

THE TRUTH

—ABOUT—

THE ARMY CRISIS

[OFFICIAL]

WITH A FOREWORD BY
MAJOR-GENERAL LIAM TOBIN



ISSUED BY THE IRISH REPUBLICAN ARMY ORGANISATION
78A SUMMERHILL, DUBLIN

PRICE - TWOPENCE

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FOREWORD

In the following pages you are given the true story of the events which led up to the recent so-called Army Crisis. We believe that you should receive entire frankness and trust, in all matters concerning you and the honour of the Nation.

In the name of "discipline" and "law and order" your old soldiers have been silenced in the effort they made to bring before you what they believed was a betrayal of the ideals of your great leader, Michael Collins. They have been suppressed as unruly elements disturbing the peace. We would remind you, though there is little need because you do not easily forget and are not easily deceived, that the elements that are called unruly to-day, are the same that have always been called unruly in Irish history, the same unruly spirit which kept alive the national tradition, which carried it forward to the greatest success it has yet won, and which alone can and will carry it to complete success.

Do not be deceived by any re-shuffling which has taken place into thinking that wrong things have been righted. The names of the members of the Army Council have been changed—the anti national spirit remains unchanged. The betrayal continues. We believe we will have your support in any efforts we can make to see that it does not continue. It would be our effort to **make** Ireland, not to break it. In those efforts we trust to be guided by the spirit of Michael Collins, as it is our ambition, humbly, to be allowed to complete his work.

LIAM TOBIN,

President I.R.A. Organisation.

THE TRUTH ABOUT THE ARMY

Causes which led to the Recent Army Crisis

As it has been made impossible for us to reach the Irish people through the Press, which has refused to publish, or has been prevented from publishing any statement from us, we are taking this means to lay before the people facts which we believe are of vital importance to the Nation's honour.

Previous to the negotiations with the British which ended with the signing of the Treaty, we all had one outlook and common aim—the Independence of Ireland under a Republican form of government. In pursuit of this ideal we followed our late Commander-in-Chief, Michael Collins, and accepted the Treaty in exactly the same spirit as he did—as an advantageous position on the battlefield from which full national independence could be won. In his speech in the Dail recommending the Treaty to the Nation, he said that it gave Ireland “not the ultimate freedom that all nations hoped for and struggled for, but **freedom to achieve that end.**” By the Treaty which he wrung from the British he won for Ireland the right and the power to achieve full freedom. With him, we accepted the Treaty on that basis, and we accepted the responsibility laid upon us to use it for that purpose.

What was it which made it possible for us successfully to wage war against the incomparably superior military and economic forces of the British? It was not because we wished to see Ireland a “free and equal” nation within the British Empire. It was because we had before us the ideal of Irish national independence, full and unrestricted, and because no personal sacrifice seemed too great to make for that ideal. Inspired by it, we matched untrained, voluntary, military effort against the highly-disciplined, fully-trained, fully-equipped armed forces of the British, and were able to hold our own, though hopelessly outnumbered.

But after the death of our Commander-in-Chief, we soon became painfully aware that those who succeeded him had not his outlook. We saw a state of things initiated and developed which we believed would prejudice and make impossible the ideal he had at heart, an ideal which we, his comrades, who are left, consider ourselves pledged to see fulfilled.

Firstly, there was an immediate hostility shown, both openly and in secret, to us, his officers, and a policy adopted of either placing us in **show positions outside the Army**, or of giving us positions within it in which we could have no power to carry on his work and make the Army what he intended it should be.

And, secondly, we saw the Army being built up largely out of anti-national elements. In the hands to which it was now entrusted

we saw the Army of the Nation ceasing to be a National Army, as we understood it. **We saw it largely officered by and recruited from ex-British soldiers, some of whom had fought against us in the War for Independence, and by ex-civilians who had never struck a blow for Ireland when her liberty was to be won, and who had been and still are hostile to the national ideals. We saw in the National Army men who had been active British Secret Service agents, and we saw them within that Army employed to carry on similar activities against those whose efforts and sacrifices had made a National Government possible.**

Seeing these things, the comrades of Michael Collins and men of the old I.R.A. met together to decide on the best means to bring these facts before the Government; and we organised ourselves so that we could speak with the necessary authority as representing the old soldiers of the Nation and a considerable number of officers in the Army.

But what happened? Learning of our organisation, which was made in a sincere and genuine attempt to see the ideals of Michael Collins brought to a successful conclusion, **the Army Council at once set up a secret organisation, which they called the I.R.B., to counteract our efforts.** That organisation was set up **not to achieve an Irish Republic, but to defer all hopes of one.** It was set up solely to prevent any influence in the Army by those who held the national ideal; and by drawing away by false claims some of the officers who were with us (in which they succeeded in a few cases) to make us powerless to press our case before those whose duty it was to set things right. **“Drop your organisation and we will drop ours” we were told by a leading officer of the “I.R.B.”**

And the policy of de-nationalising the Army continued.

We went on with our work. And in accordance with our policy of peaceful pressure, in the month of June last year we asked for an audience with President Cosgrave. We received the following reply:—

SAORSTAT EIREANN.

THE PRESIDENT'S OFFICE,
UPPER MERRION STREET,
DUBLIN.

To Major-General Liam Tobin,
A Chara,

20th June, 1923.

Referring to my letter to you of yesterday, the President desires me to inform you that he will receive your deputation on Friday morning at 8 o'clock.

Mise le meas,

G. MAGCANNAIN,
Runaidhe Aire.

We met the President and the then Commander-in-Chief, Gen. Mulcahy, and we laid the foregoing facts before them in the form of a document which was read by Major-General Liam Tobin, President of the I.R.A. Organisation, who headed the deputation. But General Mulcahy refused to consider the document, and by abruptly leaving the room brought the meeting to an end.

Two weeks later we again met General Mulcahy in the presence of Mr. J. McGrath, Minister of Trade and Commerce, and the document was discussed; but we could get no satisfactory guarantee from the Commander-in-Chief that anything would be done to put things right.

The situation was now serious. We called together a representative meeting of officers from all parts of the country, which met on Sunday, June 22nd. We reported to the meeting the failure of our efforts to rouse the Government to make an investigation of our charges, and a deputation of six officers were appointed to wait on the Commander-in-Chief. With all the authority they had from so large a representation in the Army they made one more attempt to impress upon him what they thought was a very serious situation. The deputation was introduced by Major-General T. Cullen, and after a discussion lasting some hours, **during which time General Mulcahy frequently altered his attitude towards us, being apparently of opinion that empty promises would conciliate us.** Finally, however, realising the seriousness of the position, he was sufficiently stirred from his "laissez-faire" attitude to consent to an agreement which will best be explained by the following letter from him:—

MINISTRY OF DEFENCE,
PORTOBELLO BARRACKS,
DUBLIN.

To Major-General T. Cullen.
A Chara,

27th July, 1923.

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 any 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,

R. UA MAOLCATA.

[FACSIMILE OF THIS LETTER IS REPRODUCED ON PAGES 8 and 9.]

In accordance with the terms of this agreement, we appointed three officers. But the matter ended there. No result was reached. Reluctantly we came to the conclusion that any further meetings would serve no useful purpose. A promise had been made by General Mulcahy that we would be given representation on the Governing Body of the I.R.B. That promise was broken by a member of the Army Council. Our case put to General Mulcahy was this:—If it was in fact a genuine Republican Organisation, why were not we, as old members of the I.R.B., advised of its re-organisation and asked to participate in its activities. If it was not, for what object did it exist? His reply was sympathetic and he arranged a meeting between ourselves and Lt.-General O'Murthuile to determine our representation on the governing body of that organisation. We were represented at this meeting by General Tobin and Colonel Sean O'Connell. But when pressed as to the representation we would be given, we learned from this Executive Officer of the I.R.B. that one member was all we could expect and even this was subsequently denied us. When it is understood that all powers were now in the hands of this "I.R.B.," that all questions of Army policy were now decided beyond yea or nay by this alleged Republican Organisation; it will be clear that while we were unrepresented upon its Governing Body any negotiations with the Government and the Commander-in-Chief were futile. It became apparent that such meetings were on their side mere camouflage to keep us quiet, and to take part in any more of them was for us to play into their hands.

Yet one more effort did we make in December to bring matters before the Executive Council. Through Mr. McGrath, T.D., we pointed out that there was a number of organisations and groups in the Army who were determined to resist demobilisation. And one more pretence to face up to the situation and deal with it was made by the Government. A communication from the President dated 6th December, and marked "Confidential," gave the following undertaking:—

1. A Committee of the Executive Council consisting of three members will hear and investigate on request any cases of demobilised men—having pre-Truce service—who wish to have their cases heard.

2. Recommendations made by this Committee are final and binding on all parties, and shall be accepted as such. By parties is understood the Army Council and the representatives of the men referred to in Par. 1.

3. Having investigated such cases as are put before this Committee—cases will be heard of valid complaints against officers alleged to be unworthy of holding commissioned or non-commissioned rank.

We replied in the following letter on the 10th December to Mr. McGrath:—

DUBLIN, 10th Dec., 1923.

To Mr. J. McGrath, T.D.

I am instructed to inform you on behalf of the Organisation that with a view to preventing further and unnecessary delays, the Committee as suggested by the President should be given a trial.

- (a) By the proposals we understand that a Committee of the Executive Council will immediately be set up and establish the necessary machinery to enable them to get details as to what the personnel of the future Army is to be and also get particulars of the I.R.A. Officers already demobilized. Of course, on our part we will place our information at the disposal of the Committee.
- (b) That the findings of the Committee are binding on the Army Authorities.
- (c) That the findings arrived at in the cases of undesirables will be as binding as the cases referred to in para. (a).

C. F. DALTON, COL.,
Secretary.

We believe that this Committee actually met; that it called for certain information. The information was refused by General Mulcahy, and the matter ended there.

All these twelve months, from the inception of our organisation, we were honoured with other attentions besides the policy of the cold shoulder. The Secret Service Agents became very active. Spies were employed to dog our footsteps. Dictaphones to record our conversations were placed in offices where we were likely to meet. Men of the Intelligence Branch were put on to "make friends" with us. The agent-provocateur came up from his underworld to suggest to one of our officers the murder of a member of the Army Council.

And within the Army things developed as we saw they would develop. The rot continued. The de-nationalising policy was carried on apace. Events proved that our fears were only too well founded. **Large numbers of Officers with excellent records were demobilised without getting a fair opportunity to prove their fitness in the Commissioned ranks or even non-Commissioned ranks, while the Army became studded with officers, N.C.O's. and men, not only without any national record, but with ex-**

5után 5149
(TELEPHONE)

Uimhir Tagairtá
(REFERENCE NO.)

AIREACÉ COSANTA
(MINISTRY OF DEFENCE)

BEARRAIC PORTOBELLO,

BAILE ÁTA CLIAÉ.

27th. July, 1923.

TO:
Major-General T. 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 any 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 Beannasht.

Rua MacDermot

SAORSTÁT ÉIREANN.

Reference No.

OIFIG AN UACHTARAIN
(The President's Office).

P.A.

SRÁID MHUIRBHTEAN UACH.
(Jones' Memorial Street)

TELEPHONE 5166.

BAILE ÁTHA CLIAITH
(Dublin).

20th June, 1933.

To:
Major General Liam Tobin,

A Chara,

Referring to my letter to you of yesterday, the President desires me to inform you that he will receive your deputation on Friday morning at 8 o'clock.

Mise le meas,

E. M. J. Connamry

Rúnaidhe Aire.

British and post-Truce records and, in a large number of cases, holding hostile views to the true national outlook. When it is considered that the whole fighting strength of the I.R.A. (including the Six Counties) had hardly reached four figures, and that a considerable number joined the Irregular movement, it will be surely agreed that it ought not to have presented an insuperable difficulty even to place every man who could claim he came into this category in the Commissioned ranks of an Army 20,000 strong. As far as concerned ourselves as soldiers, we wanted to see a strongly National Army, an Army necessarily reduced in numbers, but **not an Army weakened in its personal strength.**

The argument has been made that men who were suitable for service in a volunteer force fighting the British are not necessarily suitable to be officers in a National Army. Such an argument reveals the slave mind. It might pass if the Army is to exist for peace purposes only. The Army may have vital work yet to do for the Nation. Is the Independence of Ireland to be secured by eliminating from the Army the soldiers who brought it within our grasp? **There is the unity of Ireland and full independence still to be achieved.** In the last resource it may be necessary to fight for these. Where should the old soldiers be then but in their places? To win these national ends without fighting, which we all desire, what stronger argument can there be on our side than an army containing our tried soldiers, old in the national tradition, whose metal is known to the British and who brought them to sue for peace, and whom they know would fight again with the old spirit? **What argument, what silent pressure to the British or our N.E. countrymen will be an army composed largely of ex-British soldiers and of men who were civilians when Irish freedom was fought for before? If the men who fought with Michael Collins are no longer suitable for the Army of the Ireland which Michael Collins brought into being, then Michael Collins himself, if he were still with us, could no longer find a place in it.**

We have gone in some detail into the history of our approaches to President Cosgrave and General Mulcahy to show that we made patient and repeated efforts over a long period to bring before the proper authorities a condition of things which, we believed, was operating against the national welfare. These efforts were in vain. The whole history of our efforts is a story of hindrance and broken promises, adopted towards us by those whose care it should have been to investigate promptly and rigidly charges of so grave a nature brought before them by men having, as they admitted, "absolute honesty of purpose and ideals."

We had failed in our policy of peaceful pressure. It was clear to us at last that if the Government was to be roused, something more drastic was necessary. How were we to reach the people and make them aware of what was going on? After much thought and consideration, and realising to the full the personal risks we

incurred, we took what we believed to be the only action left :
On March 6th we sent an Ultimatum to the Government.

Its terms are well known.

Sir—On behalf of the I.R.A. Organisation we have been instructed to present the following ultimatum to the Government of Saorstát Éireann :—

Briefly our position is this—

The I.R.A. only accepted the Treaty as a means of achieving its objects—namely, to secure and maintain a Republican form of Government in this country.

After many months of discussion with your Government it is our considered opinion that your Government has not these objects in view and that their policy is not reconcilable with the Irish people's acceptance of the Treaty.

Furthermore, our interpretation of the Treaty was that expressed by the late Commander-in-Chief, General Michael Collins, when he stated " I have taken an oath of allegiance to the Irish Republic and that oath I will keep, Treaty or no Treaty." We claim Michael Collins as our leader and again remind you that even after the Treaty was signed that drastic action was taken against enemies of the unity and complete independence of our country. Both in oath and honour bound, it is our duty to continue his policy, and therefore present this ultimatum, to which we require a reply by 12 noon, 10th March, 1924.

We demand a conference with representatives of your Government to discuss our interpretation of the Treaty on the following conditions :—

- (a) The removal of the Army Council.
- (b) The immediate suspension of army demobilisation and reorganisation.

In the event of your Government rejecting these proposals we will take such action that will make clear to the Irish people that we are not renegades or traitors to the ideals that induced them to accept the Treaty.

Our Organisation fully realises the seriousness of the action that we may be compelled to take, but we can no longer be party to the treachery that threatens to destroy the aspirations of the nation.

LIAM TOBIN, MAJOR-GENERAL,
President of the Executive Council.

C. F. DALTON, Col.,
Secretary to Executive Council.

A Cabinet meeting was held the following day, Friday, March 7th. Was more than one way of meeting the Ultimatum considered at that meeting? Was there some hesitation between war and

peace? Be that as it may, it was not until the following evening, Saturday, March 8th, more than two full days after the receipt of the Ultimatum, that the Government decided that the "foundations of the State" were in jeopardy, issued to the evening papers their proclamation on "Mutiny in the Army" to prepare the public for the "disciplinary steps" which were to put an end to the "conspiracy," and gave orders for the arrest of the signatories to the Ultimatum. Raids and searches began that night.

The Dail met on the following Tuesday, March 11th, and in a solemn pronouncement President Cosgrave referred to the Ultimatum as "a challenge which no Government could ignore without violating the trust conferred upon it," while he denied that he had ever discussed questions of politics with Army officers.

On Wednesday, Mr. McGrath, T.D., arose and, announcing his resignation from the Ministry, asked the people of the country to refrain from forming an opinion until he had given them facts which he was satisfied would convince them that the situation had been brought about by "muddling, mishandling and incompetence" on the part of the Ministry of Defence.

And what happened then? Alarmed at the prospect of that muddling and mishandling, which for months we had endeavoured to bring to their notice, being communicated to the people of Ireland, the Government made a sudden *volte-face*. Our Ultimatum became all at once no longer "a challenge which no Government could ignore," the foundations of the State were no longer threatened, that which was a "treasonable" document arising out of a "conspiracy" on Tuesday, was discovered on Wednesday to be really a letter of helpful advice. A Military Enquiry was promised to look into the whole question of Army administration. The Ultimatum was not to be taken at its "face value."

Behind the scenes, on Tuesday, March 11th, the same day as the pronouncement on "Mutiny" in the Dail, one of our Officers was sent a request by the then Chief of Staff, General Sean McMahon, to arrange a meeting between himself and General Tobin: We replied that it would be arranged at once if General McMahon would meet General Tobin, as head of the Army, with full powers to discuss all Army affairs. No meeting took place. And it may be assumed that the full powers were not forthcoming.

Then on Wednesday, March 12th, Mr. McGrath, T.D., came from the President, and, with the concurrence of the Committee of the Cumann na nGaedheal, offered us the following terms to which we agreed:—

- (a) The setting up of a Committee of Enquiry into Army administration. In the event of this Committee finding for the removal of the members of the Army Council, they to be replaced by neutral officers who were not connected with either side.

- (d) The personnel of the Army to be reviewed with the object of making it an I.R.A. Army. All men with active service records, even though demobilised, to be placed, so long as the Army estimates did not exceed £4,000,000.
- (e) Suitable arrangement to be arrived at whereby all our officers and men would return to their posts with any arms removed from same, it being distinctly understood that there would be no victimisation.

There were to be no further raids or arrests, and both sides were to co-operate in preserving order.

In return for these pledges, and accepting them in good faith, and to enable the Government to explain its change of front to the Dail and the public, General Tobin put his signature to the second letter which was read in the Dail by President Cosgrave on Wednesday, March 12th, as follows:—

“To the President,

“The document dated 6th March was sent you with the sole object of exposing to the Government and the representatives of the people what we consider to be a serious menace to the proper administration of the Army.

“We were forced to present the document to bring to your notice and that of the Dail the seriousness of the situation. We say and have always maintained that **we fully recognise that the Army just as the police must be subject to the absolute control of the civil authority, and further that the Army should not have within its ranks any sections or organisations tending to sap allegiance from the only and proper constitutional authority, viz., the Government of the people, which we fully recognise.**

“We are satisfied that we have brought the matter sufficiently before the people, and will consider our object achieved if, as a result of our action, the Army situation is righted. (Signed)

“LIAM TOBIN, Major-General.

“C. F. DALTON, Col.”

How were these pledges kept by the authorities and how was the Truce observed by them?

The same day, Wednesday, March 12th, Captain G. Ashton, one of our officers, was fired on in Wicklow Street (as recorded in the Press), and the following Sunday he was arrested while walking in Phoenix Park. This breach of faith was followed up by a still more dastardly act of treachery. On the following Tuesday night, March 16th, a raid was made on 68 Parnell Street where a number of our officers were assembled, and the building surrounded by

hundreds of troops with machine guns and armoured cars. This action can only be understood as a deliberate attempt to provoke resistance, in order to be able to suppress the "conspiracy" in the most sure and final manner. Taking into consideration who the men were and the feelings of deep indignation that would be aroused in them by such action, one end could be anticipated—the wiping out of the chief members of the I.R.A. Organisation in bloodshed.

But realising the seriousness of the situation and being unwilling to be a party to a new outbreak throughout the country which would have occurred if blood had been spilled, and all it would mean for the Nation, the officers surrendered themselves to the raiding forces.

The rest of the story is soon told. The next day in the Dail the Government condemned the action of the Military authorities which was undertaken they said without their knowledge or sanction. The action was described by the Vice-President, Mr. O'Higgins, as "worse than mutiny," and the resignations of the Army Council were called for by the Government.

But was good faith kept even then by the Government itself? It was not. The act of defiance by the Army Council to the Government's authority by the raid on Parnell Street was not an isolated act of insubordination, but part of a long settled military tyranny, which proved our case that the Army Council was not a suitable body to be in control of military affairs. Its dismissal was a justification of our action.

But the arrested officers were kept in jail. The "worse than mutiny" act of the dismissed Army Council was availed of by the Government to break their agreement with us and to extract undertakings from the arrested officers as the price of their release. The Government had hostages. Full advantage was taken of that fact. They were strong enough now to break the undertaking they had made and to impose new and humiliating terms.

Sickened by such an experience of dishonesty, lack of faith and fair dealing, convinced that no agreement would be kept with us the moment it was expedient for the Government to break it, the officers concerned sent in their resignations and severed their connection with the Army. To have recognised the "Enquiry" set up and to have attended its "deliberations" after the lesson we had learned would have been to invite the authorities to fool us once again and to lend ourselves to the fooling of the nation.

In the name of "discipline" the large majority of the old soldiers of 1916-1921 have been driven out of the Army. May we suggest that the time has not come yet for us in Ireland to be ruled by formulas. Discipline is necessary, but at times it can cover stupidity, tyranny, and injustice. What discipline, as it is understood now, had we in 1916-1921? We had an army of volunteers disciplined by love of country and readiness for self-sacrifice. "Soldiers must not meddle in politics." We have heard no such

formulas from our soldier-patriot, Michael Collins, when we were fighting with him for Irish freedom against the British. Till the national ideals are satisfied we are patriots, not politicians. Here is the situation ! **There seems to be no place in the Army of Ireland for the old spirit to-day**, although the full ground of Irish freedom and unity is not yet won. When we fought the British successfully in 1916-1921, we fought them in our own Irish way, not by means of formulas, but by the strength of the determination which was within us. We can only succeed in the future by giving free play to the old revolutionary spirit. We are all still revolutionaries, **or should be**, because our freedom is not yet complete. Our strength must lie, as it has done hitherto, in the spirit which inspires us. In material power and in numbers compared with England or any other Great Power we are and must be for a long time to come a weak nation.

If there is anything in our ideal of a united, independent Ireland, such as Michael Collins envisaged, we must take steps to achieve it. If there is not, then let us frankly say we will all become West Britons and that there is nothing more to look for. For completing the work of the Treaty the military element must be recognised, as it was in 1916-1921, as the strength on which we must rely.

Our challenge to the present authorities is this :—

Is or is not the national work complete ? Quite obviously it isn't while the Partition of Ireland is upheld by British money and British armed forces. Quite obviously it isn't while Ireland is a part of the British Empire.

Influenced by formulas about the "foundations of the State" and the "sacredness of democracy," the Government have suppressed the genuine patriotic impulse for an Irish Republic within their own ranks. That genuine patriotic impulse was the meaning of the Ultimatum. The Government have suppressed it. Yet the impulse which dictated it cannot be suppressed. However unstatesmanlike the language, it voiced the national desire for the full freedom of our country, and that desire cannot be stilled.

Our Motto is :—Back to the spirit of 1916-1921 and the Completion of the Work.

