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IRELAND



by
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Forgotten Books

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Foreword

Ireland is one of those subjects which have occupied me since my youth. In the year 1875 I began to examine Malthusianism, as the conventional socialist criticism of it did not satisfy me. As a result of my work on this, a book came into being, my first on the book-market, which was completed in 1878.

The appalling position of East India and Ireland was seen by the Malthusians as a major argument showing that misery is caused by over-population. So I was obliged to study thoroughly the history and economy of both countries and to incorporate a detailed discussion of them in my book *Einfluss der Volkvermehrung (The Effects of Population Increase)* However, when it finally became possible to publish the book, which was not till 1880 because of the Anti-Socialist Laws, the analyses of Ireland and East India had to be left out.

The East India manuscript is still in my desk. By the time it became possible to publish it, I had become a marxist, and from this standpoint it seemed inadequate to me. However, I was able to publish the work on Ireland as a pamphlet in 1880. It sold out within a few years, but I decided against a new edition for the same reasons I had allowed the East India exposition to rest.

Meanwhile the subject has occupied me since from time to time, and I began to prepare a new book on Ireland during the last few years with the new intensification of the struggle for an Irish Republic. But I have been prevented from

completing the work as quickly as I would have wished by other more pressing work.

Since then the Irish question has reached its present state, which we hope will soon be past, and will not recur. Thus, rather than remain silent, it seems proper to me to publish at least a preliminary sketch of the planned book.

Whether or not I will have the strength to bring the book to the perfection in which I would like to present it to the public depends not on me (apart from the state of my health) but on the kind of problems being forced on socialists today in superabundant profusion by the historical process, in which our wishes are of no account. Although great demands are placed upon us by this situation, none of us would wish it replaced by abundant leisure, which would represent a standstill in the triumphal procession of the proletariat.

Berlin, January 1922

K. Kautsky

1. The Early History of Ireland

After a continuous struggle of nearly one thousand years between the sister nations of England and Ireland a lasting peace seems finally to have been agreed and the injustice against the Irish people which is centuries old seems to have been ended.

The injustice started as far back as the early Middle Ages, in the 12th century. All feudal lords are hungry for estates and strive to acquire land. But the Norman aristocracy was distinguished by unusual greed. In 1066 a Norman army left Normandy and invaded England which it conquered in order to establish a Norman feudal aristocracy there. The invaders had scarcely consolidated themselves in England when they found that territory too small.

By the 12th century they had re-occupied the land they had come from – Normandy – and shortly after they sought to capture more French territory in long and bloody wars. They were not driven out till the middle of the 15th century.

At the same time, however, they found that Ireland was another convenient place for expansion. And this country (unlike France which was large and flourishing), completely cut off from Europe's cultural development by its geographical position, was in no position to ward off the foreign invaders.

Ireland remained subject to the hard, feudal rule of the barons who remained foreigners in their country of occupation and who, being closely connected with British

culture, looked down contemptuously at their barbarian copyholders.

In this way the contradiction between lords and bondsmen was intensified by the national contradiction. As if this was not enough, it was further heightened to an immeasurable extent during the Reformation Wars in the 16th and 17th centuries. At that time Catholicism was the main enemy of the English: not so much the Pope in Rome, but Catholic Spain and Catholic France, whose tool the Pope was.

But England's enemies were Ireland's friends. The wilder the blaze of anti-catholic fanaticism raged in England, the more tenaciously the Irish clung to the Catholic Church, despite the cruellest consequences. In the struggles at the time of the Reformation, the Catholic original inhabitants lost the remainder of their possessions in their own country.

“After the revolution of 1688 against James II the Catholics remained in possession of only one-eleventh of the land and even this meagre amount was not equally divided amongst the people but was in the hands of five or six Catholic families of English origin.” (K. Kautsky, *Ireland*, Leipzig, 1880, p.14)

From this time onwards the mass of the peasantry was only allowed to scrape a living as an outlawed peasantry, having their very blood sucked. They had much too little land and equipment. A class of hard-hearted owners of large estates was above them and these fled from the barbarism caused by their own system of exploitation to spend lavishly abroad the money-squeezed from the poor Irish.

It was at this time that the sea of blood and tears arose between England and Ireland – a gulf much deeper, rougher

and wider than St. George's Channel which separates the two islands.

There was no improvement in Ireland's position in the 18th century when England's industry started to expand. English industry, like all industry, was protectionist in its early stages and it demanded protection from the state-power to enable its development. Thus the British state sought to destroy the seeds of competition against English industry in those territories which were dependent on it: the North American colonies and Ireland. This was one of the most powerful reasons for the secession of the American colonies, which constituted themselves the United States of America. Ireland was too weak and too near England to free itself in this way. Its rebellions were all bloodily suppressed. The results of these defeats and of the ruined industry was increased misery. [1]

Footnote

1. This account ignores the internal factors in Irish society which contributed strongly to the decline of Southern Irish industry around 1800. For an account of these see *The Economics of Partition*, see Athol Books. All footnotes by the publisher.

2. 19th Century Decline

The new century brought a great economic upsurge in England. But during the first half of the century there was a further increase in the misery of the people of Ireland, though it scarcely seems possible that they could bear any more.

The capitalist mode of production strives in every branch of industry to replace human labour by other forces as much as possible. This tendency is halted where industrial production grows quicker than workers are released by technical advance. Here we find a relative decrease of workers in relation to capital employed, but an absolute increase in their number.

On the other hand, farming is not capable of rapid expansion in a country with an ancient culture. Here capitalist development usually leads to an absolute decrease of the agricultural population. This also happened in Ireland to a particularly marked extent. Her wretched small tenants would not have been capable of intensive, technically advanced cultivation. However, Ireland's soil and climate were exceptionally well suited to pasturing. The more England's cities grew, and with them meat-consumption, the more pasturing thrived. The developing railways simplified the transport of cattle.

Thus the big landowners found it profitable to drive out their wretched small tenants in order to replace them with cattle and sheep. In Ireland today two-thirds of the cultivated land is made up of meadows and pastures.

Professor Bonn, in his valuable book, which everyone wishing to study Ireland is recommended to read, says about this:

“Ireland is a land of permanent pasture. Two-thirds of the land is never touched by plough or spade. Here there is no one to be seen, for there are no cow-herds pasturing the cattle in the fields, which are enclosed. The only sign of human activity is a solitary pillar or stone in the middle of a field for the animals to rub themselves on. Between them lie scattered hundreds of thousands of ruined huts in which people used to live. On many slopes, rings and elevations show that here then once were broad beds surrounded by furrows where the Irish cottager did his wretched digging. It is these broad pasture-farms that have made Ireland into a land of great silence.”
(*Ireland and die irische Frage*, 1918, p.38, 39)

No wonder the rural population decreased rapidly: In other countries rural population declines (if more gradually) but this only results in an increase in the industrial population. Thus, in practically all countries the total population keeps growing.

In Ireland there was no industry to absorb the people released from the land. Massive emigration, mostly to England and America, was the only course for them. This has gone on up to the present: between May 1st, 1851 and December 31st 1913, 4,380,000 people emigrated from Ireland to places outside Europe. The millions who emigrated to England are not included here.

In the decade before that, 1841 to 1851, 780,000 Irish emigrated to the United States alone.

No wonder the country's population decreased rapidly. In 1841 the population reached its highest total of 8,200,000. In the pre-war year of 1913, it only amounted to 4,380,000.

The reason for the decline of population cannot be attributed to a custom of having two-child families. On the contrary, the fruitfulness of Irish marriages made Ireland the favourite example of the earlier Malthusians for proving that all misery results from over-population

Indeed, the excessive fertility of the Irish has probably always been a figment of the imagination. The birth-rate in Ireland since the registration of births first started has always been lower than that of England. Births per 10,000 of the population:

	1861-70	1910
in England	352	248
in Ireland	262	233

These figures alone refute the assertions of the Malthusians. However it is not worth squabbling with them these days, as they have joined the extinct species.

3. 19th Century Uprising

At first, England's industrial development intensified Irish misery. But industrial capitalism cannot expand beyond a certain point without rousing the lower classes, above all the industrial proletariat, to fight for political rights and social freedom.

A strong Irish oppositional movement arose as early as after the American War of Independence (1776-1782). It led to several concessions to Irish Catholics in the face of England's weakness resulting from the war.

A struggle for the right to vote began in England after the Napoleonic Wars. A struggle by the Catholics against their lack of rights, which prevented their access to public office and Parliament, arose parallel with this. And this Irish struggle was successful even earlier than that of the English

for the extension of the franchise. Catholic Emancipation, which opened the way to public office and parliament for Catholics, went through as early as 1829; the extension of the franchise not until 1832.

This electoral reform did not satisfy the English masses. It merely removed the ascendancy of landed property in favour of the bourgeoisie, but denied the right to vote to the workers. These continued the fight for the vote in the form of the Chartist movement.

The Irish were not satisfied with the opening of the way to Parliament either. Now they demanded their own Parliament. Ireland had had one till 1800. But the country's independence seemed highly dubious to England at that time as the French Revolution made the Irish friends of the French; and during the war between England and revolutionary France they had favoured French landings on the Irish coast.

The dissolution of the Irish Parliament in 1801 had not moved the mass of the people, for this Parliament had represented only the Protestant large estate owners and their lackeys.

Now, after Catholic Emancipation, a Parliament for the Irish people took on a quite different significance. The struggle for it began immediately after Catholic emancipation was carried. In 1830 the Repeal Association was founded with the aim of forcing the Repeal of the Union between the Irish and English Parliaments.

This movement soon achieved great strength, so long as the English Chartist movement stood beside it. The defeat of the

European revolutionary movements, and especially of the proletariat in 1848, caused the death of Chartism and also of the Repeal movement.

Simultaneously with this open political agitation, a secret economic defence movement had been going on since the end of the 18th century. When and where the economic pressure became particularly intolerable secret societies arose, usually calling themselves "Whiteboys" because of the white shirts they wore over their clothes for purposes of identification, during their night-time campaigns. Their aim was to intimidate and injure hard-hearted landowners by terroristic outrages. The English government never succeeded in mastering these secret bands. These were never under central command, (unlike the city secret societies of the time, in Italy and France), so at most, a single district here and there could be exposed. But even this was difficult for in the country informers do not develop easily as the goings and comings of individuals are much more obvious than in a big city.

These secret societies became a source of heavy losses for landowners and the English tax-payers, who had to pay for a powerful military and police force in Ireland. But if their lack of co-ordination made the suppression of the secret societies difficult it also prevented them from arriving at large combined operations.

By the beginning of the sixties the masses, all over Europe had recovered from the blows dealt them by reaction after 1848. The proletarian movement then surged up anew in England, and likewise the rebellion of Ireland against England.

But in meantime each of these movements had won new bases, and with them new forms. The proletarian movement did not rejuvenate the political party of Chartism but was centred in the trade unions. To begin with these followed the "International" but after the defeat of the Paris Commune in 1871 they increasingly succumbed to liberal influences.

In Ireland, however, emigration had become particularly heavy after the collapse of the European Revolution. Millions of Irish found themselves together in America, freed from the degrading effects of the misery at home, but filled with love for their native land and filled with hatred for those who had driven them over the ocean: the English. Now arose a new and terrible enemy for England; but a new and powerful help for Ireland: the Irish in America. Fanatics (as emigrants are as a rule), having greater resources than their brothers at home, they now gave a tremendous impetus to the Irish struggle for independence.

A new secret society became active in 1861, that, of the *Fenians*. This time it was a centralised society with an unseizable supreme command based in America and supplied with American resources. The society tried to bring about an armed uprising. When attempts at this failed, it turned to terroristic activities, not only in Ireland but also in England. The Fenians hoped to force a completely independent Irish Republic from the enemy by intimidation.

They failed to achieve this, although they were not entirely unsuccessful. They forced concessions from the English government: laws which were supposed to improve on the one hand the position of the Irish tenant, and on the other, that of the catholic clergy in Ireland. These law reforms

started in 1869, and had the immediate effect of conciliating the catholic clergy, who had become the most influential leaders of the mass of the Irish people, and of turning them into a part of the establishment. [2]

On the other hand, the land laws remained totally inadequate for a long time.

Nevertheless, the reforms, together with coercive measures, were enough to force the terrorists into the background for a while.

Meanwhile the Irish had learnt how to handle Parliamentarism, to which they had had access for a generation.

The Irish National Party was formed in 1872 and it demanded "Home Rule" (self-government or national independence) for Ireland. It did not differ greatly from the Fenians in aims, only in means. However the Home Rule Party did not entirely disdain the strengthening of parliamentary action through acts of terrorism by the Fenians – with whom close contact was sometimes maintained.

The Fenians and Home Rulers became particularly aggressive in the early eighties when competition from American food-stuffs drove the prices of agricultural products right down, and would have made the position of the Irish tenant a desperate one if rents hadn't been considerably reduced.

In contrast to Ireland's growing power of attack, the power of her opponent to resist was weakening.

The reduction of land-rents, which had become unavoidable, made the most determined opponents of Home Rule – the great landowners of Ireland – favour separation in order to save what could be saved. [3]

On the other hand in England the Liberal Party became more and more radical, and more and more conciliatory towards the Irish. We have already mentioned that the English workers had come increasingly under Liberal influence after the Paris Commune. This estranged them from socialism. However the Liberals only succeeded in attracting them by continually adapting themselves to the workers' demands.

Thus they had to replace the policy of forcible suppression of national movements with one of compromise and conciliation.

However the English taxpayers as a whole also grew to dislike a policy of suppression which entailed even more enormous costs, and the less they had the interests of the great landowners at heart, and the more the Irish landowners themselves showed themselves willing to be bargained with, the more pointless it all seemed.

Finally the presence of the Irish members in the English Parliament made it increasingly difficult to legislate quickly and successfully. Ireland sent 105 members into Parliament, of which the majority, usually over 80, were nationalists. Frequently they held the balance between the two large traditional parties, and were always inclined to join the Opposition and use all the tricks of the trade to make the life of every government a misery, and, at the very least delay that legislation in which they had no interest.

In 1865 the workers won an electoral reform, which admittedly did not give the universal vote, but which gave a vote to many workers who had previously not had one. After the reform new elections were held and the Liberals won with a large majority. Gladstone then brought in a Bill designed to create an Irish Parliament.

However not the whole of the Liberal Party could accept this step. It split and Gladstone was defeated with 311 as against 341 votes.

It was not until 1893 that Gladstone got a majority for a new Home Rule Bill, but only in the Lower House. The Upper House rejected it. As long as this resistance was unbroken, Home Rule remained impossible, and the English retained the methods of carrot and stick. They passed land reforms which were more and more radical and which were increasingly successful economically, but at the same time they passed coercive laws which exacted unprecedented sacrifices from both sides and whose only lasting effect was the growing embitterment of the combatants.

The Upper House did not lose the power of blocking Home Rule till 1911. From then on England no longer stood in the way of granting Home Rule to Ireland.

But meanwhile a new opponent of this demand had arisen in Ireland itself. That was Ulster.

Footnotes

2. It is not clear in what sense Kautsky means that the clergy had become part of the establishment. They certainly did not become part of the *British* establishment in Ireland at this time: on the contrary, with the replacement in about 1850 of the liberal hierarchy of the first half of the century by the Ultramontane hierarchy which has dominated Southern Irish society ever since, the Catholic Church became one of the chief anti-British forces in Ireland. From 1850 the clergy behaved as a distinct Irish establishment, dedicated to eradicating the effects of British liberalism and secularism from Irish society.

3. Around 1870 some landlords took the initiative in launching the Home Rule movement, reckoning that they had better chances of survival in a Home Rule Ireland which they helped to bring into being, than in a United Kingdom in which the agrarian demands of the Irish peasants were made law by the British industrial capitalist ruling class, which had little sympathy with the cause of landlordism. Isaac Butt, the founder of the Home Rule movement, was a lifelong champion of Orange Tory landlordism.

4. Ireland in the 20th Century

a) Ulster

The north-east corner of Ireland, the eastern part of the county of Ulster is a peculiar part of Ireland. It is the only part of Ireland in which protestants are in the majority and in which a strong industry has developed.

Like the rest of Ireland this territory was taken away from its original inhabitants by foreign invaders, but these were invaders of a special kind. They were from Scotland, not England; they were not conquering, plundering feudal lords, but political fugitives, living by their own labour.

The Reformation in England and Scotland was not simply a protestant battle against catholic power, but also a battle of protestants amongst themselves: on the one side royalty and nobility and the submissive state-church and on the other side the rising democratic classes, who were organised in sects with republican and anti-feudal tendencies.

When it was able to, the state-church persecuted these dissenters just as gruesomely as the Catholics. Many of the dissenters had to flee in the struggles of the 17th century. Most of the English dissenters sought refuge in Holland or in the English colonies in North America. The Scottish dissenters preferred the north-east of Ireland, which was near their home, as a place of refuge. [4]

Most of them were handicraftsmen. With them that part of Ireland facing Scotland gained something it did not otherwise have: an industrial, hardworking population. But it also gained a population of religious, puritanical fanatics.

They naturally despised catholicism – as a wretched heresy. But in Ireland, as in Scotland, the greater enemy (because it was the more powerful), was the state-church and the royal power. So long as the catholics remained weak and without rights, Ulster stood at the head of the Irish radical, democratic movement against English state-power.

Whilst the rest-of Ireland decayed economically after the Reformation, Ulster advanced. England's offensive against Irish industry in the 18th century caused most destruction in the woollen industry, which was centred in the catholic South. Ulster's prosperity rested on the linen industry and shipbuilding. These seemed less of a danger to the English capitalists and were left untouched. [5]

Ulster was, therefore, well prepared for the capitalist upsurge in the British state in the 19th century, a generous share of which fell to it.

With the increase in the industrial population the power of the state-church decreased. In 1829 the Dissenters (who had been the least tolerated section in the British state since 1689), were like the Catholics given political equality of rights.

Now Ulster's attitude was transformed. The enemy was no longer the English state with its established Church, but the Catholic majority in Ireland itself, which was increasing its power rapidly. If the better-educated, prosperous, hard-working Ulstermen had up to then looked down disparagingly at the Irish catholics because of their ignorance, their dirty poverty, their apathy resulting from despair, now they were filled with fear and with fear-engendered hatred (which is the worst kind) of the Irish –

now battling actively and, successfully for their further development.

The most energetic champions of a free Ireland now became its most violent enemies. The old religious fanaticism of the Presbyterians was kindled anew, and their ideology found fresh strength in the new social and political circumstances. The more England ceased to be the worst enemy of Irish Home Rule, the more Irish Ulster itself took her place. And this contradiction overshadowed all class contradictions. In Ulster's cities, especially Belfast, bloody fights between protestant and catholic workers took place endlessly. [6]

As Home Rule, sneeringly described as Rome Rule, came nearer, the Ulster people increasingly remembered their rebellious traditions and became more and more violent not merely to Ireland, but also to England, which wished to give independence to Ireland.

Immediately a majority for Home Rule was assured in the English Parliament, and the Upper House had lost its power to prevent it, Ulster prepared for armed resistance against the Irish Parliament to be imposed on them.

There arose an army of Volunteers, who armed themselves and drilled with weapons: And the warning of armed-resistance was no empty threat. It was given substance by the fact that a large, section of the English officer-corps let it be known that it would not allow itself to be used against Ulster. On the other side the Irish prepared for the overthrow of Ulster.

The British state seemed on the verge of civil war when the English Parliament refused to be intimidated (*by Ulster*)

and voted for the Government's Home Rule Bill in the summer of 1914 – at the very time when (*Kaiser*) William kindled the world war with his support of the mad and criminal Vienna Policies,

William and his followers would certainly have been less light-hearted in playing with fire had they not assumed England, crippled by the Irish conflict, would leave Russia and France (*to fight*) alone.

In this and other respects they were wrong. The general feeling for the war immediately defeated that for the civil war lobby. The implementation of Home Rule was postponed. Thus the people of Ulster were conciliated, as were their military supporters, who like the military in every nation have a liking for war. However, the majority of the Irish had been brought closer to England by the proposed Home Rule. England treated these carefully: compulsory military service, which became necessary during the war, was not extended to Ireland. However, the recruiting of volunteers yielded quite good results there, if not quite as good as in England and Scotland.

If the war had been short, the general patriotism it caused would perhaps have served to bring about Home Rule peacefully. However it dragged on, and the longer it lasted the more influence the military and their spirit gained, even in England, where the military had formerly had little say.

In these days when the democratic spirit has been: universally accepted by the masses of the people, the spirit of violence, engendered by militarism and war, must invariably have an evil effect, not only on those against whom it is directed, but also on those who direct it, because

it is so contradictory to the needs of political circumstances. Germany learnt this before and during the war; France, whose security is threatened by nothing but the military spirit, which is penetrating it and isolating it from the rest of the world, is learning it today: England learnt it during the war, and for a time after it from her Irish policies.

Footnotes

4. Kautsky does not mention the official Plantation of six Ulster counties. This is a mistake on the right side – when compared with Catholic nationalist histories which focus attention on the official Plantation at the expense of the more substantial settlement of Antrim and Down by spontaneous migration.

5. Here again Kautsky explains industrial development or decline as consequences of English economic policy, and without reference to internal social conditions in the various parts of Ireland, which in fact were the more important factors. See *Economics of Partition*, Athol Books.

6. For a more adequate account of the resurgence of “*the old religious fanaticism of the Presbyterians*” in the 19th century and of how it related to the development of the Catholic nationalist movement under the hegemony of an increasingly powerful Ultramontanist Catholic hierarchy, see *Ulster As It Is*, Athol Books.

b) New Rebellious Elements

In order to appreciate this we have to take another look at the changes which occurred in the Irish opposition during the last twenty years.

At first the main force of the Irish rebellion against the native big landlords, and the English government which was supporting them, was made up of impoverished tenant-farmers. These were led and organised by the Catholic clergy.

In the course of the last decade of the 19th century the attempts to make propertied farmers out of the majority of the peasants were finally successful. In 1914 there were 566,000 agricultural undertakings in Ireland. Of these 349,000 were run by their owners and 217,000 by tenants. Thus far more were run by their owners. In addition, the tenants' rents were greatly reduced by special courts of law. Furthermore the price of agricultural products rose at the turn of the century,

The agricultural population of Ireland is thus on the point of increasing.

At the same time the Catholic Church in Ireland has also feathered its nest.

Thus the position of the farmers and clergy has been changed and is now the same as in most of the older states: that is, they form a conservative element. Their demand for self-determination has not decreased with the increase of their power, but it is no longer expressed in such desperate

ways. They prefer the means of parliament to those of violence. They only support violence because of tradition.

However, the Irish in America were little affected by this change. A danger facing most emigrants who continue to take part in the politics of their homeland is: that they imagine the situation there to be the same as at the time of their emigration. If the conditions have changed considerably they are unable to understand it.

They saw England as the force which drove them out of Ireland. They no longer had direct interest in the prosperity or decline of their old homeland. They were concerned not so much with its prosperity but with their hatred of England. The rich financial resources they sent to Ireland must only benefit the most extreme tendencies whose aim was to harm England at any price and with most desperate means.

However, in the long-run, a rebellious movement cannot be maintained on subsidies alone in the absence of support from certain social interests and needs.

The base in the country people vanished. But two new rebellious elements in the cities replaced it.

The first was the up-and-coming Irish *intelligentsia*, which quickly increased with the growth in public education. The Irish intelligentsia had for a long time enriched English intellectual life. The Irish play a similar role in English literature as the Jews in German. They give it their wit and spirit: from Swift and Sheridan to Bernard Shaw. However, these Irish mostly belonged to the ruling, protestant strata, and they enriched only the hated anglo-saxon culture with their intellectual treasures.

The Irish intellectual remaining in Ireland, and wishing to influence the Irish people, found only a meagre field of activity. In all agricultural countries there is almost only one great field of activity: the government bureaucracy. But in Ireland this was controlled by the hated English.

Far more than for the farmers, the independence of Ireland now became for the intellectuals a question of survival.

In order to eliminate the super-imposed competition from the English intellectuals, Irish intellectuals sought to erect a new spiritual partition between England and Ireland and to revive the ancient Irish language. This has nearly died out. In 1911 there were only 16,837 people left whose only language was Irish. The number of those understanding Irish as well as English was

1891	630,245	14.5%	of the people
1901	641,142	14.4%	of the people
1911	582,446	13.3%	of the people

In spite of this continual regression in the language, which is becoming extinct, the Irish intellectuals strive to galvanise it into new life. They live more in the past than in the present, gush about the great deeds of yore and seek to revive old usages and customs. Like our German nationalist students who swear by Wodan.

They even write their own names in the ancient way wherever possible. The Treaty between Great Britain and Ireland, which should now definitively control the relations between them, is signed by five delegates for the Irish side, not one of which uses his usual name, but its ancient Irish

translation: Thus, for example, Mr. Gavan Duffy uses Seorsa Ghathain Ui Dubhthaig.

How that is pronounced, I do not know.

These nationalist Irish intellectuals became easy prey to the American extremists

The other new stratum of the population arising along with the Intellectuals, and showing outspoken rebellious spirit, was the wage-proletariat. of course Ireland's industry, apart from Ulster, remained weak. But even an agricultural country needs an extensive transport system, with its subsidiary industries, as soon as its exports begin to grow. This demands a certain development of the proletariat.

However, the latter developed in a situation which was completely nationalistic, and hostile to England. For this reason the Irish proletariat learnt very little from the English proletariat. Its relations with the Irish emigrants were much closer. Suppressed by the power of the state, brought to despair by the power of capital supported by the state, the proletariat at its inception always leaned towards over-rating force and under-rating economic laws which are rarely self-evident. This also applied to the Irish proletariat. Natural hatred of the capitalist government, was for the Irish proletariat, increased by the fact that it was the government of the foreign conqueror, or the English, that stood opposed to them. This tendency towards force arising amongst primitive strata of workers as soon as they become roused to action was twice as pronounced in the Irish proletariat because of the history of the country; for, ever since the first English invasion, the most brutal force had been used by

both sides as the main means of political and economic struggle.

The Irish workers grew to hate Parliamentarism more and more as the mass of the Irish farmers came to flourish under it, became prosperous and lost their revolutionary zeal. With the growing opposition of the urban workers to the farmers, who benefit by rises in the cost of provisions, their hatred of the nationalist Parliamentary Party also grew.

The nationalist syndicalism spreading amongst the Irish proletariat under these circumstances was a fruitful field for the American extremists.

Out of these intellectual and proletarian elements, subsidised and urged on from America, a rebellious movement arose, the leadership of which was soon taken over by Sinn Fein, which had been developing since 1905. At first Sinn Fein, founded by men of letters, had a predominantly literary character, but in time it assumed ever more violent forms. Ulster's appeal to arms found a powerful response amongst all the Irish, but chiefly amongst the Sinn Feiners.

These were furious because at the outbreak of war the majority of armed Irishmen did not join England's enemies, but made common cause with the English patriots. However, they themselves were so weak that it was a long time before they dared to strike out alone.

c) Civil War

It was not until April 1916 that, under pressure from America and Germany, there was an armed insurrection and an Irish Republic proclaimed. The forces supporting it were so weak that despite the greatest heroism on the part of the insurgents, they were quickly defeated.

If England had at that time been ruled by far-sighted politicians, aware of modern national feeling and able to reckon with it, the failure of the Rising could well have taken the wind out of the sails of the violent faction of Irish politicians for a long time, perhaps forever.

The mass of the Irish people were against the Rising, and they would have bitterly turned against those guilty of insurrection if the victorious government had not proceeded against the defeated in the most cruel manner.

However the spirit of militarism had become dominant in the government because of the war, and that spirit had scarcely shown itself so stupid, pig-headed and sordid, so lacking in foresight and chivalry, as at the beginning of the 20th century.

The soldiery was let loose on Ireland, and not only did it attack with a bloodthirsty rage the surviving rebels and their friends, but it treated the peaceable part of the population with the utmost cruelty. It made war against the whole of Ireland.

These blunderheads did not consider that opposed to them was a people who had in a century of uninterrupted war against cruel and coercive rule routed it and forced its

capitulation. In Russia [7] they may successfully use the Cheka to suppress an unwilling people for years yet. In Western Europe these methods fail. Here they increase defiance, create intensified resistance.

Thus it was that the bloody suppression of the Rising of the Easter days in 1916 did not extinguish the Irish Rebellion, but rather enabled it to blaze up to its full height.

The militarists sought to master the growing resistance by increasingly terroristic methods, and thus arose the appalling civil war which outlasted the world war by several years, inflicted deep wounds on England and threatened to destroy Ireland.

Undoubtedly the 40 millions of highly industrialised England and Scotland, supported by the enormous resources of the British Empire, had to defeat the 3 million farmers, men of letters, transport workers, with no industry, which made up Ireland after the separation of Ulster.

But what had England to win by victory? The three million seemed to be determined to be destroyed rather than capitulate. By its victory England would only have conquered a desert; she would have paid for the victory dearly, with enormous sacrifices in life and property, and war would have crippled her internal and foreign policy for years to come.

As the war psychosis, which had also taken over in England, disappeared; as the militaristic way of thinking, which sees ultimate wisdom in violently defeating an opponent, receded, the voices demanding a negotiated peace became more and more numerous. The socialists had always

interceded for Ireland's rights; the unions' call for a peace with Ireland also rang ever louder. The workers' party intervened energetically for Ireland. [8] Finally it was realised more and more in the bourgeois camp that continuation of the war could well ruin Ireland, but must also weaken England, and that victory by the slaughter of an entire people brings not laurels, but shame.

Footnotes

7. This remark follows from Kautsky's opposition to the October Revolution on the grounds that the backward social and economic conditions in Russia made the building of socialism impossible there.

8. The reference to the "workers' party" here and later, is to the Labour Party.

d) Reconciliation

Lloyd George, who is very sensitive to the moods of the important political elements in his country, finally felt himself forced to take the initiative for reconciliation. And, being an audacious and gifted tactician, he approached the other side in a way which shortly before no one believed possible. He offered concessions which went far beyond Home Rule, which had become law in August 1914. According to the new settlement to which he acceded, Ireland became a completely independent free state in the British Commonwealth, with its own commercial policy and own army. Only naval defence would remain for the moment a matter for the empire. Ulster is given a choice of whether or not to join the new Free State.

Far-reaching though this approach was, Lloyd George did not find it easy to bring the other side to condescend to negotiate.

As always happens in long and bitter wars, the most reckless tendency had become leader of the movement in Ireland, even though it had angered the movement while it was still a small minority by a line of action which was condemned by the great majority. This extreme tendency of irreconcilable Republicans led by De Valera, president of the Irish Republic, was completely under the influence of the American emigrants, who were equally far removed from both Ireland's woes and joys, and who were more concerned with England's harm than Ireland's good. These Irish politicians of force, who in their way are just as brutally narrow-minded as their English counter-parts, wanted to hear nothing of reconciliation, but demanded the

continuation of the war till England's unconditional capitulation!

One example of the absurdity and the recklessness of the American Sinn Feiners is provided by their organ appearing in New York, *The Irish World*. It sent De Valera a telegram declaring that the proposed agreement was the worst defeat suffered by Ireland since Strongbow's landing: It would be her first moral defeat, because she would now lower herself to voluntary servitude to England.

This Strongbow, an English feudal lord, Richard De Clare, with the nickname Strongbow, was the first of the English conquerors to gain a foothold in Ireland. (1170).

In the nine centuries since then the Irish people suffered an abundance of the most painful defeats, and had lost their land and freedom. Now, with one blow the Irish are to be transferred into the ranks of the freest nations in the world, on a par with Canada and Australia, – and these American Sinn Feiners dare to represent, this change as the worst defeat Ireland has suffered in nine centuries – merely because eternal hostility is to be replaced by hearty friendship towards England, or voluntary servitude, as it seems to the *Irish World*.

The absurdity and unscrupulousness of American Sinn Fein demagoguery cannot be demonstrated more clearly.

But they were up against an adversary who surpassed them in intelligence and tenacity. And Ireland's true interests had to reassert themselves in the consciousness of the mass of her people and force back the Sinn Feiners and other extremists as soon as the intoxication of the bloody war had been interrupted by a ceasefire, which cleared the way for sober reflection.

With endless patience and outstanding skill, Lloyd George was able to bring De Valera to the negotiating table in spite of himself and in spite of his unfriendly and at times directly insulting behaviour, and was able to spin the thread, once joined, ever further, however often it seemed likely to tear.

It could be wished that the German proletariat would also find a Lloyd George to unify it, who would bring the De Valeras of the proletarian class struggle to the negotiating-table, and overcome the obstacles preventing them from unifying.

Right up to the end, Mr. De Valera put every obstacle that the irreconcilability of a nationalist brain could think of, in the way of peace and understanding between peoples. We also have patriots of this calibre amongst the German nationalists, amongst which there are not a few who unthinkingly want to drive Germany into new wars, in which however it would be destroyed, but which would also be an embarrassment to France.

Yet these German patriots are condemned to impotence. The mass of the German people want nothing to do with them and that would become even more evident if the French were as clever about Germany as Lloyd George was about Ireland. He put the Sinn Feiners on weak ground by his fair dealing and won the mass of the Irish people for the bond of friendship with England. It is a true bond, people to people, for Lloyd George did not act here as an autocrat, but as the representative of the vast majority of his people, as is shown by the overwhelming majority which his Irish proposal received from all parties – with the exception of a section of the ruling party.

5. Outlook for the Future

a) The Effect on Ireland of the Solution of the Irish Question

Socialists in all countries have always followed Ireland's struggle against its oppressors with the greatest of sympathy. Besides the national unification of Germany and Italy, Marx and Engels demanded national independence for Poland, Hungary and Ireland. On 15th February 1882 Engels wrote me a letter in which the following sentence occurs:

“I am of the opinion that *two* nations in Europe have not only the right, but the duty, to be national before they are international; the Irish and Poles”.

Hungary is no longer in question. It achieved its independence in 1867, and at the same time lost its significance for the European revolution, Hungary's reactionary cloven hoof was already clearly visible in 1882. But it could not be then divined that a Horthy would be produced as a successor to Kossuth.

If Marx and Engels could see the present-day, independent Poland they would view it also with very mixed feelings.

The significance of both countries for revolutionary democracy in Europe lay in the fact that they were the only effective force against absolutism, Hapsburgist in one case, Tsarist in the other. But this power of resistance, which occasionally benefited rising democracy, rested on classes which were economically reactionary – the aristocracy, and above all the vast petty aristocracy, the Junkers. As soon as these classes were rid of the external oppressor, they

deployed all of their inherent brutality against the newly striving classes, above all against the proletariat, but also sometimes against the capitalists, which appeared in those countries predominantly in Jewish form and which were plundered when they did not comply with their wishes.

Like Poland and Hungary, Ireland is also a backward agricultural country. It is true that there is no national aristocracy to come to power through independence. But there is another agrarian class, the farmers, which is as uncomprehending and hostile as the junkers to the modern classes predominating in the urban population.

The intellectuals do not form a particular class with their own class politics anywhere. They always pursue the politics of other classes. In the Irish Free State they will represent the agrarian interest above all. Even up to the present they have sought their ideals not in the future but in the ancient past, which their imagination paints in the most glowing colours.

The influx of American money will cease, for the Irish emigrants in America no longer have an interest in an Ireland living peacefully with England. A new source of income is now opened to the intellectuals of Ireland: the government apparatus, which now falls into Irish hands. This new bureaucracy, in conformity with the character of the country, its Parliament and its government, will also be reactionary.

Those intellectuals who in these circumstances, follow modern ideas will come up against the strongest resistance of the farmers, their clergy, and their bureaucracy. Their position will be difficult for a long time to come.

And the same applies to the proletariat. Up to the present it has developed a socialism, of a wary, backward nature. In the *Berlin Socialist* of 24th December, 1921 we find, reprinted, from the *American Nation*) an article by Frank T. Walsh describing the Irish, working class. He assures us:

“Ireland today has the most intelligent, important and united workers’ movement in the world.”

However if we further investigate this, modest self-assessment, we find that the most important motive force of this so very outstanding movement is *land-hunger*. The wage worker wants to become, a propertied farmer.

Walsh illustrates the high point of the Irish working class movement with the example of an Irish worker in Dublin who fought in the Irish Republican Army during the civil war. No doubt the energy, devotion and courage of this man made him a outstanding fighter. But his socialism is curiously elucidated when we hear:

“He risks his life by day and night with the constant vision of a Wicklow farm before him ...”

For he came from County Wicklow originally. To get a farm there was his ideal. This vision does not seem precisely that of modern socialism.

The land-hunger distinguishing the Irish workers has no prospect of being satisfied in the Free State. The calculation that the Irish soil can feed 20 million people makes no difference.

Political independence will not alter the economic fact that pastoral farming, and the production of meat and milk for

the English market is the most profitable for Irish agriculture. Thus the prospects for substantially increasing peasant plots are meagre. The worker however who seeks to improve his living conditions in the city by political and economic struggle will come up against, not the English government which has to take notice of a strong working class, but a purely agrarian government in the Free State, which can and will offer greater resistance to the minority of urban workers.

The deciding battles for Ireland's independence in recent years were won mainly because of the energy and devotion of her proletariat. And in spite of this, this proletariat is threatened by the independent state which it won, not with an improvement, but with a further decline of its position.

Yet it was necessary for the proletariat to join the fight for national independence. And international socialism can as little begrudge its sympathies for an independent Ireland as for an independent Hungary or Poland.

In an oppressed country the class contradictions are only too easily hidden and obscured by national contradictions. The Irish worker will only rightly, recognise his class position and become responsive to international socialism when the government confronting him as the guardian of the property of the ruling class is no longer that of the English but that of his own country-people. Then also his distrust of the English worker will disappear and the feeling of solidarity with him will take deeper root.

The Free State, which will follow its own customs and trading policy will encourage, the development of Irish industry more than the foreign government did. But of

course one cannot expect too much in this respect, for the Irish farmer will prefer to import cheap industrial products from England than to pay dearly for “patriotic” products. The farmer is no friend of taxes for industry, that is, not the exporting farmer.

But all the same, several industries will arise in independent Ireland, – and they will make it easier for the Irish worker to replace his agrarian ideals with industrial socialism.

b) The Effect outside Ireland of the Solution of the Irish Question

But the freeing of Ireland will become more important because of its effect back on the workers' movement in America and England. Oppressed Ireland has, year in, year out, sent countless hordes of workers to both countries, workers whose thoughts and aspirations were of a completely nationalist character. They remained a foreign body in the working class of the country in which they found work, and did not share their struggles, that is, not their political ones. Also even where they did not appear as strike-breakers, they were still a hindrance to each independent working class movement. Accustomed to common struggle with bourgeois elements from the very beginning, they also liked to support those bourgeois-parties in America and England from which they most expected a furtherance of Irish aims. They sold their votes to them for small national concessions, often enough just for money in America. In the United States the Irish formed the most corrupt section of the proletariat and the greatest obstacle to socialist propaganda in their ranks. In England also there was nothing more unreliable in the working population than the

Irish vote. Often enough in the Parliamentary elections, if the Liberals had promised Home Rule, Irish votes turned the scales against socialist candidates who were embarrassing to the Liberals.

An even worse effect was that the everlasting pre-occupation with Irish problems reduced the time and energy for dealing with social problems for all the English parties.

All this must now change. Irish emigration will doubtless decrease. However, those Irish workers, who emigrate to England or America will no longer be accustomed to bourgeois leadership by the national struggle, but will become responsive to independent class politics. And they will stop carrying on Irish politics abroad, but will merge into the working class of the country and follow their class politics without national ulterior motives.

But the English workers now get a free hand in their own country, and get the possibility of concentrating their total force on the struggle for socialism.

Already in 1869, Marx wrote to Engels (Letter of 10 December):

“It is in the direct, absolute interest of the English working class to get rid of their present union with Ireland ... I have long believed it possible to overthrow the Irish regime by the influence of the English working class. I have always put this interpretation in the *New York Tribune*. Deeper study has now convinced me of the opposite. The English working class will never accomplish anything until it is rid of Ireland. The lever must be applied in Ireland. That is why the Irish question is so important for the social movement, in general.”

Now it is clear that this interpretation was completely justified.

Marx expressed the same view at almost the same time in a letter to Kugelmann of 29th November 1869. He wrote here:

“I am more and more of the conviction – and now is the time to drill this conviction into the English working class – that it can never do anything decisive here in England ... until it not only makes common cause with the Irish but grasps the initiative in dissolving the union of 1801 and replacing it by a free, federal relationship. And, what is more, this must be pursued not as a question of sympathy for Ireland, but as a demand based on the interest of the English proletariat. If not each of its movements in England itself will be crippled by the dispute with the Irish, which form a considerable part of the working class in England itself ... And it is not only England’s social development which remains crippled by the present relationship to Ireland, her foreign policy is also affected in relation to Russia and the United States.

“But as the English working class undoubtedly constitutes the decisive weight on the scales of social emancipation generally, the main point is to apply the lever here.”

That applied half a century ago. It applies far more today. Between then and now England’s weight in the scales of social emancipation has been indeed light, but since the world war she has again become of decisive importance in the world struggle for social emancipation, and the practical consequences of this are now quite different to those of 50 years ago. For we have stepped from the age of expectancy into that of fulfilment.

Admittedly the human spirit is of a very conservative nature. Only slowly does it follow those changes in social organisation which are decisive for the changing historical forms which Thought assumes.

Is it not probable, therefore, that in the forthcoming elections to the English parliament the blessed influence on English politics which must follow the Irish solution will make itself strongly felt? But it is certainly to be expected; that was shown by the by-elections held hitherto that the general election will certainly bring a significant strengthening of the workers' party and its political influence. That must unleash great social struggles. It will certainly be of importance to their outcome that the crippling dead weight of Ireland has been removed from England's internal politics. And this must have effects far beyond England itself. Every social success of the English workers' party will have an inspiring and strengthening effect on the socialist movement of all countries. Each strengthening of the workers' party must influence most deeply not merely the internal, but also the external policies of England; and, what is more, in the sense of the reconciliation of peoples and their concerted action for the common welfare, it must influence the ending of the present system of mutual mistrust, of the arms race, of advantage to the strong and oppression of the weak. Starting from proletarian England this system will be replaced by the new world politics of international socialism.

Little though we expect directly for the cause of social progress from the new Irish Free State, yet do we joyfully greet its creation as the first step by Europe away from the agonising hell, into which it was thrown by the world war, into a higher and better existence of lasting world peace and well being for all.