

# IRISH BULLETIN

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## "CLEANING THE DIRTY IRISH"

### A New Method of Torturing Irish Prisoners

The following are copies of signed statements made by untried prisoners in Wexford Military Detention Barracks. All the men who were ill-treated were arrested "on suspicion." They had not been found guilty of any offense. The majority of them were not even charged. Yet they were tortured for refusing to work. The method of ill-treatment mentioned in these statements is being frequently practiced in some of the prisons in Ireland. It is usually described by English officers who superintend this form of ill-treatment as "cleaning the dirty Irish." The troops in the barracks in which these torturings occur are paraded for the occasion and are permitted to jeer and abuse the prisoners who are being "cleaned." It will be noticed that certain officers are named in these statements as having supervised the housing of untried "suspects." These officers are some of the heroic British Army officers in whose chivalry, sense of justice and fairmindedness Sir Hamar Greenwood professes to have such implicit confidence.

#### The Statement of Thomas Devereux

(Copy)

"On the morning of the 1st February the prisoners (at Wexford Military Barracks) were informed by the military authorities that visits would be discontinued. In consequence the prisoners sent a written communication to the O-C, informing him they would cease all voluntary work from that day. Subsequently at about 9.30 a. m. the prisoners were paraded before the O-C., Lieutenant Sparks, on the Barrack Square, all the available troops being present, many of them under arms. The O-C. informed the prisoners he had received their communication with regard to work. He told them if they refused to work all visits would cease, no parcels or letters would be allowed in, no exercise, and their food would be reduced to the lowest minimum, and also 'other things would happen.' The prisoners' names were then called out and the corporal in charge ordered them to their different jobs (one being to clean the sergeant's mess). On their refusal soldiers with fixed bayonets hustled and shoved them to their different places, amidst the threats and abuse of the majority of the soldiers present, whilst the O-C. and Lieutenant Gibbons were looking on. When the prisoners still continued to refuse to work, four of them, Nicholas Bent, Thomas Doherty, Nicholas Maddock and Thomas Devereux, were ordered to stand against a wall near the hose pipe. They were then ordered by the sergeant-major to undress. This the prisoners refused to do. The sergeant-major then ordered the hose to be turned on the prisoners. The O-C. and Lieutenant Gibbons were still present. After about 10 minutes the hose was turned off, and the prisoners were asked if they would work now. On their still refusing they

were ordered to double around the square for about 15 minutes, during which the sergeant-major and some of the soldiers jeered and abused them. After this they were put standing by a wall for about the same space of time. Then they were doubled around the square again for another while. After which they were ordered to the wall again.

"Four other prisoners: Laurence Radford, Pierce Byrne, Thomas Casey and Edward Murphy were then ordered to the hose pipe and compelled to strip off all their clothes with the exception of their pants. They were then left standing thus, almost naked, for between five and ten minutes. The hose was then turned on them with great violence, so great that one of the prisoners—Pierce Byrne—was knocked down by the force of it and nearly collapsed. After about 12 minutes the hose was turned off the prisoners and deliberately turned on the clothes of one of them. The sergeant-major then asked one of the prisoners were they willing to work and when they still continued to refuse told them the dose would be repeated until they would do so, and threatened to use hot water. The prisoners were then ordered to their room. (They were not given any change of clothes, and some of them had to leave those they had to dry on their bodies). \* \* \* The next night both of the windows were stopped with sheets of galvanized iron and were not allowed to be opened although there were 14 persons sleeping in the room. The following day the galvanized iron was taken down and both windows were white-washed. On Friday, February 4, I was removed to Waterford jail.

18th February, 1921.

(Signed)

Thomas Devereux."

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#### The Statement of Laurence Radford

(Copy)

"I, Laurence Radford, was arrested by the military in Wexford on January 8, and taken to the barracks where I was kept until 4th February. I was then taken to Waterford Prison, no charge being made against me. During my detention in Wexford, I, along with other prisoners, had my hair clipped close by a soldier. On the 1st of February there were 11 prisoners in the room along with me getting ready to receive visitors, as it was visiting day, when the corporal in charge of us came in and said we were not to have any visit today, so we decided amongst ourselves not to do any work as we were being detained without trial and sent a note to this effect to the officer in command, signed by the 12 prisoners. Immediately afterwards we were ordered out on the barrack square and Lieutenant Sparks (the O-C.) stated he had received our note and that we would be told off to different jobs; if we did not work he would stop all our parcels, letters and visits and we would be kept on bread and water and bully-beef and other treatment. M. Maddock, N. Bent, T. Devereux and Thomas Doherty were then sent to work which they refused to do. They were then rushed across the yard by privates with rifles and fixed bayonets, and told to strip which they refused to do. Then the water hose was fixed in position and played on them until they were wet through. They were then made to run around in a circle for about a quarter of an hour. Myself, P. Byrne, W. Doyle, T. Casey, E. Murphy and C. McCarthy were then asked to work which we refused to do. All except W. Doyle and C. McCarthy (those being under the doctor's care, we advised them to give in which they did), were told to strip, which we did all except the pants which we refused to take off. We were then left standing for about five minutes, the hose being then played on us \* \* \* I was, as well as I can judge, about 10 minutes (under the hose). The private who was at the hose then turned it on one of the men's clothes which were lying

close by, thinking they were mine. There were two officers present when we were being treated as I have stated; also N. C. O.'s (as well as ordinary troops). \* \* \* The officers present and who directed this treatment of our men were—Lieutenant Sparks, Lieutenant Johns and Lieutenant Gibbons.  
18th February, 1921. (Signed) L. Radford."

These statements are supported by the signed statements of Pierce Byrne, Thomas Casey, Edward Murphy, Nicholas Maddock and Nicholas Bent.

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**The Statement of Patrick Connaire**  
(Copy)

"At nine o'clock on Monday morning, 7th February, Corporal Cooper (of Wexford Detention Barracks) brought me out into the barrack yard. He told me to strip in a doorway where there was between eight and ten soldiers. While taking off my clothes I was struck twice by a fellow called Semon. When naked they doubled me over to the hose pipe, making kicks at me as I went. Then they kept the hose on me for about ten minutes, stopping once to scrub me for about a minute with a yard brush. I was brought back again and made put on my clothes without drying myself. I was then taken to the cell by Corporal Cooper, who after about five minutes made me strip again and gave me a sack to dry myself.

(Signed) Patrick Connaire."

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**The Statement of W. Devereux**  
(Copy)

"On Friday morning the 11th February, at about 9.30 I was brought out by Corporal Cooper and told to take every stitch of clothes I had on off, and then was placed in the corner of a tank and one fellow held the hose on me and Corporal Cooper turned on the water as hard as ever he could. There were 12 soldiers standing around jeering and laughing. Two officers took up positions in a neighboring window and kept watching while this was done to me. The officers were Lieutenants Gibbons and Sparks. After (hosing me for) 10 minutes they stopped the water. They gave me a big lump of a bas-bag to dry myself and when I had dressed myself I had to run around the (barrack) square for half an hour.

(Signed) W. Devereux."

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