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Friedrich Engels, *[Relations Between the Irish Sections and the British Federal Council]*⁸⁷

[...] The Irish sections in England were no more under the jurisdiction of the British Federal Council than the French, German or Italian and Polish sections in this country. The Irish formed, to all intents and purposes, a distinct nationality of their own, and the fact that they used the English language could not deprive them of the right, common to all, to have an independent national organization within the International.

[...] There was the fact of seven centuries of English conquest and oppression of Ireland, and so long as that oppression existed, it was an insult to Irish working men to ask them to submit to a British Federal Council. The position of Ireland with regard to England was not that of an equal, it was that of Poland with regard to Russia. What would be said if this Council called upon Polish sections to acknowledge the supremacy of a Russian Federal Council in Petersburg, or upon Prussian Polish, North Schleswig, and Alsatian sections to submit to a Federal Council in Berlin? Yet what it was asked to do with regard to Irish sections was substantially the same thing. If members of a conquering nation called upon the nation they had conquered and continued to hold down to forget their specific nationality and position, to 'sink national differences' and so forth, that was not Internationalism, it was nothing else but preaching to them submission to the yoke, and attempting to justify and to perpetuate the dominion of the conqueror under the cloak of Internationalism. It was sanctioning the belief, only too common among the English working men, that they were superior beings compared to the Irish, and as much an

⁸⁷ This passage is taken from a manuscript of Friedrich Engels (see note 47) in regard to an intervention he made during the meeting of the GC on 14 May 1872. The full text can be found in GC, V: 297–300.

aristocracy as the mean whites of the Slave States considered themselves to be with regard to the Negroes.

In a case like that of the Irish, true Internationalism must necessarily be based upon a distinctly national organization; the Irish, as well as other oppressed nationalities, could enter the Association only as equals with the members of the conquering nation, and under protest against the conquest. The Irish sections, therefore, not only were justified, but even under the necessity to state in the preamble to their rules that their first and most pressing duty, as Irishmen, was to establish their own national independence. The antagonism between Irish and English working men in England had always been one of the most powerful means by which class rule was upheld in England. [...] Now, for the first time, there was a chance of making English and Irish working men act together in harmony for their common emancipation, a result attained by no previous movement in their country. [...]

If the promoters of this motion were so brimful of the truly International spirits, let them prove it by removing the seat of the British Federal Council to Dublin, and submit to a Council of Irishmen.

[...] If the motion was adopted by the Council, the Council would inform the Irish working men, in so many words, that, after the dominion of the English aristocracy over Ireland, after the dominion of the English middle class over Ireland, they must now look forth to the advent of the dominion of the English working class over Ireland.