
Engels on Colonialism

Ireland and the Agency of the Colonised

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Abstract

Frederick Engels' 1856 tour of Ireland was key to his and Karl Marx's political shift away from the idea that colonialism might have a progressive element. This article will examine how this relatively early experience, before the Great Indian Uprising of 1857, was part of a shift in Marx and Engels in relation to the agency of oppressed peoples in colonised countries in their own liberation. This replaced the idea that they should wait for help from an outside working class or the development of their own working class. As such it conceptualised capitalism as an interrelated world system.

Key words: Engels, Ireland, colonialism, imperialism, post-colonialism

Karl Marx and Frederick Engels are often presented as outdated, particularly in their understanding of issues relating to colonialism and racism. Their focus can be seen as a disproportionate obsession with industrial workers, at the expense of all other oppressed groups. For example, in the collection *Decolonising the University* (2018), the only reference to Marx dismissively claims that he 'developed his stages of history from a European perspective that ignored the historical developments of other societies, while arguing that these same stages were universal in nature'.¹ It does not cite anywhere that Marx stated this, beyond quoting Edward Said's passing critique of Marx in his book *Orientalism* (1978), which I will engage with below. There have been revisions of this dismissal of Marxism as statically Eurocentric. Arun Kundnani's *What Is Antiracism?* (2023) notes that Marx's later writing 'accords to colonized workers the possibility of their pursuing their own paths to emancipation'.²

Even after the global financial crisis, where the crisis-prone nature of capitalism has led to Marx being somewhat rehabilitated, Engels is presented as responsible for the most mechanical forms of Marxism. To some extent this is part of attempting to divorce the 'economist' Marx from the social theories

that accompany Marxist ideas, and this division has been true in one way or another since the emergence of the New Left with its attempt to distance Marx from Stalinised Marxism in the 1950s. By this view, Engels' dogmatism led to the mechanical dialectics of the Second International in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and subsequently the anti-humanism of Stalinism. I do not have space to rehearse this argument here, except as it relates to the specific issue of colonialism and the agency of the oppressed. This view emerged from a reading of Marx's early writings, *The Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts* of 1844, which were published after the Second World War. As Alex Callinicos wrote in *Deciphering Capital* (2014) these encouraged some to see Engels as producing 'a scientific and determinist "Marxism"', especially after Marx's death. While there were real differences, Callinicos notes, 'this portrayal of Engels is absurd: towards the end of his life he was particularly concerned to correct dogmatic readings of Marx, as his letters of the early 1890s on historical materialism clearly show'.³ The idea of a distinction between Marx and Engels is more favoured among people trying to rehabilitate Marx and say he was not well used by Engels than most modern commentators, who dismiss both Marx and Engels. However, I will argue on the basis that Marx and Engels developed their ideas in tandem and as each of the criticisms tends to affect both thinkers, I will engage by referring to both Marx and Engels.

I want to defend Engels from the charge of reductionism, particularly by looking at how Engels was not only part of a development in Marxist thought regarding colonialism, but was frequently its leading exponent. Notably this development was often based on his practical experience, not the abstract development of ideas. One reason that this contribution is sometimes missed is because scholars looking at the question of colonialism repeatedly leave out the experience of Ireland, seeing it as part of the European experience unlike places in, for example, Africa or Asia. Marx and Engels' early position is put in the *Manifesto of the Communist Party* as: 'In proportion as the antagonism between classes within the nation vanishes, the hostility of one nation to another will come to an end'.⁴ It implies that as different interests disappear, nationalism will also. As such it fails to see the way in which it is in the practical interests of any country's rulers to encourage nationalism and a sense that people from different classes have something in common, despite the fact that this latter idea is one of the main points of the manifesto. More importantly, they would come, particularly because of the experience of Ireland, to see that the experience of the oppressed and exploited was not uniform: colonialism and later imperialism were more than simply the agglomeration of capitalism.

Marx and 'Oriental despotism'

In their writings in the 1840s and early 1850s both Marx and Engels expressed the belief that non-capitalist societies, particularly in 'the orient', would be unable to advance socially without the intervention of the expanding European capitalist powers. In the same period, Engels, in particular, referred to 'non-historic peoples' when examining the European revolutionary movements of 1848. As I will argue, both of these positions relate to an assumption that it is only with the advent of capitalism that peoples become part of history. It is these positions that provide the basis for criticism by more recent scholars.

Edward Said's remains the best-known critique of the 'orientalist' or 'Eurocentric' positions taken by Marx and Engels, and this features in his books *Orientalism* (1978) and *Culture and Imperialism* (1993), though a critique of Marxism was not the main concern of either book. He states that Marx 'returned with increasing conviction to the idea that even in destroying Asia, Britain was making possible there a real social revolution'.⁵ The reference to 'increasing conviction' is odd, as Said was referring to four articles Marx wrote on India in 1853 and this selective approach to Marx's writings does account for more forceful critiques of colonialism in Marx, that I will detail below. There *are* troubling elements in the 1853 writings, yet even in these early days the main distinction is not between European and non-European societies, but between static ones and ones capable of social movement. Engels wrote in the radical Chartist newspaper *The Northern Star* in 1848 of the French imperial conquest of Algeria that, while the method, by means of 'brutal soldiers', was 'highly blameable', nevertheless the action was 'an important and fortunate fact for the progress of civilisation'.⁶ His argument, echoing that put in the *Manifesto of the Communist Party* in the same year, was that however brutal capitalism may be, in practice it is progressive as it allows the creation of a working class, both in the metropole and the occupied territory, which will allow people to liberate themselves. This is very similar to Marx's later argument on India. The *Manifesto* presents capitalism as an unstable but dynamic system that creates the productive forces that can replace it. What followed was a growing understanding that capitalism did not create a uniform world in the way the *Manifesto* suggested, that it held some people and some areas back.

In the *Manifesto* Marx and Engels state that capitalism 'has made barbarian and semi-barbarian countries dependent on the civilised ones, nations of peasants on nations of bourgeois, the East on the West'.⁷ Modern social scientists would not employ such crude terms for stages in societal evolution – savage, barbarian, civilised. Far more controversial is the concept of 'Oriental despot-

ism', which misunderstands pre-existing social structures in Asia, suggesting a peculiarly static society. In one 1853 *New York Tribune* newspaper article on India, Marx said:

We must not forget that these idyllic village-communities... had always been the solid foundation of Oriental despotism... England, it is true, in causing a social revolution in Hindostan [India], was actuated only by the vilest interests... But that is not the question. The question is, can mankind fulfil its destiny without a fundamental revolution in the social state of Asia? If not, whatever may have been the crimes of England she was the unconscious tool of history in bringing about that revolution.⁸

The references to fulfilling a 'destiny' and being a 'tool' of history fit with Enlightenment ideas of social progress that came to Marx and Engels via the philosophy of Georg Hegel. But the idea of societal advance is not the issue here, it is the idea that such static societies can only be brought into 'history' and achieve any social change through outside intervention. Marx did not coin the term 'Oriental despotism', which was the standard Western understanding of the time. In a study on Marx's sources and notebooks, Lucia Pradella shows the origin of the concept, in a chapter that goes on to forensically examine its evolution, explaining, 'The theory of Oriental despotism depicted governments in Asia as personal and despotic, on the basis of the assumption that the monarch was the sole landowner...'.⁹

Marx moved away from this concept as he gained access to more accurate histories and analyses of the system. Pradella comments that his notebooks 'contradict the widespread view that, in the early 1850s, Marx uncritically assumed the Orientalist thesis.'¹⁰ But in practical terms in 1853 he maintained that 'you cannot maintain a net of railways over an immense country without introducing all those industrial processes necessary to meet the immediate and current wants of railway locomotion', and therefore a working class would develop, which would allow the self-liberation of the Indian masses.¹¹ In *Capital* Volume 1 (1867), where his ideas are much more fully developed, Marx still argued that, the social 'simplicity' in Java, where jobs continue from generation to generation by tradition alone 'supplies the key to the riddle of the unchangeability of Asiatic societies, which is in such striking contrast with the constant dissolution and refounding of Asiatic states, and the never-ceasing changes of dynasty'.¹² However this should be seen in the context of the following paragraph, which talks about how Europe's medieval guilds carried out a similar function in hindering social and economic change as 'On the whole, the worker and his means of production remained closely united, like the snail

with its shell'.¹³ At this point he is discussing any kind of pre-capitalist social inertia.

Said singled out Engels for criticism in *Culture and Imperialism*, quoting him from 1857 to show his apparent orientalism. Said states that when Engels described 'the Moors of Algeria as a "timid race" because they were repressed, but "reserving nevertheless their cruelty and vindictiveness while in moral character they stand very low," he was merely echoing French colonial doctrine'.¹⁴ He may have been unaware that the editors of the encyclopaedia for which this is part of an entry, had instructed Marx and Engels that their articles, 'should show not the slightest party tendency regarding questions of politics, religion and philosophy'.¹⁵ Nevertheless, the editors toned down Engels' attacks on French colonial policy.¹⁶ It is also of note that when discussing anti-colonial violence in China during 1857, it was Engels who condemned the brutality of the colonialists, dismissing them as 'civilisationmongers'.¹⁷ Nevertheless there is an assumption, from which both Marx and Engels would subsequently move away, that change would come from the developed capitalist countries. A discussion on 'non-historic' peoples, regarding particularly various groups in central and eastern Europe, as well as Ireland, show that the idea of static societies was not primarily a Eurocentric dismissal of non-Europeans.

Engels and the 'non-historic' peoples

Another position, in this case specifically associated with Engels, is the idea of the 'non-historic peoples' that was raised during the 1848 uprisings against the Austro-Hungarian Empire. As Roman Rosdolsky explains:

By peoples 'without their own history', Engels understood those peoples who were unable to form a strong state of their own in the past and therefore lacked, in Engels' opinion, the power to achieve national independence in the future.¹⁸

Rosdolsky shows how Engels at this period mistakenly went along with ideas of a continuing progressive bourgeoisie that he would later reject. In a period of revolt against existing empires, in this case the conflict between the Russian and the Austro-Hungarian, Engels could only see social advance through the development of nation states that could challenge the autocratic empires. Any 'peoples' who were not strong enough to develop a 'nation' of their own would fall under the influence of another autocracy. In this case he saw the

weaker rebels against the Austro-Hungarian empire becoming mere tools of the Russian empire – and pan-Slavism becoming shorthand for the expansion of Russian autocracy. He believed that a strong national bourgeoisie would be able to challenge autocrats on either side. The reality of 1848, as Rosdolsky demonstrates, was that no nations followed the radicalism of France in an earlier period. These were both logical but flawed positions, but they were formulations that Marx and Engels moved away from relatively rapidly. For the purposes of this article what is interesting is how and why Engels led the way.

Marx and Engels were philosophically indebted to Hegel, and started from many of his positions regarding social change.¹⁹ When Engels talked of the non-historic peoples he was sharing a Hegelian philosophical view of an advancing ‘spirit’ or *Geist* in history.²⁰ This was seen as embodied in the nation, and Engels had not fully broken from this view in the 1840s. It can be seen echoed in his comments on Ireland. Hegel’s worldview started from an idealist position, in that changes to society started from the idea, which moved to shape reality. It allows a direction to history; indeed the direction is History. So only peoples with this spirit could be said to have a history. For Hegel this excluded Africans who were outside of the ‘category of Universality’.²¹ Rosdolsky writes that ‘In Hegel’s view, world history represented “the dialectic of several national minds”,’ and an associated state. And ‘only such peoples [as could create such a state] were the bearers of historical progress. Peoples, on the other hand, who were unable to establish a state formation or who had the misfortune to lose their state for a long period of time were “nonhistoric”; their sole destiny was to become subject to other peoples and finally to be absorbed by them’.²²

Whilst Africa occupied a particular space in the nineteenth-century imagination, the discourses of otherness were also apparent in other colonial contexts. According to Bipan Chandra, Engels argued in 1844 that: ‘the character of the Irish people had produced overpopulation and pressure on land since they were unfit for undertaking manufactures and had failed to develop agriculture along capitalist lines. The English... “might have raised the standard of Irish civilization” they had contented themselves “with the most brutal plundering”. It, therefore, followed that... “the cause of Irish misery, which now seems to come from abroad, is really to be found at home”’.²³ On this understanding, the immiseration of the Irish people is a result of their own behaviour and not of the imperial occupation, but this was not a position that Engels maintained.

Engels' sympathy for Irish workers

The shift in Engels' ideas and understanding came from his lived experience in relation to the Irish. Despite the views stated above, from his arrival in Manchester, Engels was sympathetic with Irish people fighting oppression, though initially he saw the only path to liberation being through joining the British working class, becoming part of the class struggle in Britain's industrial cities and supporting the Chartists, the world's first mass working class movement.²⁴ Many of this organisation's leading militants and leaders were themselves Irish, including their national leaders Feargus O'Connor and Bronterre O'Brien.²⁵ But at the time he saw unindustrialised Ireland itself as having no ability to become part of history.

Engels' change in views interacted with his experience, through his direct connection with Irish resistance to English domination and colonialism. This came initially through his meetings with radical workers in Manchester. Chandra comments that Marx and Engels were affected by Engels' connection with Irish militants, and:

Consequently, they were more alive to the bias of English writers and historians. Because of Engels' Irish companions, Mary and Lizzy Burns, and Marx's and Engels' direct contact with the leaders of Irish workers in Britain, they had greater sympathy for as well as better knowledge of Irish affairs and Irish life and culture.²⁶

That is, their experience was different precisely because Engels had worked directly with Irish militants in Manchester. Though they had experience of the 1848 revolutions, this was the first connection with colonised peoples rather than academic books on colonisation.

Travels in Ireland, changing views in 1856 and consequences

It was Engels who was able to visit Ireland, and he saw the reality of colonial rule unmediated through colonial experts. He made two tours of Ireland, in 1856 and 1869. Note the date of the first visit, between the *New York Tribune* articles of 1853 and the Indian Uprising of 1857. He wrote to Marx about what he saw:

Gendarmes, priests, lawyers, bureaucrats, country squires in pleasing profusion and a total absence of any industry at all, so that it would be difficult to understand what all these parasitic growths live on if the distress of the peasants did not supply the other half of the picture... Ireland may be regarded as England's first colony and as one which, because of its proximity, is still governed exactly in the old way, and one can already notice here that the so-called liberty of English citizens is based on the oppression of the colonies.²⁷

His understanding is that a long period of British rule – as Britain's first colony since Oliver Cromwell's conquest under the Commonwealth in 1649 – had not led to the integration of the majority of Ireland into the British economy. This experience opened up the opportunity to understand that colonialist development was not simply capitalist development as in the metropolis on a wider scale. It was not the case that Ireland as a whole was made part of the 'industrial process' necessary to meet capitalism's current needs, as Marx had earlier suggested of India. Indeed by and large its development was held back. As Chandra has argued, Ireland was the only case in which Marx and Engels were able to study the reality of colonial rule at first hand:

Consequently, in Ireland, they not only did not see any destructive positive role for colonialism but also abandoned the mirror image of the transplantation of capitalism and therefore also its regenerative role. Instead they saw clearly both the exploitative and the underdeveloping aspects of colonialism.²⁸

This experience led to a shift in both Engels and Marx's understanding, as they came to be much more sympathetic to non-working-class resistance, seeing it as part of a wider anti-capitalist struggle. Engels wrote to Marx after his 1869 visit to Ireland:

Irish history shows one what a misfortune it is for a nation to have subjugated another nation. All the abominations of the English have their origin in the Irish Pale. I have still to plough my way through the Cromwellian period, but this much seems certain to me, that things would have taken another turn in England, too, but for the necessity for military rule in Ireland and the creation of a new aristocracy there.²⁹

Engels spent some time preparing notes for a history of Ireland, but it was never completed.³⁰ It was in discussion around Engels' correspondence that Marx wrote back, 'The English working class will *never accomplish anything* before

it has got rid of Ireland. The lever must be applied in Ireland.³¹ As Jie-Hyun Lim has noted of Marx's coverage of both India and the roughly contemporaneous Taiping uprising in China, that 'his focus was not on the national liberation struggle itself. His main concern was that these revolts [might]... cause a financial crisis in England, contribute to deepening of the general crisis of capitalism, and therefore further conditions for proletarian revolution in England.'³² Nonetheless, there is a shift in seeing people struggling against colonialism as immediate allies. Chandra comments that Engels' shift can be most clearly indicated in a less central colonial conflict. So, regarding the national struggle of the Bedouin in North Africa, Engels 'expressed respect for [nationalist leader] Abd-el-Kader's valiancy and favour for the national movement of the Bedouins', where an article a decade earlier had seen the revolt as 'regressive'.³³

Cedric Robinson and Engels

Cedric J. Robinson is particularly influential in critiques of Marxism on issues of race and colonialism, particularly in *Black Marxism* (1983). This is not a book about Black Marxism as such, but about how black radicals must pass beyond what Robinson interprets as the limits of Marxist ideas to achieve radical change. Robinson, nevertheless praises Marx's theories for saying, 'slavery had been "the chief moment of primitive accumulation", "an economic category of the highest importance". First, African workers had been transmuted by the perverted canons of mercantile capitalism into property. Then, African labour power as slave labour was integrated into the organic composition of 19th century manufacturing and industrial capitalism.'³⁴ However, in a later introduction he would add, without substantiation that, 'the "masses" whom Marx presumed would be "seized" by theory were European male wage labourers and artisans in the metropolises of western Europe, Britain, and the United States'.³⁵ While Marx and Engels both continued to believe that the working class was key to human liberation both expressed the opinion that women and non-white people were part of that class and in later writings that the without the national struggles of colonised peoples the workers of the West would never be able to liberate themselves. So in *Capital* Volume 1 Marx notes that exploiting women as workers was 'the first thing sought for by capitalists who used machinery'.³⁶ He specifically referred to race in his statements that 'Labour in a white skin cannot emancipate itself where it is branded in a black skin'.³⁷ I will return to the issue of colonised peoples below.

Robinson makes a sustained criticism of Engels in *The Anthropology of Marxism* (2001), especially Engels' *Anti-Dühring* (1878) and its history of the development of socialist ideas, which he dismisses as 'less than explanatory'.³⁸ He rejects Engels' assertion that 'modern socialism' comes from a recognition that 'class antagonisms existing... between proprietors and non-proprietors, between capitalists and wage-workers' are [put into struggle] by 'the anarchy existing in production'.³⁹ And indeed he rejects the idea that there exists the kind of social progress in modes of production that Marx and Engels discuss. The book spends much of its time showing that variations on socialist ideas were common among Christian sects in the Middle Ages and they didn't need historical materialism or scientific socialism to guide them. Robinson tends to see Marx and Engels as simply praising capitalism as an advance on previous social systems, sweeping aside old mystifications, without engaging with their arguments that it created its own new mystifications. This leads him to talk as if Marx and Engels were unaware of earlier socialistic movements against oppression outlined for example in Engels' *Peasant War in Germany*, and to miss their argument that capitalism creates its own internal contradictions. Writing in 1850, Engels makes a direct comparison between the forces engaged in the German Peasant uprising in 1525 and those of 1848:

In 1848 as in the Peasant War, the interests of the opposition classes clashed with each other and each acted of its own accord. The bourgeoisie, developed sufficiently not to tolerate any longer the feudal and bureaucratic absolutism, was not powerful enough to subordinate the claims of other classes to its own interests.⁴⁰

Robinson does not like Engels' discussion of the peasant war in class terms because this is what he sees as a weakness in Marxism, rather than a strength in it as a tool of analysis.

In a more sophisticated form Marx explains capitalist economics in *Capital* Volume 3, edited and published after his death by Engels and itself sometimes accused of thus being distorted:

this economic trinity [and its itinerant] connection between the components of value and wealth in general and its sources completes the mystification of the capitalist mode of production, the reification of social relations, and the immediate coalescence of the material relations of production with their historical and social specificity: the bewitched, distorted and upside-down world haunted by Monsieur le Capital and Madame la Terre, who are at the same time social characters and mere things.⁴¹

This does not rely on a reductivist view of class relations of the kind that Robinson accuses Marx and Engels of and rejects. Despite the value of Robinson's critique, as with others engaged with in this article, it is based in a selective reading of Marx and Engels.

Late Marx and late Engels

Marx published very little in the decade leading up to his death in 1883. This was largely because he was faced with a rapidly changing capitalism and wanted to adjust his arguments accordingly. He realised that *Capital* had to cover far more than Western Europe and its social evolution, thus his extensive reading of the latest anthropology and studies on non-capitalist societies.⁴² Engels had to make choices after Marx's death, and he decided to prioritise the publication of volumes II and III of *Capital*. However, towards the end of his life, in 1890, Engels said:

Marx and I are ourselves partly to blame for the fact that the younger people sometimes lay more stress on the economic side than is due to it. We had to emphasise the main principle *vis-à-vis* our adversaries, who denied it, and we had not always the time, the place or the opportunity to give their due to the other elements involved in the interaction. But when it came to presenting a section of history, that is, to making a practical application, it was a different matter and there no error was permissible.⁴³

The practical results of their change in position can be seen in a row Engels had on the council of the International Working Men's Association – the First International – in 1872. The organisation's general secretary John Hales, argued for a merging of the British and Irish sections in the name of 'internationalism'. Engels opposed this vehemently, arguing:

If members of a conquering nation called upon the nation they had conquered and continued to hold down to forget their specific nationality and position, to 'sink national differences' and so forth, that was not Internationalism, it was nothing else but preaching to them submission to the yoke.⁴⁴

Engels showed how his view had evolved in *England in 1845 and in 1885*, a look at 40 years of capitalist development, written not long after Marx's death. He now talks of capitalism treating different populations differently, the de-

velopment of colonies will not echo that of the metropolis. Furthermore the model for colonial and imperial development is Ireland:

England was to become the 'workshop of the world'; all other countries were to become for England what Ireland already was – markets for her manufactured goods, supplying her in return with raw materials and food. England the great manufacturing centre of an agricultural world, with an ever-increasing number of corn and cotton-growing Irelands, revolving around her, the industrial sun.⁴⁵

This shows he has come to an important understanding that colonialism is not simply kind of capitalism indistinguishable from industrial development elsewhere. The system does not necessarily depend on all oppressed people being exploited in the same way. Without suggesting that Engels saw the necessary revolution outside of the 'West', it is significant if we compare Engels' position in his letter to Russian socialists in 1882 quoted below. We are now in the period of the Berlin congress that divided up Africa between the imperial power. Engels' letter to Karl Kautsky outlined what would happen to the major powers' colonies with the advance of socialism, and it is worth quoting at length:

Countries inhabited by a native population, which are simply subjugated, India, Algiers, the Dutch, Portuguese and Spanish possessions, must be taken over for the time being by the proletariat and led as rapidly as possible towards independence. How this process will develop is difficult to say. India will perhaps, indeed very probably, produce a revolution, and as the proletariat emancipating itself cannot conduct any colonial wars, this would have to be given full scope; it would not pass off without all sorts of destruction, of course, but that sort of thing is inseparable from all revolutions. The same might also take place elsewhere, e.g., in Algiers and Egypt, and would certainly be the best thing for us. We shall have enough to do at home.⁴⁶

This is not a fully formed position and can be taken as justifying some of the conservative views on colonialism taken by Social Democratic parties in the Second International that looked to a 'progressive colonialism', if they were in government. It does appear to suggest that the treatment of countries in what we would now call the global south would be different from others (and he says as much regarding Australia and India).

But as to what social and political phases these countries will then have to pass through before they likewise arrive at socialist organisation, we today can only advance rather idle hypotheses, I think. One thing alone is certain: the victorious proletariat can force no blessings of any kind upon any foreign nation without undermining its own victory by so doing.⁴⁷

This commitment to self-determination is also there in Engels' 1890 letter to Russian Marxist Vera Zasulich regarding whether Ukraine should have a separate existence: 'It is not my task to decide this question. I can only say this, that in my opinion, the people concerned should decide their fate themselves'.⁴⁸

Conclusion

From a vantage point in the early twenty-first century it is possible to see the shifts of Marx and Engels thought more clearly, in part this is because their publications and particularly their notebooks are more widely available. The change in Engels' ideas emerged from his active engagement with the workers' movement in Britain and the anti-colonial movement in Ireland, and the attempts to understand and explain these events. Marx and Engels' insights were developed by subsequent thinkers in a number of directions, but the aim of this piece is to show that Engels in particular was neither exclusively mechanical in thinking nor purely Eurocentric in the development of his ideas; ideas which tended away from a simple concentration on the European industrial working class.

In 1914 Lenin argued in *The Right of Nations to Self Determination* that:

The policy of Marx and Engels on the Irish question serves as a splendid example of the attitude the proletariat of the oppressor nations should adopt towards national movements, an example which has lost none of its immense practical importance. It serves as a warning against that 'servile haste' with which the philistines of all countries, colours and languages hurry to label as 'utopian' the idea of altering the frontiers of states that were established by the violence and privileges of the landlords and bourgeoisie of one nation.⁴⁹

Lenin's interpretation of Marx and Engels on the Irish question was made in a text that was hugely influential to anti-colonial activists. This article does not seek to suggest that Marx and Engels saw the socialist revolution occurring

outside of the heartlands of capitalism. Rather than Engels' work on Ireland enabled an understanding of colonised peoples as key agents in the struggle against capitalism.

Notes

- 1 William Jamal Richardson, 'Understanding Eurocentrism as a Structural Problem of Undone Science', in Gurminder K. Bhambra, Dalia Gebrial and Kerem Nişancıoğlu, eds, *Decolonising the University*, London, 2018, p.234.
- 2 Arun Kundnani, *What is Anti-Racism? And Why it Means Anti-Capitalism*, London, 2023, p.55.
- 3 Alex Callinicos, *Deciphering Capital*, London, 2014, p.38.
- 4 Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *Manifesto of the Communist Party*, Moscow, 1977, p.57.
- 5 Edward Said, *Orientalism*, London, 2003, p.153.
- 6 Frederick Engels, 'Extraordinary Revelations. — Abd-El-Kader. — Guizot's Foreign Policy', in Marx and Engels *Collected Works* Volume 6, London, 1976, p.469.
- 7 Marx and Engels, *Manifesto of the Communist Party*, p.40.
- 8 Karl Marx, 'The British Rule in India' in Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *On Colonialism: Articles from the New York Tribune and other writings*, Moscow, 1972, p.40.
- 9 Lucia Pradella, *Globalisation and the Critique of Political Economy: New insights from Marx's writings*, Abingdon, 2015, p.34. She discusses the sources of these ideas at length, pp.33-40.
- 10 *Ibid.*, p.121. She discusses Marx's evolving response to the idea of Oriental despotism on pp.115-122.
- 11 Karl Marx, 'The Future Results of British Rule in India', in Marx and Engels, *On Colonialism*, p.84.
- 12 Karl Marx, *Capital* Volume 1, Harmondsworth, 1976, p.479.
- 13 *Ibid.*, p.480.
- 14 Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, London, 1994, p.215.
- 15 Hal Draper, Introduction to *Karl Marx & Friedrich Engels: Articles in the New American Cyclopaedia*, Berkeley CA, 1969, p.14.
- 16 *Ibid.*, p.16.
- 17 Frederick Engels, 'Persia and China', in Marx and Engels, *On Colonialism*, p.124.
- 18 Roman Rosdolsky, *Engels and the 'Nonhistoric' Peoples: The national question in the revolutions of 1848*, Abingdon, 1987, p.19.

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- 19 See Kevin B. Anderson, *Dialectics of Revolution: Hegel, Marxism, and its critics through a lens of race, class, gender and colonialism*, Ottawa, 2020, particularly pp.13-23.
 - 20 This section was influenced by ideas from Kevin B. Anderson, *Marx at the Margins: On nationalism, ethnicity, and non-Western societies*, Chicago IL, 2010.
 - 21 G. W. F. Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of History*, London, 1884 p.97
 - 22 Rosdolsky, *Engels and the 'Nonhistoric' Peoples*, p.130.
 - 23 Bipan Chandra, 'Marx and Engels and Colonialism in Ireland', *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress*, Vol. 38, 1977, p.638.
 - 24 See Tristram Hunt, *The Frock-Coated Communist*, Harmondsworth, 2010, particularly pp.78-100.
 - 25 See E. P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class*, Harmondsworth, 1968, pp.484-485.
 - 26 *Ibid.*, p.644.
 - 27 Frederick Engels, 'Engels to Marx, May 23, 1856', in Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *Ireland and the Irish Question*, Moscow, 1971, p.93.
 - 28 *Ibid.*, p.637.
 - 29 Frederick Engels, 'Letter from Engels to Marx, October 24, 1869', in *ibid.*, p.387.
 - 30 *Ibid.*, pp.263-382.
 - 31 Karl Marx, 'Letter from Marx to Engels, December 11, 1869', in *ibid.*, p.397.
 - 32 Jie-Hyun Lim, 'Marx's Theory of Imperialism and the Irish National Question', *Science & Society*, Volume 56, No. 2, 1992, p.166.
 - 33 *Ibid.*, p.168.
 - 34 Cedric J. Robinson, *Black Marxism: The making of the Black radical tradition*, Chapel Hill, NC, 2000, p.113.
 - 35 *Ibid.*, pXXVIII.
 - 36 Marx, *Capital* Volume 1, p.517.
 - 37 *Ibid.*, p.414.
 - 38 Cedric J. Robinson, *An Anthropology of Marxism*, London, 2019, p.2.
 - 39 Frederick Engels, *Socialism: Utopian & Scientific*, London, 1995, p.29.
 - 40 Frederick Engels, *The Peasant War in Germany*, London, 1996, p.89.
 - 41 Karl Marx, *Capital Volume 3*, Harmondsworth, 1981, p.969.
 - 42 See Lucia Pradella, *Globalisation and the Critique of Political Economy: New insights from Marx's writings*, Abingdon, 2015, p.173; and Anderson, *Marx at the Margins*, pp.196-198.
 - 43 Frederick Engels, 'Engels to J. Bloch in Königsberg, September 21, 1890', in Karl Marx, Frederick Engels, Vladimir Lenin, *On Historical Materialism: A collection*, Moscow, 1972, p.295.
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- 48 Quoted in Rosdolsky, *Engels and the 'Nonhistoric' Peoples*, p.184.
- 49 Vladimir Lenin, *The Right of Nations to Self Determination*, Moscow, 1967, p.52.