



An Chartlann Náisiúnta **National Archives**

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23, Suffolk Street.

DUBLIN. 12th November 23

A Chara,

A terrible tragedy is imminent on this the 30th day of hunger strike for some hundreds of men and the 20th day for several women who are still fasting in the North Dublin Union.

This is a matter which concerns every individual citizen and for which every one who has given, or still gives an active support to the Free State must bear a share of responsibility.

At this stage no one can plead ignorance of the cause of this situation or its seriousness, but we append to this statement

- (1) The full explanation given by General Michael Kilroy of the state of affairs that drove the men on hunger strike.
- (2) A copy of report received from Mountjoy Prison on Saturday last.
- (3) Letters showing the attempt to trick the women in N.D.U.

Comment on any of those documents is unnecessary. We merely note with reference to the Report from Mountjoy that if any man kept animals in such conditions he would be prosecuted.

We might presume that the men who passed a "Public Safety Act" in the Free State Parliament would at least feel bound by its provisions. There is in it, we believe, a section 13, with sub clauses (b), (d) and (c) referring to the necessity for attending to sanitation, to the supply of doctors, medical appliances and nurses for prisoners in need thereof, and for the inspection of those prisons or camps in which men are interned. These people do not respect even their own laws.

CAUSE OF IMPRISONMENT:

Why are these men and women imprisoned? Because of the war forced on them by the Provisional Government on June 28th 1922. For the war thus begun the Provisional Government had no sanction but secret orders from England. The Parliament of the Irish People elected on June 16th had been summoned to meet on July 1st. That Parliament alone could have given a mandate for war. Without such a mandate the war was an act of an usurping junta - an unjustifiable attack on the liberties of the citizens and army of the Republic and as such had to be resisted.

That armed resistance came to an end in April 1923. The "Cease Fire" Order has since been loyally obeyed by the soldiers of the Republic but thousands of prisoners are still detained.

CRIMINAL STATUS.

In September last an attempt was made to reduce the prisoners in Mountjoy to the status of criminals; to take from them their rights as Prisoners of War. This the prisoners refused to accept. The attached statement from General Kilroy fully explains the position.

THE HUNGER STRIKE :

The Hunger-strike began in Mountjoy and was taken up in the gaols and camps all over Ireland. That over 8000 men would carry on a hunger strike for any length of time was not expected, but the fact that the majority have ~~broken~~ broken their fast seems to encourage in the Free State Authorities a belief that all will eventually succumb.

TACTICS OF FREE STATE AUTHORITIES:

Meantime, the prison officials, evidently acting on orders, are endeavouring in every possible way to break the spirit of the men. This is particularly evident in Mountjoy. The men there have been told that the men in Kilmainham are getting in parcels; that they have broken the strike - in fact the methods adopted in this direction resemble those which we are told trapped Carey to inform on his comrades.

The conditions of filth, vermin and utter neglect of men unable any longer to care for themselves, are almost incredible. But the accounts are from men whose word is reliable and we know they are not exaggerating. Relatives have pleaded to be allowed send in clean linen. Their request is refused unless the men accept criminal status. The trick of telling prisoners they are unconditionally released and, when they have taken, on that understanding a little food or drink, throwing them back again to the prison and denying the promised release has been tried on men as well as on women.

The Free State authorities are probably counting on the fact that Terence McSwiney lasted 74 days and they may wait longer than 30 days with safety in the hope that more will give in. Without commenting on the callous brutality of that, we remind you that Terence McSwiney was kept by the foreign enemy, in a warm room carefully attended by doctors and nurses, while the extra loss of vitality caused by conditions in Mountjoy makes an endurance of 30 days a miracle in itself.

IS IT BLUFF?

It has been stated that the hunger strike is a bluff. Mr. Blythe said the prisoners would not die, nor would they be released. We beg to remind you that the men who call - and perhaps believe - this hunger strike a bluff, are the very men who talked loudly of a Republic and sent other men to die for it, and now acknowledge that to them it was all bluff. They are judging others by themselves. But the Republic was not a bluff to Terence McSwiney or to Kevin Barry. It was not a bluff to Cathal Brugha nor to the men who fought in its defence when traitors sold it. Nor are these men bluffing now. Do you even pretend to believe that a man could bluff through 30 days of starvation.

Are YOU going to let these men die. On you either as member of the Free State Parliament, as one of its Senators or as a responsible citizen the responsibility rests as well as on the Ministers directly concerned. Some of these men are the elected representatives of the people, elected three times over on the same mandate which they have faithfully endeavoured to obey.

Among the women hunger strikers are the sister and niece of the O'Rahilly and the sister of Kevin Barry. Three years ago Kevin Barry was tortured to make him betray his comrades and his cause. He did not fail. His sister is being tortured now, she too will not fail. Will the deaths of these noble men and women ensure lasting peace and stability in the country?

Were such an evil deed even contemplated in any country
the world there would be an outcry against it. Will you
calmly allow Ireland to be disgraced by such a tragedy?

As we write a report has come that already one man is
dead in Tintown. We hope it is only a report, but even so,
the tragedy is inevitable and cannot be long averted unless
you act at once.

Mise,

Mary MacSwiney
Kathleen Lynn.