

MARX AND ENGELS ON IRELAND—IV.

[We conclude this month the instalments of the *Correspondence of Marx and Engels illustrating their attitude on Ireland*. The extracts have been made by T. A. Jackson, who has also provided an Introduction and explanatory Notes. The letters printed in this instalment have been specially translated from the German edition of the *Correspondence between Marx and Engels now being published by the Marx-Engels-Lenin Institute.*]

WITH this instalment we conclude the series of extracts from the correspondence of Marx and Engels relating to Ireland. They form, in bulk, only a small fraction of their total output upon the question; but, at the same time they give, qualitatively the essentials of their standpoint. They constitute evidence not only of the amazing thoroughness with which Marx and Engels acquainted themselves with every fact relevant to the political situation before them—but also of the efficacy of the historical method with which Marx's name is indelibly associated—Engels contributing to its formulation in a degree second only to that of his friend and leader.

The appositeness of their joint conclusions to the situation presented to us in our own day is striking. Not only have we a new Fenian movement in the I.R.A. (Irish Republican Army) and sympathetic thereto a new Irish section of the Workers' International, but the question of the separation of Britain and Ireland is raised in a sharper form than ever.

The general conclusions of Marx and Engels may be thus formulated :

1. The Fenian movement as the struggle of a subjected people against both the fact and the causes of their subjection, is essentially revolutionary alike in its methods and its objectives.
2. The relative backwardness of Irish economic development is a reflex co-relative of the advance of British economic development.
3. The political separation of Ireland from Britain is indispensable as much in the interest of the British workers as in that of the Irish workers and working-farmers.
4. Such a separation is an indispensable preliminary to any future federal union of the two peoples as equals. The British workers should take the initiative in enforcing their separation.
5. An Independent Irish Republic would, pending the development of a Socialist world-economy, have to defend its economic reconstruction by means of protective tariffs.

6. The Fenian movement in that it aimed at smashing the power of the landlords and exalting that of the common-people had a certain Socialist tendency.
7. The success of an agrarian revolution in Ireland would have a vital and far-reaching importance for the settlement of the " Social Question " of the whole world.

These things, true 60 years ago, are even truer to-day. Irishmen should note that Marx and Engels penetrated to the heart of the matter with greater precision than any other politicians, English or Irish, living in their day; British workers should note the importance Marx and Engels attached to the Irish question.

MARX TO ENGELS.

December 4, 1869.

DEAR FRED,

The resolution was unanimously carried in spite of Odger insisting on verbal amendments. I have only given in to him on one point, the omission of the word " deliberate " before " insults " in the first paragraph. I did this *on the pretence that everything a Prime Minister publicly did, must be presumed eo ipso to be deliberate.* The real reason was that I knew that once the first paragraph of the thing was agreed to, all further opposition would be in vain. I am sending you two *National Reformers* wherein is a report of the first two sessions but not the last one. This report is also bad and much of it quite false (through misunderstanding), still it is better than Eccarius' report in *Reynolds'* paper. They are by Harris about whose currency panacea you can also read in the last numbers of the *National Reformer*.

With the exception of Mottershead, who tries to play the rôle of John Bull, and Odger, who always plays that of the diplomat, the English delegates behaved very well. On Tuesday begins the general debate on the attitude of the English working class to the Irish question.

Here we have not only to combat the prejudice but also the stupidity and wretchedness of the Irish spokesmen in Dublin. The *Irishman* (Pigott) not only knew about the debates and resolution from *Reynolds'* which it receives and from which it often quotes. They were also sent direct to it by an Irishman (the resolutions) by November 17. *Up to to-day there is intentionally not a word about it.* The ass was similarly misleading during our debate and petition for the Manchester people. The Irish question must be treated as something quite apart from and unconnected with the rest of the world, and especially dead silence must be observed about the fact that the English workers sympathise with the Irish! What sort of a herd can be got from one cow! The International

on the other hand has organs throughout Europe and the U.S.A. Now this week he has received the resolutions officially with the signatures of the Foreign Secretaries. The matter has also been sent to the *People*. *Nous verrons* (we shall see). Mottershead is against the *Irishman* and will unfailingly make use of this opportunity to poke fun at the "high-souled" Irishmen.

I will yet play a trick on Pigott. I am writing to-day to Eccarius, asking him to send the resolution with the signatures, &c., to Isaac Butt as president of the Irish Working Men's Association. Butt is not Pigott.

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ENGELS TO MARX.

MANCHESTER.

December 9, 1869.

DEAR MOHR,

In the reports in the *National Reformer* sure enough some nonsense was put into your mouth. It's always the same these days. The *Beehive* ignores the whole debate, I notice. This they call publicity, just like the old saw (didaskalia) "For spirit, mind and publicity."

I had half expected the business with the *Irishman*. Ireland is still the *sacra insula* (sacred island) whose aspirations must not be confounded with the profane class struggles of the rest of this sinful world. To be sure, this is partly honest craziness on the part of the people, but also partly, just as surely, calculated by their spokesmen to keep their mastery over the peasantry. So it comes about that a peasant nation must always take its literary representatives from the bourgeoisie of the cities and from their ideologists, and so Dublin is apparently to Ireland (I mean Catholic Dublin) what Copenhagen is to Denmark. But to these gentlemen the whole working class movement is sheer heresy and the Irish peasant must not know that the Socialist workers are their only allies in Europe.

But the *Irishman* has been very lousy in other respects this week. If it wanted to withdraw at the first threat of the suspension of the Habeas Corpus Act, then the previous sabre-rattling before was quite wrong. And now there is its anxiety lest there should be other political prisoners elected! On the one hand the Irish are warned, and quite rightly, not to let themselves be lured into any illegalities, and on the other hand they are kept back from doing the only legal thing which is to hand and which has a revolutionary character, and which alone can successfully break down the accepted practice of electing the place-hunting lawyers and impress the British Liberals. Here, clearly, is Pigott's anxiety lest others get in before him.

You remember, too, how O'Connell also was always inciting the Irish against the Chartists although, or even because, these had also inscribed Repeal on their banner.

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MARX TO ENGELS.

LONDON.

December 10th, 1869.

DEAR FRED,

Ad vocem : Irish Question. I did not go to the Central Council last Tuesday. My "family" did not allow me—although I had undertaken to open the debate—to go out in this fog in my present state of health.

As regards the report in the *National Reformer*, not only is nonsense attributed to me but what is rightly reported is falsely reported. But I did not want any self-advertisement. *D'abord* (to begin with), I would get the reporter (Harris) into trouble thereby. And, secondly, so long as I do not mix myself up with it, all these reports have nothing official about them. If I correct anything, I concede the rest to be correct. And the whole of it, as it is reproduced, is false. Besides, I have reasons not to turn these reports into juristic evidence against me and this will happen the instant I correct details.

The way in which I will present this question next Tuesday is like this: leaving out of consideration all "international" and "humanitarian" phrases about justice for Ireland which go without saying in an International Council, *it is to the direct and absolute interest of the English working class to get rid of their present connection with Ireland*. And this is my deepest conviction, and on grounds which, in part, I cannot communicate to the British workers themselves. I did believe for a long time that it was possible to overthrow the Irish régime by *English working class ascendancy*. I have constantly put forward this point of view in the *New York Tribune*. Deeper study has now led me to the opposite conclusion. *The English working class will never do anything before it has got rid of Ireland*. The wedge must be driven in in Ireland. That is why the Irish question is of such importance for the socialist movement generally.

I have read a lot of Davies in extracts. The book itself I have only glanced through superficially in the Museum, so you will place me under an obligation if you will copy out for me the parts relating to common property. You must get hold of Curran's speeches edited by Davis (London, James Duffy, 22 Paternoster Row). I wanted to make you a present of it when you were last in London. Now it is circulating among the English members of the Central Council and God knows when I

shall see it again. It is of decisive importance for the period from 1779 to 1800 (Union) not only on account of Curran's speeches (particularly the judicial ones)—I consider Curran *the only great advocate* (people's advocate) of the 18th century and the *noblest of natures*, while Grattan was a parliamentary blackguard—but because you will find cited therein *all the sources* dealing with the United Irishmen.

This period is of the very greatest interest, scientifically and dramatically. First, the swinish acts of the English from 1588 to 1589 are repeated (and perhaps even exceeded) in 1788-1789. Secondly, it is easy to discern the class movement itself within the Irish movement. Thirdly, the infamous policy of Pitt, and fourthly, what will irritate the English gentlemen exceedingly, proof that Ireland failed because, as a matter of fact, from a revolutionary standpoint *the Irish were too far advanced* for the English King and Church mob, while, on the other side, the English reaction in England (as in Cromwell's time) was rooted in the enslavement of Ireland. This period must be presented in at least one chapter, a monument of shame to John Bull!

Here are three important points concerning the contemporary Irish movement.

1. Opposition to the lawyers and trading politicians and blarney.
2. Opposition to the dictates of the priests who (*the ones in high positions*) as in O'Connell's time, from 1789-1800, are traitors.
3. The rising of the agricultural labouring class against the farming class on the last meetings. (Similar phenomena from 1795-1800.)

The *Irishman* only rose to fame through the suppression of the Fenian press. For a long time it was in opposition to Fenianism. Luby, &c., of the *Irish People*, &c., were educated men who treated religion as a bagatelle. The government stuck them in prison and then came the Piggotts and Co. The *Irishman* will only be something till these people are out of prison again. It knows this although it is now making political capital out of the Declamation on the felon convicts.

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MARX TO KUGELMANN.

LONDON.

March 28th, 1870.

DEAR KUGELMANN,

I send you a letter destined for the Braunschweig Committee, Bracke and the comrades. It will be best if after reading it you pass it on yourself, remembering that it is confidential and not intended for publication.

Here is the letter :

INTERNATIONAL WORKING MEN'S ASSOCIATION
CENTRAL COUNCIL, LONDON.
Confidential Communication.

. . . . Finally the long-suppressed wrath against the General Council broke forth openly. *Progrès* and *Egalité* jeered, attacked the General Council and declared that it was not doing its duty, for example, it was not issuing quarterly bulletins ; the General Council must denounce direct control over England and must found an English Central Committee which should concern itself only with English matters ; the resolution of the General Council on the arrest of the Fenians was outside its province since it is not its business to occupy itself with such questions of local politics. . . .

' I attach an exact copy of the letter from the General Council to the Geneva Romande Central Committee.

The General Council to the Federal Council of La Suisse Romande at Geneva.

At the special session of January 1st, 1870, the General Council resolved :

. . . 5. The Question of the Resolutions of the General Council on the Irish Amnesty.

If England is the bulwark of European landlordism, then Ireland is the unique spot where the hardest blow can be struck against official England.

First and foremost, Ireland is the bulwark of English landlordism. If landlordism falls in Ireland, it must necessarily fall in Britain also. In Ireland this operation is a hundred times easier because the economic struggle there is exclusively concentrated on the ownership of the land, because this struggle is there at the same time a national struggle, and the people are more revolutionary and embittered than in England. Landlordism in Ireland is only maintained by the presence of British troops. The moment the forced union between the two countries ceases to exist, a social revolution, albeit in antiquated forms, will break out in Ireland. The English landlords will not only lose an enormous source of their wealth, but also a great moral source of strength as the representatives of England supremacy in Ireland. On the other hand, the English proletariat will find its landlords in England invulnerable so long as their power is maintained in Ireland.

On the other hand the English bourgeoisie has not merely exploited Irish misery to depress the conditions of the English working class by forcing poverty-stricken Irish to emigrate, but it has in addition to this,

split the proletariat into two enemy camps. The revolutionary fire of the Celtic worker does not easily unite with the massive but slower methods of the Anglo-Saxon. In all the big industrial centres of England there is a deep gulf between the Irish and English proletarians. The average English worker hates the Irish worker as a rival who is lowering his wages and his standard of living. He feels a national and religious antipathy towards him. He considers him almost in the same light as the poor whites of the Southern States of North America considered the negro slaves. This cleavage between the two proletariats is artificially fostered and kept alive by the bourgeoisie. They know this cleavage is the real secret of the maintenance of their power.

This cleavage also persists on the other side of the Atlantic ocean. Irishmen, driven from their homeland by cattle and sheep, betake themselves to the U.S.A. where they form a considerable and ever-increasing proportion of the population. Their one thought and passion is hatred of England. The English and American governments, that is to say, the classes those governments represent, nurse these passions in order to perpetuate those international enmities which hinder any serious and honourable alliance between the working class of both sides and, in consequence, their common emancipation.

Ireland is the only pretext the English Government has for keeping a big standing army, which, if necessity arises, can be let loose on the English workers, as has been seen, after the soldiery composing it have been trained in Ireland. Finally, England shows us to-day what Ancient Rome showed us on a much greater scale. A nation which brings others under its yoke is forging its own chains.

The point of view of the International Association in regard to the Irish question is thus very clear. Its first task is to speed up the social revolution in England. For this purpose a decisive blow must be struck in Ireland.

The General Council's resolutions on the Irish Amnesty serve as introduction to other resolutions. In these latter it is shown that, not even speaking of international justice, a necessary preliminary condition of the emancipation of the English working class is the transformation of the present compulsory union, i.e., the enslavement of Ireland, into an equal and free alliance, if that is possible, or complete independence if it is not.

EXPLANATORY NOTES

NATIONAL REFORMER—A Journal then edited by Charles Bradlaugh. Its policy was declared to be "in politics, Republicanism; in religion, Atheism; in economics, Malthusianism."

FOREIGN SECRETARIES :—The corresponding Secretaries for the various National Sections of the I.W.M.A.

"DAVIES":—"A Discovery of the True Causes why Ireland was Never Entirely Subdued nor brought under Obedience of the Crown of England until the beginning of His Majesty's Happy Reign." By Sir John Davies [Attorney-General for Ireland under James I.] 1612.

"CURRAN'S SPEECHES":—"The Speeches of the Rt. Hon. John Philpot Curran." Edited, with Memoir and Historical Notes, by Thomas Davis. Dublin, 1848.

LUBY, THOMAS CLARKE (1821-1901)—Leading Fenian; registered proprietor, and assistant-editor of the "Irish People." Sentenced in 1865 to twenty years' penal servitude.

"PROGRÈS" and "EGALITÉ": Bakunist journals.

PIGGOTT, Richard—Afterwards celebrated as the forger of letters which formed the main basis of the celebrated *Times* articles on "Parnellism and Crime" and the Royal Commission that investigated them.

BUTT, ISAAC (1813-1879)—Lawyer; one-time opponent of Daniel O'Connell; later leader of a succession of Federalist, Parliamentary Nationalist Movements; was "deposed" from his leadership of the "Home Rule Association" by the then young Charles Stuart Parnell in 1877. Butt defended most of the Fenian prisoners, and was active on behalf of the Amnesty Association. The "Irish Working-Men's Association" had only a transitory existence; but it was for a time possessed of branches in Dublin, Cork, Newry, Dundalk, and Sligo.

DR. KUGELMANN was a distinguished gynæcologist living in Hamburg. He had been as a student a comrade with Marx in the Communist League. The "secret" circular given above was sent through Kugelmann to the Braunschweig section of the International in reply to the attacks of the Bakunists (who had captured the Federal Council of the Suisse Romande at Geneva) on the policy of the General Council. The Bakunists, taking an ultra-"Left" pose affirmed that the Fenian struggle was "merely" Nationalist and therefore "bourgeois" and not at all revolutionary.