
THE GENERAL STRIKE - 1919

THE PERIOD from 1917 to 1919 was a time of world revolutionary turmoil and stirring working class struggles never since repeated. The traumatic effect of the Bolshevik Revolution of October 1917 and the disturbed aftermath of the First World War transformed Europe into a boiling cauldron of political and industrial unrest. In 1919, a wave of revolt and protest swept across the continent bring a soviet in Munich, an insurrection in Berlin, a commune in Budapest, a general strike in Vienna, risings in Vratca and Plovdiv, the occupations of factories by Turin workers, the struggles for a forty-hour week in Glasgow and Belfast and big strikes in Liverpool, Southampton, Tyneside and London.

Ireland experienced some of the tremors of this upheaval. A combination of external and internal influences found expression in working class activity in different parts of the country. In Limerick, many workers, led by the officers and executive committee of the United Limerick Trades and Labour Council, had grown in political and nationalistic consciousness. This development had been sharpened by a number of events, notably, the effects of the 1913 Dublin Lockout, the influence of the writings of James Connolly and the participation of the Citizen Army in the 1916 Rising. James Larkin, speaking at the 1914 annual conference of the Irish Trade Union Congress, in thanking those who had helped the locked out Dublin workers, made a special reference to the Limerick Pork Butchers who had 'sent more every week in proportion to their strength than any other union.' (1)

This new awareness found an outlet in the appearance on October 20th 1917 of Limerick's first working class paper, **The Bottom Dog**. This weekly publication was written and circulated by some of the leaders of the Trades Council and continued for 48 editions to November 1st 1918. Labour Day was celebrated by Limerick workers for the first time on May 1st 1918, when over 10,000 workers marched through the streets. A press report described the event: "It was a striking display of the strength and solidarity of organised labour in the city, and the appeal of the Trades and Labour Council to celebrate the day was most successful." (2)

The demonstration ended with speeches from three platforms at the Market's Field, where the assembled workers passed a resolution, to the sound of a trumpet. The first part of this resolution read: "That we the workers of Limerick and district, in mass meeting assembled, extend fraternal greetings to the workers of all countries, paying particular tribute to our Russian comrades who have waged such a magnificent struggle for their social and political emancipation." Thus it can be seen from the language used in the text of the resolution that the Russian Revolution had repercussions in Limerick and the expression of solidarity by the city's workers shows the extent of their developing class consciousness. (3)

During this period, the Irish Transport and General Workers Union campaigned, vigourously to organise general workers into its young Limerick branch. But other forces were also at work. The rise of Sinn Fein to political power brought another potent influence into working class consciousness. In the years 1917 and 1918, two papers published in the city, **The Factionist** and **The Soldier Hunter**, fanned the new nationalistic fervour. So the two emergent political expressions of nationalism and socialism struggled to assert themselves and these forces were soon to merge in a general strike of the city's workers, in April 1919, that became widely known as the Limerick Soviet.

The first moves that led to the strike began on January

by Jim Kemmy



Robert ("Bobby") Byrne.

21st, 1919, when a member of Sinn Fein and an Irish Volunteer, Robert J. (Bobby) Byrne, was sentenced to twelve month's imprisonment with hard labour after a revolver and ammunition had been found at his house. Byrne had been branch president of the Post Office Clerk's Association until he was dismissed from his job for his political activities. He had also been a delegate to the Trades Council. In prison Byrne led his republican colleagues in a campaign of disobedience to secure political status and better treatment. This campaign culminated in a riot at the prison. Police reinforcements were sent for and the prisoners were beaten and ill-treated. On February 14th, following a meeting of the Trades Council, a resolution was passed, and late distributed throughout the city in leaflet form, protesting against the treatment being meted out to the prisoners.

This protest was ignored and the prisoners went on hunger strike to try to secure their objective. After three weeks, Byrne was in a weak condition and was removed to the hospital at the Limerick Union. He was placed in a general ward under a heavy armed guard. Plans were made for his rescue by the Volunteer leadership and, at 3 p.m. on Sunday, April 6th, the attempt was made. An attack was made on the ward and, in the ensuing melee, Byrne was shot through the chest and died at 8.30 p.m. the same evening. One of the policemen guarding Byrne was killed, another was seriously wounded and others received injuries.

The death of the policeman was not an isolated incident but part of a general strategy of guerilla harassment and attacks on the British military forces and the police. The British administration in the country was in the process of breaking down before the rising tide of Irish nationalism. In March 1919, a month before the Limerick strike, in a report marked **URGENT** and stamped **SECRET**, the Inspector General of Royal Irish Constabulary informed the Chief Secretary's Office for

Ireland that "In the prevailing discontent with the existing form of Government, should the extremists decide to take independent action, they could rely to a considerable on the co-operation of Labour organisation, and that they would certainly find a large number of fanatical Irish Volunteers through the country, ready to do their bidding. Ireland is unquestionably in a highly inflammable condition and in my opinion at no time was there more urgent necessity for the presence of an overpowering military force." (4)

It was against this highly charged background that the funeral of Robert Byrne took place. The funeral itself was a tense and crowded occasion with an estimated 15,000 people, including the Mayor and Corporation and Sinn Fein sympathisers from Limerick and the surrounding counties, coming together for the event. The British military authorities became alarmed that a further outbreak of trouble was imminent. Troops and armoured cars lined the route of the funeral procession and two planes hovered over the city.

On April 9th, three days after Byrne's death, the British military authorities took a further step to deal with the explosive situation: the city of Limerick was proclaimed a special military area under the Defence of the Realm Act, with the terms of the proclamation to take effect from Tuesday, April 15th. From that date, special permits would have to be used by all people entering the city. Those who needed permits had to present

also be forced to undergo the same military and police scrutiny.

Strong resentment spurred by the active nationalist forces, manifested itself among the workers against these restrictions. A special meeting of the Trades Council was called for on April 13th and was attended by representatives of thirty-five trade unions. The decision of the meeting was that the workers should not be forced to work under the conditions of the proclamation. A general strike of all the city's workers was declared and the Limerick Soviet was under way.

A strike committee was elected to control the city and a subcommittee were appointed to take charge of propaganda, finance, food and vigilance. The strike was called at 11.30 p.m. on Sunday, April 13th and, with the help of a sympathetic printing works in Cornmarket Row, which worked night and day during the strike, within two hours the city was covered with the following proclamation:

Limerick United Trades and Labour Council Proclamation. The workers of Limerick assembled in Council, hereby declare cessation of all work from 5 a.m. on Monday, April 14, 1919, as a protest against the decision of the British Government in compelling them to procure permits in order to earn their daily bread.

By order of the Strike Committee Mechanics' Institute. Any information to the above can be had from the Strike Committee.



THE LIMERICK GENERAL STRIKE COMMITTEE, 1919

themselves to Brigadier-General Griffin, at 78, O'Connell Street, where their height, weight, colour of hair and eyes, and other details were recorded before a permit was issued. In defining the places at which permits had to be furnished, the river Shannon was designated at the boundary on the south side, despite the geographical fact that the city extended far beyond this point to the large working class area of Thomondgate. Workers from this district would therefore have to show their permits and undergo examinations by military sentries four times a day at two bridges. Similarly, workers who lived on the other side of the Shannon but who worked in two of the city's largest factories on the north side, Cleeve's Condensed Milk Company and Walker's Distillery, would

So the strike began and an estimated 15,000 workers obeyed the call. Through a unique coincidence, journalists from all over the world were then in Limerick to report on the proposed transatlantic flight by Major Wood, who had planned to land in the city for re-fuelling. Consequently, within twenty four hours, the striking Limerick workers had captured headlines in newspapers throughout the world. For the duration of the strike, these journalists gave their readers a blow by blow account of the operation of the soviet.

Four depots were established to supply food at fixed prices and the work of collecting and distributing the food was carried out by four City Councillors. Certain shops were allowed to open and labour was provided for

bakeries, gas and electricity works and other essential industries. Only vehicles displaying the notice, "Working under authority of the Strike Committee", were allowed to travel on the streets. Approval was given to some firms to save perishable goods and to transport such goods as coal, butter and flour from the docks and the railway station. Any company not carrying out instructions or engaging in profiteering or the unequal distribution of food was immediately closed down. James Casey, a printer, one of the strike leaders and treasurer of the Trades Council, has written:

Whilst the Trades Council and Strike Committee controlled all activities inside Limerick City, during the General Strike, the Irish Republican Army was busy without. Supplies of much needed food for the beleaguered population were systematically collected from neighbouring towns and villages. After nightfall, relays of boats with muffled oars were successfully used to run the food and other supplies through the blockade and to maintain communication with the citizens. Numerous stratagems were employed to elude the military cordons, and funeral hearses from the Union Hospital and other districts outside the city did not always have a corpse in the coffin. (5)

Public houses were kept closed for the duration of the strike. A special citizen police force was set up to ensure, with the help of groups of picketing workers, that the authorised shops opened and closed at the appointed times. Queues were also controlled and traffic regulated. Every effort was made to prevent inconvenience, and equality of classes was the guiding principle of the strike committee. James Casey has recorded: "It was, generally admitted that the city was never guarded or policed so well previously. The people, for once, were doing their own work, and doing it properly... There was no looting and not a single case came up for hearing at the Petty Sessions."

The strike committee published a people's news sheet, **The Worker's Bulletin**, which carried a day-to-day account of the progress of the strike. A separate report of the daily activities was also prepared for the benefit of the Irish and foreign journalists. The military authorities hit back with their own propaganda, issued through their Press Censor's Office. In typewritten notices pasted up in the streets, the military claimed: "If owing to the wanton action of ill-disposed persons, the inhabitants suffer through lack of the necessities of life, the Government are in no way responsible and cannot do anything to ameliorate the consequences of such wanton action." (6) To this the strike committee replied and its statement ends on a defiant and optimistic note: "Should any suffering or inconvenience be occasioned, we rely on the men and women of Limerick, inspired as they are by old and proud traditions, to suffer them patiently, as our forefathers did before us in the glorious cause in which we shall soon have millions of supporters from all over the world". (7)

The Roman Catholic Bishop of Limerick, Dr. Hallinan, and ten prominent local priests issued a carefully worded statement which did not directly refer to the strike. The statement described the proclamation of the city as "quite unwarrantable", claimed that the military arrangements during the funeral of Robert Byrne were "unnecessarily aggressive and provocative" and were "an uncalled for display... of military power" and protested at the "lamentable want of consideration for the convenience of the citizens at large and especially for the working classes" in the fixing of the boundaries. (8) But martial law continued and the city remained cut off by the military road-blocks. The strike committee went on with the job of administering and policing the area. And the soviet began to receive widespread coverage in the national and international press. The **Irish Independent**, in its first report, headed "14,000 Workers Idle", stated that John Cronin, president of the Limerick Trades Coun-

cil, had wired Mr. W. O'Brien, secretary of the Irish Labour Party and Trade Union Congress: "General strike here as protest against permit restrictions." (9) On the same day the **Irish Times** stated: "Associated to some degree with labour is the irresponsible element amongst Sinn Fein which, of course, regards the situation as a challenge to British law."

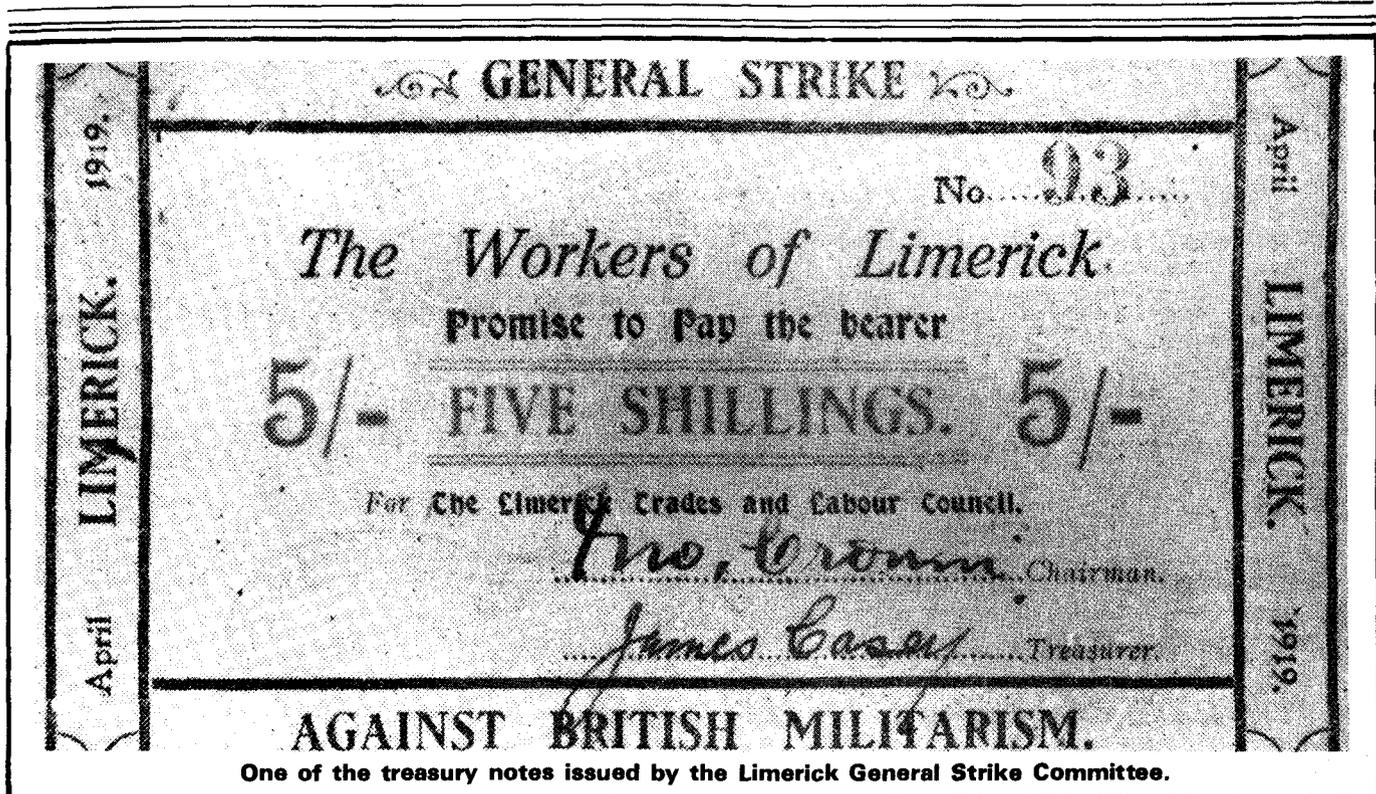
Tom Johnson arrived in Limerick on Thursday April 17th as the representative of the Irish T.U.C. He stated that "he had authority for announcing that the full strength of the Labour movement in Ireland, backed by the general public, would be exerted on behalf of the men and women of Limerick". (10) On the previous day, a telegram had been received by the strike committee from William O'Brien advising: "Delay action of railwaymen, Limerick, until matter is considered by the national executive and national action taken". (11) The role of the railwaymen and their union was to be a crucial factor in the course of the strike.

On April 17th, Brigadier-General Griffin, commandant of the military operation, met the members of the Limerick Chamber of Commerce and gave them authority to issue permits to their workers to go to work. (12) Griffin also stated that he was considering giving the employers further permission to send permits to their customers in the country. Despite these concessions, the members were far from happy at the calling and conduct of the strike. The Chamber held a special meeting on April 19th and send a resolution to Bonar Law demanding that martial law be ended in Limerick. (13)

In a statement issued on April 18th, the National Executive of the Irish Labour Party declared: "The National Executive is unanimous in condemning the action of the military authorities in proclaiming a military area in Limerick..." (14) The strike committee's president, John Cronin, said on the same day that "the delegates who had been visiting various centres had returned to Limerick, and their reports showed that the workers, especially the railwaymen in other districts, were ready to go when the call was made..." (15) The strikers' own paper, **The Worker's Bulletin**, stated on April 18th: "'Tis true that the British soldiers have been used in the past to do the dirty work of their capitalist bosses; men who enlisted 'to fight for small nationalities' have been forced to dragoon their fellow workers, of course in the interests of freedom moryah!... Men like to fight men on equal terms, but when it comes to dragooning one's own class, especially women and tender babes, in the interests of autocracy, it may become a different story." (16)

On Saturday, April 19th, the Mayor of Limerick, Alphonsus O'Mara, called a meeting of the citizens to consider the situation. A large crowd, including Tom Johnson, attended and a resolution was adopted protesting against "the imposition of the military area system and demanding the instant withdrawal of the military cordon which prevented the workers from having free access to their work" (17) The press continued its attention. **The Irish Times** reported:

The fact is that the strike is too big for a small city like Limerick and it is bound to collapse unless substantial outside aid is forthcoming... The local committee meanwhile is carrying out its functions with a thoroughness and appreciation that have not hitherto been associated with provincial disputes. Shrewd judges detect in this complete organisation the guiding hand of Sinn Fein and, though there is no open alliance, there is complete accord between the political and industrial parties here. Defiance of British law affords them a common platform. Labour, however, takes care to keep itself aloof from politics lest it should offend its friends in Great Britain, whose support is adequately appreciated in the present struggle. One sees very few emblems of Sinn Fein here nowadays and, except the daubing of the Treaty Stone in republican colours, there is no glari-



ng display of the tri-colour. (18)

At the annual conference of the Gaelic Athletic Association held in Dublin, on April 20th, a resolution was adopted making a grant of £100 for the Limerick strike fund. A collection of £35.15s. was also taken up for the same fund. The *Irish Times* carried a report on the opposition of British trades unions to the strike. (19) On the following day, the same paper stated: (20) "Mr. J.H. Thomas, M.P., in a circular to all branches of the railwaymen's union in Ireland...advises the members of the union not to take any official part in the movement without the authority of the executive committee. In accordance with the instruction given, a copy of Mr. Thomas's letter has been sent to the branch of the union at Limerick and to all branches connected with the railwaymen throughout Ireland". The paper also reported the local reaction to this statement and to a similar one from Mr. Stockman, on behalf of the executive of the British T.U.C. and British Labour Party. (21)

At the end of the first week, the strike committee had not received the anticipated amount of outside financial support. The committee, faced with dwindling food supplies and a serious shortage of money, attempted to head off a crisis by deciding to design and print its own money. Thousands of pounds, in denominations of 10/-, 5/- and 1/- notes, were issued. Commenting on this decision, an *Irish Times* reporter wrote:

"The decision to issue 'Treasury Notes' to secure goods on credit is taken as a sign of growing financial weakness...The impression therefore is gaining ground that the crisis has passed and that the close of the week will synchronise with the close of the strike". (22) An editorial writer in the same edition stated: "We are speculators today at a very bold and candid experiment in Irish syndicalism. We think that the experiment will fail... The country will note...the sorts of friends whom the Limerick Soviet has made in England. The great organisation of Labour remains silent and aloof. Only the extreme socialists, a small and discredited body, take it to their bosom. It has earned the injurious praise of the British Socialist Party and of the Independent Labour Party". (23)

The "injurious praise" of the Independent Labour Party was also given in the same issue of the *Irish Times*, in an account of that party's annual conference.

"Councillor Crawford, Edinburgh, said that they ought to do something to encourage the "Limerick Soviet" which had got over its financial difficulties by the issue of a paper currency of its own. He would like to see the working classes in this country do the same. In spite of what Mr MacDonald had said, the 'Limerick Soviet' was the first working class Soviet on practical lines established in these islands. Although it was not possible to move a resolution, their sympathies were with their Irish friends." (24)

On Tuesday, April 22nd, the *London Times* devoted its third leader to the strike and concluded: "It is the outcome of the efforts of the Transport Union to paralyse the national life of Ireland, but in reality there is no country where the doctrines of Syndicalism are less likely to obtain a firm hold. The chief sufferers will be the strikers themselves." (25)

A number of ruses were carried out by the strike committee in attempts to confuse and harass the military. One such scheme involved the organisation of a bogus hurling match, on April 21st at Caherdavin, outside the city on the Clare side. Later the same evening, about a thousand men, including Tom Johnson, attempted to cross back over the Shannon to Limerick without permits. At Sarsfield Bridge, a confrontation developed between the military and the men but, following the intervention of a Franciscan priest, the men dispersed. Early the next morning the men walked to the nearby Longpavement railway station, where they boarded the incoming train from Ennis, and, despite the surveillance of the military, made good their return to Limerick.

Another interesting vignette of the strike was given by the American journalist, Ruth Russell of the *Chicago Tribune*, in a book written about her experiences in Ireland:

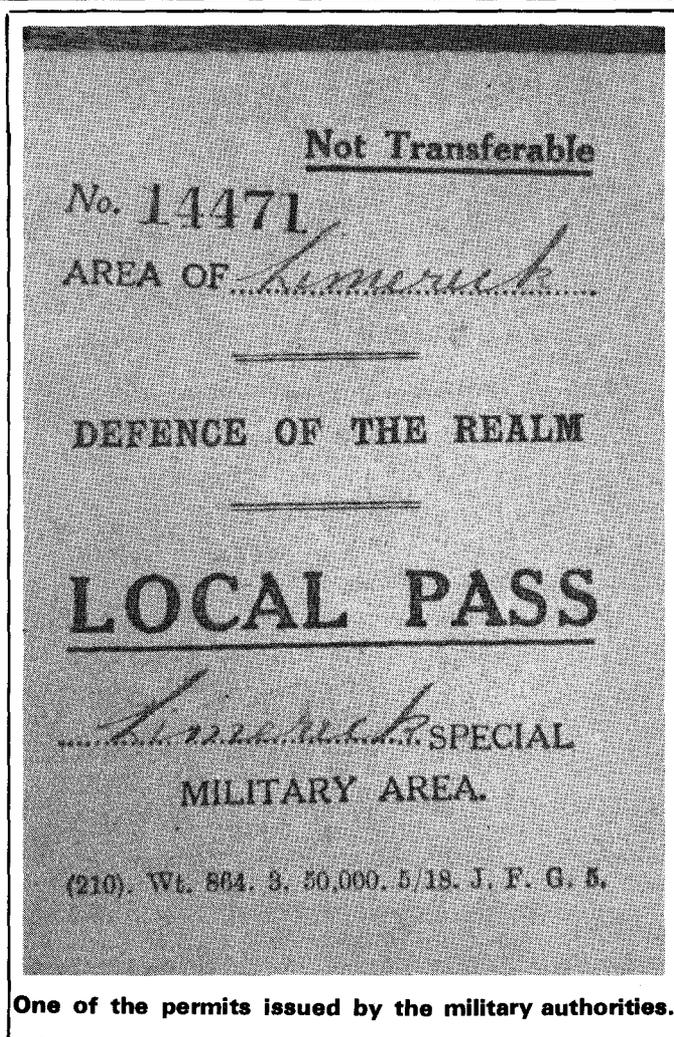
At the door of a river street house, I mounted gritty stone steps. A red-badged man opened the door part way... I entered a badly lit room where workmen sat at a long black scratched table... "Yes, this is a soviet", said John Cronin, the carpenter who was father of the baby soviet. "Why did we form it? Why do we pit people's rule against military rule? Of course, as workers, we are against all military... You have seen how we have thrown the crank into production... The kept press is killed, but we have substituted our own paper." He held

up a small sheet which said in large letters: **The Worker's Bulletin Issued by the Limerick Proletariat...** "We have, by the way, got the sympathy of the union men in the army sent to guard us. A whole Scotch regiment had to be sent home because it was letting workers go back and forth without passes." A few of the workers' red-badged guards came to herald the approach of the workers, and then sat down outside the hall. St. Munchin's chapel bell struck the Angelus. The red-badged guards rose and blessed themselves. (26)

The strike committee continued its work against a variety of difficulties and pressures. Daily discussions with Tom Johnson failed to bring the promised support from the Irish T.U.C. or from workers in other parts of the country. Some discussion developed within the committee on the failure of the T.U.C. to go any further than paper and verbal support for the strike. An effort was made to force this issue and the *London Times* stated:

"Various Labour leaders were converging upon Limerick yesterday, and it is understood that a decision will be reached today on the question of a general strike throughout Ireland. The prevalent opinion in Ireland appears to be any call of the kind will not meet with a widespread response." (27) The *Irish Times* reached a similar conclusion: "The National Executive of Labour evidently is disappointed with the result of its appeal to the workers throughout Ireland... the strike cannot be universal because the sturdy and highly organised Labour of North-East Ulster will have nothing to say to it." The Labour Party had earlier decided to give practical support to the striking workers. But on April 23rd., the *Irish Times* correspondent in Limerick stated: "The failure of the national executive of the Labour Party to fulfil their engagement to meet here today is regarded as an indication that all is not well in Labour circles. Their action, taken in conjunction with the action of the British Labour leaders, forces one to the conclusion that the end of the strike cannot be far off." (28)

On Thursday, April 24th, following discussions with the Roman Catholic Bishop of Limerick, Dr. Hallinan, and the Mayor of Limerick, Alphonsus O'Mara, the workers' solidarity began to crumble. The strike committee, under strong pressure, shifted ground. After a long meeting, John Cronin addressed a big meeting outside the Mechanics' Institute, the headquarters of the strike committee in Lower Glentworth Street, and announced the terms of the decision taken. He called on all workers who could resume work without military permits to do so, and those who could not to continue "in their refusal to accept this sign of subjection and slavery". (29) And the strike committee issued its final proclamation outlining the terms of the decision and ending on a hopeful if unrealistic note: "We... call upon our fellow-countrymen and lovers of freedom all over the world to provide the necessary funds to enable us to continue this struggle against military tyranny." The *Irish Times* reported: "This decision was made at the close of an anxious day of conferences and conversations... After an exchange of views with a delegation from the conference, the Most Rev. Dr. Hallinan, Roman Catholic Bishop of Limerick, and the Mayor called upon Brigadier-General Griffin and discussed the situation at length. Subsequently, his Lordship and the Mayor sent a joint communication to the conference, and it was as a result of this document that the decision was reached... This announcement, while giving intense relief to the citizens generally, had been received with mixed feelings by the strikers. Many of them are glad to get back to work, but others regard the result as a defeat, and feel that their sacrifices have gone for nothing. They were basing their hopes upon a national strike and, even when it became evident that this would not take place, they expressed their determination to continue the struggle. Their leaders, however, saw the futility of pursuing such a course and wisely decided to get out of an awkward situation as gracefully as possible.



When the decision was conveyed to the men this evening, they received it in silence, and the subsequent speeches of their leaders did not put them in better heart." (30)

The abrupt end to the strike caused much discussion and controversy in Limerick. In an editorial headed, "The Strike-And After", the local paper, *The Munster News*, commented: "The struggle would have dragged on for some time longer had not his Lordship, Most Rev. Dr. Hallinan and the Mayor, as representing the spiritual and temporal interests of the citizens, sent a joint letter to the Trades Council on Thursday, requesting the immediate end of the strike; and that the ready compliance with that request was wise will be readily acknowledged by everyone who has at heart the interests of Limerick as a whole—interests that suffered severely during the continuance of the strike." (31)

While the contents of the joint letter sent by the Bishop and the Mayor were not publicly disclosed, it is clear that the Bishop's intervention was the decisive factor in finishing the strike. A report in the *Irish Times* stated: "The opinion is undoubtedly entertained that the early attitude of the Roman Catholic clergy in supporting the strikers was not consistently pursued. It is thought that their views on the situation completely changed when they learned the drastic plans submitted by the Labour Executive to force the issue. They naturally discounted extreme measures and the Executive knowing that the people would be guided by their clergy, wisely abandoned their plans..." (32)

This statement was further reinforced by the sermon given by Rev. W. Dwane, Administrator of St. Michael's Church, when speaking at the 12 o'clock Mass, on Sunday, April 27, when he said: "What he wished to state was that neither his Lordship nor the clergy were consulted before the strike was declared, and were teetotally opposed to

PROCLAMATION

WHEREAS the Workers of Limerick have been on Strike since Monday, 14th April, as a protest against the Military Ban on our City, and

WHEREAS, in the meantime the question has become a National issue, we hereby call upon all workers who can resume work without Military Permits to do so on

TO-MORROW (FRIDAY MORNING)

WE further call upon all those workers whose daily occupation requires them to procure Military Permits to

CONTINUE IN THEIR REFUSAL

to accept this sign of subjugation and slavery; pending the decision of a special Irish Trade Union Congress to be called immediately.

WE also call upon our fellow-countrymen, and lovers of Freedom all over the World to provide the necessary funds to enable us to continue this struggle against Military Tyranny.

STRIKE COMMITTEE

Limerick April 24th 1919.

The proclamation calling off the strike.

its continuance.” (33)

Another body which was also opposed to the continuance of the strike was the Chamber of Commerce. It complained after the end of the dispute: “Had the workers consulted with the Chamber before declaring a general strike, joint action could have been taken which might have been effective and saved the city from the disastrous strike which lasted twelve days. The directors of this Chamber feel it their duty to enter an emphatic protest against the arbitrary actions of the workers in calling a general strike without giving due notice to the employers. Had the positions been reversed and the employers without notice closed down their premises, the workmen would have bitterly resented the action.” The Chamber estimated that the employers had lost about £250,000 in turnover during the period of the strike and that the workers had lost £45,000 in wages. (34)

A week after the total resumption of work, the military authorities withdrew the proclamation of the city. The Sinn Fein policy of helping to keep the strike going as long as possible as a tactic to harass the military was emphasised in the nationalist paper *New Ireland*: “The chief value of the strike in Limerick lies in the effect it will have in putting the energetic nationalists on their mettle.” (35)

A Limerick republican broadsheet *The Republic* was bitterly critical of the members of the strike committee who had “bowed the knee in shameful submission to the Army of Occupation”. The people had been let down by the “nincompoops who call themselves the ‘Leaders of Labour’ in Limerick”, and the calling off of the strike “came as a death blow to the hopes of thousands” (36) who were waiting outside the Mechanics’ Institute.

The dissension between the Limerick Trades Council and the Irish T.U.C. did not end with the calling off of the proclamation. Echoes of the resentment broke out at the annual conference of the Irish Labour Party and Trade Union congress, held at Drogheda in August 1919, during the debate on the carefully-edited report of the executive on the Limerick strike. A delegate, Michael O’Donnell of the Irish Clerical Workers’ Union and a member of the Limerick strike committee, criticised the executive because of its delay in going to the strike area which “allowed certain undercurrents to get to work to sap and undermine the movement in Limerick”. A Cork delegate named O’Duffy made a claim when he said that the strike was ended as “a result of subterranean influences”. Tom Johnson, replying to the debate at the conference, explained the attitude of the executive. “Their proposal was that the men and women of Limerick, who, they believed were resolved and determined to sacrifice much for the cause they were fighting should evacuate their city and leave it an empty shell in the hands of the military. They had made arrangements for housing and feeding of the people of Limerick, if they agreed to the Executive’s proposition! The local strike committee had rejected this proposal on the grounds that it was impractical, and because of the clergy’s opposition to the plan”. (37)

The report as a whole was then submitted to the conference and adopted, with only one vote, that of the silent and unknown King’s County (now Offaly) Trade Council delegate, Smyth, being cast against it.

SOURCES

1. The report of the 1914 annual conference of the Irish T.U.C.
2. *Limerick Chronicle* report.
3. The minute book of the United Trades and Labour Council, May, 1919.
4. The report of the Inspector General of the R.I.C. for the month of March, 1919.
5. James Casey, *Limerick’s Fighting Story*, pp. 42-46.
6. *Ibid.*, p.45.
7. *Ibid.*, p.46.
8. *Ibid.*, p.46.
9. *Irish Independent*, 15 April 1919.
10. *Irish Times*, 19 April 1919.
11. *Irish Times*, 17 April 1919.
12. *Limerick Chronicle*, report.
13. James Casey, p.46.
14. *Irish Times*, 19 April 1919.
15. *Ibid.*
16. *The Worker’s Bulletin*, issued by the Strike Committee, 18 April 1919.
17. *Irish Times*, 21 April 1919.
18. *Ibid.*
19. *Irish Times*, 22 April 1919.
20. *Irish Times*, 23 April 1919.
21. *Ibid.*
22. *Ibid.*
23. *Ibid.*
24. *Ibid.*
25. *The Times*, 22nd April 1919.
26. Ruth Russell, *What’s the Matter with Ireland*.
27. *Irish Times*, 22 April 1919.
28. *Irish Times*, 23 April 1919.
29. *Limerick Chronicle*, report.
30. *Irish Times*, 25 April 1919.
31. *Munster News*, 26 April 1919.
32. *Irish Times*, 26 April 1919.
33. *Limerick Chronicle* report.
34. *Ibid.*
35. *New Ireland*, 3rd May 1919.
36. *The Republic*, May 3, 1919.
37. Annual report of the Irish Labour and Trade Union Congress, August 1919 pp. 56-8.