

If not, the Prime Minister's statistics of official reproof are obviously imperfect.

In this earlier period occurred the sack of Balbriggan on September 21 (when Sir Hamar Greenwood admits that, by way of reprisal for the shooting of two constables, 150 men visited the town in motor-lorries at night, destroyed the cottages of the poor as well as a large factory, and murdered two men against whom no charge had been made); the attack on Trim on September 26, after the wounding of a constable (when the town hall was gutted, the hotel was attacked with a machine-gun, and the whole population was exposed to indiscriminate violence); the reprisals on Mallow on September 29 (when public as well as private buildings were burnt, and anyone who tried to quench the flames was fired at); and the reprisals at Tubercurry on October 2 (when four motor-lorries of armed men, after breaking into licensed premises and drinking there, fired the principal shops of the place, smashed up buildings, and completely destroyed a co-operative creamery). It is not without significance that after these "deplorable excesses" the Prime Minister made a speech on Ireland on October 11 at Carnarvon in which he had not one single word to say by way of rebuke or restraint of these proceedings, and that on October 20, in the House of Commons, the Chief Secretary for Ireland was pleased to say: "I have yet to find one authenticated case of a member of this Auxiliary Division being accused of anything but the highest conduct characteristic of them." Yet exactly six months later the Prime Minister is constrained to admit that in this very period there have been "deplorable excesses," and that "undesirables" in this corps of officers and gentlemen have been "guilty of unjustifiable acts."

What is the explanation why, in the autumn of last year, the Prime Minister and the Chief Secretary spent their time in trying to conceal the real character of the proceedings of the new forces which they had let loose in Ireland? It was because a policy of terrorism had been decided on, but it was thought impolitic to avow it. It was because they hoped that in a few weeks or months the dirty work would be over, and the success it had secured would conceal the methods by which it had been obtained.

Thus, on October 25, Sir Hamar Greenwood told the House of Commons, "The policy of the Government has succeeded, and succeeded rapidly. The total number of outrages has rapidly decreased." If he was to say so to-day, his statement would carry as much conviction as if he were to assert that the city of Cork had been destroyed by spontaneous combustion. On November 9, at the Lord Mayor's banquet, the Prime Minister assured his fellow-guests that he had "got murder by the throat." On November 15 he told the House of Commons, "we are simply enforcing law in Ireland, and I believe we are doing it successfully." Mr. Lloyd George would hardly have produced the same comforting impression if he had said then (as he says now) that his agents, instead of simply enforcing law, were themselves guilty of "deplorable excesses." On November 18 Mr. Lloyd George cheerfully announced that "he thought things in Ireland were getting much better." More extraordinary still, on November 24 the Chief Secretary stated: "I am doing my best, and have done from the start, to prevent reprisals, and I have succeeded." Yet within the last week there has been widespread burning and destruction in Kerry in reprisal for the murder of an officer, and similar reprisals have been officially announced and carried out in Tipperary. No wonder the Prime Minister was reduced to speechlessness when he was asked (on March 17) whether he approved of official reprisals. No wonder that Mr. Austin Chamberlain (on April 19) declared that "official reprisals" was a term which he did not recognise, and declined to answer the question how they could be justified in Ireland when civilised opinion throughout the world denounced them seven years ago in Belgium.

The Prime Minister does his utmost to persuade the religious leaders of this country that he has been engaged from the beginning in sternly repressing the deplorable excesses of his agents. On the contrary, he was not found one word to say in rebuke of them as long as he thought there remained the slightest prospect of their methods

succeeding. His condonation has encouraged every wild and reckless spirit to further outrage. The Report of German Atrocities in Belgium (Cd. 7894, p. 16) truly observes: "When once troops have been encouraged in a career of terrorism, the more savage and brutal natures, of whom there are some in every large army, are liable to run to wild excess, more particularly in those regions where they are least subject to observation and control." No one who is acquainted with the recent proceedings of members of this force will accept the view that, after the patronage and protection which they have enjoyed, the recent dismissals have turned them into a force which, in Mr. Lloyd George's words, will "command the admiration of posterity." *Non tali auxilio, nec defensoribus istis Tempus eget.*

So much for the success of the policy of counter-outrage. What about its moral justification? Mr. Lloyd George challenges religious opinion in this country on this subject. He insinuates that in the presence of outrage and murder committed by desperate men against members of the Crown forces there is nothing wrong in the adoption of corresponding methods by those who ought to be the upholders of law and order. This is a doctrine which is subversive of the first principles of civilised government. One of the chief differences between civilised administration and barbarous administration consists in this, that a civilised Government, in wielding executive powers for the detection and suppression of crime, secures that innocent people shall not suffer at the hands of the authorities for wrongs committed by others; and that even suspected people, instead of being shot like dogs by armed agents of the Crown, should be arrested and brought before properly constituted tribunals capable of administering unbiased justice and furnishing full security for the accused to defend themselves.

This is the moral issue which the Prime Minister's latest declaration clearly raises. It remains to be seen whether the leaders of organised religion in this country will take up the challenge. One of them, at any rate, has very effectively disposed of the monstrous insinuation that those who denounce reprisals perpetrated by servants of the Crown are condoning the shocking acts of violence for which Sinn Fein is responsible. "The man," declared the Archbishop of Canterbury in the House of Lords on February 22, "who says—and there are not wanting those who either say or imply—that because we criticise some part of the Administration, or its apparent ineptitude in a fearfully grave matter, we are condoning Sinn Fein outrages, or shielding, or excusing, or minimising their wickedness, is so stupidly ignorant that his words may be disregarded. If he is not ignorant, but informed, and still says so, then I say bluntly that what he says is a lie. It is a question, not of politics, but of ethics, a question of right and wrong, the ordinary abiding principle of right and wrong in public affairs. Not by calling in the aid of the devil will you cast out devils or punish devilry."

I submit, therefore, that the policy of reprisals is both politically disastrous and morally wrong. Instead of restoring peace it is intensifying war. Instead of vindicating British prestige, it is exposing us to the scorn of the world. It is adding day by day to the store of bitter memories which keep Britain and Ireland apart. It is turning Mr. Lloyd George's heroics about the rights of small nations into nauseating cant. It is undermining the character and self-control of hundreds of young Englishmen by permitting them to indulge in deplorable excesses of every kind. It is directing the energies of hundreds of young Irishmen into the horrible channels of assassination and outrage, when their inextinguishable devotion to their own land ought to be working out a better and happier future for Ireland.

Surely it has become plain that the policy and method of reprisals must be entirely abandoned, that these new forces must be wholly withdrawn and disbanded, and that a truce must be offered in which a new solution may be sought by mutual conciliation and understanding.

Yours faithfully,

JOHN SIMON.

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