

**James Connolly**

**On German  
Militarism**

**(1914)**

From **Irish Worker**, 22 August 1914.

Finally, as a word of warning. Do not let anyone play upon your sympathies by denunciation of the German military bullies. German military bullies, like all tyrannies among civilised people need fear nothing so much as native (German) democracy. Attacks from outside only strengthen tyrants within a nation. If we had to choose between strengthening the German bully or the Russian autocrat the wise choice would be on the side of the German. For the German people are a highly civilised people, responsive to every progressive influence, and rapidly forging weapons for their own emancipation from native tyranny, whereas the Russian Empire stretches away into the depths of Asia, and relies on an army largely recruited from amongst many millions of barbarians who have not yet felt the first softening influence of civilisation. German thought is abreast of the best in the world; German influences have shaped for good the hopes of the world, but the thought and the hopes of the best in Russia was but the other day drowned in blood by Russia's worst.

To help Britain is to help Russia to the dominance of Europe, to help the barbarian to crush the scientist. That is the reflection of the wise revolutionist of today.

Meanwhile the Orange enemy of Irish freedom wisely stays at home and conserves his forces, and the Irish Nationalist is encouraged by his leaders to rush abroad and shed his blood in a quarrel not his own, the simplest elements of which he does not understand.

## James Connolly

# Northern Notes

**Irish Worker,** 22 August 1914.

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In numbers, Sunday night's meeting at Library Street was the greatest held on that pitch this summer. James Connolly spoke on the war and its effects industrially. Like all other parties his own was divided in opinion. For that reason he made it clear that his opinions were personal and did not necessarily bind others who spoke from that platform. The war was the greatest crime of modern times. The nations and peoples involved in it were plunged into it by a dozen men about whose doings and intrigues nobody was allowed to know anything. All the misery, murder and suffering were brought about by those few men in spite of the wishes and desires of the people. The workers of all countries were the sufferers,

and it was they who were paying for the war in both blood and money. Already its evil effects were felt in the prevailing unemployment and the rapid rise in the cost of living, and they were only at the beginning of it.

Thousands upon thousands of workers in France, Germany, Austria, Belgium, Britain and Russia were being sent straight to death in a war in which they had no interest, fighting for a cause they neither knew nor understood. Homes were broken up, wives and children left behind to starve and suffer, and blood spilt like water to satisfy rulers and exploiters who never as much as consulted their peoples before going to war. He had worked with men from all these countries. He knew the German workers to be a kindly people and he could never forget or fail to admire the sacrifices and fights made by the French for liberty and freedom all over Europe. But Britain's was a criminally disgraceful part in the war. Everybody knew that her pretence of defending Belgian independence and integrity was a sham and hypocrisy. Even the English people were not consulted about the war, and with none of the peoples had Ireland any quarrel. Every soldier or sailor killed in that war was in reality murdered. Even should he stand alone he would always protest against wars of aggression. One thing he would not sacrifice at any cost and that was honour and principle. [...]

## James Connolly

# America and Europe

(1914)

**Irish Worker,** 22 August 1914.  
From P.J. Musgrove (ed.), **James Connolly: A Socialist and War (1914-1916)**, London 1941, a collection of Connolly's anti-war articles published on behalf of the Communist Party of Great Britain shortly before the German invasion of the Soviet Union.

The notes from this edition are included here because of their historical interest.

Certain English Press agencies and their Irish imitators have during the past fortnight been hard at work assuring the reading public that in the United States public opinion is practically unanimous on the side of Great Britain and her allies. [1] It would be as well for the readers of the **Irish Worker** to take that statement with the proverbial grain of salt and bucket of sea-water. It is as true probably as the currently accepted English yarn that the United States is a great Anglo-Saxon nation – a yarn that is blatantly asserted by all English politicians and journalists and greedily swallowed by most working people in England despite the fact that ten minutes' calm reflection upon the history of immigration into America would show that the Anglo-Saxon in that country represents but a very small drop in a very big ocean of races. Somewhat similar reflection upon facts will serve to dispel the idea of the solid American sentiment for England. The present writer does not know from personal knowledge the present state of public opinion in the States, but he does know from personal knowledge the various elements of which the population of the States is composed, and he knows their usual affiliation and political leanings. And from such knowledge it is not hard to guess at the state of public sentiment upon this war.

Next to the native-born Americans, who although derived from all races are in all things loyal first to American interests and American ideas, the two greatest elements in America are the Irish and the Germans. Of the German-American population, then, it may be quite safe to say that their sentiments are most likely with the Fatherland, even although they may be entirely opposed to the German Government. The German Press is the most powerful Press in America not printed in the English language. It is read not only by all German immigrants and their children, but as the German language is a sort of *lingua franca* or free common language to Hungarians, Poles, Lithuanians, Czechs, Slavs and Jews, it is read by all those races and nationalities likewise. One may be sure that the German journalists have kept well to the front the fact that the German Government offered to concede all that the British Government had asked for in

the matter of Belgium, and had even asked the British Government to name its own terms of neutrality, and that the British Foreign Minister concealed this fact from the Parliament when speaking before the declaration of war. One may be sure that such a typical act of British double-dealing has not been allowed to escape the attention of the readers of the German-American Press. Nor yet is it likely that the non-German elements of the foreign-speaking population in America are any more in favour of the Allies than the Germans. Belgians and French are numerically insignificant in that country in proportion to the North and South Europeans.

The Hungarians are not likely either from present national reasons, from Socialistic sympathies, or from their past traditions to favour any policy likely to increase the favour of their Russian neighbours in Europe – the Russians whose armies in 1848 laid Hungary in ruins in order to drive the Hungarian revolutionists back under the heel of Austria; the Russians whose brutal despotism is the perpetual menace of every freedom-aspiring community from the Black Sea to the Baltic. The Finns, most enlightened and most progressive of all the races within or bordering upon that vast stretch of territory, may well be trusted to work and pray for the humiliation of the Russian tyrant whose hand is even now upon their throat, whose Cossacks were but yesterday trampling into the dust their laws, their language, their liberties, their very existence as a separate people, and so trampling despite all treaties to the contrary. The people of the Baltic provinces were but the other day harried with fire and sword by the Russian allies of the British Lion. They have swarmed into America to escape the fury; can they be wishing for the success of the allies of Russia? Not the most numerically important, but surely one of the most influential of the races represented in America are the Jews. Particularly is this true of the eastern states, and in the commercial and journalistic world. I observe that in one of the recent proclamations the Russian Czar speaks of his “beloved Jews” in calling them to the army. English newspapers speak with tender admiration of such Imperial manifestos; honest workers can only feel sickened by the thought of this imperial bully whose passion it is to torture, imprison and slaughter in times of peace those to whom he appeals with snivelling panic in times of war.

Conscientious and impartial authorities have proven from official documents that the pogroms or race riots for which Russia has been notorious, and of which the Jews are the victims, have almost always been the work of Government agents, and have always been carried out with Government connivance. In these pogroms the Jewish districts were given up to pillage and outrage by mobs of armed men, whilst the police looked calmly on. Shops and houses were burned after being looted, women and children were ravished, babies and old men and women were thrown from windows to their death in the streets, and hell was let loose generally upon the defenceless people. After long months some few nobodies were occasionally arrested and sentenced for these crimes, only to be set free again by pardon *signed by the Czar's own hand*. And now this same Czar addressing the unfortunate survivors calls them his "beloved Jews".

Verily there must be laughter in hell these days.

Surely the Jews are not unanimously wishing for the success of the British armies which are fighting to increase the power of this monster over Europe.

And the Poles; is it possible that they, like the fool Irish, will rush out to fight for their tyrant, for the tyrant whose prisons are full of their compatriots? Or that the Poles in America are praying for the success of the Russian Czar?

Certainly the Press tells us with tears of joy dropping from their printing machines that the manifesto to the Poles promises complete autonomy to Poland, and that in view of that promise the Poles will be radiantly joyous with enthusiasm for the Czar. Ah, promises! How easily promises fall from the lips of tyrants! Remember the words of Whitman, the 'good grey poet' of America, when writing on the promises of European Royalty to the revolutionists of 1848.

"For many a promise made by Royal lips, and broken,  
And laughed at in the breaking."

The Poles know, the Revolutionists of the world know, if others have forgotten, that in his manifesto of October, 1905, this same Czar guaranteed in his own words that the population of all Russia and Poland was to be

“given the inviolable foundation of civil rights, based on the actual inviolability of the person, and freedom of belief, of speech, of organisation, and meeting,”

and that as soon as his Government had crushed the revolution “those who tried to realise these principles were treated as rebels guilty of high treason,” as Prince Kropotkin truly remarks.

One small item will illustrate the fidelity of the Czar to his own royal promises. For trying to act up to the principles laid down by the Czar as above there were exiled to Siberia by administrative order – that is to say without trial – in 1908 no less a number of political prisoners than 74,000. These are the figures as supplied by the Department of Police to the Russian Duma upon the request of that body for exact information. We are scarcely likely to hear of the subjects of the Czar who have escaped to America swelling the chorus of prayers for the success of Russia and her ally, Great Britain.

Next to the Germans the largest and most respected non-English speaking element in the States are the Scandinavians, Danes, Norwegians and Swedes. The largest in numbers are the Swedes, who indeed rather dominate the others. The attitude of the Swedes towards the war and their prayers for the victor can easily be judged if we remember the question that formed the issue upon which the last general election in Sweden was fought. That issue was the Government demand for more soldiers, more ships, and more fortresses to protect Sweden against Russia.

It was freely declared that the anxiety of the Russian Czar to wrest her liberties from Finland and to Russianise her armies was a mere preliminary to open the way for a conquest of Sweden. Hence Sweden and all the Scandinavian countries and all their friends abroad feel that the present campaign of the Triple Alliance, France, England and Russia, is a campaign to make the Russian despot the overlord and master of all the free countries of Northern Europe, as the struggling peoples of Southern Europe feel that the same campaign is designed to place the greatest enemies of social and political freedom in an impregnable position of military strength.

It is felt, in short, that England is sacrificing the hopes of civilisation in Europe in order to safeguard her commercial prestige and destroy a successful commercial rival; just as it is felt that the capitalist class in France in lending money to the Russian Czar during the Revolution of 1905 struck down the hopes of Freedom in Russia, and in order to secure the dividends upon that unholy loan are now needlessly plunging their country into war-betraying a republic in order to support an autocracy to which they have lent money.

These are the considerations of which the Irish Press is for the most part laughably ignorant, and of which they suppress all mention when they do know, but which are perfectly well known to the American public.

Do not let us therefore worry over the carefully manufactured lies of the news agencies as to the attitude of the great American public. For the native-born Americans, suffice to say that to aid their judgment they have a rooted inherited distrust of England, and a dislike of Russia born of broad human sympathies and love of liberty.

Finally, as a word of warning this week. Do not let anyone play upon your sympathies by denunciation of the German military bullies. German military bullies, like all tyrannies among civilised people, need fear nothing so much as native (German) democracy. Attacks from outside only strengthen tyrants within a nation. If we had to choose between strengthening the German bully or the Russian autocrat the wise choice would be on the side of the German. For the German people are a highly civilised people, responsive to every progressive influence, and, rapidly forging weapons for their own emancipation from native tyranny, whereas the Russian Empire stretches away into the depths of Asia, and relies on an army largely recruited from amongst many millions of barbarians who have not yet felt the first softening influence of civilisation. German thought is abreast of the best in the world; German influences have shaped for good the hopes of the world, but the thought and the hopes of the best in Russia were but the other day drowned in blood by Russia's worst.

To help Britain is to help Russia to the dominance of Europe, to help the barbarian to crush the scientist. That is the reflection of the wise revolutionist of to-day.

Meanwhile the Orange enemy of Irish freedom wisely stays at home and conserves his forces, and the Irish Nationalist is encouraged by his leaders to rush abroad and shed his blood in a quarrel not his own, the simplest elements of which he does not understand.

## Notes

1. This propaganda of 1914 is significant when we consider the present press campaign boosting the “moral support” and “identity of interests” between Britain and the USA **The Star**, October 10th, 1940, declared in headlines that “US Has One Foot in the War.” The voices of the millions of US citizens who are crying for peace are not allowed to reach us through the capitalist Press. The **Daily Worker** (October 11th, 1940) was the only paper to publish in full the appeal of Earl Browder, Communist Presidential Candidate, for a peace policy based upon friendship with China and the USSR.

## James Connolly

# A Martyr For Conscience Sake

(1914)

As I am writing this the news appears in the press that our comrade, Dr. Karl Liebknecht, has been shot in Germany for refusing to accept military service in the war. The news is unconfirmed, and will, I trust, be found later to be untrue, but I propose to take it this week as a text for my article.

Supposing, then, that it was true, what would be the socialist attitude toward the martyrdom of our beloved comrade? There can be little hesitation in avowing that all socialists would endorse his act, and look upon his death as a martyrdom for our cause. And yet if his attitude was correct, what can be said of the attitude of all those socialists who have gone to the front, and still more of all those socialists who from press and platform are urging that nothing should be done now that might disturb the harmony that ought to exist at home, or spoil the wonderful solidarity of the nation in this great crisis?

As far as I can understand these latter, their argument seems to be that they did their whole duty when they protested against the war, but that now that war has been declared it is right that they also should arm in defence of their common country, and act in all things along with their fellow subjects – those same fellow subjects whose senseless clamour brought on this awful outburst of murder. We are told, for instance, that the same policy is being pursued by all socialist parties. That the French socialists protested against the war – and then went to the front, headed by Gustave Hervé, the great anti-militarist; the German socialists protested against the war – and then, in the Reichstag, unanimously voted 250 millions to carry it on; the Austrians issued a manifesto against the war – and are now on the frontier doing great deeds of heroism against the foreign enemy; and the Russians erected barricades in the streets of St. Petersburg against the cossacks, but immediately war was declared went off to the front arm in arm with their cossack brothers. And so on. Now, if all this is true, what does it mean? It means that the socialist parties of the various countries mutually cancel each other, and that as a consequence socialism ceases to exist as a world force, and drops out of history in the greatest crisis of the history of the world, in the very moment when courageous action will most influence history.

We know that not more than a score of men in the various Cabinets of the world have brought about this war, that no European people was consulted upon the question, that preparations for it have been going on for years, and that all the alleged 'reasons' for it are so many afterthoughts invented to hide from us the fact that the intrigues and schemes of our rulers had brought the world to this pass. All socialists are agreed upon this. Being so agreed, are we now to forget it all: to forget all our ideas of human brotherhood, and because some twenty highly-placed criminals say our country requires us to slaughter our brothers beyond the seas or the frontiers, are we bound to accept their statement, and proceed to slaughter our comrades abroad at the dictate of our enemies at home. The idea outrages my every sense of justice and fraternity. I may be only a voice crying in the wilderness, a crank amongst a community of the wise, but whoever I be, I must, in deference to my own self-respect, and to the sanctity of my own soul, protest against the doctrine that any decree of theirs of national honour can excuse a socialist who serves in a war which he has denounced as a needless war, can absolve from the guilt of murder any socialist who at the dictate of a capitalist Government draws the trigger of a rifle upon or sends a shot from a gun into the breasts of people with whom he has no quarrel, and who are his fellow labourers in the useful work of civilisation.

We have for years informed the world that we were in revolt against the iniquities of modern civilisation, but now we hear socialists informing us that it is our duty to become accomplices of the rulers of modern civilisation in the greatest of all iniquities, the slaughter of man by his fellow man. And that as long as we make our formal protest we have done our whole duty, and can cheerfully proceed to take life, burn peaceful homes, and lay waste fields smiling with food !

Our comrade, Dr. Liebknecht, if he has died rather than admit this new doctrine, has died the happiest death that man can die, has put to eternal shame the thousands of 'comrades' in every European land, who, with the cant of brotherhood upon their lips, have gone forth in the armies of the capitalist rulers – murdering and to murder. The old veteran leader of German social democracy, his father, Wilhelm Liebknecht, said in one of his pamphlets:

“The working class of the world has but one enemy, the capitalist class of the world, those of their own country at the head of the list.”

Well and truly has the son lived up to the truly revolutionary doctrine of the father: lived and died for its eternal truth and wisdom.

Now we are hearing a new excuse for the complicity of socialists in this war. It is that this war will be the last war, its horrors will be so great that humanity will refuse to allow another.

The homely Irish proverb has it that “far off cows have long horns,” or that “far away hills are always green.” It must have been in some such spirit that this latest argument was evolved. For what can happen in the future that is not more applicable now! In the future this militarist spirit will probably be in the ascendant, new national prejudices will have been born, new international hatreds called forth. There will be memories of recent defeats to wipe out, fresh frontiers to conserve or to obliterate, and the military caste will have acquired an ascendancy over the popular imagination because the large numbers of the various armies will have given rise to widespread solicitude for their welfare and consequent hopes for their success. If you have friends or relatives whom you dearly love serving in the army, you cannot help wishing for the success of that army, and the defeat of its immediate opponents, and from such a state of feeling to the most intense jingoism is but a small and easy transition. The large armies of today draw upon the whole population, all are interested in the fate of their friends or relatives, and we may all be sure that the lying press can be depended upon to convert solicitude for our friends into passionate hatred for those whom war makes their opponents.

No; we cannot draw upon the future for a draft to pay our present duties. There is no moratorium to postpone the payment of the debt the socialists owe to the cause; it can only be paid now. Paid it may be in martyrdom, but a few hundred such martyrdoms would be but a small price to pay to avert the slaughter of hundreds of thousands. If our German comrade, Liebknecht, has paid the price, perhaps the others may yet nerve themselves for that sacrifice. On

what conception of national honour can we blame them, before what fetish of national dignity can we prostrate ourselves in abasement to atone for their act?

The war of a subject nation for independence, for the right to live out its own life in its own way may and can be justified as holy and righteous; the war of a subject class to free itself from the debasing conditions of economic and political slavery should at all times choose its own weapons, and hold and esteem all as sacred instruments of righteousness. But the war of nation against nation in the interest of royal freebooters and cosmopolitan thieves is a thing accursed.

All hail, then, to our continental comrade, who, in a world of imperial and financial brigands and cowardly trimmers and compromisers showed mankind that men still know how to die for the holiest of all causes – the sanctity of the human soul, the practical brotherhood of the human race!

**James Connolly**

# **No Compromise – No Conciliation**

**(1914)**

**Irish Worker,** 15 August, 1914.  
From the collection: **Ireland Upon the Dissecting Table**, Cork Workers' Club 1975.

The Carsonites remain as obdurate and anti-Irish as ever. It is noticeable that all the talk about a “union of North and South in defence of Ireland”, about “blending the Orange and Green”, about “marching united as Irishmen against the common foe” and all the other claptrap has been strictly confined to the Nationalist side. No response has come from the Ulster Volunteers; no Carsonite official has made the smallest overture towards peace; there has not been the slightest melting of the sour bigotry of the Orangeman. The following extract from the columns of a Belfast evening paper of last week is a valuable index of the present state of mind of these people:—

“The verdict of a Dublin coroner’s jury on the victims of the Bachelor’s Walk shooting is not so extreme as was expected. Counsel sought to have a verdict of wilful murder brought in against persons by name, but the jury wisely did not go that length. A great deal of vindictiveness was displayed during the enquiry by some of the counsel against the soldiers. These men, it is clear, did not fire till they were in deadly peril from a mob of Dublin hooligans, who are the greatest cowards on earth. The testimony of the witnesses who sought to show that nothing more harmful than banana skins were thrown at the military was disapproved by abundant testimony. It is to be hoped that no more will be heard of the affair now that the country has sterner things to do than squabble about the incident.”

One cannot but admire in this connection the tact and skill with which Sir Edward Carson has conducted and still continues to conduct his campaign against any extension of liberty to the Irish people. It has been marked by one long series of success. Despite sneers and jeers and laughter, despite reason and justice, despite threats and against seemingly overwhelming odds, he had kept serenely on his way pursuing the policy he had marked out for himself and his followers. For him there was no compromise, no conciliation. He met each fresh concession with studied insult, at each fresh offer of peace he shook fresh rifles in the face of the Government; when the Home Rule Party basely consented to put the question of the integrity of their country at the mercy of a local majority of bigoted traitors of Ireland, he put machine guns upon the streets of Belfast and Lisburn. Mr. John Redmond now blatantly declares in the House of Commons

that the National Volunteers will defend Ireland for the Government. Sir Edward Carson says grimly that nothing is yet altered in Ireland, and the Belfast Orange Press warns the Ulster Volunteers against being sent out of Ireland and leaving Ulster to the mercy of a Government that they cannot trust. Like the Irish after the Battle of the Boyne; the National Volunteers should offer to “swop leaders” with the Orangemen. It would be to Ireland’s advantage if Sir Edward would fight for Ireland so skilfully and as courageously as he has fought against her.

## James Connolly

# The National Danger

(1914)

**Irish Worker,** 15 August 1914.

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In my article last week I said that only from the working-class democracy could a real lead be expected in this crisis. I am happy to be able to state that we are not so isolated in this matter as I at first feared. In many other quarters the fact that keeping the foodstuffs in Ireland is the first duty of every true Irishman and woman had already been realised before my article appeared. We of the Irish Transport Workers’ Union are so often Ishmaels in public life, with every man’s hand against us and our hand against every man, that it is a rare treat to be able to acknowledge that on a question of supreme importance such as this we are but

one among many agreeing voices. The editor of **Sinn Féin** strikes a perfectly correct and sane note upon the crisis, we are glad to say, as does also **Claidheamh Soluis**, the Gaelic League weekly. Other newspapers and journals make tentative and truly fearful suggestions along the same lines; in many Dublin companies of Volunteers the members have discussed the matter and came to agreement on the right side, and despite the fearful wave of pro-English filth now spread over the country signs are multiplying that in actions upon these lines there will be found the possibility of making a stand for Ireland that will win the adhesion of all that is best in the land.

Meanwhile the daily Press continually reports news that confirms the attitude of the **Irish Worker** towards all the sections of the enemy upon whom it makes war. The Carsonites remain as obdurate and anti-Irish as ever. It is noticeable that all the talk about a “union of North and South in defence of Ireland”, about “blending the Orange and Green”, about “marching united as Irishmen against the common foe” and all the other clap-trap has been strictly confined to the Nationalist side. No response has come from the Ulster Volunteers; no Carsonite official has made the smallest overture towards peace; there has not been the slightest melting of the sour bigotry of the Orangeman. The following extract from the columns of a Belfast evening paper of last week is a valuable index of the present frame of mind of these people –

The verdict of the Dublin coroner’s jury on the victims of the Bachelor’s Walk shooting is not so extreme as was expected. Counsel sought to have a verdict of wilful murder brought in against persons by name, but the jury wisely did not go that length. A great deal of vindictiveness was displayed during the inquiry by some of the counsel against the soldiers. These men, it is clear, did not fire till they were in deadly peril from a mob of Dublin hooligans, who are the greatest cowards on earth. The testimony of the witnesses who sought to show that nothing more harmful than banana skins were thrown at the military was disproved by abundant testimony. It is to be hoped that no more will be heard of the affair now the country has sterner things to do than squabble about this incident.

One cannot but admire in this connection the tact and skill with which Sir Edward Carson has conducted, and still continues to conduct, his campaign against any extension of liberty to the Irish people. It has been marked by one long series of success. Despite sneers and jeers and laughter, despite reason and justice, despite threats and against seemingly overwhelming odds, he has kept serenely on his way pursuing the policy he had marked out for himself and his followers. For him there was no compromise, no conciliation. He met each fresh concession with studied insult; at each fresh offer of peace he shook fresh rifles in the face of the Government; when the Home Rule Party basely consented to put the question of the integrity of their country at the mercy of a local majority of bigoted traitors of Ireland, he put machine guns upon the streets of Belfast and Lisburn. Mr John Redmond now blatantly declares in the House of Commons that the National Volunteers will defend Ireland for the Government. Sir Edward Carson says grimly that nothing is yet altered in Ireland, and the Belfast Orange Press warns the Ulster Volunteers against being sent out of Ireland and leaving Ulster to the mercy of a Government that they cannot trust. Like the Irish after the Battle of the Boyne, the National Volunteers should offer to “swop leaders” with the Orangemen. It would be to Ireland’s advantage if Sir Edward would fight for Ireland as skilfully and as courageously as he has fought against her.

Contrast with such leadership the attitude of Mr Redmond and his Party towards the Volunteers. First he slights and secretly opposes them. Then when they get strong he demands the power to control them. Granting that he is honest, here was a great blunder. His former leader – Charles Stewart Parnell – always believed in a physical-force party, but would never join it. This gave him always the power to say to the English Government that if it did not grant his moderate demands then the physical-force party would take control of Irish affairs out of his hands. “And,” he would assure Mr Gladstone, “you know I have no control over that extreme party.” Had Mr Redmond pursued a similar policy and kept clear of the Irish Volunteers he could always have met every move of the Government towards the Carsonites, every proposal to mutilate Ireland’s rights, with the quiet statement that the Volunteers over whom he had no control would scarcely allow it. “You know, Mr Asquith,” he could have said, “I would be willing to do what you ask, but I have no control over the Irish National Volunteers, and

I am afraid that they would cause trouble if I gave in to Carson." Thus, like Parnell, he would have had the power of an organisation of armed men behind him whilst he had no responsibility for their actions. This he threw away when he set out to obtain control of the Volunteer forces.

Why did he throw it away? What did he get in exchange that was good for Ireland? Would it be too much to suggest that he was compelled by the Government to try and get the Volunteers into his hands, and that the Government so compelled him because they knew that this European war was coming.

With a European war on and Ireland organised with Volunteer regiments, such regiments, even without arms, could have made the adhesion of Ireland to either side, or even the real neutrality of Ireland, of so much importance that great and substantial national advantages would have been offered her to secure such adhesion or neutrality. With a European war on and the Volunteers in the control of Redmond and Party, the active co-operation of the Volunteers in the defence of the empire was given to the Government without a single concession of any kind being obtained; nay, even whilst the menace of an amending Bill to mutilate Ireland was still part of the Government plan. Now we are assured by the Home Rule Press that as a consequence of the happy union of Ulster and National Volunteers (which exists only in their imagination) still more generous concessions are to be given to Ulster.

Alas that I should live to see it! North, South, East and West the Irish Volunteers are marching and parading with the Union Jack in front of them, their bands playing *God Save the King* and their aristocratic officers making loyalist speeches.

North, South, East and West the anti-Irish landlord classes are now hurrying in to officer the Irish Volunteers, and brave true-hearted men who have given their lives in earnest, unobtrusive service to their motherland are thrust contemptuously aside that positions may be given to those aristocratic jackanapes. The fools who are in control hail this as a sign of national unity. The wise who know the history of their country ask how can we expect swift and

prompt action for Ireland in any emergency when the officers in command will thus be men whose whole life, opinions, instincts, class bias, and prejudices have been coloured with hatred of all that the Irish National Movement ever stood for. Remember the words of the greatest Irish Revolutionist, Wolfe Tone:—

When the aristocracy come forward the people fall backward; when the people come forward the aristocracy, fearful of being left behind, insinuate themselves into our ranks and *rise into timid leaders or treacherous auxiliaries*.

The fatal policy of the Irish Volunteers is producing and pushing these timid leaders and treacherous auxiliaries into every position where their timidity or treachery will work the most havoc in any emergency.

It is a humiliating thought that Mr Redmond's declaration on this war has completely changed the status of this country. Before it we were a "subject province of England", now we are "an English province" in the eyes of the world. And there are more enemies of the Empire in a small corner of Toulon than there are in the whole of Ireland.

We have reached the very lowest depths as a race, and the greatest part of the responsibility lies with those who in their cowardly fear of an ignorant, newspaper-rigged public opinion surrendered the control of the Volunteers to the Redmondite wirepullers. Henceforth Irish discontent will not be regarded abroad as symptoms of an aspiration after distinct nationality, it will only and rightly be interpreted as the discontent of leisure in the game of imperial politics.

I have had few more unpleasant experiences in my life than I underwent when listening to the pitiful attempts of some members of the Provisional Committee to explain and justify their votes upon their surrender. To hear them telling of their great diplomacy, and their wonderful wirepulling was a revelation. It showed at once that they were attempting to do the work of a revolutionary movement by the methods of a ward-canvasser in a Municipal election; that they were approaching a supreme crisis in a nation's history in the temper and spirit of a political registration agent out for votes for his party. The kindest thing that

can happen to them now is that their names may be forgotten; at present it seems an equal chance between oblivion and malediction.

The time is now ripe, nay, the imperious necessities of the hour call loudly for, demand, the formation of a Committee of all the earnest elements, outside as well as inside the Volunteers, to consider means to take and hold Ireland and the food of Ireland for the people of Ireland.

We of the Transport Union, we of the Citizen Army are ready for any such co-operation. We can bring to it the aid of drilled and trained men, we can bring to it the heartiest efforts of men and women who in thousands have shown that they know how to face prison and death, and we can bring to it the services of thinkers and organisers who know that different occasions require different policies, that you cannot legalise revolutionary actions, and that audacity alone can command success in a national crisis like this.

Freedom, we believe, cannot flourish, or even awaken into life in the miasmatic atmosphere of wirepulling and intrigue, but as St Just said:—

Liberty is born in storm and tears as the Earth arose out of chaos, and as man comes wailing into the world.

We who have faced the storm for industrial liberty, and wept the tears for the sufferings of our own class will not shrink from either for the sake of our country.

Try us!

*BY JAMES CONNOLLY*

**James Connolly**

# A Continental Revolution

(1914)

From **Forward**, 15 August 1914.

The outbreak of war on the continent of Europe makes it impossible this week to write to **Forward** upon any other question. I have no doubt that to most of my readers Ireland has ere now ceased to be, in colloquial phraseology, the most important place on the map, and that their thoughts are turning gravely to a consideration of the position of the European socialist movement in the face of this crisis.

Judging by developments up to the time of writing, such considerations must fall far short of affording satisfying reflections to the socialist thinker. For, what is the position of the socialist movement in Europe to-day? Summed up briefly it is as follows:

For a generation at least the socialist movement in all the countries now involved has progressed by leaps and bounds, and more satisfactory still, by steady and continuous increase and development.

The number of votes recorded for socialist candidates has increased at a phenomenally rapid rate, the number of socialist representatives in all legislative chambers has become more and more of a disturbing factor in the calculations of governments. Newspapers, magazines, pamphlets and literature of all kinds teaching socialist ideas have been and are daily distributed by the million

amongst the masses; every army and navy in Europe has seen a constantly increasing proportion of socialists amongst its soldiers and sailors, and the industrial organisations of the working class have more and more perfected their grasp over the economic machinery of society, and more and more moved responsive to the socialist conception of their duties. Along with this, hatred of militarism has spread through every rank of society, making everywhere its recruits, and raising an aversion to war even amongst those who in other things accepted the capitalist order of things. Anti-militarist societies and anti-militarist campaigns of socialist societies and parties, and anti-militarist resolutions of socialist and international trade union conferences have become part of the order of the day and are no longer phenomena to be wondered at. The whole working class movement stands committed to war upon war – stands so committed at the very height of its strength and influence.

And now, like the proverbial bolt from the blue, war is upon us, and war between the most important, because the most socialist, nations of the earth. And we are helpless!

What then becomes of all our resolutions; all our protests of fraternisation; all our threats of general strikes; all our carefully-built machinery of internationalism; all our hopes for the future? Were they all as sound and fury, signifying nothing? When the German artilleryman, a socialist serving in the German army of invasion, sends a shell into the ranks of the French army, blowing off their heads; tearing out their bowels, and mangling the limbs of dozens of socialist comrades in that force, will the fact that he, before leaving for the front 'demonstrated' against the war be of any value to the widows and orphans made by the shell he sent upon its mission of murder? Or, when the French rifleman pours his murderous rifle fire into the ranks of the German line of attack, will he be able to derive any comfort from the probability that his bullets are murdering or maiming comrades who last year joined in thundering 'hochs' and cheers of greeting to the eloquent Jaurès, when in Berlin he pleaded for international solidarity? When the socialist pressed into the army of the Austrian Kaiser, sticks a long, cruel bayonet-knife into the stomach of the socialist conscript in the army of the Russian Czar, and gives it a twist so that

when pulled out it will pull the entrails out along with it, will the terrible act lose any of its fiendish cruelty by the fact of their common theoretical adhesion to an anti-war propaganda in times of peace? When the socialist soldier from the Baltic provinces of Russia is sent forward into Prussian Poland to bombard towns and villages until a red trail of blood and fire covers the homes of the unwilling Polish subjects of Prussia, as he gazes upon the corpses of those he has slaughtered and the homes he has destroyed, will he in his turn be comforted by the thought that the Czar whom he serves sent other soldiers a few years ago to carry the same devastation and murder into his own home by the Baltic Sea?

But why go on? It is not as clear as the fact of life itself that no insurrection of the working class; no general strike; no general uprising of the forces of Labour in Europe, could possibly carry with it, or entail a greater slaughter of socialists, than will their participation as soldiers in the campaigns of the armies of their respective countries? Every shell which explodes in the midst of a German battalion will slaughter some socialists; every Austrian cavalry charge will leave the gashed and hacked bodies of Serbian or Russian socialists squirming and twisting in agony upon the ground; every Russian, Austrian, or German ship sent to the bottom or blown sky-high will mean sorrow and mourning in the homes of some socialist comrades of ours. If these men must die, would it not be better to die in their own country fighting for freedom for their class, and for the abolition of war, than to go forth to strange countries and die slaughtering and slaughtered by their brothers that tyrants and profiteers might live?

Civilisation is being destroyed before our eyes; the results of generations of propaganda and patient heroic plodding and self-sacrifice are being blown into annihilation from a hundred cannon mouths; thousands of comrades with whose souls we have lived in fraternal communion are about to be done to death; they whose one hope it was to be spared to cooperate in building the perfect society of the future are being driven to fratricidal slaughter in shambles where that hope will be buried under a sea of blood.

I am not writing in captious criticism of my continental comrades. We know too little about what is happening on the continent, and events have moved too quickly for any of us to be in a position to criticise at all. But believing as I do that

any action would be justified which would put a stop to this colossal crime now being perpetrated, I feel compelled to express the hope that ere long we may read of the paralysing of the internal transport service on the continent, even should the act of paralysing necessitate the erection of socialist barricades and acts of rioting by socialist soldiers and sailors, as happened in Russia in 1905. Even an unsuccessful attempt at social revolution by force of arms, following the paralysis of the economic life of militarism, would be less disastrous to the socialist cause than the act of socialists allowing themselves to be used in the slaughter of their brothers in the cause.

A great continental uprising of the working class would stop the war; a universal protest at public meetings will not save a single life from being wantonly slaughtered.

I make no war upon patriotism; never have done. But against the patriotism of capitalism – the patriotism which makes the interest of the capitalist class the supreme test of duty and right – I place the patriotism of the working class, the patriotism which judges every public act by its effect upon the fortunes of those who toil. That which is good for the working class I esteem patriotic, but that party or movement is the most perfect embodiment of patriotism which most successfully works for the conquest by the working class of the control of the destinies of the land wherein they labour.

To me, therefore, the socialist of another country is a fellow-patriot, as the capitalist of my own country is a natural enemy. I regard each nation as the possessor of a definite contribution to the common stock of civilisation, and I regard the capitalist class of each nation as being the logical and natural enemy of the national culture which constitutes that definite contribution.

Therefore, the stronger I am in my affection for national tradition, literature, language, and sympathies, the more firmly rooted I am in my opposition to that capitalist class which in its soulless lust for power and gold would bray the nations as in a mortar.

Reasoning from such premises, therefore, this war appears to me as the most fearful crime of the centuries. In it the working class are to be sacrificed that a small clique of rulers and armament makers may sate their lust for power and their greed for wealth. Nations are to be obliterated, progress stopped, and international hatreds erected into deities to be worshipped.

**James Connolly**

# **Our Duty In This Crisis**

**(1914)**

From **Irish Worker**, August 8, 1914.

What should be the attitude to the working-class democracy of Ireland in face of the present crisis? I wish to emphasise the fact that the question is addressed to the 'working-class democracy' because I believe that it would be worse than foolish – it would be a crime against all our hopes and aspirations – to take counsel in this matter from any other source.

Mr. John E. Redmond has just earned the plaudits of all the bitterest enemies of Ireland and slanderers of the Irish race by declaring, in the name of Ireland that the British Government can now safely withdraw all its garrisons from Ireland, and that the Irish slaves will guarantee to protect the Irish estate of England until their masters come back to take possession – a statement that announces to all the world that Ireland has at last accepted as permanent this status of a British province. Surely no inspiration can be sought from that source.

The advanced Nationalists have neither a policy nor a leader. During the Russian Revolution such of their Press as existed in and out of Ireland, as well as their spokesmen, orators and writers vied with each other in laudation of Russia and vilification of all the Russian enemies of Czardom. It was freely asserted that Russia was the natural enemy of England; that the heroic revolutionists were in the pay of the English Government and that every true Irish patriot ought to pray for the success of the armies of the Czar. Now, as I, amongst other Irish Socialists, predicted all along, when the exigencies of diplomacy makes it suitable, the Russian bear and the English lion are hunting together and every victory for the Czar's Cossacks is a victory for the paymasters of those King's Own Scottish Borderers who, but the other day, murdered the people of Dublin in cold blood. Surely the childish intellects that conceived of the pro-Russian campaign of nine years ago cannot give us light and leading in any campaign for freedom from the British allies of Russia today? It is well to remember also that in this connection since 1909 the enthusiasm for the Russians was replaced in the same quarter by as blatant a propaganda in favour of the German War Lord. But since the guns did begin to speak in reality this propaganda had died out in whispers, whilst without a protest, the manhood of Ireland was pledged to armed warfare against the very power our advanced Nationalist friends have wasted so much good ink in acclaiming.

Of late, sections of the advanced Nationalist press have lent themselves to a desperate effort to misrepresent the position of the Carsonites, and to claim for them the admiration of Irish Nationalists on the grounds that these Carsonites were fearless Irishmen who had refused to take dictation from England. A more devilishly mischievous and lying doctrine was never preached in Ireland. The Carsonite position is indeed plain – so plain that nothing but sheer perversity of purpose can misunderstand it, or cloak it with a resemblance to Irish patriotism. The Carsonites say that their fathers were planted in this country to assist in keeping the natives down in subjection that this country might be held for England. That this was God's will because the Catholic Irish were not fit for the responsibilities and powers of free men and that they are not fit for the exercise of these responsibilities and powers till this day. Therefore, say the Carsonites, we have kept our side of the bargain; we have refused to admit the Catholics to

power and responsibility; we have manned the government of this country for England, we propose to continue to do so, and rather than admit that these Catholics – these ‘mickies and teagues’ – are our equals, we will fight, in the hope that our fighting will cause the English people to revolt against their government and re-establish us in our historic position as an English colony in Ireland, superior to, and unhampered by, the political institutions of the Irish natives.

How this can be represented as the case of Irishmen refusing to take dictation from England passeth all comprehension. It is rather the case of a community in Poland, after 250 years colonisation, still refusing to adopt the title of natives, and obstinately clinging to the position and privileges of a dominant colony. Their programme is summed up in the expression which forms the dominant note of all their speeches, sermons and literature:

“We are loyal British subjects. We hold this country for England. England cannot desert us.”

What light or leading then can Ireland get from the hysterical patriots who so egregiously misrepresent this fierce contempt for Ireland as something that ought to win the esteem of Irishmen?

What ought to be the attitude of the working-class democracy of Ireland in face of the present crisis?

In the first place, then, we ought to clear our minds of all the political cant which would tell us that we have either ‘natural enemies’ or ‘natural allies’ in any of the powers now warring. When it is said that we ought to unite to protect our shores against the ‘foreign enemy’ I confess to be unable to follow that line of reasoning, as I know of no foreign enemy of this country except the British Government and know that it is not the British Government that is meant.

In the second place we ought to seriously consider that the evil effects of this war upon Ireland will be simply incalculable, that it will cause untold suffering and misery amongst the people, and that as this misery and suffering have been brought upon us because of our enforced partisanship with a nation whose

government never consulted us in the matter, we are therefore perfectly at liberty morally to make any bargain we may see fit, or that may present itself in the course of events.

Should a German army land in Ireland tomorrow we should be perfectly justified in joining it if by doing so we could rid this country once and for all from its connection with the Brigand Empire that drags us unwillingly into this war.

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, to break up bridges and destroy the transport service that war might be abolished, 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.

But pending either of these consummations it is our manifest duty to take all possible action to save the poor from the horrors this war has in store.

Let it be remembered that there is no natural scarcity of food in Ireland. Ireland is an agricultural country, and can normally feed all her people under any sane system of things. But prices are going up in England and hence there will be an immense demand for Irish produce. To meet that demand all nerves will be strained on this side, the food that ought to feed the people of Ireland will be sent out of Ireland in greater quantities than ever and famine prices will come in Ireland to be immediately followed by famine itself. Ireland will starve, or rather the townspeople of Ireland will starve, that the British army and navy and jingoes may be fed. Remember, the Irish farmer like all other farmers will benefit by the high prices of the war, but these high prices will mean starvation to the labourers in the towns. But without these labourers the farmers' produce cannot leave Ireland without the help of a garrison that England cannot now spare. We must consider at once whether it will not be our duty to refuse to allow agricultural produce to leave Ireland until provision is made for the Irish working class.

Let us not shrink from the consequences. This may mean more than a transport strike, it may mean armed battling in the streets to keep in this country

the food for our people. But whatever it may mean it must not be shrunk from. It is the immediately feasible policy of the working-class democracy, the answer to all the weaklings who in this crisis of our country's history stand helpless and bewildered crying for guidance, when they are not hastening to betray her.

Starting thus, Ireland may yet set the torch to a European conflagration that will not burn out until the last throne and the last capitalist bond and debenture will be shrivelled on the funeral pyre of the last war lord.

**James Connolly**

# **The Carsonite Position**

**(1914)**

**Irish Worker, 8 August, 1914.**  
From the collection: **Ireland Upon the Dissecting Table**, Cork Workers' Club 1975.

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## **James Connolly**

# The Latest Massacre in Dublin

(1914)

From **Forward**, August 1, 1914.

As I am writing all the people of Ireland are agog with excitement over events in Dublin. The first shots of the threatened civil war have at length been fired, and the streets of an Irish city have run red with the blood of Irishmen. But contrary to all the threats, omens and portents, it was not an Ulster city that witnessed calamity; it was not the blood of Ulstermen that was shed in defence of their rights and liberties. It was only the blood of common ordinary Irishmen who dared to fancy that what was sauce for the Orange goose was also sauce for the Nationalist gander.

On Sunday, 26th July, the Irish Volunteers brought off successfully a gunrunning coup of their own at Howth, near Dublin. A few thousand Volunteers marched out from Dublin and took possession of the village. Sentries were posted on all the roads leading into Dublin, telegraph and telephone wires were earthed, and every military precaution was taken to secure freedom from interruption by the authorities.

When the regiments had successfully taken possession of the harbour, signals were sent to a yacht that was standing off the coast, and the yacht, steered by an unknown lady, entered in and commenced to discharge a cargo of rifles. The local customs chief and the head of the police force in the district attempted to interfere at this juncture, but were quietly warned off at the point of loaded

revolvers. A quantity of rifles, variously estimated at from 2,000 to 4,000, with corresponding ammunition, was landed and dispatched and then the Volunteers present proceeded to march back in military order to the city, each man carrying his newly acquired rifle, but no ammunition.

The police, who were helpless, marched along with the battalions without making any effort to disturb or intercept the march. But some cyclist had managed to slip past the volunteer sentries and bring the news to Dublin Castle. The authorities there hastily despatched a regiment of soldiers, the King's Own Scottish Borderers, apparently with orders to seize the rifles and break up the march.

These soldiers met the returning Volunteers near Fairview, and drawing across the roadway demanded the surrender of the rifles and the disbandment of the parade. Although surrounded by police and confronted by soldiery, the Volunteers refused to give up their arms, and after a brief altercation the military fired and then charged with fixed bayonets. Having foolishly neglected to retain their ammunition, the Volunteers could only defend themselves with the butt-ends of their rifles against the bayonets of the soldiery. Hence the conflict was but one-sided. The soldiers captured about 20 rifles, all the rest being got safely away. It is also stated that a quantity of rifles was wrenched from the hands of the soldiers by the people.

Then the soldiers after this 'brilliant victory' marched back to the city, accompanied all the way by a crowd of angry demonstrators, furious at the wanton slaughter of Dubliners for daring to exercise a right which the Carsonites had freely exercised less than 24 hours previously in Belfast.

Passing through the centre of the city the crowd increased in numbers and in indignation. Stones were thrown, a few soldiers were jostled, and suddenly, without a moment's warning, an officer wheeled his company across the roadway and ordered them to fire with ball cartridges upon the people. No Riot Act was read, no Magistrate was present, no warning was given, but before the people could realise their danger, the volley was sent flying into the midst of the multitude in that crowded, narrow thoroughfare. The hired assassins had obeyed

orders. It is a soldier's duty to obey orders – except when the soldier is an officer ordered to act against his class instincts.

Stated baldly these are the facts of Sunday's work in Dublin. For the past two years the aristocrats of the Tory Party have been preaching rebellion against constituted authority. For two years they have been training and arming a rebel army – an army to rebel against the mandate of the democracy of these islands. Their conduct has continually been connived at by the Government, and each fresh connivance has led them on to fresh acts of aggression and organised intimidation. They held up three seaport towns, made prisoners of the King of England's constabulary and coastguardmen, interfered with the railway system, the telegraphs, and telephones, and took unlawful possession of passengers upon the King's highway.

Finally, upon Saturday, 25th July, they paraded through the streets of Belfast in military array, armed with rifles and escorting Maxim and other machine guns. All this they were allowed to do with perfect impunity; indeed, their chiefs in the midst of their illegalities were granted special indications of Royal favour.

Upon the top of this the Irish Volunteers make an effort to equip themselves with arms, so that they, the most popular body in Ireland, should not also be the most unprotected. Who can question their wisdom in resolving to protect themselves, as the Government would grant them no protection? But immediately this attempt was made, police and military are ordered out, a bayonet charge is made upon the Volunteers, and volley firing with ball cartridges is practiced upon unarmed crowds in the streets of the capital city. At the time of writing, four persons have been killed, and about 80 wounded as a result of the few minutes blood lust of those in command of the soldiery on Sunday.

What a grim comment upon the so-called impartiality of the Liberal Government! What a telling indictment of the whole system of class rule upon which the Government of these islands is conducted. What a striking refutation of the theory that what is sauce for the Ulster goose would be sauce for the Irish gander. Here we have a demonstration – a demonstration written in blood – that the ruling classes of those countries are one in heart and sentiment, whether they

call themselves Tory or Liberal; that in the last analysis the rule of the classes is founded upon the sword, and that no petty quarrel amongst themselves over methods of ruling is going to make them tolerate the idea of guns getting into the hands of slaves who cannot be trusted to use them in the interests of their masters. Liberal and Tory may quarrel over methods by which class rule should be maintained, but Liberal and Tory are at one in the determination that maintained it must be, and that no effective organisations of force should be allowed amongst those who might question it or destroy it. The Dublin workers have strewn in the near past that they are not willing slaves, political or social, and that not even the necessity of the struggle for political freedom can make them abandon their individual liberties, or weaken their fearless democracy. Hence it became imperative in the interests of the ruling tyrants that these guns should be prevented from remaining in the hands of such men. It was felt that even John Redmond might not be able to resist the appeal for a forward move made by men with guns in their hands, and it was realised that this concept of an armed democracy, inspired by democratic ideas and stirred by social unrest, was a menace to the class rule for which governments exist. Hence the attempt to disarm the Volunteers of Dublin and hence the fresh massacre of the Dublin workers.

Brave, heroic, Dublin! Ever battling for the right, ever suffering, ever consecrating by the blood of your children the weary milestones of the path of progress. A year ago the Capitalist class let loose its wolves and slanderers upon you, jailed, batoned and murdered your sons and daughters, but were unable to destroy your holy aspirations for freedom. Today the Government of that class once more spring at your throat; once more the blood of your children is shed in the streets, and even some of your misguided children who cheered on that Government in its outrage of a year ago are now ruthlessly slaughtered by that same Government.

Magnificent Dublin! As you emerged with spirit unbroken and heart undaunted from your industrial tribulation, so you will arise mightier and more united from the midst of the military holocaust with which this Government of all the treacheries meets your plans for political freedom.

Labour will not be swept off its feet in this crush. But Labour sees that all its antagonisms to this Government were more than justified, hears now that even the critics of Labour unite in declaring that no more unscrupulous Government ever held sway in this country, and that the only real hope of the people is in the strength of the people. For

Behind all kings and governments, all presidents and law,  
Stand army corps and commoners to keep the world in awe;  
For sword-strong races rule the earth and ride the conqueror's car,  
And liberty has ne'er been won except by deeds of war.