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Transnational Cigar-Makers: Cross-Border Labour Markets, Strikes, and Solidarity at the Time of the First International (1864–1873)*

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ABSTRACT: Several authors have argued that one of the main goals of the International Working Men's Association was to control transnational labour markets. In the eyes of trade unionists, especially in Britain, uncontrolled cross-border migratory movements threatened to undermine wage standards and working conditions. Their solution was to organize internationally, both to prevent strike-breaking and wage-cutting by workers from abroad, and to support unions elsewhere to raise wage standards in their home countries. Cigar-makers operated on a cross-border labour market and were very prominent in the First International. In this article I describe the connections between the German, British, Dutch, Belgian, and American cigar-makers as migratory workers, and their actions to stimulate, support, and coordinate trade unions internationally. I argue that the international cooperation of cigar-makers was primarily motivated by a wish to regulate their cross-border labour market, not so much by an abstract ideal of international solidarity.

In one of his many pleas for a transnational labour history, Marcel van der Linden argued that the International Working Men's Association, later to be known as the First International, should not be considered as a form of cooperation of representatives of different nations.¹ According to Van der Linden, this view reflected a later stage of internationalism, which

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1. Marcel van der Linden, "Transnationale Arbeitergeschichte", in Gunilla Budde *et al.* (eds), *Transnationale Geschichte. Themen, Tendenzen und Theorien* (Göttingen, 2006), pp. 265–274, 267; see also *idem*, *Workers of the World: Essays toward a Global Labour History* (Leiden [etc.], 2008), p. 5.

emerged in the 1890s and which he called “national internationalism”. This kind of internationalism developed in the period of the national integration of European working classes between 1871 and 1914. In his view, the internationalism at the time of the First International should better be analysed as “sub-national”. Because national trade unions and other working-class organizations hardly existed, it organized international solidarity between local organizations in different countries.²

In this article, I want to elaborate on this argument by emphasizing that the kind of “sub-national” internationalism described by Van der Linden reflected a transnational, cross-border organization of the labour market, preceding the national integration of working classes and labour markets. This relationship was already observed in the 1960s by the eminent Belgian historian of the First International, Jan Dhondt:

One knows very well how much the workers in this period had a travelling existence. Hungarian labourers were not rare in London; Belgian labourers counted for tens of thousands in France, and concerning the German labourers, they could be met in almost every country. The International of revolutionary radicals was thus doubled by an International of the workers themselves, stretching across the world, far from their country of origin.³

Cigar-makers, whose migratory behaviour and early involvement in radical politics are well known, both operated on a transnational cross-border labour market, and were very prominent in the First International. They are, in fact, a perfect illustration of the relationship between the existence of a transnational labour market and workers’ internationalism. As far as the cigar-makers’ history, including their relationship with the First International, has been written, however, it has been done predominantly in a national context (cf. the literature in the footnotes below). In this article I want to show that the history of this relationship can best be written from a transnational or “entangled” cross-border perspective.⁴ If we follow Van der Linden, the international character and aim of the First International cannot primarily be understood in its current meaning, referring to relationships between nation-states or national institutions, but in the sense of what today is called transnational,

2. *Idem*, “The National Integration of European Working Classes, 1870–1914: Exploring the Causal Configuration”, *International Review of Social History*, 33 (1988), pp. 285–311; repr. in *idem*, *Transnational Labour History: Explorations* (Aldershot, 2003), pp. 23–47; *Idem*, *Workers of the World*, pp. 268–270 and 272.

3. Jan Dhondt, “Rapport de synthèse”, in Centre national de la recherche scientifique [hereafter, CNRS], *La Première Internationale. L’institution, l’implantation, le rayonnement* (Paris, 1968), pp. 463–484, 469.

4. The literature on the so-called transnational turn in the writing of history is abundant. See, for instance, in the field of labour history (with several theoretical chapters), Leon Fink (ed.), *Workers across the Americas: The Transnational Turn in Labour History* (Oxford, 2011).

connecting people in cross-border social networks. “Transnational” has a much broader meaning than “international”, as it refers to the interaction between individuals, groups, and organizations across national borders, and to structures that extend beyond the nation-state.

In recent years the concept of *histoire croisée* has gained some popularity in transnational history, mainly in the context of the study of the cross-national transfer of ideas and cultural practices.⁵ As far as this kind of “entangled history” tries to overcome enclosed national approaches and opens our minds to the transnational exchange of ideas and interconnectedness of social events, it can be helpful to orient transnational studies, but in this case I want to go beyond the transfer of ideas, and look for the cross-border social relations behind this transfer, i.e. the transnational labour market for cigar-makers, which shaped their worldview, and also their actions to cooperate internationally.

CROSS-BORDER CONNECTIONS, STRIKES, AND THE FIRST INTERNATIONAL

Already long before the “transnational turn” entered the debate, several authors have argued that the main goal of the International Working Men’s Association was to control transnational labour markets by organizing cross-border solidarity. Daisy Devreese, student of Dhondt, wrote: “[T]he [International Working Men’s Association] was of value as an instrument in daily life because it aimed at acting as a regulator, on an international scale, of the supply of labour.”⁶ The International considered itself particularly useful in the case of strikes, as stated at the Geneva Congress of 1866: “To counteract the intrigues of capitalists always ready, in cases of strikes and lock-outs, to misuse the foreign workman as a tool against the native workman, is one of the particular functions which our Society has hitherto performed with success.”⁷

Precisely this issue had been brought up by the English trade unionists who took the initiative to establish an “International”. In their address

5. The classical text is: Michael Werner and Bénédicte Zimmermann, “Histoire croisée. Penser l’histoire croisée entre empirie et réflexivité”, *Annales: économies, sociétés, civilisations*, 58 (2003), pp. 7–36; or the English version: “Beyond Comparison: Histoire Croisée and the Challenge of Reflexivity”, *History and Theory*, 45 (2006), pp. 30–50.

6. Daisy E. Devreese, “An Inquiry into the Causes and Nature of Organization: Some Observations on the International Working Men’s Association, 1864–1872/1876”, in Frits van Holthoorn and Marcel van der Linden (eds), *Internationalism in the Labour Movement 1830–1940*, 2 vols (Leiden, 1988), I, pp. 284–303, 285; see also: *idem*, “L’Association Internationale des Travailleurs: bilan de l’historiographie, perspectives de recherche”, *Cahiers d’histoire de l’Institut de recherches marxistes*, 37 (1989), pp. 9–31, 20–21.

7. Cited in *ibid.*, p. 20, and Devreese “An Inquiry”, p. 285.

“To the Workmen of France from the Working Men of England” (December 1863) they had argued:

A fraternity of peoples is highly necessary for the cause of labour, for we find that whenever we attempt to better our social condition by reducing the hours of toil, or by raising the price of labour, our employers threaten us with bringing over Frenchmen, Germans, Belgians, and others to do our work at a reduced rate of wages [...].⁸

This was of particular concern to the British trade-unionists whose relatively high wages were threatened by less well-off immigrants from other European countries. In the 1850s and early 1860s, strike-breakers were increasingly recruited by employers from abroad, as, for example, in strikes of gas-stokers, bakers, cigar-makers, tailors, and pianoforte-makers in London. During the great London builders’ strike in 1861, the employers threatened to import foreign workers en masse. The union had tried to prevent this by writing to working men’s associations abroad, but to no avail.⁹ For the London Trades Council, formed in that same year, this failure to prevent the import of strike-breakers was the main reason for seeking contact with representatives of the French workers, which led to the establishment of the International in 1864. This explains the content of their address, cited above.¹⁰

Two years later, in 1866, during a major tailors’ strike in London, it became clear how effective the International could be in organizing international solidarity. It helped to prevent the recruitment of strike-breakers in Belgium, France, Switzerland, and Germany (Hamburg and Berlin), and the Paris tailors sent financial help. As a result, the masters quickly gave in. “Nothing had struck greater consternation into the camp of the employers than the fact that they could not obtain men from the

8. Cited by Marcel van der Linden, “The Rise and Fall of the First International: An Interpretation”, in Van Holthoorn and Van der Linden, *Internationalism in the Labour Movement*, pp. 323–335, 331; repr. in *idem*, *Transnational Labour History*, pp. 11–21; see also *idem*, “Pourquoi le déclin de la Première Internationale était-il inéluctable?”, *Cahiers d’histoire de l’Institut de recherches marxistes*, 37 (1989), pp. 125–133, 128.

9. Iorwerth Prothero, *Radical Artisans in England and France, 1830–1870* (Cambridge, 1997), p. 116; on the importance of the London builders’ strike see also Henry Collins, “The International and the British Labour Movement: Origin of the International in England”, in CNRS, *La Première Internationale*, pp. 23–40, 24–27.

10. Cf. Knud Knudsen, “The Strike History of the First International”, in Van Holthoorn and Van der Linden, *Internationalism in the Labour Movement*, pp. 304–322, 307. The address was written by George Odger, Secretary of the London Trades Council, later to become the first (and only) president of the International. Looking back (in *The Times*, 29 June 1871) after his resignation as a member, he declared that the International had been formed to promote “peace and the raising of continental wages to British levels” [my italics]; cited by Henry Collins and Chimen Abramsky, *Karl Marx and the British Labour Movement: Years of the First International* (London [etc.], 1965), p. 214.

Continent by the prompt action taken by the association”, concluded the London tailors’ union.¹¹ A tailors’ strike in Edinburgh in that same year was reason to issue another warning to the German tailors,¹² which also reached Denmark. The Danish *Folkebladet* informed its readers of the strikes in Britain and issued a warning that British employers were trying to find workers in Copenhagen, Stockholm, and Kristiana (now Oslo), because they were prevented from doing so by effective labour organizations (i.e. the International) in France, Belgium, Germany, and Switzerland.¹³

In 1867 it was the Paris tailors’ turn to strike, and the London tailors to refuse any work being done in London for Paris firms.¹⁴ A Paris victory was followed by a new London tailors’ strike, and they now received help from tailors in Paris and other French towns, while the International raised funds on the continent and in America.¹⁵ At the request of the International, for instance, money was sent by Berlin tailors, cigar-makers, and carpenters.¹⁶

The successes of the International in the tailors’ struggles played a decisive role in advancing its popularity and prestige in the trade-union movement, both in Britain and internationally.¹⁷ The British and French examples were followed by tailors in Brussels, who in April 1867 also staged a strike and joined the International in June of that same year.¹⁸ They made a huge impression in Germany too. In October 1867 an

11. Cited by Christiane Eisenberg, *Deutsche und englische Gewerkschaften. Entstehung und Entwicklung bis 1878 im Vergleich* (Göttingen, 1986), p. 172.

12. “Warnung des Korrespondierenden Sekretärs des Generalrats für Deutschland Karl Marx an die deutschen Schneidergesellen 4. Mai 1866”, repr. in Institut für Marxismus-Leninismus beim ZK der SED, *Die Internationale in Deutschland (1864–1872). Dokumente und Materialien* (Berlin, 1964), pp. 117–118, and 720, n. 118.

13. Hans-Norbert Lahme, “Zur Vorgeschichte der dänischen IAA-Sektion”, *International Review of Social History*, 19 (1974), pp. 54–72, 56–57; the original text in Danish on p. 70. On the attempts to recruit strike-breakers in Denmark, see also Collins and Abramsky, *Karl Marx and the British Labour Movement*, p. 72; on the international tailors’ strike wave in general, see *ibid.*, pp. 83–84.

14. See also Michel Cordillot, “La section Française de l’Internationale et les grèves de 1867”, in *idem, Aux origines du socialisme moderne. La Première Internationale, la Commune de Paris, l’Exil* (Paris, 2010), pp. 33–55, 45–46.

15. Knudsen, “The Strike History”, pp. 310–311; Prothero, *Radical Artisans*, pp. 116–117.

16. Ernst Engelberg and R. Dlubek, “Le mouvement ouvrier allemand et la Première Internationale”, in CNRS, *La Première Internationale*, pp. 168–191, 182; see also Ulrich Engelhardt, “Nur vereinigt sind wir stark”. *Die Anfänge der deutschen Gewerkschaftsbewegung 1862/63 bis 1869/70* (Stuttgart, 1977), p. 346, n. 59.

17. “The 1866 tailors’ strike established the International as a force in the labour movement”; Collins and Abramsky, *Karl Marx and the British Labour Movement*, p. 288.

18. Daisy Eveline Devreese, “Ambachten, arbeidsmarkt en arbeidersbeweging. Vorming van de moderne arbeidersbeweging te Brussel, 1842–1867”, in Boudien de Vries *et al.* (eds), *De Kracht der Zwakken. Studies over arbeid en arbeidersbeweging in het verleden. Opstellen aangeboden aan Theo van Tijn bij zijn afscheid als hoogleraar Economische en Sociale Geschiedenis aan de Rijksuniversiteit Utrecht* (Amsterdam, 1992), pp. 109–137, 133–134.

Allgemeine Deutsche Schneiderverein was formed under the influence of German members of the International, more specifically its Cologne and Berlin sections, which were in close contact with leading internationalists in London.¹⁹ At that time there were many German tailors in London, some of whom were members of the General Council, like Johann Georg Eccarius (then a close friend of Karl Marx), Albert F. Haufe, and Friedrich Leßner. They held meetings for the German-speaking tailors in London in support of the strike, and tried to organize solidarity on the continent.²⁰

Because of its ability to mobilize international support, the International was very effective for the British trade-union movement, as it reported in 1867:

It used to be a standard threat with British capitalists, not only in London, but also in the provinces, when their workmen would not tamely submit to their arbitrary dictation, that they would supplant them by an importation of foreigners. The possibility of such importations taking place was in most cases sufficient to deter the British workmen from insisting on their demands [...]. The action taken by the Council had had the effect of putting a stop to these threats [...].²¹

In an overview of the actions of the International in Britain, historian Henry Collins even concluded that:

[...] the public significance of the International to the British labour movement was [...] limited to its function as an international trade union liaison committee whose assistance could be secured during strikes by unions which affiliated and even – as in the case of the Engineers during the Nine-Hour movement of 1871 – by those which did not.²²

The International did not only assist British workers, however. It organized support for workers on strike everywhere, by calling on fellow workers in other countries to prevent the employment of strike-breakers and by helping to provide money for the strikers.²³ It was, for instance, very active in supporting strikes in France, both in Paris and in the provinces.²⁴ The importance of the international strike wave in the 1860s

19. Cf. Engelhardt, “*Nur vereinigt sind wir stark*”, pp. 353–356. The German tailors were also inspired by the example set by the cigar-makers, who had established a national union two years earlier (1865); *ibid.*, pp. 356–359.

20. Eisenberg, *Deutsche und Englische Gewerkschaften*, pp. 170–176. The president of the tailors’ union, Heinrich Schob, adhered to the International in 1867; Engelberg and Dlubek, “*Le mouvement ouvrier allemand*”, p. 182.

21. Cited by Knudsen, “*The Strike History*”, p. 310.

22. Collins, “*The International and the British Labour Movement*”, pp. 38 and 27: “[T]he most important single motive impelling trade unions to affiliate was the desire to prevent strike-breaking through the introduction of European labour.”

23. Cf. Devreese, “*An Inquiry*”, p. 286 (n. 14 lists strikes supported by the International).

24. Several examples in: Julian P.W. Archer, *The First International in France 1864–1872: Its Origins, Theories, and Impact* (Lanham, MD [etc.], 1997).

and early 1870s for the implantation and development of the International can hardly be overstated. It had the effect that the ideas of Karl Marx on the economic struggle as a crucial element in the development of the labour movement won the day, against the (at that time still influential) opinions of Proudhon in France and Lassalle in Germany that strikes made no sense.²⁵

The role of the General Council in mobilizing international support in trade disputes was part of the argument of the “Marxist” Friedrich A. Sorge in support of a centralized organization at the Hague Congress of the International in 1872. Against the assertion of the “Bakunist” James Guillaume that the General Council was of no use in strikes, he pointed to the strike of the bronze workers in Paris in 1867, which had achieved victory thanks to financial aid organized by the General Council, to the strike of the Newcastle engineers in 1871, which the General Council had helped to succeed by preventing foreign, especially Belgian, engineers being recruited as strike-breakers, and to the strike of the New York Singer sewing-machine workers in 1872, demanding an eight-hour working day, who had appealed to the General Council to help forestall the importation of European workers.²⁶

In the same vein he could have mentioned the Antwerp cigar-makers’ strike of 1871. During the meeting of the General Council on 13 June 1871, James Cohn, delegate of the London Cigar-Makers’ Mutual Association, reported on the action in support of the Belgian cigar-makers who had been locked out by their employers. The report deserves to be

25. On the French case: Knudsen, “The Strike History”, pp. 313–314; Cordillot, “La section française de l’Internationale et les grèves”, pp. 50–54. The ideas of Karl Marx on the importance of wage struggles were expounded in a paper read before the General Council in May and June 1865, to be published in 1898 as “Value, Price and Profit”, and became the foundation of a resolution on trade unions and strikes at the Geneva Congress in 1866; Collins and Abramsky, *Karl Marx and the British Labour Movement*, pp. 104–105 and 116–118.

26. Institute of Marxism-Leninism of the CC, CPSU, *Documents of the First International. The Hague Congress of the First International September 2–7, 1872. Minutes and Documents* (Moscow, 1976), pp. 67 and 696; *idem, Documents of the First International. The Hague Congress of the First International September 2–7, 1872. Reports and Letters* (Moscow 1978), pp. 85 and 230. On the role of the International in the 1867 Paris bronze workers’ strike, see Archer, *The First International in France*, pp. 82–83, and Cordillot, “La section française de l’Internationale et les grèves”, pp. 37–43; on its role in the 1871 Newcastle engineers’ strike: Edward Allen *et al.*, *The North-East Engineers’ Strikes of 1871: The Nine Hours’ League* (Newcastle upon Tyne, 1971), pp. 135 and 148; and *Karl Marx Friedrich Engels Gesamtausgabe* [hereafter, MEGA]. *I. Abteilung: Werke, Artikel, Entwürfe, Bd. 22, März bis November 1871* (Berlin, 1978), *Text*, pp. 589–591 (Meeting of the General Council 8 August 1871), and p. 596 (Meeting 22 August 1871). The Singer sewing-machine workers’ strike was part of a massive strike movement in New York in 1872, which was lost. The loss hastened the disintegration of the already divided International in New York; David Montgomery, *Beyond Equality: Labor and the Radical Republicans 1862–1872* (New York, 1981), pp. 328–335.

cited at length, because it testifies the international character of the cigar-makers' labour market and struggle:

Citizen Cohn then gave in a report of the Cigarmakers' Lockout in Belgium. The London Cigar makers had sent over some delegates, who stayed there 15 days, and thoroughly investigated the state of affairs. The masters had obtained 30 men of Holland, but everyone had been sent back again. They had also obtained 25 girls from Metz and Strasbourg, but sixteen of them had also left, so that after seven weeks, the masters had only obtained 9 hands. Not one of the men locked out had offered to go in, and the masters were as near as beaten as could be. [...] The Cigar makers of Hamburg had warmly espoused the cause and found work for 30 of the men locked out. The following sums had already been sent to Belgium from England [follows an account of donations by several trade unions, among others by the London Cigar Makers, Dutch Cigar Makers, and Belgian Cigar Makers in London].²⁷

POLITICAL CIGAR-MAKERS

The movement found its strongest support among the cigar-makers, who during many years formed the driving force and the leadership of the social-democratic party in my home town.²⁸

[...] one cannot sustain that all social-democrats are cigar-makers, but the claim that all cigar-makers are social-democrats is almost true.²⁹

Writing about "political shoemakers", Eric Hobsbawm and Joan Scott related the proverbial radicalism of shoemakers, apart from their independence and poverty, to "the semi-routinized nature of much of their work, which could readily be combined with thinking, watching and conversation". As Hobsbawm and Scott remarked, shoemakers shared this characteristic with other crafts, like tailoring and cigar-making, which were also well represented in radical movements in the nineteenth century. Also, the working environment was relatively quiet. Like shoemakers, cigar-makers were known to appoint a "reader": one of the men taking turns to read newspapers or books.³⁰ According to an

27. *MEGA. I. Abt., Bd. 22, Text*, p. 563. Cohn was born in Denmark as Jakob Cohen.

28. Julius Bruhns, "*Es klingt im Sturm ein altes Lied!*". *Aus der Jugendzeit der Sozialdemokratie* (Berlin, 1921), p. 12, cited by Hans-Kai Möller, "Zigarrenheimarbeiter in Altona-Ottensen 1865–1914. Zu den Auswirkungen der Arbeits-, Wohn- und Lebensverhältnisse auf ihre politische Orientierung", in Rainer Paetau and Holger Rüdell (eds), *Arbeiter und Arbeiterbewegung in Schleswig-Holstein im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert* (Neumünster, 1987), pp. 51–96, 86–87.

29. *Der arme Teufel* [Detroit] 11 September 1886, cited by Horst Rößler, "'Amerika, du hast es besser' – Zigarrenarbeiter aus dem Vierstädtegebiet wandern über den Atlantik, 1868–1886", *Demokratische Geschichte. Jahrbuch zur Arbeiterbewegung und Demokratie in Schleswig-Holstein*, 4 (1989), pp. 87–119, 88.

30. Eric Hobsbawm and Joan W. Scott, "Political Shoemakers", in Eric Hobsbawm, *Uncommon People: Resistance, Rebellion and Jazz* (London, 1998) [orig. *Past and Present*, 89 (1980)], pp. 18–43, 28. The idea that especially shoemakers, tailors, and cigar-makers had a philosophical



Figure 1. Julius Bruhns (Hamburg 1860–Offenbach 1927). Like several other German cigar-makers, Bruhns became a prominent social democrat. In 1921 he wrote his memoirs, *Es klingt im Sturm ein altes Lied* (<http://library.fes.de/pdf-files/netzquelle/a-58090.pdf>).
Collection IISH

American observer “cigar-makers perceived themselves as a ‘race of philosophers’, and loved to debate politics, the labor movement, current events, and life generally”.³¹ Likewise, in Cuba: “The cigar maker [...] loves discussions and this can be explained in terms of the way he works and his wide knowledge. There are daily debates in and out of work and there are times when they gain such impetus that the whole gallery takes part.”³² The German socialist cigar-maker Julius Bruhns (1860–1927) wrote in his memoirs: “The whole day there were political debates [...] and the foundations for the abilities of many competent social-democratic leaders had been laid during these vehement discussions about socialist goals and theories with colleagues in cigar-makers’ workshops.”³³

Samuel Gompers, later to become one of America’s most influential trade-union leaders, started working in a New York cigar factory in the 1860s and remembered political discussions, singing, and reading by one of the workers, who would be paid by his colleagues to read aloud while the others worked. In fact, Gompers acted as a reader himself.³⁴ The custom of employing a reader in cigar factories had originated in 1865 in Cuba – where cigar-making and the reading habit was associated with political radicalism as well – and had spread from there to Spanish-speaking workshops in the United States,³⁵ but it was also well known in cigar factories in Germany.

approach because of their quiet working conditions, can already be found in Leo Uhen, *Gruppenbewußtsein und informelle Gruppenbildung bei deutschen Arbeitern im Jahrhundert der Industrialisierung* (Berlin, 1964), p. 49. On the appointment of a reader by German tailors (without further reference), see Eisenberg, *Deutsche und englische Gewerkschaften*, p. 171. The appointment of a reader did not only occur in artisan trades; on the reading of “an English Chartist newspaper undertaken by one of their comrades who is paid by them to do this” in a British linen factory in Landerneau (Brittany, France) in 1849, see Fabrice Bensimon, “British Workers in France, 1815–1848”, *Past and Present*, 213 (2011), pp. 147–189, 177.

31. A.M. Simons, “A Label and Lives – The Story of the Cigar Makers”, *Pearson’s Magazine*, January 1917, p. 70, cited by Patricia A. Cooper, *Once a Cigar Maker: Men, Women, and Work Culture in American Cigar Factories, 1900–1919* (Urbana, IL [etc.], 1987), p. 66.

32. Gaspar Jorge García Galló, *El tabaquero cubana: psicología de las profesiones* (Havana, 1936), cited and translated by Jean Stubbs, *Tobacco on the Periphery: A Case Study in Cuban Labour History, 1860–1958* (Cambridge, 1985), p. 88.

33. Bruhns, “*Es klingt im Sturm ein altes Lied*”, pp. 13–14, cited by Möller, “Zigarrenheim-arbeiter in Altona-Ottensen”, pp. 86–87.

34. Samuel Gompers, *Seventy Years of Life and Labor*, 2 vols (New York, 1925), I, pp. 34–35, 44, and 68–69, cited by Dorothy Schneider, *Trade Unions and Community: The German Working Class in New York City, 1870–1900* (Urbana, IL, 1994), p. 56.

35. Cooper, *Once a Cigar Maker*, pp. 17 and 66; on “readers” in the Americas, see Araceli Tinajero, *El Lector: A History of the Cigar Factory Reader* (Austin, TX, 2010); Evan Matthew Daniel, *Rolling for the Revolution: A Transnational History of Cuban Cigar Makers in Havana, Florida and New York City* (dissertation, New York, 2010, retrieved from: <http://gradworks.umi.com/34/44/3444203.html>); Stephanie L. Maatta, “El Lector’s Canon: Social Dynamics of Reading from Havana to Tampa” (paper IFLA conference 2011, retrieved from <http://conference.ifla.org/past/ifa77/81-maatta-en.pdf>). On the origin of readers in Cuban

Perhaps it was imported there from Cuba by sailors arriving in the German port cities of Bremen and Hamburg, but this is hard to prove. In the 1860s “reading”, especially of political writings, became widespread in German cigar-makers’ workshops, and was sometimes deliberately used by socialist agitators.³⁶ German immigrants being very prominent in New York cigar-making,³⁷ Samuel Gompers’s experiences with “reading” were most likely related to this German tradition.

Although the idea of a straightforward relationship between working conditions, intellectual attitudes, and early trade unionism in the case of tailors, shoemakers, and cigar-makers has been subject of debate,³⁸ the important role of cigar-makers in the German socialist movement has since long been recognized by German labour historians.³⁹ Their prominence can be illustrated by the fact that with a total number of 123 they were the largest single occupational group among the socialists expelled from Germany in the period of the anti-socialist laws (1878–1890), that is 15.5 per cent; the second largest group were 90 carpenters (11.5 per cent). It is noteworthy that 104 of these 123 cigar-makers came from Hamburg (and the bordering towns of Altona and Ottensen); the others came from Berlin and Leipzig.⁴⁰ In Leipzig, Hartmut Zwahr found out that cigar-makers were

workshops also Stubbs, *Tobacco on the Periphery*, pp. 98–99, and Joan Casanovas, *Bread, or Bullets! Urban Labor and Spanish Colonialism in Cuba, 1850–1898* (Pittsburgh, PA, 1998), pp. 83–91 and 112–113.

36. Möller, “Zigarrenheimarbeiter in Altona-Ottensen”, pp. 84–90; a glimpse of this practice is revealed in October 1872 when twenty-eight cigar-makers in a Berlin factory went on strike “because the reading of the *Neue Social-Demokrat*, that until then had been tolerated, had suddenly been forbidden by the foreman”; Lothar Machtan, *Streiks und Aussperrungen im Deutschen Kaiserreich. Eine sozialgeschichtliche Dokumentation für die Jahre 1871 bis 1875* (Berlin, 1984), p. 258.

37. Schneider, *Trade Unions and Community*, p. 55. Cuban cigar-makers in New York were also active in the International; Casanovas, *Bread, or Bullets!*, p. 113.

38. Cf. Engelhardt, “*Nur vereinigt sind wir stark*”, pp. 370–371.

39. Hartmut Zwahr, *Zur Konstituierung des Proletariats als Klasse. Strukturuntersuchung über das Leipziger Proletariat während der industriellen Revolution* (Munich, 1981; orig. 1978); Wilhelm Heinz Schröder, “Arbeit und Organisationsverhalten der Zigarrenarbeiter in Deutschland im 19. und frühen 20. Jahrhundert. Ein Beitrag zur Erklärung der Führungsrolle der Zigarrenarbeiter in der frühen politischen Arbeiterbewegung”, *Historical Research, Supplement*, 23 (2011), pp. 195–251, 208–210 [orig. in *idem*, *Arbeitergeschichte und Arbeiterbewegung. Industriearbeit und Organisationsverhalten im 19. und frühen 20. Jahrhundert* (Frankfurt/M [etc.], 1978)]; Dagmar Burgdorf, *Blauer Dunst und rote Fahnen. Ökonomische, soziale, politische und ideologische Entwicklung der Bremer Zigarrenarbeiterschaft im 19. Jahrhundert* (Bremen, 1984), pp. 182–184; Möller, “Zigarrenheimarbeiter in Altona-Ottensen”. See also Thomas Welskopp, *Das Banner der Brüderlichkeit. Die deutsche Sozialdemokratie vom Vormärz bis zum Sozialistengesetz* (Bonn, 2000), pp. 93 and 266. On the impact of political German cigar-makers in the US, see Schneider, *Trade Unions and Community*.

40. See Heinzpeter Thümmel, *Sozialistengesetz §28. Ausweisungen und Ausgewiesene 1878–1890* (Berlin, 1979), pp. 73–74 and 153–159; see also Möller, “Zigarrenheimarbeiter in



Figure 2. Interior of a cigar-factory in Havana (Cuba), c.1903. This postcard shows a *lector*, reading a newspaper to entertain his co-workers. The habit of “Reading” originated in Cuba around 1865 and became widespread in Germany as well.

Mary Evans Picture Library

a majority (12) among a group of workers (21) arrested during the May 1848 revolt in Saxony.⁴¹

One of them was Friedrich Wilhelm Fritzsche (1825–1905), who in 1865 became founder and president of the German cigar-makers’ union, the oldest national trade union in Germany. Although a follower of Lassalle, in 1867 he adhered to the Berlin section of the International Working Men’s Association, and established connections with the German language section led by Johann Philipp Becker in Geneva. In 1869 he was co-founder of the Eisenacher Sozialdemokratische Arbeiterpartei (led by Wilhem Liebknecht and August Bebel), but he left that party again in 1872.⁴² A contemporary wrote about Fritzsche in his memoirs: “The Leipzig cigar-worker Fritzsche distinguished himself by

Altona-Ottensen”, p. 94; Rößler, “Amerika, du hast es besser”, p. 99. On the over-representation of cigar-makers among socialist candidates and members of the German Reichstag, see Schröder, “Arbeit und Organisationsverhalten der Zigarrenarbeiter”, p. 248.

41. Zwahr, *Zur Konstituierung des Proletariats*, pp. 282–283 and 291; there were 300 cigar-makers among the refugees who were expelled from Germany after the 1848 revolution; Schröder, “Arbeit und Organisationsverhalten der Zigarrenarbeiter”, p. 248, n. 123.

42. Cf. the detailed account on Fritzsche in Engelberg, “*Nur vereint sind wir stark*”, pp. 269–271, n. 19; on his contacts with the International: *ibid.*, p. 300, n. 178; on his relationship with Liebknecht and Bebel: *ibid.*, pp. 416, and 596, n. 7; see also Zwahr, *Zur Konstituierung des Proletariats*, pp. 165, 314, and 318.

his high posture, his somewhat pressed nose, and an impressive democrats' beard (*Demokratenbart*) [...]. I can still see the impressive figure of this old Dresden barricade fighter, with his long grey hair, and can still hear his rousing voice." Through his "not yet out-of-date suave tone of speaking", he had "considerable influence among working people".⁴³

Cigar-makers were very prominent in the local branches of the First International in cities like Amsterdam, Antwerp, London, and New York. The last case can be exemplified by the life story of Samuel Gompers. As a long-time President of the American Federation of Labor (1886–1924) he stood for an a-political and anti-socialist kind of business unionism, but in his early years he had been connected to the New York branch of the First International, and had cooperated closely with one of its leading figures, Adolph Strasser, a German-Hungarian immigrant and co-organizer of the Journeymen Cigar Makers' International Union (CMIU) in New York.⁴⁴ In 1873, three of the six members of the North-American Federal Council of the International in New York were cigar workers (the Germans Karl Bertrand and Fred Bolte, and the Swede Ferdinand Laurel).⁴⁵

TRAVELLING

Cigar-makers were a travelling lot, both nationally and internationally. "The cigar-maker is a wanderer", wrote an American observer.⁴⁶ Geographic mobility created a sense of solidarity, independence, and community among cigar-makers, and was utilized to maintain workplace control. In Patricia Cooper's words: "Cigar makers regarded their travelling as an assertion of their independence [and] their freedom to control their own time."⁴⁷

43. Cited by Welskopp, *Der Banner der Brüderlichkeit*, p. 410.

44. Schneider, *Trade Unions and Community*, pp. 45, 56, 66–67, and 233; see also Hubert Perrier, "De l'Internationale à 'syndicalisme pur et simple': l'influence de l'AIT sur le mouvement ouvrier aux Etats-Unis", *Cahiers d'histoire de l'Institut de recherches marxistes*, 37 (1989), pp. 107–123; and Hans H. Gerth, "The Retreat from Ideology as a Prerequisite for American Trade-Unions", in CNRS, *La Première Internationale*, pp. 403–413. Internationalism, not only among the various nationalities in New York, but also across the Atlantic, was still much alive in 1876, when Strasser "called upon his fellow unionists to join hands with the English in their struggle for daily bread", and even aspired "to unite all the trade and labor unions in both hemispheres into one International Brotherhood"; cited in Clifton K. Yearley, *Britons in American Labor: A History of the Influence of the United Kingdom Immigrants on American Labor, 1820–1914* (Baltimore, MD, 1957), p. 60.

45. Samuel Bernstein, *The First International in America* (New York, 1965), p. 162; Hubert Perrier, *Idées et mouvement socialistes aux États-Unis 1864–1890, Tome I, La Première Internationale* (thèse de Doctorat d'État, Paris, 1984), p. 303.

46. Simons, "A Label and Lives", cited by Cooper, *Once a Cigar Maker*, p. 75.

47. Patricia Cooper, "The 'Traveling Fraternity': Union Cigar Makers and Geographic Mobility, 1900–1919", *Journal of Social History*, 17 (1983), p. 127.

In Europe, wandering was, of course, a well known custom in other crafts also, but in cigar-making, being a recently established trade, it had not developed from an artisan tradition.⁴⁸ Travelling was a device to regulate the labour market and was therefore supported by trade unions, mainly through the instrument of travelling benefits. They could use it in some measure to regulate the size and distribution of the labour force. Travel benefits put the individual unionist in a position where he was not compelled to take work at any price and undercut wages since he was able to tramp on in search of a better job.⁴⁹ In 1865 the newly established German cigar-makers' union decided to raise travelling benefits "to enable the departure of the unemployed, so that they would not cause downward pressure on wages".⁵⁰ Before, every local society had had its own travelling fund.⁵¹

From the 1860s onwards German cigar-makers extended their travels and made the trip across the Atlantic in large numbers, where for a while they became the most important ethnic group in booming cigar-making, especially in New York.⁵² In general, cigar-makers from different countries were highly mobile between the various centres of cigar-making on both sides of the Atlantic. Thomas M. Dolan, a union organizer in Cincinnati and Detroit, "never forgot the lessons [...] learned in unionism as a Liverpool cigar-maker".⁵³ The German trade-union leader Fritzsche (mentioned above) had started his working life travelling through Germany, Switzerland, France, and Italy. In Switzerland he had cooperated with refugee Johann Philip Becker, later to become the representative of the First International for the German-speaking countries.⁵⁴ After the forced dissolution of the German cigar-makers' union under the anti-socialist laws, he departed for the USA in 1881 and stayed there after a successful agitation trip.⁵⁵

48. Cf. Horst Rössler, "Traveling Workers and the German Labor Movement", in Dirk Hoerder and Jörg Nagler (eds), *People in Transit: German Migrations in Comparative Perspective, 1820-1930* (Cambridge, 1995), pp. 127-145, 129.

49. *Ibid.*, pp. 133-135; Cooper, *Once a Cigar Maker*, p. 88.

50. Cited by Willy Buschak, *Von Menschen, die wie Menschen leben wollen. Die Geschichte der Gewerkschaft Nahrung-Genuss-Gaststätte und ihrer Vorläufer* (Cologne, 1985), p. 523.

51. Walther Frisch, *Die Organisationsbestrebungen der Arbeiter in der deutschen Tabakindustrie* (Leipzig, 1905), pp. 29-30; Heinrich Bürger, *Die Hamburger Gewerkschaften und deren Kämpfe von 1865 bis 1890* (Hamburg, 1899), p. 12.

52. Rössler, "Traveling Workers", p. 145; see also Rössler, "Amerika, du hast es besser". Schneider, *Trade Unions and Community*, p. 55, even describes the "budding New York cigar industry" as "an extension of the German cigar industry".

53. Cited in Yearley, *Britons in American Labor*, p. 150.

54. Zwahr, *Zur Konstituierung des Proletariats*, p. 253; on John Philip Becker, see Daisy E. Devreese, "'Ein seltener Mann'. Johann Philipp Becker und die Internationale Arbeiter-Assoziation", in Hans-Werner Hahn (ed.), *Johann Philipp Becker. Radikaldemokrat - Revolutionsgeneral - Pionier der Arbeiterbewegung* (Stuttgart, 1999), pp. 113-128.

55. Schröder, "Arbeit und Organisationsverhalten der Zigarrenarbeiter", p. 249; his departure to the US was related to (false) accusations of fraud with trade-union money; Franz Klüss,

Cigar-makers from Hamburg went to Sweden and Denmark. Hamburg cigar-makers brought Lassallean ideas into the Copenhagen tobacco workers' union Enighedden (Unity), for instance.⁵⁶ Hamburg in its turn attracted cigar-makers from other parts of Germany, Belgium, the Netherlands, and Scandinavia.⁵⁷ Among the seventeen foreign-born socialists expelled from Hamburg because of the anti-socialist laws in 1883, there were eleven from Denmark, of whom at least eight were cigar-makers.⁵⁸ In the Netherlands, their mobility was noted as well. An 1869 report stated: "It is said that they are a wandering personnel, roaming around the country, and that they all know each other."⁵⁹ Especially among the many Jewish cigar-makers in Amsterdam it was very common to work in London for a longer or shorter period. Many of them lived half-time in London, half-time in Amsterdam.⁶⁰

While migration within Europe was often circular, migration to the United States seems to have been mostly permanent. Again, the life story of Samuel Gompers can serve as an example: his family originated from Amsterdam, where cigar-making was a trade of poor Jews. In the 1840s the family had moved to London, like many other Jewish cigar-makers from Amsterdam, who had formed a closed Dutch community on the so called Treter Grounds along Treter Street near Spitalfields in London's East End. At that time, cigar-making in London had the reputation of being a Dutch-Jewish trade.⁶¹ Samuel had been born in London in 1850, and apprenticed to a cigar-maker at a very young age, but in 1863 the family decided to move to New York, where several friends and relatives had gone already. As a member of the London Cigar Makers' Society, Gompers senior could benefit from an allowance from an emigration fund, established by the Society to provide for the passage to America. It was part of a larger scheme of cooperation between the English and American cigar-makers' unions to regulate migration.⁶² In the 1860s more

Die älteste deutsche Gewerkschaft. Die Organisation der Tabak- und Zigarrenarbeiter bis zum Erlasse des Sozialistengesetzes (Karlsruhe, 1905), pp. 50–51. On other socialist cigar-makers departing for America because of the anti-socialist laws (especially from Hamburg): Thümmeler, *Sozialistengesetz* §28, pp. 147–150, and Rößler, "Amerika, du hast es besser", pp. 101ff.

56. Hans-Norbert Lahme, "Der Deutsche Social-Demokratische Arbeiterverein in Kopenhagen und die dänische Arbeiterbewegung", *International Review of Social History*, 21 (1976), pp. 240–255, 248–250.

57. Rößler, "Amerika, du hast es besser", pp. 89–90, and 96.

58. Thümmeler, *Sozialistengesetz* §28, pp. 64, and 139–145.

59. Cited in Ad Knotter, *Economische transformatie en stedelijke arbeidsmarkt. Amsterdam in de tweede helft van de negentiende eeuw* (Zwolle, 1991), p. 188.

60. *Ibid.*

61. Geoffrey Alderman, *Modern British Jewry* (Oxford, 1998), p. 9.

62. Yearley, *Britons in American Labor*, p. 57: "American cigar-makers over a period of decades conducted heavy and extremely important correspondence with their brethren in England.

Jewish cigar-makers of Dutch descent had moved to New York: between 1860 and 1870 their proportion among employed Dutch Jews there had risen from 7 to 25 per cent.⁶³ But once in New York, the young Samuel worked together with migrants from Hamburg and Sweden too.⁶⁴

CROSS-BORDER CONNECTIONS AROUND THE NORTH SEA BEFORE THE INTERNATIONAL

Cigar-making had originated in Cuba, and in the eighteenth century had moved to Europe, at first to port cities as an offspring of the overseas trade in tobacco leaf. Already in 1788 a cigar factory was set up in Hamburg to manufacture leaf imported from Cuba. Several others followed, both in Hamburg and Bremen. In the early nineteenth century, these northern German ports became the major European centres for the trade in American tobacco, while Amsterdam acquired a similar position for tobacco from the Dutch East Indies.⁶⁵ When smoking cigars became increasingly popular in Europe, cigar-making developed first in these and other port cities. It increased vastly there in the 1830s and 1840s, but expanded into numerous inland provincial centres as well, where labour was cheaper. The skills of the trade were often introduced there by experienced cigar-makers from the older coastal centres of cigar-making.⁶⁶ By about 1860 there were established cigar industries in German towns like Berlin, Breslau, Leipzig, to name just a few, and also smaller towns and in rural areas like Baden, or Dutch inland towns like Utrecht, 's-Hertogenbosch, and Kampen.⁶⁷

Cigar-making, being a new and expanding trade, was open to entry from outsiders. As there were no formal or informal rules of exclusion, it was easy to access by workers who had trouble entering older, more regulated crafts. For that reason, in cities with a large Jewish population, especially Hamburg and Amsterdam, cigar-making provided opportunities for poor Jews, who

Full advantage was taken of these channels of communication to interdict immigration of 'unfair men' and to assist skilled men bound for American markets to make their transition with greater ease." These contacts were established "long before the Civil War" (*ibid.*, p. 60).

63. Robert P. Swierenga, *The Forerunners. Dutch Jewry in the North American Diaspora* (Detroit, MI, 1994), pp. 57, and 110–112. On the migration of Jewish cigar-makers from Amsterdam to New York in the 1860s, see also Knotter, *Economische transformatie*, pp. 188, and 335, n. 36.

64. Rößler, "Amerika, du hast es besser", p. 94.

65. Cf. Jean Stubbs, *El Habano: The Global Luxury Smoke* [Commodities of Empire Working Paper No. 20] (London, 2012).

66. Frisch, *Die Organisationsbestrebungen*, p. 12; Schröder, "Arbeit und Organisationsverhalten", p. 230; on the Leipzig case: Zwahr, *Zur Konstituierung des Proletariats*, p. 93.

67. *Ibid.*, p. 196; Keetie E. Sluyterman, *Ondernemen in sigaren. Analyse van bedrijfsbeleid in vijf sigarenfabrieken in de perioden 1856–1865 en 1925–1934* (Tilburg, 1983), p. 17.

entered the trade there on a relatively large scale.⁶⁸ In these cities cigar-making was no Jewish monopoly, however. The growing demand for labour and the lack of formal and informal barriers attracted a heterogeneous workforce.

In London the situation was somewhat different. According to Henry Mayhew in his *London Labour and the London Poor* (first published in 1849/1850), Jews acquired a monopoly in cigar-manufacturing there, because it emerged from Jewish street vending:

The cigar street-trade was started [some 20 years ago] by two Jews, brothers [who] supplied the other street sellers. The itinerant cigar-vending was always principally in the hands of Jews. [...] [Also] the manufacture of the cigars sold at the lowest rates is now almost entirely in the hands of the Jews [...]. The cigars in question are bought (wholesale) in Petticoat-lane, Rosemary-lane, Ailie-street, Treunter-ground, in Goodman's-field, and similar localities.⁶⁹

In the 1840s Jewish tobacco manufacturers concentrating on the making of cigars had established factories in East End.⁷⁰ Although Mayhew doesn't mention it, most of the cigar-makers were Dutchmen, who had arrived in London in that period. In the 1880s it was noted in Charles Booth's *Life and Labour of the People in London*: "[This] section of the tobacco trade [...] is in the hands of foreigners, especially the old-established Dutch Jews of Spitalfields", and elsewhere:

The Dutch are chiefly conglomerated in a comparatively small district in Spitalfields, where they are largely engaged in cigar making. These are mostly Jews, but the colony is a longer established one than that of the Polish Jews, as is shown both by the proportion of males to females, and a comparison of numbers with older census returns.

In spite of being an established community, Dutch cigar-makers still kept arriving from Amsterdam to work in London: "The trade is largely recruited from abroad by Dutchmen, who arrive with a knowledge of their business. The number of boys in London who are learners is not large."⁷¹

68. Schneider, *Trade Unions and Community*, pp. 51–52; on Jewish cigar-makers in Hamburg see Frisch, *Die Organisationsbestrebungen*, p. 12; and Bürger, *Die Hamburger Gewerkschaften*, p. 11: "Cigar-making in Hamburg developed from an early date. It is very remarkable that in the first half of this century only Jewish workers were employed in this trade, later there was also an influx of Christians." On Jewish cigar-makers in Amsterdam, see Knotter, *Economische transformatie*, pp. 188–189; and Karin Hofmeester, *Jewish Workers and the Labour Movement: A Comparative Study of Amsterdam, London, and Paris* (Aldershot, 2004), p. 36.

69. Henry Mayhew, *London Labour and the London Poor: Cyclopaedia of the condition and earnings of those that will work, those that cannot work, and those that will not work*, 4 vols (London, 1861; orig. 1849/50), I, p. 442. Elsewhere (p. 119), Mayhew writes about Jewish cigar-makers who took to the old-clothes business when the cigar trade was slack.

70. Harold Pollins, *Economic History of the Jews in England* (East Brunswick, NJ, 1982), p. 97.
71. H. Llewellyn Smith, "Influx of Population", in Charles Booth (ed.), *Life and Labour of the People of London*, vol. VIII: *Blocks of Buildings, Schools and Immigration* (London [etc.], 1892),

According to another report in Booth's *Life and Labour*, already in 1835 a Cigar-Makers' Mutual Association had been formed, as "one of the pioneers in organizing labour", which was "conducted on liberal and enlightened principles".⁷² As an example of these principles it is mentioned "that, not only are the foreign workmen in London admitted to membership, but also very substantial pecuniary assistance was rendered by it some years ago to those of their trade who were on strike in Amsterdam". This most certainly refers to the great Amsterdam cigar-makers' strike of 1873, which was supported by the London Association (see below). The report also notes that "frequent communications [...] take place between this union and the workers both on the Continent and America, and, in its attempt to introduce an international element, its position among other English societies appears to be almost unique". At that time (1893), its membership was about 850; in 1868 it had been 759.⁷³

We encounter a first sign of these international connections in 1849, this time from Germany. In March 1849 there was a strike of 150 cigar-makers in London: "Then the Hamburger Cigar-Makers' Association decided that none of its members were allowed to go to London, and the president of the society, Julius Hincke, published a circular with the same message to the German cigar-makers."⁷⁴ A similar situation arose in 1857:

In England there was a strike of cigar-makers, and the employers tried to find workers in several German places. These efforts failed because of the discipline of the Society of German cigar-makers, who had decided not to act as strike breakers in these cases, and who were informed by English workers. The English cigar-makers had send messages to the towns of Mannheim, Frankfurt (Main) and Heidelberg. Unanimously a boycott was decided upon and sanctioned by Leipzig, Bremen and Hamburg.⁷⁵

The English manufacturers apparently met with more success in the Netherlands, at least according to a message which appeared in the

pp. 98 and 102; G.H. Duckworth and Harold Hardy, "Brewers and Tobacco Workers", in Charles Booth (ed.), *Life and Labour of the People of London, vol. VII: Population Classified by Trades (continued)* (London [etc.], 1896), p. 140.

72. Stephen N. Fox, "Tobacco Workers", in Charles Booth (ed.), *Life and Labour of the People of London, Vol. IV, The Trades of East London* (London [etc.], 1893) p. 226.

73. *Ibid.*; John. B. Smethurst and Peter Carter (eds), *Historical Directory of Trade Unions. Volume 6* (Farnham, 2009), p. 120 (citing Royal Commission on Trades Unions, vol. II, Appendix 1869, p. 318).

74. Elisabeth Todt and Hans Radandt, *Zur Frühgeschichte der deutschen Gewerkschaftsbewegung 1800–1849* (Berlin, 1950), p. 123.

75. Elisabeth Todt, *Die gewerkschaftliche Betätigung in Deutschland von 1850 bis 1859* (Berlin, 1950), p. 83.

London Jewish Chronicle of 15 January 1858. An “Oppressed Cigar Maker” wrote on account of the strike:

The masters being unable to procure English workmen [...] to submit to the lowering of wages, resort to the practice of travelling to Holland and other parts of the continent, and, exaggerating the state of the cigar trade in England, fill the poor Dutchmen’s minds with buoyant hopes of high wages. Arriving in a strange land with their wives and families they too soon discover that not only they have been duped but are as badly off as they were in their own country.⁷⁶

The naivety of the Dutch did not last long, however. In 1864 the Amsterdam cigar-makers founded a trade union called “Door vriendschap bloeiende” (“Flourishing through friendship”), which later would become one of the pillars of the Amsterdam section of the International. For Dutch contemporaries the link with London was clear:

In the society [in Amsterdam] mainly Jews were organised. They, with their tendency to be always on the move, were in close contact with London, where many Dutch Jewish cigar-makers worked. [...] It is therefore not surprising, that they came into contact with English organisations, and that they tried to apply here what they had learned abroad.⁷⁷

Like the British, the German cigar-makers were early organizers too. Already in the 1820s a sick fund for Jewish cigar-makers was founded in Hamburg;⁷⁸ in Bremen such a fund dated from 1824.⁷⁹ A nationwide conference of German cigar-makers in 1848 formed an *Assoziation der Tabakarbeiter*, a kind of umbrella organization of decentralized local organizations, with an estimated membership of about 1,000.⁸⁰

From 1852 onward, local cigar-makers’ associations were suppressed by the German authorities, but many changed into travelling and/or sick funds. In this way, they could survive the years of persecution.⁸¹ Cigar-makers were also involved in secret radical political societies, at least in Bremen and Leipzig.⁸² In 1857, Friedrich Wilhelm Fritzsche, who we have met before as a participant in the 1848 revolution, had returned to Leipzig and had found employment in a cigar factory there. From 1858 or 1859 he tried to convince his fellow workers to transform their insurance fund into a trade union.

76. Cited by Alderman, *Modern British Jewry*, p. 9; on this strike see also Pollins, *Economic History of the Jews*, pp. 123–125.

77. Cited by Dirk Hudig, *De vakbeweging in Nederland 1866–1878* (Amsterdam, 1904), p. 55.

78. Schröder, “Arbeit und Organisationsverhalten”, p. 234; see also Rainer Liedtke, *Jewish Welfare in Hamburg and Manchester c.1850–1914* (Oxford, 1998), p. 195.

79. Frisch, *Die Organisationsbestrebungen*, p. 9.

80. *Ibid.*, pp. 15–27; Schröder, “Arbeit und Organisationsverhalten”, pp. 231–234.

81. Rössler, “Traveling workers”, p. 132; Frisch, *Die Organisationsbestrebungen*, pp. 29–32.

82. Burgdorf, *Blauer Dunst*, pp. 208–214; Zwahr, *Zur Konstituierung*, pp. 286–292.

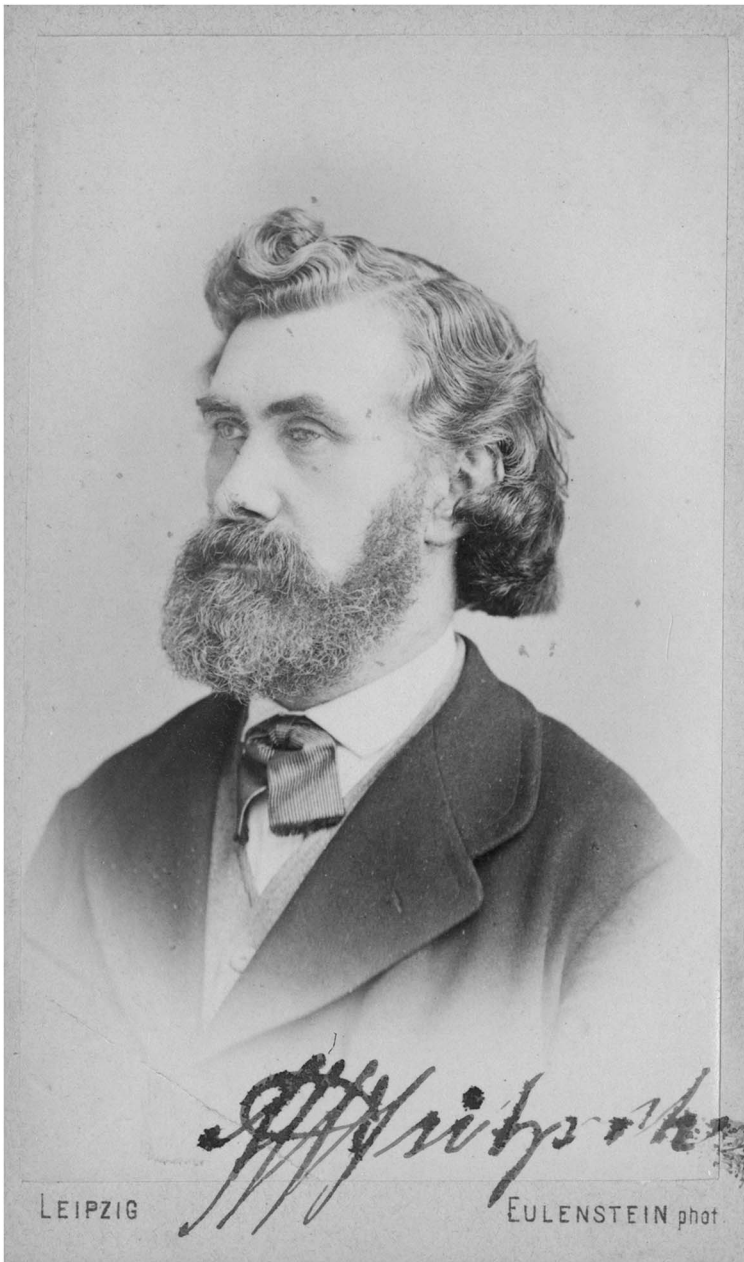


Figure 3. Friedrich Wilhelm Fritzsche (Leipzig 1825–Philadelphia 1905). After an adventurous life Fritzsche settled in Leipzig as a cigar-maker. He became founder of the German national cigar-makers' union in 1865 and participated in attempts to establish an international union in the early 1870s. In the 1880s he moved to the USA.

Photograph: Eulenstein, 1869; Collection IISH

In 1864 he succeeded in establishing a local *Zigarrenarbeiterverein* in Leipzig, and one year later he became the driving force and president of the Allgemeiner Deutscher Cigarrenarbeiter-Verein (established 1865).⁸³ It soon attracted members in some 120 towns in Germany.

THE INTERNATIONAL AND CIGAR-MAKERS' STRIKES IN GERMANY AND BELGIUM

In 1868, for the first time, the *Zigarrenarbeiterverein* became involved in a strike in Berlin against newly imposed factory rules. The nationwide campaign in support of the strike led to a jump in membership from 7,000 to 10,000.⁸⁴ The strike ended in the establishment of a productive association. This outcome could be justified within the Lassallean worldview,⁸⁵ but the strike launched in 1869 in Leipzig for a wage increase took another turn, away from the Lassallean rejection of strikes. The strike involved some 900 people.⁸⁶ Fritzsche used the profits of the Berlin cigar-makers' productive association to support the strike in Leipzig. Financial support was also collected in other German towns, like Hamburg.⁸⁷ In July 1869 Fritzsche, who, as noted before, had adhered to the International in 1867, appealed to Karl Marx, as the representative of Germany in the General Council of the International, to help provide a loan in support of the strikers to an amount of 3,000 *Reichstaler*.⁸⁸ The International was not able to collect such an amount of money in Britain; however, donations were provided by the New Yorker Cigarmakers' Union No. 90 and the "Belgian brethren".⁸⁹ It was collected by the recently (December 1868) established Antwerp Sigarenmakersverbond.⁹⁰

83. *Ibid.*, p. 290, n. 527, and p. 297; Frisch, *Die Organisationsbestrebungen*, pp. 33–35; a detailed account in Engelhardt, "Nur vereinigt sind wir stark", pp. 269–309.

84. *Ibid.*, p. 304.

85. *Ibid.*, pp. 379–387; Frisch, *Die Organisationsbestrebungen*, pp. 53–58; on Lassalle's attitude towards productive associations and its positive reception among Hamburg cigar-makers, see Möller, "Zigarrenheimarbeiter in Altona-Ottensen", p. 91.

86. Frisch, *Die Organisationsbestrebungen*, pp. 58–59.

87. Heinrich Laufenberg, *Geschichte der Arbeiterbewegung in Hamburg, Altona und Umgegend*, 2 vols (Hamburg, 1911–1931), I, pp. 368 and 402.

88. "Schreiben des Präsidenten des Allgemeinen Tabak- und Zigarrenarbeiterverbandes Friedrich Wilhelm Fritzsche in Leipzig an Karl Marx in London um den 11. Juli 1869", and "Brief von Wilhelm Liebknecht in Leipzig an Karl Marx in London 12. Juli 1869", repr. in *Die Internationale in Deutschland*, pp. 374–378, and p. 764, n. 287. See also Engelhardt, "Nur vereinigt sind wir stark", pp. 935–936. The letter by Fritzsche was mentioned by Marx at the meeting of the General Council, 13 July 1869: *MEGA. I. Abteilung: Werke, Artikel, Entwürfe*, Bd. 21, *September 1867 bis März 1871* (Amsterdam, 2009), *Text*, p. 674; *Apparat*, p. 1957.

89. Engelhardt, "Nur vereinigt sind wir stark", p. 936.

90. Albert Van Laar, *Geschiedenis van de Arbeidersbeweging te Antwerpen en omliggende* (Antwerp, 1926), pp. 315–316.

The Leipzig strike was part of a strike wave which swept through Germany in 1869 and 1870 (until the outbreak of the Franco-Prussian War in July).⁹¹ In 1869, out of a total of 152 strikes counted by Engelhardt, 20 were by cigar-makers (14 per cent), just after the 23 by textile workers (also 14 per cent).⁹² The strike wave was resumed in 1871, after the end of the war, and prolonged into 1872.⁹³ Many of the cigar-makers' strikes were started spontaneously,⁹⁴ also by followers of Lassalle.⁹⁵ In 1871 out of a total of 157 strikes in Germany, 21 were by cigar-makers; in 1872 there were again 21 (larger and smaller) cigar-makers' strikes, but out of a total of 362; in 1873 there were 15 out of a total of 289. In 1874 the strike wave was clearly over: there were only 135 strikes, of which 8 were by cigar-makers.⁹⁶

Without doubt, the high point, and the most bitter of these cigar-makers' strikes was a strike and lock-out of 2,200 Berlin cigar-makers, lasting from April to August 1872.⁹⁷ To relieve the strike fund, money was collected to enable the migration of strikers' families, even to America, to which in the end only five of them travelled; however, many more went to other places in Germany, most of them to Hamburg and Altona.⁹⁸ The strike was also supported internationally, by funds from abroad, mostly from British trade unions.⁹⁹ The strike wave was not restricted to Germany, but was a European phenomenon, also involving cigar-makers.¹⁰⁰ Outside Germany, there were important cigar-makers' strikes in Belgium (1871) and in the Netherlands (1873).

From 1868 onward London cigar-makers had been complaining about Belgians coming over: "There were some Belgian lodging house keepers in the East of London who imported them in such numbers that it very seriously interfered with the trade. On their first arrival they worked for

91. Laufenberg, *Geschichte der Arbeiterbewegung*, pp. 366 and 423-431; Welskopp, *Das Banner der Brüderlichkeit*, pp. 283-284.

92. Ulrich Engelhardt, "Zur Entwicklung der Streikbewegungen in der ersten Industrialisierungsphase und zur Funktion von Streiks bei der Konstituierung der Gewerkschaftsbewegung in Deutschland", *Internationale Wissenschaftliche Korrespondenz zur Geschichte der deutschen Arbeiterbewegung*, 15 (1979), p. 550.

93. Laufenberg, *Geschichte der Arbeiterbewegung*, pp. 477-489.

94. Cf. Frisch, *Die Organisationsbestrebungen*, p. 59 [on the cigar-makers' strikes]: "In the next strike period, stretching from mid 1871 to 1873, it is hard to establish if the union was the official organizer, or if it was forced to participate because its members went on strike [spontaneously]. This happened, as far as I know, most of the times."

95. *Ibid.*, p. 61; Engelhardt, "Zur Entwicklung der Streikbewegungen", p. 550.

96. Calculated from strike tables in Machtan, *Streiks und Aussperrungen*, pp. 57-447.

97. Cf. overviews in *ibid.*, p. 177, and Frisch, *Die Organisationsbestrebungen*, p. 65.

98. Rößler, "Amerika du hast es besser", p. 102.

99. Frisch, *Die Organisationsbestrebungen*, p. 80.

100. For the sake of brevity I can refer to *MEGA. I. Abt., Bd. 21, Apparat, Einführung*, p. 1131.

anything that was offered to them.”¹⁰¹ Some members of the London Cigar Makers’ Mutual Association proposed to leave the International because it proved unable to counteract this tendency, but they did not gain a majority in the Association.¹⁰² Clearly, in the eyes of those members that wanted to leave the International, and undoubtedly also of the majority who then still preferred to stay in, international organization was, or should be, useful as an instrument of labour market control. The International should help to prevent the arrival or importation of foreign – in this case Belgian – workers, and to support the establishment and activities of trade unions elsewhere to defend or improve wages and working conditions, so there would be less reason to come to Britain.

It must be for this reason that James Cohn, representative of the Association in the General Council of the International, made contact with Brussels and Antwerp cigar-makers during his visit to the Congress of the International in Brussels in September 1868. In a press announcement, issued by the International after his return, it was reported:

Mr. Cohn announced that during his stay at Brussels he had succeeded in getting a great many cigar-makers together who had entered into arrangements to establish a trade society and affiliate it to the International. In their present disorganised state they worked many hours more than the London cigar-makers and were miserably paid. He had been well received by them, and had no doubt that they would carry out what they had begun. At Antwerp he had been equally well received, and arrangements for the establishment of a trade society had also been made.¹⁰³

In December 1868 Antwerp cigar-makers’ had followed Cohn’s call by founding the Sigarenmakersverbond, led by the Internationalist Leopold Haesaert. It was the first “real” trade union in Antwerp, and soon united 500 of the approximately 1,000 Antwerp cigar-makers.¹⁰⁴ Although Haesaert, and several of his co-founders of the Sigarenmakersverbond were Internationalists, after much discussion it was decided that the

101. *Ibid.*, *Text*, pp. 593–594 and 725–726 (Meetings of the General Council 25 August 1868 and 9 November 1869).

102. *Ibid.*, pp. 725–726 and 743 (Meetings of the General Council 9 November 1869, and 11 January 1870).

103. *The Bee-Hive* [London], No. 364, 3 October 1868, cited in *ibid.*, *Apparat*, p. 1896; see also the report by Cohn in the General Council 29 September 1868, in *ibid.*, *Text*, p. 600. See also *ibid.*, p. 749 (Meeting of the General Council 8 February 1870), and Collins and Abramsky, *Karl Marx and the British Labour Movement*, p. 171.

104. See the accounts by Karel Van Isacker, *De Internationale te Antwerpen 1867–1877* (Antwerp, 1964), pp. 69–70 and 80–88, and Van Laar, *Geschiedenis van de Arbeidersbeweging te Antwerpen*, pp. 313–315.

Verbond as such would not adhere to the International.¹⁰⁵ Nevertheless, contacts were made with cigar-makers in other places in Belgium, the Netherlands, Germany, and Britain.¹⁰⁶ On 8 January 1871 a conference of cigar-makers was held in Antwerp with delegates from Belgium and the Netherlands.¹⁰⁷ One of its effects was the foundation of a national Dutch cigar-makers' union, the Nederlandse Sigarenmakers Bond, shortly afterwards, on 4 February 1871, by a combination of two older Amsterdam associations "Eensgezindheid baart vreugde" (Unity breeds joy) and "Door vriendschap bloeiende" (Flourishing through friendship). There were also branches in Rotterdam, The Hague, Leiden, Utrecht, and Dordrecht. In December 1871 a total of 2,000 members was reported. Its president Jan Willem Wertwijn (1839–1899) had been present at the Antwerp conference and was a member of the International, and although there was talk of affiliation, it is not clear if this really happened.¹⁰⁸ A second Dutch–Belgian cigar-makers' conference, held in Brussels on 19 February 1871, decided to establish an international union,¹⁰⁹ but it was December of that year before this could be realized (see below).

In March 1871 a strike by members of the Belgian Sigarenmakersverbond in an Antwerp factory led to a lock-out of 500–600 cigar-makers, the employers refusing to recognize the union, and demanding that members give up their membership. In Brussels 250 strikers were locked out too.¹¹⁰ In the meetings of the General Council James Cohn regularly reported on the lock-out and the solidarity campaign organized by the International. As a consequence of his earlier trip, he told the Council, there were now also unions in Liège and other places in Belgium, "and from Belgium they had established unions in Holland". Belgian and Dutch cigar-makers working in London had also formed societies, and had donated money.¹¹¹ To support

105. *Idem*, "Uit de eerste vakbeweging van Antwerpen", *De Socialistische Gids*, 13 (1928), pp. 737–747, 737–738; on the confusion around this issue, see *Documents relatifs aux militants belges de l'Association Internationale des Travailleurs. Correspondance 1865–1872. Textes réunis, établis et annotés par Daisy Eveline Devreese* (Louvain [etc.], 1986), p. 274, n. 1387, p. 293, n. 1461, and p. 295, n. 1469.

106. Letter of Philippe Coenen, secretary of the Antwerp section of the International, to Karl Marx, 29 March 1871, repr. in *ibid.*, pp. 265–266.

107. Van Isacker, *De Internationale te Antwerpen*, p. 80.

108. Jacques J. Giele, *De Eerste Internationale in Nederland. Een onderzoek naar het ontstaan van de Nederlandse arbeidersbeweging van 1868 tot 1876* (Nijmegen, 1973), pp. 104 and 161; W. van der Hoeven, *De Nederlandse sigarenmakers- en tabakbewerdersbond opgericht op 26 december 1887. Zijn geschiedenis, werken en streven* (Amsterdam, 1937), p. 19. See also Bauke Marinus and Bob Reinalda, "Wertwijn, Jan Willem", in *Biografisch woordenboek van het socialisme en de arbeidersbeweging in Nederland V* (Amsterdam, 1992), pp. 301–304.

109. Van Isacker, *De Internationale te Antwerpen*, pp. 129–130, n. 63.

110. Van Laar, "Uit de eerste vakbeweging", p. 740.

111. *MEGA. I. Abt., Bd. 22, Text*, p. 528 (Meeting of the General Council 4 April 1871) and p. 539 (meeting 25 April 1871).

the strikers, aid was asked internationally and was reported to be received from Ghent, London, Liverpool, Berlin, Hamburg/Altona,¹¹² and also from Amsterdam.¹¹³

Through the intervention of Friedrich Engels, who acted as the representative of Belgium in the General Council of the International, a sum of £150 (or 3,750 Francs) were received as a loan from the London cigar-makers, and Engels promised to do his utmost to collect money from other unions and places.¹¹⁴ A letter from Engels to Wilhelm Liebknecht in Leipzig, dated 4 May 1871, called for help from the Leipzig cigar-makers who, two years earlier, were supported by the Antwerp union: "The Antwerp cigar-makers contend that they had send 3,000 Francs in support of the great cigar-makers' strike. The strike in Antwerp and Brussels is still going on, and when this is really true, then it is a damned guiltiness of the Germans to pay this back."¹¹⁵ In the end Engels seems to have collected a sum of 15,000 Francs, but when he found out that the Antwerp Sigarenmakersverbond was not even an institutional member of the International, he became less enthusiastic, and even reproached the secretary of the Antwerp section, the shoemaker Philippe Coenen, for not having informed him properly.¹¹⁶

While the Antwerp union tried to save on payments by sending strikers abroad to find employment elsewhere, to Germany among others,¹¹⁷

112. Van Isacker, *De Internationale te Antwerpen*, p. 82; see also Van Laar, *Geschiedenis van de Arbeidersbeweging te Antwerpen*, p. 318; *idem*, "Uit de eerste vakbeweging", p. 739; *MEGA. I. Abt., Bd. 22, Text*, p. 540 (meeting of the General Council 25 April 1871), p. 567 (meeting 20 June 1871), p. 578 (meeting 18 July 1871). In Britain most of the money had been contributed by the London and Liverpool cigar-makers, but there had also been a response from a wide range of other trade unions: compositors, gilders, basket finishers, tinplate workers, coopers, hatters, bookbinders, plumbers, brass finishers, elastic web weavers, bricklayers, paperhangers, plasterers, blind makers, tailors, and furriers. See Collins and Abramsky, *Karl Marx and the British Labour Movement*, p. 219.

113. Giele, *De Eerste Internationale*, p. 118.

114. *MEGA. I. Abt., Bd. 22, Text*, pp. 742 and 745, appendix I: letter by Fr. Engels to Ph. Coenen, 5 April 1871, repr. in *Documents relatifs aux militants belges de l'Association Internationale des Travailleurs*, pp. 268–272; for the request by Coenen addressed to Karl Marx to support the strike, see *ibid.*, pp. 265–266.

115. "Brief von Friedrich Engels in London an Wilhelm Liebknecht in Leipzig 4.Mai 1871", repr. in *Die Internationale in Deutschland*, p. 225. Before, Engels had published a call for support in Liebknecht's paper *Der Volksstaat*; see *ibid.*, p. 799, n. 423, and Van Laar, "Uit de eerste vakbeweging", p. 745. The article is reprinted in *MEGA. I. Abt., Bd. 22, Text*, p. 11. See also "Friedrich Engels à Philippe Coenen 5 avril 1871", *Documents relatifs aux militants belges de l'Association Internationale des Travailleurs*, pp. 268–270.

116. Letter by Engels to Coenen, 1 [4?] August 1871, repr. in Van Laar, "Uit de eerste vakbeweging", pp. 746–747, and *Documents relatifs aux militants belges de l'Association Internationale des Travailleurs*, pp. 294–296. Nevertheless, Cohn had reported earlier, at the General Council of 9 May 1871: "As to the affiliation it appeared that many Cigarmakers were individually members of the International but their Trade Society was not affiliated"; *MEGA. I. Abt., Bd. 22, Text*, p. 548.

117. Van Laar, *Geschiedenis van de Arbeidersbeweging*, p. 317; Van Isacker, *De Internationale*, p. 85.

the employers tried to recruit strike-breakers from abroad, a few from Germany and Norway, some girls from Strasbourg and Metz, but most of them from the Netherlands, in spite of an appeal from the president of the Dutch cigar-makers' union Wertwijn not to go to Antwerp.¹¹⁸ On 20 July some twenty Dutch strike-breakers were molested in a tavern on the Paardenmarkt. Crowds of cigar-makers, assisted by fellow workers from other trades, men and women, accompanied the Dutchmen to the factories, and in this way managed to convince them it was best to leave Antwerp.¹¹⁹ The strike lasted until August, when the strikers had to give in.

ATTEMPTS AT INTERNATIONAL UNION

Although both the Belgian and the Dutch unions were founded and led by individual members of the International, in both cases it proved difficult to convince their members to affiliate to the International as organizations. There are indications that Cohn, although a member of the General Council as the president and representative of the London Cigar Makers' Association, preferred an international cooperation of cigar-makers' unions outside the International.

In August 1871 the General Council had sent Cohn as its representative to Belgium to help prevent the recruitment of engineers, especially in Verviers, by the Newcastle employers to act as strike-breakers in the nine-hours strike there.¹²⁰ The Belgian council (Conseil générale) of the International, however, was rather annoyed about the behaviour of Cohn, because in their view he had used his visit primarily to strengthen his relationship with the cigar-makers' union in Brussels, "not very favourable to the International, as the Brussels cigar-makers' association never wanted to affiliate, even if it had received full support of the International during the last strike".¹²¹ At a conference of the International in London

118. Berend Bymholt, *Geschiedenis der arbeidersbeweging in Nederland* (Amsterdam, 1894), p. 95; Giele, *De Eerste Internationale*, p. 118.

119. Van Isacker, *De Internationale*, pp. 83–84, and 86–87; Van Laar, *Geschiedenis van de Arbeidersbeweging*, p. 318. On the strike and these incidents, see also the police reports repr. in Hubert Wouters (ed.), *Documenten betreffende de geschiedenis der arbeidersbeweging ten tijde van de Ie Internationale (1866–1880), Deel I* (Louvain, 1970), "De procureur des konings te Antwerpen aan de procureur-generaal te Brussel, 19–23 maart 1871", pp. 375–385, and "De procureur des konings te Antwerpen aan de procureur-generaal te Brussel, 5 augustus 1871", pp. 407–409.

120. See above n. 26, and *Documents relatifs aux militants belges de l'Association Internationale des Travailleurs*, pp. 309–311: "Alfred Herman [secrétaire correspondant pour la Belgique] aux membres du Conseil belge de l'A.I.T., London 9 Augustus 1871". In this letter, the British support for the Antwerp cigar-makers' strike is invoked as an argument for the Belgians to support the Newcastle strike by preventing the recruitment of Belgian engineers. Perhaps this was the reason why Cohn was sent as a delegate.

121. *Ibid.*, "César De Paepé à Alfred Herman, Bruxelles, le 23 août 1871", pp. 320–322.

in September 1871, the secretary of the Antwerp section Coenen even challenged Cohn that during his visit in August he had hardly done anything to convince the Belgian engineers not to go to Newcastle; instead, he had talked a lot with the leaders of the Antwerp cigar-makers' union, but he had refused to demand that this union affiliate to the International, and had even advised against it.¹²²

In his own report, Cohn confirmed that he had made contacts in Belgium through the Antwerp Cigar Workers' Mutual Association (so, apparently not through the Conseil générale), and that as a result of his efforts, many Belgians were dissuaded from leaving for Britain. He had been expelled by the Belgian government on 25 August, and then sent to Newcastle by the General Council, where, according to the engineers' strike leader John Burnett, many of the Belgian engineers had left as a result of "the persuasive tongue of Mr. Cohn, who sent off a batch with nearly every boat that left for the Continent"; "by the manner in which he induced foreigners to leave Newcastle", Cohn had been "of great service to the cause".¹²³

Whatever Cohn's merits in mobilizing support for the engineers' strike, these reports show that Cohn indeed had used his visit to Belgium to renew his contacts with the Belgian cigar-makers. Considering the subsequent events, it seems likely that during his visit he had discussed the foundation of an international union apart from the International itself. In October 1871, the Dutch and Belgian unions decided to cooperate more closely to prevent strike-breaking.¹²⁴ Also in October, the London Cigar Makers' Mutual Association sent out a call for an international conference to be held in London in December 1871. The conference was attended by representatives of five British unions, local Belgian unions (both Flemish- and French-speaking), Dutch unions, and also by Friedrich W. Fritzsche representing the German union. An international federation of cigar-makers' unions was formed, with the aim of organizing international support in cases of strikes. The Dutch affiliated some time in spring, the Germans in July.¹²⁵ The affiliation of the Dutch was confirmed

122. MEGA. I. *Abt.*, Bd. 22, *Text*, pp. 747–748.

123. Cited in Collins and Abramsky, *Karl Marx and the British Labour Movement*, pp. 219–220. On the London Conference of 16 and 23 September 1871, see *ibid.*, pp. 221 and 230–232; and Henryk Katz, *The Emancipation of Labor: A History of the First International* (New York, 1992), pp. 88–95. According to Katz, p. 89, "Cohn, the Danish secretary, was totally absent, as he was preoccupied with other matters, closer to his heart", but he does not make clear what these matters were. Allen *et al.*, *The North-East Engineers' Strikes*, p. 135, write about Cohn being active in Belgium "with modest success", but on pp. 148–149 cite *The Times*, 11 September 1871, confirming the failure of the Newcastle employers to keep hold of imported strike-breakers from the continent.

124. Giele, *De Eerste Internationale*, p. 161.

125. Frisch, *Die Organisationsbestrebungen*, pp. 78–80; the attendance at the London conference by the Amsterdam cigar-makers was decided in a public meeting in Amsterdam on 26 November; Giele, *De Internationale in Nederland*, p. 161.

in a national meeting held in Amsterdam on 4 and 5 August 1872, in the presence of a representative of the London Cigar Makers' Association, a Dutchman working in London named F. Neuman. It was decided to "work towards a general combination [of cigar-makers' unions] throughout Europe into a General Tobacco Workers' Union, everywhere where our trade is represented".¹²⁶ So, starting from the arrival of the Belgians in London in 1868 and the actions of James Cohn in preventing them coming, a chain of events had eventually resulted in the foundation of an International Cigar-makers' Union in 1871. The cigar-makers now started to depend on this international union to regulate their cross-border labour market, instead of the International. As there were many hesitations about joining the International in cigar-makers' unions outside Britain, they perhaps started to doubt its effectiveness in organizing international solidarity.

A second international conference was held from 28 October until 2 November 1872 in Amsterdam, with the president of the Dutch union, Jan W. Wertwijn, and the representative of the London Association, F. Neuman, as organizers. There were thirty-two representatives: apart from Dutchmen from Amsterdam, Rotterdam, and other Dutch cities, there were twelve from the London Association, among whom were three Dutchmen working in London, and six from Belgium (from Antwerp, Brussels, Liège, Ghent, and Bruges).¹²⁷ According to the police report on which this account is based, the conference was chaired by "a certain Van der Hout";¹²⁸ this must be the well-known Amsterdam Internationalist Salomon van der Hout (1843–1918), who was no cigar-maker, however.¹²⁹ The report describes Neuman and his colleagues Brandon and Loozen as "Israelites", and as "Dutch cigar-makers living in London", who guided the other Londoners through Amsterdam and acted as translators at the conference. It also mentions a "Leon Hasaers" from Antwerp, probably the aforementioned president of the Antwerp union Leopold Haesaert, and a German representative with the name of "Fritzer", in which we may recognize the president of the German union, Friedrich W. Fritzsche.

A formal effect of this international meeting was that the Dutch union from now on called itself *Afdeeling Nederland van de Internationale Sigarenmakers- en Tabakbewerkerbond* (Dutch branch of the International

126. Cited in *ibid.*, p. 162.

127. *Ibid.*; Frisch, *Die Organisationsbestrebungen*, p. 79, mentions this second conference, but has no further information.

128. Stadsarchief Amsterdam, archief politie, 1e sectie M 336 (31 October 1872).

129. Cf. Piet Wielsma and Heiner Becker, "Hout, Isaac Salomon van der", in *Biografisch woordenboek van het socialisme en de arbeidersbeweging in Nederland II* (Amsterdam, 1987), pp. 68–70.

Cigar-makers' and Tobacco Workers' Union);¹³⁰ a material effect was that it discovered that Dutch cigar-makers were the lowest paid in Europe. In April 1873 a strike for a wage increase broke out in several Dutch cities (Amsterdam, The Hague, Leiden, Delft, Utrecht, Bois-le-Duc), involving 1,500 men. As in Belgium two years earlier, the employers refused to recognize the union, and locked out its members.

The prolonged strike and lock-out made a huge impression, both nationally and internationally. The General Council of the International had been moved to New York after the Hague Congress in 1872, and thereafter there is no record of workers approaching the General Council for help. Appeals from foreign workers were now directed at the separate British Federal Council of the International, formed after the London Conference of September 1871. So, in 1873 the Amsterdam cigar-makers appealed to this Federal Council for help during the lock-out. The sum collected by the London cigar-makers is said to have amounted to 33,000 Dutch guilders, and was brought directly to Amsterdam by its president Cohn and its secretary.¹³¹ The London association helped by taking strikers to London for employment there. Money was also received from Belgium and Germany.¹³²

The strike lasted until the autumn of 1873, and was officially called off in January 1874. The lost strike meant the end of the activities of the International Cigar-Makers' Union, and de facto also of the Dutch sections of the International Working Men's Association. In London, however, the relief action in support of the Dutch cigar-makers in 1873 evolved into a Society for the Benefit of the Dutch (*Vereeniging tot Nut der Nederlanders*), with the aim of uniting all Dutchmen working in London. It was established and led by former Internationalists, who had gone to London because Dutch employers refused to employ them any longer, among whom was the aforementioned Salomon van der Hout.¹³³

130. Giele, *De Internationale*, p. 163; Van der Hoeven, *De Nederlandse Sigarenmakers- en Tabakbewerkerbond*, p. 19.

131. Collins and Abramsky, *Karl Marx and the British Labour Movement*, pp. 275–276. In fact, the British Federation had split in 1872 (*ibid.*, p. 271), and the appeal for support had been directed to the dissident branch led by the former secretary of the London General Council, John Hales, which had some following in East London. Perhaps Cohn and his London cigar-makers' association had adhered to this dissident branch. See also Henry Collins, "The English Branches of the First International", in Asa Briggs and John Saville (eds), *Essays in Labour History. In memory of G.D.H. Cole 25 September 1889–14 January 1959* (London, 1960), pp. 242–275, 274.

132. See the accounts in Giele, *De Internationale*, pp. 217–219; Van der Hoeven, *De Nederlandse Sigarenmakers- en Tabakbewerkerbond*, p. 20; Frisch, *Die Organisationsbestrebungen*, p. 80.

133. Giele, *De Internationale*, p. 231; Dennis Bos, *Waarachtige volksvrienden. De vroege socialistische beweging in Amsterdam 1848–1894* (Amsterdam, 2001), pp. 147–148.

After 1873 nothing is heard of this society, but in 1877 Van der Hout became involved in an abortive attempt to re-establish the International under the name of International Labour Union.¹³⁴ Is it really surprising that one of its co-founders was a *flämischer Zigarrenmacher*, named De Jong, living at the Commercial Road in London's East-End?¹³⁵

CONCLUSION: THE PRACTICE OF INTERNATIONALISM

The existence of a cross-border labour market can explain the efforts of the cigar-makers to organize internationally, but not their early trade unionism and political radicalism, both in Europe and in the Americas. The love of political discussion and the habit of "reading", as in the cases of Cuban and German cigar-makers, cannot explain this either, if only because there are no signs of this habit in British, Dutch, and Belgian cigar factories (which does not mean that it was absent). Social historians have explained the early trade unionism and radicalization of artisans, like tailors, shoemakers, printers, cabinetmakers, shipwrights, and carpenters, by their loss of artisanal status and independent position in this period,¹³⁶ but this cannot be applied to cigar-makers, because there was no artisan background or tradition in this trade.

Cigar-makers were originally recruited from the poorest strata of the population. This explains the prominence of Jews in Hamburg, Amsterdam, and London. The remarks by Mayhew in the case of London around 1850, cited above, that Jewish cigar-makers had started as street sellers, and that

134. Wielsma and Becker, "Hout, Isaac Salomon van der"; Max Nettlau, "Ein verschollener Nachklang der Internationale: The International Labour Union", *Archiv für die Geschichte des Sozialismus und der Arbeiterbewegung*, 9 (1921), pp. 134–145. In 1878 the ILU decided to send delegates to an international labour congress, planned by the French labour leader Jules Guesde. Guesde and thirty-nine other French organizers were arrested and imprisoned, however, and the congress had to be cancelled. See Bernstein, *The First International in America*, p. 298, n. 25.
135. Nettlau, "Ein verschollener Nachklang", p. 137. It is not clear how Nettlau found out about the Flemish origin of this De Jong. It could be that it is just his interpretation because of the name. However, the surname De Jong is extremely rare in the Dutch-speaking part of Belgium (Flanders), but very common in the Netherlands. So perhaps he was a Dutchman. Another co-founder was John Hales (see n. 131).

136. For instance Bernard H. Moss, *The Origins of the French Labor Movement: The Socialism of the Skilled Workers, 1830–1914* (Berkeley, CA, 1976); Friedrich Lenger, "Beyond Exceptionalism: Notes on the Artisanal Phase of the Labour Movement in France, England, Germany and the United States", *International Review of Social History*, 36 (1991), pp. 1–23; and (strangely omitting cigar-makers) Ad Knotter, "Van 'defensieve standsreflex' tot 'verkoopkartel van arbeidskracht'. Twee fasen in de ontwikkeling van de Amsterdamse arbeidersvakbeweging (ca. 1870–ca. 1895)", *Tijdschrift voor Sociale Geschiedenis*, 19 (1993), pp. 68–93. "Artisan background" in this context relates to the independent position artisans had enjoyed, producing directly for customers, which in this "artisanal phase" was being undermined by middlemen, contractors, and other entrepreneurs mediating between their work and the (more or less open) market. There is no such history of independent cigar-makers.

they fell back on the traditional old-clothes trade in slack times, are clear signs of their poor backgrounds. Non-Jewish cigar-makers also came from proletarian families, as Zwahr has shown in the case of Leipzig.¹³⁷ In the Dutch town of Utrecht the poverty of their families is attested for by the stature of nineteen-year-old cigar-makers measured for conscription: they were the smallest among the other occupational groups.¹³⁸

In this sense, employment in a cigar factory can be considered a kind of economic emancipation from poorer conditions, and as often in these cases, this became a starting point for further aspirations. In my view, the early formation of trade unions and the concomitant radical political attitude of cigar-makers can be explained by a wish for social advancement. The cigar-makers did not have an independent artisanal status to defend, but they wanted to do business with their employers about wages and working conditions (in a sense precluding Gompers' business unionism in the AFL). They soon found out that this kind of business often meant struggle, and that their position in this struggle depended on the degree of labour market control.

The international cooperation of cigar-makers, be it in the International or in a separate international union, was primarily motivated by the urgent need and rather mundane wish of the cigar-makers to regulate their cross-border labour market, not so much by an abstract ideal of international solidarity (although the talk about "a fraternity of peoples" and "Belgian brethren", cited above, indicates that this was not completely absent). Nor was it just based on the transfer of ideas (although the idea of forming trade unions was clearly transferred from Britain to Belgium and the Netherlands), or a perspective resulting from my aim as an historian to write an entangled cross-border history (although this approach opened my eyes to the existing transnational relationships). Much more than in the twentieth century, at the time of the First International, transnational labour markets emerged quite "naturally" as a consequence of uneven local and national economic developments in Europe (and also America). In the twentieth century, labour markets became increasingly organized and regulated nationally, by national social security arrangements, collective agreements, and systems of labour exchange and migration control, and, partly as a consequence, members of the working classes began to consider themselves, and were considered, as national citizens. This, however, was not yet the case at the time of the First International. In the nineteenth century, workers moved remarkably easy, or were remarkably easily recruited, across national borders.

137. Zwahr, *Zur Konstituierung des Proletariats*, pp. 93–99 and 143–145.

138. J.J.A. (Hans) de Beer, "Beroepskeuze, levensstandaard en lichamelijke ontwikkeling. De kleine sigarenmaker in Utrecht, ca. 1850", *Tijdschrift voor Sociale Geschiedenis*, 19 (1993), pp. 216–235.

The pre-eminence of London as an engine of economic growth attracted workers from all over Europe, who, in the eyes of the Londoners, threatened to undermine wage standards and working conditions achieved by the London trade unions because of their strength and the favourable economic conditions in London.¹³⁹ Their solution was to organize internationally, both to prevent strike-breaking and wage-cutting by workers from abroad, and to support unions elsewhere in raising wage standards in their home countries. In the case of the London cigar-makers this primarily affected the Netherlands and Belgium, and only secondarily Germany (in contrast with, for instance, the German tailors in London). Initiatives from the London cigar-makers to support trade unions and strikes were therefore primarily directed towards their Belgian and Dutch “brethren”, although relationships with and support for the German unions were not absent. From a labour market and migratory perspective, however, German cigar-makers were much more connected to the United States than to London, where Dutch, and to a lesser extent Belgian, cigar-makers mostly went to.

Because of the exceptional economic growth of London (and Britain) in the 1850s and 1860s the city became a pole of attraction for immigrants from other parts of Europe and an organizational centre for the European international workers’ movement. It drew refugees and migrant workers from across the continent, who were able to think and act internationally and connect with local trade unions in the International Working Men’s Association. The transnational nature of labour markets did not, of course, disappear with the demise of the International in the 1870s. It therefore hardly comes as a surprise that in the 1880s new attempts were made to organize labour internationally, this time from the United States. Just as London, the United States continued to attract migrants on a massive scale, and for the US labour movement comparable problems arose to uphold wage standards in the face of growing competition by immigrants. As Steven Parfitt has shown in a recent article, the US-based Noble and Holy Order of the Knights of Labor (established in 1869, but reaching its zenith in the 1880s) combined the wish to regulate immigration with the international cooperation of trade unions. The Knights “viewed the Universal Brotherhood as a means to raise living standards elsewhere up to American standards. Equalizing the wages of American and European workers would render immigration to the United States unnecessary, and workers on both sides of the Atlantic would benefit accordingly”.¹⁴⁰ It is a scheme reminiscent of the trade-union policies of

139. On this issue also Van der Linden, “The Rise and Fall of the First International”.

140. Steven Parfitt, “Brotherhood from a Distance: Americanization and the Internationalism of the Knights of Labor”, *International Review of Social History*, 58 (2013), pp. 463–491, 474 and 485.

the First International on a smaller European scale in an earlier stage. The ideology may have been different but the practice of internationalism had not fundamentally altered.

TRANSLATED ABSTRACTS
FRENCH – GERMAN – SPANISH

Ad Knotter. *Cigariers transnationaux. Marchés du travail transfrontaliers, grèves et solidarité à l'époque de la Première Internationale (1864–1873)*.

Plusieurs auteurs ont avancé que l'un des principaux objectifs de l'Association Internationale des Travailleurs était de contrôler les marchés du travail transnationaux. Pour les syndicalistes, particulièrement en Grande-Bretagne, les mouvements migratoires transfrontaliers incontrôlés menaçaient de saper les normes salariales et les conditions de travail. Leur solution fut de s'organiser au plan international, tant pour empêcher que des travailleurs de l'étranger brisent les grèves et fassent baisser les salaires, que pour aider des syndicats dans d'autres pays à y augmenter leurs normes salariales. Les cigariers opéraient sur un marché du travail transfrontalier et furent très prééminents dans la Première Internationale. Dans cet article, je décris les liens entre les cigariers allemands, britanniques, néerlandais, belges et américains en tant que travailleurs migrants ainsi que leurs actions pour encourager, aider et coordonner les syndicats au plan international. Je soutiens que la coopération internationale des cigariers fut principalement motivée par un souhait de réglementer leur marché du travail transfrontalier, bien plus que par un idéal abstrait de solidarité internationale.

Traduction: *Christine Plard*

Ad Knotter. *Transnationale Zigarrenarbeiter. Grenzübergreifende Arbeitsmärkte, Streiks und Solidarität zur Zeit der I. Internationale (1864–1873)*.

Mehrere Autoren haben argumentiert, dass eines der Hauptziele der Internationalen Arbeiterassoziation darin bestanden habe, transnationale Arbeitsmärkte zu kontrollieren. In der Wahrnehmung vor allem britischer Gewerkschafter drohten unkontrollierte grenzüberschreitende Migrationsbewegungen Lohnstandards und Arbeitsbedingungen zu unterminieren. Ihr Lösungsvorschlag bestand darin, sich international zu organisieren: sowohl um Streikbruch und Lohndrückerei durch ausländische Arbeiter zu verhindern als auch, um Gewerkschaften anderswo beim Anheben der Lohnstandards ihrer Länder zu unterstützen. Zigarrenarbeiter agierten auf einem grenzübergreifenden Arbeitsmarkt und waren in der I. Internationale prominent vertreten. Der Beitrag beschreibt die Verbindungen, die zwischen deutschen, britischen, holländischen, belgischen und amerikanischen Zigarrenarbeitern in ihrer Eigenschaft als migrantische Arbeitskräfte bestanden; ebenfalls beschrieben wird, was diese Zigarrenarbeiter unternahmen, um Gewerkschaftsarbeit auf internationaler Ebene anzuregen, zu unterstützen und zu koordinieren. Es wird argumentiert, dass die internationale Zusammenarbeit der Zigarrenarbeiter weniger durch ein abstraktes Ideal internationaler Solidarität

motiviert war als durch den Wunsch, den eigenen grenzübergreifenden Arbeitsmarkt zu regulieren.

Übersetzung: *Max Henninger*

Ad Knotter. *Cigarreros transnacionales. Mercados de trabajo transfronterizos, huelgas y solidaridad en la época de la Primera Internacional (1864–1873)*.

Distintos autores han venido a discutir que uno de los principales objetivos que la Asociación Internacional de Trabajadores se planteó era el control transnacional de los mercados de trabajo. Desde la perspectiva de los sindicalistas, especialmente en Gran Bretaña, los movimientos migratorios transfronterizos incontrolados se convertían en una seria amenaza que podía minar tanto los niveles salariales como las condiciones de trabajo. La solución encontrada fue organizarse internacionalmente, tanto para prevenir la acción de los rompe-huelgas y la reducción de salarios provocada por trabajadores venidos de otros países, como para apoyar a las organizaciones sindicales en otros sitios para aumentar los niveles salariales en sus países de origen. Los cigarreros operaron en un mercado de trabajo transfronterizo y jugaron un papel importante en la Primera Internacional. En este artículo se describen las conexiones existentes entre los cigarreros como trabajadores migrantes en Alemania, Gran Bretaña, Países Bajos, Bélgica y Estados Unidos, y sus acciones para promover, apoyar y coordinar asociaciones sindicales a nivel internacional. En él se plantea que la cooperación internacional de los cigarreros estaba motivada fundamentalmente por un deseo de regular su mercado de trabajo transfronterizo, y no tanto por un ideal abstracto de solidaridad internacional.

Traducción: *Vicent Sanz Rozalén*