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SAORSTAT ÉIREANN.

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# REPORT

OF THE

## ARMY ENQUIRY COMMITTEE.

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Presented to the Dáil by Order of the Executive Council  
JUNE, 1924.

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### INTRODUCTORY NOTE.

The Executive Council herewith presents to the Dáil the Report of the Army Enquiry Committee. The Report has been signed by the five members of the Committee, subject, however, in the case of the Chairman, to a reservation as to completeness.

A document stating the Chairman's reservation has been received by the Executive Council.

The Executive Council has decided not to publish the evidence, and as the Chairman's reservation as to completeness contains portions of the evidence, it is not proposed to publish it.



## REPORT OF THE ARMY INQUIRY COMMITTEE.

ARMY INQUIRY COMMITTEE,  
GOVERNMENT BUILDINGS,  
7th June, 1924.

A UACHTARAIN A CHARA,—

I have the honour to submit herewith the Report of the Army Inquiry Committee, which was constituted by you on the 3rd April last. After many protracted sittings, and after giving full and patient consideration to the large volume of evidence produced before us, I am pleased to say that we have been able to agree to the various findings and statements contained in the Report as to the matters that came within the scope of our Terms of Reference. The Report is unanimous; but I have felt obliged to make my concurrence subject to a reservation as to completeness. In the course of a couple of days I shall submit such addenda as I feel would be necessary if my own personal views are to be adequately reflected. I most sincerely trust that the result of our labours may be to give the Cabinet the information which it requires, and assist in dealing satisfactorily with the situation which has arisen.

Mise le meas mor,

(Signed), JAMES C. MEREDITH,  
*Cathaoirleach*

LIAM UASAL MAC COSGAIR,  
*Uachtarán.*

### THE ARMY INQUIRY COMMITTEE REPORT.

PRESIDENT COSGRAVE,  
President of the Executive Council,  
Saorstát Eireann.

I. THE ARMY INQUIRY COMMITTEE, composed of the undersigned, J. Creed Meredith, Gerald Fitzgibbon, P. McGilligan, Bryan Cooper, and D. J. Gorey, was appointed by President Cosgrave on the 3rd April, 1924. On the invitation of the President, it held its first preliminary meeting on the 7th April, 1924, in the Council Chamber, Government Buildings. Its Terms of Reference were:—

“To enquire into the facts and matters which have caused or led up to the indiscipline and mutinous or insubordinate conduct lately manifested in the Army,”



which in a covering letter were amplified as follows:—

"To enquire into and report to the Executive Council upon the facts and matters which have caused or led up to the indiscipline and mutinous or insubordinate conduct lately manifested in the National Army and generally to investigate and report upon the state of discipline prevailing amongst all ranks in the Army, and any facts or circumstances adversely affecting discipline, as, for example, the existence of factions, conspiracies, secret societies, or political organisations, or groups amongst the officers and men, the considerations determining and making of promotions or appointments. And to enquire and report whether the discontent amongst certain officers and men shown in the recent threat of mutiny and insubordination is justly and fairly attributed to 'muddling, mismanagement, and incompetence in the administration of the Army.' And in addition, to report on such specific matters and reply to such specific queries as may from time to time be referred to the Committee by the Executive Council."

2. We have held forty-one meetings and have examined twenty-seven witnesses. The names of the witnesses are set out in the annexed Schedule. If this Report is published, the schedule can be omitted, as some of the witnesses may not desire to have their names appear as having given evidence. The initial stages of the Inquiry were subject to a certain amount of inevitable delay, due to the fact that no person appeared before the Committee to undertake the conduct of a case in support of definitely formulated charges or even to supply us with a list of useful and available witnesses. Mr. M. Maguire, instructed by Messrs Corrigan & Corrigan, appeared for General Mulcahy, and Mr. C. Lavery, similarly instructed, appeared for General Sean MacMahon, Lieutenant-General Gearoid O'Sullivan and Lieutenant-General Sean O'Murthuile. At the outset the Committee invited them to furnish immediate statements giving their version of the genesis of the recent mutiny and the information at their disposal as to the existence of secret organisations within the Army, such statements to be afterwards supplemented in any way necessary, but this invitation was definitely refused. In these circumstances, and as the witnesses who laid the foundations of the evidence necessarily took some time to collect their materials and prepare their statements, the accumulation of evidence was a slower process than might otherwise have been expected. Considerable assistance was, however, received from the valuable statements, memoranda and materials supplied by Mr. O'Connor, Secretary to the Ministry for Defence.

No person (save the members of the late Army Council, who were in the position of defending themselves against charges) was professionally represented or attended otherwise than as a witness for the purpose of giving his own evidence for the assistance of the Committee. The Committee endeavoured to procure the attendance of all witnesses who seemed likely to give material assistance to them.

In the net result there was a sufficient concurrence and convergence of testimony to enable the Committee to feel that their investigations had been sufficiently exhaustive, and that their conclusions could



hardly be disturbed by the evidence of any witnesses who had not appeared before them.

3. The number of officers which it was found necessary to demobilise, the difficulty of providing civilian employment for those discharged, the undoubted claims which so many officers had to recognition for past services in the national cause, the fact that in the selection of officers for a permanent establishment, organised so as to be suitable alike for peace conditions and for the activities of a force operating as a trained and regular army, it was found necessary to take education and other qualifications into consideration as well as pre-Truce services; the past history of the Army, the inevitable growth of domestic and local influences and attachments in a force organised on a territorial basis; and the fact that the interval between the cessation of hostilities and the promulgation of a demobilisation scheme gave opportunities for the development of a certain amount of organised opposition to demobilisation; the fact that there had not been sufficient time to allow of the development of a non-political and purely soldier type of mind in the Army, and that circumstances, during such time as there was, had been peculiarly unfavourable for any such development; were all factors that conspired to put a very severe strain on Army administration. It was unfortunate that financial considerations necessitated the preparation of a large scheme of demobilisation at high pressure, under which it was impossible to give minute consideration to every individual case. We believe that in all the circumstances the Army Council honestly endeavoured to deal fairly with the question of demobilisation.

4. The terms of reference appear to us to fall under three main heads:

*First.* To report upon the facts and matters which have caused or led up to the late mutiny.

*Second.* To report upon discipline generally, and as incident thereto to report upon several subordinate matters which are specified as examples of circumstances which do or may adversely affect discipline.

*Third.* To report whether the discontent shown in the recent threat of mutiny is justly attributed to muddling, mismanagement and incompetence in the administration of the Army.

#### A.

5. In our opinion the evidence presented to us has established the following facts, all of which caused or led up to the late mutiny.

6. That the organisation, which brought about, and many members of which joined in, the late mutiny, was in existence at least in embryo, before the outbreak of the Civil War, and that many of the officers who mutinied and of those who encouraged and abetted them had become a problem to General Collins before his death in August, 1922.

7. That after that event they drew more and more closely together for the furtherance of their own objects, which were partly personal and partly political.



8. That the organisation of which they were members did not regard the Army as a non-political servant of the State, but as an engine to be used if necessary, and to be kept in a condition to be used, for the purpose of obtaining personal and political objectives.

9. That they contemplated the use of the Army, so controlled, for the purpose of imposing their views upon the Civil Government.

10. That in furtherance of their objects they regarded it as essential that the Army should be officered and controlled by men of, or in sympathy with, their views, and especially that ex-British officers should be eliminated, and both these objects are prominently advanced in the documents emanating from the group or organisation, and the expressions used by their spokesmen at interviews.

11. That the complaint put forward by many of those who were concerned in the mutiny was, not that they had not office, but that they had not power in the Army.

12. That the group acted more or less in concert; that they were not in general amenable to discipline, and that some, at least, of the individuals who composed it were not qualified for the positions which they considered they should receive.

13. They attempted to dictate to G.H.Q. and to the Government upon Army administration, putting forward claims as a group and relying upon their organised force in support of their contentions.

14. That their objects, and the methods by which they desired and attempted to achieve them, were wholly incompatible with discipline and the obedience which an Army must render to the Government of any Constitutional State.

While we are completely satisfied that there would have been no mutiny but for the existence of this organisation, we are equally satisfied that its activities were intensified by the revival or reorganisation of the I.R.B. with the encouragement of certain members of the Army Council, the lack of confidence and want of intercourse between these two sections of Army officers, and the failure of both to appreciate their position as servants of the State.

15. General O'Murthuile has stated to us that the I.R.B. was originally reorganised to prevent the Irregulars from getting control of it if it were left derelict, and using its name to stir up disaffection against the State, but we are satisfied that the "Old I.R.A." group regarded the reorganisation as directed against them, and were confirmed in this belief by the fact that none of them were allowed to share in the control of the reorganised I.R.B. We consider that the reorganisation of the I.R.B., carried out as it appears to have been by the actual heads of the Army, was a disastrous error of judgment, and accentuated a mutiny which might not have occurred at all, and which could have been more firmly suppressed if those in authority had not weakened their position by leaving themselves open to the charge of acting in the interest of a hostile secret society.

16. It has not been proved to us that any appointments or pro-

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motions were made by reason of membership of, or influence corruptly exercised by the I.R.B., and those most concerned repudiated the charge. The difficulty of direct proof in this connection is obvious. There was, however, a natural suspicion on the part of non-members that the I.R.B. had and exercised influence in these matters, and this suspicion undermined confidence in the impartiality of the Army Council and the higher commands.

17. Suspicion concerning demobilisations and promotions was also occasioned by distrust of an Officers' Board, consisting of four General Officers Commanding, which was originally set up to deal with these matters.

In fact, though it was not generally known, this Board had only dealt with about 120 cases when it was dissolved. The 120 cases were all reconsidered by the Army Council, and a new Board, comprising the members of the Army Council and all the General Officers Commanding, was constituted instead.

18. The attitude of the I.R.A. organisation towards the heads of the Army, who were believed by it to be adverse to its ideals and to disregard the claims of its members, became more hostile after the reorganisation of the I.R.B., and the exclusion of its members from the governing body of the reorganised I.R.B. widened the breach between the two sections of Army officers.

The leaders of this organisation believed that they had been tricked by the late Minister of Defence when, after entering into negotiations with them in July, 1923, and giving them a written assurance in the following terms:—

27th July, 1923.

To:  
MAJOR-GENERAL TOM CULLEN.

A CHARA,

Following our discussion of the 23rd instant, and in reply to your communication of the 25th instant, which reached me to-day, this note will assure you that:

- (1). I am quite prepared to deal directly at any time with any three representatives of those I have recently met for the consideration of any representations they may wish to make on "matters which are considered vital to the progress of the Army on National lines with a view to the complete independence of Ireland"—it being understood that this is, of necessity a personal and private arrangement and not indicative of sectionalism of any kind in the Army.
- (2). I am quite prepared to see any individual of those I have already met who may wish to make representations in this matter.
- (3). And that I am quite prepared, after the recent discussion, to accredit all concerned with "having absolute honesty of purpose and ideals."

I have seen sufficient disaster brought about by isolation and misunderstanding, to be determined not to leave anything undone that may be possible on my part, to prevent either



one or the other coming between men whose co-operation have made the present position of the country possible.

Beir beannacht,

(Signed), R. UA MAOLCHATHA.

He held no further communication with them, and did not reply to the representation which was put forward on their behalf.

19. The first overt act of the mutiny was the refusal of a number of officers to accept demobilisation papers at the Curragh, and the other events all followed thereon.

These officers were courtmartialled and sentenced to dismissal, but the decision of the courtmartial was quashed upon a technical ground. A new courtmartial was directed, which would almost inevitably have pronounced a similar decision to that arrived at by the former one, but instead of permitting it to proceed, the mutinous officers were persuaded or permitted to accept their demobilisation papers. In our opinion this cannot be said to have caused or led up to a mutiny which had already commenced, but it may have influenced subsequent mutineers by producing the impression that mutinous conduct would not be severely punished.

#### B.

20. The general state of discipline in the Army appears to be fairly satisfactory, and, with the exception of a small outbreak of indiscipline immediately after the cessation of hostilities, not unnatural in the circumstances, there appears to have been a steady improvement both in discipline and efficiency from the formation of the Army down to the present date.

21. There was a feeling prevalent in some quarters that efficiency was not a predominant factor in deciding questions of promotion or retention, while others considered that sufficient weight was not given to pre-Truce service. These suspicions led to slackness and indiscipline.

22. The existence of secret societies, factions and political organisations undoubtedly did affect discipline among officers, especially by undermining the confidence of Army Officers in the impartiality of their superiors. The mere existence of such suspicion, whether well-founded or not, is antagonistic to the welfare of any institution, especially one which depends upon personal discipline, and we are strongly of opinion that the attestation of all officers and soldiers should include a declaration similar to that at present demanded from a Civic Guard.

#### C.

23. It has been clearly established that the recent mutinous conduct was confined almost exclusively to senior officers, and that it had no support among junior officers, N.C.O's., or the rank and file. In our opinion this is highly creditable to those ranks, who had endured great hardship and had borne the brunt of the campaign.



24. No evidence was given before us to justify a charge of muddling, mismanagement or incompetence on the part of the late Chief-of-Staff in carrying out his duties.

25. We have already dealt with the actions of the late Quarter-master-General in connection with the reorganisation of the I.R.B. No other charge relevant to our Inquiry was made against him.

26. It was suggested that the late Adjutant-General condoned or connived at insubordination by failing to punish it in the case of highly placed officers. The principal instance was the Kenmare case. In dealing with that the Adjutant-General strictly followed the advice of his legal adviser, the Judge Advocate-General. He put the case in train for a Courtmartial, and he was no party to dropping the proceedings. The failure to secure the attendance of the Civic Guard at the courtmartial in the Mayo case was not in our opinion intentional, and was not attributable to negligence on the part of the Army Authorities or a desire on their part to shield a military offender.

27. General Mulcahy accepted full responsibility for the decision to drop the Kenmare case.

In our opinion this was a grave error of judgment on his part. It did not contribute to the mutiny, but it did militate against discipline generally by encouraging suspicion in the minds of officers and others that the Army Authorities were disposed to hush up charges against persons high in authority.

28. We consider that the Minister of Defence should have taken the earliest opportunity of informing the Executive Council of the proposed reorganisation of the I.R.B., and that he should also have kept the Council fully informed of the course of his negotiations with the Tobin group, and that his omission to do either of these things increased the difficulty in dealing with the mutiny.

29. We were not asked to report upon any specific matters other than those with which we have dealt, and no specific queries were referred to us by the Executive Council.

If the Council should desire suggestions from us upon any matters which came before us in the course of our Inquiry, we are willing to place our views at the disposal of the Council.

30. We desire to express our appreciation of the arduous and satisfactory work done by the official reporting staff of the Oireachtas, and in particular we desire to record our sense of the great obligations we are under to Mr. McGann, who acted as Secretary to the Committee, and gave us unremitting attention and invaluable assistance throughout the whole course of our investigation.

Dated this 7th day of June, 1924



(Signed), GERALD FITZGIBBON.  
 (Signed), P. MCGILLIGAN.  
 (Signed), BRYAN COOPER.  
 (Signed), DENIS J. GOREY.  
 \*(Signed), JAMES C. MEREDITH  
 (Cathaoirleach).

(Signed), G. MAG CANAINN,  
 Runaidhe.

(Copy.)

### ARMY INQUIRY COMMITTEE.

While agreeing with the statements and findings contained in this Report, the undersigned, J. Creed Meredith, does not feel that without some additional statements it would adequately reflect his views on the subject-matter of the Inquiry, and accordingly he is obliged to sign subject to the annexed reservation.

Dated this 7th day of June, 1924

\*Signed subject to annexed reservation.  
 Not printed. See introductory note.