

Letters and statements of the leaders executed
after the Rising at Easter 1916

LAST WORDS

Piarsa F Mac Lochlainn



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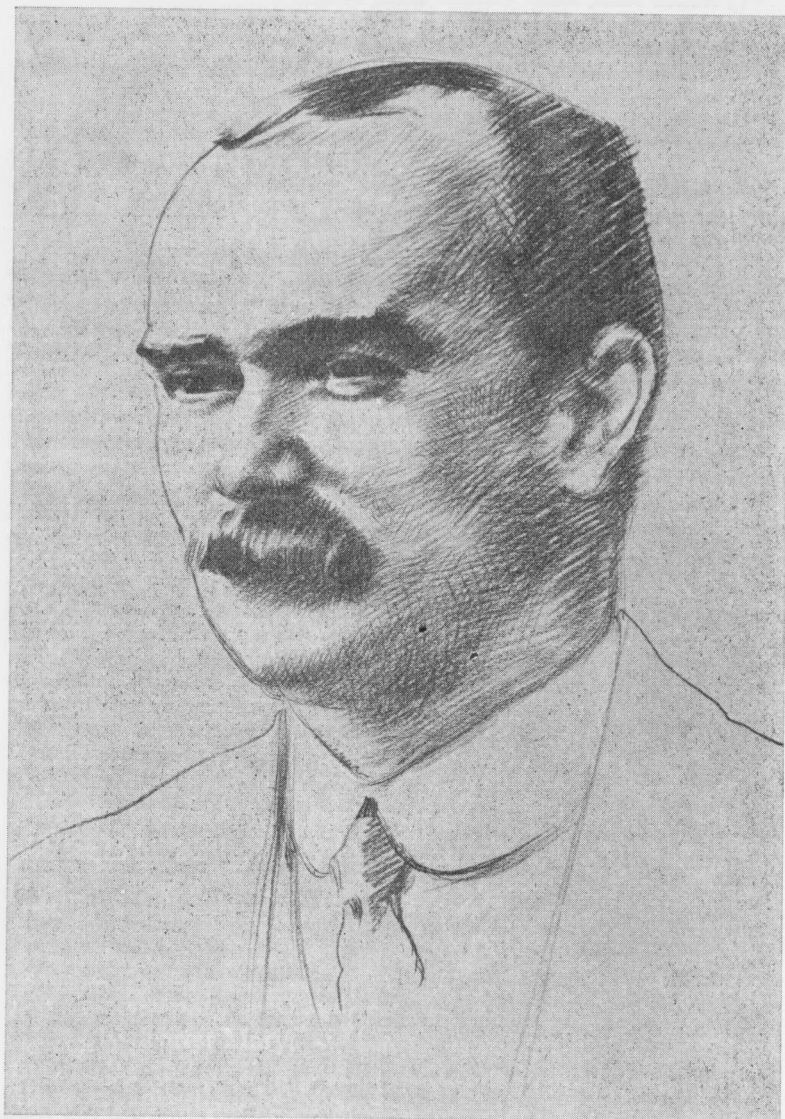
PIARAS F. MAC LOCHLAINN

a chuir in eagar

Dublin

KILMAINHAM JAIL RESTORATION SOCIETY

1971



Séamus Ó Conghaile

1868-1916

James Connolly

SÉAMUS Ó CONGHAILE

JAMES CONNOLLY

Shortly before noon on Easter Monday, 24 April, 1916, James Connolly, having been nominated by the Military Council of the Irish Republican Brotherhood as Commandant General of the Dublin Division of the Army of the Irish Republic, led from Liberty Hall the composite group of Irish Volunteers and Irish Citizen Army which was soon to occupy the General Post Office.

At his right marched his Commander-in-Chief, P. H. Pearse; at his left Commandant Joseph Mary Plunkett.

(Two other members of the Military Council, Thomas Clarke and Seán Mac Diarmada, had already gone ahead to O'Connell Street, and two others, Thomas MacDonagh and Éamonn Ceannt, were already on their separate ways to occupy Jacob's Factory and the South Dublin Union. The seven were to become the Provisional Government of the Irish Republic when the Proclamation, of which they were also the signatories, was read.)

Connolly had earlier signed a warrant appointing Michael Kelly to the rank of Lieutenant in the Irish Citizen Army.

Order Appointing Michael Kelly Lieutenant

Irish Citizen Army
Headquarters, Liberty Hall, Dublin.
Commandant James Connolly.

Date, 24th April, 1916.

By warrant of the Army Council, I hereby appoint Michael Kelly to take the rank of Lieutenant, with full power to exercise all the rights and perform all the duties belonging to that rank.

(Signed) JAMES CONNOLLY
Commandant.

(This warrant was found, after the surrender, in the College of Surgeons where Lieutenant Kelly fought under Commandant Michael Mallin.)

And he had issued what was probably his first dispatch as Commandant General of the Dublin Division—a note to Seán Heuston :

Order issued to Seán Heuston, 24 April, 1916

April 24th

To Captain Houston (*sic*)

Take the Mendicity Institute today at 12 o'clock at all costs.

J. CONNOLLY.

At noon, the column having arrived, via Lower Abbey Street and the North side of O'Connell Street, in front of the Imperial Hotel (now Clery's), Connolly gave the order—"Left Wheel: the G.P.O.: Charge!"—and the General Post Office was occupied. Having supervised the building of defences, the fortification of windows, the barricading of doors, having seen the green banner with the words IRISH REPUBLIC hoisted on the roof at the Prince's Street corner and the tricolour at the Henry Street corner, Connolly stood outside to listen to Pearse reading the Proclamation of the Irish Republic, and when Pearse had concluded "clasped his hand and cried out: 'Thanks be to God, Pearse, that we have lived to see this day!'"¹

Another dispatch, issued by Connolly on Tuesday, survives :

Dispatch issued from the General Post Office, 25 April, 1916

ARMY OF THE IRISH REPUBLIC
(Dublin Command)

Headquarters

Date—25th April, 1916.

To Officer in Charge,² Resis³ & D.B.C.⁴

The main purpose of your post is to protect our wireless station. Its secondary purpose is to observe Lower Abbey Street and Lower O'Connell Street. Commandere in the D.B.C. whatever food abd utensils you require. Make sure of a plentiful supply of water wherever your men are. Break all glass in the windows of the rooms occupied by you for fighting purpose. Establish a connection between

your forces in the D.B.C. and in Reis's building. Be sure that the stairways leading immediately to your rooms are well barricaded. We have a post in the house at the corner Bachelor's Walk, in the Hotel Metropole, in the Imperial Hotel, in General Post Office. The directions from which you are likely to be attacked are from the Custom House or from the far side of the river, Dolier Street or Westmoreland Street. We believe there is a sniper in McBurney's on the far side of the river.

JAMES CONOLLY

Commandant General.

The misspellings here are not attributable to Connolly but to the typist.

During the week Connolly, inside and outside the General Post Office, was a source of inspiration to the Garrison.

Desmond Ryan refers to "his force, authority and determination to keep the morale of the defenders to the highest point in spite of the terrific pressure on them." Even after he was wounded Pearse described him as "still the guiding brain of our resistance."

On Thursday afternoon Connolly was wounded twice by British snipers.⁵ Dr. James Ryan has recalled:⁶

"...After Thursday morning we were completely isolated....Up to this the hospital staff was not very busy. Only three or four wounded had been received. Then I saw James Connolly come in. Walking quickly to where I was standing he asked if there was any private place where he might speak to me. I led him behind the folding screen. Here he took off his coat and showed me a flesh wound in his arm. He asked me to dress it and, when leaving, begged me not to tell anybody. He feared a garbled report of the gravity of the wound might reach his men and, perhaps, undermine their morale. He immediately returned to his duties but, before long, he was carried back on a stretcher, this time suffering from a severe wound in the ankle. It was badly lacerated, probably from a rifle bullet⁷ at comparatively short range. Having no choice of anaesthetic I gave him chloroform while Dr. O'Mahony, R.A.M.C., one of our prisoners of war, and Mr. McLoughlin⁸ put the leg in splints. Connolly suffered great pain and it was only with the help of frequent injections of morphia that he got any rest. We had

a number of wounded now, some from the sniper's bullet, others from shrapnel but, with the exception of Connolly and one other wounded on Tuesday, none gave cause for anxiety.

We were kept busy on Thursday night. Connolly required a good deal of attention. He slept very little and in the intervals the pain was ever present and severe. . . ."

On Friday morning Connolly sent for his secretary, Winifred Carney, and dictated a manifesto to the soldiers under his command.

Manifesto issued from the General Post Office,

28 April, 1916

Army of the Irish Republic
(Dublin Command)

Headquarters, April 28, 1916.

To Soldiers:

This is the fifth day of the establishment of the Irish Republic, and the flag of our country still floats from the most important buildings in Dublin, and is gallantly protected by the officers and Irish Soldiers in arms throughout the country. Not a day passes without seeing fresh postings of Irish soldiers eager to do battle for the old cause. Despite the utmost vigilance of the enemy we have been able to get information telling us how the manhood of Ireland, inspired by our splendid action, are gathering to offer up their lives if necessary in the same holy cause. We are here hemmed in because the enemy feels that in this building is to be found the heart and inspiration of our great movement.

Let us remind you what you have done. For the first time in 700 years the flag of a free Ireland floats triumphantly in Dublin City. The British Army, whose exploits we are for ever having dinned into our ears, which boasts of having stormed the Dardanelles and the German lines on the Marne, behind their artillery and machine-guns are afraid to advance to the attack or storm any positions held by our forces. The slaughter they suffered in the first few days has totally unnerved them and they dare not attempt again an infantry attack on our positions.

Our Commandants around us are holding their own.

Commandant Daly's splendid exploit in capturing Linenhall Barracks we all know. You must know also that the whole population, both clergy and laity, of this district are united in his praises.

Commandant MacDonagh is established in an impregnable position reaching from the walls of Dublin Castle to Redmond's Hill, and from Bishop Street to Stephen's Green.

(In Stephen's Green, Commandant Mallin holds the College of Surgeons, one side of the square, a portion of the other side, and dominates the whole Green, and all its entrances and exits.)

Commandant de Valera stretches in a position from the Gas Works to Westland Row, holding Boland's Bakery, Boland's Mills, Dublin South-Eastern Railway Works, and dominating Merrion Square.

Commandant Kent holds the South Dublin Union and Guinness's Buildings to Marrowbone Lane, and controls James's Street and district. On two occasions the enemy effected a lodgment and were driven out with great loss.

The men of North County Dublin are in the field, having occupied all the Police Barracks in the district, destroyed all the telegraph system on the Great Northern Railway up to Dundalk, and are operating against the trains of the Midland and Great Western.

Dundalk has sent 200 men to march upon Dublin, and in other parts of the North our forces are active and growing.

In Galway Captain Mellows, fresh after his escape from an Irish prison, is in the field with his men. Wexford and Wicklow are strong and Cork and Kerry are equally acquitting themselves creditably. (We have every confidence that our allies in Germany and kinsmen in America are straining every nerve to hasten matters on our behalf.)

As you know, I was wounded twice yesterday and am unable to move about, but have got my bed moved into the firing line, and, with the assistance of your officers, will be just as useful to you as ever.

Courage, boys, we are winning, and in the hour of our

victory let us not forget the splendid women who have everywhere stood by us and cheered us on. Never had man or woman a grander cause, never was a cause more grandly served.

JAMES CONNOLLY

Commandant-General,
Dublin Division.

This manifesto, phrased as it was in the most defiant and hopeful terms, was obviously aimed at maintaining the morale of the men. As Desmond Ryan points out: "His summary of the situation was at variance with even the known facts, and with Pearse's more outspoken and candid dispatch of the same day."

A typed copy of the manifesto was among the documents presented to Senator Margaret Pearse in 1946. (See above.) To the typed copy—taken, obviously, from an official file—was appended a note as follows:

The above interesting orders, which were typewritten, were found on the body of the O'Rahilly, one of the rebel commandants, who was shot by the 216th Sherwood Foresters as he was leading a charge on one of their barricades in Moor (*sic*) Street near the Post Office. Upon him also was a letter written to his wife after he was wounded, in which he said he was shot leading a charge. He got into an entry on the side of the street and later endeavoured to crawl into an opening on the other side. He was wounded, and before he died he wrote in a firm hand a pencilled note to his wife and children.

The copy found on the O'Rahilly's body is in the National Museum.

Continuing Dr. Ryan's narrative :⁶

"...On Friday morning the wounded numbered about sixteen. While I was on my rounds Mac Diarmada came up and told me to prepare all casualties for removal to Jervis Street Hospital. We got busy on this but when we reached Connolly he refused to go, saying he must remain with his men. The other wounded, in charge of Mr. McLoughlin with stretcher-bearers and Cumann na mBan, then set out and reached Jervis

Street Hospital in safety. I remained, but now my only patient was Connolly. He asked to be put in a bed with wheels or castors so that he could be moved to the front hall. This was done and he resumed command of the garrison. Nothing could conquer the will of this man... Now came hurried orders for evacuation....

Pádraic Pearse with drawn sword stood at the side door leading into Henry Street and each man in turn rushed across to Henry Place directly opposite....

Connolly was carried across on a stretcher....

There was little time for rest on Friday night though the men were tired out. Some of them worked hard boring through the walls dividing the houses on the East side of Moore Street, others kept watch and some, overcome by fatigue, slept at their posts. None of the leaders slept....

On Saturday morning we moved from house to house through bored walls. The openings were small and Connolly's stretcher would not pass through. We had to put him in a sheet and so carry him northwards. He must have suffered torture during that journey but he never complained...."

Richard P. Gogan, T.D., of the G.P.O. Garrison, recalls:⁹

"We were in the last group to leave the Post Office. The group included James Connolly and the other members of the Provisional Government. I believe that Seán Price was one of Connolly's stretcher-bearers and that possibly Paddy Meagher (R.I.P.) was another. When we moved over Henry Street into Henry Place an attempt was made by a Volunteer to break into a stable and he shot himself in the attempt. At this stage Connolly pulled my rifle from me and told me to help carry him. We brought him into a stable in Henry Place (O'Brien's Mineral Water Factory). The people in the houses there—"shut in" all the week—were maddened by hunger and by the fire which extended from Messrs. Drago's premises in Henry Street as far as the stables. In no uncertain language Connolly told us to get him out of that! Seán Price and I carried him from there to Cogan's shop at the corner of Moore Street. There Dr. Jim Ryan attended him as well as a Volunteer, P. J. Murray, who had been wounded in the retreat. Connolly gave orders that holes were to be knocked in the walls up to the end of Moore Street with the idea of joining forces with Volunteers reported to be in the premises of Messrs. Williams & Woods. This was done...."

Julia Grenan was in Cogan's shop. "We were in a parlour at the back of the shop," she recalls,¹⁰ "when Miss O'Farrell came

in. She had fallen as she rushed along and was, in fact, carried in by one of the Volunteers. James Connolly was on the stretcher on the floor. Miss O'Farrell asked him how he was feeling and he said: 'Bad. The soldier who wounded me did a good day's work for the British Government.' "

On Saturday morning, as we have seen, temporary headquarters were set up in No. 16 Moore Street to which the men had tunnelled their way. Connolly was put to bed in a back room and, around his bed, in "council of war," "the members of the Provisional Government present at Headquarters" decided finally on an unconditional surrender.

After a sad leave-taking Pearse went out, with Nurse O'Farrell, to meet Brigadier-General Lowe.

"Winnie Carney was kneeling at Connolly's bedside," says Julia Grenan, "crying bitterly. 'Was there no other way?' she asked. Connolly said: 'No. No other way. We could not see our brave men burned to death. No. No other way.' "

After Pearse's departure Dr. Ryan was called to Connolly who told him of the surrender. "He told me he wanted to be prepared for a journey to the Castle," recalled Dr. Ryan. "When I asked him what terms he expected, he said that the signatories would be shot but the rest of us set free. Connolly was soon ready and was taken to the Castle on a stretcher borne by four¹¹ Volunteers in full uniform."

Séamus Devoy, one of the stretcher-bearers, recalled¹² the journey to the Castle:

"... On the Saturday afternoon of Easter Week, following the surrender, I was instructed by Capt. M. W. O'Reilly of G.H.Q., to go to the barricade at the top of Moore Street under a white flag.

I was to inform the British officer in charge that Commandant-General James Connolly, Commandant of the Dublin Division, was badly wounded and would be taken to the Military Hospital at Dublin Castle.

I was to request this officer to have a passage made in the barricade to help the stretcher-bearers. This his men did and I reported back to G.H.Q.

The bearer party, having removed all arms and equipment, formed up under Captain Diarmuid Lynch of G.H.Q. Their names were Michael Staines, Joseph Fallon, P. J. Byrne, Michael Nugent, Liam Tannam and myself.

The first stop was outside Tom Clarke's tobacco shop in Parnell Street (then Great Britain Street), where Commandant-General Connolly had a few words with the Brigadier-General commanding the British forces in the G.P.O. area.

We then started for Dublin Castle via Capel Street, escorted by an officer and sixteen men of the British Army.

We arrived at the Upper Yard of the Castle and there was a short talk between Commandant-General Connolly and the British General Staff officers, after which the British Red Cross men carried our wounded chief into the hospital. The officer in charge of our escort then told us we were prisoners of war and we were marched away to Ship Street Barracks...."

A Voluntary Aid Detachment (V.A.D.) nurse, describing her "Experiences at Dublin Castle during the Rebellion,"¹³ referred to the arrival of Connolly:

"...The arrival of James Connolly caused an unusual stir. From the window I could see him lying on the stretcher, his hands crossed, his head hidden from view by the archway. The stretcher was on the ground, and at either side stood three of his officers, dressed in the Volunteer uniform; a guard of about thirty soldiers stood around. The scene did not change for ten minutes or more; they were arranging where he should be brought, and a small ward in the Officers' Quarters, where he could be carefully guarded, was decided upon. The nurses in charge of him acknowledged, without exception, that no one could have been more considerate, or have given less trouble. About a week after his arrival he had an operation on the leg. All through, his behaviour was that of an idealist..."

Major de Courcy Wheeler, Staff Captain to Brigadier-General Lowe, had accompanied Pearse from Parnell Street, where he surrendered, to British Army Headquarters where Pearse interviewed Maxwell, the British Commander-in-Chief, and, soon after, signed the formal surrender order. Major Wheeler was then given the task of keeping guard over Pearse but was on that duty for only fifteen minutes when he was sent for by Lowe.

"...I was ordered," he recalled,¹⁴ "to go at once to the Castle, show the order of Commandant-General Pearse to Commandant Connolly, in command of the Irish Citizen Army, who had been brought in wounded and a prisoner, to get him to sign it, or issue a similar order to his own men. When I arrived at Dublin Castle, part of which had been turned into a Red Cross Hospital,

I was conducted to the ward where Commandant Connolly had been carried. He was in bed. I waited beside him while his wounds were being dressed. I told him my orders and asked him did he feel well enough to comply.

Having said he was alright, he read the order which had just been signed by his Commander-in-Chief.

Commandant Connolly then dictated his own orders which I wrote down underneath General Pearse's typed orders and this document was signed and dated April 29/16 by Commandant Connolly. . . . This document has been reproduced in facsimile in several publications. . . ."

Surrender Orders, 29 April, 1916

I agree to these conditions for the men only under my own command in the Moore Street District and for the men in the Stephen's Green Command.

JAMES CONNOLLY

April 29 / 16

Early on the morning of Low Sunday, 30 April, 1916, Fathers Augustine and Aloysius, from the Capuchin Friary, Church Street, called to Dublin Castle.

Father Augustine wrote

. . . I, being anxious, spoke to Father Aloysius and we decided to walk over to the Castle. There we soon met Brigadier-General Lowe who received us in a very gentlemanly manner. I told him we had heard of the two surrenders (G.P.O. and Four Courts), that a truce had been granted in our area (Church Street), but that we were in quest of Pearse's document as we felt that the Volunteers in our area would never lay down arms until they felt quite sure about it. He assured us that the document was genuine, that typed copies of it had been made, but that, unfortunately, he could not lay his hands on one just then. "But," he added, "Connolly is here and would reassure you on the matter, if you were to see him." "Of course," we replied, and he at once led us to where the leader of the Citizen Army lay in bed. General Lowe remained outside. We entered, passing the armed sentry at the end of the room, near the door. I remember well, just as if it were but yesterday, the feeling of admiration in my heart as I laid eyes for the first time on this man of fine head and noble brow. Approaching his bedside I asked him if the document said to have been signed by Pearse was genuine.

He assured me in the affirmative. "Did you also sign it?" I then asked. "Yes," he replied at once. Then, as I turned to leave him, he said: "But only for the men under my own command." These words are indelibly imprinted on my memory....

On Wednesday, 3 May—it was the day on which Pearse, Clarke and MacDonagh were executed—Connolly's daughter, Ina,¹⁵ went to Dublin Castle in an unsuccessful attempt to see her father.

"I went to Dublin Castle," she wrote,¹⁶ "and it was difficult for me to get directed to the proper quarters. The policemen would send me on, first to one place and then to another. They did not like to turn me away immediately. As I was allowed inside the gates I felt I had some hope. There are several buildings inside Dublin Castle. As I was sent from one building to another I came to the conclusion that father must not be here. When I saw a nurse in the distance, I ran after her and inquired if she could tell me where to go and whom to ask for. She brought me along to that part of the Castle which had been turned into a Red Cross Hospital. She told me whom to ask for and before she left me she said that father was very weak from loss of blood and was not improving.

I saw the officer in charge of the Hospital and he said that he would send word to father that I had called, and that all the family was in Dublin. He took the address and said he would let us know when a visitor would be allowed."

"After that," recalls Connolly's eldest daughter, Nora¹⁷ "any news we got of Papa was from the newspapers and these told us that he was growing steadily weaker and that it was doubtful if he would recover. Then, day by day, the news of the executions nearly drove us out of our minds. We had heard of the shooting of Pearse, Clarke, MacDonagh; then of Willie Pearse, Plunkett, Ned Daly and the rest. Every time we heard the newsboys call out 'One more execution,' 'More executions,' we dreaded to look in the paper for fear we might read my father's name. And yet we felt we must buy the paper.

On Sunday afternoon a note was left in the letter-box addressed to Mama. It read: 'If Mrs. Connolly will call at Dublin Castle Hospital on Monday or Tuesday at 11 o'clock she can see her husband.'

Mama was in terror that Papa's time had come but everyone had been telling her that the fact of his being wounded was a good thing for him; that as long as he was wounded he would not be executed; that by the time he was well again public feeling would be so strong that the authorities would hesitate to shoot him. 'They'll never execute a wounded man,' was the cry.

I quieted Mama's terror somewhat by pointing out to her that the note said 'Monday or Tuesday' so that the day of his execution could not be either of those days. Still she was in an agony of impatience for Monday morning. On Monday she went to the Castle. Before she was allowed in to see Papa she was subjected to a most rigorous search. And she had to give her word of honour that she would not tell him of anything that had happened outside; and she had to promise that she would not bring in anything he could take his life with.

My youngest sister went with Mama. She wasn't yet 8. She was searched too.

Mama came home in a more contented frame of mind. She felt sure that Papa would be spared to her for some time. . . ."

On Tuesday, 9 May, 1916, Connolly was tried by court martial.

Statement to Court Martial, 9 May, 1916

(Evidence mainly went to establish the fact that the accused, James Connolly, was in command at the General Post Office, and was also Commandant-General of the Dublin Division. Two of the witnesses, moreover, strove to bring in alleged instances of wantonly risking the lives of prisoners. The court held that these charges were irrelevant, and could not be placed against the prisoner.)

I do not wish to make any defence except against charges of wanton cruelty to prisoners. These trifling allegations that have been made, if they record facts that really happened, deal only with the almost unavoidable incidents of a hurried uprising against long established authority, and nowhere show evidence of set purpose to wantonly injure unarmed persons.

We went out to break the connection between this country and the British Empire, and to establish an Irish Republic. We believe that the call we then issued to the people of Ireland was a nobler call, in a holier cause, than any call issued to them during this war, having any connection with the war. 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

to win for Belgium. As long as that remains the case, the cause of Irish freedom is safe.

Believing that the British Government has no right in Ireland, never had any right in Ireland, and never can have any right in Ireland, the presence, in any one generation of Irishmen, of even a respectable minority, ready to die to affirm that truth, makes that Government forever a usurpation and a crime against human progress.

I personally thank God that I have lived to see the day when thousands of Irish men and boys, and hundreds of Irish women and girls, were ready to affirm that truth, and to attest it with their lives if need be.

JAMES CONNOLLY, Commandant-General
Dublin Division
Army of the Irish Republic.

A copy of this statement was given by Connolly to his daughter, Nora, while, with her mother, she visited her father for the last time in the early morning of 12 May. (See below.)

On Tuesday, 9 May, some time after his court martial, Connolly's wife, Lily, called to Dublin Castle again to visit him. This time her eldest daughter, Nora, accompanied her.

"There were soldiers on guard at the top of the stairs," continues Nora's statement, "and in the small passage-way leading to Papa's room. They were fully armed—rifles with fixed bayonets. All that armed force to guard a wounded man who could not raise himself in his bed!

We were warned to discuss only personal matters with Papa—not to talk of the Rising or anything that had taken place since. Of course we said 'Alright.'

An officer of the R.A.M.C., stayed in the room all the time we were there.

Papa's wounded leg was in a cage.

I asked him was he in great pain. He said: 'No; but I was courtmartialled today. They propped me up in the bed. The strain was very great.'

I was very depressed at this news. I had been thinking he was safe at least until his wounds would be healed, but now I knew that if they Courtmartialled him while he was unable to sit up in bed they would not hesitate to shoot him.

But Papa was very cheerful as he lay in his bed talking of plans for the future. I know now that he must have known

what his fate was to be but he never gave us a word or a sign. I asked him how he had been wounded. He told us:

'It was while I had gone out to place some men. On my way back I was shot above the ankle. Both bones in my leg were shattered. I was too far away for the men I had placed to see me, and too far away from the G.P.O. to be seen from there. So I had to crawl back until I was seen. I lost a lot of blood. They couldn't get it staunched.'

Papa was mainly concerned with leaving us; what would happen to a family of mainly girls and Mother. He was thinking of the old days and all the misery we had been through and that it would be no life for us at all. So he was advising us to go to the States. And then he spoke of his writings. He wanted me to get in touch with Sheehy Skeffington¹⁸ to get him to arrange publication of some of his (Papa's) songs and to give the proceeds to Mama. This was the last straw. I had tried to keep to the rules until then but then I said: 'Skeffington is gone.' He said: 'What?' and I said: 'In Portobello Barracks,' and just left it at that, because I didn't want to be put out of the room in case there was something else I might manage to tell him. I did tell him some things. I told him that the papers had it that Liam Mellows¹⁹ was still out with his men in the Galway hills, and that Larry Ginnell²⁰ was fighting for the men in the House of Commons.

'Good man, Larry,' he said, 'he can always be depended on.' He was very proud of the men who fought under his command. 'It was a good clean fight,' he said. 'The cause can't die now. The fight will put an end to recruiting. Irishmen now realise the absurdity of fighting for another country when their own is enslaved.'

And he praised the brave women and girls who had helped in the fight.

'No one can ever say enough to honour or praise them,' he said.

I mentioned the number of young boys who had taken part and told him that Rory²¹ had been in prison.

'So Rory was in prison,' he said. 'How long?'

'Eight days,' I said.

'He fought for his country, and has been in prison for his country,' said Papa, 'and he's not sixteen. He has had a great start in life, hasn't he, Nora?'

Then he asked what happened when myself and my sister, Ina, went up North with Pearse's order that the Rising should take place after all. I told him that MacNeill's countermand had caused the forces to disband; that we had walked all the way back from Dundalk; that our journey North was in vain; that, in fact, we had done nothing.

'I think my little woman did as much as any of us,' he said as he hugged me with one arm around my shoulder.

We were discussing many things, but I was thinking all the time of his Court Martial and what the sentence would be. And I said to Papa that there was great talk among the people that because he was wounded he wouldn't be executed but he said: 'No. No. There is no hope of that. I remember what happened to Scheepers²² in South Africa. He was wounded and they executed him. That will have no effect on what they decide to do, and that's that.'

Mama was very upset—It isn't a thing one wants to look back on very much—but Papa was very calm and very cool. I asked him again was he suffering much pain. 'No,' he said, 'I'm not suffering much pain. It has eased a good bit.'

Connolly was visited in Dublin Castle again by his wife and daughter, Nora, in the early hours of the morning of 12 May.

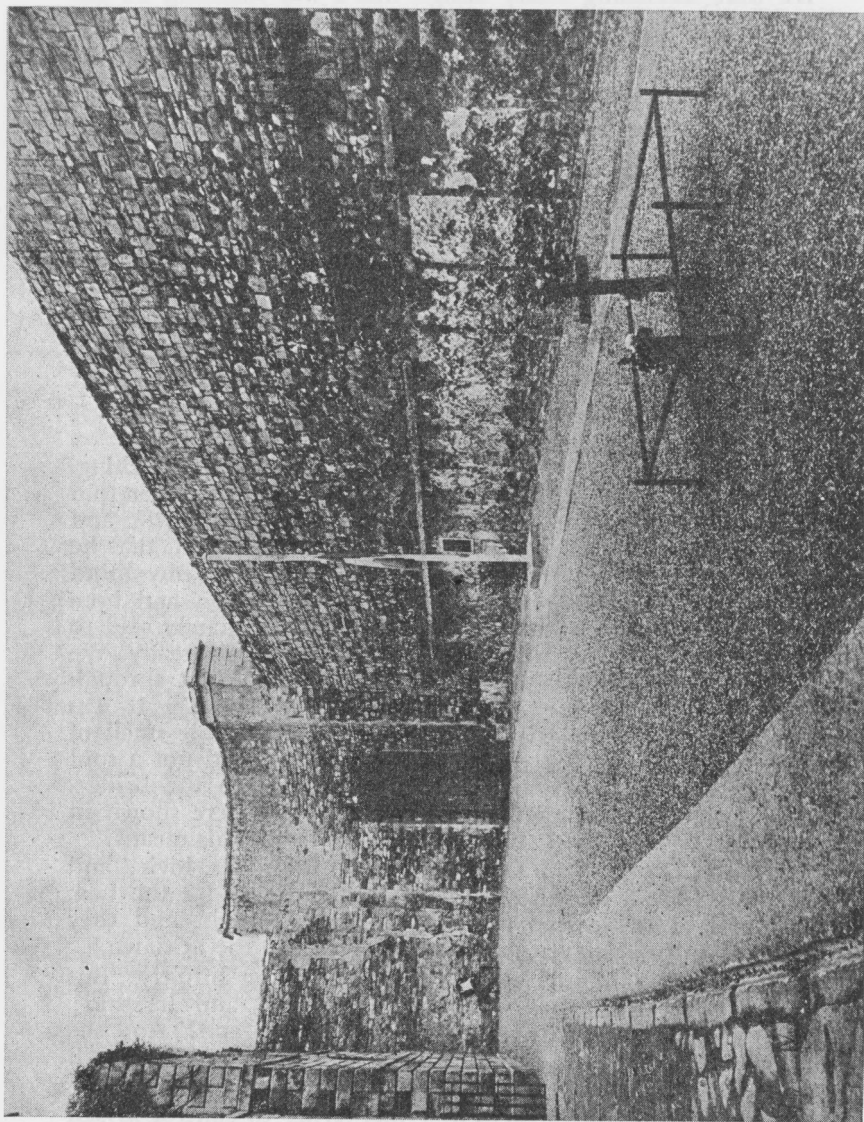
Continuing Nora's statement:

"We were wakened up at about one o'clock in the morning. There was an Army lorry at the door and a British officer told us that the prisoner James Connolly wished to see his wife and eldest daughter. Mama had an idea that he wasn't well, that he had taken a turn for the worse. But it jumped to my mind immediately. All the signatories of the Proclamation had been shot except Papa and Seán MacDermott. I immediately said to myself: 'Papa is going to be shot.' Anyway we got ready. We went down and were taken in the Army lorry right through town. (We were staying in William O'Brien's house.)²³ It was an awfully queer eerie trip. There was still a horrible smell of burning in O'Connell Street. There was curfew and not a soul to be seen, not even a soldier, until we came to the bridge. There were a number of them there. When we were shown in Papa said: 'Well, Lily, I suppose you know what this means?'

She said: 'Oh no, Jim. Oh no!' and he said: 'Yes, lovie,' and then Mama broke down, sobbing, with her head on the bed. Papa said: 'I fell asleep for the first time tonight and they wakened me up at eleven and told me I was to die at dawn.'

Mama said: 'Oh no!' again, and then crying bitterly, 'But your beautiful life, Jim, your beautiful life!' and he said: 'Wasn't it a full life, Lily, and isn't this a good end?' And she still cried and he said: 'Look, Lily, please don't cry. You will unman me.'

So she tried to control herself. I was trying to control myself too. Then Papa said to me: 'Put your hand down on the bed.' So I put it down on the bed and he said: 'That's a copy of my statement to the Court Martial. Try and get it out.' The piece



Kilmainham Jail: Ceapach an Bháis—The Execution Plot.

of paper was folded up very tightly—very small. So I took it anyway.

And we stayed there talking of little things. He was trying to plan a life for us after he'd be gone.

One thing he said to Mama I remember: 'The Socialists will never understand why I am here. They will all forget I am an Irishman.'

And then they told us the time was up and that we'd have to go. (He was to be shot at dawn.)

So Mama—we couldn't get Mama away from the bed and the nurse²⁴ had to come and help her away.

And I went to the door. And then I went back again to him. And that was the last I saw of him."

James Connolly was executed in Kilmainham Jail on 12 May, 1916. *The Catholic Bulletin*²⁵ quotes the surgeon who attended him as having asked Connolly if at the moment of his execution he would pray for him and for those about to shoot him; and Connolly as having replied: "Yes, Sir, I'll pray for all brave men who do their duty according to their lights."

In the British House of Commons on 30 May, 1916,²⁶ Mr. Laurence Ginnell asked the Under-Secretary of State for War

the number and nature of the wounds which James Connolly, when he surrendered, was found to have sustained; whether the military authorities first decided that he should not be tried until his wounds were healed; whether, on the surgeon reporting that Mr. Connolly was dying of his wounds, they tried him; whether, being too ill to walk to or stand for his execution, he had to be carried on a stretcher to the place of execution, propped up in a chair there, and shot in that condition; and if he will give the date and place of any precedent for the summary execution of a military prisoner dying of his wounds.

The Under-Secretary of State for War, the Right Hon. Harold John Tennant, replied:

The medical authorities were consulted before the trial of James Connolly took place, and they certified that he was in a fit state to undergo his trial.

He was wounded just above the instep, and although he was unable to walk there was no reason why in the interests of humanity the execution should have been delayed.

The House will see that the hon. Member's question is characterised by the inaccuracy and exaggeration to which the House is becoming accustomed.

Mr. Ginnell: Will the right hon. Gentleman answer two clauses of the question—was this man certified to be dying when put on his trial, and what is the precedent for the summary execution of a dying man?

Mr. Tennant: I have already said that the medical authorities certified he was in a fit state to undergo his trial; therefore the other question does not arise.

¹Desmond Ryan, in *The Rising*.

²Captain Thomas Weafer, killed in action on Wednesday, 26 April.

³Charles L. Reis & Co., 10/11 Lower O'Connell Street.

⁴Dublin Bread Company Restaurant, 6/7 Lower O'Connell Street.

⁵Desmond Ryan in *The Rising*. Diarmuid Lynch in *The I.R.B. and the 1916 Insurrection* disputes this. It is, however, in conformity with Connolly's own statement (see above), with Joseph Mary Plunkett's Journal (see above) and with Dr. Ryan's account (above). Lynch refers to "reports of those who attended him, which were that he received his first wound (in the arm) on Wednesday and his second (in the leg) on Thursday." As to the leg wound received by Connolly on Thursday there is no conflict. The "Report of Operations, Easter Week, 1916" in *The I.R.B. and the 1916 Insurrection* tells of Connolly's surveying the situation on Thursday afternoon as "enemy activities became more in evidence on the rear flank of G.H.Q.," and of his superintending, in person, the establishment of outposts in Liffey Street and Middle Abbey Street. "On his way back to the G.P.O. he received a very serious leg wound which rendered him virtually *hors de combat*. From Abbey Street he succeeded in dragging himself through Williams' Lane (where he was out of the enemy line of fire) as far as Prince's Street, whence he was brought in on a stretcher."

⁶*Capuchin Annual*, 1966.

⁷Seán McLoughlin, who was close by at the time, said (*Camillian Post*, Spring, 1948) Connolly "was struck in the leg by a piece of flying shrapnel," but Connolly himself spoke of a bullet to his daughter.

⁸Dan McLoughlin, fellow medical student of Dr. Ryan, who was also assigned to hospital duties in the G.P.O.

⁹In a statement to the Editor.

¹⁰In a statement to the Editor.

¹¹But see Devoy's account, below.

¹²In an interview published in the *Irish Independent* 1916-'66 Supplement.

¹³*Blackwood's Magazine*, December, 1916.

¹⁴*Irish Press*, 20 April, 1949.

¹⁵Now Mrs. Connolly Heron.

¹⁶*Liberty*, October, 1966.

¹⁷Dr. Nora Connolly O'Brien, in a statement to the Editor. Her account is based on earlier statements of hers in her books—*The Unbroken Tradition* (Boni and Live-right, 1918) and *Portrait of a Rebel Father* (Talbot Press, 1935)—and in an interview given by her to Radio Telefis Eireann and shown on TV at Easter, 1966.

¹⁸Francis Sheehy Skeffington was murdered in Portobello Barracks by Captain Bowen-Colthurst on 26 April, 1916.

¹⁹Mellows had escaped capture but the fight in Galway had been called off since 28 April.

²⁰Laurence Ginnell, M.P. for Longford-Westmeath.

²¹Rory—Connolly's son—served under his father in the G.P.O.

²²Commandant Scheepers was captured in the Ladysmith District, South Cape Colony, in October, 1901. Suffering from enteric fever and appendicitis, he was tried on 18 December, 1901, sentenced to death, and shot on 18 January, 1902.

²³⁴³ Belvedere Place.

²⁴The same nurse, in response to a request from Mrs. Connolly, cut a lock from Connolly's hair and sent it to her with a note:

The Castle,
Dublin.
12th May, 1916.

Dear Mrs. Connolly,

Enclosed you will find that which you asked me to get for you last night.
I offer you my sincere sympathy in your great trouble.

Yours,

(Signed) B. Sullivan
Sister

The lock and note are now on display in the Kilmainham Museum, presented by Dr. Nora Connolly O'Brien.

²⁵July, 1916.

²⁶*Hansard*, Fifth Series, Vol. LXXXII.

And see bibliographical note p. x.

LAST WORDS

is a compilation of the last written words of the men who were executed after the Rising of Easter Week, 1916. It includes also statements and dispatches issued by the leaders during Easter Week and accounts of their last moments from relatives or friends who visited them or priests who attended them.

The editor, the late Piaras F. Mac Lochlainn died when the book was in proof.

As editor and keeper of the museum for the Kilmainham Jail Restoration Society and as organising secretary of the National Commemoration in 1966 of the fiftieth anniversary of the Rising, he was ideally equipped for the task of compiling **LAST WORDS** and his wide-ranging research in manuscripts and printed sources, personal interviews and extensive correspondence have produced a definitive work on the last weeks of the sixteen executed leaders.