

James Connolly

Militarism

(1915)

Workers'

Republic,

21

August

1915.

Every day gives fresh proof of the gravity of the danger facing the workers of this country from the ever-increasing power of the military. In Belfast the military have been employed to do ordinary labouring work at salvaging in the docks. One of the docks was the scene of a great fire, and members of the Irish Transport and General Workers' Union were afterwards employed to do the salvage work in sorting out the burnt goods and rescuing any material that could be saved. As these men naturally held out for proper wages they were informed one day last week that they would have to go, and next morning they found the military in their place. The soldiers did not want the job. They had not enlisted to scab upon their brother workers, but they found out that what they fancied they had enlisted for, and what they were really used for were two different things.

Would it be a fair question to ask if such military interference with Labour does not do more to discourage recruiting than all the anti-militarist speeches we could deliver?

In Barrow, in Glasgow, on the Tyne, in short in every great industrial centre, the same tale is being told. All trade union rights are assailed, all trade union liberties are denied, the working class is everywhere menaced by an unscrupulous

master class in alliance with a military power in the hands of men who have grown up in hatred of democracy, and with a contempt for the class from which the private soldiers are drawn.

More than ever it is necessary for Labour to spring to arms in defence of its birthright.

James Connolly

To All Labourers' Societies

(1915)

Workers' Republic, 14 August 1915.

Republished in **James Connolly: Lost Writings**, (ed. Aindrias Ó Cathasaigh), [Pluto Press](#) 1997.

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FELLOW WORKERS, –

This is a day of great Organisations. Whether it be on the side of Labour or of Capital, in the realm of peaceful industry or in the arena of warfare, this is a day in which victory goes to the force that is most thoroughly organised. For this reason we of the Irish Transport and General Workers' Union have resolved to invite you, and all other Irish Societies organising the Workers engaged in general labour, to a Conference to be held in Dublin on some date to be mutually

agreed upon, for the purpose of bringing about an amalgamation of all our Unions into one Great Irish Organisation of Labour.

There are few who have not noticed and deplored the large number of small Unions in this country, and still fewer who have not seen that each of those small Unions is much weaker and more helpless than it would be if it was united to the others. They are like companies and regiments on a battlefield, but like companies and regiments which have not united to form an army but persist in each fighting isolated in its own corner, although opposed to an enemy thoroughly united, disciplined and armed, and directed with skill and cunning.

Under such circumstances the local Unions of Labour have all the odds against them. The Capitalists are in control of vast masses of capital, they own all the newspapers, they own and control the Government, and they can use all the military and police forces as they choose as their obedient servants.

To oppose this odds Labour must Unite. It has been found by experience that mere Federation is not sufficient. The Federation of Unions is better than entire isolation, but it has the danger that each separate Union so federated, when its brother Union calls for assistance in a fight thinks of its own treasury and its own finances before it thinks that it should make its brothers' cause its own. We do not blame them, they must do so as long as they are separate Unions, but the necessity keeps them weak, and enables the Capitalist to attack and defeat them one by one.

It is the old tale of the Irish clans all over again. Each Irish clan when attacked by the English Invader was left to fight its battle alone, as all the others thought it was none of their business. United they could have crushed the invader, but they failed to amalgamate, and so he crushed them and stole their country.

Labour in Ireland must amalgamate if it would save itself from slavery. All the small unions must be fused into one, and that one must take over all the members, assets and liabilities of the whole. There must be One Card, One Badge, One Executive – One Front to the Common Enemy.

There will have to be rules to prevent members going from one department too readily to another – leaving a lowly paid occupation to rush into and flood a better paid one, and thus lower its standard. There must be rules to allow all local bodies sufficient self government and control; there must be provision made for taking over all the present officers and premises, so that no one will suffer by the change, but running through and inspiring all such rules and provisions there must be the guiding principle that all local bodies are to be fashioned into an army to be governed, and directed, from a common centre.

This can all be done if the right spirit inspires us all. The economy and greater effectiveness that would result from amalgamation, the ease with which men could maintain their membership in the most diverse occupations, instead of finding the necessity of joining a fresh union and abandoning the old one every time they changed their job or moved from one locality to another; the increased power of tracing members and keeping their cards in good trim which would result from the amalgamation, and above all the greater strength in face of the capitalist class, all, all are factors calling loudly for earnest consideration.

We therefore appeal to all Unions of General Labour in Ireland to communicate with us at Liberty Hall, Dublin, or with the Secretary of the Dublin Trades Council informing us of their views on the matter, and letting us know whether they would be prepared to send delegates to a Conference to discuss this question, and frame a scheme to be submitted to the various bodies.

JAMES CONNOLLY.

James Connolly

Ireland's Travail

and Ireland's Resurrection

(1915)

From **Workers' Republic,** August 7, 1915.

Never did Ireland see a more soul-stirring outpouring of the Gael than was witnessed on last Sunday, August 1, 1915.

We do not know whether the McManus Funeral – to name the occasion with which it is most customary to draw comparisons – was or was not more imposing in point of numbers than the turnout in honour of O'Donovan Rossa, but we do know that in all other respects this latter called for a greater exercise of courage and faith in the future than either the McManus or any other demonstration ever seen in Ireland. Let us set forth the position clearly to our own minds.

The McManus Funeral was the first sign of the uprising of Irish Nationality after the shameful, sorrowful days of 1847-48 and 1849. Ireland, in the words of James Fintan Lalor, “sank and surrendered to the famine,” and with no resistance of the importance even of a riot had gone down before the blows of the enemy. So completely had she gone down that many of her rebels formally gave up the struggle, and announced their belief that the cause of Ireland's separate existence was a lost cause. The case of M.J. Barry, the gifted author of that splendid revolutionary song, all too seldom sung nowadays, *Bide Your Time*, may be cited as a notable example. But this surrender of Ireland, this defeat of Ireland, was a surrender and defeat inflicted by the enemy against the protests and vain struggles of the representatives of the Irish people.

All the organised life of Ireland protested against the means by which the potato blight was used to create a famine, against the methods employed to make that famine subservient to English policy. Their protests were ineffectual, they who were willing to let the case go to the arbitrament of battle waited too long and lost their chance, and they who were not so willing were equally unable to stem the tide of demoralisation. "The soul of Ireland sank where that of other nations would soar," and the cause was lost. But the issues were left clear in the public mind. It was still the existence of Ireland against the public policy of England.

For the year preceding the Rossa Funeral the conditions of Ireland were entirely different. The cause of Ireland as a separate nation, as a nation with a separate life, history, and individuality of its own, was again looked upon as a lost cause, and the fate of Ireland was again accepted as being irrevocably and finally blended with that of the British Empire.

But unlike the days of '48 the days of the past twelve months were remarkable for the fact that the abandonment of the cause of Ireland as a separate nationality, the merging of the hopes of Ireland in the success of England, the definite declaration that the British Empire could count Ireland as finally conquered and made 'loyal' – all this came not from without, not imposed upon us in the hour of our weakness, but from within, and accepted in the moment of our greatest tactical strength by the leaders trusted by the majority of our people. For twelve months – twelve long dreary agonising months – we have seen war in Ireland, war upon the soul of the Irish people, war upon the traditions, the religious spirit, the holiest aspirations, the centuried hopes of the martyred men and women who had made Ireland famed and respected wherever there are gathered men and women capable of honouring fortitude in disaster, and sublimity of soul in the midst of defeat.

Never has a nation suffered such an onslaught. Belgium in its agonies under the heel of the invaders, nor Poland in its awful travail, cannot claim to have suffered as Ireland has suffered since war was declared. Betrayed and deserted by all but a faithful few, Ireland was attacked by every poisonous agency ever brought to bear upon the mind and soul of a people. Her religion, her love of

nationality, her strict sexual morality, her natural affection for the weak, her sympathy for suffering and distress – every high and noble instinct implanted in her by ages of suffering, was appealed to that her children might deny the past of their country, and surrender their hopes of moulding its future. Ireland was asked, nay, was ordered, to deny all that her martyrs had affirmed, to affirm all that her martyrs had denied. And this assault upon the soul of the country was planned and carried out in all its minutes and most revolting details by the men whom a cruel fate had allowed to become the leaders and guides of Irish public opinion.

The fight in Belgium and in Poland are fights for the material possession of towns and cities, the fight in Ireland has been one for the soul of a race – that Irish race which with seven centuries of defeat behind it still battled for the sanctity of its dwelling place.

Old mediaeval legends tell us how in the critical moments of the struggle of an army, or the travail of a nation, some angel or deliveror was sent from above to save those favoured by the Most High. To many people today it seems that the funeral of O'Donovan Rossa came to Ireland in such a moment of national agony – came on such a mission of divine uplifting and deliverance. The mists and doubts, the corruption and poisons, the distrust and the treacheries, were blown away, and the true men and women of Ireland saw with pleasure the rally of the nation to the olden ideas – saw the real people of the country solemnly bearing witness to the faith and wisdom of those who had “fought a good fight, and kept the faith.”

The McManus Funeral rallied the people of Ireland after their defeat by the enemy; the Rossa funeral rallied the people of Ireland after the onslaught of her faithless leaders.

Will the rallied Irish people stand fast as well as he whom they honoured?

James Connolly

Why The Citizen Army Honours Rossa

(1915)

From

Rossa

Souvenir,

July

1915.

In honouring O'Donovan Rossa the workers of Ireland are doing more than merely paying homage to an unconquerable fighter. They are signifying their adhesion to the principle of which Rossa till his latest days was a living embodiment – the principle that the freedom of a people must in the last analysis rest in the hands of that people – that there is no outside force capable of enforcing slavery upon a people really resolved to be free, and valuing freedom more than life. We in Ireland have often forgotten that truth, indeed it may be even asserted that only an insignificant minority of the nation ever learned it. And yet, that truth once properly adopted as the creed of a nation would become the salvation of the nation.

For slavery is a thing of the soul, before it embodies itself in the material things of the world. I assert that before a nation can be reduced to slavery its soul must have been cowed, intimidated or corrupted by the oppressor. Only when so cowed, intimidated or corrupted does the soul of a nation cease to urge forward its body to resist the imposition of the shackles of slavery; only when the soul so surrenders does any part of the body consent to make truce with the foe of its national existence.

When the soul is conquered the articulate expression of the voice of the nation loses its defiant accent, and taking on the whining colour of compromise, begins to plead for the body. The unconquered soul asserts itself, and declares its sanctity to be more important than the interests of the body; the conquered soul ever pleads first that the body may be saved even if the soul is damned.

For generations this conflict between the sanctity of the soul and the interests of the body has been waged in Ireland.

The soul of Ireland preached revolution, declared that no blood-letting could be as disastrous as a cowardly acceptance of the rule of the conqueror, nay, that the rule of the conqueror would necessarily entail more blood-letting than revolt against the rule. In fitful moments of spiritual exaltation Ireland accepted that idea, and such men as O'Donovan Rossa becoming possessed of it became thenceforth the living embodiment of that gospel. But such supreme moments passed for the multitude, and the nation as a nation sank again into its slavery, and its sole articulate expression to reach the ears of the world were couched in the fitful accents of the discontented, but spiritless slave – blatant in his discontent, spiritless in his acceptance of subjection as part of the changeless order of things.

The burial of the remains of O'Donovan Rossa in Irish soil, and the functions attendant thereon must inevitably raise in the mind of every worker the question of his or her own mental attitude to the powers against which the departed hero was in revolt. That involves the question whether those who accept that which Rossa rejected have any right to take part in honour paid to a man whose only title to honour lies in his continued rejection of that which they have accepted. It is a question each must answer for himself or herself. But it can neither be answered carelessly, nor evaded.

The Irish Citizen Army in its constitution pledges its members to fight for a Republican Freedom for Ireland. Its members are, therefore, of the number who believe that at the call of duty they may have to lay down their lives for Ireland, and have so trained themselves that at the worst the laying down of their lives

shall constitute the starting point of another glorious tradition – a tradition that will keep alive the soul of the nation.

We are, therefore, present to honour O'Donovan Rossa by right of our faith in the separate destiny of our country, and our faith in the ability of the Irish workers to achieve that destiny.

James Connolly

The Man and the Cause!

(1915)

From **Workers' Republic**, 31 July 1915.

On Sunday, August First, we propose to pay public homage in Dublin to the remains and memory of Jeremiah O'Donovan Rossa. It is well then that we strive to make clear not only to the public, but to ourselves, upon what grounds that homage is paid. We belong to the working class of Ireland, and strive to express the working class point of view. Always and ever the working class movement seeks after clearness of thought, as a means to the accomplishment of working class aims. The middle class may and does deceive itself with finely turned phrases, and vague generalising of still vaguer aspirations, but the working class

can think and speak only in language hard and definite, as hard and definite as the conditions of working class life. We have no room in our struggle for illusions – least of all for illusions about freedom.

O'Donovan Rossa represents to us a revolutionary movement the least aristocratic and the most plebeian that ever raised itself to national dignity in Ireland. It was a movement that resting upon the masses of people in Ireland and drawing its inspirations from the hearts of that people, was successful in inspiring its followers with such a belief in their own ability to conquer and master the future, that it nerved them to conspire for a revolt against the British Empire at a time when that Empire was at peace with all the world. The mere conception of such a struggle, the stark naked fact that such a project was ever even mooted, in itself stamps as heroes all who cherished and suffered for it. Grand indeed must have been the souls, magnificent must have been the courage, splendid the idealism of the men and women who with the awful horror of the famine of Black '47, and inglorious '48, still in their minds were yet capable of rising to the spiritual level of challenging the power of England in 1865 or 1867. There were giants in those days! Are we pigmies in these?

These men realised that no nation is conquered until its mind is conquered, until it accepts defeat. No nation capable of, however futilely and impotently, denying with arms in the hands of even a few of its sons that it is conquered and submerged in its conqueror, can be considered as having lost its existence. In the present European hell-broth the diplomats, writers and speakers of the world freely discuss the chances of re-establishing many nations long subdued and banished from the roll of nations, but in no one of these discussions does the name of Ireland figure. Because Ireland has surrendered its separate national identity – Ireland has become a mere geographical expression. To the world Ireland speaks through its elected representatives, through its press, through its great organs of public opinion, and so speaking has announced itself a loyal province of the British Empire.

The sons of Ireland who are in arms are in arms for England, the blood of Ireland that flows in torrents every day flows for England, the Irish men who die fighting like heroes and demigods die fighting for England. Ireland knows them

not, can never number them amongst her possessions, can never tell the tale of their sufferings and exploits as sufferings and exploits for her.

And yet Ireland dare not blame them! The least of these, our brothers, would have fought for Ireland if those who spoke in Ireland's name had but had the courage to call them, to summon them to the sacrifice. But all, all failed in the supreme moment of destiny. And it seems to us that when the eternal reckoning is made, God in His infinite wisdom will deal less harshly with the Irish Tommies in the English service than He will with the unscrupulous politicians, or blatant revolutionaries, who stood by in silence and let our poor brothers march out to their fruitless martyrdom in Flanders or the Dardanelles.

They shrank from the responsibility of giving the word not realising that they thereby took on the more shameful responsibility of failing to give the word.

Rossa was one of the men who in the days of another generation assumed the responsibility from which these men shrank, and assumed it amid greater difficulties. He had to face not only the possibility of defeat at the hands of a foreign tyrant, but he had also to face the certainty of odium and hatred from those he was prepared to die to liberate. Every 'respectable' class in the country was against the Fenians, all the press was against them, most of the clergy denounced them from the altar, all the members of parliament hated them with a fierce and malevolent hatred. They were accused of conspiracy to destroy religion, a priest refused to solemnise the marriage of Rossa himself, alleging that he was outside the pale of the Church, every conceivable wickedness was imputed them, they were said to be enemies of the family, of society, of morals.

Against such enemies they held their own, and if they failed to emancipate their country or win for it a place amongst the nations of the earth, they at least succeeded in establishing in the mind of the world the fact of the independent existence of Ireland. Their greatest enemies were those of their own race. They failed, but it was a failure more glorious than many a victory. But its glory consisted in the fact that against all odds, and in spite of the calculations of the trimmers and wiseacres there were proven to be in Ireland thousands of men and women who were prepared to affirm with their lives that Ireland was a nation

with an independent destiny of its own. Neither terrified nor corrupted, the Fenians redeemed the honour of their nation, and we of the working class are proud to remember that those heroes were of our own class.

When we honour Rossa we honour in him the fearless representative of a great movement – a movement that accomplished great things. We honour the latest of those who in days of darkness pledged their faith to an Irish Republic, and kept that faith unsullied to the last.

We on our part affirm that we march behind the remains because we are prepared to fight for the same ideals. And we shall be all the more nerved for fight when we remember that the banner of Fenianism was upheld by the stalwart hands of the Irish working class of that day, as the militant organisation of the same class today is the only body that without reservation unhesitatingly announces its loyalty to the republican principle of national freedom for which the Fenians stood. We are here because this is our place!

James Connolly

Dublin Trades Council

(1915)

Workers' Republic, 31 July 1915.
Republished in **James Connolly: Lost Writings**, (ed. Aindrias Ó Cathasaigh), [Pluto Press](#) 1997.

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The fortnightly meeting of the Dublin Trades Council was held on Monday evening, Mr T. Farren, President, in the Chair. Also present: Messrs Edward Lyons, Brass Founders and Gasfitters; R. Carroll, TC, Brick and Stone Layers; John Lawler, Cab and Car Owners; J. Simmons, Carpenters (Amal); Matthew Callanan, Central Ironmoulders; M. Culliton, Carpenters (Gen Union); T. Murphy, Carpet Planners; Francis Farrell, Coachmakers; A. Kavanagh, P. Bowes, J. Bermingham, Corporation Labourers; C. Woodhead, Electricians; J. Bowman, Engineers; B. Drumm, Farriers; Joseph McGrath, Irish Clerks' Union; J. Metcalfe, W.P. Partridge, TC, T. Foran, PLG, James Connolly, Irish Transport Workers; James Courteney, Marble Polishers; J. Lennon, Mineral Water Operatives; J. Kelly, National Union Assurance Agents; Jos. Farrell, M. Smith, Painters (Amal); F. Davidson, Dyers and Cleaners; W. Shanks, Packing Case and Box Makers; Peter Macken, John Bermingham, Painters (Metropolitan); D. Holland, M.A. Brady, Printers (Typo); A. Doyle, Saddlers; G. Paisley, Sawyers; P.D. Bolger, Slaters; W.J. Murphy, Smiths (White); J. Flanagan, P. Carey, Stationary Engine Drivers; Thomas Farren, Stonecutters; John Farren, Sheet Metal Workers; John Duffy, Iron Dressers; J.F. O'Neill, Irish Grocers' and Purveyors' Assistants Union; Winston, National League Blind; Jeremiah Kennedy, Smiths (United).

Messrs Lawler and Farren (Representatives on the Asylum Board) reported that a resolution had been adopted by the Board forbidding the taking in of apprentices in any of the Board's workshops, as in their opinion such boys were not given full facilities to learn their trade, and rarely turned out good workmen. The Board had also agreed to give its labourers coal at cost price.

The President said the report proved the utility of having representatives on such public bodies.

Mr Partridge complained of the attempt by Mr Watson, of the Great Southern and Western Railway, to commandeer the machinery of the Bolton Street Technical School for the manufacture of war munitions, while Mr Watson's own machinery was lying idle all night, and not all of it was worked on munitions in the day time.

Mr J. Murphy was astonished to hear of such an application, and thought the Education Committee were justified in refusing. In his opinion the boys in the school might be taught to do this work.

Mr Connolly said there was more in the matter than that suggested by the last speaker. The machines were originally acquired for educational purposes, and would be spoiled by the application to such work as it was now suggested to put them, and the citizens should not submit to it. He proposed a resolution protesting against the granting of such machinery for the munitions of war. They should be only employed in teaching the arts of Peace.

Mr Macken seconded the resolution, which he said would strengthen the Technical Education Committee in its refusal to grant the machines, and suggested that copies be sent to the Committee and the Department.

The resolution was passed unanimously.

Mr Macken referred to the forthcoming funeral procession of O'Donovan Rossa, which was now definitely known would leave the City Hall on Sunday next at two o'clock, and urged all working people to attend.

Mr Lawler asked that the trades should keep together, and suggested that they meet in Capel Street.

Mr Partridge expressed the hope that every Irish man in Dublin and its vicinity would attend, and advocated the closing of the public houses.

Messrs Holland and Simmons disagreed with the suggestion on the ground that it would cause great inconvenience to the travelling public.

Mr T. Murphy suggested Stephen's Green as the rallying point of the various Trades.

Mr Connolly supported the suggestion, which was adopted.

The Chairman urged all present to do their utmost in making the procession worthy of the man and creditable to the nation.

It was decided to send a subscription to the Committee having charge of affairs in connection with the procession.

Mr Connolly said that the result of the South Wales Miners' Strike was another signal proof of the strengths and invincibility of Labour when united. Here we had the greatest and strongest government that these countries had ever seen in modern times – a government vested with powers that a few years ago no one present would ever have dreamt would be vested in a modern British Government. We had a Coalition Cabinet of all the virtues; a military commander with almost unlimited power, and a civil population that had become hardened to the sight of the exercise of arbitrary authority by that power; we had an army and navy of unprecedented size and efficiency, and as against all that on the one side we had on the other a body of workers in control of nothing but their labour power. But when that body of workers declared that they would stop the process of production it was found that they were more powerful than all the mighty civil and military forces arrayed against them. What a lesson was this for Labour! It showed that Labour already possessed the power, all that it needed was the united will to exercise it. But we had been cursed with leaders without faith in their own class, without vision, without moral courage – leaders who were always preaching about our weakness instead of teaching us to rely upon our strength. Had we had the right kind of leaders this war would never have taken place. If the working class soldiers of Europe had but had the moral courage to say to the diplomats that they would not march against their brothers across the frontiers, but if they were going to fight they would rather fight against their enemies at home than against their brothers abroad, there would have been no war, and millions of homes that were now desolated would be happy (applause).

The Chairman said that it would be a pity to spoil such a magnificent speech by adding anything to it. He took that as the opinion of the Delegates.

The meeting then adjourned.

James Connolly

Strikes and Revolution

(1915)

The Workers' Republic, 24 July 1915.
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.

We wish this week to congratulate our Welsh Comrades upon the successful outcome of their resistance to the attempt of the Government to dragoon them into submission. We congratulate them all the more heartily because we realise that had the Government succeeded in terrorising them we might all have bidden a long farewell to our industrial liberties. Successful in Wales, the capitalist class that runs these islands would have been ruthless in Ireland. We are aware, of course, that the people of this country do not possess the same public rights as are freely exercised in Great Britain. But we also know that the measure of liberty enjoyed in Great Britain has a direct bearing upon the measure of liberty permitted in Ireland.

That which the people of England enjoy as a right we in Ireland are sometimes permitted to exercise as a great favour, but if the people of England can only enjoy it as a favour then we will never be allowed it at all. Every loss of freedom in England entails a still greater loss in Ireland; every victory for popular liberty in England means a slight loosening of our shackles in Ireland. This is humiliating, as everything in Ireland is humiliating to-day. But we do not destroy the humiliation by refusing to recognise it. The humiliation is part and parcel of the price we pay for the degradation of being members of a subject nation – fit only to fight the battles of their conquerors.

The Welsh miners have attested the value of solidarity. They demonstrated that the Government feared to prosecute any resolute body which defied them, and to the cautious whispers of those who declared that the Government desired to make an example of them, they fearlessly answered that they were ready any time that the Government wanted to try that sort of thing.

This was the right spirit. It proves again that the only rebellious spirit left in the modern world is in the possession of those who have been accustomed to drop tools at a moment's notice in defence of a victimised or unjustly punished comrade. The man who is prepared to lose his job in defence of a comrade is prepared to lose his life in the same or a greater cause, and out of such willingness to sacrifice the perfect fighting army of revolution may at any moment be fashioned.

James Connolly

Street Fighting – Summary

A complete summary of the lessons to be derived from the military events we have narrated in these chapters during the past few months would involve the writing of a very large volume. Indeed it might truly be urged that the lessons are capable of such infinite expansion that no complete summary is possible.

In the military sense of the term what after all is a street? A street is a defile in a city. A defile is a narrow pass through which troops can only move by narrowing their front, and therefore making themselves a good target for the enemy. A defile is also a difficult place for soldiers to manoeuvre in, especially if the flanks of the defile are held by the enemy.

A mountain pass is a defile the sides of which are constituted by the natural slopes of the mountain sides, as at the Scalp. A bridge over a river is a defile the sides of which are constituted by the river. A street is a defile the sides of which are constituted by the houses in the street.

To traverse a mountain pass with any degree of safety the sides of the mountain must be cleared by flanking parties ahead of the main body; to pass over a bridge the banks of the river on each side must be raked with gun or rifle fire whilst the bridge is being rushed; to take a street properly barricaded and held on both sides by forces in the houses, these houses must be broken into and taken by hand to hand fighting. A street barricade placed in position where artillery cannot operate from a distance is impregnable to frontal attack. To bring artillery within a couple of hundred yards – the length of the average street – would mean the loss of the artillery if confronted by even imperfectly drilled troops armed with rifles.

The Moscow revolution, where only 80 rifles were in the possession of the insurgents, would have ended in the annihilation of the artillery had the number of insurgent rifles been 800.

The insurrection of Paris in June, 1848, reveals how districts of towns, or villages, should be held. The streets were barricaded at tactical points not on the main streets but commanding them. The houses were broken through so that passages were made inside the houses along the whole length of the streets. The party walls were loopholed, as were also the front walls, the windows were blocked by sandbags, boxes filled with stones and dirt, bricks, chests, and other pieces of furniture with all sorts of odds and ends piled up against them.

Behind such defences the insurgents poured fire upon the troops through loopholes left for the purpose.

In the attack upon Paris by the allies fighting against Napoleon a village held in this manner repulsed several assaults of the Prussian allies of England. When these Prussians were relieved by the English these latter did not dare attempt a frontal attack, but instead broke into an end house on one side of the village street, and commenced to take the houses one by one. Thus all the fighting was inside the houses, and muskets played but a small part. On one side of the street they captured all the houses, on the other they failed, and when a truce was declared the English were in possession of one side of the village, and their French enemies of the other.

The truce led to a peace. When peace was finally proclaimed the two sides of the village street were still held by opposing forces.

The defence of a building in a city, town or village is governed by the same rules. Such a building left unconquered is a serious danger even if its supports are all defeated. If it had been flanked by barricades, and these barricades were destroyed, no troops could afford to push on and leave the building in the hands of the enemy. If they did so they would be running the danger of perhaps meeting a check further on, which check would be disastrous if they had left a hostile building manned by an unconquered force in their rear. Therefore, the fortifying of a strong building, as a pivot upon which the defence of a town or village should hinge, forms a principal object of the preparations of any defending force, whether regular army or insurrectionary.

In the Franco-German War of 1870 the chateau, or castle, of Geissberg formed such a position in the French lines on 4 August. The Germans drove in all the supports of the French party occupying this country house, and stormed the outer courts, but were driven back by the fire from the windows and loopholed walls. Four batteries of artillery were brought up to within 900 yards of the house and battered away at its walls, and battalion after battalion was hurled against it. The advance of the whole German army was delayed until this one house was taken. To take it caused a loss of 23 officers and 329 men, yet it had only a garrison of 200.

In the same campaign the village of Bazeilles offered a similar lesson in the tactical strength of a well-defended line of houses. The German Army drove the French off the field and entered the village without a struggle. But it took a whole army corps seven hours to fight its way through to the other end of the village.

A mountainous country has always been held to be difficult for military operations owing to its passes or glens. A city is a huge mass of passes or glens formed by streets and lanes. Every difficulty that exists for the operation of regular troops in mountains is multiplied a hundredfold in a city. And the difficulty of the commissariat which is likely to be insuperable to an irregular or popular force taking to the mountains, is solved for them by the sympathies of the populace when they take to the streets.

The general principle to be deducted from a study of the examples we have been dealing with, is that the defence is of almost overwhelming importance in such warfare as a popular force like the Citizen Army might be called upon to participate in. Not a mere passive defence of a position valueless in itself, but the active defence of a position whose location threatens the supremacy or existence of the enemy. The genius of the commander must find such a position, the skill of his subordinates must prepare and fortify it, the courage of all must defend it. Out of this combination of genius, skill and courage alone can grow the flower of military success.

The Citizen Army and the Irish Volunteers are open for all those who wish to qualify for the exercise of these qualities.

James Connolly

June 1848

Workers' Republic, 17th July 1915.

In February, 1848, the monarchy of Louis Phillippe was destroyed by an insurrection in the streets of Paris, supported by risings in various parts of the country. This insurrection, like all previous risings of the same description, owed its success principally to the determined fighting of the working class. But whereas in previous insurrections the working class after doing the fighting were content to let the middle class reap the harvest, it resolved this time to demand certain guarantees for itself.

Education had progressed rapidly, and in addition the relative numbers of the workers were greater than at any other similar crisis. Hence, after the victory, whilst arms were still in its hands, it demanded that the new government establish in its social constitution some provisions making for social well-being. The government consented reluctantly but with great show of zeal for the cause of labour, and established 'National Workshops', guaranteeing work to all comers.

This proposition was, of course, economically unsound and bound to fail, but it placated the workers for the time. The Republican Government got time to mature its plans against republicanism, and to organise its military force against labour. Thousands of workers were taken on in the workshops, and middle class

poets talked enthusiastically and sang ecstatically about the Era of Labour. But all the time the government was quietly drafting its forces into Paris, removing from Paris all the city regiments and replacing them with battalions from remote country districts, perfecting its artillery, and calmly preparing to crush the workers should they persist in their idea that the Republic ought to regard them as its children, not as its slaves. Eventually when all was ready the government began to dismiss men in thousands from the National Workshops, and to form brigades of workers to be removed from Paris ostensibly to work at canal construction in the provinces.

One of these brigades was formed of 14,000 men, almost all of whom were Parisians, and members of various local Labour clubs. In addition to this wholesale removal of workers to unfamiliar provinces, the government on the 22nd June, 1848, summarily dismissed 3,000 more on the pretence that they were not born in Paris, and ordered them to leave the city at once. Money and tickets were supplied to them to pay their lodgings along the road to their birthplaces.

Out of this deportation sprung the Insurrection of June, 1848.

About 400 of the deported workmen returned to the city that evening and paraded the streets, calling upon their comrades to resist the plot of the government to destroy the Labour forces. In the morning the sound of the *generale*, the popular drum beat to arms, was sounded, and barricades began to be erected in the streets. All the working class districts rapidly rose, and the insurgents fortified their quarters so rapidly and skilfully that it was quite evident that astute minds had been busy amongst them preparing to meet the schemes of the government.

At the Porte St. Denis the fighting began. The barricade here was stormed after the soldiers had been twice beaten off. At the Porte St. Martin and at several other points similar fights took place, at each of them the soldiery stormed the barricade. But at each of them it was found that after the barricade had become untenable the insurgents were able to fall back behind others that had been prepared for the purpose, and when the troops sought to pursue them they were

met by a galling and terrible fire from all the side streets and houses. The insurgents had seized houses which commanded the passage of the streets, but were still so retired that they could not be swept from the front, and had prepared their house in the most scientific manner. The front walls were loopholed, the entrances were barricaded with furniture, boxes, trunks, and obstacles of all kinds, the party walls were cut through so that only one man at a time could pass, and as fast as one house was taken in desperate hand-to-hand fighting they retired through this passage to the next.

Some of the houses were compared to rabbit warrens, full of holes and galleries, and in every corner death was waiting for the soldiers. Windows were blocked with mattresses and sandbags, and marksmen fired from behind them, and women were busy casting bullets, raining slates and stones on the heads of the troops, carrying arms, and tending the wounded.

Before nightfall the troops had been driven back at numerous points, and the roar of artillery was heard all over the city.

Next morning it was found that most of the barricades destroyed during the day had been erected again during the night. To enumerate here the places and districts fortified would be a useless display of names, but sufficient to say that the insurgents had drawn a huge semi-circle around a vast portion of Paris, had erected barricades in a practically continuous line all along their front, had carefully prepared the houses and buildings at tactically strong points, and were now applying to their service everything within their lines that foresight or prudence could suggest.

Two great buildings served as headquarters in the various districts. The headquarters of the North were in the Temple, those of the South in the Pantheon, and in the centre the Hospital of the Hotel Dieu had been seized and held as the strategical bureau of the whole insurrection.

Meanwhile the soldiers in overwhelming numbers were being rushed to Paris from all the provincial centres, and as France was then at peace with all

foreign powers the whole force of the army was available. General Cavaignac issued a proclamation that

“if at noon the barricades are not removed, mortars and howitzers will be brought by which shells will be thrown, which will explode behind the barricades and in the apartments of the houses occupied by the insurgents.”

No one heeded his threat, and on the next day the fighting re-commenced. But the shortage of ammunition on the part of the insurgents told heavily against them, and in addition, as the government had all along planned, the soldiers brought to Paris outnumbered the armed men in revolt, as well as being possessed of all the advantage of a secure source of supplies.

The first fighting at the Clos St. Lazare was typical of the whole and therefore the following description from the pen of an eye-witness is worth reproducing. He says:—

“The barricades in advance of the barriers were as formidable as regular engineers would have constructed, and were built of paving stones of a hundredweight each, and blocks of building stone cut for building a hospital, and weighing tons. The houses covering them were occupied. The tall houses at the barriers were occupied and the windows removed. The houses on the opposite side of the Boulevard were, moreover, in the possession of the rebels and manned with marksmen. What formed, however, the strength of their position was the perforation of the wall of the city which is twelve or fourteen feet high, at intervals of eight or ten yards for a mile in length, with several hundred loopholes of about six inches in diameter. During all Saturday and Sunday a constant and deadly fire was kept up from these loopholes on troops who could hardly see their opponents.

“The defenders ran from loophole to loophole with the agility of monkeys. They only left the cover of the high wall to seek *ammunition, of which they had only a scanty and precarious supply.*”

It was only when the insurgents' ammunition gave out that the artillery became formidable. Then it was able to pound to ruins the building in which the insurgents were awaiting their attack, and to gradually occupy the district so cleared of its defenders.

By the 25th June all fighting had ceased in Paris. The isolation of that city from all provincial support, combined with the overwhelming number of the soldiery had won the day.

On the 10th of December 1848, Prince Louis Napoleon was elected President of the Republic, and four years afterwards he destroyed it by the aid of the army which the republican government had turned against the workers of Paris in the fighting just chronicled. When Louis Napoleon was destroying the French Republic its middle class supporters called in vain for the support of the brave men they had betrayed in June 1848.

Remarks

The insurrection of June 1848 in Paris was the most stubbornly fought, and the most scientifically conducted, of any of the revolutions or attempts at revolutions in Paris. The lessons are invaluable for all students of warfare who wish to understand the defence and attack of cities, towns, villages, or houses. Whatever changes have come about as a result of the development of firearms and the introduction of smokeless powder have operated principally in increasing the power of the defence. In our next week's issue we propose to sum up the military lessons of all the great uprisings dealt with in these notes up to the present.

James Connolly

Coercion in England

(1915)

The Workers' Republic, 17 July 1915.

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 because of their historical interest.

Two weeks ago [\[1\]](#) we ventured to predict that the power given to the Government under the Munitions Bill would prove to be disastrous to Labour, and we asserted that the British Labour leaders in voting for the Bill, and agreeing to its restrictions, were basely betraying their class interests. Already these statements are fully borne out. The action taken by the Government against the miners of South Wales is the grossest and most unjustifiable attack upon the right of combination any Government has attempted in these islands for generations. Let us quietly sum up the situation:

The miners of the South Wales coalfield have demanded an increased wage, and the revision of agreements made in time of peace, which latter they hold are entirely inapplicable now. The President of the South Wales Miners' Federation, interviewed in London on Tuesday, said that the men's representatives had analysed the figures supplied by the employers to the Government, and proved that the increased cost of producing coal since the war began had not exceeded 5*d.* per ton. But on the other hand the mine-owners had made this small increase a pretext for an increase of prices of an additional 7*s.* per ton on large coal and 5*s.* per ton on small coal, and out of this great increase of prices the miners had received no increase in wages.

Now when the miners threaten a stoppage to enforce their claims the Government declare a strike illegal, and proclaim the whole South Wales Mining area.

Surely a more flagrant case of partiality and class bias was never before exhibited. It means that the employing class have been systematically using the pretext of the war in order to increase their profits; that while the working class was sending their best blood and flesh to the trenches the employers were quietly robbing the helpless ones left behind; it means that this most awful of all wars has been used by a heartless gang of bloodsuckers to enable them to plunder with impunity, and that whilst they rioted in the plunder of the poor, the Government looked smilingly on, but as soon as the poor commenced to call a halt to the plunder, the same Government ordered out its soldiers, and denounced as 'treason' the attempts of the workers to protect their interests.

Good luck to the Welsh miners! Good luck to all who attempt to stem the tide of tyranny and robbery which, under cover of military safety, is allowed to run unchecked throughout the length and breadth of the land. Such revolts will serve to unmask the real enemy, serve to show how they who are loudest in denouncing militarism are the quickest to use it to keep their poorer fellow-citizens in the chains the master class are forging for the nation!

Note

1. See the article, [The Right to Strike](#).

James Connolly

What is a Scab?

(1915)

Workers'

Republic,

10

July

1915.

The question seems rather superfluous. We will be told that everyone knows what a scab is. In Dublin the idea of being called a 'scab' rightly awakens horror in the minds of all honest workers be they men or women. No one likes to be associated with the creature who, when the rights of Labour were in the balance of conflict, when the dignity of Labour was attacked, when the liberties of Labour were in peril, basely abandoned his fellows and 'sold the pass' on his comrades. And yet, as simple as it seems the question involves more than can be answered without a good deal of thought.

What is a scab?

A scab is a worker who in the course of a strike or lock out helps the employer to keep his business going – to dispense with the aid of the men or women he formerly employed. To understand what a scab is we must first understand what constitutes a striker. A strike is an attempt to obtain certain concessions from an employer or group of employers by stopping his business, and thus stopping the flow of profits. If a body of workers are on strike the question of whether they are winning or losing is settled in the long run by their success in stopping their employers' business. If they succeed in stopping that business they win, if they do not succeed they lose. If their Union is able to pay Strike Pay for a year or two years they would still lose if the business can go on without them; nay, if the Union could pay a Strike Pay greater in amount than the weekly wages they had earned they would still lose if the employer's business was going on without them. But if the business cannot go on without them then they win. Hence, and this is the pivot of the whole question, whosoever enables the

employer to continue his business without the striking workers is scabbing upon those workers.

Now let us imagine a practical illustration of this case. The labourers in the shops and yards of certain Dublin railway depots are on strike for an increase in their miserable wages. The work of these labourers consists mainly in helping or attending certain skilled tradesmen. If the Companies can get men degraded enough to do it they will bring in men to do the work formerly done by the men on strike. These men will be scabs. But what will be the skilled tradesmen who will accept the help of these scabs, who will instruct them in their duties, and work side by side with them in the effort to enable the Companies to defeat the strikers?

Many of the skilled tradesmen have already signified their attitude. All of them have stood firm in their refusal to do other work than their own. On Saturday, July 3rd, six engine drivers on the Midland and Great Western Railway were asked and agreed to wash out the boilers of their engines. On Sunday the local branch of their Union held a meeting and strongly repudiated their action. On Monday the Company requested the attendance of a deputation to discuss the matter in the office. The deputation attended and stood firm in their refusal. The United Smiths are equally firm, as are the Boilermakers.

But looming in the background is the threat of the Companies to get scabs to help the tradesmen. On the Dublin and South Eastern some few scabs have already been obtained. These scabs first worked a coal boat, and then went into the workshops to attend the skilled men as helpers.

As a result these skilled men are already face to face with the question we are treating in this article.

If a labourer who goes into work on a dispute is a scab, what is the skilled tradesman who accepts him as a helper?

We know how our readers would answer the question, we know how the Transport Union has always acted when another Union had its members on

strike from the same employment as our members were engaged in, we know what honour and wisdom would dictate, but –

What will the skilled Trades do? How will they answer the question, “What is a scab?” [\[1\]](#)

Note

[1.](#) The employers agreed to an increase of 2s. a week for the railway labourers on 14 August.

James Connolly

Lexington

Workers’ Republic, 12 July 1915.

The first blood shed in actual fighting in the American Revolution was shed at Lexington, Massachusetts on April 19th, 1775. Then was fired “the shot heard round the world”, the shot whose echoes were as bugle calls summoning a nation to life.

The dispute between the British Parliament and the American colonists had been gradually drawing to a head: The town of Boston which had led in the agitation against the oppressive action of the British Government was filled with British troops intended to intimidate the Americans, and these latter had begun

to collect arms and ammunition and to store them in various places inland in order to be prepared for any eventuality. At that time the odds seemed so great against the Americans that few of them dreamt of asserting the independence of the thirteen colonies.

The colonies were but thinly populated, means of communication were very imperfect, roads were bad, and no real bond of cohesion existed. The British had a great fleet dominating the Atlantic sea coast, and able to hurl an army at any point where resistance might be contemplated and crush it before it could attain to any strength. The bad roads, sparse population and almost trackless wilds on the other hand made it difficult to unite the Americans sufficiently to oppose the British expedition. Also large sections of the population were ultra loyal, and resolved to stand by England against their fellow colonists. Owing to all these factors there was still some hope of a peaceful issue of the dispute until the occurrence we are about to describe swept the talkers and doubters aside, and placed the issue in the hands of armed forces.

On the night of the 18th and morning of the 19th April the British General Gage in command at Boston sent an expedition into the interior for the purpose of destroying certain stores of arms and ammunition the Americans were gathering at the village of Lexington. This expedition embarked secretly on boats at Boston, and were rowed up the Charles River to a landing place known as Phipp's Farm. From there they pushed hurriedly on to the town of Concord, which they reached about five in the morning. Every effort had been made to keep their movements secret, mounted officers and scouts scoured the country and arrested every inhabitant they found upon the roads to keep them from giving the alarm. But the alarm had been given; one mounted citizen, Paul Revere, having ridden ahead of them and spread the alarm far and wide. Bells were rung, fires lighted and guns fired in order to rouse the sleeping inhabitants by those who received the word as Revere passed on his way.

On reaching Lexington the soldiers found the American militia drawn up to receive them. The Officer in command ordered the Americans to disperse; these latter refused, and the soldiers fired, killing eight men and wounding several others.

The Americans fled and the soldiers then proceeded to Concord, sending six companies ahead to seize two bridges beyond the town that they might cut off the retreat of any armed forces opposing them. The American militia at this point retired and the main body of soldiers took possession of the place. At once they set about destroying all stores; three guns, a quantity of carriages, and a large accumulation of powder and ball were thrown into the river. A number of barrels of flour were also thrown in the same place and spoiled. All this time the bells had been summoning the people, bonfires were on every hill, and couriers were speeding along every road with the news that the soldiers were the warpath. The farmers and townspeople were hurrying from all quarters to the scene.

Upon completion of their work of destruction the army commenced to retire. But here the first real fighting of the day began.

As the infantry prepared to leave the town they tried to destroy the bridges behind them. A company of militia strove to cross in order to save some of their stores, but the soldiers fired killing two men. The Americans returned the fire, and the regulars were forced to retreat, leaving behind them some killed and wounded, and a lieutenant and a number of soldiers taken prisoners.

As the army retired the whole countryside rose around them. Skirmish followed skirmish, houses, walls, hedges, woods, ditches were lined by riflemen who never ventured into close quarters, but kept up the pursuit, tracking the soldiers as hunters track game. At Lexington the retreating army was reinforced by Lord Percy with 16 companies of infantry, a detachment of marines, and two cannon. From Lexington to Boston is sixteen miles and all the way the troops had to fight. The people closed in to firing distance only, crawled along the ground in their rear, lay in wait behind hillocks, trees, and hedges, firing upon the troops, and never exposing themselves.

For the soldiers it was a terrible experience, as their enemy seemed to rise out of the ground. Front and rear and flanks were alike engaged all the time, and every moment required every sense to be on the alert. Eventually the soldiers reached Charleston, and boats took them off to Boston under the shelter of the fleet.

The British admitted the loss of 273 men killed and wounded, and 2 lieutenants and 20 men taken prisoners. Amongst the seriously wounded were Colonel Smith, the commander of the expedition, a lieutenant-colonel and several other officers.

The total American loss was only 60 killed and wounded.

Remarks

The battle of Lexington was a victory for the British, inasmuch as they succeeded in their object, viz., to destroy the stores of ammunition at Lexington. But it was also a victory for the rebels, as they held the ground after the battle, compelled the enemy to retreat, and inflicted more loss upon him in the retreat than they had suffered in the battle. In this respect Lexington was like all the battles of the War of the Revolution. In practically all of those earlier battles the regular soldiers won, but after each of them the American Army gained in strength and discipline. Lexington destroyed the belief in the invincibility of the regular soldiers, gave courage to those who dreaded them because of their perfection in mechanical drill, and gave faith to those doubters who failed to recognise that no nation can be enslaved if its people think death less hateful than bondage.

James Connolly

The Right to Strike

(1915)

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 because of their historical interest.

We would advise all interested in the peaceful development of the Labour Movement to watch carefully the progress of events in connection with the activities of the Minister for Munitions. It will be noted that in his negotiations with the British Labour leaders this wily Welshman has already succeeded in inducing a very large section of these gentlemen to surrender the 'right to strike', on behalf of the workers they represent. This means that in the industries in which their members are interested the workers have surrendered the only weapon they possess of immediate effective value in compelling a hearing for their demands. We have not yet heard of any corresponding surrender on the part of the employers – have not heard of the capitalist class giving up any of the power they possess over the lives of their employees. It is only the workers who are asked to surrender civic rights – rights hard won by generations of fighters. It will of course be argued that this is for the war only. Even if that be so it cannot be cited as a justification for the surrender; it may be used as an argument against the war. For if the war can only be pursued by virtue of robbing from the civil population all the privileges hitherto enjoyed by them, then no friend of freedom and orderly progress can fail to be opposed to the war. But upon what guarantee is the statement based that this denial of the right to strike will not persist after the war? Do we not all know that the world after the war will be mightily changed, that many institutions are being introduced as war measures that will be carried over into times of peace? He would indeed be foolish who did not realise that each innovation which we see being introduced into the industrial world will, if it proves effective for its present progress, become an established fact too difficult to dislodge when war is over. [\[1\]](#)

Our friends who say that the denial of the right to strike is only a war measure would do well to study out the processes by which it can be justified on that ground. They will find that every argument that can be used to justify that

denial now, can easily be stretched to justify similar restrictions in time of peace. For instance, what is the argument that made it necessary in war-time? The answer is that such restriction is necessary in the interests of national self-preservation. Well, what is to prevent the ruling class saying hereafter that any strike in a basic industry, such as the transport, the railway, the mines, the engineering, is a menace to the well-being of the nation, and that therefore it ought to be prohibited in the interests of national self-preservation? There is nothing to prevent them doing so, but much self-interest impelling them to such action.

And any tyro in politics knows that Great Britain above all countries in the world is governed by precedent. If it can be proven in a British Court of Law that any particular decision was once given before and accepted as Law, then the judge of that Court will give his decision exactly on similar lines, though it may involve the most manifest absurdity and heinous injustice. Hence this denial of the right to strike is full of dangers for the future, and the British Labour leaders in accepting it have grossly betrayed the class to which they belong, or did belong.

Thus another liberty is disappearing. Already we have seen trial by jury destroyed in Ireland, as in the cases of Sean Milroy and Sheehy Skeffington; we have seen the Crown arresting a man in one part of the country and arbitrarily fixing his trial to take place in another, as in the case of Sean Mac Diarmada, and we have seen newspapers suppressed, type stolen and machinery dismantled by the orders of the Government, which at the same time refused to specify any one article, paragraph, or sentence in these papers upon which the confiscation and suppression was based. [\[2\]](#)

Now we see that the right of the workers to withhold their labour is also taken away. Every worker under these regulations is bound to labour when and where he is told, and if he does not like the conditions he is graciously allowed to grumble, but grumble he as much as he chooses he must keep on working under the conditions against which he is grumbling. This is freedom as it is understood by the war party in England and Ireland.

So, whilst so many of our brothers are out fighting for freedom abroad the master class are, as usual, busy forging fresh fetters with which to bind the survivors when they reach home.

Notes

1. Connolly's suspicions were justified. Restrictions of the right to strike lingered on under the name of the Trades Disputes Act.

2. When Sir John Anderson threatened (July, 1940) to suppress the **Daily Worker** he was asked to specify the subject-matter to which he objected. The following reply was received: "The Secretary of State ... cannot attempt, by reference to particular items, to give you guidance ..."