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Karl Marx an Edward Spencer Beesly in London. London, Montag, 12. September 1870

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September 12, 1870.

My dear Sir,—

Last Wednesday **A. Serrailier**^a, a member of the General Council of the **International Workmen's Association**^b, went to Paris as the plenipotentiary of the Council. He thought it his duty to remain there, not only for taking part in the defence, but to bring his influence to bear upon our Paris Federal Council, and he is, in point of fact, a man of superior intellectual quality. His **wife**^c was to-day informed of his resolution. Unfortunately, she is not only **sans sou**, she and her **child**^d, but the creditors of Serrailier having claims to the amount of about £ 12, threaten to sell her furniture and throw her on the street. Under these circumstances I and my friends have resolved to come to the rescue, and it is for this that I take the liberty to call, by this letter, also on you and your friends.

You will find that the **address**^f I laid before the General Council, Friday last^e, and which is in course of printing, coincides on many points almost literally with your **pamphlet**^{ml}.

My opinion is, that Paris will be forced to capitulate, and from the private letters I receive from Paris it appears that some influential members of the Provisional Government are prepared for such a turn of events.

Serraillier^q writes me to-day^p that the haste with which the Prussians march upon Paris, is the only thing in the world able to prevent a new Insurrection of June! Paris fallen, France will be far from lost if the provinces do their duty.

The Federal Council of Paris bombards me with telegrams, all to this effect: Recognition of the French Republic by England. In point of fact, it is most important for France. It is the only thing you can at present do for her. The **King of Prussia**^r treats officially **Bonaparte**^s as the ruling Sovereign of France. He wants to restore him. The French Republic will not exist officially before its recognition by the British Government. But no time is to be lost. Will you allow your **Queen**^t and your oligarchs, under the dictation of **Bismarck**^u, to abuse the immense influence of England?—

Yours faithfully,
Karl Marx.

A propos. There is just now much useless talk in the English Press about “our defences”. In case of a war with Prussia or the other military powers of the Continent, you have one, but this one an infallible, means of attack—to destroy their maritime commerce. You can do so only by re-vindicating your “maritime rights”, which by a Ministerial intrigue, not by any sanction of Parliament, were in the Paris Treaty of 1856^v surrendered to Russia. Russia considers this point of such decisive importance, that she caused Prussia, at the very commencement of this war, to exaggerate those clauses of the Paris “understanding”. Prussia was, of course, but too willing. In the first instance she had no navy. In the second instance, it is, of course, the common interest of the continental military powers to make England, the only great maritime power of Europe, surrender the most telling means of maritime warfare on the plea of humanity! The privilege of inhumanity—and you can make no war in a “humane” way—being reserved for the land forces! Besides, this diplomatic “philanthropy” supposes that property—always on sea, not on land—is more sacred than human life. This is the reason why the stultified English manufacturers and merchants allowed themselves to be duped by the Paris clauses on maritime war—of no possible use to them, because not accepted by the United States. And only in a war with them such a proviso could be of any value to the moneymongers of England. The contempt with which England is at present treated by Prussia and Russia (the latter marching quietly to India) is only due to their knowledge that in an offensive land war she can do nothing, and that for a maritime war, where she could be everything, she has disarmed herself, or has been rather disarmed by the arbitrary act of **Clarendon**^w, acting under the secret instructions of **Palmerston**^x. Declare to-morrow that these clauses of the Paris treaty—not even drawn up in the form of treaty clauses—are waste paper, and I warrant you the tone of the continental bullies will change at once.

Erläuterungen

- a) Serraillier, Auguste (1840-1891)
- b) Internationale Arbeiter-Assoziation (IAA) / International Workingmen's Association (IWA) / Association Internationale des Travailleurs (AIT)
- c) Serraillier, Eugénie (Jenny) (1843-1909)
- d) Serraillier, Lucien (1867-1919)
- e) Siehe Karl Marx: **Second Address of the General Council of the International Working Men's Association on the War**.^g (MEGA² I/21^h. S. 485–491 und Erl. S. 1751–1766. / Karl Marx: **Zweite Adresse des Generalrats der Internationalen Arbeiterassoziation über den**

Deutsch-Französischen Krieg.ⁱ (MEGA² I/21^j. S. 492–499 und Erl. S. 1767–1776). Siehe Special Meeting of the General Council September 9, 1870 (MEGA² I/21^k. S. 831).

f) [Zotero Link für: address](#)

g) [Zotero Link für: Second Address of the General Council of the International Working Men's Association on the War.](#)

h) [Zotero Link für: MEGA2 I/21](#)

i) [Zotero Link für: Zweite Adresse des Generalrats der Internationalen Arbeiterassoziation über den Deutsch-Französischen Krieg.](#)

j) [Zotero Link für: MEGA2 I/21](#)

k) [Zotero Link für: MEGA2 I/21](#)

l) E. S. Beesly: A word for France. Addressed to the workmen of Londonⁿ (siehe MEGA² I/21^o. S. 1757).

m) [Zotero Link für: pamphlet](#)

n) [Zotero Link für: E. S. Beesly: A word for France. Addressed to the workmen of London](#)

o) [Zotero Link für: MEGA2 I/21](#)

p) Nicht überlieferter Brief von A. Serrailier an Marx, 12.9.1870. Auszug daraus siehe Marx an César de Paepe, 14.9.1870 Siehe auch J. Marx an Engel, etwa 13. September 1870.

q) Serrailier, Auguste (1840-1891)

r) Wilhelm I. (1797-1888)

s) Napoléon III (1808-1873)

t) Victoria (1819-1901)

u) Bismarck-Schönhausen, Otto von (1815-1898)

v) Der Krimkrieg 1853–1856.

w) Villiers, (seit 1838) 4th Earl of Clarendon, George William Frederick (1800-1870)

x) Palmerston, Henry John Temple, 3rd Viscount (1784-1865)

Kritischer Apparat