

Conditions in Limerick Jail



On the 10th October 1922 Limerick Corporation wrote to Generals McManus and Brennan of the Limerick GHQ about the condition in which prisoners were being held in Limerick Jail and other places of detention in the City. When no reply had been received by the 13th a further letter was sent to General Brennan.

W.M. Nolan
Town Clerk
Halla na Cathrach
Luimneach
13th October 1922
Ref 5459

A chara,

I beg to remind you that so far you have sent no reply to my covering letter of 10th inst., and the Corporation Resolution with regard to the condition of Limerick Jail and other places of detention in the City, and the Corporation demand for the right to appoint three members of their Body as Visiting Justices to Limerick Jail and other places of detention.

Since I wrote to you a sub-committee of the Corporation has been considering and sifting, as far as the circumstances allow, further statements in connection with the treatment of prisoners. As a result of these investigations the Corporation is still of the opinion that the conditions prevailing in the Limerick Jail and other places of detention is far from satisfactory and I must ask you to have the courtesy to reply to the Corporation on the matter of the Visiting Justices without further delay.

Mise le meas mor
Cleireach na Cathrach.
(LM1987.5459)

General Brennan's response was immediate and he clearly was not pleased with the Corporation's attitude.

by Brian Hodkinson

Oglaigh na h-Eireann
F.G.H. Qrs. South Western Command
Henry St
Limerick
13th October 1922

To/ W.M. Nolan Esq.,
Town Clerk,
Limerick,

A Chara,

I am in receipt of yours of the 10th instant, enclosing copy of Corporation resolution re prisoners.

The resolution contains certain allegations about which I propose letting you have some information. Limerick Prison was certainly overcrowded for a very obvious reason. When I was a prisoner in Limerick Jail for trying to put the English out of the country, I always had much more room than I desired, in fact at one period I spent some months there without a single companion. It is an extraordinary fact that there are so many candidates for admission to Limerick Jail that we are utterly unable to provide proper accommodation for them all. However, we are doing our best and the congestion has been considerably relieved since last Monday by the removal of 200 prisoners.

No prisoner is being ill-treated in Limerick Jail. The statement that they are is a deliberate and unfounded lie. The prisoners have never made a complaint of this nature.

Full information will be given to all interested persons as to the identity and location of prisoners in every instance where the prisoner places this information in the hands of the Prison Authorities. We haven't sufficient time at our disposal to send a man around through hundreds of prisoners with a photo and description of them to try and find him for some interested friend or

relative. If a man refuses to give his name surely he should have sufficient spirit to stand up to this attitude and not try to get by back-door methods what he pretends to refuse publicly.

All parcels of food and clothing have been and will be delivered so long as this regulation is not abused.

Your Council will, I am sure, admit that after some three year's experience of British Prisons, I can claim to be more or less and authority on prisoners and their complaints I have too clear a recollection of all the old dodges in prison to take much notice of all the catch-cries about prisoners treatment which were mostly invented for political propaganda. I was Commandant of the prisoners in several Jails and my principal business was elaborating every petty little incident into a wild outburst about cruelty to prisoners etc. I've been there myself, you see, so I am not likely to be fooled by methods we invented ourselves. Where there is a definite case of misconduct or ill-treatment it is only necessary to report it to this H.Q. and it will be dealt with at once.

For your information I might add that the prisoners run the interior of the prison themselves and if it is insanitary or filthy it is because they prefer it that way. As a matter of fact I understand that at present the prisoners in Limerick keep their quarters perfectly clean and sanitary, but if they didn't it is a matter for themselves not for us, as they are provided with all necessary brushes and disinfectants.

In conclusion I might add that I spent four terms in Limerick Jail and I never saw a representative of the Limerick Corporation there, either as a "Visiting Justice" or in any other capacity. That was before the British went, though!

Mise le meas

M. Brennan C/General
G.O.C. South Western Command
(LM1987.5460)



Comdt. Gen. M. Brennan (centre front) with other officers outside National Army H.Q. in Limerick, from the *Irish Independent*, 24 July, 1922.

(Limerick Museum)