

THE LIMERICK MILITARY INQUIRY

IRISH
INDEPENDENT

NO CIVIL TRIBUNAL.

MARCH
15 1921

Mrs. O'Callaghan, widow of the late ex-Mayor of Limerick, has addressed the following letter to the Press:—

I was urged by official messengers from the military command, and also formally invited to attend a public inquiry into the death of my husband, Michael O'Callaghan, ex-Mayor of Limerick, and I was assured that the military authorities desired to have everything open, and as public as possible. How far the promise of publicity has been kept, I can judge by the newspaper reports, which state that a cordon of military surrounded the courthouse, that the adjacent streets and the grounds of the adjoining Protestant Cathedral were held by armed troops, that no members of the general public were allowed to enter, or even to approach the building unless provided with special permits from the military authorities, and that even the Press representatives had each to apply personally for a permit and to submit to the usual search before being admitted.

STATEMENTS AT INQUIRY.

In a letter to the Press on the 10th inst. I stated that I believed these military inquiries to be a farce and a travesty of justice. That belief is shared by all my fellow-countrymen who have read the reports of similar proceedings elsewhere in Ireland. They do not need fresh evidence of it, but as possibly there may be some people outside this country who have not yet come to appreciate in full the working of the system by which we are at present governed, I wish to draw their attention to statements made at the Limerick inquiry.

All the military and police witnesses examined at the Inquiry seemed anxious to prove that the Limerick murders were committed by what they were pleased to call "the extreme section of the Irish Republican Army." I, however, have no doubt who the murderers were.

They do not belong to the Irish Republican Army, who protected my husband and my home while it was possible for them to do so, and who now join with me in my bitter mourning.

THE FIRST DEATH NOTICE.

My husband was unanimously elected Mayor by the first Republican Corporation of Limerick in Jan., 1920. In March that year, the very day after his return from Lord Mayor McCurtain's funeral, his first death notice reached him, similar in terms to that received by the Lord Mayor of Cork. From that out my husband and I had no delusions of false security. We knew that those who sent it had the means and the will to carry out their threat. During the greater part of his Mayoral year my husband seldom slept at home. When he did sleep in his own house it was not the Crown forces that protected him but a guard of the Irish Republican Army.

General Cameron is reported to have paid a tribute to the services which the late Mayor, Ald. Tancy, and my husband rendered in preserving the peace of the city. Of Gen. Cameron personally I know nothing. His tribute to the dead men may be sincere, but I should like to put

the matter, and though he heard the footsteps hurriedly returning in the direction of Sarsfield Bridge the men were not challenged, and no patrol was turned out.

3. On other occasions the citizens will remember that if a policeman were wounded or even threatened in the city or within miles of it, troops poured out from all the barracks, the whole city was surrounded, the bridges were closed and the citizens were roused and searched in order to discover the criminals.

4. Thirteen minutes after my husband was murdered the doctor who was bravely coming to attend him met 5 men walking leisurely in Sarsfield St.

5. Gen. Cameron stated that the relations between the Crown forces and the inhabitants were friendly; that "about 2 months ago a girl was shot while walking out with a constable, and since then nothing had happened." Apparently many things happened without Gen. Cameron's knowledge. Has he not heard of the murder of Thos. Blake, a prominent Sinn Feiner, on Friday, Jan. 23, and is there no record of the raid on Blake's house the week before his murder and of a species of court martial conducted at it by some members of Crown troops?

THE INQUIRY.

General Cameron, the head of the Crown military system in this area, invited me to attend a military inquiry, with the purpose, I presume, of bringing the murderers of my husband to account. He set up as a tribunal of investigation one section of those very Crown forces who held the city absolutely in their hands when the murder was done. He called the inquiry a public one, and he took extraordinary precautions, military and otherwise, to ensure that it should not be public.

There are 3 women who have a bitter right to be satisfied that every step is taken to end this terror that walks by night under the military system in Ireland. I, the widow of Michael O'Callaghan, the murdered ex-Mayor of Limerick, am one of these women, and I am not satisfied.

In my agony that night, I thought of the countless other women suffering, as I suffered in my husband's threatened life and in his death. For their sakes, I demand full and open inquiry before a jury of my countrymen and countrywomen into the murder of my husband.

NO CIVILIAN INQUIRY.

SIR H. GREENWOOD AND SIR J. SIMON.

Sir H. Greenwood, replying to Mr. T. P. O'Connor in the House of Commons, said that the military inquiry into the Limerick murders had been held in public, and all the relatives of the deceased were invited to give evidence. Their refusal to attend was much regretted, and by none more than by the local military and police authorities, who were anxious that the imputation that had been made, suggesting that members of the Crown forces were in any way implicated, should be subjected to the fullest investigation. The Government saw no ground for believing that a fairer or more searching investigation could be obtained by the substitution of a civilian court, and to adopt such a course in an area under martial law would be contrary to all precedent.

SIR J. SIMON'S SPEECH.

Col. John Ward called attention to the speech at the National Liberal Club by Sir John Simon, where he said he had a signed declaration which left no doubt in his mind that the murders at Limerick were committed by uniformed servants of the Crown, and asked whether he had asked Sir John Simon to submit this statement.

Sir H. Greenwood...

was not the Crown forces that protected him but a guard of the Irish Republican Army.

General Cameron is reported to have paid a tribute to the services which the late Mayor, Ald. Clancy, and my husband rendered in preserving the peace of the city. Of Gen. Cameron personally I know nothing. His tribute to the dead men may be sincere, but I should like to put on record the kind of tribute which the forces of the Crown in Gen. Cameron's command paid to these men while they lived.

HARASSING RAIDS.

Ald. Clancy's home was frequently raided during Curfew by Crown troops, and his wife had to endure insults and threats. In August last, on the eve of our departure for a short holiday, which was not spent in this country, my husband stayed for a few nights at home without his usual guard. It was during this period that our house was first raided by a mixed party of Crown forces.

Our house was again raided on Shrove Tuesday night by a party of police, some of whom were drunk, offensive, and menacing. Both my husband and I believed that he owed his life on that occasion to the presence and restraining influence of two Irishmen, members of the old R.I.C. I particularly remember being asked again and again if I believed in murder; a curious question to put to the wife of the man whom Gen. Cameron now states to have been "opposed to violence."

WOMEN SEARCHED.

Our house was again raided on Feb. 22, 11 days before my husband's death; this time by a mixed party of Auxiliaries, soldiers, English Black and Tans, and women searchers. During the raid my husband and I were kept apart, and

a very significant feature, I had to submit to the indignity of having my room and my person searched by the women attached to the Crown forces.

Curfew and martial law conditions put an end to our living under the protection of our Republican guard because my husband was unwilling to jeopardise these brave lives. While under the protection of the I.R.A. no harm came to us, thank God. The extremists kept their trust; they did their duty well, and now it is one of my proudest and most consoling memories that they guarded him living and dead.

My husband was murdered when the city was completely in the hands of the Curfew troops, when no citizen—not even the priest and doctor who attended him—could be out on the street without peril to their lives.

THE TRAGIC NIGHT.

The desire of the Crown forces in Limerick to apprehend the murder gang who were abroad on the night of Sunday, Mar. 6, may be judged by a few facts:—

1. That one D.I. and three constables represented the entire strength of the forces which turned out on foot on hearing of my husband's murder 35 minutes after I telephoned to them to get a priest.

2. Mayor Clancy's house lies about 200 yards from the Strand barracks. The sentry on guard swore at the inquiry that he heard the steps of three men pass going in the direction of the Mayor's house. Ten minutes afterwards he heard six shots, the sound of which came from that direction. He reported

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Col. John Warg called attention to the speech at the National Liberal Club by Sir John Simon, where he said he had signed a declaration which left no doubt in his mind that the murders at Limerick were committed by uniformed servants of the Crown, and asked whether he had asked Sir John Simon to submit this statement.

Sir H. Greenwood said he had read the statement with amazement and so had the Col. Commandant in charge of that martial law area. He had taken no action with regard to it, but he thought it would be more dignified for an ex-law officer to have assisted the Government in every way in his power to find the murderers of these people in Limerick rather than make a partisan speech on information which he had not disclosed.

SIR H. GREENWOOD'S DEDUCTION.

Mr. Newbould—Would not the answers of the right hon. gentleman carry more weight if he had published the Strickland report?

Mr. T. P. O'Connor asked whether the statements attributed to Sir John Simon were not by relatives of the murdered men, and whether the best way of setting such statements at rest would not be to have such an inquiry as would command the confidence of the public.

Sir H. Greenwood said he did not accept the view that these Courts had lost the confidence of the people of Ireland.

Comdr. Kenworthy—Does not that show that they have no confidence in these Courts?

Sir H. Greenwood—I draw quite another deduction from their refusal.

CASE OF CADET HART.

Capt Redmond—In view of the right-hon. gentleman's statement that he is anxious to receive evidence, may I bring to his notice a letter I received this morning from a reliable authority, stating that Cadet Hart, who was convicted of murder, though supposed to be insane, is now wandering at large in Co. Cork.

There was no reply.

SYMPATHY.

Further messages of sympathy have been received by Mrs. O'Callaghan from Mrs. Sheehy Skeffington, Mrs. Terence MacSwiney, Cork; and Madame Egan, St. Medard, Giroude.

Newry Guardians and No. 2 R.D.C., New Ross Guardian, and Lismore Guardians and R.D.C. passed votes of sympathy with relatives of the Limerick victims and of the men executed in Cork.