



**MARX
ENGELS**

LENIN on the

**IRISH
REVOLUTION**

by

Ralph Fox

TEN CENTS



Marx, Engels and Lenin on the Irish Revolution

By Ralph Fox

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Marx, Engels and Lenin on the Irish Revolution

CHAPTER I

MARX, ENGELS AND LENIN AS INTERPRETERS OF IRISH HISTORY

FOR seven hundred years Ireland has been engaged in a ceaseless and heroic struggle for national liberty, a struggle which is still unfinished, which is now perhaps only just entering into its last and most glorious phase, that of struggle for a free and independent Irish Workers' and Farmers' Republic. Inevitably Ireland's struggle has been connected with that of other peoples and classes during this long period of history. Ireland has given many great revolutionary figures to the liberation movement of the world, Wolfe Tone, Robert Emmett, Finton Lalor, James Stephens, Michael Davitt, James Connolly and Liam Mellows, to name only some of the best and greatest. But Ireland in her turn has also received help and attention from the leaders of the world revolution, particularly from the leaders of the most revolutionary class, the working class, the class whose historical task is the destruction of all classes and the remaking of the world on a classless basis.

The leaders of the world proletariat in the revolutionary struggles of the 19th century, Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, the leader of the world proletariat in the 20th century, the epoch of imperialism, Lenin, were not only deeply interested in Irish history and Ireland's fight against English oppression, but they gave very practical help to the Irish revolution. They did so because they considered the Irish revolution not merely the concern of the Irish people themselves, but because they knew that its success would have immense consequences for the world revolution, for the liberation of all oppressed peoples and classes.

At the present time when Ireland is once more engaging in a life and death struggle with British imperialism, when the success of that struggle depends upon the ability of the Irish working class to win the lead in the revolutionary movement and create its own revolu-

tionary mass party, the opinions of Marx, Engels and Lenin on the historical development of the Irish revolution, an account of their PRACTICAL HELP for that revolution, will be of immense importance to the toilers of Ireland, the builders of the future Socialist Irish Republic. For Marx, Engels and Lenin are the greatest and most successful revolutionaries of all time, able to combine the most scientific analysis of historical fact WITH THE ABILITY TO CHANGE THE COURSE OF HISTORY BY REVOLUTIONARY CLASS ACTION. The red flag which flies to-day over one-sixth of the world, the Union of Socialist Soviet Republics, is the symbol of their success and the guarantee of the liberation of all oppressed peoples and all oppressed classes.

Engels in particular was greatly interested in Ireland. Coming to England to live in 1842, to Manchester, he was brought face to face with the consequences of English rule in Ireland by the almost indescribable condition of the thousands of Irish workers in Manchester. As an active participator in the revolutionary movement of the English workers, Chartism, he came into close contact with many Irish revolutionaries and socialists. Later he had another, personal, reason for becoming interested in Ireland, for his wife, Lizzie Burns, was the daughter of poor Irish emigrants, and herself a Fenian. Engels became so convinced of the importance of the Irish question that he began to work on a history of Ireland, learning the ancient Gaelic, which he was soon able to read freely, and preparing a mass of material, with the continual help and guidance of his friend Marx, to enable him to write the history of England's first colony. Unfortunately, other revolutionary tasks prevented him from ever carrying out this great work, but his correspondence on Ireland with Marx gives a very good idea of the views of these two on the development of Irish history.

Engels himself twice visited Ireland, in 1855 and 1869. His description of Ireland in 1855 is a classical and terrible one. "Gendarmes, priests, lawyers, officials, landlords, in numbers to gladden the eyes, the complete absence of any industry, so that it would be difficult to understand how all these parasites live, were it not for the corresponding contrast of the peasants' poverty." He noticed the most characteristic feature of Ireland to be ruins, dating from the fifth and sixth century right up to the 19th century, the most ancient ones, churches and castles, the most modern ruins—peasants' huts. The traces of the awful famine of 1846 were still to be seen everywhere in the deserted villages standing around the fine parks of the landlords. Famine, emigration, evictions, had turned

whole counties into a desert. "The country has been completely ruined," he writes to Marx, "by the English wars of conquest from 1100 to 1850 (in fact the wars and martial law have lasted for all that time). The majority of the ruins are the effects of the destruction of war. Even the people, thanks to this, have acquired a specific character, and for all their national-Irish fanaticism these lads feel that they are no longer masters in their own country. Ireland for the Saxon! This slogan is now being carried into life."

Even the native Irish landlords, he notices, in their splendid parks, are living in decay and semi-poverty, in eternal fear of the Encumbered Estates Court and the auctioneer's hammer. This was the picture he drew of Ireland at one of the saddest periods in her history, after the failure of '48 and before the rise of the Fenian movement. Still earlier in his first work, "The Condition of the Working Class in England in 1844," Engels describes the conditions of the Irish peasantry on the eve of the famine, immediately after the Repeal agitation and O'Connell's trial. The overdivision of the land, the consequent soaring rents, double, treble, quadruple those paid in England, and all for the benefit of the landlord, an army of agricultural proletarians, 75,000 more in Ireland than in England, although more than twice as much land is cultivated in England as in Ireland, the widespread and crushing poverty of tenants and labourers alike, he describes in unforgettable words. From spring till harvest the wife and children tramp the country while the husband seeks work in England or Ireland till the potato harvest comes.

What is the secret of this awful scene which Engels describes? In the letter to Marx quoted above he tells it. "Ireland can be counted the first English colony, and moreover a colony which, because of its nearness, is still ruled in the old way; and here it is already clear how the so-called freedom of English citizens is based on the suppression of the colonies. In no country have I seen so many gendarmes, and the type of drunken Prussian gendarme has reached its perfection in these constables, armed with carbines, bayonets and hurl-bats." The keen eye of Engels confronted with Irish reality at once saw through the hypocritical farce of English "freedom" and "democracy" founded on the most merciless exploitation of the colonies, and having as its symbol the drunken armed policemen. The pensions of this police, by the way, in 1932, seventy years after Engels' visit, the English bourgeoisie, through the mouth of its "Labour" Minister, Thomas, is trying to compel the Irish workers and peasants to pay by using the old weapons of force and famine.

The English bourgeoisie, always mercilessly suppressing the revolu-

tionary movements of the poor and oppressed, have themselves effected not a few "revolutions" of the most radical type, involving wholesale confiscation of the property of millions and the impoverishment of whole peoples. They did this in their own country during the Industrial Revolution at the end of the 18th century. They carried through two very fundamental agrarian "revolutions" in India at the end of the 18th century, expropriating millions of peasants, and it was not to be expected that such an "advanced" class as the English bourgeoisie would fail to give the Irish peasants also the benefit of a "revolution." They did so, in the year 1846 and the following period.

In 1846 the industrial middle class of England forced their class enemies, the aristocratic oligarchy of landlords and bankers who had ruled England since the "Glorious" Revolution of 1688, to repeal the Corn Laws and make England the classical country of Free Trade. Had not the English learned the virtues of Free Trade from the Irish themselves, from the cannons of the Volunteers in 1781 with their ominous placards "Free Trade—or?" Now the Irish were going to be shown what Free Trade meant in the way of unlimited blessings from the Liberal industrial bourgeoisie who had taken the place of the old aristocracy. In place of Castlereagh and Wellington there were to be Bright and Gladstone; in place of the "Conservative" poverty of Ireland's eight millions, the Liberal "revolution" of reducing the population by almost half in a score of years. In 1841 the population was 8,222,664, in 1866 five and a half million. The diminution began in 1846, the year of the famine.

No bourgeois historian has ever given such a true and terrible picture of this process of depopulation of a whole country, the attempted extermination of a whole great nationality, as Marx. The Irish tenant farmers before 1846 provided the bulk of the corn for English consumption, being protected against all competition by the general tariff system then in force, though, of course, the material benefits of this protection went, not to the rack-rented tenants, but to the Anglo-Irish landlords. This Irish corn monopoly came to an end with the Corn Laws in 1846. The Irish peasant's wretched farm could not hope to compete with the great feudal estates of Central Europe or the young capitalist farming of the United States. The Irish landlord, who to some extent, in his wealthier and more solid section, was identical with the English landlord, resolved that whoever suffered from this change it should not be he, and promptly began to change over from tillage to pasture, mercilessly evicting his tenants and "consolidating" the farms.

Marx describes the different stages of the process in a letter to Engels written in 1867. He points out that in the period from the Act of Union in 1807 to the famine and the repeal of the Corn Laws in 1846 (the English bourgeoisie, by the way, hypocritically pretended that the reason for the repeal was the desire to "relieve" the distress caused by the famine, when one million people died), the landlord exploited the peasant and obtained his surplus product for the market by means of rack-rents and middlemen. Evictions, though they took place in this period, were not the rule but the exception. This position, however, changed sharply with the going over from tillage to pasture. The slogans now were wool and meat, hence the need to "consolidate" the farms, as the process of eviction was euphemistically called.

The process was hastened by the passing of the Encumbered Estates Act in 1851. This Act was designed to get rid of the native Irish landlords, who had long sunk into a condition of torpor and decay, and replace them by English or Irish capitalist landlords or farmers from the merchant and money-lending classes who would carry through ruthlessly the new policy, having no ties of sentiment or interest with the peasantry. The Encumbered Estates Act turned the hated middlemen into landlords and hastened on the process of depopulating the Irish countryside. The English, as Marx points out, thus started a veritable "revolution" in Irish land relations. In an article in the German democratic paper, *Neue Oder Zeitung*, written in 1855, he thus describes the development of this new and terrible scourge which cleared Ireland of its peasantry more effectually and quickly than famine and plague. "This revolution consists in the Irish agrarian system yielding to the English, THE SYSTEM OF SMALL TENANTRY IS BEING REPLACED BY BIG TENANTRY—just as the old landlords are being replaced by NEW CAPITALISTS. The chief stages making way for this change are—the famine of 1847 which killed about one million Irish; emigration to America and Australia, which has already torn another million souls out of Ireland and which continues to uproot fresh millions; the unsuccessful revolt of 1848, breaking Ireland's last faith in itself; finally, the Act of Parliament which condemned to auction the property of the indebted Irish nobility and drove that nobility from off the land just as starvation drove off the farmers, tenants and cottagers."

This revolution, Marx considered, reached its climax in the '60's, and he puts the year 1864 as being decisive in converting Ireland into England's largest pasture. Just as he considered the famine of '46

and '47 and the beginning of the new system responsible for the rising of 1848, so he considered that its perfection in '64 and '65 was responsible for Fenianism becoming a mass movement with an agrarian socialist tendency directed against the monopoly of land by the landlords. In the first volume of his great work, *Capital*, he gives a detailed analysis of the years of 1861-1865, which gave the economic basis to Fenianism.

From 1861-1865 the area under cereal crops decreased by 428,041 acres, green crops by 107,084 acres, while grass and clover lands increased by 82,834 acres and the area under flax by 122,750 acres. There was a decrease in the total cultivated land of 330,860 acres. Over half a million people emigrated in this period of five years and the absolute number of people sank by more than one-third of a million. He points out that from 1853 to 1864 the average annual increase of industrial income (including "professional" income, doctors, lawyers, etc.) was only 0.93, while in Great Britain in the same period it was 4.58. The tremendous decrease in population (five-sixteenths in twenty years), the consolidation of farms and the turning of tillage into pasture meant that Ireland became a land of capitalist agriculture, but a capitalist agriculture of a peculiar colonial kind, in which the masses of peasantry and labourers, far from getting any benefit from the decrease in population (and therefore in competition for the land) and from the big rise in prices, suffered as much as ever before. In England the same process of converting tillage was going on, but it did not bring, as in Ireland, a heavy fall in the production of green crops (potatoes, beets, cabbage, turnips, etc.), but on the contrary, with the breeding of cattle, they increased. In Ireland the tillage became grazing or lay idle, and waste land and peat bogs, unused formerly, were made to serve for cattle-breeding.

One by one the small farmers fell before this development of capitalist colonial agriculture and went to join the army of emigrants or landless labourers. In normal capitalist countries the expropriated peasantry are absorbed in industry, but Ireland had only one real industry, linen manufacture, and its powers of absorption were soon exhausted. So the home market also shrank, and with it the incomes of shopkeepers, artisans, tradespeople, while the volume of produce exported to England, which the poverty-stricken Irish masses could not afford to consume themselves, increased.

What was happening in Ireland? Marx explains very clearly. A new gigantic process of robbery. The Irish people were robbed of their property in their own land in the 17th century by the English. In the middle of the 19th century they were robbed all over again,

and in addition, by the end of the century, over half of them forced to leave their own country altogether. A great process of concentration of the means of production was going on and these means of production were being turned into capital. From a land of small holders Ireland was becoming a country of large holdings, with the change from arable to pasture, and the surplus small holders had the choice of dying from starvation or emigrating.

The result for the landlords from this revolution, on the other hand, was highly gratifying. In 1864, out of a total income from profits (over £60 a year) for all Ireland of £4,368,610, 1,131 surplus value-makers took £2,150,818, nearly half of the total annual profit; in 1865 surplus value makers took £2,418,933, more than half the annual profit of £4,699,979. English statistics wisely remain silent as to the distribution of rents as opposed to profits. But the process of depopulating Ireland to swell the rent-rolls of the land magnates of England, Scotland and Ireland, was far from complete in 1865. Marx prophesied that many more hundreds of thousands of Irish peasants were doomed to emigration from their native country, "that thus she may fulfil her true destiny, that of an English sheep-walk and cattle-pasture," and, indeed, the population was to decrease still further till it reached the figure of 4,229,124 in 1926, or in 70 years the population per square mile has fallen from 251 to 135.

Only the class struggle of the Irish workers and peasants against English landlord-capitalist rule eventually slowed down the process, whose results remain to-day, not only in the annual ransom of £3,000,000 paid for the land of Ireland by the people of Ireland, but in the impoverishment and industrial backwardness of Ireland, which only a people's revolution can solve.

So for Marx and Engels at the bottom of the Irish question was the agrarian question, the exploitation of the peasant masses, by a foreign landlord-capitalist oligarchy. It was from this point of view that they analysed the various stages of the revolutionary movement in Ireland. For them 1798 and the rebellion of the United Irishmen, indeed the whole period 1779-1801, was "a period of the greatest interest, scientifically and dramatically." In the period of the Dublin Parliament and the Volunteers Curran is the only man for whom Marx has any praise—"the only great advocate (people's advocate) of the 18th century." Grattan he stamps as simply a "parliamentary scoundrel," a verdict to which the toilers of Ireland have long given their agreement.

Analysing the revolutionary movement, he remarks that "First of all, in 1798-99 are repeated (in a stronger form, perhaps) the atrocities

of the English in 1588-89. Secondly, in the Irish movement itself a movement of classes can easily be shown. Thirdly, the vile policy of Pitt. Fourthly—what is very annoying to the English—THE IRISH FAILED BECAUSE FROM A REVOLUTIONARY STAND-POINT THEY WERE TOO ADVANCED for the English church and king mob, and, on the other hand, the English reaction in England itself, as in Cromwell's time, was operating on the enslavement of Ireland." In England the proletariat had not yet become conscious of itself, and the ruling oligarchy, operating on the slum proletariat and a section of the petty-bourgeoisie, "the church and king mob," was able to prevent the rise of any very strong revolutionary movement in England, to isolate from the masses those sections of the petty-bourgeoisie and proletariat who were really revolutionary. The English Corresponding Societies and "United Englishmen" were able to give little real help to the United Irishmen, and indeed some of their own best revolutionary forces came from the Irish themselves. At the same time—and this lesson Marx and Engels emphasise many times over—the English reaction gained its very strength from its repressive policy in Ireland, from its experience there of suppression and terror, from the possibility of keeping up and training large armed forces, just as in 1920-1921 the Black and Tans were used against the British workers.

1798-1799 was the highest point reached by the Irish movement because here the proletariat was uniting and leading the spontaneous actions of the peasantry, because the Irish revolution was acting in concert with the world revolutionary movement. The next period of Irish history, the phase of O'Connellism, was a big step back in comparison with the United Irishmen's heroic effort to destroy British rule. It was important, however, because it worked out the line of tactics which the Irish bourgeoisie was to use for nearly a hundred years with more or less success in preventing the development of a real mass movement, while keeping up a show of opposition to the English bourgeoisie in the English Parliament.

O'Connellism, which was to become the basis of Parnellism, in its last bad phase, and of Redmondism, was early exposed by Marx in the articles on Ireland which he wrote as London correspondent of the *New York Daily Tribune*, the organ of the most leftward sections of American democracy in the '50's and '60's of last century, whose editor was the famous Horace Greeley, as well as for the German paper, *Neue Oder Zeitung*.

In an article in the latter paper in 1855 Marx exposes the whole method of political trickery employed by O'Connell and used after

him by the "Irish Brigade" of the '50's, by Butt, by Parnell after the Kilmainham Treaty, and by Redmond. By the so-called "Litchfield House Agreement" of 1835 O'Connell, "the Liberator," gave the support of the Irish members in Parliament to the Whigs in return for certain concessions in Ireland. Together with the members of the "Manchester School," Bright, Cobden and their friends, the representatives of the English industrial bourgeoisie, O'Connell held the balance in the English Parliament, as Redmond and the Labour Party held it in the years before the war. In Parliament O'Connell would agitate for "repeal"—that is, for separation of Ireland from England, against the Tories—but whenever the Whigs came to power his opposition would quietly die down and little more be heard of "tenant right" or "repeal." He himself was a typical reactionary, opposing all measures of a progressive character and an enemy of all popular movements. In later years the growth of class struggle in Ireland and in England, particularly the development of a revolutionary proletariat in Ireland, made O'Connell's tactics more difficult to carry out for his successors, but in principle they remained the same.

In the '50's Marx made the position of Ireland widely known through his articles in the German and American Press. Particularly did he give attention to the tenant right agitation, exposing the whole system of English landlordism. He pointed out that the process by which the landlord raised the rent whenever the tenant improved the farm amounted to the tenant paying the landlord interest on his, the tenant's, own money. He then flays the hypocrisy of the *Times*, acting as the mouthpiece of the English landlords and claiming that what was wrong in Ireland was the absence of "normal social conditions," which the landlords, if you please, were trying to restore. "England has destroyed the conditions of Irish society," writes Marx. "First of all, she has confiscated the lands of the Irish; then by 'parliamentary decrees' she has suppressed Irish industry; finally, by armed force she has broken the activity and energy of the Irish people. In this way England has created the 'social conditions' which allow a small *caste* of robber landlords to dictate to the Irish people the conditions in which they are allowed to hold the land and live on it. Still too weak to overthrow 'the social conditions' by revolutionary methods, the people turn to Parliament, demanding at least the alleviation or regulation of these conditions." (*New York Tribune*, July 11th, 1853.) In conclusion, Marx argues that only the expropriation of the landlords by the nationalisation of the land, a radical bourgeois democratic reform, could solve the agrarian question.

Later on, in the '80's, Engels, in a letter to the German socialist, Bernstein, outlined the views which he and Marx had formed on the Irish movement. There existed two currents in the Irish movement, Engels said, the first agrarian, the movement of the peasantry, the spontaneous resistance to the English landlords of the Ribbonmen, the Whiteboys, Captain Rock, Captain Moonlight and others. This was as old as the existing landowning system and began at the end of the 17th century. Writing in the *New York Tribune* in 1859 against the Government terror, Marx had described these societies which Irish conditions produced like "the woodland produces mushroom-rooms." "The landlords of Ireland are confederated for a fiendish war of extermination against the cotters; or, as they call it, they combine for the economical experiment of clearing the land of useless mouths. The small native tenants are to be disposed of with no more ado than vermin is by the housemaid. The despairing wretches, on their part, attempt a feeble resistance by the formation of secret societies, scattered over the land, and powerless for effecting anything beyond demonstrations of individual vengeance." (*New York Tribune*, January 11th, 1859.)

Engels in his letter shows the weakness of this peasant despair, how by the very nature of its local, scattered method of action, it cannot take on the form of a general political struggle for the independence of Ireland and a radical plebian solution of the agrarian question.

The second current becomes a leading one after the failure of the United Irishmen and Robert Emmett, after the Union of 1801. This was the liberal-national movement of the town bourgeoisie whose chief leaders were lawyers. To have any success this movement had to get peasant support, but it was not interested either in the solution of the land question or in full independence for Ireland. O'Connell was its first leader, and he used the slogans of Catholic Emancipation and Repeal of the Union very cleverly for a time, till the peasantry saw emancipation had got them nothing and that the demand for Repeal was not serious on O'Connell's part. Then he took up tenant right to maintain their support. Not till 1870, however, did tenant right find some expression in English legislation, and then not as a result of Parliamentary agitation, but before the revolutionary pressure of Fenianism. But Gladstone's first Land Bill, as Engels wrote to Marx at the time, though it checked somewhat the turning of tillage into pasture, chiefly helped the landlords and the lawyers in whose hands the care of their interests was placed.

The Land League, which through Michael Davitt stood for land

nationalisation (twenty years after Marx had advocated this in the *New York Tribune*), was revolutionary in its economic aims, but owing to its reliance on the bourgeois nationalists like Parnell, timid in its political demands for "Home Rule." Between O'Connellism and the Land League was Fenianism, which Marx considered to have a socialist tendency owing to its being "a lower orders movement" against the land monopoly, a movement of workers, poor farmers and land labourers.

Discussing the chances of a successful Irish revolt, Engels concludes his summary to Bernstein with the opinion that alone the Irish have no chance of success against England with her Fleet and Army, her police force and spy system. For an Irish revolt to be successful external war or the threat of war was necessary, or, as the Irish revolutionaries themselves express it, "England's difficulty is Ireland's opportunity." He quotes as an example the huge indemnity England agreed to pay to the United States over the Alabama affair after the Civil War, simply in order to *buy off* American intervention on Ireland's behalf.

Marx and Engels, therefore, saw the Irish revolution in the 19th century, in the period of industrial capitalism, to have an agrarian nationalist character. The programme for the Irish revolution Marx considered should turn round three simple slogans—self-government and independence from England, an agrarian revolution, protective taxes to help build up again the industries destroyed by the English. Such a revolution they clearly saw could only be carried through by the masses, "the lower orders," the small and middle farmers, the labourers, the working class and artisans. The national-liberal bourgeoisie would be against such a revolution, and until the Irish movement was freed of their baneful influence Ireland would remain subject to Britain.

Marx and Engels lived and struggled in the period of industrial capitalism, working out the theoretical weapons by which the proletariat could come to a knowledge of itself and its tasks, working to build up the first great mass parties of the proletariat. In the period of imperialism, of monopoly capitalism, their work was continued and developed by Lenin. Lenin saw that in the period of imperialism, when the whole world was divided up between a few great Powers, the colonial and national questions took on a new and greater importance, and he studied eagerly all that Marx and Engels wrote on Ireland, studied particularly what was happening in Ireland in his own day.

It was the view of the socialists of the Second International that the national question was not one which should interest the proletariat, that it was reactionary to demand freedom and independence for all oppressed nationalities. The proletariat was international, the revolution would solve all questions of national minorities, oppressed nations, etc. Against this view Lenin fought with all his power, pointing out that internationalism was a sham whilst nations and nationalities remained oppressed, and that the question of nationalism could not simply be dismissed as "reactionary," that it was, like all other questions, a class question. There was reactionary, bourgeois, nationalism, the slave to clericalism and all kinds of national prejudices, and there was proletarian nationalism, the nationalism which was based on the most oppressed class, that gathered around it all the progressive, democratic elements which could only flourish in so far as they were released by the proletariat, which was at the same time the most *international* of all classes.

In his arguments Lenin referred particularly to the example of Ireland, and to the attitude taken up by Marx and Engels towards Ireland. But much had changed in Ireland since their death, and Lenin was quick to notice these changes. The greatest change of all was the development of the Irish working class, and its rise to independent class action in the great Dublin strike of 1913, in which Irish "Home Rule" capitalists like Murphy, Sinn Feiners like Griffiths, the representatives of the bourgeois, reactionary nationalism and the priests, formed a common front with the British Government and its drunken armed police against the Dublin workers.

Lenin emphasises that the Dublin strike, the organisation of a political party of the Irish workers, completely changes the situation in Ireland, where the bourgeoisie have got their "home rule," have bought up their land from the English landlords and are now looking forward to "freely ruling 'their own' land with 'their own' Irish priests."

The rise of a workers' movement, free from any illusions about this national bourgeoisie, however, meant a complete change, for the Dublin workers would have no illusions about the meaning of "Home Rule," it would be impossible to make them believe that King George had given "freedom" to Ireland. From now on the struggle in Ireland could only be a struggle for a really independent, really free Ireland, the socialist republic of the Irish workers and peasants.

This was the meaning of the Dublin events, said Lenin, and the

Anglo-Irish bourgeoisie saw the same meaning. The Ulster Volunteers, under Carson, Londonderry and Bonar Law, became a class force, a counter-revolutionary force aiming at drowning in blood this new movement of the Irish workers, which threatened not only to unite Ireland, the shipyard worker of Belfast with the textile worker or docker of Dublin, but also to spread to England, where the workers were threatening a general strike in aid of their Irish comrades.

In a sense this was the fruit of nearly a century of Irish bourgeois nationalist "opposition" in the British Parliament. Redmond appeared to have achieved what neither O'Connell, nor Butt, nor Parnell had achieved—Home Rule, the fruit of all these generations of intrigue with the English Liberals was theirs at last. And the first result of "Home Rule" was the massacre by the Dublin police, Murphy's dictatorship, Carson's Volunteers, Asquith and Lloyd George hastening to surrender by withdrawing "Home Rule," the threatened loss of everything the Irish peasantry had won by revolutionary struggle and not by Parliamentary intrigue, for Carson's armed victory would mean a victory for the counter-attack of the Anglo-Irish landlords and capitalists.

To-day, 1932, when the Irish peasants are still paying £3,000,000 a year to the British Government as a result of those agrarian "reforms" which the Irish Parliamentary Party considered such a glorious victory, it is interesting to recall what Lenin wrote about this tribute in 1913. "*For half a century* the Liberals have dragged out the liberation of Ireland, which is not completed even to-day! Only in the 20th century did the Irish peasant change from a tenant into a proprietor, but the Liberal gentlemen have bound him by the *purchase of the land at a 'fair' price*. He pays millions and millions in tribute, and for many years will continue to pay as a reward to the English landlords for having robbed him for centuries and reduced him to permanent famine. The English Liberal bourgeoisie have forced the Irish peasants to express their thanks for this to the landlords in good money."

Lenin therefore clearly saw that any kind of "Home Rule" which allowed Murphy and the Dublin police to do the ruling, which left the peasants paying millions in tribute to the landlords who had robbed and starved them for centuries, which left the English landlords and capitalists with an armed force of pogromists in Ulster to prevent the Union of Ireland and the real liberation of the Irish peasants and workers, was only a farce. The rise of the working-class

movement in Ireland exposed this farce, and the Irish workers of Dublin, Belfast and Cork were alone capable of putting an end to it by uniting and leading all the revolutionary forces of the Irish town and countryside. Carson and Bonar Law could not be a threat if faced by the workers of both England and Ireland, and one of the chief results of the events in Dublin had been to rouse the workers of England as they had not been roused since the days of Chartism.

The imperialist war in 1914 confirmed that class division in the Irish movement which could be seen in 1913. While Redmond, Murphy, the National Volunteers, in a word, the Irish bourgeoisie, the ranchers and the big farmers, declared for British imperialism, which celebrated the war by "shelving" the Home Rule question, the masses remained silent, unmoved. As the war went on and the pressure on the masses grew heavier, as the bold anti-imperialist agitation of men like Connolly ("neither King nor Kaiser") began to spread, the masses also began to move—against British imperialism. Home Rule had been one more fraud of the British bourgeoisie, the Redmondites, the national bourgeoisie, had openly betrayed the movement, but England's difficulty was Ireland's opportunity. Under the bold leadership of Connolly and the Citizens' Army, in 1916 the same Dublin workers who had fought so bravely in 1913, the best, the most intelligent sections of the Irish working class and petty bourgeoisie of town and country, began again to prepare a blow against a tyranny which was making life unbearable.

Connolly on the eve of the rising said that the socialists of the world would not understand his motives. It is true that the official world of "socialism," the leaders of the Second International which had betrayed the workers into the war, condemned him, the English I.L.P., for example, which was supposed to be "opposing" the war, declared that "Connolly was terribly and criminally mistaken." But one socialist understood very well why Connolly made that desperate attack on British imperialism, an attack which was bound to meet with bloody repression as well as the condemnation of every philistine in the world. This socialist, who not only understood Connolly, but publicly declared his approval and attacked those who attacked the rising, was Lenin. Even honest "left" socialists had failed to understand the revolt and Karl Radek had called it a "putch"—the desperate effort of a few conspirators unconnected with the masses.

Lenin pours scorn on this conception, points out that the revolt was the climax of a mass movement which was expressed in the

Irish National Congress in the States, in the funeral of O'Donovan Rossa, in the conflicts with the police, in the suppression of the Nationalist Press by the Government. The rising was a *heroic* one, Lenin emphasised, and of world importance because it was a people's movement against imperialism in the middle of an imperialist war, a war which was itself an expression of a general crisis of the imperialist system. "The misfortune of the Irish," he added, "lies in their having revolted prematurely—when the European revolt of the proletariat has not *yet* ripened." But the revolution cannot run to a timetable, and the very diversity of time and character and place deepens and widens the general movement. The Irish rising was the first blow at imperialism, but it was not the last, and the victory of the Russian workers and peasants a year later owes something to the sacrifice of Connolly and his comrades.

What was the lesson of 1916 which the Irish masses should learn? That their real leaders are the socialist workers. And from the Russian revolution, from the example of Lenin, the Irish workers are learning that to-day the only real socialism is the socialism of Lenin and Marx, of the Communist Party.

In every great revolutionary movement the Irish have played a heroic part, in the epoch of the great French Revolution, in the European revolution of 1848, in the period which preceded the Paris Commune in 1871, in the revolutionary period which began with the war in 1914. But the Irish masses are still enslaved, Ireland is not yet a republic. Is not the reason to be found in the fact that, whereas the Revolution in Europe and Asia has learnt much from Ireland, Ireland has not yet learned all she might from the rest of the world? If the Russian workers and peasants smashed down the prison house of nationalities called the Tsarist Empire and freed peoples and classes over one-sixth of the world, if over great areas of China to-day the red flag of the Soviets is proof that many more millions are freeing themselves from imperialism, is it not because in these countries the working class has found the way to fight successfully in alliance with and at the head of the peasant masses?

Marx, Engels and Lenin learned much from Ireland, which they studied very closely. To-day the best elements in the working class of the whole world understand that these three great men have forged for them a sure weapon for liberation. The Communist International, uniting millions of workers, is the living monument to their genius. Is it not time for the Irish workers to take from the world working class the very greatest of its historical achievements, the revolutionary

teaching of Marx, Engels and Lenin? Ireland has had a great effect on the development of the world revolution in the past; the rise of a mass revolutionary Communist Party in Ireland would mean much to the revolutionary movement of the workers of the whole world, and it would mean, above all, Ireland's liberation and unification.

Marx noted long ago that the Irish were in a revolutionary sense more "advanced" than the English. The development of a mass Communist Party in Ireland would have an immediate effect on the building up of a mass revolutionary movement in England, in delivering a death-blow to the most tyrannical and murderous power in history—British imperialism.

CHAPTER II

MARX, ENGELS AND LENIN AS FIGHTERS FOR IRISH FREEDOM

It would be the greatest mistake to imagine that Marx, Engels and Lenin were revolutionaries of the study, confining their activities to writing letters to one another, articles, and books. They were practical revolutionaries who considered that in working-class philosophy there is no room for a gap between word and deed, theory and practice. Furthermore, they were *internationalists*. Lenin was not simply the leader of the Russian workers, Marx and Engels of the German workers. All three were leaders of the world's workers. All three were interested in Ireland directly as practical revolutionaries and they are undoubtedly the foremost of the foreign revolutionaries who have aided Ireland's fight for freedom.

Marx and Engels were the founders and leaders of the first international organisation of the working class, the International Working Men's Association, founded in London in 1864. The First International, as we call it now, rapidly became a very powerful organisation, with sections in every important country, including the United States, and a very great Press consisting of some scores of journals and newspapers in many languages and countries. Its bold proclamation of the independence of the working class from all bourgeois parties, its declaration that the liberation of the workers must be achieved by the workers themselves, combined with its active support of the workers' movement in every country where it had sections, won it the confidence of the workers and the fear and hatred of the capitalists.

The General Council of the International was located in London

and Marx was at once its most active member and acknowledged leader. The rise of the International as a new power in Europe, challenging the whole of established society by its principles, coincided with the beginning of the Fenian movement. From the very first, unlike its unworthy successor, the Second International, the First International actively took the part of the Irish, despite the calumnies with which the Fenians were assailed by the English Press, and even by sections of the "liberal" Press on the Continent. When O'Donovan Rossa and the other editorial workers of the *Irish People* were arrested the Council at once protested and circularised all its sections to organise protests. Mrs. O'Donovan Rossa at once wrote to the International to thank them for their activities.

Next year, 1867, news of the horrible treatment of the Fenian prisoners leaked out and Marx was moved to intense indignation at the swinish brutality of the English capitalists, who consider they are being "humane" when they treat political prisoners "no worse than murderers, footpads, coiners and sexual perverts," as he put it to Engels. At once he put the question before the Council of the International and a note was sent to the Home Secretary protesting against the atrocities committed on the prisoners. At the same time a public debate was opened by the Council on the Irish question, which attracted crowds of workers and created such a sensation that even the *Times* reported it in full.

"The English and Irish have two common enemies, the territorial aristocracy and capitalism," was the theme of most of the speeches, while one delegate declared definitely to the representatives of the bourgeois Press that "killing was no murder" in the affair of the rescue of the Manchester prisoners. The debates coincided with the trial of the rescuers of Kelly and Burke, and the International has the honour of being the only body besides the Irish organisations themselves to proclaim the innocence of the prisoners. Undoubtedly, the English delegates to the Council in these debates saved the honour of the English working class, thanks to Marx's guidance.

The memorial sent to the Home Secretary as a result of these debates declared the evidence on which the prisoners were convicted to be false and the verdict wrong, and that the execution would therefore be not a judicial act, but an act of political revenge, typical of "the bloody-handed practices of old Europe." At the next meeting the very important question was raised, in connection with the executions, of the effect these would have in the United States, and it was pointed out that not only were the relations between England and the U.S.A. being endangered, but also the relations between the

working-men of the two countries. On Marx's initiative a resolution was therefore passed calling on the English and American workers not to allow the brutalities of the English Government in Ireland to divide them, but for them both to unite to help the Irish fight for independence and to prevent their Governments making use of national differences. It is not to be wondered at that James Stephens, the Fenian leader, at this time began to express himself in favour of the International in America.

William Liebknecht, the famous German socialist and father of Karl, declares that Engels was even more closely connected with the Manchester events and that one of the escaped prisoners was concealed for some time by his wife. Whether this is true or not we shall never know, for Engels was far too good a revolutionary ever to have broken the rules of conspiracy by talking of such a matter, but Liebknecht, who was his close friend, was in a position to have known. Certainly Engels helped the Irish revolutionaries considerably with money.

The International, both in England and America, raised large funds for the Fenian prisoners, and issued a special appeal to Irish working-women to send funds to *The Irish People* in aid of the prisoners. Mrs. O'Donovan Rossa became secretary of the International's Relief Fund Committee in Dublin, while collecting sheets were sent to trade union branches all over England.

The prisoners, however, remained rotting in the English and Irish penal settlements, their conditions going from bad to worse, some dying, some going mad, only the strongest able to bear the "humanity" of Gladstone's prisons with their starvation diet, silence rule and brutal punishments. Indeed, some of the worst features in English prisons were introduced specially for the benefit of the Fenians, such as the carrying on of all interviews with relatives through a sort of cage, a measure both of the "humanity" of the regime and the wholesome fear which the Government felt of the Irish revolutionaries.

Marx could not rest while such infamies were imposed on working-men. Furthermore, he saw clearly the use the English capitalists made of the Irish question. By keeping the English workers in a privileged position in relation to the Irish workers in England, by continually trying to incite national hatred against the Irish, they prevented unity of the workers in England. He put down two questions for discussion on the agenda of the Council of the Inter-

national—the question of the amnesty and of the relation between the English and Irish working class. He himself opened the debate.

A few days before the Council met an event of great importance took place. The Reform League, an organisation of the English workers formed to fight for the vote for the workers, and which was connected with the International, held a great meeting in Hyde Park to demand an amnesty for the prisoners. It was the first time in history that the English workers had publicly demonstrated with their Irish brothers in favour of Irish freedom and was an historic event, which the whole bourgeois Press had to note, although they tried to minimise and discredit it.

It was therefore in an atmosphere of great enthusiasm that the Council met in public session to hear Marx open the debate on the amnesty. Visitors crowded in and reporters from the bourgeois papers were very conspicuous. Marx spoke for an hour, amid continual applause, demanding in the name of the International working class the release of the prisoners. He tore the mask from Gladstone's hypocrisy, showing how when the Liberal "saint" was in opposition he had used the most radical phrases, promising Ireland freedom and declaring that "every other nation would have revolted under similar circumstances." But when he came to power the only change he made was to increase the terror in Ireland and introduce an "Anglo-Russian treatment of political prisoners." Marx's denunciation of Gladstone could be perfectly applied to the Labour Party to-day, particularly to its "left" section, the Independent Labour Party, which also in opposition promises freedom to India, to Ireland, to all oppressed peoples in the Empire, but in office can only carry out the policy of terror and repression which the "Labour" Minister, Thomas, is attempting to use against Ireland to-day, and which the "Independent Labour" Minister, Wedgwood Benn, used against India in the last Government.

One other point in the discussion reminds us strongly of to-day. When Marx had finished, one after another, the delegates rose to support the demand for amnesty, with only three exceptions, but those exceptions were very interesting. They were Odgers, Applegarth and Mottershead, representatives of those English trade union leaders who believe in the sacred might of capitalism, who work, not for the emancipation of the workers, but for their "co-operation" with capitalism, that is, for binding on them more firmly the chains of exploitation.

Applegarth hemmed and hawed. He was then supposed to be a

"militant." It would not do for him to oppose the motion, the workers would execrate him. On the other hand, if he supported it his bourgeois friends in Parliament would drop him. So he tried to give the appearance of doing neither. Odgers said it was impolitic to "demand" from the Government and then launched into a long psalm of praise for the great man Gladstone, for his Church Bill and for his promised Land Bill, for his good-heartedness to every people on earth, except the Irish, of course. Mottershead was a type of politician who seeks to live somehow or other, never mind who pays. He could afford to speak more openly than the others, having less direct connection with the workers. He said outright what they thought secretly. "I regret that Englishmen applauded the statements of Dr. Marx." "Ireland cannot be independent." "If we relinquished our hold it would only be asking the French to step in," and so on.

The arguments and abuse are familiar to us to-day from Labour Party leaders. Marx in his reply turned all his fire on Mottershead, skilfully dividing him from the other two. In the end the amnesty resolution was passed unanimously. The debate made a big sensation, and Marx's speech and the resolution filled the whole front page of *Reynolds's Weekly*. The resolution branded Gladstone's reply to the Irish call for an amnesty as an insult to the Irish nation, and his conditions were declared to be "equally as degrading for the victims of bad government and the nation to which they belong." The workers were reminded that Gladstone had publicly applauded, when a Minister, the rebellion of the American slave-owners, while to the enslaved Irish he preached passive obedience.

The resolution was sent to every one of the hundreds of trade union branches affiliated to the International, and only one, a small branch of curriers, objected. A delegation was at once sent to them from the General Council to explain the policy of the workers towards Ireland and the curriers also were won over. This incident shows how under Marx's leadership no pains were spared to re-educate the English workers out of the spirit of chauvinism and national "superiority" by which the ruling class attempted to keep them divided from the Irish workers.

The resolution was sent to the American branches also. At the same time a closed discussion took place on the relations between the Irish and the English working class. The decisions taken in this discussion, made known in secret to the whole International, were of immense historical importance, and we shall discuss them fully in the next chapter.

Marx was not content with the passing of a resolution demanding amnesty. It was still necessary to make the resolution effective. He therefore took upon himself the direction of a great campaign in the foreign Press of the International, particularly in the Press of the French section, exposing the atrocities committed on the prisoners and rousing foreign opinion on this question. Gladstone was looked upon as a hero by foreign Liberals. If they began now to identify him with Bismarck and Thiers, the leaders of German and French counter-revolution, then without doubt Gladstone would be deeply affected.

At the beginning of 1870 Marx published all the information about the atrocities in an article in the Belgian paper, *L'Egalité*. The article, by bringing forward the most horrible facts of ill-treatment, exposes all Gladstone's "Liberal" pretensions completely and shows that the boasted "democracy" of England is on no higher level than the "tyranny" of the Emperor Napoleon III. in France, or of the Tsar of Russia. Gladstone's Land Bill Marx proves to be a mere manoeuvre to cover the brutal refusal of an amnesty, and in conclusion he shows from Gladstone's own speech on the Land Bill that he is forced to confess "that even the 'benevolent' laws which liberal England has granted for a hundred years to Ireland, have always led to the deterioration of the country. And after this naive confession, this same man persists in torturing the men who wish to cut short this evil and imbecile legislation."

The article was widely reproduced, but it did not satisfy Marx. He was too well known as the terrible Communist, the bogey of all respectable people, to be able so easily to convince foreign Liberals of Gladstone's vileness. The *Daily News*, Gladstone's own paper, was alarmed, however, and asked the French Liberals not to confuse the case of O'Donovan Rossa with that of Rochfort, a French Liberal imprisoned by Napoleon III. At the same time inspired articles against the Fenians began to appear in a well-known French Radical newspaper, *La Marseillaise*. Marx at once arranged for a reply to be printed in the next issue.

The reply was written by his daughter Jenny, under the pseudonym J. Williams, and for weeks a regular series of articles appeared in *La Marseillaise* revealing the atrocities of Gladstone's Government against the prisoners. Marx and Engels supplied the materials themselves to Jenny, directly from Irish sources, and the effect was immediate. The articles were reprinted not only all over Europe, but in the English capitalist Press also, which was now no longer able to maintain the conspiracy of silence over the prisoners' con-

dition. Twenty prisoners either dead or gone mad was the horrible total, and the indignation was so great that Gladstone had to appoint a Commission of Enquiry and eventually to release most of the prisoners.

The result of this successful agitation by the International in Ireland itself was immediate. Strong sections were formed at Cork and Dublin, that at Cork having some hundreds of members. In England also Irish branches began to form in all the chief towns, particularly in London. At Cork several trade unions joined, and many of "the oldest and most respected advocates of Irish independence" in the town. The secretary was a gifted young language teacher, J. De Morgan, whose activities soon won him wide popularity among the Cork workers. J. P. McDonnell, particularly popular among the Irish workers in England, was appointed Secretary for Ireland.

The Government at once took alarm and very soon the Council had to report a development of terror against the Irish sections. In Dublin armed police watched all their meetings, "the International having a dreaded name," while in Cork two constables watched De Morgan's house by day and four by night, while employers were warned against employing workers connected with the Society. A strike of coachmakers for a 54-hour week took place in Cork which was strongly backed by the local section. At once all the forces of "law and order" were called out against De Morgan. He was denounced in the pulpit by a wealthy priest, the Reverend Maguire, and dismissed from all his schools. English, Irish and American branches sent funds to the strikers to support the victimised, including De Morgan, who did not give up the fight.

After the Paris Commune the priests again tried to break up the International, saying the Internationalists in the Commune murdered priests, just as to-day they try to use the religious prejudices of the backward workers against the Russian Revolution and the Communists. A Commune meeting in Cork was attacked by a fanatical crowd, but the hundreds of workers present gave such an account of themselves that the superstition-mongers had to run for their lives. Priests, employers and the Castle made a united front against the International, the first workers' party in Irish history. Why? The answer is given by the Irish workers themselves in one of their manifestos on police terrorism. "The national antagonism between English and Irish working-men in England has hitherto been one of the main impediments in the way of every attempted movement for the emancipation of the working class, and therefore one of the mainstays of class domination in England as well as in Ireland. The

spread of the International in Ireland and the formation of Irish branches in England threatened to put an end to this state of things." (Manifesto of the Irish section of the International.)

Two forces eventually broke up the International—the opportunist leaders of the English trade unions and the very "left" anarchists who followed the Russian Bakunin. To keep the International from falling into their unprincipled hands ("left" and right formed a united front), Marx and the majority of the Council decided to transfer the centre of the International to America. It is interesting that among those who supported Marx in this struggle were the Irish branches.

Not Marx and Engels alone were practical fighters for Ireland's freedom. Lenin also can claim this honour, and his work was no small one, though of a different character. Official socialism before the war was against the revolutionary aspirations of small nationalities, limiting itself to proposals of "cultural autocracy" and other liberal chauvinist ideas. Against this sort of "socialist," Lenin, and with him Comrade Stalin also, fought ruthlessly even before the war. During the war we have seen how on the example of the 1916 rising he fought against these ultra "left" socialists who thought that revolutionary nationalism and revolutionary internationalism were irreconcilable opposites. But Lenin, by splitting the working-class movement away from the opportunists, by breaking away from the jingo socialists of the Second International, and taking the initiative in forming an entirely new international, the Communist International, for the first time since Marx and Engels brought the revolutionary workers of the whole world into the same battle-line as the oppressed nationalities and the colonial masses.

The Bolsheviks under his leadership freed the oppressed peoples of Russia after the November Revolution of 1917. More than this, under Lenin's leadership the Second Congress of the Communist International made support for the national-liberation struggle in Ireland and all other oppressed countries obligatory for all the Parties of the International.

In his speech to the delegates and the theses which he wrote for the Congress Lenin gave a programme for the liberation not only of the colonies, but of the small nations which are financially, economically, and politically oppressed by the great capitalist Powers. He pointed out that to-day all the events of world politics are inevitably centred around one central point: "the struggle of the world bourgeoisie against the Soviet Republic which inevitably groups around itself on the one hand the Soviet movement of the advanced

workers of all countries, on the other hand the national-liberation movements of the colonies and oppressed nationalities, which are convinced from bitter experience that their only salvation is in the victory of the Soviet power over world imperialism."

This is indeed the great difference between the present and the epoch of Marx and Engels. The triumph of the working class over one-sixth of the world's surface has altered completely the whole trend of politics. To-day world imperialism has a deadly enemy, the Soviet Union, and no nationalist movement can be really nationalist, really anti-imperialist, which fails to recognise this fact. The existence and continuing triumph of the Soviet Union is the writing on the wall for imperialism, the message of hope for the oppressed all over the world. "Ourselves Alone" was always a reactionary cry. To-day it is even counter-revolutionary, for no national-liberation movement can hope for victory outside the great world liberation and anti-imperialist movement, at the head of which stands the Soviet Union.

CHAPTER III

THE WORKING CLASS IN THE IRISH REVOLUTION

IRELAND's greatest "export industry" has always been the export of her own sons and daughters, driven from the land by the English conquerors. In every part of the so-called Anglo-Saxon world the Irish can be found to-day, in England, the United States, Canada, Australia, and in each of these countries the overwhelming majority of the Irish population consists of working men and women. From the very first Marx and Engels saw the immense importance of this immense army of exploited Irish workers not only in the struggle for the liberation of Ireland, but in the struggle against the exploiting classes everywhere.

Practically every one of these millions of Irish was a revolutionary nationalist, thousands of them took an active part in the struggle against the English, yet on the whole this great Irish emigration was a help rather than a hindrance to the exploiters, the imperialists. How came about this strange paradox? In the first place, in England itself, the capitalists deliberately made use of national differences to drive a wedge between the English and Irish workers. English workers were better paid; the impression was created that the Irish were in unfair competition because starvation made them accept worse

conditions. Irish workers, full of national hatred, but not yet having reached *class* consciousness, were used as strike-breakers by the English bosses. Their own priests encouraged them in this, which gave a chance to divide the workers still further on *religious* grounds.

Nevertheless, many Irishmen played a big part in the English workers' movement—O'Connor, the Chartist leader, nephew of Arthur O'Connor, the republican and United Irishmen of '98; Bronterre O'Brien, and many others, names which will never be forgotten. Ernest Jones, the English Chartist leader and friend of Marx and Engels, was the first Englishman to try and unite English and Irish workers, and himself addressed many meetings in Ireland. But Marx and Engels were the first to see clearly the necessity for union between the two working classes if their common enemy, the English landlords and capitalists, were to be defeated.

They understood also that not only in England, but in the United States as well, capitalism was able to make use of Anglo-Irish antagonism for its own ends. The American capitalists made a very good thing out of dividing the two, and they also, with the help of the priests, made a practice of recruiting strike-breakers out of the ever-growing stream of Irish immigrants. As for the Irish, poor devils, they came to the States half-starving, with the hatred of everything English burning in them, with the knowledge that they must somehow scrape up enough to send home money to keep their families in Ireland alive. They were an easy prey at first. The United States Government also made clever use of the Irish question, continually threatening England with intervention, not out of love for Ireland, but out of rivalry with the older capitalism of England.

The resolution written by Marx and accepted by the Council of the International in 1869 on the relations between the Irish and English working classes is a brilliant analysis of this position and a clear direction to English, American and Irish workers to common action against their common enemy—the bourgeoisie. This remarkable resolution is so real to-day that we have no hesitation in quoting it in full.

"If England is the fortress of European landlordism and capitalism, then the only point from which a strong blow can be struck at official England is IRELAND.

Above all, Ireland is the fortress of English landlordism. If it falls in Ireland then it will inevitably fall in England also. In Ireland this operation is a hundred times easier because the economic struggle is concentrated there exclusively around landed

property, this struggle is there also, a NATIONAL one and the people of Ireland are more revolutionary and embittered than in England. Landlordism in Ireland is only supported by the ENGLISH ARMY. The moment an end is put to the compulsory union of these two countries, a social revolution will break out in Ireland, although in old-fashioned forms. (The resolution refers to the agrarian-democratic character of the revolution in Ireland at this time, as opposed to the socialist revolution in advanced countries like England.—AUTHOR.) English landlordism will lose not only a big source of its wealth, but ALSO ITS MOST IMPORTANT SOURCE OF MORAL STRENGTH, AS THE REPRESENTATIVE OF THE RULE OF ENGLAND OVER IRELAND. On the other hand, the English proletariat will make its landlords invulnerable in England so long as their power remains inviolate in Ireland.

On the other hand, the ENGLISH BOURGEOISIE has not only exploited Irish poverty in order to worsen the condition of the working class in England, by the forced transplantation of poor Irish peasants, but it has moreover divided the proletariat into hostile camps. The revolutionary fire of the Celtic workers does not harmonise with the restrained force but slowness of the Anglo-Saxons. In all the big industrial centres of England a deep antagonism exists between the English and Irish workers. The average English worker hates the Irish as a competitor who lowers his wages and LEVEL OF LIVING. He feels national and religious antagonism towards him. He appears to him in much the same light as the black slaves appeared to the poor whites in the Southern States of North America. This antagonism between the proletarians of England is artificially cultivated and maintained by the bourgeoisie. It knows that in this antagonism lies the REAL SECRET OF MAINTAINING ITS POWER.

This antagonism also appears on the other side of the Atlantic. Turned off their native land by bullocks and sheep, the Irish emigrate to the U.S.A., where they are an important and growing part of the population. Their sole thought, their sole passion, is hatred to the English. The English and the American Governments—that is, the classes which represent them—cultivate that hatred so as to perpetuate INTERNATIONAL CONTRADICTIONS, which are a brake on every serious and honest union between the working class of both countries and a brake on their common liberation.

Ireland is the only excuse of the English Government for maintaining A BIG STANDING ARMY, which in case of need they send against the English workers, as has happened after the army became turned into praetorians in Ireland. Finally, England is at present what Ancient Rome was, in even greater degree. A people which enslaves another people forges its own chains.

In this way the viewpoint of the International Working Men's Association on the Irish question is very clear. Its first task is the speeding on of the social revolution in England. For this end the decisive blow must be struck in Ireland.

The resolutions of the General Council on the Irish amnesty must be the forerunner of other resolutions. In the latter it will be shown that, without mentioning international justice, THE ESSENTIAL PRELIMINARY CONDITION OF THE EMANCIPATION OF THE ENGLISH WORKING CLASS is the turning of the present COMPULSORY UNION, that is slavery, of Ireland with England, into an EQUAL AND FREE UNION, if that is possible, or INTO FULL SEPARATION, if this is inevitable."

The resolution was not mere words, it had its practical effect. For the first time English and Irish workers, in both England and America, began to fight together. The American section of the International was responsible for creating the first big independent labour movement in the States, and it is no accident that in the movements immediately after the period of the International, the heroic Molly Maguires among the miners of Pennsylvania and the Knights of Labour, Irish workers already played a leading role.

There is no need to dwell in detail on the role played by the working class in Ireland itself. That has been done by the first Irish Marxist and greatest Irish revolutionary, James Connolly, in his book *Labour in Irish History*. To sum up the lessons of Connolly's book, we may say that in the great historic movements for Irish independence, the Irish working class, the men and women of Cork, Dublin and Belfast, have always played a leading role, and the greater the movement, the more real its threat to British domination, the greater has been the role of the workers.

This was so in 1916, so in 1919-21, so in the Civil War when the Free Staters drowned the republican and social movement of the masses in blood with the help of British arms and munitions. It was this that led Liam Mellows from his prison cell to cry "The people with a stake in the country were never with the revolution. The

issue is—Capitalism and Empire versus national independence and the industrial workers and poor farmers.”

Connolly wrote with perfect truth, a truth proved by every page of Irish history, that “only Marxism provides the clue to Irish history.” Yet it may be objected, Connolly, the Marxist, did not himself succeed in liberating Ireland. It is true, and it is necessary to say that Connolly, great man though he was, infinitely greater than any other Irishman of his time, also made mistakes. Connolly with true working-class instinct, saw that only Marxism, the outlook of the world working class, could give the key to Irish history, to the liberation of Ireland. But Connolly himself did not altogether understand Marxism and included in his outlook several elements which were not Marxist, but nearer to Syndicalism. Particularly Connolly failed to understand the need for a revolutionary party of the working class.

Connolly lived in the epoch of the Second International, when the official leaders of socialism tried their best to distort and conceal the real revolutionary content of Marxism. Marxism is not mere theory, it is a guide to action. It does not merely seek to explain the world, but to change the world, and for revolutionary Marxists there exists no gap between theory and practice. The essence of Marxism lies in the *Party* of the working class, the highest expression of the unity of thought and action, theory and practice. The best, the most advanced of the workers, uniting in a revolutionary party which leads the oppressed peoples and classes to the overthrow of the old order, this is the very essence of Marxism. Connolly was beginning to understand this in 1916, the experience of the class struggle and the fight against imperialism, the treachery of the socialist leaders in 1914, were teaching him this greatest lesson. The only revolutionary who fully assimilated this essence of Marxism before the war was Lenin, and the Bolshevik Party, which victoriously led the great anti-capitalist, anti-landlord, anti-imperialist revolution in Russia in 1917, was the result of his understanding.

Connolly was murdered in 1916. Had he lived to know Lenin and his work there can be no doubt that he would have recognised in him the leader of the world working class, that he would have understood that *Leninism was Marxism in the period of imperialism*. In the Communist International he would have seen the continuer of the revolutionary work of the First International of Marx and Engels. In the Soviet Union he would have seen the hope of the oppressed of all the world against imperialism. Connolly, with his splendid proletarian and revolutionary instinct, could not have failed to see that what was lacking in Ireland in 1916,

in 1919-22, was a revolutionary Party, a Communist Party, able to lead and organise the workers of town and country, and build up an alliance with the small farmers. Had such a party existed in Ireland, Griffiths, Cosgrave, and "the men with a stake in the country" would never have triumphed. Had such a Party existed then in England, able to fight along with the Irish Communists, the imperialist war would have ended in a revolution in England also.

To-day there exists, under the leadership of the Communist International, of the Party of Lenin, a great world anti-imperialist movement. In China the Soviet regions already cover thousands of square miles, have more inhabitants than Germany. In India the working class is now creating its Communist Party to lead the struggle of millions of peasants for land and freedom, a struggle which Gandhi and the Congress Nationalists have betrayed. In Poland, in Czechoslovakia, in all the European countries where the Versailles treaties built up a prison-house for numerous oppressed nationalities, under the leadership of the Communist Parties, the fight for national freedom, for socialism, goes on successfully. The oppressed peoples of Eastern Europe know too well that they have no other champions but the revolutionary working class, no other Party but the Communist Party.

What are the alternatives before the workers and poor farmers of Ireland? De Valera and Fianna Fail? But Fianna Fail, for all its demagoguery about social questions, is the Party of native Irish capitalism, of the small business men and well-to-do farmers. It has never been a party of revolutionary struggle, but De Valera, during the Cosgrave terror, tried to play the part played by Parnell in the Land League days, of keeping in with the "gunmen," while playing the game of Parliamentary opposition. To-day, carried into power by the votes of the masses, urged on by the terrible economic crisis, he is compelled to redeem the promises of opposition days, to start the anti-imperialist struggle against England. But he carries it on with waverings, talk of "arbitration," seeking always some basis for a compromise, hesitating to bring the clear issue of independence forward. But what kind of arbitration can there be over the question of the tribute and the oath? If the Irish people declare they refuse to be robbed any longer for the English landlords and the pensions of police and Castle murderers, if they declare they are independent of the bloody British Empire, who has the right to "arbitrate" on such questions?

De Valera continues to collect the tributes, but the money, to whomsoever it may be paid, is nevertheless stolen from the peasants

by the landlords of England. If the Free State needs money to help pay the unemployed allowances, to give relief to the poor farmers, let it tax the ranchers, the rich farmers, the brewers, the Irish capitalists. Fianna Fail "idealists" talk about "Christian Communism," by which they seem to mean the developing of hand industries and small farming. But hand industries belong to the Middle Ages and where is the land to come from for the farms? Fianna Fail refuse to talk of breaking up the ranches, the only way to relieve the poor farmers, to give land to the landless. This is talk only meant to keep the young men of the I.R.A. from turning towards a real radical solution of Ireland's difficulties, from turning towards Communism.

Is the I.R.A. the Party which can save Ireland? It has a great revolutionary past. Its rank and file is composed of small farmers, agricultural labourers, the poor of the towns, the industrial workers. But does the I.R.A. have a programme? Partly it rejects politics altogether, failing to understand that the anti-imperialist struggle is also a social struggle, that Ireland cannot be united and freed from England without also carrying on a class struggle against the Irish capitalists, Protestant and Catholic, who are agents of English imperialism. Partly it also talks of class struggle, of socialism, but in a hesitant, inconsistent way. The leaders of the I.R.A. understand well enough that their followers will not fight for an Irish capitalist republic, but they themselves, of petty-bourgeois origin, are still afraid to break with Irish capitalism, with the well-to-do Irish farmers, with that great capitalist institution, the Church of Rome. So, in spite of themselves, they continue to deceive their followers with radical phrases, for they cannot possibly put those phrases into practice until they break with capitalism absolutely and completely, in all its forms, including the religious form. Because they are not prepared to do this, they also cannot lead the people of Ireland to freedom, despite the fine revolutionary will to freedom of the Army's rank and file.

There remains the way for which Connolly died, the way of Marx and Lenin. A proletarian revolutionary Party is alone capable of uniting Ireland and carrying the fight through to its victorious end, a workers' and farmers' Irish Republic. Engels long ago saw all the weaknesses of the Irish movement. In a letter to Marx in 1869 he wrote that "Ireland is still a 'sacred isle' whose sufferings must in no way be confused with the vulgar class struggle of the rest of the sinful world. . . . This is partly the considered tactics of the leaders so as to keep their domination over the peasants. To this must

be added that a peasant nation has always to take its literary representatives from among the town bourgeoisie and its idea-mongers. . . . For these gentlemen any workers' movement is purest heresy and the Irish peasant must not know that the socialist workers are his only allies in Europe. . . . You remember how O'Connell always slandered the Chartists to the Irish, though the latter, or rather because the latter, also demanded the abolition of the Union between England and Ireland."

Like O'Connell, the "Liberator," in the past, the Irish middle-class nationalists to-day are fond of slandering the Communists, the Soviet Union, of pretending Ireland is an exceptional country, above the class struggle. But experience has shown too often how right Engels was when he pointed out the danger to the Irish peasants of taking their leaders from the writers and politicians of the town bourgeoisie. Only the workers are the real allies and leaders of the Irish farmers. Only a working-class party is capable of uniting Ireland and freeing its masses. The anti-imperialist struggle of Ireland is to-day more than ever a part of the world revolutionary movement; "splendid isolation," "ourselves alone," is treason to the revolution.

The working-class of England, the United States, Canada, Australia, have a sacred duty to the Irish workers, to break down the divisions artificially created between the Irish and themselves, divisions of nationality and religion, to give them the utmost possible help in the struggle against British imperialism. Although the English oligarchy no longer draw their chief strength from the oppression of Ireland, but from the oppression of India, a blow at British imperialism in Ireland is still a mortal blow, a blow that would spell freedom for millions, not only in England, but all over the world. Lenin at the Second Congress of the Communist International emphasised that "direct help of all the Communist Parties to the revolutionary movement in the dependent nations or nations with unequal rights is essential," and particularly mentioned the example of Ireland, then engaged in a life and death struggle with British imperialism.

Such help must not be paper help, but help such as the First International, under the leadership of Marx and Engels, rendered to the Fenians. Demonstrations, work in the Trade Unions, strikes against terror or troop movements, a bitter fight against the coercion policy of the "National" Government, which is the worst enemy of the English as it is of the Irish workers, this is the call of Marx and Engels and Lenin to the British workers.

The workers of the United States must remember also that Marx

showed how the American bourgeoisie was able to use Anglo-Irish antagonism for its own ends. It will do so again, is doing so now. Only the unity of Irish and American workers in a struggle for Irish freedom along with the English workers, against English and American imperialism can prevent this. This is the task bequeathed to the American workers by Marx, Engels and Lenin.

To the workers of Ireland itself the legacy of these three great revolutionaries, who themselves at different periods fought so well for Ireland, who made the workers of the whole world alive to Ireland's importance for the world revolution, is also clear. Only the revolutionary movement of the workers of Ireland, regardless of religious differences artificially kept alive by Catholic and Protestant exploiters alike, can unite the Irish people and make a new free Ireland, a socialist republic of workers and farmers. A mass Communist Party, acting with the revolutionary workers of the whole world, can alone lead to a free and independent Irish workers' and farmers' republic, to the destruction of national and social oppression for ever!

