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Karl Marx, *[Ireland and the English Working Class]*⁸⁶

If England is the bulwark of European landlordism and capitalism, the only point at which one can strike a major blow against official England is *Ireland*.

In the first place, Ireland is the bulwark of English landlordism. If it collapsed in Ireland, it would collapse in England. The whole operation is a hundred times easier in Ireland, because there the economic struggle is concentrated exclusively on landed property, because that struggle is at the same time a national one, and because the people have reached a more revolutionary and exasperated pitch there than in England. Landlordism in Ireland is kept in being solely by the *English army*. If the enforced union between the two countries were to cease, a social revolution would immediately break out in Ireland – even if of a somewhat backward kind. English landlordism would lose not only a major source of its wealth, but also its greatest moral force – the fact of *representing England's domination over Ireland*. On the other hand, by preserving the power of its landlords in Ireland, the English proletariat makes them invulnerable in England itself.

In the second place, in dragging down the working class in England still further by the forced immigration of poor Irish people, the English bourgeoisie has not merely exploited Irish poverty. It has also divided the proletariat into two hostile camps. The fiery rebelliousness of the Celtic worker does not mingle well with the steady slow nature of the Anglo-Saxon; in fact in all *the major industrial centres of England* there is a profound antagonism between the Irish and the English proletarians. The ordinary English worker hates the Irish worker as a competitor who brings down his wages and standard of living.

⁸⁶ This text is another excerpt from the resolution written by Karl Marx (see note 1) described in note 77.

He also feels national and religious antipathies for him; it is rather the same attitude that the poor whites of the Southern states of North America had for the Negro slaves. This antagonism between the two groups of proletarians within England itself is artificially kept in being and fostered by the bourgeoisie, who know well that this split is the real secret of preserving their own power.

This antagonism is reproduced once again on the other side of the Atlantic. The Irish, driven from their native soil by cattle and sheep, have landed in North America where they form a considerable, and increasing, proportion of the population. Their sole thought, their sole passion, is their hatred for England. The English and American governments (in other words, the classes they represent) nourish that passion so as to keep permanently alive the underground struggle between the United States and England; in that way they can prevent the sincere and worthwhile alliance between the working Classes on the two sides of the Atlantic which would lead to their emancipation.

Furthermore, Ireland is the only excuse the English government has for keeping up a large regular army which can, as we have seen, in case of need attack the English workers after having done its basic training in Ireland.

Finally, what ancient Rome demonstrated on a gigantic scale can be seen – in the England of today. A people which subjugates another people forges its own chains.

Therefore the International Association's attitude to the Irish question is absolutely clear. Its first need is to press on with the social revolution in England, and to that end, the major blow must be struck in Ireland.

The General Council's resolutions on the Irish Amnesty are designed simply to lead into other resolutions which will declare that, quite apart from the demands of international justice, it is an essential precondition for the emancipation of the English working class to transform the present enforced union (in other words, the enslavement of Ireland) into a free and equal confederation, if possible, and into a total separation, if necessary. [...]