

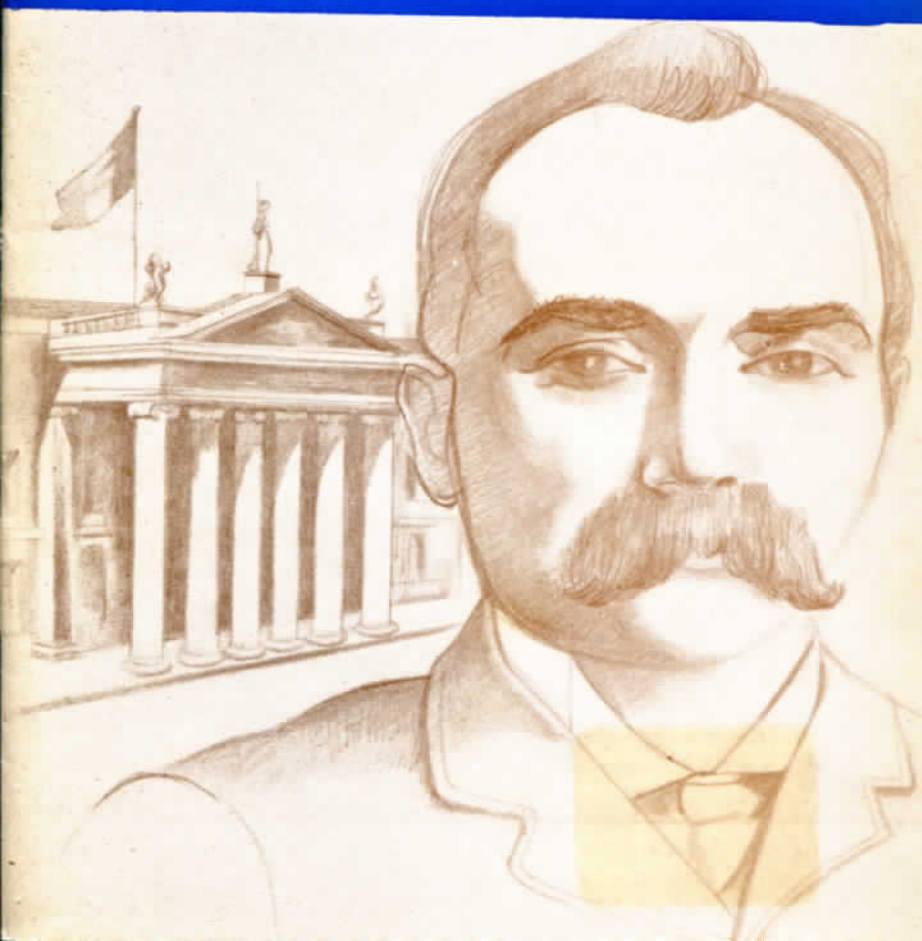
# The Teachings Of James Connolly

(With a Brief Outline of His Life)

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By Joseph Deasy

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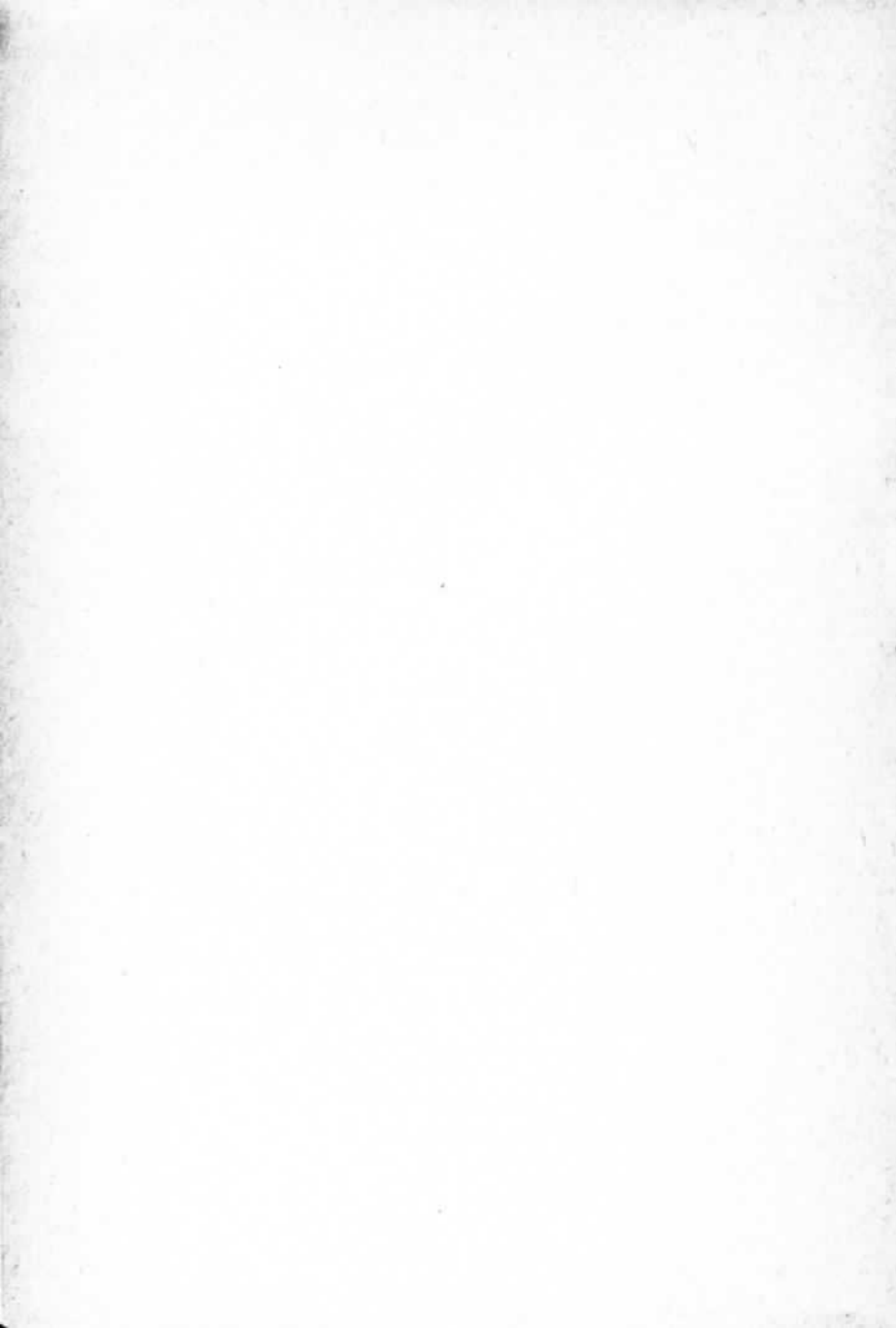
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James Connolly  
His Life and Teachings

"Jim Connolly is dead—but  
still speaketh"  
Jim Larkin.

By JOSEPH DEASY



## PREFACE

**J**AMES CONNOLLY occupies a unique place among Irish leaders and heroes; in the hearts of the Irish people his memory will be forever cherished. In the 50th anniversary year of the 1916 insurrection in 1966 his name was endlessly invoked.

Yet the complete significance of Connolly's leadership and his reasons for participating in Easter Week are understood by comparatively few, while some suppress or distort it. His stature as a militant republican is beyond challenge; his trade union labours are also widely recognised and praised. He was also however a thinker and it is here that recognition is often withdrawn and deliberate efforts made to debunk him and the ideas he fostered.

Connolly was a Marxist Socialist. This truth is at the heart of his life's work; without it his struggles and sacrifice cannot be understood. Some very silly efforts have been made to deny that he was a Marxist, or to insult his intellectual status by imputing that he only used Marxist phrases or did not understand Marxism. It may be relevant to mention that most of such commentators have themselves clearly little familiarity with Marxism.

By presenting, briefly, Connolly's essential teachings this pamphlet may counter some of the distortions. We hope it will contribute to the understanding that his socialism, nationalism and trade union struggles were all complementary, one being incomplete without the other and that all constituted not different worlds, but made up his one world.

We begin with a brief outline of his full and turbulent life.

### MAN OF ACTION

**T**HANKS to the outstanding biography by Desmond Greaves, much of Connolly's early life has been rescued from hearsay and legend.

He was born in 1868 in Edinburgh, Scotland, of Irish parents who had emigrated from Co. Monaghan. His father was a

Corporation worker—a carter who was promoted lamplighter and then relegated to a carter once again.

James started work in a newspaper office at the early age of 10 years, later working in a bakery, then becoming a printer's devil, followed by a spell in a tile factory.

Stable employment was however difficult to find; through sheer economic necessity he joined the British Army at 14 years. The year was approximately 1882. Greaves reckons he was stationed with his regiment in Ireland from 1882 to 1889 at Cork and the Curragh. He left the army before his service expired and returned to Scotland. Here he married Lillie Reynolds whom he had met while in Ireland. He obtained work in Edinburgh Corporation as a temporary carter.

His return to civilian life coincided with one of the most exciting periods of British labour history. 1889 was the year of the famous London dock strike which had been preceded by the historic gasworkers' strike. Trade unionism made tremendous gains among the tens of thousands of general workers. It was called the "New Unionism" and was characterised by impressive working class solidarity. A healthy growth of socialist clubs, societies and federations accompanied these industrial advances. A further factor was the Irish question which then centred around the land agitation and Home Rule.

Connolly dived in, joining his brother John who was already active. He absorbed socialist writings and studied avidly, especially the teachings of Karl Marx. He also became a firm supporter of militant Irish nationalism being well read in the history and literature of Irish revolt.

Through his Marxian studies and under the influence of a prominent socialist propagandist and poet of Irish descent, John Leslie, he grasped the relationship between the struggle of the working people for a better life and the fight for Irish freedom. Leslie wrote:

"The mastery of man over man, of class over class, of nation over nation, springs from the hell born system of exploitation which has cursed both countries alike". He argued that the progress of Ireland depended on the independent organisation of the working class. Leslie's writings were Connolly's starting point but the pupil was destined to leave the teacher far behind.

He succeeded his brother as secretary of the Scottish Socialist Federation and soon became the hub of socialist activity in Edinburgh. His house became a meeting place. Contesting a Corporation election he registered quite a respectable vote. These activities unfortunately led to victimisation and he lost his job. He considered emigration to Chile but eventually accepted, in 1896, an invitation to come to Dublin to become secretary of a socialist club.

Ireland was then in a state of ferment. The Parnell split had occurred and new forces were emerging. Within a few short years there was founded the Gaelic League, Celtic literary societies and the Irish Trade Union Congress. To these were added, on Connolly's initiative, shortly after his arrival, the Irish Socialist Republican Party with himself as Secretary.

A programme of immediate aims designed to alleviate the worst evils of Capitalism was published. The ultimate aim however was clearly stated—an Irish Socialist Republic.

For the next seven years Connolly was to live in Dublin with his family. His political activities were to have their successes and reverses. His party tirelessly campaigned and much of its propaganda was very effective. In 1898 he published for the first time his paper, called "The Workers' Republic". On two occasions he contested municipal elections but was unsuccessful each time.

They organised very successfully meetings of protest against the Jubilee celebrations of Queen Victoria's Coronation. In the following years there was very active participation in the 1798 centenary celebrations and spectacular demonstrations against the Boer War. During these campaigns Connolly exposed the real nature of imperialism. The party also associated with other national organisations and Connolly came in contact with people like Arthur Griffith, the poet Yeats, Maud Gonne MacBride and others who were later to become prominent in national politics.

There were, however, reverses. While his party did achieve a measure of influence in the trade union movement, membership remained small and there was internal dissension. He was promised a wage of £1 per week as secretary but it was irregularly paid; he was eventually forced to seek work as a labourer.

For six years he slaved and starved, working at several different jobs but was for the most part unemployed. As in Edinburgh he was always faced with victimisation. Haunted by anxiety for his dependents he was forced to eventually emigrate with his family to America where he was already known and had acquired a reputation as a socialist writer and propagandist.

The next seven years were to be spent in America during which time he became prominent in the political and industrial life of the American labour movement which was then undergoing a period of growth and travail. As one of the best propagandists attached to the Socialist cause he was involved in its great debates. He became a successful organiser for the Industrial Workers of the World and was secretary of the "Building and Constructional Workers Industrial Union". These activities engaged him in wide travels throughout America. He found time however to devote special attention to the spreading of Socialist ideas among Irish workers in America. In support of this objective he founded the Irish Socialist Federation and published a monthly paper called *The Harp*. There were times however, when the difficulty of earning a livelihood became extremely acute; he worked at different times as a linotype operator, a machinist and an insurance agent.

Despite his varied life Connolly never really felt settled in America. He enjoyed a standard of material well being which was a considerable improvement on his harrowing Dublin experiences; but his thoughts gravitated towards Ireland. He was insistent, however, though he dreamed of returning, he could not again live in the Dublin slums.

Meanwhile the labour scene in Ireland was being transformed. Jim Larkin's activities in Belfast and Dublin had wrought wonders. In his struggles Larkin seemed to be practising the I.W.W. tactics—united struggle of all sections of workers, guerilla actions, the sympathetic strike. In 1909 Larkin had founded the Irish Transport and General Workers' Union. Noting that industrial unionism had come to Ireland Connolly had hailed it with delight. Socialism was also growing in Ireland, and some of Connolly's old comrades of his previous Dublin period, like William O'Brien, conceived the idea of his return and with Larkin's valuable co-operation the



project was successfully effected. He was to be secretary of the Socialist Party of Ireland at £2 per week.

Initial successes in building the party were followed by the old crisis—money trouble. The supply of sufficient funds to maintain him as secretary was erratic.

Though despondent, he never allowed such a mood to curb his activities. He eventually settled in Belfast where he lectured and from where he toured, participating in any polemics which would promote his ideas. He unsuccessfully contested a seat in a Belfast municipal election but obtained 905 votes.

Subsequent to Connolly's arrival in Ireland two of his best known works were published—"Labour in Irish History" and "Labour, Nationality and Religion."

In July 1911 he became secretary and Ulster organiser of the Irish Transport and General Workers' Union. Ireland was now to experience his qualities as a union organiser. He organised the dockers and mill girls while he also struggled against the bigoted sectarianism of the Orange Order and the Ancient Order of Hibernians; these bodies created terrible divisions among the Northern Workers. In 1912 he helped to conclude on successful terms a long strike in Wexford. At the Trade Union Congress of the same year he successfully moved the resolution which proposed the establishing of the Irish Labour Party.

Connolly was now on the threshold of the two great battles of his life. A few short crowded years remained. During the great 1913 struggle against the employers he was brought down to Dublin where as Jim Larkin's main lieutenant he firmly established his reputation as one of the two greatest labour leaders Ireland has produced. His writings, speeches, spell in jail and a hunger strike, his memorable tours of Britain with Larkin, are all part of the 1913 saga. His verdict "a drawn battle" is probably the most accurate summary of the outcome. When Larkin embarked on his visit to America he became acting General Secretary of the Union. He was also to become Commandant of the Irish Citizens Army.

His part in the 1916 insurrection must rank as the supreme achievement of his life. He was Commandant of the Dublin insurrectionary forces and one of the seven signatories of the Proclamation. Gravely wounded during the fighting, he was executed while strapped to a stretcher. On the 12th

May, 1916 from the world of thought and action Connolly passed into the realm of immortal memory.

As we turn to consider his teachings we remember what Jim Larkin once wrote;

"Jim Connolly is dead—but still speaketh".

### THE THINKER

MOST OF US thought of freedom as an end in itself and because economic decay and social distress were seen as the consequences of foreign rule we were disposed to accept that in freedom all these problems would settle themselves"—An Taoiseach, Sean Lemass.

Irish Times 19/2/66.

Rather naive? Mr. Lemass went on to refer to the different social and economic policies expounded by James Connolly and Arthur Griffith. "These policies were known but not subjected to serious debate".

Whatever about Griffith, the lack of debate on Connolly's ideas was unfortunate. If they had received more attention during the period of widespread national revolt the subsequent social and economic history of our country might have been vastly different.

Connolly, viewing the future with great clarity of vision, was not content with ill-defined conceptions of freedom. There must be no illusions in the Labour movement he declared, "least of all about freedom".

"In the long run the freedom of a nation is measured by the freedom of its lowest class; every upward step of that class to the possibility of possessing higher things raises the standard of the nation in the scale of civilisation; every time that class is beaten back into the mire the whole moral tone of the nation suffers".—Workers Republic 29/5/15.

Addressing the Citizen Army some days before the Rising, he said:—"The odds are a thousand to one against us but in the event of victory hold on to your rifles as those with whom we are fighting may stop before our goal is reached. We are out for economic as well as political liberty".

Such extracts are among the many which testify to Connolly's socialist inspiration, even on the very eve of battle. They rebuff those who feebly argue that by some mysterious

alchemy he had abdicated the cause to which he had given a life long devotion. They confirm the position he adopted when he wrote his famous pamphlet, "Socialism Made Easy".

"After Ireland is free, says the patriot who won't touch Socialism, we will protect all classes and if you won't pay your rent you will be evicted, same as now, but the warrant turning you out on the roadside will be stamped with the arms of the Republic".

Connolly certainly gave adequate warning of the fruits of freedom—without Socialism.

If the life and death of Connolly is to be understood then Marxist socialism must be recognised as the basis for his political, social and economic beliefs. He referred to Marx as the greatest of modern thinkers. His greatest literary work, the famous "Labour in Irish History", was inspired by the Marxian conception of history. Marxian ideas on some vital issues are ably defended in his "Labour, Nationality and Religion". The Marxist influence is very much present also in his "Socialism Made Easy", although the conclusions on industrial unionism are at variance with some Marxist conceptions. To comprehend Connolly's system of ideas no method is more rewarding than a study of "Labour in Irish History".

## LABOUR IN IRISH HISTORY

"LABOUR IN IRISH HISTORY" is Connolly's outstanding literary achievement and is now generally regarded even by academic scholars as a vital contribution to a true understanding of Irish history. It is powerfully and persuasively written. In the world socialist movement it is rated a Marxist classic and establishes its author's place as a socialist thinker and one of the first working class intellectuals. It is history written from the standpoint of the working people.

In the foreword the two propositions on which the book is based are stated. The first is that the fight for national liberty must keep pace with the struggle for liberty of the most subject class; the development of capitalism makes the non-working class element more conservative while increasing the revolutionary power of the working class.

Secondly, the middle class in Ireland have increasingly compromised with Britain and have a thousand economic strings

in the shape of investments binding them to English capitalism as against every sentimental or historic attachment, drawing them towards Irish patriotism; "only the Irish working class remains as the incorruptible inheritors of the fight for freedom in Ireland".

It will no doubt strike the reader that this quotation has a very sharp relevance for contemporary Ireland.

These two basic propositions are well vindicated in the chapters which follow and he well and truly does a masterly job in "repairing the deliberate neglect of the social question by our historians."

At an early stage he records without equivocation his agreement with the proposition which Karl Marx set forth as the key to history; "That in every historical epoch the prevailing method of economic production and exchange and the social organisation necessarily following from it forms the basis upon which alone can be explained the political and intellectual history of that epoch".

With this key Connolly examined various crucial stages of Irish history. He primarily concentrated his analysis on the material conditions under which men fought for a living. He then examined the property and class relationships and assessed the roles of various middle class leaders like Henry Grattan, Daniel O'Connell and William Smith O'Brien.

The stature of the first two leaders especially was sharply cut down, their class attitudes being exposed in broad daylight for the first time in our history books. The betrayal of the people by such leaders is a recurring theme. Popular discontent is constantly used to advance narrow class or sectional interests; if and when these are satisfied the people's cause is forgotten. One of Connolly's favourite quotations was the remark of Henry Joy McCracken, the 1798 executed leader:—"The rich always betray the poor". In writing of the disbanded volunteers of 1782 McCracken bitterly commented, "the working men fought, the capitalists sold out and the lawyers bluffed".

In support of his contention that the Irish question was a social one and that the fight of the Irish people was in the last analysis a fight for the mastery of the means of life, the sources of production, Connolly went back to the property system that existed in early Irish society. He stressed that ownership was

then communal or tribal. The Irish chief held his position upon the sufferance of his people, it was not based on force.

This system was in marked contrast to the one which replaced it, namely Feudalism, and which was imposed on Irish society by foreign forces. Ownership was vested under the latter system in Lords and Barons and involved a condition of serfdom under which an obligation was laid on the producer by force to fulfil certain economic demands of the overlord either by "service dues or gifts to the lord's larder".

Feudalism, which had prevailed in England for centuries was therefore unknown in the greater part of Ireland until 1649. War against the oppressor was also a war against private property in land.

Connolly, however, was under no illusions about the Irish tribal system. Even if the country had remained independent that system would have eventually disappeared. His point was that the change was effected by foreign armed forces instead of internal economic ones. Resistance to the change therefore was more intense and bitter. He must have also recognised that although the ownership was in a real sense communal, in practise there were social inequalities and privileges.

Yet Connolly's point was well and validly made. His main purpose was to answer those who, in attacking socialism alleged that it was a foreign importation and that collective ownership was alien to Irish traditions and character. He was concerned to prove that private ownership of the means of production as typified by feudalism, but, more especially by capitalism, was "the most foreign thing in Ireland".

Connolly began his examination of Irish history from the Williamite wars of 1691 between Catholic King, James of England (the Jacobites) and William Prince of Orange (the Williamites). He declared that modern Irish history properly understood may be said to start with the end of these wars.

What were the issues between these factions? Many believe they were essentially religious. Was England to have a Catholic King (James) or a Protestant (William)?

But when the Protestant William defeated James at the battle of the Boyne the victory was celebrated by the Pope! That happened because the wars were of a territorial extension of a European conflict in which religious loyalties were secondary. Clearly, religion was not the basic issue at the Boyne.

Why then was there a war in Ireland for the English throne, in which the Irish people had no reason to be interested? The answer in one word was property. Religion was used on both sides to enlist popular support but the basic issue was the division of lands which would follow the end of the conflict. The Catholic nobility who had "acquired" lands feared dispossession in the event of a Williamite victory, while Protestant nobles aimed at confiscation. The outcome was the loss of three quarter of a million acres by the Catholic side to the victorious Williamites. Whatever the result, Irish peasants of both persuasions stood to lose.

Then followed the penal laws. About these, Connolly wrote: "To the vast mass of the population the misery and hardship entailed by the working out of economic laws were fraught with infinitely more suffering than it was at any time within the power of the Penal laws to inflict".

He illustrated these conclusions by outlining the economic circumstances which led to replacement of tillage by pasture and the evictions of men to make way for cattle.

Landlords seized both small farms and village common lands. Peasant rebellions followed, led by secret organisations like the Whiteboys. The agrarian struggles in the North were just as bitter and secret organisations like Oakboys and Hearts of Steel were organised to resist compulsory road repairing by tenants to reduce tithes and to restrict the system of consolidating farms for grazing purposes.

It was against these struggles that Connolly's assessment of the historical period known as "Grattan's Parliament" must be considered. He was indignant that leaders like Grattan and Flood were classified as "patriots" although they never raised their voices in protest against the outrageous injustices suffered by the mass of the people irrespective of creed. They were quite prepared however to outvie all others in their denunciation of all those who "more earnest than themselves" sought to find a radical cure for such misery. Connolly underlined the roles of such leaders because they had numerous imitators in his time, and let us hasten to add, in our own time also.

The chapters on the United Irishmen are among the most vital in the book. To Connolly, Wolfe Tone was the complete contrast to the treachery of so many middle class leaders. Tone made it quite clear that if the men of property failed to

achieve the country's freedom, then it would have to be done by "that large and respectable class of the community, the men of no property". He stood for "the greatest good of the greatest number." He was an internationalist and like all dangerous revolutionaries he advocated his principles as part of the creed of the democracy of the world. He was dubbed a tool of the French, as Connolly, was in his day, dubbed a tool of the Germans. This type of jibe is still with us and its capacity to damage will depend on the prevailing circumstances of a particular period.

Connolly was very consistent about his heroes, among whom next must be included Robert Emmet, who organised a conspiracy of a working class character with a radical social programme.

In rebutting the argument that Socialism was something alien, Connolly devoted chapters to William Thompson who was, among other things, a pioneer Irish socialist and to the now famous story of Ralahine Co.-op, Co. Clare.

These chapters are typical examples of the debt we owe to him as an historian.

Thompson anticipated Marx in his insistence that the worker was entitled to the full value of his labour; that the profit of the capitalist was due to the subjection of labour and the appropriation by the capitalists of the surplus produce of the worker. Connolly therefore recorded with pride that an Irishman was the first "to point out to toilers the conditions of their enslavement and the essential pre-requisites of their emancipation". In relating the story of the Ralahine Co.-op he describes how an estate was co-operatively worked and ruled by Irish labour with remarkable success as far back as 1833. It was only terminated when the owner Mr. Vandeleur (who had been meanwhile receiving his rent) contracted gambling debts and became bankrupt. The estate was sold above the heads of the Co-operative Community whom the law did not recognise. Connolly described the experiment as an "Irish Utopia—a point of interrogation erected amidst the wilderness of capitalist thought and feudal practise".

The great failures of the early nineteenth century were the middle class leaderships of Daniel O'Connell and some of the Young Irelanders.



The leadership of O'Connell brought little real benefit to the people. Catholic emancipation only benefited the Catholics of the upper classes while the repeat agitation ended in the fiasco of the abandoned Clontarf "monster" meeting. Meanwhile the people suffered from a social and economic oppression which goaded them into forms of revolt that were condemned by the Repeal leaders. The latter, with the clergy, did, however, support the tithe war. This was a campaign of resistance to the collection of tithe payments from tenants for the upkeep of the Protestant clergy. Connolly remarked that during this war there was little condemnation of violence by the clergy. When that particular battle was won, the condemnation of non-constitutional actions were renewed.

That inglorious period was concluded by the calamitous famine of 1845 to 1848. Here Connolly attacks the inconsistency of those who condemned the British government for inactivity in meeting the disaster but failed to attack capitalism, the laws of which were the primary cause of it.

"Labour in Irish History" exposed an aspect of O'Connell that is little known. He was an inveterate enemy of trade unionism both in Ireland and in Britain.

Some Young Ireland leaders like William Smith-O'Brien and Thomas Francis Meagher were also subjected to sharp criticism. "Their caution and excessive regard for property discouraged drastic action during the famine period and later prejudiced whatever chance there was of success for the 1848 insurrection".

"While the people perished, the Young Irelanders talked".

There were, however, some very notable exceptions. Devin Reilly, Fintan Lalor and John Mitchel constantly called for strong action during this period and they possessed also some broad social and democratic sympathies. They declared solidarity with the struggles of workers in England and France. Fintan Lalor expounded a social programme that was closely akin to socialism. Connolly was active in rescuing Lalor's teachings from oblivion.

The last chapter of Connolly's classic is titled "The Working Class". Here the author, with the assistance of quotations from "Capital", by Karl Marx, relates the social struggles of Irish workers to the rise of Fenianism.



Then comes the brilliant short synthesis of the class struggle through Irish history with the conclusion; "Irish toilers from henceforward will base their fight for freedom not upon the winning or losing the right to talk in an Irish Parliament but upon their progress towards the mastery of those factories, workshops and farms upon which a people's bread and liberties depend".

Here Connolly recorded his belief that real democracy was essentially a social and economic issue; that the instruments of production, not parliament, were the primary source of power. This is the great truth for which the support of Irish workers, North and South, must be won.

### IDEAS AND ORGANISATIONS

WHEN CONNOLLY founded the Irish Socialist Republican Party in 1896 he defined as its object; "the establishment of an Irish Socialist Republic based upon the public ownership by the Irish people of the land and instruments of production distribution and exchange".

He never wavered in his belief that this objective essentially represented the only guarantee of the permanent freedom and prosperity of Ireland. He explained that removing the English army and hoisting the green flag would be in vain unless steps were taken to set about the organisation of the socialist republic because, he wrote;

"England would still rule you. She would rule you through her capitalists, through her landlords, through her financiers, through the whole array of commercial and industrial institutions she has planted in this country".

How uncomfortably prophetic! Under capitalism it is now the policy of an Irish Government to intensify the grip of such forces on the economy of our country with the addition of other monopoly interests from America, Germany, France, Japan, etc.

Connolly avowedly supported the principle of scientific socialism as formulated by Karl Marx. It was not enough to have the mental conception of a desirable state of society, ways and means had to be developed which would make socialism a reality. Marx had formulated a system of ideas which Connolly recognised as a powerful guide to any political programme with socialism as its aim.

As already outlined this guide had helped him "to unravel the actions of 'great men'" and to show that Irish history was not just a welter of unrelated facts and purposeless warfare. It also showed him how, throughout history, one social system replaced another as the dominant mode of production—primitive communism, slavery, feudalism. With the exception of the first named all these societies were characterised by a class war between the exploiters and the exploited. In Connolly's opinion the great triumph of Marx was to discover that it was this class war which was the decisive force which effected the change from one form of society to another—"the factor in evolution of society towards freedom".

Just as all other social systems had to eventually yield to their successors, so capitalism must eventually give way to socialism. In fact, under capitalism we witness the last great confrontation between exploiter and exploited. This system would be overthrown by the very class to which it had given birth—the working class; thus would be ended forever "the exploitation of man by man".

To effect this overthrow, however, when the conditions were ripe, involved the workers organising themselves industrially and politically. To the promotion of this objective Connolly devoted his life.

He was constantly evolving or examining forms of organisation by which immediate benefits would be won for the workers and also bring nearer the day when they would be the masters themselves.

His Irish Socialist Republican Party corresponded with what were then known as Social Democratic parties in many countries. They were mainly Marxist, with the objective of winning the workers' support for socialism. Their weakness was an inability to integrate the fight for socialism with the day to day struggles of the workers.

In America, he became one of the leading exponents of industrial unionism through his being an organiser in the Industrial Workers of the World. That body organised skilled and unskilled workers on industrial lines; its aim was to work for the overthrow of capitalism and at the same time to militantly fight the employers for immediate gains.

To the I.W.W. the winning of socialism was even more important than immediate gains. Connolly became famous as

one of its propagandists and his pamphlet publicising its aims, "Socialism Made Easy", gained world wide circulation.

"Let us be clear" he wrote "as to the function of Industrial Unionism; that function is to build up an industrial republic inside the shell of the political state in order that when that industrial republic is fully organised it may crack the shell of the political state and step into its place . . . under a Socialist form of society the administration of affairs will be in the hands of representatives of the various industries of the nation; the workers in the shops and factories will organise themselves into unions, comprising all the workers of a given industry; said Union will democratically control the workshop life of its own industry".

Political elections would be contested and the Socialist Party would conduct propaganda; but the decisive battles would be industrial. He wrote :

"The struggle for the conquest of the political state of the capitalist is not the battle, it is only the echo of the battle. The real battle is being fought out and will be fought out in the industrial field".

This was certainly what Greaves called Connolly's "broadly syndicalist" phase. There was vagueness as to how the real conquest of power would be effected. It was certainly bold creative thinking but its weakness was an incomplete analysis of the nature of capitalist power. Lenin later led the way in showing how the industrial and political power of the working class could be integrated for achieving power and evolving new concepts of democracy. Yet Connolly's ideas still merit study, especially where he is concerned about the relationship in this context between the individual and the State.

Connolly never formally abandoned his syndicalist views. They apparently influenced his contention that the Transport Union could be a powerful instrument in the fight for Irish freedom both as a military and an industrial force. His leadership of the Irish Citizen Army was an expression of that policy.

On the all important question of the working class party he was very flexible and ever ready to experiment. On his return to Ireland from America he evidently tried to integrate the conception of an avowedly Socialist Party with members who were dedicated socialists with that of a broader type of working

class party which would be based on the trade unions, and would be concerned with immediate reforms and would have a broader membership. Whilst therefore he was organising the Socialist Party of Ireland he also successfully moved the resolution at the Trade Union Congress in Clonmel in 1912 which proposed that an Irish Labour Party be established. All this reveals the richness of Connolly's restless genius. The shortness of his subsequent life and the speed with which major issues multiplied did not permit him the time to personally test all of his many ideas.

## LABOUR, NATIONALITY AND RELIGION

MEANWHILE he never ceased writing and lecturing. While he was still in America the level of industrial struggle had risen enormously as Jim Larkin transformed the situation with a militant fiery leadership that brought miracles of organisation. The popularity of socialist ideas also grew causing anxiety among many sections. Rev. Fr. Kane, S.J., devoted his Lenten Lectures in 1910 to a denunciation of socialism, which were published in the *Irish Catholic*. Some Dublin comrades requested Connolly to reply; "Labour, Nationality and Religion," one of his most vital works, was the result.

The occasion was an ideal opportunity for him to uphold a conviction for which he had tirelessly fought in America; this was that Socialism was a political and economic question, and was an issue distinct from religious beliefs. He likened scientific socialism to a science, like mathematics, whose validity can be discussed without involving questions like atheism or Christian dogma. Socialism and religion could and must co-exist.

And he was anxious to persuade Catholic workers that the former was compatible with their religious beliefs.

He was Marxist but no dogmatist. He accepted Marxism as a guide to action—no more, but no less either. He concentrated on those aspects which he believed were essential to advancing the cause of socialism. This simple truth seems to have eluded many intellectual commentators, lay and clerical, some of whom do not appear to have either seriously studied Connolly or even read Marx.

"Labour, Nationality and Religion" was a crushing refutation of Fr. Kane's lectures. This was often easy to achieve

because the latter's arguments became at times outrageous and hysterical. For example he denounced socialism with words like "the will of the people would be nothing more than the will of the tyrant mob"; or "under socialism criminals would be the authorised spokesmen of your principles and the ruthless henchmen of your lawlessness"; Connolly termed such outbursts as "a monstrous farago of nonsense" . . . It was a sign of the times that such clap-trap should come from a distinguished Jesuit. There were the stock-in-trade tactics of associating socialism with "free love" and "the State ownership of children". In fact, modern Socialist States have been very concerned to foster stable family life and to improve the status and dignity of womanhood. In answer to the charge that Socialism was the "coveting of our neighbour's field", Connolly quoted several prominent fathers of the Church. For example, St. Clement: "the use of all things that is found in this world ought to be common to all men". St. Chrysostom "The rich man is a thief".

Three important aspects of socialist theory were objects of contention in the debate; the labour theory of value, surplus value and the materialist conception of history.

Fr. Kane ridiculed the theory that the value of a commodity is determined by the amount of labour socially necessary to produce it. One of his arguments ran thus; a pair of boots carved out of wood with long and careful toil will fetch less in the market than a pair of brogues. But Connolly pointed out that such boots were not produced under average social conditions, this being the vital point. The appropriation by the capitalist of the surplus produced by the worker, for which he is unpaid, was justified by Fr. Kane on the grounds that such was really capital and was used to create "more surplus value". The socialist reply was that capital was actually stored up unpaid labour which should be vested collectively in the ownership and control of the workers.

To a hysterical outburst during which socialists are accused of robbing men of their "birthright-freedom," Connolly asked the devastating question which the enemies of Socialism must always, before and since ignore, because they have no answer: *"How can a person or class be free when its means of life are in the grasp of another. How can the working class be free when the sole chance of existence of its individual members*

*depends upon their ability to MAKE A PROFIT FOR OTHERS ?”*

The lecturer scornfully dismissed the materialist conception of history. Connolly patiently replied by showing how the ideas of men are derived from their material conditions and how the most brilliant of the philosophers and scholastics of medieval Europe were limited by their surroundings and could only think in terms of the world in which they lived.

This booklet by Connolly continually stressed that socialism and religion were distinct, and he listed sixteen examples in the foreword of the Irish Hierarchy taking a stand on politics which were subsequently regarded as mistaken by most Irishmen. He concludes by insisting that socialism was neither Catholic, Protestant or Free Thinker, but only—human.

## THE ROAD TO EASTER WEEK SOCIALISM AND NATIONALISM

SPEAKING to his daughter, Nora, shortly before his execution about the probable reaction of socialists to his part in the Rising, Connolly said: “They will never understand why I am here—they all forget, I am an Irishman”.

In some cases his fears were well founded. The leadership in the British and Irish Labour movements was predominantly non- or anti-Marxist. The 1916 Trade Union Congress held in September neither condemned nor condoned the Rising, and it did not protest against the executions; it paid homage to those Irishmen who died during the Rising and those who died during the Great War.

The British Labour leadership was steeped in Imperialism. One of its leaders, Arthur Henderson, was actually a member of the British Cabinet responsible for the executions. Even many socialists who warmly admired Connolly were perplexed by his sacrifice. He had persistently tried to imbue the Labour movement with a consciousness and an understanding of the national question; his efforts were only modestly successful. Some found it difficult to reconcile his part in an apparently mere nationalist revolt with his declaration that English domination would not be ended by merely hoisting the green flag over Dublin Castle.

There was, in fact, no inconsistency in Connolly's position. A change of flag was necessary, but for him it was only the beginning. The social and national questions were inseparably linked; so also was nationalism, inter-nationalism and the world-wide struggle against Imperialism, against which any fight from any source should be supported.

He concluded that "the far-flung battle line of England was weakest at the point nearest its heart". His ever analysing intellect decided that a revolt against British rule must be launched during the war. He wrote:

"We believe in constitutional action in normal times; we believe in revolutionary action in exceptional times. These are exceptional times".

The fight for a socialist republic would be advanced by independent working class participation in a revolt by a broad alliance, the object of which would be a break with imperialism. Connolly called the outcome of such a struggle "the first stage of freedom".

In a free independent Ireland the workers would be freer to fight for their own social objectives. Meanwhile, his immediate programme called for "the conscription of all the resources of the nation . . . under one common direction . . ."

In all this, Marxist thinking is evident. Marx had contended in his day that the first decisive blow against the British ruling class must be struck in Ireland. In their own interests he urged the British working class to support Ireland's fight for freedom. He asserted that any nation which enslaved another could not itself be free.

### "WE SERVE NEITHER KING NOR KAISER"

IN 1900 CONNOLLY secured separate national recognition for a delegation from the Irish Socialist Republican Party to the Paris International Socialist Congress. In 1910 and 1912 this International declared that socialists in all countries should oppose war. When, however, war broke out in 1914 the majority of socialists in Britain, France, Germany and other countries did not abide by this declaration and succumbed to war fever. This failure shocked Connolly but did not diminish



his determination to oppose the involvement of Ireland in the holocaust.

In 1914 he wrote: "Should the working class of Europe rather than slaughter each other for the benefit of Kings and financiers proceed tomorrow to erect barricades all over Europe . . . we should be perfectly justified in following such a glorious example and contributing our aid to the final dethronement of the vulture classes that rule and rob the world".

When by 1916 the hoped-for European barricades had not materialised he resolved that a blow must be struck in Ireland against Imperialism. Though some argue that he came too near to being pro-German, his basic position was made clear by the banner over Liberty Hall which read: "We Serve Neither King nor Kaiser, but Ireland".

### SUPPORT FROM LENIN

IN THE International Labour Movement it was among the Marxists that he found most support. Lenin, probably the most successful revolutionary in history, had been closely studying Irish affairs for some years. He analysed the 1913 strike, the 1914 Curragh mutiny and other aspects of the Irish question. Arising from his assessment of imperialism, he welcomed the 1916 Rising with words which remarkably resemble, in substance, those which Connolly himself had used. Lenin wrote:

"A blow delivered against British imperialist bourgeois rule by a rebellion in Ireland is of a hundred times greater significance than a blow of equal weight in Asia or Africa".

He integrated the Rising with other anti-imperialist revolts in other countries and attacked those who tried to dismiss it as a putsch—a conspiracy with no popular roots. Social revolution was inconceivable without revolts by small nations. He ridiculed those who expect a "pure" social revolution.

"The misfortune of the Irish is that they have risen prematurely when the European revolt of the proletariat has not yet matured. Capitalism is not so harmoniously built that the various springs of rebellion can of themselves merge at one effort, without reverses and defeats."



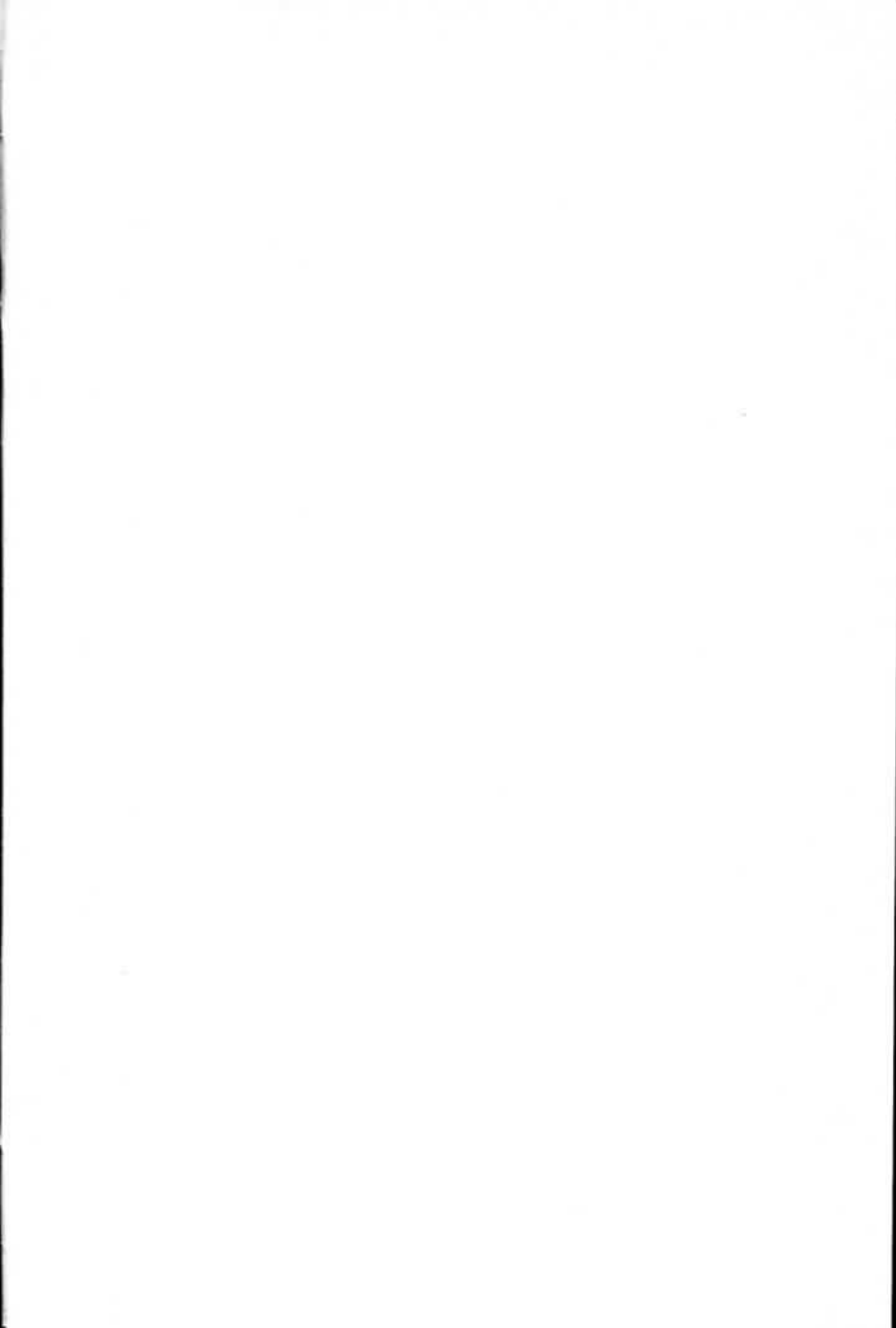
## CONNOLLY AND THE MODERN LABOUR MOVEMENT

JAMES CONNOLLY AND JAMES LARKIN were the two great founders of the Irish Labour Movement.

Labour failed, however to follow Connolly's lead in the national question and did not benefit from the opportunity which his grasp of the issue placed at its disposal. This failure was due to the narrow exclusive attention given to immediate economic and social problems. Over the years a heavy price has been paid for the abdication by Labour of serious national leadership which consequently has remained the property of parties with capitalist or middle class leadership—with corresponding policies. With the growing disillusionment of the people with Fianna Fail and Fine Gael a situation may shortly emerge where Labour can present a serious challenge. To do so effectively a serious effort will have to be made to present policies which are clearly distinctive on all vital issues, social, economic and political. They must certainly challenge the policy of presenting our country primarily as a profitable field of penetration for foreign monopoly capital, a process now to be intensified by the Free Trade Agreement. And, presently, there is the threat of membership of the Common Market. At the same time it must be clear that Labour in alliance with other progressive forces is the only reliable custodian of traditional national objectives, including the re-unification of our country.

For the successful fulfilment of such a programme the legacy left by Connolly is of immense value. This does not mean that his writings must be treated as holy writ and quoted as a solution to all problems. He himself would have scorned such mechanical conformity. They do however, possess a sharp relevancy for modern Ireland and present us with a rich quarry of ideas which can guide us to complete our national revolution by defeating both the old and the new conquests. He is still a figure of controversy because the issues he raised still live. The Socialist principles for which he fought throughout his life are winning the support of ever growing millions. They can be the basis of great advances by Irish working people but only if fostered by the same fearless, independent thinking which inspired Connolly himself throughout his life.





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