

# REVOLUTION 1916 THE ORIGINAL & AUTHENTIC EXHIBITION



## JAMES CONNOLLY (1886-1916)

## SÉAMUS Ó CONGHAILE (1868-1916)

James Connolly was born in 107 Cowgate, Edinburgh, Scotland to Irish immigrants from County Monaghan, John Connolly and Mary McGinn. Growing up in extreme poverty James left school at 11 to work, and later in an attempt to escape the harsh conditions lied about his age and joined the British Army.

Using the surname Reid he was stationed in the south east of Ireland and witnessed how the British treated the dispossessed Irish. It was during this time that he met Lillie Reynolds a young Protestant girl. He deserted the army in 1887, moving back to Scotland with Lillie, marrying under his real name in Perth 1890.

Self-educated and a voracious reader Connolly was attracted by the writings of Karl Marx on class struggle and the rights of workers and became involved in the Socialist movement. Through a position in the Scottish Socialist Federation he accepted a job offer in Dublin in 1896 as a full-time secretary with the Dublin Socialist Club on a salary of £1 a week. He soon changed the club into the Irish Socialist Republican Party and began publishing the newspaper Workers Republic.

After a lecture tour in America in 1903, the Connolly family moved to New York in 1904 where he got involved with the American Labour movement. He was involved with the Industrial Workers of the World (the Wobblies) and became a national organiser for the American Socialist Party.

This was a productive period for Connolly, writing some of his best known works including Labour in Irish History. Returning to Ireland, this time Belfast, in 1910 where conditions were more receptive than previously, Jim Larkin appointed him the Ulster Organiser for the Irish Transport and General Workers Union (ITGWU).

In Dublin during the 1913 Lockout to support Larkin, Connolly organised the shutting down of Dublin Port as “*tight as a drum*” as the stand-off between the big bosses led by Irish Independent owner William Martin Murphy and the ITGWU continued into January 1914. The attacks on workers by the police led to the setting up of the Irish Citizen Army (ICA) to protect the workers, and later on under the control of Connolly the ICA played a significant role in the 1916 Rising.

Connolly actively resisted British Army recruitment in Ireland for the First World War, denouncing especially the use of poverty as a recruiting tactic as he had personal experience of it. Connolly's threat to rise with the ICA alone alarmed the Irish Republican Brotherhood who were planning a rising themselves through the Irish Volunteers. Pádraig Pearse, Joseph Plunkett and Seán Mac Diarmada met with Connolly and they involved him in their plans for the Rising.

James Connolly was Commandant General of the Dublin Brigade of the Irish Republican Army directing most of the week-long rising. He played an active role in protecting the radio station at Reiss's Chambers and visiting Volunteer outposts and barricades. Connolly was wounded twice, once in the arm which he concealed, and then a ricochet shattered the shin bone in his ankle on Thursday 27th April leaving him stretcher bound.

After the surrender Connolly was brought to the First Aid post in Dublin Castle, and it was there whilst in bed that he was court martialled. His daughter Nora, visiting him with his wife Lillie for the last time, broke the news to him of the ongoing executions and that himself and MacDiarmada were the only two leaders left. He had heard the volleys from his hospital bed, but didn't understand what they were. Nora was hopeful due to his condition that her father wouldn't be executed, but Connolly remembered a case from the Boer War.

*“I remember what they did to Scheepers in South Africa,” he said. Scheepers was injured in the Boer War and court martialled before he recovered and shot in a chair by the British. James last words to Nora were: “We will rise again”.*

James Connolly was tied to a chair and executed at Kilmainham Jail on May 12th 1916. Peter Paul Galligan who was active in the Rising in Enniscorthy was told by a British soldier in the jail that Connolly had gripped the side rung of the chair and it was still in his hand when he was buried in the pit at Arbour Hill Prison yard.

*“We went out to break the connection between this country and the British Empire and to establish an Irish Republic.... We succeeded in proving that Irishmen are ready to die endeavouring to win for Ireland those national rights which the British government has been asking them to die for Belgium. As long as that is the case then the cause of Irish freedom is safe”.*

Saolaíodh Séamus Ó Conghaile in 107 Cowgate, Dún Éideann na hAlban, agus b'imirigh de bhunadh Chontae Mhuineacháin a thuismitheoirí, John Connolly agus Mary McGinn. Bhí siad beo bocht nuair a bhí sé óg agus d'fhág Séamus an scoil ag aois 11 ar thóir oibre. Níos faide anonn, agus é ag iarraidh éalú ó na drochdhálaí beatha, d'inis sé bréag faoina aois agus chuaigh sé le hArm na Breataine.

D'úsáid sé an sloinne Reid agus Ionnaíodh in oirdheisceart na hÉireann é agus chonaic sé conas ar chaith na Sasanaigh le Éireannaigh a díseilbheadh. Ba le linn an ama seo a casadh cailín óg Protastúnach Lillie Reynolds air, thréig sé an arm in 1887 ag filleadh ar Albain le Lillie. Phósadar faoin a ainm ceart i bPeairt in 1890.

Chuir Ó Conghaile oideachas air féin agus ba rímhinic i mbun na léitheoireachta é. Mheall saothar Karl Mark ar streachailt na n-aicmí é agus ar chearta oibríthe agus chuaigh sé leis an Sóisialachas. Tríd an bpáirt a bhí aige i gCónaidhm Shóisialaithe na hAlban ghlac sé le tairiscint poist mar rúnaí lánaimseartha i mBaile Átha Cliath i 1896 ar £1 sa tseachtain mar thuarastal. Ba ghearr gur bháis sé ainm úr ar an chlub, An Páirtí Sóisialach Poblachtach, agus thosaigh sé ag foilsíú an nuachtán Workers Republic.

I ndiaidh camchuairt léachtaí a dhéanamh i Meiriceá i 1903, d'aistrigh muintir Uí Chonghaile go Nua Eabhrac in 1904 áit a ghlac sé páirt i ngluaiseacht na nOibríthe i Meiriceá. Bhí sé ina chomhbhunaitheoir ar Oibríthe Tionsclaíocha an Domhain (na Wobblies) agus ina eagraí Náisiúnta ar Pháirtí Sóisialach Mheiriceá. Tréimhse an-táirgiúil a bhí ann do Ó Conghaile inar scríobh sé cuid dá saothar is cáiliúla ina measc Labour in Irish History. D'fhill Ó Conghaile ar Éirinn go Béal Feirste in 1910 agus bhí dálaí níos fearr agus daoine níos tuiscenáil faoin am sin ná mar a bhí roimhe agus cheap Jim Larkin ina Eagraí Cúige Uadh é ar Cheardchumann Oibríthe Iompair agus Ilsaothair na hÉireann (ITGWU).

D'fhill Ó Conghaile ar Bhaile Átha Cliath le linn Fhrithdhúnadh 1913 le tacú le Larkin agus d'eagraigh sé dúnadh Phort Bhaile Átha Cliath “*chomh daigeann le drum*” a fhad is ar lean an leamhsháinn idir na boic mhóra faoi úinéir an Irish Independent William Martin Murphy agus an ITGWU, go 1914. Ar Lúnasa 31ú 1913, mharaigh Póilíní Chathair Bhaile Átha Cliath triúr oibríthe ar Shráid Uí Chonaill nuair a d'ionsaigh siad slógadh. Is de bharr bás James Nolan, James Byrne agus Alice Brady a bunaíodh Arm Cathartha na hÉireann chun na hoibríthe a chosaint agus níos faide anonn, faoi stiúir Uí Chonghaile, bhí ról faoi leith aca in Éirí Amach 1916.

Bhí Ó Conghaile go dlúth in éadan feachtas earcaíochta Arm na Breataine don Chéad Chogadh Domhanda á cáineadh go h-áirithe toisc an úsáid a bhí dá dhéanamh an bochtaineacht a úsáid mar ghléas earcaíochta, rud a raibh taithí pearsanta aige air. Chuir bagairt Uí Chonghaile Arm Cathartha na hÉireann a úsáid inmí ar Bhráithreachas na Poblachta a bhí cheanna ag beartú éirí amach le Óglaigh na hÉireann. Dá bhri sin bhuail Tomás Ó Cléirigh agus Pádraig Mac Piarais leis agus aontaíodh ar cur cuige le chéile don Éirí Amach.

Bhí Séamus Ó Conghaile ina Cheannfort-Ghinearál ar Bhríogáid Bhaile Átha Cliath Arm na Poblachta agus dá réir ag díriú tromlach an Éirí Amach. Ghlac sé ról gníomhach i gcosaint an stáisiúin raidió ag Seomraí Reiss agus thug sé cuairteanna ar urrhoist agus bharaicáid na nÓglach. Gortaíodh é faoi dhó, uair amháin sa sciathán, a choiméad sé faoi cheilt go dtí gur dhéan athscinneadh smidiríní de chnámh na lorga ina rúitín ar Déardaoin 27ú. Bhí sé teoranta do sinéan ina dhiaidh.

I ndiaidh an ghéilleadh tugadh Ó Conghaile go dtí an t-ionad GarChabhach i gCaisleán Átha Cliath agus cúisíodh os comhair armchúirte é ina leaba. Is ag an cuairt deireanach ag a iníon Nóra, agus a bhean Lillie ar chuala sé don chéad uair faoi na bású a tharla go dtí sin agus nach raibh fágtha beo dena cinnirí ach é féin agus MacDiarmada. Bhí sé tar éis roiseanna urchar a chloisint óna leaba san ospidéal ach níor thuig sé cad é a bhí iontu. Bhí Nóra dóchasach nach gcuirfí a hathair chun báis mar gheall ar an mbail a bhí air, ach bhí cuimhne aige ar chás ó Chogadh na mBórach.

*“I remember what they did to Scheepers in South Africa,” arsa sé. Gortaíodh Scheepers i gCogadh na mBórach agus triailleadh os comhair armchúirte é sular athshlánaigh sé agus scaoileadh é agus é ina shuí ar chathaoir. Na focail dheirí a dúirt Séamus le Nora ná nach chóir díomá bheith uirthi agus “We will rise again”.*

Ceanglaíodh Séamus Ó Conghaile le cathaoir agus cuireadh chun báis é i bPríosún Chill Mhaighneann ar Bealtaine 12ú 1916. Dúirt saighdiúir Sasanach i a bhí san príosún le Peter Paul Galligan bhí gníomhach san Éirí Amach in Inis Córthaidh gur rug Ó Conghaile ar an runga ar thaobh na cathaoireach agus go raibh sé go fóill ina láimh nuair a cuireadh isteach i bpoll adhlactha é i gClós Phríosún Chnoc Arbhair. Tá teoríc eile ann gur cuireadh a shínteán ina sheasamh in éadan an bhalla agus é ann agus gur scaoileadh é, agus go m'bhféidí gur shagart Caipisíneach a d'inis do Nóra gur scaoileadh i gcathaoir é nuair a d'iarr sí air cad é mar a d'fhéadfaí é a scaoileadh nuair nach raibh sé in ann seasamh.

