

**ORIGINAL**

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21  
BURO STAIRE MILEATA 1913-21  
No. W.S. 755 (ii)

ROINN



COSANTA.

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21.

STATEMENT BY WITNESS

DOCUMENT NO. W.S. 755 (Section 3)

Witness

Sean Prendergast,  
'Upton Lodge',  
30 Grace Park Terrace,  
Drumcondra,  
Dublin.

Identity.

Member of Fianna Eireann, 1911 - ;  
Member of 'C' Company, 1st Battalion, Dublin  
Brigade, 1914 - .

Subject.

National events from 1911 to the commencement  
of the Civil War, 1922, including the Rising  
of Easter Week 1916.

Conditions, if any, Stipulated by Witness.

Nil

File No. ....S.260.....

Form B.S.M. 2

ORIGINAL

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21

BÚRO STAIDE MILEATA 1913-21

No. W.S. 755 (iii)

W.S. 755

431.

Chapter 19.

Once the first shock of the intensification of the guerilla warfare, and particularly the street warfare, and the subsequent onslaughts of the Crown forces had been encountered and felt, the Dublin Brigade could be said to be feeling its sea-legs. We were meeting the worst period in our existence then and, as a consequence, we as individuals entertained but one thought to strive by might and main to give of our best in the fight. No other course was open to us, due in a large measure to the strain of the times we were living in, the pace of the game that was set and sometimes by the force of circumstances, if not more often by military expediency, policy or endeavour. One time the forces of the Crown demonstrated their strength and prowess by sheer brute force, the next the I.R.A. by ruse, subterfuge or stratagem engaged in some daring exploit, the urge in each case being to exact an influence on the situation then prevailing. Meanwhile the General Headquarters of the I.R.A., forcing the issue, sought an intensification of guerilla warfare, issuing orders from time to time to keep up the pressure. 'An tOglach', the official organ, which was being circulated weekly during the period instead of fortnightly as previously, expressed the minds of G.H.Q. and, seeking in every way to stimulate enthusiasm, gave first-hand accounts of actions and episodes as the fight progressed. Exploits of daring they were which were depicted in glowing colours and by way of imparting military knowledge and to encourage the military spirit. Lectures were given to Company officers on the more important ambushes as carried out by some of the flying columns. By that means and in other ways, every opportunity was availed of to speed up activity.

As already referred to, in Dublin, street ambushing and the preparation for it became the main form of operation. Each company was required to provide for its own system of ambush groups, acting separately and independently of other units or parties. Generally Companies were only permitted to operate in their own allotted area and were given a certain amount of scope and liberty subject at first to certain limitations, which suggested that no operation of a military nature, ambushing especially, was to be carried out within the immediate neighbourhood of certain buildings that were being utilised as Dail Eireann or I.R.A. Offices or places otherwise frequented by leading officers of our G.H.Q. In some instances special permission of G.H.Q. had to be obtained beforehand for the carrying out of an ambush in such areas. These arrangements generally worked out well and up to a point were reasonably good. It became a kind of unwritten law to respect territory that was considered to be invulnerable to our side, so signally implied in those orders. Company Commanders in subsequent action sought to maintain the status quo - by no means an easy matter to do when military strategy or urgency demanded otherwise. Without overstressing the point it might be well to record that there were hardly any Battalion areas and certainly few Company areas that had not got some such places - dumps and buildings. Certainly our first Battalion had quite a number of them; and the very fact of their existence did not in any way lessen the difficulties for Battalion or Company Commanders who had to keep these things in mind when planning any form of action or operation.

We had, during that period, contrived to keep

abreast of the times and in conformity with our orders endeavoured to extend the scope for street ambushing. In order the more successfully to utilise our men to the full, graduated systems of posting parties for such operation had to be devised. The ambushing parties were of variable sizes and dispositions depending in many instances on the type of operation intended. These were placed at suitable points generally on the main thoroughfares, through which British Crown Forces patrolled or moved, in motor tenders of various denominations and makes. In some cases the latter moved singly or in convoys of two or more cars at a time. Sometimes they operated as patrol parties, but, not uncommonly, they were passing through from points to point on some military errand or mission. Besides they were sometimes fast moving high powered cars many of them being most up to date types, Lancia, Crossley, and Rolls Royce tenders then the acme of perfection and reliability which were particularly used by the British Auxiliaries. The larger three to 5 or 6 ton lorry was used by the British Army personnel.

Our form of waging street warfare necessitated the use of grenade and or revolvers. In the case of the latter a more limited but not less important use was adopted. Sometimes they were employed to break up an ambush attack; at other times their use was intended to support the man or men whose task it was to deliver the grenade attack. Very often men armed with revolvers were placed with men armed with grenades or convenient thereto in order to act as protection when the attack was delivered. Sometimes the grenade men were armed with revolvers.

In allotting men to the duties of street ambushing the greatest care had to be exercised to pick those who had specialised training in grenade throwing and aim delivery. This involved a certain amount of skill, much labour in training and a full understanding of grenade technique. Regarding these several matters it could be said that our (C) company had reached a fair state of efficiency during the course of the previous four years and especially within the two years before by means of lectures, demonstrations and practice. Few, if any, of our men were unfamiliar with that subject. Not merely that but we had what might be termed, an intimate association with manufacturing of the missile in its various composition, stages and assembly, by reason of the fact that some three of our men had given time and labour on same. Two of these, Paddy Macken and John Farrell were, unfortunately, interned in Ballykinlar at that period. The third, Danny Holmes was a prisoner in Mountjoy Jail. They each had devoted various numbers of years at that work, working under the Battalion Quartermaster and or the Director of Munitions. Part of the specialised training which our Company had gone through was conducted during 1919 and part of 1920 by a former British Army grenade instructor whose services were availed of by our former Captain Sean Flood in order to perfect our men in the use of same. This service, it must be understood was supplementary to the training which we had received or were receiving from Captain Flood and at least the two junior officers and two of the N.C.Os. Dinny Holmes and Patrick Kirk. The instruction imparted to us by our ex-British instructor concerned the use of the "Mills" which was a British Army pattern grenade. It must be recorded too that this redoubtable instructor, as well

as another, also an ex-British Army Sergeant who was "teaching" us the use of the British Army Service Lee Enfield rifle, were not duly members of the the I.R.A. The Grenade Instructor knew little of our own "Number Nine" home made bomb. He was wrapped up in the Mills and we though partial to our own type were not unduly unreasonable in "taking in" the training he imparted for we were quite adaptable to the possible use of one or the other whichever such became available or feasible In taking advantage of these men who acted as instructors the golden rule had been observed to just keep them at that as they were not considered as members of the Company. It is only fair to them to record that the persons referred to rendered us some valuable help in their various capacities though some of it was a repetition of the training we had already undergone in previous years.

Hence, it was to be expected that, in the early part of 1921, we were not behind in training or efficiency in the several spheres of military science. Some there were who made claim to the boast that our Company was one of the best in that respect. However, that may or may not be. We could undoubtedly assert that we had learned well and had been taught well in the use of such weapons as rifle, revolver and grenade. Experience and adaptability in their use would do the rest.

As times went on the Companies increased the scope and character of their ambushing plans and instead of one ambush party being on duty for one night or one place, two, three or more were planned, until every Company Area became a possible danger zone. It must not be thought, however, that every such ambush party came into action all at once or on any one occasion.

That generally depended on the activities of the British Forces and especially the movements of British Motor detachments. How often had men who had been out on ambushing parties for an hour or more in the night time reported to their Company Officers that no British activities occurred in their vicinity, or on the other hand that too great activity was noticeable on the part of the British. There were occasions too, when the British Forces were showing activity not at but in the vicinity of positions where our men were stationed awaiting to carry off an ambush. Not infrequently other Companies might have become engaged in an ambush near where our men were situated, in which event discretion was the better part of valour. In either eventualities safety lay in beating a hasty retreat or to lie low; though generally the former course was considered the most adviseable in the circumstances, as our plans were specifically made to deal a blow at a given point and any sudden alteration of that plan, without careful consideration or proper direction might not have the maximum telling effect desired. As we planned to ambush the enemy at a given point or points we in all cases selecting the locality and time for such in the full light affording the best possible advantage, reason, sound military reason dictated that we, rather than they, should set the pace in all operations of that nature.

In many instances we were groping in the dark when we could not foresee or even hazard a guess on the score of the enemy's plans, movements or activities in a given district or at any particular time. There were occasions when parties of British soldiers or auxiliaries moved along the route of the ambushing party or parties as a big convoy consisting of quite a number of motor vehicles, sometimes protected by one

or more armoured cars; of such size and disposition as to be invulnerable to the modest attacks that our men were prepared to deliver or to tackle. This was hardly to be wondered at when consideration is given to the fact that only a small number of men of the I.R.A. units armed only with grenades and or, revolvers were on duty on such occasions, thus precluding the possibility of engaging in a big attack against a force that was proximately their superior in every sense of the word. Besides the presence of armoured cars with the convoys or transports presented a problem with which our grenades and revolvers were not capable of dealing - unless we desired to make undue sacrifice of life - the lives of our own men and incidentally the civilian population in the immediate neighbourhood of the action - considerations which were of prime importance to us in the circumstances. That is not suggesting that no action could be taken against such large forces but the mens orders were to attack single lorries plying in their immediate vicinity.

The mobility, speed and characteristics of the armoured cars and even some of the motor lorries, some of which were armoured, afforded a certain greater amount of protection for the British Forces travelling a la mode. Add to that the feature that they generally operated in populous areas on the main thoroughfares and you get a fair picture of the difficulties facing the I.R.A. in pursuing action against them. Besides being afforded a certain measure of protection that way they also had quite a considerable measure of security; for only the best aimed grenade was capable of being landed into their cars when travelling at the speed which habit or orders directed them. But not

always did they move so expeditiously. There were occasions when they moved with caution and not in haste.

In the course of time the British Forces came to realise that danger lurked at any or every street corner in Dublin. We, however, knew differently - knew in particular that not every street corner was useful in the military sense for knocking up the enemy. Even some of them that were suitable were not availed of for many reasons. The compelling point in our ambush operation was to get the British when they were least on guard - to surprise them. The British Forces may have surmised that every civilian was a potential ambusher. Thus they sought to be always on the alert and were none too squeamish in their actions to eliminate them when occasion made such a course imperative.

We in the I.R.A. recognised that a fair proportion of the civilian population did not favour or support our form of warfare, although in the main many of them, due to fear of the consequences, suffered in tolerance to the ordeals imposed or resulting therefrom. With all this and despite it the I.R.A. had had to plan and take into account, as far as possible, the interests, the safety and convenience of the civilian population. Many an ambush plan had had to be scotched or scrapped because of the apparent or actual presence of people other than our own armed parties. Not so the British who worked on the principle of "business as usual" or duty first last and all the time. Unlike them we were faced with other difficulties of an individual and personal nature, one of which was the dreadful possibility of causing bodily injury or even death to the members of our own families owing to ambushing on our part. We could not even warn or

appraise them of the dangers of being in certain districts or streets where ambushes were liable to be carried out. Not that the rank and file were always aware beforehand as to the location or time of ambushes as news of these were generally only issued a short time before the enterprise and seldom over a long period and perhaps the night previous. The men were under a rule of secrecy not to give knowledge of it to any one. Actually their own personal safety depended on them adopting a non-communicative attitude in that matter.

Generally each ambush party was commanded by an officer or N.C.O. After a short time on duty in that sphere of ambush parties the men accepted as a mere matter of routine any variation or alteration in the plans accruing only in so far as the inclusion or dropping of a man on the operation. Every intended action was governed by the nature and extent of the area to be covered and the particular scope of the projected ambush or ambushes.

The importance of that form of warfare can be best gauged by the fact that our own G.H.Q. issued numerous orders from time to time, expressive of the desire to intensify our actions against the British. In like manner the Dublin Brigade authorities and our 1st Battalion O.C. - Paddy Holohan - stressed the importance of getting on with that phase of fighting. At weekly meetings of our Battalion, Officers of Companies were particularly prevailed on to get the men out on ambushing and we were urged, nay, appealed to, to show that our Battalion was alive and doing well in that sphere. There was always the urgent necessity to do so. Indeed it had been commented on by our Commandant, P. Holohan, that there was a feeling

abroad that our Battalion was behind in the ambush warfare. We were not doing enough.

These urgings and admonitions sorely aggrieved some of us Officers particularly when we knew that our commands and our men were on the spot and doing their best in the conditions then prevailing. For reasons already enumerated - the sometimes short time at our disposal between the period of the termination of our ordinary avocation or working hours and the coming on of the Curfew - and the sometimes appearance of British Forces when our men were on duty - largely nullified our efforts. But, if there was just cause for complaint on the score that Companies were not doing enough in the way of activity the words of exhortation and admonition on the part of the higher Officers, our own Commandant included, affected to bring into play a more active and a more sustained effort into the fighting.

As against that it could be said by at least some of the officers of Companies that the fault of not showing results was not due to any laxity on their part or on the part of the men under them. Rather was it due in many instances to circumstances over which we officers and the men under us had no control. One factor that materially helped to stultify our efforts in the direction desired was that of the difficulties which some Companies, as indeed was the case with our own company, were confronted with not being able to use some of the customary halls for meetings and where we were able to do so could only muster a small group of our men at any given time and that only occasionally and spasmodically. In consequence of this we had to content ourselves at great risk to meet or assemble at points outside - in private dwellings or in the streets or alleys. We had

/ 441

always the task of keeping contact with our men and our men with us for purposes of posting men to ambush parties and issuing of current orders. Many of our usual haunts were forfeit or if used at all could not be used regularly owing to repeated raids or danger of raids by the British. Such buildings as the Foresters Hall No. 41 Parnell Square, The Banba Hall, 20 Parnell Square, The house at 44 Parnell Square, the several Sinn Fein Clubs and Gaelic League Halls in our Battalion area which had been constantly in use for parades of various companies became out of bounds or had to be utilised sparingly. Some of them had to be used not always for purposes of training but as assembly points for Companies or parts of Companies, for meetings of the Battalion Staff, Battalion Council Meetings, or for special classes. In this connection it must be mentioned that even in the worst period of the fighting, 41 Parnell Square and the Banba Hall were open houses for Battalion Council Meetings although the risk of capture was ever present.

We had to be always on the alert in anticipation of raids by the British during the progress of our meetings. Precautionary measures aimed at securing protection had to be adopted for Battalion Council Meetings. A protective party of men from 'I' Company Battalion Cyclist Company generally was on duty outside the meeting place to give warning of the presence and movement convenient thereto. Similar precautions had to be taken by companies when meeting in large or small numbers. Up to that time the Battalion Council Meetings were luckily held in regular sequence, the officers attending escaping the attentions and raids of the British though we had many uncomfortable moments and a few nerve testing experiences. Companies too had been

favoured with good luck, the only one unfortunate example being "F" Company which was found off guard when raided and suffered the loss of a goodly number of their men at a meeting in a hall in Buckingham Street.

In mentioning the matter of the utilization of the various buildings for I.R.A. purposes it was as it were generally accepted policy to disguise the fact that we were I.R.A. Units. Not infrequently they were booked under such harmless titles as athletic clubs, football teams etc. These subterfuges and tricks helped us in no small measure to preserve the integrity of our units from the inroads that had been, were being or were liable to be made in pursuit of British action against such places. Small wonder then that we had come to realise the direful, threatening nature of the position we were in and that we should take appropriate steps to protect our units and our men by any and every means at our disposal.

We had to take chances and put discretion to the wind at times in using some of the above mentioned premises or any premises and run the gauntlet of discovery and capture. Perhaps the hall, 41 Parnell Square, and the Banba Hall, 20 Parnell Square afforded us a partial security on the ground that the former was one which was let and used by numerous public associations, societies and clubs and the latter was a Trades Union Hall. Each of them let out their halls for dancing etc. By that means we might be safely nestled within each foundation and perhaps because we had not many alternative places to meet. Even these did not always afford security against alarms and tidings of approaching and impending danger as English parties appeared in the vicinity on some mission or activity. We had always

to be conscious of the risks we were running on such occasions and might have no other option but to hold on, or on the other hand effect to gracefully retire from the scene.

The arrangements of only being able to assemble a few men at a time was a regular nightmare to many of us officers who had a large number of men to contend with. That was so in the case of our Company. It was less so in the case of officers with a small roll of membership. The particular circumstances of our Company in that respect was that of being confronted with a perplexing problem whereby all the members could not be paraded on the one occasion or in one building without imperilling their personal liberty. We could have carried on better were we able to meet together in that way and so do our work much better and more expeditiously instead of having to do it in parts and in a round about fashion.

At the end of February 1921 the Dublin Brigade I.R.A. was militarily still in the field or rather on the streets of Dublin bombing the British forces whenever and however favourable opportunity occurred to do so. There was no lessening in the manifold difficulties that our men had to face in the bombing attacks which were being carried out during that period. Not the least difficulty and annoyance was the variation and extension of the Curfew hours. In that way we were denied certain useful periods of time for our military activities, and consequently felt ourselves tied to shorter hours for so doing. The British in a sense benefited by the imposed curfew as they strained every nerve to overcome our powers of resistance by curtailing valuable time, every moment of which was conceived to be

of relative importance.

Adjusting our plans to beat the Curfew hours and still strike telling blows against the British became a problem that tested the mettle and character of officers of Company Units. The men in a self-sacrificing spirit likewise adjusted themselves to the time factor in order to keep pace with the increasing tempo of street ambushing and the devised plans for them. Every company in the Dublin Brigade area was more or less poised for assault. Our own "C" Company contributed its share in the general plan. The main concern was to come into action and show results always. That word always did not however occur in every instance for the simple reason that ambush parties owing to extraneous circumstances, were unable on many occasions to deliver and bring off an ambush operation in proportion to the plans that were afoot and the number of ambush parties and men that were employed every night in the week. Reports of abortive ambushes, of ambushes that might have been, and sometimes the sparcity of enemy movements during the allotted time at their disposal for that duty were not uncommon features; indeed in some instances were too common and commonplace.

Our Company, as indeed other companies as well, had quite a toll of misadventures and misfortunes on that score. The amount of time and labour expended was often spoiled as a result, much to the chagrin and disgust of the men themselves who felt deeply upset for being frustrated in carrying off their several coups. Of the men it could be said they were splendid and though facing up to grave trials gave much of the spare time they possessed, <sup>and</sup> <sup>to</sup> lived up the best traditions of the Dublin Brigade. It was found too and many a

Company officer could give testimony to it that the men placed on ambush duty behaved wonderfully whether they succeeded or failed in coming into action. It was felt that in many cases the fault was not theirs for not being more fortunate in their quest for hitting hard decisive blows.

Many accounts could be recorded in proof of the heroism, fortitude and constancy of such men whether acting in small or large groups or parties. In that respect mention might be made of individual cases of bravery of those who showed signal courage in the midst of danger. Such cases were not rare among the Dublin Brigade. Less rare too was the enthusiasm of the men to volunteer their services. These cases concern our Company but they may be typical of other Companies in the Dublin Brigade. As already mentioned certain types of men were regularly utilised for ambushing. Other men feeling peevish or slighted sought similar consideration and service, beseeching Company Officers to put them on that work and activity. Citation of a few cases by way of example may suffice. Take the case of one of our Company members who was lame. He (Sean Morrissey) could march as well and as fast as any others in the Company. Added to that was his regular attendance at parades, route marches, field manoeuvres and patrol duties. His physical infirmity did not cause him to sit down when there was the question of serving his country. He became one of our Company Signallers of which he soon became proficient. Even that did not satisfy him; he wanted to be on ambush parties and to take part in ambushing. Another, a young lad, Eddie Flood who was a brother of our former Company Captain, Sean Flood, sought to prevail on us to put him on ambush parties. The fact that already his family -

there were five of them in the I.R.A. - did not deter him from making the effort to do big things. Strange as it may seem his big complaint was that he had been "kept in the background too long". He deduced, or blamed the fact that he was in the same Company as his brother Sean our former Captain. Indeed he had often murmured against being held down in such a way. The new urge was to kick the traces which Sean's absence helped to undo. Piteously he pleaded for an active part in the armed activities of the Company. His wish was granted.

A third case concerned a group of men of the Company attending the first aid class, showing thereby a willingness and solicitude to engage in the fighting. That in short was the keynote of their demands.

Cases of elderly men who had big domestic responsibilities - fathers of large families and the like - some who were not considered active enough for the quick movements of street warfare and those who in one way or another showed signs of physical weakness, apart altogether from those who were impatient or "jumpy" as well as some who were undergoing military specialised training in other spheres which were sought to be retained at all costs created problems for Company Officers. In several instances men in these categories felt it hard to acquiesce to any form of inactivity or to remain inactive when there was work to be done, especially when some of their immediate comrades were being availed of for such duties. It followed then as a natural consequence that, if at all, these men could only be used sparingly. But time and circumstances change and so it was that as the guerrilla warfare in Dublin developed use was made of some of these men in some capacity - Company Officers always keeping in mind the importance of maintaining as far as possible the fabric of the specialised training services of first

aid and signalling.

Much could be written on the score of the many willing volunteers for duty on ambushing. Old and young the active and the not so active vied with one another for the work. The older they were the more insistent were their pleadings and demands to partake in the work to be let do things "the same as the young fellows" as some of them put it, but that work was generally more for the fleet of foot, the young and the active, a fact begot by experience as many had learned. "To hit and run" quickly was ever the safest course to pursue on such occasions. Speed in bringing off an ambush and getting away were vitally essential conditions and considerations in that type of warfare then becoming fast and furious. If there was any choice it was and had to be in favour of the young fast-moving and least cumbersome among our men and if perchance we, the Company Officers, deigned to waive the point to admit the inclusion of others who were a bit elderly and less active, only considerations of extreme necessity prompted and advised the course.

Besides the many difficulties, as set forth in previous paragraphs we had to contend with, not the least was the activities of other ambush parties adjacent to or in the immediate neighbourhood where our men were situated. Company Officers never knew and were never appraised what other Units contemplated to do or were doing. Anything could be happening fifty, a hundred or more yards away. As activities were conducted at the discretion of officers of Company Units and independent and distinct from other Units, arrangements by way of liaison did not exist nor were any efforts made to acquaint them of any such intended action or actions. The possible effect of such was that it created at times

overlapping and <sup>of</sup>cutting across other people or other units work, not to mention the likelihood of clashing all of which accentuated the many other difficulties confronting ambush parties. Many lurid examples could be given of the operation of such plans or of the ramifications and dangers of such a proceeding in which recourse was had to the quantitative nature of providing bombing and ambush parties rather than to the qualitative selecting and arranging of them in such a way as not to trip up others on the same duties.

Pertinent to that whole question of widespread bombing as conducted by units of the Dublin Brigade I.R.A. against the British forces and by way of illustration several ambushes that were carried out in our First Battalion area may be cited. Some such occurred quite adjacent to our Company operational zone at a time when our men were on duty for ambushing. These were the the respective ambushes at North King Street in which men of 'B' Company were involved; the ambushes conducted by 'H' Company at Parnell Street and by the same Company at Upper end of Capel Street; the ambush engaged in by the 5th Battalion at North Frederick Street which, without minimising their importance from the military standpoint conduced to neutralise the power and effectiveness of our men on the several occasions and caused them to retire from their positions before the arrival of possibly large reinforcements of British forces. Any other course would have left us as it would leave others similarly placed in a very invidious position indeed.

Similarly any action carried out by our unit effected other neighbouring units and in consequence cut across their plans. The results accruing from these were not always satisfactory. Where such conditions prevailed

many other difficulties were bound to arise. We had no means of changing the procedure without infringing the effectiveness, the initiative and the movements of Company Units or in upsetting the independent discretionary powers residing in Company Officers to do their work in their own particular way and without let or hindrance from other officers or commands. They, like us, had no other option but to accept the rules of the game that was being played on the streets of Dublin.

It was plain as the months progressed that we were all set for a long and tedious ordeal of attrition. This was made evident by the issuing of larger supplies of munitions, particularly grenades, an odd revolver and some revolver ammunition. Our Battalion Q.M., (Joe Corless) and his assistant were busy men indeed, each working like trojans to keep pace with supply and demand. Joe was, if anything, a trustworthy and efficient Q.M. We doubted if a better could be found for the job which of late had reached enormous proportions. Complaints, there were, by the score, on the question of supplies; none could be raised against our Q.M. or his worth and work. It was through no fault of his that supplies were not always available. When forthcoming they were distributed to the various Companies by means of a workable system which in the interest of all he had adopted as a kind of fixed principle.

He had an unenviable task of looking after the Battalion Stores, being responsible for the procuring, the distribution and safety of all warlike material entrusted to his care. As regards the latter the question of storage was indeed a vital one. This was where our Company rendered very special service. We placed our Company Dump or part of it in Glasnevin at his disposal.

our Company Q.M., Sean Nathan working in close co-  
 operation with him, the two of them collaborating in  
 various capacities and on the broad basis of partnership  
 in respect of the utilisation and occupation of the  
 premises. Regarding the occupancy of the premises only  
 one severe condition was enjoined. The Battalion Q.M.  
 was prevailed on and agreed to maintain the strictest  
 secrecy as to the nature of the dump and to treat the  
 place as private where only the smallest number of people  
 were to be permitted to use it. These conditions were  
 made necessary for reasons of security and to spare  
 the dump from being discovered and raided by British  
 Forces.

Our Battalion Quartermaster's job was not made  
 anything lighter by the several difficulties associated  
 with the safe transporting to that and to other  
 rendezvous. Such difficulties would have daunted other  
 men but not Joe. He possessed a latent characteristic  
 for doing things as they should and must be done  
 possessed not merely a dogged pertinacious will but a  
 stout heart which admitted neither defeat or frustration  
 His was a coolness, a sangfroid and a resourcefulness  
 of no mean order or degree. The part which he played  
 in his particular sphere and at such a time could be  
 regarded as marvellous in the extreme. If ever a man was  
 brave and devoted and trustworthy he was. More than  
 that he was a man of many parts, versatile in speech  
 and manner, a sometimes cold rigid disposition, at  
 other times fulsome and exuberant and full of gaiety. He  
 was one not easy to be taken in or beguiled who prided  
 himself and others asserted it, as possessing a keen  
 business instinct and acumen, who showed himself to be  
 shrewd in all his transactions, a man hard to bargain  
 with, and one who could, and would, hold out for the

last cent and possibly get it. These descriptions could aptly fit him in his capacity as Battalion Q.M. But neither of these detracted from his many other good qualities and characteristics as far as work for the Battalion was concerned.

Apropos of the hard bargaining on the part of the Q.M. I had known men who in their dealings with him had boasted that they had "wiped his eye" (By-the-bye "wiping his eyes" or "eye-wiping" was regarded as a mild form of extracting a mead of gain or privilege. In the particular instance referred to the words meant that some material or financial point had been scored over him and to his (the Q.M.'s disadvantage). A simple bargain indeed! One, however, had only to consider the Battalion Q.M. being so easily hoodwinked or fooled True there were occasions when hard-bargaining were secured between him and the Company Quartermasters and some particularly outstanding gain resulted, but generally speaking the Battalion Q.M. true to the dignity and responsibility of his office conformed to the ideal of getting and giving value for the money involved or expended. The same applied to Companies It is not to be regarded as unlikely that he sometimes felt that others (that is Company Quartermasters) were trying to get more than their share of and value for the war material passed around. That was his sphere to share and transfer materials to Companies; none could deny that he carried out that task in the letter and the spirit.

If ever a man was charged to perform an onerous and important task that man was Battalion Quartermaster Corless. It is in no small measure due to him that the Companies in the Battalion were, from the point

of view of armaments served well or as well as they could be considering the not too plentiful supply available at the time. Unfortunately there was not always enough to go round and no Company could boast to have enough. Grenades were in plentiful supply due in the main to their being I.R.A. manufacture. Rifles were being taken from Companies for transference to flying columns in the country, the Battalion Quartermaster and Company Quartermasters co-operating in the transaction. An arrangement was in operation whereby companies passing over rifles in that way received payment in exchange or in lieu of small arms or revolvers. These several transactions involved additional work on the Battalion Quartermaster and the respective Company Quartermasters. As against that it provided us with more suitable material and reduced our stores of big materials made room in our dumps for smaller items such as grenades etc.

The importance of a good Quartermaster - Brigade, Battalion or Company - at that juncture was a prize equally as valuable as a fighting man or good Commander. In every respect our Battalion Quartermaster fitted into the order of things in every conceivable way. Even in his own right he was a leader of men in so far as his position rendered such possible for he had delegated powers and functions derived from the Battalion Commandant which gave him certain authority over others - his subordinate Company Quartermasters. They were his sole charge as far as commissariat stores and finance were concerned. He was responsible for arming of each Company, was required to keep a register of all war materials in each Company, was responsible for their safety and storage, and in turn required to furnish reports of all these matters to the Battalion and

Brigade. He had to keep records of all fresh purchases and acquisitions of munitions to Companies and Battalions. Truly an unenviable job which none but a real "live-wire" could be expected to fill.

There were indications too that the British were in no better plight than we were during that most exciting period. Due to the ever-growing bombing attacks and other activities which the I.R.A. were carrying out on a wide scale the British had to adopt new and more vigorous measures. It would be fair to assume that these several and multifarious I.R.A. attacks increased rather than diminished their (the British Forces) difficulties. Obviously they were learning the lesson that the guerrilla warfare as pursued by the I.R.A. in Dublin was more deep seated and devastating than they were inclined to at first admit or to anticipate. They had come to realise that to succeed they should have to put into commission greater potentialities of men and materials, newer devices and a stiffening up of the measures to deal with the menace that the I.R.A. had created and were continuing to sustain. They also knew and appreciated the value of time as an important factor in the prevailing situation.

Hence there was nothing unusual - indeed it was to be expected that among some of the measures open to the British to adopt and exploit would be additional armoured vehicles, high powered military cars, wired in cage like lorries and special crews to man them. They went further by making increased demands on their auxiliary force - the semi-military cum police force that they had brought into being and which consisted in the main of ex-British army officers of various ranks.

Additional demands were made on their Intelligence Agents and they introduced the use of foot patrols of British Army and Auxiliary personnel. The latter was a new innovation devised to counteract the operations of our ambushing parties most of which were being employed to attack motor transport.

The wired-in caged motors were humourously referred to by children and not a few adults as "monkey cages". To us they represented something more sinister and dangerous. Designed by the British in their great extremity to ward off the effects of bomb throwing attacks these contraptions resembled circus or commercial vehicles rather than military conveyances. The big difference and one that was very pronounced, underlying the use for which they were intended was that the "cargo" was, or were real live, highly trained and well-equipped warriors, who were always on guard to deal with any would-be attackers. Regarded by the British as invulnerable targets they served the purpose to prevent bombs (or grenades) from entering and exploding within them, for the aforesaid wire construction covered the front, sides and roof, leaving only a small opening in the rear to admit of ingress and exit for the occupants. Thus they acted as a barrier against our attacks.

Undeniably the British made good use of their preponderous reserve of men and materials. We, on our part, were governed by the principle of utilising small groups and the smallest amount of men in any selected operation. In that sphere we were the attackers, they were the attacked. We provoked the offensive. They were on the defensive. Ours was more a "war of nerves" in which wits, cunning and speed, rather than big battles or campaigns sufficed, or were sought to suffice to wear

down the morale and discipline of the "big battalions" arrayed against us. But these were signs that the British were learning something of our tactical operational measures and as we could discern, tried to imitate us, by employing small groups on their expeditions or patrol enterprises. Like us they had to be alert cautious and show initiative if and when opportunity occurred. Unlike us, who were an invisible force, they operated as an army which was always in view and so open to attack.

Sometimes their strength and the consciousness of their own greatness lured them into a false position and goaded them to take unnecessary risks. But not for long or continuously did they act so. Experience was teaching them that even with all these important attributes credited to them, including the highly prized potentialities so much in their favour they were unable to sway the course of the fighting and to win. Their difficulties were no less real and troublesome than were ours. The variety and extent of our armed activities was causing them much concern, for they knew not when or how attacks would be delivered against them, by reason of their fighting against an invisible guerrilla force that had its roots firmly set on native soil - a force that was making the pace and selecting the ground to suit the specific type of warfare. Go where they would or in whatever formations they choose, danger and the possibility of danger in one form or another appeared to loom in sight and ever anon there always appeared the spectre of what they had ever regarded as the "I.R.A. Gunmen" on the horizon, however insignificant those self same "gunmen" and their attacks were.

Here was a type of warfare that did not always

conform to regular and orthodox military standards, that was not influenced and perhaps was not always governed by strongly built bastion structures or mechanical appliances or equipment or even well regulated positions. Little value was placed on the ordinary codes of warfare as they apply to belligerents. We were rebels, murderers, unlawfully at large and fighting unlawfully!!

A word here to the unenlightened. It must be borne in mind that the I.R.A. during the first three months of 1921 had not thrown into the warfare all the men and resource at its disposal. Only a small proportion of men and material was being employed. Our tactics and our policy at the time were directed to wear down the British forces. No effort had been made by our authorities to bring all our forces into action at any one time. Indeed such would have been impossible, it would have been suicide to do so unless we wished to stage another Easter Week. That seemed hardly likely. Newer methods of warfare had overtaken us and were being availed of and put into practical use.

Certain thoroughfares in Dublin had become prominent in the military sense due to the number and intensity of street bombings. One of these was Redmonds Hill and Wexford Street in the south side, a short narrow street that divided Aungier Street and Camden Street. Those streets were habitually used by British forces plying from the city to Portobello Barracks and vice versa. Several streets jutted from the north entrance of Redmond's Hill, Diggas Street, Bishop Street and Peter's Row, at the southerly end Cuffe Street. The strange feature about Redmond's Hill was that it was a bottle neck. Ambushing at this

point was carried out with such recurring frequency as to cause it to be regarded and called "the Dardanelles".

Mention must be made of other personalities who were officers of the 1st Battalion Staff. In that connection the name of our Commandant, Patrick Holohan, stands out pre-minent and as a shining light as supreme head and leader. Already his name, his personality and some of his work has been dealt with - especially in regard to some aspects of his association with the Fianna from 1909 to 1915, his part in the Easter Week 1916 Rising and his imprisonment in 1918 or 1919 for singing "seditious songs". "Paddy" as he was more commonly called by those of us who were close and intimately associated with him had recently taken over charge of our Battalion having succeeded our former Commandant Tom Byrne. Prior to his elevation to that post he had served in 'F' Company as Captain. It could be said that from that period he was deeply engrossed, firmly attached to and immensely proud of his Battalion - nay more, he moved, lived for and had his being centred therein. His was a type of personality that was strong virile and expressive which backed by a robust physical and mental framework sought to dominate or to influence the shaping of events and of men in the colourful exciting periods of the times. Casual acquaintanceship with him produced the inevitable verdict that our Commandant was an egoist, one who was himself always and ever. On closer intimacy and more intimate association Paddy appeared a more normal, sociable and lovable character. If perchance he was an egoist or possessed the ego spirit as some people declared the fact of his rank in the I.R.A. and perhaps outward appearances and speech rather than his nature contributed somewhat to create impressions that he was such. In a more general way his lofty appearance, his way of

addressing men and his virile, straight to the chin approaches conducted in no small way to the beliefs or fancies that Paddy was anything but one of ourselves. That he was a type that went straight to the point and was direct and incisive in commanding or giving commands none could gainsay. In plain words he commanded and he commanded surely, personally and determinedly. These were his main military characteristics.

To those of us whose knowledge extended for ten years or more impressions gained went far to assess that Paddy loved soldering. He had grown to love all the work in the Fianna and Volunteers - every aspect, training organisation and operational. All were dear to him as his continued service proved. He brought that love with him when he became our Commandant of which it could be said he was at home, a man reigning over men. To some Paddy was rough, robust and stern; could one forget that even these things were qualities in an officer and all of a sort that sometimes produced good soldiers. In a bigger sense he was a "go-getter" and "up-and-get-them" type that always wanted to do things and to show results wherever or however they would be attained. Few could be more an officer than he for he had many attributes in his favour as Commandant of our Battalion.

In a personal or individual sense Paddy Holohan was a good friend, a loyal comrade and a true associate. As an officer he was a firm and strong disciplinarian. His was not a hard nature to understand once you peirced a not too hardened exterior which was seldom invulnerable to a good deed or a kind word for he was in ordinary civilian life gayest than the gayest. Many typical examples of these trends in his make up and general characteristics may be accounted here. In the

Fianna (pre 1916) days Paddy could throw himself headlong into any danger, row or fracas in which politics or political feeling were contributing factors to stir up occasional outbursts of excitement. At such times he could display the utmost contempt for and utter disconcern of the consequences of his actions. In play, in sport or in revelery, Paddy could "go all out" and be "in the thick of it" even if by so doing he imperilled his limbs or his liberties. How many a time did he come off second best on the hurling field which brought him a fractured collar-bone or other injury. How many times did he engage in tearing down Imperial flags that were freely and provokingly displayed on the occasion of the English King's visit to Dublin in 1912 or some other British event or festivity; in the many clashes that occurred at British recruiting meetings held during the 1914 and 1918 World War; or the wild scenes of orgy fostered by British supporters during armistice day celebrations? Then he would display a reckless abandon which his physique and his size went far to emphasise. (Paddy was 6 ft. high and of strong well proportioned build).

Easier for him to throw his weight about than to recover his balance. Not that he was always displaying his physical prowess and human faculties for purposes of creating or seeking trouble. They were only incidental to a nature that was truly vigorous, fairly excitable and mainly expansive but a nature that was given to fun, frivolity and enjoyment in whatever way and by whatever means they could be sought. He could as easy be "the fun of the party" at a ceillidhe or soiree as in doing a turn on a concert platform. In either event he could be seen and heard to advantage

at Fianna or Volunteer functions rendering the every famous Wexford Insurrectionary Ballad "Kelly the boy from Killan" or the more recent "Blood and Tears" song "Vengeance" (which had become popular after 1916). Even on one occasion he made bold to entertain concert-goers by a violin recital; who could deny that he made a brave show even though he was only an amateur having but a few months tuition to his credit and the audience were not over cynical or severe. Then you found him as he was a big boy and one that refused or did not know how to grow up in the sense that some grow to maturity by stages or through the passage of time.

Another member of the first Battalion Staff that fitted well into his post was George Irvine the Battalion Vice-Commandant. He was an intellectual and a dreamer, in the sense that all our greatest Irish Irelanders were dreamers in that they strove for and cherished dearly the ideal of the Gaelic State. He was the embodiment of nobility, of honesty and of honour. Senior in age and with few exceptions in rank as a Volunteer Officer, his strength of years of service in our cause had been marked with ability, impersonal loyalty and sheer hard working enthusiasm in any work he gave aid to. George had some years previously come to our Battalion from the 4th Battalion in which he had served as a Captain prior to and during Easter Week 1916. He was closely associated with many distinguished officers - Eamonn Ceannt, Con Colbert, John McBride, Pearse etc. For his part in the Rising he was sentenced to death.

Quiet, reserved and taciturn he had a depth of character out of the ordinary. He brought tact, devotion, and enthusiasm into his work as Second Officer of the Battalion. He was assiduous in all matters appertaining.

to the welfare of the different special services and much of the success, especially the continual existence of these classes was due to his labours. That duty he pursued with vigour and zest and with undiminishing perseverance, unique as they were supreme. So absolutely and so resolutely did he perform that duty that he was looked upon by some of the tank and file as a hard task-master, a stern disciplinarian and one who was too severe and exacting in his work. Little was it known and perhaps less was it appreciated that our Vice Commandant was acting under orders and that at times these same orders signified that the services he maintained at all hazards.

His actions then in that regard were not only typical of the personality of the man but of our movement which prescribed duty and service as being sacred and lofty. They proved the good qualities of an officer whose main concern was for the things that were, should be and must be, and not the go as you please, happy go lucky approach to the things that matter. We officers knew his worth, his qualities and his service, and knowing them regarded him as a very efficient, practical and beloved associate and one who did his duty at all times faithfully energetically and efficiently, quietly and without fear or favour.

No Battalion could exist in the midst of danger and difficulties without the services of a good Adjutant Ours in the person of Paddy Byrne lived and flourished in the dark and evil days of 1921. Here was a patient diligent and conscientious worker, the penman of the Battalion, who was the essence of good fellowship, good order and a great favourite among the officers of the Battalion. His fine personality was stamped on every work he performed and in everything he put his hand to.

In the onerous and arduous duties attaching to his office he showed many outstanding characteristics not least of which was a great aptitude for work and care and attention to every detail of duty. So ponderous and difficult was the work at times that not a few officers wondered how he could cope with it. None but a man who was steadfast and persistent and in love with his work could hope to succeed in the face of the enormous difficulties in which he sometimes found himself. The "written word" to him was no less a symbol of duty than the gun was to the combattant. Laborious work it was too - the compiling of records of the Battalion, the issuing and despatch of orders from the Battalion to the various Companies; the circulating of orders from G.H.Q. and from the Brigade Commands, and the maintenance of contacts between Company Adjutant and in general the Companies. Everything and anything that was clerical came under his aegis and without his service our Battalion Commander and our Battalion could not for long exist.

Thus was our Battalion staff - Commandant, Vice-Commandant, Battalion Adjutant and Battalion Quartermaster. The Battalion Council consisted of the various Captains of Companies, Battalion Intelligence Officer, Battalion Police Officer, Battalion Armourer and the two Officers from the special services - First Aid and Signalling.

Chapter 20.

The streets of Dublin became veritable battle centres where many bloody encounters were fought, spasmodically at first, but later in growing fury and momentum. As time progressed and as experience was gained innumerable operational exploits became acceptable features of I.R.A. activity. Of the men, especially the men of our Company, who participated in ambushing a few, general reference must be made. Here were youths and young men ranging from 18 to 30 years. These only possessed a limited and in many instances little knowledgeable military training, certainly not anything like the training of those arrayed against them. One of their big advantages in their favour was that they were disciplined and orderly to an uncommon degree. More than that they were game and eager to fight. No need to apply force to make them do so; no endeavour, no sacrifice was too great for them; they would go to any length to prove their loyalty to and their faith in our cause. Any enterprise that called for dash, initiative and daring commanded their support. Indeed the weakness of our position was that they could not be all utilised together. One could write at arms length on that subject to explain the feelings and desires of the men in that regard.

It could be claimed with some truth that the members of our Company excelled in the use of grenades, because of the specialised training they had received, and that we were fortunate in having men (particularly one of the officers) of the Company giving full time service, under direction of the Director of Munitions - Seán Russell - to their manufacture. Consequently we had

more than a passing interest in the matter. Every available moment had been availed of to perfect our men in the art of throwing that missile. And the rather funny way we sometimes practised the art? How often had we assembled in some field at Finglas or Ballymun in the north suburbs of Dublin, and amused ourselves throwing stones, as if we were boys? But the stones we threw were of a selected size, shape and weight - the nearest to a grenade. Hours and hours were devoted to that task. Thus many of our men became adept and skilful in lobbing or throwing them.

In course of time we built up quite a considerable number of squads or groups for duties connected with ambushing, adding to the number as time went on. Sometimes part of a half Company or part of a section with appropriate officers and N.C.Os. would be detailed.

The requisite amount of material had to be furnished for these: truly a trying and arduous task or series of tasks for Company officers and the Company Quartermaster, trying and arduous from the point of view that in many cases the men had to come from different parts of the city, and the materials had to be in many cases transferred from man to man or from dumps to men prior to the occasion. The Company Quartermaster had no easy or pleasant job, as such entailed more than ordinary care and management. The difficulties were not as pronounced in the case of men and there were some, who could keep an odd revolver or grenade in their homes. Some were able to keep a quantity on chance as it were. But where it was not always found possible to use men and materials of that category, recourse had to devolve on the Quartermaster for arranging the best possible alternative plan for keeping supplies available and

convenient and always with a view to their being wanted at any given moment.

This was where a good Company Quartermaster was highly desirable and necessary. Fortune favoured us in that connection. Ours was a man who was attentive, alert, and resourceful. Company Quartermaster Seán Nathan gave early promise of all the qualities of a wartime Quartermaster. He was second to none in the Battalion. For one thing he was gifted with a knowledge of the use of tools and he lacked nothing in ingenuity and craftsmanship for the safe disposal of all materials entrusted to his care. Such were the workings of an acute alert mind that he wouldn't "keep all his eggs in the one basket". He provided several alternative places as temporary dumps to give effect to the requirements of always having materials on hand for emergencies, always of course, keeping in mind and using our big Company dump, which by the way was a considerable distance away from our customary field of operations.

He had fitted up a place in his own home in Lower Dorset Street for storing some of the materials, provided another spot in Joe McDonagh's shop in the same street, and secured the ready help of a friend of our cause, Miss Nelly Doyle, who had a dairy shop opposite to MacDonagh's, where he could hand over and deposit some of our munitions, otherwise he could not have carried out his work. Patiently, persistently and painstakingly he worked, and never showing a care and seldom worry in the doing. So thorough, methodical and exact was he that he could easily lay his hands on the material required. He was a type that had through a course of personal mental training acquired the habit of remembering things. We had only to

acquaint him of the amount of material required, the men for whom such was required, specify the time, and lo! it was done promptly! In the peculiar circumstances in which we were placed and especially his own situation in regard to the separated points of the dumps, <sup>it was</sup> nothing short of marvellous that he could perform such difficult tasks. Even his own wife was a great help to us in innumerable ways; indeed some of his daughters too. Often Mrs. Nathan helped in transferring rifles, revolvers and grenades from place to place, even vied with her husband in giving service to Ireland in that and in other spheres. Her help and indeed her pram was of great use in that work.

That Company Quartermaster Nathan was keen, alert and adaptable, we had every reason to observe and attest. His mind was ever working in the directions of procuring, distributing and minding of materials. It was a pleasure to work with him; none but those who worked intimately could assess his qualities and greatness as a Quartermaster. There were always certain risks that he had to run which few could undertake so joyously and even jokingly or in such a matter-a-fact way. He was always at his best in times of difficulty or when he was wanted most. Time and labour meant nothing to him. He had a hard job, but he tackled it in the way that was dear to him, the hard way. He wanted no sinecure - he got none. His greatest asset was that he had an unusual aptitude for the work allotted to him. He inordinately liked handling "stuff", our war stuff. He loved to have scope for putting things "safely away". He was afforded ample facilities and opportunities for that when he took over our dump and prepared others of lesser but useful qualities.

Seán was clever and shrewd in many of his transactions in the purchase and procuring of munitions, considering himself an able skilled bargainer. It was his big boast. Generally and not infrequently he was entitled to some measure of praise in that regard. How many bargains did he secure from "P.J." (That was the title he applied to Battalion Q.M. Corless). Though there were others who made bold to declare that "P.H. was too cute - he is not easy coddled", nobody was more insistent on that than Nathan.

If there was one thing that Nathan excelled in it was in quick incisive memory. It was his masterpiece. There was a certain degree of adaptability in the way he managed to keep records of Company stores, equipment and funds. They were mystifying to everyone but himself. He put his knowledge of repairing houses and installing of various household accessories or gadgets to good use in preparing safe dumps for large or small amounts of our stores. How he gloated over the tricky traps and devices to conceal same; and rightly, as it brought out the best in the man. So thorough and secure were they that in at least two of the places that he had prepared or had some hand in preparing, searches by enemy forces failed to unearth the contraband stuff. One of these raids was on MacDonagh's shop; another was during an exhaustive investing of a large area which took in Nathan's home. The latter exhibition of massed raiding might have had disastrous results for our Quartermaster and our Company. Even on one occasion our dump at Glasnevin was raided by British forces, fortunately without serious result, for which we had to appraise Nathan for his handiwork.

Nathan also prided himself on being able to cover up his work without leaving any traces or suspicions that he was engaged in any type of what the British would call "unlawful actions," a no easy thing to do during that period when there were so many pitfalls and dangers of commission and omission. There were always likely prying eyes; there was always the danger of inconsiderate or loose talk to be reckoned with, and one had to work carefully and in devious ways to convey the impression of being a good citizen. Truly, Seán Nathan and his wife were wonderful. Indeed it could be said that she was more wonderful than he in the sense that there was no obligation on her part to do the work. That brave woman took great risks, oblivious of time and danger, without fear or question. The Nathans' home was ever at our disposal for the affairs of the Company, meetings of Company officers and rendezvous for Company members for transferring of munitions. It was a vital and necessary part of our existence and life as a Company, for from that place radiated as it were, many forms of activity associated with our Company. Time without number we had held Company council meetings there. How often was their home in requisition when no others were available? How many of our men passed through the portals of that dwelling on one occasion or other to be met with the welcoming words "Come in"? How many guns, revolvers, quantities of ammunition, or grenades were handled, cleaned, and transferred to or from there? Even repaired and overhauled, oiled and put into service! Who could record the hundred and one transactions associated with his work, financial and material? His knowledge or his memory was hardly ever at fault. One had only to tell him to do a thing, whether it was in the nature of attending a meeting

or to providing men with guns, and as sure as day it was done, and the principal trait of all he was never known to fail in the latter part of his work.

Intelligence and observation on the activities of British forces and those who worked in and for the British regime formed an important item of work in our (First) Battalion, in the interest of which selected men were assigned. Thus it was that Tom Walsh became our Battalion Intelligence Officer. A Corkonian, Tom had lived many years in Dublin, where he became deeply absorbed in the Irish-Ireland movement, being closely associated with many of the highlights of the Gaelic League and Volunteer Organisations, and in a very particular way with the late Peadar Clancy in our Company of Volunteers, and later as a business partner in the Republican Outfitters in Talbot Street. That partnership had been dissolved and during the period under review he was co-owner of a similar business establishment trading under the title Brennan and Walsh, 5 Upper O'Connell Street. (By the same token his partner in that venture (Maurice Brennan) was also deeply engrossed in the I.R.A., being at the time on the staff of the Dublin Brigade. Intelligence Officer Walsh, like Brennan (who was an "F" Company, 1st Battalion, man) had participated in the Rising of 1916, both having been tried by British courtmartial; Walsh was, I think, sentenced to death, later commuted to penal servitude, he having served with the Four Courts garrison under our then Company Captain, Frank Fahy. Part of the sentence he served in English prisons and he was released at the general amnesty in June, 1917.

Tom Walsh was a great favourite, of a simple, lovable and winsome disposition, a nature that showed outward signs

of fussiness and exciteability to a degree that one would associate with being highly strung and "nervy", and a concern for getting some affair in which he was interested done quickly. His very speech, his every action suggested impatience; not uncommonly, however, he was cool, calculating, exact in all work of the I. R. A. He could rise to great heights within the range of business or political affairs. In council and in the affairs of his business he was energetic, practical and prepossessing, and exhibited that sense of proportion of keen judgment, of fine business acumen which singled him out as a person of no little importance. Warm in his affectations for things Irish and in the affections he had for the cause and those who rendered it service, he won the equally warm affection of all whom he came in contact with. They were legion and varied, and consisted of no one particular class, but many from the humble layman to the professed ecclesiastic as co-workers in our cause or as clientelle in their business concern respectively. Much of that business suffered as a result of the part he and Maurice were playing in the National Movement, but Tom Walsh and for that matter Maurice Brennan were not the kind of people who would sit down and moan over their losses, but, instead, gave much of their time and attention to I. R. A. affairs. Few men possessed such latent talents for observing and obtaining information in a greater degree than Tom Walsh.

Our Battalion Police Officer was Mark Byrne of "A" Company; the Battalion Armourer, Seán Derrington of "D" Company, the late Seán Heuston's Company. Seán Derrington had served in the Mendicity during the Rising of 1916, being subsequently sentenced to death by the British. For several years prior to and up to 1921 he had filled the

position of Battalion Armourer. No better could be found, <sup>he</sup> being adept and skilled in the work. He imparted training and knowledge to others, instructing special classes in the same.

Vincent Gogan, our Battalion Officer of First Aid or Medical Service, was a member of, I think, "B" Company, with which Company he had served a number of years. He participated in the Rising of 1916, sparing no effort to train others in the special class-he had made a particular study of medical work, being a most efficient instructor and leader.

Our Battalion Signalling Officer who was responsible for that service was Jimmy Mason, a member of "B" Company, and also a participant in the Rising of 1916.

Among the officers of the Battalion of the period, were, Peadar McNulty, Captain of "A" Company; Phil Luddy was also one of the officers of same; Frank Daly, Captain of "B" Company; "D" Company, Peter O'Connor; "C" Company, the writer; "E" Company, Willie Corri; "F" Company, P.J. Ryan; "G" Company, Bob Oman; "H" Company, Seumas Kavanagh; "I" Company, (Cyclists), Jerry Golden; "J" and "K" Company, Val Forde, Mick Fitzpatrick; "L" and "M" Company (Blanchardstown), Andy Dowling. Of that number Captain Frank Daly was senior in rank. Prior to the Rising of 1916 he had been officer in charge of the Engineering and Armouring class, which at the time met in General Headquarters, No. 2 Dawson Street. He was assigned a special task in the plans for the insurrection, namely the demolition of the Liffey Junction, which task he endeavoured to put into effect with a small selected number of men attached to his engineering unit, among whom was one of our Company members, Mick Howlett.

other

Of the Company Captains I knew that Bob Oman, Jerry Golden and Andy Dowling fought in the Rising, with the 1st Battalion, Captain Seumas Kavanagh who was then an officer of the 2nd Battalion ~~and who~~ served in the Stephen's Green area under Commandant Michael Mallin of the Citizen Army, and Countess de Markievicz: He was formerly of the Fianna: Jerry Golden then a member of "B" Company, 1st Battalion, had served in the early stages of Easter Week at Cabra or North Circular Road railway bridge until the position became untenable when, escaping capture, he linked up with Commandant Thomas Ashe of the Fingal Brigade, and later that week participated in the famous "Battle of Ashbourne". For his complicity in same he was tried by British courtmartial and sentenced. Released on the general amnesty in June 1917, he renewed his service with the 1st Battalion becoming in course/<sup>of time</sup> officer in charge of the cycling class. In 1920 or early in 1921, a special Cycle Company designated "I" Company, was formed, with Jerry Golden as Captain. That unit was composed of selected men of the various Companies in the Battalion, each Company having to supply a certain number of men. Among that number our Company supplied the following, James Finnerty, Joe Musgrave, Charlie Purcell.

Previous to the formation of "I" Company, the Battalion becoming a regular unit, it was known as a Battalion Cyclist class, to which the Companies were required to send their quota of men for training in scouting and various military duties. The significant thing about that former class was that the men retained membership of their own particular Companies, and were amenable to the orders of their own respective officers. But the new venture caused a severance in the membership of men of the Companies, and established the new force as a separate Company.

To return to the narrative. The imposition of the 9 o'clock curfew put us at a great disadvantage, because it lessened the time at our disposal for carrying out night ambushes or other operations. Thus we had but a bare hour and a half for such work. Notwithstanding the many difficulties connected with that curtailment of time and the risks they were running, the men responded well to all the demands made on them, and gave many examples of courage, of patience and of resolve in the discharge of any duty entrusted to them. One of the most notable examples of their wondrous spirit deserves comment. That refers to their individual or personal reactions to the trials imposed on them by reason of the intensification of activities. It could be said of most of the men who were giving service that while on duty they took their work seriously and were obedient to all orders; off duty, many of them were sociable, gay and full of life.

It might be a bold assertion to make that the men of the Dublin Brigade I.R.A. were otherwise; to even assert that they were a hundred per cent sober, to the point of being strictly temperate. It would be no exaggeration to say that a very large proportion of them, by choice, custom or restraint, abstained from intoxicating drinks. Some there were who loved their drink and the company associated with drink. The exception to the rule were men who only indulged in small quantities and that only on rare occasions. Cases there were, a fact that cannot be regarded as uncommon in ordinary human society, of men who did and would get top heavy at times, but few people could admit that any of our men were drunk or resorted to drink when on duty. There were very few instances of men who put drink or the

indulging of drink before their duties in the I. R. A. The writer, who was associated with a very large number of men of his own and of other units, was afforded many opportunities to know a good deal of the conduct, habits and characteristics of a very large section. It would be true to say that drunkenness was not practised on a large scale or among any large group in the I. R. A. at the time. Indeed it could be said for many of the Companies in our Battalion for most of the officers and men forming same, that drunkenness was an unknown quantity and that any cases that occurred were few and far between and only occurred when the men were off duty.

Even when things were hottest, the average man's behaviour was exemplary, and many of them combined duty with pleasure. Their leisure hours, as when off duty, were spent in various kinds of recreation, fun and enjoyments. Why should they not have occasion to revel and enjoy themselves? They would have a "good time" with or without the serious work which their service in the I. R. A. connoted. They had not parted with their native wit and native humour even in the worst or most menacing situation. These had helped to sustain them in the past: without them they could hardly exist in the struggle then prevailing. They would have their moments of good humour, funny jokes, of mirth and revelry. Fondness for pleasant companionship, for the bright congenial atmosphere of the céilidhe hall or dance halls, in some cases dark, smoke invested billiard saloons and the equally dark confines of the picture houses were "aids" to keep up the spirits. Not that our men were habitually downcast, gloomy or morose, or that they required such "aids". Rather were they availed of to keep as near to their former ways and modes of life and also for the purpose of keeping contact one with another.

Not always were such places safe from the prying eyes and the raids of the British forces. In some cases men took chances or risks in attending dances, in playing billiards and the like. Some favourite resorts for some of our 1st Battalion men and members of the A. S. U. were the Savoy Billiard Rooms beside the Gresham Hotel in Upper O'Connell Street, Wilson's Billiard Rooms and Tobacconists in North Frederick Street, Mattassa Coffee and Ice Cream Saloon in Marlboro' Street, to mention but a few of the normal haunts. The latter place was a particular rendezvous for large numbers of I. R. A. where, nightly and on Sunday mornings, the inevitable cup of coffee or bovril, a glass of minerals, or a portion of ice cream were tempting baits to lure many of us to steal a few peaceful moments in company with some of our confrères. If the walls of that place could only speak, what stories would be unfolded, what pictures would be painted, what history would be made! On such moments we were not conspirators or conspiring. We loved the company of our friends and, of course, we liked the various appetisers. Thus many a happy moment was spent with an abundance of right good humour and banter and jolly companionship.

During that time Mattassa had a large clientelle of I. R. A. One could always hope to find a friend there - I. R. A. men like Frank Flood, Jimmy Carrigan, Seán O'Neill, Tommy McGrane, Frank Carberry, Dinny Holmes, Seán Nathan, Paddy Kirk, Tom O'Brien - oh, their names were legion. That place had sad as well as pleasant memories. One of the saddest centres around one of those whose name has been mentioned before - Frank Flood. The night before the fateful ambush that was to cause him his death, Frank had been in company with a few "of the boys" in

Mattassa's. The next day he was in charge of an ambush party - being a Lieutenant in the A. S. U. - awaiting to attack British forces at Clonturk Park. The plans miscarried and Flood, Paddy Doyle, Bertie Ryan, Thomas Bryan and Dermot O'Sullivan were taken prisoners. They were tried by British courtmartial and sentenced to be hanged. Of the number Dermot O'Sullivan, who was under 18 years of age, was reprieved. They all were former 1st Battalion men. All had been on a number of stunts during the previous few years.

Of Bertie Ryan, reference has already been made in connection with certain activities on the day Seán Treacy was shot. He was a fine simple, quiet sort of boy, full of enthusiasm for our cause and always wanting to face danger; jollity, gaiety and fun he dispensed in a boyish way; one who was seeking to do men's work and could do it in a way all his own.

Paddy Doyle whose association with quite a series of activities under the late Vice-Brigadier Clancy, and in other capacities, had an abundance of dash, enthusiasm and valour to sustain a spirit that was always active, that wanted to keep on the move and do the things nearest to hand. More than that he disdained inactivity and would take on the impossible task.

Frank Flood - the gay, exotic, and lovable Frank - was hardly out of his teens at the time when he threw everything to the winds and joined the A. S. U. Like the rest of the men and boys who had volunteered for that unit he did not believe in giving half-hearted service. Of Frank, it could be said, that he had a charming manner, an amiable disposition, an exuberant demeanour, all of which contributed to win him hosts of friends and well-wishers, who felt the magic of his company and prided his

friendship, ever true, and always endearing. It could be said likewise of him that he was every inch a boy and showed a natural boyishness, one who revelled in boyish pranks and found outlets for his boyish flights of fancy and good humour. But in the realm of man or of man's work Frank could take his place with the best, as his most intimate associates, particularly those who were allied to him in I.R.A. affairs, were aware.

No lesser tribute could perhaps be lavished on Tommy Bryan, who like Paddy Doyle, were the only two married men of the group.

The sense of tragedy that surrounded these young I.R.A. men who were awaiting death was felt in I.R.A. circles in Dublin: their execution on March 14th, 1921, came as a staggering blow to us all. It was a big price to pay for freedom. Two other I.R.A. men had been added to the list, making six executions on the one day: Frank Flood, Bertie Ryan, Paddy Doyle, Tommy Bryan, Thomas Whelan and Paddy Moran. To those of us in "C" Company, who had such close affinity with Frank Flood and his company - for were we not the parent Company? - the noble martyrdom was accepted as a personal bereavement as it was to his former comrades in "H" Company and the A.S.U. their hour of travail.

While the above was being enacted other strange and startling events had occurred. One of these referred to an outrage that was perpetrated on a member of our Company. On a night in February, Seumas (Jim) Murphy and Willie Gannon were passing along Talbot Street when they were held up by British Auxiliaries, questioned and searched. The same procedure was gone through with other civilians. Murphy and another man were arrested and brought in a lorry to Dublin Castle. The next morning

their dead bodies were found in Clonturk Park. It was stated at the time that tin cans were placed on their heads as they were being shot. Of Seumas Murphy it could be said that he was a particularly earnest, sincere and noble character, one who was popular with a large number of us, officers and men, and beloved by a large circle of friends and admirers. He was a provision assistant employed at Messrs. Whiteside, South Great George's Street. Reliable, energetic and willing, he was as good as any in our Company. He always took his I. R. A. duties very seriously and could easily fit himself into the run of things because of his keen alertness to what was required of him and his desire to do things. No wonder then that he was freely availed of to render service on patrol duties or with some of the ambush parties detailed by the Company. Sad to relate on the night of his arrest he had just parted with a few of his comrades of the I. R. A. then playing billiards at the Oxford in O'Connell Street, little dreaming that it would be his last meeting in this earthly life. There he had repaired after being on some duty with his Company.

Dublin in March, 1921, bristled with excitement because of and due to the armed activities of the British and the I. R. A. forces. Events were moving swiftly; ambushing by the I. R. A. on British lorries became quite an ordinary feature of the day or night proceedings. During that month efforts had been made by G. H. Q. I. R. A. to speed up activities, particularly to increase bombing attacks. The result was that Companies to carry out these orders put more men and more ambush groups into commission. Such was the case in our First Battalion; every Company was meeting the situation in one way or other. Our Company was no exception to the rule.

Night in, night out, our men in small or large groups occupied positions at selected points, poised for attack. In many instances, however, failure, inexorable failure, stalked the footsteps of the men engaged in that way. Forlorn hopes, disappointments, misfortunes trailed them. Then at last something occurred and there was recorded the news that our men had come into action. That action was brought about in the following manner.

On that night in March an uncommonly large number of our men were placed in position to attack a convoy of British soldiers proceeding from Gormanston Camp to Dublin Castle. Our information was that three or four lorries would use that route. Plans were accordingly made to deal with that number. The men selected were divided into two groups, one of which occupied the corners of the junction of Ryder's Row and Capel Street; the other was situated at the Technical Schools, Bolton Street. This grouping was devised in order to catch the convoy inside the belt, the front lorry or lorries to be dealt with by the men at the former position, the last one by latter group. The topography of the locality favoured somewhat such an operation in that it afforded certain facilities for attack and retreat. The street running from the Technical Schools took a sharp bend on entering Capel Street. That bend, it was contended, would be of assistance to the men at the Technical Schools, pre-supposing the lorry would turn it at the moment of the attack. Thus protection from retaliatory fire from the British soldiers would be provided. The men in the forward position were differently circumstanced in that they were more liable to be exposed to view and possibly to fire in certain eventualities. Their main concern was to attack when the front portion of the convoy were entering the narrow portion of Capel Street, running from

Ryder's Row and Parnell Street, their original direction. That arrangement was made on the assumption that the British would not use Ryder's Row as an alternative route, should they be attacked sooner.

It so happened that the large convoy as expected did not appear. Instead only one lorry came. Carrying out their orders the men situated at the Technical Schools permitted it to pass on its way. As it approached to enter into the narrow portion of Capel Street it was bombed by the party stationed there. Retaliatory fire was opened by some of the soldiers as they sped their way onward.

By way of explanation it may be necessary to mention that that ambush had been arranged in order to test the effectiveness of the grenades. Many complaints had previously been made by several officers and men of the Battalion that the grenades were defective, that on several occasions they failed to explode. As our Company had a particular interest in the manufacture or assembling of grenades, some of our men had, and one was then so employed, we undertook, to give them a try out. Not alone that but the opportunity was availed of to test them with a shortened fuse, viz. a three-second instead of a five-second one. In making that alteration care had to be taken by and instructions issued to the men to throw them quickly. By that means they should explode on reaching the target, and would obviate their being thrown back at the attackers or on to the road before exploding. That experiment was proved successful that night and we adopted the short fuse for future use.

A rather strange feature of that ambush that night was the use that was made of a member's house for the

storage of some of the material, and the distribution of some of the revolvers and grenades. The men had almost come into action immediately they had taken up positions. In as short a time they were speeding in their several directions to get out of the area, a not very difficult task as there were ample laneways and bye-ways to favour their get-away. A very special precaution had been taken that night to provide facilities for the care of possible casualties. A hackney cab, owned and driven by a member of "H" Company, Jack Flood, had been engaged and was waiting at the rear entrance of Williams and Woods, Jam Factory, in Loftus Lane. He had detailed orders that in case any of our men were wounded they were to be taken to a house at Upper Gardiner Street, where one of our men, Martin Finn, lodged. Such wounded were to be given attention by Martin who was then studying medicine at the National University. Another of our men, Frank Carberry, was present there to render help. Fortunately, such was not required, but Jack Flood, or the "Brasser" as he was generally called, helped in getting others away to safety.

Whatever effect the bombing had on the British forces that night could not be definitely ascertained, but unofficial information - of a nature that was regarded as reliable - indicated that they suffered many casualties in dead and wounded; though in the British report of the affair, as indeed in every case when attacks were made on British forces, little, if any, mention was made of casualties. Thus the British drew a veil of secrecy over the bombing operations as carried out by the I.R.A. In some instances their official reports mentioned "our troops returned the fire and one (or more as the case was) of the attackers was seen to fall", or "our troops suffered no casualties".

Brevity was the acme of wisdom on such occasion. It was notorious that groups of soldiers from the North Dublin Union Barracks as a retaliatory measure descended on the locality the next night and broke many windows in business establishments in Capel Street. Notorious too was the fact that the British extended the curfew hour from 7 p.m.

One outstanding effect the operation had, was that it brought complete confidence to our men, some of whom, other Companies' officers and men, had laboured the point that the grenades were unreliable. Our demonstration had proven the opposite. Agitation had been going on among some of the Battalion officers against their use with such vehemence as to cause an inspection to be made of the various Companies' supply of grenades by Battalion Quartermaster Corless and our Lieut. D. Holmes. The result of their findings revealed that in many cases the grenades were defective because of bad storage, dampness and want of proper care and maintenance. Little wonder then that, as was asserted, they failed to explode, as happened in some case when men of other units sought to effect an ambush and left themselves in a very serious predicament. It was quite possible indeed that in many instances such material had been hastily "dumped" in places that were not easily accessible or suitable. Sometimes they were stored for long periods without being given adequate attention, and as a result the gelignite got out of form and the priming sets became faulty. The continual raiding by British forces aggravated the problem considerably. Thanks then to the discovery of the faults - the men in our Battalion were spared many moments of doubts and possibly serious mishaps.

The innovation of shortening the fuses in grenades, which we had found to be effective, added considerably to

give additional confidence to the men, particularly those of our own Company. No longer would men feel doubtful on the score of their landing in or at the target; no longer would they have a fear that they would be thrown back at them. The short period between their being thrown and their explosion - even the possibility that they would explode near the target area - were considerations of great importance to the men engaged on ambushing. That was a decided advantage over the previous system. Then it was problematical whether, at short range, the bombs would burst before the moving lorry had passed as had happened in a number of cases with other ambush parties. Short as were five seconds, a car travelling at normal speed could easily steer clear of the danger zone by a dozen or more yards. But at three seconds, unless it was travelling at break-neck speed less favourable chances to beat the bomb or escape the bombing were there.

In no instance were the British asleep on their work. Rather the opposite could be demonstrated. Seldom were they sufficiently off guard to permit attacks to be made on them indiscriminately. They used the many advantages they had to the extreme limit of durability. One of these advantages was mobility, and the use of motor transport, which stood them in good stead not infrequently. Thus many difficulties were presented to the I.R.A. It required much ingenuity, watchfulness and skill on the part of our men in trying to dodge them when not on duty or if on some duty unconnected with bombing, not desiring to be held up, searched and possibly arrested. For even during that time various other forms of activities were carried out by men of the I.R.A. whether armed or unarmed. Such things as carrying dispatches, of transferring

warlike material from place to place, and men moving to and from ambush points, were typical forms of activity that called for the finest qualities in men. The British forces were ever busy making sudden unexpected swoops and searches on motor cars, trams, cyclists, pedestrians and vehicles of all kinds. One never knew when or where they would operate in that fashion, or whom they would search. Innumerable instances could be cited in proof of the thorough-going manner in which these forces engaged when carrying out such raids and searches. One such may be given. Two of our men unwittingly were caught in a cordon that seemed to have been mysteriously formed, as they were walking along a certain thoroughfare. Halted, they were ordered to put their hands up, then searched. Not satisfied with the customary searching of their pockets, they were required to sit on the pavement and to take off their boots and socks, which the British soldiers thoroughly examined. Luckily, they were not accosted some short time previously when one of the party was carrying copies of An t-Oglach intended for distribution in our Company. Other cases there were too of men who had "narrow shaves" in such contingencies. Here is one of a very unusual type. It concerned a man who was carrying a small quantity of grenade cases, neatly wrapped in paper, when he was held up. Placing the parcel on the ground, he submitted to the searching. When completed the British Tommy told him to "beat it", which he did in quick time, bringing the parcel with him, while all the time his heart was thumping rather wildly.

These hold-ups and searchings had also many humorous sides. There was the story of an I. R. A. man who made it a habit to carry a racing form book. On one of the many searches he had been the victim of, that precious book became the object of very careful scrutiny. The

British officer requested to know what it was. "A Racing Form Book", replied our worthy fellow. "What! another one of those beastly things? Do all the men here have to have these?". The strange thing was that the man himself knew nothing about horses, but here again it was prudent to carry something and a racing book or a copy of the "early bird" was better than nothing. Such tricks came easy to men who had cunning enough to play them.

Yet another incident, in which an I. R. A. man figured. He too was armed with some racing paper or other. In the course of questioning he mentioned he was an ex soldier. "What!", said the British soldier who was paying him all attention, "another bally ex Army man! Blimmie, they must be all ex soldiers around here". It transpired that quite a large number of men who had been held up by that group of British Crown forces claimed to have been former members of the British Army. Incongruity again. Many of the British Army personnel who formed the Army of Occupation in Ireland then, particularly the younger fry, must have considered it very strange indeed at the large number of ex Tommies in Dublin who were non-combatants. Many of these expressed their mind freely and openly on the way they were being treated by the Crown forces. No different treatment was meted out to them than to any other citizen. Perhaps it was because a large number of them were not taking sides in the troubles, and that the fight was between the British and the "Shinners".

We in the I. R. A. knew that the average ex British soldier was neutral at the time and wanted to remain so. Further we knew that there was a fair number of them sympathetic to our cause for several reasons, one of which was because of the brutal atrocities and the harsh inhuman reprisal policy carried out by the British

Authorities. Quite a number also were members of the I. R. A. or were related to I. R. A. men. These factors were in themselves of some importance at the time.

In many instances ex British soldiers were shown little concern and small consideration by British forces operating or raiding or hold-up parties. Sometimes they were as badly treated as I. R. A. <sup>men were</sup> /themselves. Perhaps the British soldiers found it hard to differentiate in a situation where any civilian might be a potential I. R. A. man and that they had no other recourse but to treat all citizens alike. They had apparently no room for gentle behaviour or kind persuasive methods when the prize of their goal was the destruction of the I. R. A.

Strange as it might appear the ordinary citizen by then had become somewhat used to the various activities of the British forces - their raidings, hold-ups, searches, curfew, patrolling <sup>and</sup> /the various movements of British soldiers and auxiliaries in their armoured cars, motor lorries and cages, gallaventing at dead slow or break-neck speed through the streets of Dublin. Equally they had become used to some of the I. R. A. activities: had become wide awake and alert to the series of bomb attacks which were becoming alarmingly incessant. So war-minded had some of them become that when caught in an ambush they threw themselves on the ground or in some other fashion took cover for their own protection. Such precautions went far to cause them little injury during a bomb attack by I. R. A. or the returning rifle fire of the British forces afterwards. In many instances a good deal of civilian casualties were caused by rifle shots fired by the British after an attack, with disastrous results for the citizens.

But even in the most extreme dangers the people seemed to carry on as if nothing unusual was happening around them. Indeed many of them exhibited a sang froid that was neither depressing nor slavish. However difficult or disturbing the trend of affairs, they carried out their day-to-day duties and avocations in as near to their ordinary form and concept as was possible in the circumstances. It is not to be understood, however, by this that the average citizen had not to undergo hardships, inconveniences and trials in one shape or other, or was even able to keep adrift from all the things that were happening in their midst. Such would have been utterly impossible. Very few people could remain or were unaffected by the activities of one or other of the combatant forces. What safety had they in the streets, what peace and quietude had they in their homes, what comfort had they on public or private conveyances or in public buildings? Even during curfew hours was there any respite from the attentions and annoyances provoked by military movements of men, motors and search-lights, the all-too numerous banging on doors, shouting of military commands and movement of troops, heralding a stampede or a raid in the immediate vicinity or on their neighbours' house? How many citizens were caught on the stroke of or during the curfew hours and thrown into military lorries, deposited in jail for the night? How many had to undergo insult and indignity when the business premises or institution in which they worked, the pub, library or the club which they frequented for a drink or a read or a game of cards, were raided, sometimes allegedly for wanted men or arms, but oftimes just because of orders received?

Sometimes these several activities occupied a few minutes, sometimes an hour or more, or all through the

night or the best part of a day. Not uncommonly some of the raids carried out by the British lasted a full day and night or vice versa - sometimes longer - as when they cordoned off large areas of the city, thereby cutting normal communication between the different sections of the populace, so that those who were "roped in" had to remain put not knowing what was happening outside and those who were outside had little knowledge of what was going on inside. Yet the people behaved magnificently, giving many examples of calmness, fortitude and in many cases good humour, through what must have been to most people, a distinctly nerve-wrecking ordeal.

Their acceptance of the situation as it then was, had a very heartening effect on us who were no less desirous to bear the burdens of the conflict patiently, obediently and trustfully. Our task and our duty demanded personal compliance. There was no obligation on their part to comply with anything that was detrimental to their own individual lives or liberties. Except among those who supported our policy and who backed up our every effort in the fight was anything in the nature of obligation required. It was a noteworthy fact that many who were least our friends, or considered to be so, were more desirous to remain neutral than to lend their aid to the British against us. Some perhaps were silent and unprovocative through fear, others by choice, or being the most discretionary role to play between the "two sides". None could gainsay that the lot of those people who were not parties to the fight, was anything but an unenviable and sad one. Many there were who had no relish and were unwilling to be brought into the maelstrom, who wanted to be left alone, to live

and let live, as they would say. Such an attitude of mind was quite understandable - in Dublin at least - where the population was cosmopolitan, consisting of varied species and of different castes although the majority of people were sound on the question of Ireland's right to be free, as the previous general and local elections since 1918 demonstrated.

There were other elements and individuals less national-minded, and not a few that were distinctly hostile. Among those were the type that lived by and wanted the British connection always and at any price. Some of them, putting discretion aside, engaged in rendering service to the British against the I. R. A. That was done in several and devious ways; by spying, giving information and by rendering active service. The two former courses were more generally adopted. Many of the raids carried out by the British on I. R. A. men, homes, premises, etc.; many arrests and deaths of I. R. A. men were traced to the spies and informers with disastrous results to the latter, who in innumerable instances were shot by orders of the I. R. A. authorities when their deeds and misdeeds were discovered.

Sometimes information leaked out to the British due to indiscreet talk, gossip or idle boasting of I. R. A. men or their friends. These were of rare occurrence and were never on a large scale. In very rare instances was any real injury done our cause. Our G. H. Q. had had warnings issued on that aspect of men openly discussing or speaking too openly of I. R. A. affairs. It was hardly likely that the British, even with their highly-trained, sensitive and large Secret Service, their Intelligence Officers, spies and informers, gained very much for their pains, though they tried to imply that there was a

leakage at I.R.A. source. Indeed, not infrequently, British officers informed I.R.A. whose homes they raided and who were placed under arrest because "they were given away by their friends". There was no evidence forthcoming to prove the truth of the allegations that they were betrayed by any of their comrades in the I.R.A. It could be more reasonably assumed and believed that the proffered information came from hostile neighbours or those who spied on their movements. Who could believe, who among the I.R.A. could believe, the story that there were informers in the I.R.A.? Here was a popular movement that depended on and gained support from the Irish people; a Volunteer force whose existence was known to the British through their police force, whose members had from time to time appeared in public, training, drilling and marching, even participating in public processions, and as a result could not deny that they were I.R.A. men, as they had come under the notice of police and spotters whose special duty it was to keep them under observation and to apprehend them when necessary.

Perhaps it might not be deemed inadmissible to digress on the partly open character of the I.R.A. Since its inception in 1913, it had appealed to and received support from the manhood of Ireland. These men had voluntarily given service, time, money and labour in proof of their beliefs. Its popularity over the period of years had not decreased, rather was it in the ascendant "in spite of dungeon, fire and sword". Its adherents not only gave moral but physical service in proof of their loyalty, belief and faith in the ideals it stood for and the cause it championed. THE I.R.A. was a

partly open and partly secretive force; partly open in so far as it was known to exist, and that there was no intent intention to disguise its existence; partly secret because of its functions and the exercise of its policy as a military force. It was not a secret body in the sense that the United Irishmen of '98 or the Fenian Brotherhood were secret. Much of the work of the I. R. A. was secret in order to make their actions effective, but there was little exclusively secret in regard to its actual existence. In many instances I. R. A. proclaimed themselves such at British courtmartial and in public courts though their public profession of membership of "an illegal organisation", a term applied to the I. R. A. by the British, produced sentences for certain periods. I. R. A. men were not found to be afraid to profess that they were "soldiers of the Irish Republic" or "soldiers of the Irish Republican Army" before their execution. Largely the thousands of our internees then languishing in internment camps proclaimed that they were I. R. A. men, and the Internment Orders issued by the British and served on them specified that they were so interned because they were regarded as members of the I. R. A.

If there was any evidence of the existence of spies or informers in our ranks it could not have been of any great consequence or importance. In the absence of first hand information on the point we could as safely dismiss the allegation as being unsustainable in law or in fact. Even allowing that the British obtained some measure of information from idle gossip and captured documents, who would be so bold or so dense as to admit that they were of such a nature as to cause a complete breakdown of the I. R. A. framework? If the British were in possession of such valuable information why could they not lay hands on

the high lights of the I.R.A.? If they knew so much as they claimed to know, why were so many valuable men committed to internment camps when, according to all the canons of English law they should have undergone the rigours of convict prison life or become victims of the hangman's handiwork. Such questions could naturally spring to our minds as we thought of the insidious implications underlying the allegation that there were spies and informers in our ranks.

A more sober and careful analysis of the theory that the British received information from I.R.A. sources could be gleaned from the fact that not only was their information defective but also that despite every attempt on their part to produce a common informer they had signally failed to do so. Not that they did not want or did not seek the services of such people to suit their own ends and to all the more successfully destroy the power and prestige of their enemies, the I.R.A. Their failure arose not for want of trying to obtain information but rather because they were unable to get people, and particularly the kind of people who would be in a position to part with first-hand information to come forward to help them. In theory and in practice they failed for the simple and explicit reason that the men of the I.R.A. remained solid, sound and true, to their comrades and their ideals. Even the British could not deny that they had made every effort and availed of every opportunity to secure information about the I.R.A. and of members of the I.R.A. They had not been remiss in applying extreme measures to extract information from prisoners. Every known and unknown device was resorted to: by means of a carefully planned and cleverly devised interrogation, through the medium of coaxing, persuasion.

and sympathy or as was more frequent and persistent application of force, of threats and abuses. Many and varied were the stories of the cruel deeds that were perpetrated on I.R.A. prisoners for the purpose of obtaining information. How many of them were brutally treated, wantonly bludgeoned and mercilessly outraged, because they refused to tender information about their comrades, the officers and men of the I.R.A.? How many had been driven insane or near to the point of insanity by the infamous and inhuman beatings they had received from their captors or interrogators? How many others had borne the marks of violent treatment they had received rather than consent to be informers? These facts stand out in bold relief as a beacon of light to disprove the allegations that the I.R.A. or men within the ranks of the I.R.A. were so false to themselves, their comrades and their country as to turn traitors in the interest of an alien government.

In the sphere of the military conquest of Ireland, the British were not making much headway. The Government of Ireland by England was carried out, not in strict accordance with the normal processes of law and order, but rather by means of a military junta, and that mainly because of military necessity. Virtually the country was governed by military law. In many cases martial law was in operation. Especially was this so in many of the Southern Counties, where military areas had been established. The reign of British militarism was thereby supreme. Dublin, the capital of Ireland, though the seat of the Government of England and strangely the seat of the Government of Dáil Éireann, the Irish Republic, though not completely immune from much of the hazards of the British military law, was bearing a not inconsiderable share of the guerilla fighting.

CHAPTER 21.

In recording the history, the workings and exploits of the I.R.A. during the years under review, the association of the I.R.B. as a contributing factor to the general plan must be considered and analysed. Since the formation of the Irish Volunteers the I.R.B. had played a prominent part in the Irish political and military sphere. Prior to 1916 Rising as the proclamation of the Irish Republic, signifying the establishment of a Provisional Irish Government, so boldly averred that "secret armed revolutionary body" the I.R.B. had supported and upheld the Irish Volunteers since that time it had supported the efforts of and exercised a profound and effective influence on the military affairs of the I.R.A. Its ramifications were widespread and varied for, while giving absolute and complete attention to the I.R.A., it influenced the policy of the political wing, Sinn Féin, and also the Trades Union movement. It had representatives on the two former bodies. As regards the latter organisation, it did not claim to have any great influence beyond what might be called a watchful brief aimed at trying to bring labour closer to the national ideal and to prevent it going international.

At the period under review the I.R.B., by means of a special group within its ranks, was playing high in the affairs of the labour movement in Dublin. Not high in the sense of securing control, but in the influence it brought to bear on various unions. That was done in several ways. Numbers of I.R.B. men held various offices in the trades union movement as branch presidents, secretaries, treasurers, or as members of committees. The ordinary rank and file members of unions were encouraged to go forward for elections as officials or members of committees. In so doing, they would be advancing the interest of the I.R.B. in creating

a liaison between their own and the labour movement. The grand plan envisaged the labour movement rendering full support to the Republican movement.

Not always, however, was it possible to wield sway over the labour movement, unless they (the I.R.B.) could bring strength of numbers and the right type of men for the various posts. In many instances men who were associated with the I.R.B. were in the minority in their various trades union branches and, try as they would and did, they were unable to rise to any responsible position there. The few men who held responsible positions were not always effective in pursuit of further advancement in the sphere of higher ranks which, it might be contended was the prize to the goal aimed at.

It must not be thought by the foregoing that labour was so self-centred and distinct as to be exclusively un-national or anti-national. The opposite could be advanced, for in the many crises of the previous years - particularly since 1916 - Labour had rendered assistance in the national fight for independence. Who could forget Labour's contribution to the anti-conscription movement in 1918 by enforcing a one-day strike in protest to the British plan to conscript Irishmen into the British army, and in lending aid by means of their representatives on the anti-conscription conference for the same ends? Who could forget Labour's opposition to and protestations against the Black and Tans and British military governmental rule; their one-day strike in favour of our I.R.A. hunger-strikes? Could we forget the noble part Labour played during the munition strike when railwaymen and dockers refused to handle warlike stores intended for use against the national movement, and when the former refused to carry British forces, not to mention the other forms of aid and succour that they freely gave to I.R.A. men and the I.R.A. body? These are by way of commentary and in order to bring to light the inherent link that existed in one form or other between Labour and Nationalism.

The move to exercise influence in the Labour Movement intended by the I.R.B. to maintain and sustain the closest affiliation with the national fight being waged attained some measure of success, insofar as I.R.B. personnel and the large number of I.R.A. men who were members of the trades unions were enabled to do so by their voice and their votes on various committees and groups therein.

The I.R.B. exercised particular influence in the I.R.A. sphere of organisation and it could be said that the predominant numbers of officers of the latter body were I.R.B. men.

Sometime in the latter part of 1920, or early in 1921, some of its "Centres" adjourned sine die their meetings. The reason advanced was the difficulties arising from holding them in the face of the raids by British on public buildings and the growing pace of the fighting, in which many disciples of the I.R.B. were engaged, while a large number were in jail and internment camps.

Our "Circle", up to its curtailment in late 1920 or early in 1921, met in Room 8 at the Foresters' Hall, 41 Parnell Square, the "Centre" being Martin Conlon; among those who comprised the centre were Sean McHugh, Michael O'Flanagan, who was general secretary of the Printers' Trades Union, Paddy McGrath, Tom "Boer" Byrne, Oscar Traynor, Frank McNally, Sean Kennedy, Luke Kennedy, Mick Doherty of Citizen Army fame, Michael Scully, James Stritch, who was prominent in the Foresters organisation, Joe Kelly, Paddy McArdle, Joe Brabazon, Paddy Hughes, Dick McKee, Charlie O'Hanlon - to mention but a few. Very strangely, the printing trade was very conspicuously represented.

Intelligence - April 1921.

Junior members of the company, many of them ex-Fianna boys, played a particularly useful role under our company intelligence officer, following up clues about suspected spies and informers and any particulars required by our G.H.Q. The co-operation of the company was always given to matters of information sought or suspected, unfriendly people, their activities and movements. Company officers were not necessarily aware of every activity of even their own company intelligence, as the company intelligence officer operated as a separate independent entity yet sufficiently within the framework of a complete whole. This procedure had been devised in order to leave company commanders free for other military duties instead of having to be concerned with such intricacies and difficulties. In more ways than one that arrangement made X the company intelligence officer a free agent to pursue his duties under orders of battalion intelligence officers.

That system worked perfectly; its success was in no small way due to the importance of the office and the fact that the company intelligence officer was recognised and acted as a member of the company staff and council. Regular attendance at council and company meetings ensured complete collaboration with company and battalion affairs. It could be said that intelligence played a tremendous part in the guerilla war; the company intelligence as a unit played a part second to none to any of the other branches of our activity. Just as it was pre-eminently and predominantly essential in this phase of our guerilla warfare as a concomitant factor to the military machine of the I.R.A. without which we could hardly have been able to withstand the onslaughts of a mighty foe or have been able to maintain our existence as a living, virile force.

Reverting to the matter of the holding of our company council meetings, it is necessary to mention that much use

had to be made during that period of private houses for the purpose. Fortunately, facilities were available to us to use such places as Sean Nathan's home, McDonough's shop - both in Lower Dorset Street - Bevan's home in Geraldine St. and Tom O'Reilly's home in 25 Parnell St., to mention but a few. The latter was more commonly availed of, the back kitchen affording us every facility, comfort and a reasonable sense of security at a time when few places could be regarded as completely safe from molestation of raiding British forces always showing signs of activity in the streets. How many times we were interrupted by the sounds of military lorries and armoured cars as they rumbled along the street outside, and the warning that the 'soldiers' or the 'Tans' were in sight. Then the inevitable pack of cards was ever at hand, or we had to appear as if we were 'just visitors' to the household. On such occasions it was always good policy to be in possession of some substantial alibi. Anyway, we seemed to be always fairly safe in any of our haunts unless some 'nosey parker' noticed our entry to or exit from such places; chances had to be taken, using our brains and a certain degree of discretion to allay suspicion.

These company council meetings continued uninterruptedly during the months of 1921 as on previous occasions no matter how or by what means the larger body - the company - was meeting. It was one means to keep the company in being, by maintaining contact with the various members of the company staff and N.C.Os. We had always work to do of a routine nature, administrative work, as well as matters relating to the planning of operations, the recording and issuing of orders from the battalion, the brigade and G.H.Q. for regulating meetings of various groups in the unit and business passed on via the company adjutant, company quartermaster, company intelligence and police officers. Sometimes we had to furnish detailed reports under different headings to various higher commands and deal with cases of men being transferred to us or in process of being transferred to other units. It must be

mentioned that recruiting as such had been largely curtailed, except in very special circumstances. That order, however, did not apply to Fianna boys who had reached the age of 18 years and were being absorbed into the I.R.A.

In many respects our meetings also were mainly concerned with work connected with the quartermaster, such as arms, ammunition replenishment and the purchase and disposal of same, always live matters requiring immediate attention.

Regarding the measure of help which the I.R.A. in Dublin received, of which the use of premises was but a single feature, certain salient facts can be recorded. Among the large sections of people who embraced and worked for the political arm, Sinn Fein, were many who, although not rendering active military service, gave succour and support to the fighting men. Some even underwent suffering, imprisonment, and shared sacrifices for so acting. Their services in that regard were no less important and real than if they had served in our ranks. No greater proof could be given of the indissolubility of the unity of forces that existed between the component parts of the national movement without which the best and most thorough national effort would have been of little consequence in the stupendous task of meeting British militarism. Every I.R.A. unit in Dublin had its quota of such men and women supporters who were ready and willing to perform service in different ways. Their numbers were legion and of various types and categories. Take the cases of business proprietors whose premises were freely at the disposal of I.R.A. units and officers and for I.R.A. purposes; numerous cases could be cited, but in the interest of brevity two must suffice now. One refers to a Miss Nellie Doyle who carried on a dairy and grocery shop in Dorset St. During the hard and difficult days of the Tan struggle in 1921 her business place was a veritable halfway house for the storage of some of our company munitions as well as being the safe repository for odd revolvers which I.R.A. men, finding themselves <sup>temporarily</sup> in a tight corner, could safely

leave them to be collected at other less difficult times. Generally, however, our Q.M. had full access to that shop for warlike purposes; the good lady, out of sheer regard for our cause, not alone not raising any objection, but willingly admitting to the course, whenever necessity warranted that the place should be used as a munition dump or storage for same.

Another such case, too, concerns another friend of our company - that of Mr. Tom Hoban, the owner-proprietor of the tobacconist and newsagent shop, 26 Parnell St. That shop and house was utilised for many and various purposes connected with the Sinn Fein Movement and of I.R.A. affairs. From the early days of the republican movement his shop was a 'marked' one - marked by the British for raiding in quest of unlawful publications, or the seizure of warlike materials. H. Coy. and our own C.Coy. of the 1st Battalion, I.R.A. had prior claims on the use of the premises for meetings of various groups; the former unit using the premises as a store for dumping arms. The fact that three of Mr. Hoban's sons belonged to H.Coy. and that some of its officers and N.C.O.s., as well as some of us in C.Coy., were his intimate confidants and customers, went quite far in securing his very generous help for our cause in the many difficulties that from time to time perplexed us.

During one of the many raids and searches that were made on the premises, munitions - presumably belonging to H.Coy. - were discovered by the British forces, with the result that he received a jail sentence which he was doomed to serve in Bedford prison in England. Even during his incarceration "26" continued to be used as a meeting place of the various I.R.A. groups referred to. Our own company on many occasions held company council meetings there.

Mention has already been made to another safe quarters for meetings of our company council, namely, Tom O'Reilly's

The month of April 1921 was no less an active month, as far as I.R.A. guerilla warfare was concerned. Every group and unit of the Dublin Brigade appeared to be on the alert for whatever type of operation was placed to their keeping. Accustomed as the men were to street warfare, they had settled themselves down to the prevailing order of things which prescribed that greater endeavours were to be made in bringing extra pressure into the fight. The British authorities, also, were no less desirous to make their presence felt, by increasing the pace and tempo of their activities in order to secure victory over the I.R.A. Forced as they were to adapt themselves to defensive tactics by the employment and use of smaller units, the guerilla campaign as conducted by the I.R.A. in Dublin went very far in undermining the discipline and effectiveness of the British armed forces. In their pitiable plight, much of their strength in men and materials became of little use and were often sadly unavailing, however, they strove to bring them into effective play against an invisible force such as the I.R.A. were deemed to be at the time, and when, on certain grounds and in certain circumstances, some measure of equality existed between a belligerent I.R.A. man and his opposing number in the British Forces, although of a truth the British soldier had greater advantages and suffered lesser disabilities than the average Volunteer of the I.R.A.

yet, notwithstanding these important factors, even the fact that they were better trained and equipped than the I.R.A. had little effect in bringing additional material aid to bear on the situation. Their (the British forces') main concern was to hold their heads, to maintain a good fighting morale, bearing and discipline. In the latter qualities the I.R.A. could be said to excel. It might be commonplace to state a fact that during that period the men of the I.R.A. on service were highly disciplined and orderly and obedient. The fact that they were so added enormously to the process of fighting and served to stimulate them to greater efforts. No force was exercised, no force was needed to get I.R.A. men on operations. Those who undertook the work did so from the point of view of duty and many of those who were not placed on that work could not be said to be anything but willing to do so if they were called upon to do so, or as opportunities occurred. Some could not be employed on ambushing for reasons already advanced. Time was playing a big factor in our scheme of things, and the element of time then was a vital matter in excluding some men.

Here was where time played us tricks. Most members of our company ceased work at six o'clock. Allowing for a meal and a brush up, few could be on duty before 7 or 7.30 p.m. Curfew was on at 9 o'clock. Assuming they had to get to a selected point to be armed and given orders as to the duty to which they were assigned, and adding a few extra minutes for getting to the seat of operation, they could only be on duty for a half hour or so. There was always the thorny problem of men residing far away from the company area. Other companies were similarly circumstanced. Care, too, had to be taken and time given, that the men so armed from selected arms receiving centre, would return same immediately after duty. The difficulties, as we found, were not lessened when it is considered that, as often happened, such arms receiving and

deposit centres were far removed from the spot of the projected ambush or other activity. Considerations like these had not to be made in the case of a few of our men who were exercising the personal custody of arms and responsible for their safety in their own homes, workshops, or otherwise. Company officers had always to keep these things in mind when preparing activities. Generally, the system worked well when the one group of men were employed on such work, but when the occasion arose of supplementing the number by the inclusion of a fresh man or more, we had to face up to the obvious difficulties as they appeared.

By this time we had reached the stage of meeting trouble by the forelock. In common nautical parlance, we had found our sealegs. More than that, we were becoming balanced, confident, and were using our senses and our talents to bend to the work so as to get things done in the quickest and best way possible.

In our company there were quite a good number of men who were adept in the handling of arms, of firing a revolver or in throwing a grenade. Many of our men had already seen service in one capacity or another; there was a large and growing number of these whose service had been availed of too in connection with ambushing. The procedure to use the same type of men on all company activities had to be replaced by a system which aimed at bringing more men into the conflict. The regular placing of men in allocated positions for engaging in ambushing became a regular feature, and the time of officers and N.C.Os. was large used in that direction. There was hardly a night in which an ambush party, or ambush parties were not on duty at some point in the company area. The reaction of the men to the work was such as to cause no strain or anxiety to the officers and N.C.Os. concerned.

That some men benefitted more than others by the experiences and the testing time connected with that very

exacting type of duty none could deny. That could be confirmed in the case of men who might be termed the élite of the company. These were regarded as the nuclei of the active personnel; not that they were classed as the best in the company, although much credit must be given to them and a certain amount of honour bestowed, because they formed our main striking force, owing to their being easily available and always willing and ready for action whenever and however required. These men had many calls on their services, their time and their labours. Would it be thought surprising that in the course of time some of them would be looked upon with very special favour to be often requisitioned for a large measure of company activities? Many considerations of a perplexing nature had to enter into the reckoning of placing men according to their capabilities, their physical and mental reactions and their personal conduct in the midst of danger. It had to be a process of gradual development, of men becoming familiar with - because of their constant engagement on - the duties associated with guerilla warfare. True, many of these men had been, as it were, hand-picked and specially selected from the initial stages, and as they were found suitable, were retained for subsequent service.

This process of making selection was the prerogative of the company captain assisted in some cases by his junior officers and N.C.Os. and, sometimes, the company council. In that matter the company officer had full discretionary and plenary powers. No slur was intended, or could be entertained on the qualities, the courage and sagacity of the other Volunteers who were not called on to perform the same work, or take the same risks. Some men there were whose services could be rarely utilised - tram drivers, tram conductors, and men who worked in the provision and pawnbroking businesses. The latter, whose working hours extended late into the night, were availed of on occasions of half-days, generally on

Wednesdays. In the case of the former, their free hours for night duty varied. In the case of First Aid men and signallers company officers had to use caution and discretion. The men forming these services could not be as freely or as frequently utilised <sup>if at all</sup> as other men in the company. To add to the dilemma in which company officers were driven, the aforementioned services were regarded as non-combatant, in the sense that great efforts were being made to maintain them at effective strength and in keeping them at their specialised training. Because of these things, and particularly by reason of their bearing the name 'non-combatant', some of the men riled against the order that kept them out of the fight. Already company officers had found it difficult to get men for such <sup>as First Aid men and Signallers</sup> work and a certain measure of pressure had to be applied to <sup>those</sup> initiate them into services and keep them on the job. Thus company officers had more than one cause for headaches besides the actual fighting propensities of the company.

We generally found it easier to get men to volunteer to use a gun or a grenade than to learn how to save life or to use signals by means of flags or Morse code. Only in the most extreme or urgent cases were the personnel of such services employed on other operations. But in some instances a few of these were utilised in some capacity or other.

Stress has already been laid on the difficulties some of the companies were confronted with in connection with their ambushing plans. It could not be said that every time men were placed in ambush position that fighting ensued. Indeed, the contrary was the case. There were times when it looked as if Dublin was sitting down on the job, when an odd ambush or operation could be reported. Contrasting the great spate of activities on the part of other units in the country where things on a big scale were happening and had happened, we in Dublin could be termed idling and ineffective. For exploits of daring, the various flying columns had become legendary ;

lurid accounts of these several engagements were published in An tOglach, our official organ, for our edification and interest; many of these became subjects for lectures to officers.

If, on the surface, Dublin did not show any great achievements in the course of the fighting, the fault could not be said to lie in every particular with the officers and men of the Dublin Brigade. More commonly could the cause be found in the changing tactics and dispositions of the British armed forces adapting themselves to a new code of military technique and newer formations and movements.

Then, one Saturday afternoon, a very special and urgent order of the Dublin Brigade came into force, and every unit mobilised to take up positions for the purpose of "hitting up all enemy transport" or, in other words, "everything on wheels". This was a tall order, and certainly the biggest one we had so far got; and, if we could judge rightly, was intended as being the biggest exploit in the guerilla warfare in Dublin. That it was a strange order and a startling one, no one could gainsay. In actual fact, it was tantamount to taking almost complete physical possession of Dublin's main thoroughfares and trying to deny use of same to the British. It was a bold stroke! Every company furnished its own particular quota, big or small as their circumstances and equipment permitted, in the big plan of operation. Ours was no exception to the rule. On that day, 4th April 1921, our company mustered about 30 men, which number was divided into two ambush groups, one of which was placed in Up. Dorset Street, the other at Phibsboro Road. Most of them were stationed at the former place. That force consisted of scouts, some revolver men, grenade men and a First Aid man. Holding the thoroughfare from a point near Wellington Street where one of our scouts was placed, to Henrietta Street, a distance of approximately 600 yards, the plan was this. Two men, armed with grenades and revolvers, were situated at

the corners of Granby Row and Dorset St. Above them at the Black Church in Mary's Place two other men were placed, one armed with a revolver, the other a First Aid man. Two or three revolver men occupied the corner of a laneway resting on Dorset St., a little to the left and on the far side of the street in which the bombers were. About fifty yards further on two of our scouts were in position. Additions to that were two revolver men who were situated at Henrietta St. and Bolton St. corners, and another who was acting as a scout occupied a point in Dorset St., midway between where our grenade men were in position and the corner of Wellington Street. That, it will be seen, was an uncommonly large number of men to be put into action.

This force was only a short time in position when a British military dispatch bearer who was riding a combination motor cycle, and accompanied by an armed companion in the sidecar, came into sight. As they approached our men at the corner of Granby Row fire was opened on them, to which the soldiers replied and an almost pitched battle ensued. In the meantime the soldiers had swerved to the right as if to turn into St. Mary's Place. Almost simultaneously with that move one of our men had thrown a grenade. The driver of the cycle seemed to be wounded, but without slackening speed, shot clear away. In the melee, which was over faster than the telling of it, one of our men was wounded in the forearm by a revolver bullet. He had to be helped away from the scene by two of his comrades and brought to Hoban's in Parnell St., nearly a quarter of a mile away. Blood was oozing copiously from the wound. Then the real trouble began, to obtain medical aid. A doctor was requisitioned, who, alas! on seeing the nature of the case, felt perturbed and refused to attend him. It took a good deal of persuasion to even get him to condescend to give advice as to how his wound was to be treated. Fortunately, one of our officers, Lieut. Kirk, already skilled in first aid, took charge of the case, and

after careful attention, extending over a few weeks, the wounded man was made right and nothing the worse of the exploit. One difficulty the man had to contend with - he endeavoured to perform his ordinary employment, for fear of awakening suspicion.

By a strange irony of fate, we were the recipients of a mild form of reprimand for the attack, by the brigadier, not so much for attacking the cyclist as for having had to use a grenade for the purpose. Strangely, also, as was learned afterwards, the brigadier was passing at the time of the action and almost came into the line of fire. Such were the peculiar vagaries of our guerilla warfare, that one never could anticipate what form the attack should take or who might be endangered thereby. The throwing of the bomb in this instance might not have occurred but for the fact that the Volunteer had released the pin from the grenade at the signal "Enemy coming" and after he being wounded and after the revolver duel, he could hardly have done otherwise for his own safety.

In the latter connection we had been brought face to face with the possibilities, if not the probabilities, that at sometime, and due to our active part in the fighting, injury would be meted out to our nearest and dearest in our own families or among our comrades, should they unwittingly find themselves at the wrong moment in an ambush zone. We might not, indeed it was considered discreet not to tell them or anyone outside the engaging fighting groups the likely places and times when an ambush was to be effected. Thus there was imposed on us a double ordeal of anxiety for our own welfare and the dangers that our relatives and friends would assuredly run during the conflict. We had, it seemed, to take our risks and whatever chances might result from our actions. In respect of this matter I relate a very sad fatality in which the wife of an I.R.A. man was killed in one of these ambushes. It appears that on the day "H" Company carried out an ambush at the corner of Capel Street and King Street, the British forces, returned the fire, just at the moment when a woman living in the vicinity on hearing the shooting ran out<sup>of her home</sup> in quest of one of her children then playing in the street. Very ironically the deceased was a wife of Tom O'Brien then Quartermaster of that Company.

The other action, in which some men of our company were involved that day, related to an attack on a motor car in which were travelling British soldiers. The scene was Phibsboro Road. Six or eight of our men, under another Lieut., were on duty there, a few of whom, as in the case of the former group, only came into action. It must be stressed here that no fault could be attached to the men for not being able to show bigger results. If fault there was, it could only be apportioned on the theory that not the plan, and certainly not the men, failed, but rather that little opportunity presented itself to execute belligerent action, either because the enemy was exercising caution that day or was not showing any great measure of activity in or around our company area. At other points in the city several groups of I.R.A. came into action, but there were quite a large number of areas where no operation was carried out for reasons already voiced. We could not, of course, hazard a guess whether the big plan to ambush right, left and centre in Dublin was a proven success. But we had enough sense to know that even the smallest action, raid or ambush was of some significance at the time. It proved that the British Crown forces, contrary to their propaganda pretensions and beliefs, had not the Irish situation so well in hands, and that there was quite a large number of the I.R.A. available to do those things and to take the risk of doing things, however much the inconvenience or the sacrifice.

Disappointments there were - such perhaps were inevitable in the game we were playing - but they were of a nature that cut to the marrow. How often had we to listen to men giving vent to their feelings when anything went wrong, or when they were not given bigger or greater chances to fight? How often had we heard men mourning their disappointment that such and such an action, ambush or operation did not materialise? How often were we made aware of their sorrow that they were not able to bring off a successful coup or coups? How often

did the men worry over the half-successful effort and apologise that they did not win out, or for not doing more? Every time and always the question arose: "Wonder will this thing succeed?" or "what a pity this or that ambush did not come off". Even the remark: "better luck next time" seemed not to fit in with their sad mood resulting from previous misadventures or periods of ill-luck, as they termed them. Was it not passing strange that things could go awry despite the most careful planning for successful action for which few of our men could be held accountable when one considered their splendid spirit and indomitable courage at a period of great trial. The greatest praise is due to these men whose lot it was to be engaged in any of the spheres of endeavour which military necessity and the cause of freedom, which they served, entailed; men who, even if they were only called once in a time to brave the hazards and face the trials of an ambush operation, deserved praise for so doing. What words of praise could adequately apply to men who, of their own individual and voluntary choice, and because they wanted it so, were on duty night in and night out, in all weathers and regardless of dangers, and without murmuring, remorse or grumbling. Many an officer could testify that although the number of men involved or utilised on any given action was relatively small, the specific importance of the enthusiasm and determination which these men brought into that work was of the highest order and meritorious in the extreme. The only fault any of them had was that their efforts were not always attended with complete success; all the greater praise is due to them when it is considered that we were then very much up against it; indeed, there were obvious signs that we were going through our hardest time.

Each succeeding day and week of April brought us deeper and surer into the maelstrom from which escape was impossible, unless, by weakening our efforts or slackening the pace that

had, up to then, been set, the word "enough" was inscribed on the chapter of blood, tears and desolation. But with the advent of a new month that word was neither spoken or hinted. Instead the month of May was heralded in by a more intensified movement on the part of the I.R.A. "to get on with the work", the one and only purpose being to make further inroads on the policy and influence of the British forces and to make their efforts to govern Ireland a costly, nay, an impossible one. None among us, at least few officers, could admit that our task was to be anything but a hard and hazardous one, and we could never foresee or anticipate events or the shape these might take from hour to hour, or from day to day. We had only to confine ourselves to immediate current affairs and seek to make the best use of the opportunities as they appeared or were presented to us. Never was our task an easy one. There were times when what appeared to be insuperable barriers balked our every move, and when even our best and most carefully prepared plans were upset for want, not of men, but other and more select types of weapons when our bombs and our revolvers and our methods of placing men in our customary ambush formations could not be made full and effective use of.

Perhaps at this stage it might be of historical interest to reproduce the following, as taken from Hansard Parliamentary Debates in the British House of Commons, Monday, 25th April, 1921:

"The Attorney General for Ireland (Mr. Denis Henry) answering Mr. Hogge, stated:

"There were more casualties among soldiers and police in the nine months following July 1920 than in the nine months preceding.

In answering to the latter part of the question I regret I cannot give any date for the cessation of these murderous attacks on the gallant forces of the Crown".

Answering Mr. T.P. O'Connor, Mr. Hogge replied:

"The total number of casualties during the last few days (weekend) were 4 police killed and 7 wounded, 3 soldiers wounded and 3 civilians killed. Two cadets were killed in Belfast and 2 civilians named Duffin and ..... I am still awaiting particulars of the latter occurrence".

Lieut-Commander Kenworthy asked the Prime Minister if his attention had been called to statements in the Press that certain Hon. Members of this House, including the Noble Lord and Member of Horsham (Lord Winterton) and the Hon. and gallant member for Bury St. Edmonds (Lt.Col. W. Guinness) have been in communication in Dublin with the Dail Eireann during the week ending the 16th April; whether he is aware of such communications between the Hon. Members and persons whose arrest is sought by His Majesty's Government; and whether the Hon. Member consulted his Majesty's Government before entering into communication with the Government of the insurgents in Ireland?

The Prime Minister:

"I can only say I know nothing of such communications".

Answering Captain Redmond, who asked the Chief Secretary whether ... he will say how bloodhounds were brought over to Ireland by the military, Mr. Henry replied:

"as the Hon. and gallant member is no doubt aware the provisions of the Diseases of Animals Acts (Rabies Order) under which the prohibition order in question was made are not binding on the Crown. There was therefore no contravention of the Order in its non-observance in this case, and the reason for its non-observance was an over-riding public interest (namely, the bringing of criminals to justice in order to suppress murder".

From Parliamentary Debates in British House of Commons,  
26 May 1921:

The Prime Minister (Mr. Lloyd George) answering Lieut-Commander Kenworthy, who asked whether he has addressed any further invitation to the leaders of the Sinn Fein party in Ireland to negotiate a settlement with His Majesty's Government; or what progress has been made to date:

"Mr. L. George: No, Sir, The attitude of the Government was defined by me in my speech to the House on the 28 April last. The offer I have repeatedly made has not up to the present led to any response . . . . I do not see what further steps can be taken. A public offer was made in the House of Commons and has undoubtedly been conveyed to these Gentlemen and they have made no response; at least if any response has come it has not reached us".

Lieut-Comdr. Kenworthy: "Has not the position been altered by the recent elections held in the south and west of Ireland. Does that not give a new negotiating body, and cannot we address ourselves to that body in the interests of peace?"

Lord H. Cavendish-Bentinck: "Does not the Right Hon. Gentleman think that the increasing lawlessness in Ireland demands some more useful policy than that of pure drift, which is the policy adopted by the Government?"

The Prime Minister: "No, on the contrary, we do not propose to drift. If it demands anything further it is an addition to the forces of the Crown there to cope with it.

Lord Cavendish-Bentinck: "Does not every day prove the increasing importance and hopelessness of the present Government in Ireland?"

The Prime Minister: "Quite the reverse".

#### Use of bombs, etc.

While naturally we were very much concerned with our form of fighting from the point of view of effectiveness other things were happening in our midst to prove that the I.R.A. was still alive in Dublin. Of these happenings two very important factors predominated at the time. One of these was the appointment of two ex-American officers - Major Dineen and Capt. Cronin to the I.R.A. training staff. These officers had arrived from America and, with our then Director of Training - "Ginger" O'Connell - set in motion training company officers, classes being held in a room over Gogan's in Marlboro St. by the two former officers in the use of the Thompson sub-machine gun in which they were particularly expert. It is noteworthy that about that time and from that time the "Thompson" came into prominence as a favourite weapon of the I.R.A. In this connection it is well to note that already we, the I.R.A., possessed various other types - possibly every

conceivable make - of revolvers, not a few of which were the famous "Peter the Painter" automatic revolver and rifle combination, and other automatic revolvers of various calibres two of the most used were the parabellum and the .45 ordinary long or short type; but that did not preclude the use of the several "38's, automatics or plain types, revolvers on occasions.

Of the many daring exploits of the guerrilla warfare none were so sensational perhaps as that which occurred about this period when a British armoured car was seized by a dare-devil group of I.R.A. men under orders of G.H.Q. The scene was the Corporation Abattoir in North Circular Road, beside one of the British Military Barracks and convenient to several others. On that occasion the armoured car "crew" were over-powered and the I.R.A. men drove the car to Mountjoy Jail for the purpose of effecting the rescue of Commandant Sean MacEoin "the hero of Ballinalee" as he was then popularly called. MacEoin had been sentenced to death in connection with an ambush which he had successfully carried off against British Forces. The I.R.A. men who sought to rescue him were dressed in British Army uniforms and made demands on the Jail Governor to hand over MacEoin, by producing faked documents, which purported to specify that on British Authority he was to be transferred elsewhere. But the ruse, brave and daring, failed, and the redoubtable rescue party had to withdraw in, of course, the armoured car, which, driven to Clontarf was abandoned and found later by the British.

We had not long to wait for another eventful and extraordinary event in the annals of I.R.A. activity in Dublin. That event was the destruction of the Custom House on May 25th 1921, an operation that was planned and executed for the purpose of paralysing the British civil machinery of Government. The task was entrusted to the Active Service Unit and the 2nd Battalion, assisted outside by several groups drawn from the 1st and other Dublin Battalions some of which - our own company included - were to act as a defensive force to be engaged in other capacities near or a distance from the scene of activities. One very important duty that fell to a few of those outside units related to the occupation of certain city fire stations, a precaution that had been taken in order to prevent the fire brigades from being employed to save the building. The operational plans resided in the O/C. Dublin Brigade, Oscar Traynor, who exercised power delegated to him

from G.H.Q. arranged and selected the various officers and units to have the work expeditiously and completely executed. These plans, if somewhat detailed and comprehensive, were simple, concise and definite. Every conceivable aspect of the enterprise had been carefully considered and obviously minutely planned.

The evening before that date the order had been issued to the various units that had been selected to arrange for the allotted quota of men and possible amount of material requisite for the operation. The next morning, as per instructions, I appeared at the brigade headquarters - the Plaza in Gardiner's Row, there to receive final orders from the brigadier. In disclosing the general plan, he stressed the main points, notably the time element, such as being on the spot at "zero" hour, and the time fixed for completing "the job", as well as detailing the possible points of danger from enemy action between these times, and the measures to be taken to deal with the British should they appear on the scene at any of the points where our forces would be operating. One could not fail to apprehend that this was nothing less than a big occasion and that nothing less than complete success was expected, were we to judge by the hub-bub and the scene of animation that prevailed at the Plaza. Even the brigadier, who generally looked the most unconcerned and the coolest of men, showed evident signs of excitement and enthusiastic anticipation on the outcome of our efforts. His every movement, word and gesture suggested a personal interest in the affair and that all of us, officers and men participating should regard it in the light of being of tremendous importance. It did not take many minutes of his presence to convince us of that.

Our company's part in the operation was intended to provide protection and cover to the party specifically selected to set fire to the building. Thus we were detailed

to occupy positions in the street outside in order to prevent enemy forces from taking action against the men inside. Our orders were to provide 12 men all of whom were to be armed with revolvers, and some with grenades. These were to occupy a position extending from Liberty Hall to the railway arches where Lower Abbey St. links into Beresford Place. On inquiry as to the advisability of using the overhead railway as sniping or grenade positions, or other buildings for similar purpose, the Brigadier conveyed the news that G.H.Q. was against such a move.

Zero hour was fixed for 1 p.m. Sharp on time the operation commenced by the men who had been selected moving into the building as unobtrusively and as unconcerned as if they were only engaging in ordinary business affairs. No apparent hurry or excitement could be noticed by the average citizen passing at the time. Even the presence of a heavy motor lorry outside the main entrance of the Custom House that faces Lower Gardiner Street did not seem to be out of place in the truly artistic setting of that palatial and beautiful architectural masterpiece some fifty or more yards removed from the public thoroughfare. These things were occurring as our men were taking over their allotted positions. Previous to that the men of our company had paraded in Tara Hall, where they were given orders and furnished with requisite arms for the purpose, the latter portion of which was entrusted to our company Q.M.. From there we moved, in small parties, to take up position as follows: Two men-William Gannon and Andy Mulhall - were placed under the arches. These were armed with revolvers and grenades. Two - Frank Carberry and Frank Brennan - were placed on the footpath at end of the railings of No. 11 and beside end of Brooks Thomas, while further up at another part of Brooks Thomas between ~~Ir. Abbey St. and Beresford Place were~~ three more - Martin Finn, Jim Plunkett and Nicholas Tobin - were placed. Across the Beresford Place road at Tuck's corner were the 2nd Lieut. Paddy Kirk and myself and on our right, at the corner of the laneway in Beresford Place beside Liberty Hall were Eddie Flood and Paddy Leonard commanded by 1st Lieut. Dinny Holmes.

In detailing our orders the brigadier enjoined that we were not to interfere with British forces unless they were in the vicinity for the purpose of taking action against our men. We were, in short, not to take armed action against any enemy force, if they appeared to be passing through on the several missions associated with their activities. In other words, we were to "lie low" and not to do anything that would convey the impression that anything strange was afoot. Should <sup>however</sup> British forces appear on the scene we were to permit them through our lines and "give them everything we had" if they showed signs of engaging in action. According to the brigadier's calculations, the operation was timed for 25 minutes in which time the building was to be ablaze and the men safely outside. Everything going well it should terminate at 1.25 p.m.

The time selected for the operation was a fortunate one, it being lunch-time. Thus, we had no great difficulty in concealing our identity or the purpose connecting our presence in the locality, for we had ample knowledge at our disposal that the open spaces and the thoroughfares surrounding the Custom House were the resort for workmen from the quays and neighbouring business establishments to spend portion of their lunch time in lounging about, or in other words, taking things easy. Thus to all outward appearance our men could be classified as being of the usual motley of people congregating there. Who could even suspect that we had any evil intent or design on man or beast or anything that day? Certainly, if appearances meant anything, some of the members of our company group put on a great masquerade by dressing a la mode working class, even to dungarees and not over-genteelish clothes. To such an extent indeed as to cause a fair share of laughter and jokes among their comrades. So unsuspecting were we in dress and demeanour that few, if any, people paid us any great attention.

Not that all our plans or some of the activities associated with the operation did not excite some degree of curiosity among spectators, or excitement on our part; indeed, the opposite could be proved, suspected or imagined. One of these occasions was when some of the main party were entering the building and when the petrol tins were being taken from the lorry and brought in through the Gardiner St. entrance. Was it not a case of "guilty conscience" that caused our hearts to give a sudden flutter, or the strange feeling that everyone around was aware that the I.R.A. were going to burn the place? The feeling passed away as quickly as it came, as no undue curiosity was aroused and the people passing at the time went their way oblivious of what was taking place in their midst.

Another such occasion arose when something bordering a scene occurred outside a door facing Abbey St. A policeman who was walking by that place, as if going in the direction of Store St. Barracks, had suddenly halted and seemed to be meeting with some trouble with a man <sup>an I.R.A. Sentinel</sup> there. This caused many eyes to be directed to that quarter. Some folk passing by halted showing a certain curiosity in the proceedings.

Almost simultaneously with that 'scene', another and more serious one was enacted about 15 minutes past one. Smoke and flames were seen to be issuing from one of the top corner windows nearest the railway. To say that it caused a sensation would be but mildly describing it. Passers-by stood in alarm, their curiosity deeply aroused. Our men outside urged them to keep moving. During this time our brigadier and Captain Paddy Daly were standing at the footpath at the corner of Abbey St. in sight of the flames. A few minutes afterwards a motor tender in which were armed Auxiliaries turned Eden Quay corner, passing Liberty Hall into Beresford Place, followed by another carrying a similar cargo. On they came, at a slow pace. The first one turned under the railway arches

as if going towards Store St. Just at that point one of the Auxiliaries was seen to be standing up in the car a revolver in hand pointing towards the smoke and flame then emitting from the window of the building. The car stopped dead just as a shot rang out, followed by a loud explosion which, we guessed, was caused by a grenade having been hurled at the car<sup>by one of our men</sup>. The impact of the explosion literally threw the occupants on the floor of the car or on to the roadway. The other tender also came under fire, but some of the occupants sought to rush for cover and in so doing ran the gauntlet of revolver fire directed by members of our party and men from the doorway of the Custom House. The strangest part of the proceeding was that the cars had come to the position where our grenades were situated, and the latter had no great difficulty in finding their target. Indeed, they had only to 'lob' them in at the short range available. It was quick and furious action.

The Auxiliaries who had escaped injury took up positions behind pillars supporting the railway or the upright pedestals that were interspersed around the space that formed the north-west and western side of the Custom House. (These pedestals had been constructed for holding swinging chains.) In a thrice all was excitement as rifles and revolver shots rent the air, and billowing smoke of the burning building and flashes of flames could be distinctly seen mounting. Without actually watching it, one had the feeling that a good part, if not all, of the work of burning was accomplished. In the midst of the fusilading, one of our men was seen running for sheer life followed closely by an Auxiliary, along Abbey St. passing Brooks, Thomas, and towards Northumberland Square. Not more than six paces divided them when, suddenly, the Auxiliary fell on the pathway, stretched as if dead, and Andy Mulhall - the man being pursued by the Auxiliary - escaped through a prearranged line of retreat through Brooks Thomas

into Marlboro St. Certainly, luck favoured him on that occasion and, as I perceived, he was doubly favoured by being able to perform a good sprint.

While this was being enacted a new element of danger to our forces had arisen. Already I had moved a short distance round the corner into Abbey St., my companion, Lieut. Kirk, having separated when the moment for action arrived and just in time, for the space on the corner where we had formerly been situated had come under fire. A short time before the previous episode, machine gunfire was heard. It was not easy to locate from whence it came, but we were not left long in doubt. The presence of a double-turretted armoured car in our vicinity provided a clue, as its hotchkiss gun came into play. Here was a big danger now to our men outside and also to the men inside the Custom House. It raced madly through the thoroughfares that surrounded the buildings, through Beresford Place from Eden Quay to Gardiner Street, backwards and forwards, firing all the time. Alternately it stopped at different places for the space of a few moments only to move on again to some other point, ever alive, ever threatening and deadly. What could our poor revolvers do in such an awful position?

Prior to that I had seen one of our men, Frank Garberry, near the railway arch and he almost sitting with his hands raised over his head. Could he be wounded? The presence of the armoured car in my immediate proximity occupied my closest attention. Greatest shock of all - the car turned the corner at Beresford Place and came into Abbey St. Meanwhile the firing, especially the small-arms fire, had diminished. The streets were deserted except for a few people who had taken shelter in the gateway entrance to Tucks. Charred and burning pieces of paper were falling on the streets and smoke filled the air as I dashed into Dunlop's hallway.

Just in time, too, for the armoured car had just stopped outside and remained a few moments, then departed. Instantly I felt the urge to escape - to make a dash for freedom. Running along Abbey St. was a matter of moments. I arrived at the lower end of Marlboro St. Just as I reached the Abbey Theatre entrance a woman nearby shouted "Don't go on to the quays, mister, the soldiers are there".

Vainly I sought to link up with some of our men. Could it be that they were all casualties? None were about. Disconsolately I moved away, retracing my steps, and gingerly skipped across Abbey St. into the other part of Marlboro St., making for McDonough's shop in Dorset St., the place where our men were to report after the operation to dump their guns. Soon I was at Mountjoy Square and, looking down on the Custom House, instantly proved that the job was well done. Joe McDonough had no news of any of the men. Could it be that all the others were prisoners or casualties? The thought was not a very wholesome one for either of us. Even yet there was work to be done if it was true that none of our men had escaped. To acquaint their relatives and take dangerous material from their homes in case of raiding by the British; but proof was soon forthcoming that Frank Carberry was a prisoner. He had been one of the best of <sup>our</sup> trusted and tried <sup>men</sup>. The "Littler" as he was affectionately called and partly designated because of his small stature would be sorely missed. We shall miss him in the future. But what of the others? A check-up revealed that Frank Brennan had also been captured - all the remainder of the company group had escaped without a scratch. A few of our revolvers were lost in the action; some others had been traced in the vicinity and recovered later by our men or by members of other units of the Dublin Brigade.

There was, however, great satisfaction in the knowledge that the operation was a complete success from the purely military and political aspect, although we had every reason

to feel sorry that the Dublin Brigade I.R.A. should have to pay a big toll to achieve such gigantic results. Thus, we had to mourn the deaths of gallant fighters - Sean Doyle, Daniel brothers and Paddy Head the/Stephen/O'Reilly and Paddy Dorrins - members of the 2nd Battalion - a number of wounded and several score of prisoners. These losses could in all seriousness be regarded as a dire calamity to our cause, not alone because we were robbed of the sterling services of so many fighting men, but also on account of the possible reactions which such might have on the course of further fighting in Dublin.

The British forces, particularly the Auxiliaries, suffered many casualties, though they in their official report disguised their losses, information became available to the I.R.A. authorities that quite a number of them were killed and wounded.

A night or two afterwards, the brigadier, Oscar Traynor, conveyed through our First Battalion Commandant, Paddy Holohan, a special message of commendation for the part our company group had played in the action. Our men highly appreciated that they should be the object of laudation from such an exalted source. None could deny them the signal honour of paying tribute to their heroism and absolute obedience to orders. Each and every one of them deserved every praise for they had given full proof of the trust that had been reposed in them. The marvel was that any of them escaped alive from the trying and troublous ordeal and that they had rendered a good account of themselves.

Of course, many stirring accounts were given concerning the highly exciting exploits and experiences of some of our men. Mention must be made of one such case: The person referred to had already disposed of his grenade by throwing it at the Auxiliaries and likewise had expended his four rounds of revolver ammunition. His next plan was to get away. Behind

him was, strangely enough, No. 10 Beresford Place, into which he dashed, much to the amazement of some women who were congregated there as the place was a dispensary. A woman, presumed to be the caretaker, brought him aside, took his revolver from him, then got a girl whom he took to be her daughter to link him outside. In the meantime, she had given him a bottle of medicine. The good girl escorted him through the cordon of British soldiers which had been drawn across the lower end of Gardiner St. Thus, he got safely away. The next day, or night, he returned to the house and recovered his revolver.

The effect which the operation of the destruction of the Custom House was truly electrifying and gave great heart to the men of the Dublin Brigade, for it represented what might be termed a major action and perhaps the biggest in the guerilla warfare. It bespoke a departure from the employment of small groups, and possibly a stepping up of our methods for waging our warfare. Even the newspaper reports of the "startling occurrence" conveyed the telling news that something more than an ordinary raid had been carried out. Indeed, it was evident to all and sundry that a good deal of fighting had ensued and all Dublin knew that, for the shooting had been heard some distance away. News travelled fast and far those times and it was reasonable to suppose that nothing was lost in the telling, some of which were only conjectures and had no relation to facts. While on the subject of news and conjectures, it might be well to refer to the matter affecting the presence of the first two lorry loads of Auxiliaries, Had they any prior knowledge that the building was being burned by the I.R.A.? Was their presence on the scene coincidental or according to design? Were they on ordinary patrol duty that brought them in the vicinity, or were they merely passing on their way to some other point, or on some other duty? These points were debated by several of the participants afterwards. They were questions that puzzled not

a few. There was some evidence to prove that the first group of 'Auxies' showed surprise when they beheld the smoke and flames coming from the building. The fact that they came to a halt so far away from the building might indicate that they were not in possession of information concerning the I.R.A. action. While that was evidently true in many respects, the question of their having some kind of information on the point could not be entirely ruled out. It was even contended by some that they could have been so informed by various channels and in devious ways that something strange was going on there. One could argue that there were several means available to do that - could even infer that the police authorities at Store St. Barracks communicated the information. Indeed, that was held to be the most likely source for spreading the news on account of it being within a couple of hundred yards' distance from, and which by reason of its location commanded a view of the northern portion of the Custom House. Much of the activities connected with the operation of burning that building, and certainly, the fire itself could hardly have escaped their notice, unless and this was the big conjecture - they were asleep to all that was happening so close to them.

We knew already that no help to stop the fire could be forthcoming from the fire brigades, as units of the I.R.A. from the several Dublin battalions, as well as a group from "F" Coy. and I think "B" Coy. 1st Batt., occupied the several stations. Likewise, it had been hinted that telephonic communication would be locally disconnected. If information was conveyed, it must have been by some other names, such as through secret service channels or from a distance outside the danger zone. The main point of the conjecture was when the British authorities became aware of the I.R.A. operation. As it was, fifteen or twenty minutes elapsed before the contingent of 'Auxies' appeared. Already the fire was 'well on' and they themselves were powerless to stop the men inside the building from continuing burning the building

When the bigger reinforcements of British troops arrived, the building was a veritable cauldron and a complete devastating fire, which even the best efforts of the fire brigades, when they were allowed by the I.R.A. to intervene, were of no avail. Thus, one of the important 'pillars' of the British administration in Ireland went up in fire and smoke, becoming thereby one of their most potent losses.

Many stirring and exciting anecdotes were related afterwards by individual participants of that epic drama - tales depicting extraordinary deeds of valour, of qualities of endurance and of faithful obedience to duties under the most adverse and difficult circumstances. Herein were displayed every latent talent of daring grit and abandon in the teeth of a blazing inferno inside, and the death-dealing rifle and machine gun cannonading outside the building. Death stalked them everywhere and whenever they turned. Every second and every minute of the time they gave to the task of burning that huge pile lessened their chance of survival or even escape. Yet they held on grimly and determinedly to complete the work to which they were allotted, until there was hardly any other prospect left to them except to perish in the flames they had set alight, or to run the gauntlet of the merciless gunshots of the British forces, who by that time had practically sealed off their remaining avenues of retreat. A dreadful and disconsolate situation like that called for more than ordinary cool heads and steady nerves. Some there were who threw caution to the winds and, taking their lives in the hollow of their hands, made a desperate endeavour to fight their way out, and in so doing faced imminent death from enemy gunshots. Luck favoured a few in that bold way to escape. Others, of whom Doyle and O'Reilly were two, fell in the attempt to run the gauntlet, while at least one - Tom Ennis - was seriously wounded, but got to safety notwithstanding. But most of those

men who had engaged in the burning were hopelessly trapped within. When they were eventually extricated they became prisoners, because they could not give a proper account of themselves. Some of these were given away by some of the staff and others were suspected because they smelled of or bore traces of petrol on their clothing. There were some few, however, who sought refuge in subterranean passages or swam the Liffey to safety.

Admittedly the British lost very valuable material potential, but as against that, the I.R.A. had weakened itself, or become weakened as a result of the destruction of the Custom House. The attempt had cost us dearly in the loss of life and the number of our men that had been captured by the British. When consideration is paid to the point that most of the men engaged were what might be termed the "big guns", or actual fighting potential, such losses could be regarded as serious and disturbing. As against the successful completion of a most important operation - and no one could doubt that it was other than a big achievement - we were debited to the extent of having a very weakened active service unit which, together with the losses incurred by the 2nd Battalion of the Dublin Brigade, was bound to have serious consequences in the conduct of our guerilla campaign. Was it any wonder then that a certain degree of disorganisation resulted from the enforced defection, due to their military activity, and that plans should have to be got under way to reorganising the active service unit, in order to bring it up to fighting strength?

With that aim in view, Volunteers were solicited from units in the Dublin Brigade and the A.S.U. accordingly reformed as an effective fighting unit. Included in the number were two members of our company, William Gannon and Eddie Flood. These and all men were required to be transferred and to be supplied with revolvers and ammunition. It became an accepted condition that aspirants to that unit should be well-trained and, of course

capable of engaging in various activities. It so happened that the application of that system resulted in a nett gain to the A.S.U. and loss to the various companies of quite a large number of active Volunteers. Such was the system, however, that the company commanders had had to part with some of their most active men after having brought them through the several laborious stages of training and providing them with experience in ambushing and other forms of activities. Plainly, there was no alternative to the procedure of maintaining the existence of the A.S.U. as it was generally conceded to be our front line force, specifically charged with the task of fighting. No other recourse was possible to companies except to replenish with suitable man-power for the proper discharge of their particular distinct and essential duties. It fell to the companies then supplying men to the A.S.U. to fill in the gaps created thereby, by posting other men to the positions rendered vacant. Of course, the companies had possibly greater scope for this than the A.S.U. as the former had generally more men than it could conceivably actively employ. Most of the men gave a clue that they desired to be transferred to the A.S.U. and it must be said that they looked upon it as a duty and, in their own words, "If I don't do it, someone else will". The feeling <sup>which</sup> prevailed amongst some of them ~~was~~ <sup>that</sup> was they should be given a chance in a bigger and a more sustained way of proving themselves. There was never much difficulty in getting volunteers for the A.S.U. Of the men who were already serving in the A.S.U., or those who sought transference there, few if any of them showed manifestation of heroics or tendency to 'show-off' their prowess or their valour. Only one predominant passion was manifest. They were actuated only by the desire to do whatever was needed in the new role. Even the question of payment for their services could not be regarded as the all-pervading element to their willingness to do things in

as precise a manner as that to which they had served in their former, and parent, company. For one was to the other part and parcel of the same thing, in the sense of passing from one sphere of influence <sup>or</sup> from a lower to a higher plane in the military scheme of the I.R.A.

During the course of its few months existence and activities the A.S.U. had become a force to be reckoned with and had proved itself a live and potent guerilla group. Already it had dealt many telling blows against the British. On the other hand, it suffered vital losses in killed, wounded and executed. Every such loss had to be met by initiating new men into the service. At no period of its existence was there such great need for this than after the Custom House operation. Judged in the light of the serious dilemma in which it then was, it became imperative that a critical adjustment would have to be made to put the A.S.U. on a sound and effective footing. Time was an essential factor then, as it ever was, in a situation that called for quick decisions to keep alive a force that had suffered a severe but not irretrievable setback. Any slackening in our activities might tend to give the British the impression that they had whipped us and that, having 'shot their bolt' the I.R.A. forces, as represented by the large number of prisoners, were weakened thereby. The I.R.A. sought to prove otherwise.

The big question of the moment was the supreme urgency of keeping the fight going with, if possible, greater energy and in a more marked degree. It was vitally necessary to do this in order to mislead the English and to create doubt in their minds that they had so many of our best men in jails. We knew otherwise, but felt that our best plan was to show a bold front in order to prove that we still had large forces at our disposal to continue the fight. In what other way could we assert this except by rehabilitating the A.S.U.

the A.S.U. and planning to bring it into play on an effective military basis. Thus, the A.S.U. in its rejuvenated state, took up the threads of its former life and functions so ruefully interrupted by the debacle in which it found itself after the Custom House burning.

Another form of activity in which the Dublin Brigade engaged around that period related to a widespread raid carried out sometime in May 1921 in connection with the Belfast Boycott. On that day certain offices and commercial firms were visited by select men from various units, our own C/Coy. included, and goods and records of sales were seized, on the orders of our G.H.Q. Information had been conveyed to various commands that efforts were being made by the business fraternity, with some measure of success, to smuggle in goods of Belfast or Ulster origin in order to beat the boycott imposed by Dáil Éireann and enforced by the I.R.A. After inspection by the competent higher authorities of the I.R.A., the seized records and invoices of sales were returned, peremptory warning being issued to those who were found to be trading in such contraband goods, or trying to evade the ordinances prescribing same. So thoroughly efficient was that particular branch of the service associated with the Belfast Boycott plans, and so alert were our men generally on all aspects of intelligence work, that few if any moves could be made without the knowledge reaching I.R.A. quarters and appropriate action taken in the matter.

Curfew in Dublin at 8.30 p.m.

In a summary of activities of the Dublin Brigade, An tOglach stated "that for the month of May 97 distinct operations were carried out. These included the destruction of the Custom House. There were 27 attacks on enemy forces in lorries and seven armed conflicts with enemy forces. There were 23 captures of enemy stores and other enemy goods, bicycles, telegraphic and telephonic apparatus etc. by means of raids and holds-up...."

About this time also the British adopted and operated a system of foot patrols, which caused us much concern as it appeared to be the most effective move to counter our activities. Thus we were brought to realise that some other effective form of warfare was desirable arising out of the new situation. Many officers of our battalion advocated the use of rifles for sniping on these British formations as the most practical method of countering/ambushing enemy foot patrols. The chief point underlying their advocacy of that new form of warfare was that selected buildings commanding strategic positions in or on various main thoroughfares should be made use of and occupied for short periods, that these buildings should be occupied by I.R.A. sharpshooters who would be required to fire a few rounds and then withdraw from the scene. A bold plan enough, and one that was an actual replica of our regular 'hit and run' tactics. As an idea it had much to recommend it and seemed to possess many favourable features. But the idea was scotched in its infancy by our authorities, on various grounds, one of which was that it might expose the civilian population to greater trials, inconveniences and losses. Another aspect that was stressed was that at the time in question only a small number of service rifles were available for such duty because of the fact that the Dublin Brigade units were under orders to pass these on for use of the flying columns. Besides, it was not intended to create the impression, as such a course of fighting might be construed to be, as something resembling an actual uprising. The result was that we had to remain largely ineffective because of having to place greater reliance on what was, up to then, our normal system of fighting - the employment of ambushing parties, armed only with revolvers and grenades - while the British, exploiting the military position, made our work harder and more troublesome. A good deal of our ambush plans were frustrated thereby, as these foot patrols were difficult to avoid and were not so

vulnerable to attack as troops in lorries, for they moved in extended order through the streets holding up and searching pedestrians.

One never knew when or from what direction they would appear; no street could be regarded as safe from their presence, their attentions and their movements. Sometimes they appeared to spring up from nowhere in particular, but always and ever they were prominently active, astutely suspicious and most eminently efficient in the discharge of the varied duties which that form of activity entailed. So thorough and attentive were they in that specific sphere that much of our plans to bring off ambushes became surfeit or were retarded in consequence. Every ingenious device and trick had to be resorted to by us in order to baffle them, to avoid them and to reduce their power to entrap and overawe us. A more than ordinary perception of danger forced us to conduct a regular battle of wits against them, pitting our brains against their tremendous show of strength if for no other reason than to neutralise their efforts to exploit the situation thus created; while at the same time we sought to prove that even in the face of such enormous difficulties our will to wage war remained unaffected. Yet the dangers were there in the streets and by-streets of Dublin. We were always more than conscious and visibly aware of them. It would have been the height of folly to ignore them, or to treat them as if they did not exist, when we knew but too well that they were proximately present in the form of a foe that was neither lenient or generous in combatting us. Indeed reason dictated that we should face up to these dangers and the consequential difficulties that were bound to arise from the operations of the foot-patrolling system which the British had so craftily devised for the purpose of preventing or circumventing ambushing by or on our behalf. The all-important essential method of approach requisite to meeting and baulking the

aggressive spirit behind that subtle move suggested, nay demanded, that we should regulate our conduct and movements in the full consciousness of ever-growing and imminent danger.

Adaptability and originality were always our strong points in the past. Every situation that had arisen, and every move made by the British, whether provoked by force or imposed by law, had little if any effect in weaning us away from our cause, or the course that had been set for us. It was ever our pride that we were as clever, as tenacious and as elusive as the British, or as they gave us much credit for. Up to date we had been quite successful in overcoming many of the obstacles placed in our path by the British or resulting from circumstances connected with the varied nature of the warfare in which we were engaged. By adapting ourselves to the changing circumstances we were thus enabled to keep abreast of the times, even though the task was neither an easy or a pleasant one. In the prevailing conditions imposed by the new form of military tactics, and which the cleverly devised machinations of the British had so singularly aggravated, it took more than a modest effort on our part to continue the warfare in the form and at the pace in which we had become accustomed. It was a time when a greater degree of caution, ingenuity and circumspection was called for, and had to be applied by us whenever and wherever the I.R.A. affairs, or matters associated with I.R.A. activities entailed our movement through the city streets so desirable.

On such occasions, especially when armed, our men showed neither undue concern or disquietude, except from the angle that greater opportunities were not afforded them to be more active in the sphere of ambushing. There had been a noticeable decrease in the volume and extent of motor transportation by the British forces of late, particularly during the night time when our men were on duty. Like us, they seemed to be playing the role of hide and seek; like us, they were exercising caution, and seeking not to expose themselves except for good reason. Not that they remained inactive or passive all the time. Seldom, however, was their activity of such a nature as to facilitate action being taken by our forces at the times and in the places selected; they were often too numerous or too strong or active to be attacked by our men. We had to contend with the ever-increasing difficulties of trying to dodge them, to frustrate their every move and all the while seek to pursue our course by continuing the fight.

That was how matters stood all during the month of June, 1921, as units of the Dublin Brigade continued the fight by whatever means and methods were available to do so. The A.S.U. were likewise showing signs of activity, having become reorganised and recovered from the effects of their previous losses. Our difficulties had not lessened with the passage of time. Then came the fourth of July. To mark the anniversary of American Independence, President de Valera had issued a request for a display of flags. Needless to remark, advantage of this was taken to fly, not alone the American but also the Irish flag. In many instances the Irish tricolour was predominantly displayed from many windows and roof-tops, principally in the poorer quarters of Dublin. The British occupying forces were none too pleased or happy at the "disloyal" exhibitions, so much so that not a few attempts were made by them to interfere with the display and to forcibly cause the offending Irish flags to be removed, in many instances having to use force to remove them themselves or else to stage demonstrations to show their disapproval of the whole idea. Of the many thoroughfares selected for the latter course, Dominick Street became a danger zone. When night fell, British forces, particularly the "Auxies", descended on the neighbourhood and went "tearing mad", shouting and shooting.

It so happened that of all nights, our Battalion Council meeting should be held in one of the houses of that street, number 40 to be exact, which was situated opposite the Dominican Church. The room, or rather the bath/<sup>ROOM</sup> at the top of the first flight of stairs, served as a kind of munition depot where daily one of our Company officers, Lieutenant D. Holmes, carried on

work of preparing grenade sets and making revolver ammunition. On that particular July night all the Battalion staff and Company Captains were present. We had just barely got down to business when the report was delivered by one of our scouts stationed outside anent the enemy activity. Prior to that we had heard the heavy rifle shooting. We had enough sense to realise that it was quite convenient to our meeting place and associated with a possible move to capture us. Our meeting was brought to an untimely end, after having transacted our business in the shortest time possible. Then we were instructed to hop it. Safety lay in moving out of the building unostentatiously, one at a time, for fear of attracting undue attention from unfriendly sources, for in the course of our work we had to guard against the prying eyes and ears of secret and open enemies. In that wise, we made our exit while the British forces of law and order engaged in bringing terror to all and sundry in that vicinity.

We prided ourselves in escaping that night, happy at the thought that our meeting place was not discovered. Others too were likewise pleased, not the least of those being our Director of Munitions, Seán Russell, the good Volunteer Jimmy Grace, who lent the place for I.R.A. purposes, and Holmes who even afterwards used the place for "making things". Its loss would have been a serious handicap to the I.R.A. Frequently I visited that workshop and had a fair idea of what was going on. Indeed on more than one occasion, I had been brought face to face with some of the work that was carried on there. Once in particular, when Dinny was demonstrating rather proudly

the quality of the home manufactured revolver ammunition, in a matter-of-fact way he placed one in the cylinder of a revolver and, before either of us realised it, presto a shot rang out! - and I felt a sudden warm feeling in my right ear. Fortunately nothing untoward occurred except that the bullet embedded itself in the door behind. There could be no gainsaying the fact that it was good stuff - the misadventure proved that much at least. Fortunately too the report was not heard outside.

In connection with this matter of the manufacture of revolver ammunition, it must be mentioned that the .45 calibre had fallen into short supply. That type was in almost general use and there had been a considerable expenditure of the ammunition during ambushes. Thus the problem was created to meet the deficiency by cutting down another class of ammunition of the same bore, the lead portion of which being made in a hand mould, in order to fit it to the revolvers as mentioned. No greater proof of ingenious skill could be provided than this minute and meticulous mode of craftsmanship. It afforded proof too that, even with primitive tools and working under extremely adverse conditions, such things could be fabricated and accomplished. This was a far cry from the home-made grenade that was and had been in use in many an ambush or operation in Dublin and throughout different parts of Ireland, as well as the numerous experiments, fittings and accessories that had been brought into the field of engineering and chemistry.

During the following days of July rumour was rife that "something was going on behind the scenes".

Parliamentary Debates in the  
British House of Commons,  
Wednesday, June 22nd, 1921.

Sir James Baird answering Mr. Briant:-

"In view of the grave danger which would in many cases ensue to persons giving information, the practice is not to supply interned persons with a formal statement of the evidence against them. If they apply to the advisory committee the evidence against them is indicated, as far as possible when they appear before the committee, and they are given the fullest opportunity of answering it. They are heard in person by the committee at the internment camps."

---

Mr. Henry answering Mr. MacVeigh:-

"Patrick Rafferty (arrested near Newry in March) is serving 3 years for the possession of ammunition and seditious literature, including an I.R.A. pamphlet on night firing and is in prison in England."

---

Similar rumours had been rife for a considerable time previously which suggested that "peace feelers" and possibly "peace negotiations" were afoot. In connection with these important moves, it may be relevant to mention that the names of influential English personages, English noblemen, members of the British Parliament, Church dignitaries, etc., were designated as being linked in the endeavour to stop the fighting in Ireland. Many of these people had been shocked by the atrocities practised by the Black and Tans particularly and the cruel methods of the British administration in Ireland generally. These excesses and abominations had already evoked a wave of indignation among liberty-loving people of various types and classes in England, Labour leaders and Trades Unionists included, who had expressed their indignation and disgust of British government policy in the British Parliament, on public platform and in the British and Anglo-Irish press. We had no reason to assume that any accommodating spirit towards the several peace feelers, intermediaries or pour parlers had been exercised or encouraged by our political or military leaders, although rumours, strong and persistent, had been going the rounds that the peace move had been in swing the previous Christmas, Lord Derby's and Archbishop Clune's names being mentioned therewith. The rank and file could hardly be aware and certainly were not made aware of such things, if there was any foundation in fact for the suggestion that negotiations of some kind or other were going on. Certainly was that true up to the time when, like a bolt from the blue, sensation was caused by the publication of a very strange message from one of our military leaders, Mick Collins, which opened many people's eyes to the

revealing knowledge that some form of negotiation was going on under the surface. His message, "Stop talking and get on with the work", could only have one meaning for us, namely, that which indicated that we were still waging war, and yet we could hardly forbear the thought that there "was something in the rumours after all".

Like a bolt from the blue also had come the startling news when on the 8th and 9th July reports were issued intimating that a Truce was declared between the British Government and Dáil Eireann. That Truce, we were informed, was to operate on Monday, July 11th.

On Monday, July 11th, 1921, at twelve noon the guns ceased firing and the British forces and the I.R.A. for the first time in five years became non-combatant and non-aggressive. On that day the British Chief Secretary for Ireland (Sir Hamar Greenwood) stated:-

"The truce was agreed to on Saturday; it officially became operative at 12 o'clock to-day.

Unfortunately the shooting of a policeman in Belfast on Friday night precipitated one of these deplorable riots which I think tarnish the good name of the Northern capital of Ireland. I share with him (Mr. Devlin), and all the world shares, the feeling of relief and hope engendered by the peace proceedings in

Ireland, but the police in Ireland remain under the Imperial Government until, under the Government of Ireland Act, they are given over to Northern Ireland and Southern Ireland."

The British Chief Secretary (Mr. Lloyd George) announced in the British House of Commons:-

"I have had a telegram from Mr. de Valera.

'Telegram received. I will be in London for Conference on Thursday next.'

The telegram which I sent has already appeared in the papers."

Thus we were brought to the full realisation that something had been going on behind the scenes. Plainly there was no reason now for disbelieving Dame Rumour or the propagation of news which, perhaps good meaningly, if indiscreetly, could claim affinity to sources that were definitely "well-informed" or emanating straight from the horse's mouth. The truth was out at last. Belligerent actions between the Irish and the British forces ceased. Guns, revolvers and grenades were accordingly silenced and, in their stead, a new method of approach to a political settlement of the "Irish situation" was imposed, or superimposed, as a necessary condition to end the warfare in Ireland. It was a simple enough expedient, that idea of a peace conference, which no person in his right senses could find fault with, to rile against or condemn.

Officers and Men of "C" Company, 1st Battalion,Dublin Brigade, I. R. A.on 11th July, 1921.

Captain :	Prendergast, Seán
1st Lieutenant :	Holmes, Denis
2nd Lieutenant :	Kirk, Patrick
Company Adjutant :	Richmond, John
Company Quartermaster :	Nathan, Seán
Intelligence Officer :	Finn, Martin
2nd Lieutenant :	Kennedy, Seán (Interned)
Section Leaders :	Byrne, Patrick
	Kelly, Mark
	Maher, William
	Tighe, John
Police Officer :	Dowling, Thomas
Quartermaster :	Molphy, Charles (Interned)
Volunteers :	Allen, Con
	Bevan, Charles
	Byrne, Jerry
	Brabazon, Joseph (Interned)
	Brennan, Frank (Interned)
	Brooks, Fred
	Birmingham, Andrew
	Bannon, William
	Bowes, Peter (Interned)
	Buckley, Edmund
	Bould, George (Interned)
	Carroll, William
	Cassidy, Thomas (Interned)
	Cooling, Joseph
	Curry, William (Interned)
	Cahill, John
	Cregan, Christopher
	Courtney, Michael
	Conroy, Joseph (Interned)
	Carbery, Frank (Interned)
	Crowe, Joseph
	Corcoran, Seán

Volunteers :

Darcy, Patrick  
 Durkin, P. J.  
 Donnelly, James (Interned)  
 Doyle, John  
 Duignan, Patrick  
 Dolan, Edward  
 Downey, James  
 Daly, Patrick  
 Farrelly, John  
 Farrell, John (Interned)  
 Finn, John  
 Foley, Frank  
 Flynn, Patrick  
 Fulham, Joseph  
 Grogan, Eamonn  
 Grennell, Gerald  
 Gallagher, Felix (Interned)  
 (Alias Peadar Meehan)  
 Gorman, Thomas  
 Howlett, Michael  
 Hollywood, Matt  
 Hanafin, Tim  
 Hanafin, Con  
 Hughes, Patrick  
 Healy, Christopher  
 Hahesy, Thomas  
 Kelly, Joseph  
 Kelly, Joseph  
 Kavanagh, James  
 Kavanagh, Seumas  
 Keating, Patrick  
 Kinsella, James  
 Keane, Edward (Interned)  
 Kirk, Robert (Interned)  
 Killeen, James  
 Ledwith, Peter  
 Lynch, Bernard  
 Leonard, Patrick  
 Lambe, Patrick  
 Manning, Henry  
 Macken, Patrick (Interned)  
 Moriarty, John  
 Mulligan, Con (Interned)  
 Mulligan, John (Interned)  
 Molloy, Joseph  
 Moore, Maurice  
 Madden, Anthony  
 Myles, Charles  
 Morrissey, Seán (Interned)  
 Myler, Seán  
 Mulhall, Anoy  
 Mongey, Laurence  
 Maree, John  
 McGuinness, Séamas  
 McDonough, Joseph  
 McArdle, James (Interned)  
 McArdle, Patrick  
 McArdle, Edward (Interned)  
 McGrane, Denis (Interned)  
 McManus, Thomas  
 McEvoy, Patrick  
 McGrath, Michael  
 Nevin, Patrick  
 Nalty, John

Volunteers :	O'Reilly, Christopher	(Interned)
	O'Shea, Patrick	
	O'Connor, Patrick	
	O'Connor, John	
	O'Hanlon, Charles	(Interned)
	O'Brien, Patrick	
	O'Toole, William	
	O'Keefe, James	
	O'Sullivan, Denis	
	Poole, John	
	Plunkett, James	
	Plunkett, Peter	
	Reilly, Bernard	
	Ryan, John	
	Stringer, Patrick	
	Swan, Patrick	(Interned)
	Sweetman, Joseph	
	Smart, Thomas	
	Sheehan, Michael	
	Scully, Michael	
	Tobin, Nicholas	
	Tallon, Michael	
	Whelan, George	(Interned)
	Walsh, Desmond	?(Interned)
	Walsh, Patrick J.	
	Weafer, Frank	
	Wilson, Mark	(Imprisoned)
	Wilson, Laurence	(Interned)
	Yourell, Thomas	

The following Volunteers had been transferred previously from our Company to and were then serving in the A. S. U. :

Carrigan, James	
Flood, Edward	
Gannon, William	
Quinn, Seán	
O'Sullivan, Dermot	(was in prison).

---

In the intervening days between the promulgation of the terms of the Truce and the actual day of the Cease Fire order coming into effect, no appreciable abatement of activity or action was noticeable on the part of the British forces. Likewise the I.R.A. remained on guard and continued activity in the several capacities to which it had hitherto been involved. On our part, we continued to send out and place men on ambush duty, raids, etc., if for no other purpose than to take advantage of every available moment and keep the war going up to the twelfth hour. While these activities were continuing, one could not fail to comprehend the profound importance of the occasion which the declaration of the Truce and the notification of the proposed Anglo-Irish Conference had imposed on our military force, the I.R.A. In the short space of the intervening days, it was not even possible to conjecture, indeed it could not be reasonable to assess, the true state of feelings of our force in its entirety or even to sense the reactions of the average man of the I.R.A. to what was then regarded as a most sensational and historical event. No means were available to do so, and the fact that there existed a wonderful sense of discipline and regard to duty, which each man voluntarily and patriotically accepted as a condition of honourable service, precluded such being ascertained. It was always possible, however, for those who were officers or well known, provided they moved freely around within the compass of certain circles, groups, or in their own units, to obtain a fair insight into, or an understanding of, the thoughts, the feelings and characteristics of the average man that comprised our movement. In that way, "a thing or two" had been learned and appreciated in the past.

As regards the situation that had been created by the Truce declaration, the least that could be said was that it found most I.R.A. men perturbed, surprised and not a little speculative as to cause and effect. To say that it was received with mixed feelings would but mildly describe the reactions of the men of the I.R.A. to the Truce. Doubts and suspicions there were among many as to the purpose and the nature of the Truce itself and on the specific ground that it might be merely a breathing time, of long or short duration, in which advantage might be taken by the British to rehabilitate themselves and strengthen their forces in Ireland for a renewal of the conflict. Some there were who feared that the Truce was only a trap designed to break our discipline, to take us off our guard and cause us to weaken our hold on things generally. But, in the main, the majority looked upon it in the light of being a military order and as such deserving respect and compliance.

When the psychological moment for the cessation of hostilities arrived, we became aware, through the medium of detailed orders from the higher commands of the I.R.A. of the fact of our continued existence and that we were expected to take up the trend of the work that had to some extent fallen into abeyance during the campaign. We were again to function, to parade and train; this time without fear of interference, arrest or punishment. Active units of the Dublin Brigade went into camp; men of the flying columns in the country returned to their former commands and homesteads under orders that they continue service in the new form as directed. A new wave, or rather a return of the old spirit of enthusiasm beckoned us on to reunite and strengthen our forces. Officers of units were particularly desired to redouble their efforts with a view to conducting extensive and systematic training of their men. Our own (1st) Battalion opened a camp in Mulhuddart, Co. Dublin, where men of the various units went into training. Towards the

end of July our company had established a permanent camp at Portmarnock. All classes of military subjects were taught. Certain numbers of our men spent their spare time and even their holidays there. Every weekend the company reported there for the various duties and, during the week nights, the work of training was carried on at the camp and the company venue, Tara Hall, to which we had returned in force after the signing of the Truce. General headquarters had encouraged the idea of training camps. Then it was that the functions of soldiering became understood. The lull in the fighting gave us a breathing space for officers and men to improve their knowledge of military technique, inculcating a finer sense of discipline and elan of the units. Much had been learned and much gained from the exploits and experiences of the recent warfare. Every day and every week of the Truce was well spent in toning up the spirit, character and finesse in men as ~~te~~ in the units. Particular care was taken to bind the partly shattered organism and to tighten up the military machine, by instituting a rigorous system of training, re-arranging the various groups composing the units, and attending to the different administrative and routine matters that were all too plentifully and all too urgently thrust on us. Specialised classes in first aid, signalling, machine gun, armouring and training were re-arranged. Police and intelligence groups consolidated, all units availed of the occasion to make the best use of the time at their disposal, urged as we were by the feeling or premonition that "the conference" might not be successful.

In the midst of that acceleration the pace to perfect our military training and secure general fitness of our men, the officers of companies were prevailed on to keep on the move and not to weaken in their efforts, to maintain complete control of their units. Classes were also conducted for officers and N.C.Os. Weekly meetings were held for company adjutants and quartermasters; likewise, company captains attended weekly (Note: See Company Roll on Pages 540 to 543, inclusive)

meetings of the battalion council. Thus we returned to our former organisational system, the captains alone having had to surrender most of their spare time in trying to meet the demands placed on them. But if the period was one that imposed certain strains on us, it found us only too eager and too glad to do our best in the circumstances, our only regard being to give loyal and consistent service to our men and those who exercised authority over us in the interests of our country.

During what might be regarded as a period of quiet and tranquillity everything in the garden was not lovely. How often has the best prepared plan of mice and man been brought to naught, or been hampered or frustrated by some act or acts of indiscretion on the part of those on whose shoulders rested the responsibility for initiating and completing a perfect job? This is by way of preface to an affair in which the writer and his company became involved during the Truce period. It arose over the question of our camp at Portmarnock. We had been installed there for well over a month when orders were issued by our battalion O/C. Comdt. P. Holohan to "break camp and to proceed to the battalion camp venue, Mulhuddart". Sadly upset and chagrined, not so much at the issuing of this peremptory order as that its terms implied the conclusion of our company venture, we dallied in giving strict and immediate compliance to the demand imposed on our company. Acrimonious controversy accordingly ensued. The Battalion O/C. took umbrage at our unaccommodating attitude. To hold out on a matter of principle of company requirements and company independence could only be registered as dissentients to the battalion plan. Our actions were rather guided in the light that as a unit we were carrying out all orders respecting training, claiming also that we had been first to set up training camp. Stress was also laid on several responsibilities, not the least of which entailed the renting of the site and our possibly increasing liability and expense in transporting our stores. These, however, were considered of little consequence in the matter of obedience

or non-obedience to orders. Small wonder, indeed, that soon afterwards our Portmarnock camping expedition came to an end and the company returned to the city. Small wonder, too, I became suspended pending courtmartial on a charge of insubordination and non-compliance with orders.

It did not take long to set up a court of officers to try the case; neither were they long in deliberating and imposing sentence. The inevitable verdict specified that I be suspended from duty for a month. That sentence was not a happy one for me for many reasons, not the least of which it put our company wrong with the battalion, and established the first real break in my service over a long number of years. Each of these were hard to endure. Perhaps we had erred in permitting the matter to reach the point where retreat was impossible; but we had acted in what we conceived to be the best interests of our company, and because these interests suited our members. It must be admitted that the whole affair was viewed by the members of the company with misgiving and not a little resentment so much so that they refrained as a company from participating in the battalion camp.

By a strange coincidence my period of punishment terminated a short time before the day fixed for the battalion review, which signalled the conclusion of the battalion camp at Mulhuddart. We, or to be more precise, I, had in the meantime returned to the fold, all disabilities and acrimony being passed away. None perhaps was so happy as I; and the battalion commandant who, credit where credit is due, acted as if nothing had arisen to spoil an otherwise long and pleasant association. Thus our company paraded at Phibsboro' on that fateful Sunday in September and set out on lorries to the rendezvous, Mulhuddart. Six or seven hundred men were on parade that day. The inspection officer was the Chief of Staff, 'Dick' Mulcahy, who, taking advantage of the occasion, addressed us. In solemn and earnest

tones he exhorted us to bend ourselves to the task of being well drilled and well prepared to resume the fight. His reference to the possibility of us going into the fight again synchronised with the sensational news that was in circulation at the time of an almost rupture in negotiations at the Peace Conference in London where, during the past months, efforts were being made to 'make' an Irish settlement. Up to date, however, the question of Ireland as a Republic or a Dominion, had not been composed and, if rumours were true, there was a rift in the proceedings. In such a circumstance our Chief of Staff advised us to prepare for the worst, by becoming specialised and perfect in the use of arms and grenades, for we might yet have to resume the fight. The knowledge thus imparted to us gave additional impetus to the rapid intensification of our endeavours to train our men, as it brought home to us the uncertainties of political affairs as they related to the London Conference.

From that moment, a fresh spurt was given to perfect our organisation and our training. Such was true of all units in the Dublin Brigade. Training, more training, and still more training became, as it were, the accepted watchword. Never in the history of our force was enthusiasm higher or the will to do things exercised so freely and persistently. These and the utilisation of suitable and better facilities for training greatly contributed to the urge to be ready for all contingencies. Every moment was valuable, and every moment was put to good use. Fortunately we had a greater degree of freedom in conducting our training, especially indoors since, for the first time within nigh eight years, we were afforded immunity against enemy raids or actions directed against us. In that way we could plan without fear of being interfered with and always with the possible assurance of carrying out the allotted programme as arranged. Besides, we were also enabled to train

with the appropriate materials such as rifles, revolvers and grenades instead of improvised makeshifts, or rough and ready substitutes.

Crises followed crises in the political domain of the London Conference. The Irish barometer became as variable as the autumn weather. With the approach of early December the mist cleared somewhat, when, lo and behold! there came a day, it was the sixth day of that fateful month, the news fell upon us and upon the world that "a settlement had been, at last, reached". Glaring newspaper headings, reports and posters flashed the sensational tidings anear and afar. They told the story of a Treaty agreement having been signed by the Irish and British plenipotentiaries - a Treaty of Peace - a Treaty guaranteeing Ireland's Freedom, a settlement of the age-long quarrel between Ireland and England, were rapturously displayed and as rapturously applied to the document labelled "articles of agreement". The publication of the Treaty terms or "articles of agreement" brought to light the salient and salutary fact that Ireland was being accorded "Dominion status within the Empire". Soon afterwards the Dáil was summoned, and met and deliberated on the Terms and, for the first time, in years those who stood for republican principles showed signs of disunity and unrest.

From that moment the seeds of disunion became rooted in the hearts and minds of those who had hitherto stood in the gap of danger fighting for an Ireland one and indivisible. Disruption and dissention in the Dáil rapidly spread outside. After days and weeks of harsh and rancorous discussion, the Dáil adjourned for the Christmas recess, agreeing mutually to reassemble to still further debate the question in the following month. In the meantime, the doors of the prisons and internment camps were flung open and our dear comrades of the I.R.A. and kindred republican movements returned as freemen to a country that was beginning to be swept by a

desperate and cruel whirlwind of political passion and animosity. Rejoicings there were, and justly so, for their homecoming. Even though the occasion and the circumstances responsible for their liberation were such as to cause great happiness to fall on all those immediately concerned, there was hardly one among them who was not apprehensive of the dark and darkening clouds that then hung over the Irish scene. Under such sombre conditions their personal liberation and the welcomes and festivities associated therewith lost much meaning and lacked true balance when viewed in the light that the move to release them was intended as a means to create a good atmosphere for the success of the Treaty cause. Therefore, they came amongst us in the midst of political turmoil unlike their parting when all within and all of the republican fold were one in faith as they were one in fealty, and where unity and a high resolve to win complete freedom were appropriately applied in the face of an alien despotism that stood as a bulwark against us and the cause we espoused.

Not that they returned in an unfriendly or politically biassed manner different than when they parted. Rather the contrary was the case. They, like us, had mixed feelings and held divergent opinions on the Treaty issue which, to say the least, only served to supplement the already existing political rancour so cruelly and so wantonly invading the regions of our military force, and causing other difficulties to accrue to their and our undoing. Every unit - our own was no exception to the average - became belligerent to the point of taking sides, and it became only a question how many or how few <sup>were</sup> in favour of or against the Treaty. Every unit, in the Dublin Brigade at least, was similarly circumstanced in regard to the major national situation, involving, as it was bound to involve, the I.R.A. no less than the other component parts of the republican movement into a first rate debacle with or without the inclusion of the returned and liberated prisoners.

While the political instability caused by the signing of the Terms of Agreement for a Treaty had brought discord in an otherwise united nation, I.R.A. affairs remained somewhat unchanged. Training continued as heretofore. Our comrades who had been recently set free returned to their respective units. All would have been well then if the storm arising from the London agreement was less threatening and not so foreboding; but, alas! when on the 7th January 1922, the Dáil voted by a majority of seven for a ratification of the Treaty, the storm burst furiously, menacingly and indiscriminately throughout the length and breadth of Ireland. Its repercussions were particularly felt amongst those who through dark and evil days had given service in the I.R.A. forces and the Sinn Fein organisation. If it brought a measure of freedom to Ireland, it also brought about a cleavage in these worthwhile national organisms. Its evil effect was less noticeable perhaps in the I.R.A. than elsewhere, although signs and symptoms were in evidence which set the minds and frayed the tempers of individual officers and men on the merits or demerits of the Treaty. There was a certain uneasy feeling which indicated that all was not well or could continue to go well in the armed forces, while its political and national arm, Sinn Fein as well as Dáil Éireann, were going through a supremely tempting and troublous crisis.

Fortunately, the high degree of discipline in the I.R.A. prevented an immediate disruption. But the same could not be said of the Sinn Fein organisation, especially in Dublin, where the serpent of disunity had from an early period shown its ugly fangs emitting venom within the body politic and leaving its poisonous stigma in the minds and in the hearts of many people. I had a proximate knowledge of this by reason of my being one of the paid organisers of Sinn Fein then operating in Dublin city. In that capacity I visited various

cumainn (or clubs) of the organisation, met and collaborated with officials and members, made contact with existing branches and sought to organise new ones. A particularly sad part of my work related to the endeavour to keep existing cumainn from splitting on the Treaty issue. Mixing among the different groups and classes which composed the organisation one would easily get to know their minds and their allegiances and judge accordingly who was for and who was against the Treaty. At the time of which I write - before and for a short time after the ratification of the Treaty by Dáil Éireann - it was a common policy, indeed a definite rule prescribed by the Dublin City Executive, to keep clear of the issue and to refrain from debating or voting on the matter at meetings of the cumainn. It was held to be such a delicate and controversial subject which sorely threatened the very existence and welfare of the movement that anything resembling a showdown was deemed inadvisable. But all that time disunity had raised its ugly head and men and women members of cumainn professing pro-Treaty or anti-Treaty opinions were giving vent to their feelings in either regard. Hence the condition imposed on me to exercise restraint on the grounds of national unity.

The work which I then had to perform in that particular sphere, though quite difficult at times, had certain pleasing and useful aspects; not the least of those was concerned in the gaining of many friendships and the winning of many confidants and confidences. I considered myself fortunate, nay, highly honoured, in being so well circumstanced, my rank in the military force contributing in no small degree to the attainment of their trust and the ratio of importance which some well-meaning people regaled me. Another pleasing feature about the work was that it brought one in contact with a large number of members of the I.R.A. who held various positions in Sinn Féin cumainn and in some instances largely controlled some of them. My visitations to these were regulated by the

Executive consisting of the principal officials of the various constituencies. That work was purely organisational, to keep in touch with the different groups, to attend their meetings and to summon meetings where none were held, or infrequently held, to resurrect redundant cumainn and to infuse new life into dying ones. In a word, an organiser was required to secure revival and to assert activity. Thus he was granted an expansive field in which to exploit his talents, his capabilities and his skill within certain limits and governed by certain well-defined conditions.

It was not always easy to attain to great eminence in the field of organising during that period of stress when those who had formerly been true and abiding friends were fast becoming suspicious, if not antagonistic, to each other, on account of the political tension then prevailing. Other circumstances and considerations militated against producing satisfactory results. During the latter stages of the guerilla warfare and the activities of the British forces, many of the cumainn had fallen into disuse or functioned in a small way or with only a few members. Meetings were seldom if ever held. Some of the cumainn had suspended work or ceased to function altogether for other causes, principal of which was that many of their officials and members were serving with the military arm in the fighting, while not a few were 'on the run' or prisoners. Even during the relatively peaceful period of the Truce many found it hard to continue membership of their Sinn Fein Cumann, as a good part of their time was taken up with training in the I.R.A. Other men who were less active in the I.R.A. were able to devote a good deal of time and attention to cumainn affairs. Many of these difficulties were got over during the Truce and most of the cumainn in Dublin city had got into a composed and effective state immediately prior to and up to the ratification of the Treaty, only to face another and more awful ordeal, that of the probability of disunion.

Here was I labouring in two spheres, each of them calling for tact caution and in many cases much diplomacy. These were difficult at a time when everyone in both the I.R.A. and Sinn Fein were considered to be for or against the Treaty. Particularly so was it in my case, as I was personally against the Treaty terms, although I accepted and exercised the role of peacemaker in the interest of unity in our own company and in Sinn Fein. I looked upon the Treaty with disfavour for the reason that it was less like the independent Irish Republic we had declared our allegiance to and more like the Dominion Home Rule which we had for years disfavoured, because of the Oath of Allegiance to the British Crown; the office of Governor General, and that Ireland was to have two parliaments instead of one, as well as the clause which gave England the right to make use of the harbours and ports of Ireland in times of war, etc. I was not alone in this, as practically all the principal officers and the majority of N.C.Os. and men of our 1st Battn., as well as all the officers and N.C.Os. and most of our company were of the same mind.

The bitter and frenzied debates in An Dáil had upset and disturbed the minds and weakened the loyalties of many men in the I.R.A. and in Sinn Fein and kindred bodies like the Cumann na mBan, the Citizen Army and the I.R.B. We found ourselves wondering whether the attainment of the Treaty, which conferred on Ireland the status of a Dominion within the British Commonwealth of Nations was going to disunite our militant forces, the I.R.A., or whether, alternatively, by some contrivance or other, the I.R.A. could maintain its unity and its entity within the ambit of the Treaty. Some there were who considered that we could "work the Treaty" and at the same time keep the I.R.A. intact and, by so doing, prevent a complete disunity of the country. How seriously and how energetically we laboured these points in the belief that the unity and integrity of the army would be secured no matter how the people acted on the Treaty issue! But, alas, the political situation

outpaced us, if it did not, as it were, engulf and ensnare us. Perhaps we received support or encouragement for our ideas from the assertions made by some of the politicians who supported the Treaty that it could be made a "stepping stone to the Republic". The high-minded wordy duel in the Dáil, however, succeeded in achieving two things - it won the Treaty and lost the unity of the country and the people of Ireland, Sinn Fein and the I.R.B. Of its effects on the I.R.A. and I.R.B. more anon.

As regards Sinn Fein, it could be said that the Treaty position brought it, as a powerful political and national organisation, through gradual stages of inactivity to absolute stagnation. That was so in the case of Dublin city. There the membership of the cumainn rapidly decreased and those who remained members became less enthusiastic, less vigorous and less attentive than heretofore. It was difficult to break down the barriers that contributed to its undoing; suspicion, distrust and even hatred had crept early and unmistakably into the councils and among the personnel attached to the different cumainn. Anyone with any sound sense of reason and judgment could perceive that the organisation and its members were going through a period of travail, and a process of disintegration for which there could be no redress unless the Treaty, which was the main cause, was eliminated. Plainly, we were witnessing the death and destruction of one of the most potent political and national movements in the annals of Irish history.

Was it not a poignant and a saddening thing to contemplate the passing of such a grand and patriotic organism into oblivion? Here was a movement - nay, more than a movement, a veritable institution - being condemned to extinction and death at the hands of their friends and so-called protagonists and devotees, Sinn Fein, that had withstood the test of time and of trial, of vituperation and of persecution, that had stood

four square against alien laws, tyrannical governments and military governors; that had braved the bullet, the bludgeon and the prison cell, by means of the ballot and the exercise of free speech in its fight for Irish self-determination and the will of the Irish people to be free, was to die an ignominious death. Sinn Fein as an organisation that had rallied Irishmen and women everywhere and won their support, their esteem and loyalty of the best in Ireland, won them mostly on the principal and sole reason that it stood by the Proclamation of 1916 and the establishment of the Irish Republic. For this reason was it pledged and gained strength during the previous six years; in this faith it lived and had its being beside and in harmony with the militant force, the I.R.A.

Was it possible that a movement like Sinn Fein should now so easily crumble to pieces and put "finis" to its own work when the ideals which it so proudly enunciated and so nobly affirmed had fallen into disuse because the Treaty was a "compromise" and a stepping stone to the Republic? What other fate could befall it when those who were its most enduring friends and trusted leaders lent themselves to perpetuate disunity because the Treaty was "the best that could be got under the circumstances?" Was it not a humiliating condition to impose on an organisation and a class of brave men and women who were left with no other choice but to break away from the heroic traditions of the six glorious years of endeavour and sacrifice and that the Treaty settlement was considered to be a fair price to pay for the disunity of Irish men and women. Was there any way of averting the tragedy that was being enacted under our very eyes, the tragedy of men and women who were firm and loyal friends in a great ennobling cause being rent asunder and thrown at each other's throat? Was there any reason or logic for such a course.

In the face of the undercurrent that was furiously sweeping the Sinn Fein movement and its allied forces to perdition, there were many people, friends of each of them who were making gigantic efforts to prevent a total split. Even that was not an easy task, since the Dáil had split on the issue of the Treaty and, in consequence, had, by a vote, elected a new Dáil, thus displacing the leader of the Republican Dáil, President de Valera, for a President who had pledged himself to implement the Treaty. That lead was bound to have serious repercussions in the political and military movements. It seemed only a matter of time when the Sinn Fein organisation would follow the same course. Nothing short of a miracle could prevent it from collapsing. As far as my knowledge and experience was concerned, Sinn Fein in Dublin was far on the way to disunity at the time of the ratification of the Treaty in January 1922. It would not be safe to make a bold assertion that at that time it would have been impossible to compose the differences that had arisen. There were, as we too well were made aware, many people in our midst who had goodwill and were well disposed to the movement and were seeking to hold it together. Their point of view was that it would be tragic for the country if disunity was effected in the national movement. But such unity was dependent on the issue of the Treaty or the issue of the Republic, since the movement up to and including the period of the Treaty ratification was linked to the idea of the "living Irish Republic" and, in consequence, had not found cause to make changes in that regard.

How could unity and amity be maintained under such adverse national circumstances when men and women, devotees of a popular and patriotic movement were fighting out the issue within the clubs? How could unity be maintained when their leaders, who were their, and the country's accredited and trusted leaders, were at loggerheads on the next political issue? Was it not asking too much that the rank and file should continue in unity when their chosen leaders were throwijg discretion to the winds

and, by unseemingly bad taste and vicious invective, were lending themselves to the promotion of a deadly, a vicious and a cankerous growth in the body politic. How would or how could the rank and file respond to such a situation when those whom they loved and trusted showed such small regard for their feelings or their patriotism as to expose the national movement to disruption, and in turn, disturb the ideals which up to that time were considered to be sacrosanct, sacred and securely fixed. Was it not expecting too much of human kind to expect forbearance, tolerance and the exercise of charity in a crisis wherein was enshrined the fate of not alone the country, but also the destiny of their own beloved movement to which they had given such loyal service in both spheres. These, and perhaps a legion of other questions were asked by many people who regarded Sinn Fein as being of supreme national importance in the national entity known as Irish Ireland.

It was unfortunate, as it was manifestly nauseating, that no other appropriate answer could be given to the many questions that arose as a result of the political tension and uneasiness imposed by the Treaty position except to produce chaos within the national forces. Every moment that elapsed only served still further to bring ruin and disintegration among those whose lot was cast within the Sinn Fein fold. One had need to be closely and intimately associated with the men and women adherents of that organisation to obtain a clear picture of what was going on behind the scenes, and of the havoc that was being wrought within the confines of the different cumainn. In that respect, I was not uncommonly circumstanced in being "in the know" of things and of gauging the reactions, opinions and feelings of quite a large number of people. How many times had I had reason to report unfavourably on the conditions of the cumainn within the Dublin area? Not infrequently had I stressed the point that disunity existed and was stultifying activity and progress. Particularly was that so after the Dáil had decided to ratify the Treaty.

Then the various cumainn showed evident signs of approaching disruption not by one gesture or action but rather for want of either. No such thing as a complete cleavage occurred for the simple reason that none was encouraged and none was sought because certain efforts were being exerted to avert such a course as would cause absolute disunity among them. It looked at times, however, as if nothing short of a miracle could keep them together. The issue of the Treaty was not at the time as clear-cut in the Sinn Fein cumainn as it had been in the higher councils of the organisations and in the Dáil. Besides no vote was taken on the question for fear of creating a split.

It would be hard to say at that juncture whether the majority of the members of the Dublin cumainn favoured the Treaty or were against it, for the reasons above specified. The nearest anyone could go in estimating an approximate figure would be to say that opinions were fairly evenly divided in the various cumainn in the comhairle ceanntair and in the combined constituencies council that governed the Dublin city area. Some of the cumainn, however, were predominantly pro-Treaty, others anti-Treaty, while not a few were more concerned in not showing their true feelings on the issue, they being more concerned in keeping the movement intact, rather than precipitating a crisis. Of the latter class I would make bold to say that most of them would have made no end of sacrifices towards that end, Credit where credit is due, it must be asserted that even those who professed themselves Treatyites and anti-Treatyites could not be regarded as averse to the true interests of Sinn Fein, or were not prepared to do a lot to prevent a crisis that threatened to engulf it, When, at that stage, decisive action on that question would have achieved no good purpose, and when, as was then the case, efforts were being made to effect a compromise that would keep united all those who subscribed to Sinn Fein policy and principles.

Oh, the wickedness and the machinations of man! The time came when the cleavage occurred and men and women took sides on the issue, despite and notwithstanding the immense endeavours of some well-disposed people to patch up the rented fabric that once had withstood the tempests of the previous troublous years. Then a curse came on us when our leaders became disunited, dividing on the Treaty issue and, in consequence, forming separate camps. Then we became aware of a house divided against itself. For the first time in nigh six years our united front was broken, not by dungeon, fire or sword, but by the process of a Treaty that was regarded, and vauntingly extolled, as being the harbinger of peace and freedom for Ireland! Paradoxically in the exercise of securing such a measure of freedom, no other choice was possible except to break the common bonds that preserved unity among our leaders, united us to them and they to us. Thus a real stumbling block to the continued maintenance of unity in Sinn Fein was erected.

One of the reasons that militated against reconciliation among adherents of the Sinn Fein organisation was not so much leadership as an excess of leadership. That fact that it and the kindred bodies, such as the I.R.A. and, even to an extent, the I.R.B. were controlled and governed by the same individual leaders went very far in producing unsatisfactory results; the fact that the same Tom, Dick and Harry (these terms are used advisedly) were members of the executives of each, and in many cases ministers and members of Dáil Éireann as well were factors that aggravated the tension that prevailed therein and among those who were members of such. In many instances policy was subordinated to the question of personality, when the only thing that mattered was the popularity and influence of the leaders, or some of them, and the use these could be put to in order to secure support to their side. Only too well were these availed of and demonstrated. Perhaps it was human that people should regard their leaders with awesome reverence and render to them filial devotion because of their truly grand and patriotic past.

Hence the fight ranged around the names, the fames and glories of individual leaders according to the whims, the fancies and the follies of their respective protagonists.

But the achievements, adventures and greatness of any one leader or set of leaders were stressed to the full. These might, in ordinary circumstances, have been of some value in holding the people together to keep them united and to spur them on to greater endeavours. Such had been the case up to the Treaty position. Since then, however, leadership had fallen into disrepute, if it had not fallen into disuse, where it was not already over-stressed or over-emphasised because of the trend to disunity which seemed to overtake some of our leaders at that particularly sad time. Under these awful circumstances, the plain people of the Sinn Fein organisation broke the bonds that had previously served to unite them to their leaders; they, too, following their leaders' actions, became Treatyites or anti-Treatyites.

While these things were happening, the Sinn Fein cause and movement in Dublin declined. Insuperable difficulties arose, due mainly to the Treaty issue, which tended to kill initiative and activity and to bring the different cumainn to stagnation point. Some of these ceased to function, while others that could be regarded as existing were only barely able to function, or to hold themselves together, in some haphazard fashion. My work, as indeed my position, as organiser, in consequence, showed evident signs of deterioration in the face of a similar fate that was speedily pulling down our national structure and changing everything, brought us to the verge of utter and hopeless disruption. In many instances, meetings were held infrequently if at all. <sup>Any of</sup> the few "live" cumainn that existed were neither lively nor beneficial except in the sense, and for the purpose of providing opportunities and scope for ventilating opinions on the Treaty issue. Much of my work was directed in trying to keep them from so acting, as a matter of common policy

and because cumainn were precluded from taking decisions on the question of the Treaty. So utterly impossible had things become, however, that no great need existed for keeping in office an organiser - to wit, myself - at a time when organising was at a very low ebb and was so hopelessly dependent on the existence of a virile and progressive movement, which Sinn Fein could, unhappily, not be regarded as being at the time in question. As my salary was paid from a common pool, in which each cumainn subscribed a quota, and as many cumainn had fallen on hard times, my departure was assured. Hence, I had perforce to break what was not a wholly unpleasant or unpleasing association among those whom I had ever regarded as dear friends and faithful collaborators in a good cause. In parting thus I could not fail to be aware that our Sinn Fein movement in Dublin was going through a period of sad and unrelenting distress of which disunity formed the major part.

Perhaps my enforced disassociation from Sinn Fein affairs in the sphere in which I operated was not altogether of a very disturbing nature when it is considered that most of my duties were concerned with keeping the peace so that the various contestants would not fight the issue out, within the cumainn. Mine was no easy task, and the fact that I held decidedly strong anti-Treaty views which I was precluded from airing because the conditions of my office prescribed that I act with circumvention and restraint and required that I should not take sides, gave me an experience that was both salutary as it was peculiar. But then I was no worse placed than <sup>in</sup> the position I already exercised in the military force, where I also had to hold myself in check in the interests of unity which, as in the case of Sinn Fein, was being so ingloriously undermined by the political fury and passions then raging over the Treaty question.

In my association with Sinn Fein in Dublin I had been brought into close contact with many ardent lights in the

various comhairle ceanntair or cumainn, notabilities like Larry Raul of the South City Cumainn, Harry O'Hanrahan, Dick Davys, Christy Healy of the Inns Quay Cumainn, Mick O'Brien, Secretary of the North Dock Cumainn, Peadar Doyle of the Kilmainham Cumainn, Owen Porter, Secretary of the Wood Quay Cumainn, Dominick Owens of the Rotunda Cumainn, Tom Hoban and Seamus Doyle of the North City Cumainn, Nicholas Lennon of the Arran Quay Cumainn and Mrs. McKean were but a small number of the hosts that comprised the movement then. Other personalities were the various deputies of Dáil Éireann for the Dublin constituencies, Liam Cosgrave, Phil Shanahan, Liam Staines, Sean T. O'Kelly.

Due to the conditions prevailing at the time my work as organiser could not be considered as secure and 100% beneficial by reason of the curbing influences and checks which had been brought to bear in connection with my organising work. Not less dissimilar were these applied in the I.R.A. where regard for the interest and wellbeing of the military forces was considered to be above the issue of the Treaty, and where through the medium of superb discipline and a high sense of patriotism officers and men were enjoined to exercise the greatest caution in preserving unity within its ranks. On the officers particularly devolved, as a question of duty, the task of trying to keep their men and their units free from the political bickerings and unrest then so apparent outside.

The altogether tragic, poignant and disturbing evils of disunion, resulting from the Treaty position, having affected the political organisation, Sinn Fein, was bound to become manifest in the militant arm, the I.R.A. The big question that arose was: whether we as professing soldiers could weather the political storm better than the pronounced political adherents? Unquestionably, from the moment the Treaty was

signed, and especially since the date of its ratification, the I.R.A. became somewhat involved in the trend of national affairs of which it shared partisanship and was, partly or wholly, interested. Obviously no better proof existed than the fact that some of its leading officers were signatories to, and voted in favour of, the Articles of Agreement. Other officers as members of An Dáil had also voted for the Treaty. On the opposing side were ranged leading officers who, in similar capacities, voted against the Treaty. In that way, and by that means, we were involved in the political conflict that was being unleashed or raging in our midst.

That conflict of opinions and diversified actions of some of the leading lights of the I.R.A. were contributory factors in sowing the seeds of disunity and disruption among us. There seemed no way of escape from the impending doom into which our treasured movement was being so cruelly and so swiftly plunged. Here was a force, an invincible, virile and sensitive force, that had borne the full blast and the weight of the war for independence; that had boldly faced every situation and stood up to every test and trial against superior odds, in many cases overwhelming odds; that had relied on its own strength, initiative and courage of which it possessed much; that had not been broken or beaten in the warfare or by the process of jailings or internment camps; now about to fall a victim to the more deadly and devastating form of conquest, disunity! As many of our G.H.Q. staff were members of the Government and of the Dáil and, of course, on the high council of Sinn. Fein and I.R.B. it was hardly possible that the I.R.A. would entirely steer clear of the dangers that were inherent in the receding political situation - or to escape from the even more deadly and devastating evil - that of a split within the I.R.A.

True there was a strong feeling among a fairly substantial number of men of the I.R.A. that, however much other groups and

organisations, or even the Dáil itself, should disagree on the question of the Treaty, the I.R.A. as a militant force should not split, but rather remain intact in the interests of the nation. Many amongst us argued the question from a purely military and national angle. There were even some who were solely concerned to keep the I.R.A. free from the political rancour and unrest which was then only too manifest outside our force. A split among the I.R.A. was then generally regarded as the greatest evil in an uncertain and difficult period. That seemed to be the only sound logic, at a time when bitter acrimonious wrangling was being indulged in by politicians in the Dáil on public platforms, in the council chambers, and last and by no means least, the public press. The greatest harm accrued from the speeches of political groups and the propaganda indulged in by the press, the latter particularly being predominantly pro-Treaty, had by then thrown its full weight into the fray against those who professed republican or anti-Treaty views.

Concerning the actions of the Irish public press during the period under review, the salient fact emerged that if anything, they persistently pursued a policy of strict partiality and partisanship in support of the Treaty, savouring of a too spacious and an over solicitous regard for the things that were nearest and dearest to their own agelong political hearts. They got to idolising some of our soldiers and our political leaders, eulogised them for their manly and heroic deeds and generally accorded them veneration and the highest form of hero-worship. Did it not sound highly exalting to have such men written off as national heroes and brave warriors and to have them regaled as the men who won the war? Did it not appear that, after all, the "pen was mightier than the sword?" Could we of the I.R.A., or some of us, be blamed for examining our consciences on that rather strange and surprisingly sudden conversion for which the Treaty was directly responsible? But was it conversion or merely self-interest

that caused such a press to lionise their would-idols and to lavish on them bouquets and paeans of praise for their great deeds of valour during the fight of the preceding few years? Miracle of miracles, the press took up the cudgels of the fight at the point where the fighting men left off, and fought it over again by a spate of special articles and selected writings in praise or some, not all, of those who had rendered service in that manner, all of which helped to widen still further the gap that already existed in the I.R.A.

Perhaps our memories were at fault or playing us false in the situation then. Perhaps we had forgotten the part the Irish public press had played during the period when our men were fighting for their lives and in defence of an ideal without and despite the help of the journalistic scribes who seldom if ever raised their voices or used their pens in our defence or in defence of our cause. Perhaps we had forgotten that on occasions our movement had had to take hostile action against some of them because of some indiscreet or insulting reference to our men and our cause, when such action on the orders of the I.R.A. authorities consisted in raiding newspaper offices and printing works and by smashing certain portions of the machinery therein left no doubt in the minds of certain newspaper managers that the fighting men would not be trifled with. Such courses of action were seldom carried out by the I.R.A. Verily our memories were short and our intellects dull were we to be forgetful that the same newspapers supported every cause but that to which we gave allegiance supporting in turn the British sponsored convention; Recruitment for the British forces during the 1914-18 World War, as well as the British side in that war; condemned the insurrection, the leaders who promoted it and were executed for it and wrote of the rank and file as "poor deluded dupes"; a press that was purposely anglophile, and mainly concerned with the "predominant partner" and favoured the connection with England as being the

the only thing that mattered and was worthwhile for Ireland.

In throwing their full support on the side of the Treaty the public press, especially in Dublin, aided disunity in the ranks of those who had kept alive the spirit of nationality throughout the previous six years and went very far in setting Irishmen against each other. Were the matter of Irish unity and of I.R.A. unity in particular, or even for that matter the deciding of the Treaty issue alone, left to the national combination of men and women that comprised the national movement, the chances for composing the differences might not have been so difficult. Heretofore we of the national movement had paid scant attention to, and had accustomed ourselves to disbelieving the average Irish papers. We generally gave them a wide berth, or where for want of alternative organs for news tolerated them, as being the best of a bad lot. We considered ourselves to be strong enough in our own convictions in our opinions and our aspirations as to remain immune from their denationalising influence. How proudly we boasted that not all the press of England or Ireland could win us to their viewpoints, or cajole or mislead us. We looked to our own consciences, our own hearts and hands in matters appertaining to national affairs and the cause of freedom for Ireland. We had learned our lesson from the past, and we prided ourselves as being so fixed in our purpose and our principles that not even the press could turn us from our straight course or affect our ideals in any degree. We had given our allegiance to Ireland, to our movement and our people, and however the tide would ebb or flow, press or no press, we would continue to carry on without the help of a press not one of which (in Dublin at least) in those past years had favoured republicanism, or the cause or fight for the Irish Republic.

The Irish movement of the past few years had had to rely on a few weekly, bi-monthly and monthly journals, papers and periodicals for national news. Some of these were published under exceptional difficulties and had had bad times, through the exercise of a severe and strict censorship, seizures and stoppages. Many other obstacles were placed in their paths by the British administration in order to reduce to a minimum the power and influence of a truly national and republican press. It had become a kind of settled policy for them to institute repeated raids on offices of these papers, arresting and imprisoning editors and staffs on divers charges, but not uncommonly because they printed and published matters of a seditious nature. But such manifold difficulties and disabilities were accepted by those who supported the national cause, as part of the price that had to be paid in the interest of the nation. Meanwhile, we had grown accustomed to be unrepresented, ignored or misrepresented by the ordinary so-called public press which gave true emphasis to our weakness and our great loss in not having a press of our own. Mention must, however, be made of some of the organs of national and republican opinion which circulated from time to time during the past number of years, such as "Nationality", "Sinn Fein", "United Irishman", "New Ireland" etc. Some of these had been suppressed. Some, even after suppression, appeared under different titles. There was one other paper, however, which survived the tempest; that was "An tOglach", the official organ of the I.R.A. Secretly printed, it circulated secretly among I.R.A. men. Its editor was an I.R.A. officer, and it was printed by I.R.A. men. Perhaps none of our republican papers had such an exciting history to record as "An tOglach". It was in existence in 1922, having served the cause of the I.R.A. and the national and republican ideal over a number of years in which it gave faithful and loyal service, sustaining us at all times, but particularly during the most trying periods of the fight from 1919 onward. As a small broadsheet

it was mainly devoted to military matters, furnishing hints on training, tactics and strategy and suchlike, as well as articles describing the exploits and achievements of the I.R.A. Its leading articles were words of wisdom for us, whether these were of a political, national or military tinge, relating to the Irish and the I.R.A. cause. Undoubtedly "An tOglach" was most eagerly sought paper among I.R.A. men who unhesitatingly subscribed their twopence to procure a copy fortnightly over a number of years, but weekly within the previous eighteen months or so of its circulation.

One very important feature concerning the printing and circulation of "An tOglach" was the interest the British authorities took in trying to locate its printing press and to destroy it lock, stock and barrel. Try as they would they were unable to do either although no easy task was set for the promoters and printing staff to keep it in circulation during such troublous times, as the period of the guerilla warfare. Yet, its influence never waned, but grew stronger as the fight got hotter and many an I.R.A. man undertook many sacrifices even imprisonment or the risk of imprisonment on its behalf, and because it was esteemed as "our paper" and bore the imprint of a truly national and republican mouthpiece. That was its profession, its aim and its purpose, which it had fulfilled to the letter and in the spirit of our fight for Irish independence. It could not easily depart from that course without doing irreparable damage to itself, as the mouthpiece of the I.R.A. and in defence of the Irish Republic.

While on the topic of "An tOglach" and its views and news on the national issue it might not be irrelevant to refer to a complaint that was made by one of my associates. It was during the Truce period and a short time before the Treaty, when negotiations were in full blast between the Irish and British plenipotentiaries. The complaint was that the words "Irish Republic" or "the Republic" were not being used or

had not been in use in any of the leading articles for some time previously. The alleged omission caused him some heart-burnings. He produced one copy particularly, the one that he took especial notice of, and examining it, we found that no mention was made of the magic words, although terms like "independence", and "freedom" were used. So keenly suspicious was he that he allowed himself to think that there was some subtle meaning in the whole subject, even to the point of suggesting that something short of a republic was in the offing. Further to that, and to give additional emphasis to his suspicions, he expressed the opinions that the politicians - those of the Sinn Fein type who were not "whole-hoggers" for the republican ideal - would let us down. He had, it appeared, formed those opinions on the previous Christmas when, as a prisoner in Mountjoy jail, he and others incarcerated there, had become aware that secret negotiations were going on, with some of our leaders. He based his misgivings on conversations he had with some of the political personages imprisoned there, and, as he declared "I have been suspicious ever since". His reasoning, even if true in its entirety, could hardly be subscribed to by many of us who considered that complete unity reigned supreme in our national movement.

#### CHAPTER 24.

Reverting to the I.R.A. and I.R.A. affairs after the retification of the Treaty by An Dáil, very special stress must be laid on the formation of the Provisional Government, which had come into being for the purpose of "implementing" the Treaty. Positions held formerly by the Dáil Cabinet as the government of the Irish Republic fell into the hands of those whose plan it was to work the Treaty. Thus, the President of the Irish Republic and of An Dáil, Eamon de Valera, was dispossessed. Similar action was taken against other Ministers who held views repugnant to the Treaty and in favour of the

Irish Republic. As a result, the Dáil Cabinet became the Provisional Government, and An Dáil an instrument for upholding the Treaty position. In ordinary circumstances political changes of such a character would not in themselves have been abnormal where the ordinary processes of constitutional law were available to or availed of to impose governmental authority. But no such normal position existed then in a country like Ireland, which up to that time was governed by a predominantly one-party legislature when ministers and deputies held only one exclusive political view and took their stand on the fundamental right of complete freedom. These had been elected from an exclusive political and national movement and received backing by a voluntary and volunteer army that was oath-bound to defend and uphold the existing Irish Republic and the Government of Dáil Éireann which at the time was the Government of the Irish Republic.

If chaos reigned in the political and national organisation, Sinn Féin, no less chaotic conditions prevailed in the I.R.A. consequent on the outvoting of the former Government and Dáil which the newly proposed Provisional Government superimposed in the interest of the new order. The climax was reached when not alone Sinn Féin but the I.R.A. showed symptoms of splitting on the Treaty issue, thus accelerating the division in An Dáil which, as the days passed, found echo if not imitation among a people who hitherto had remained firm, solid and undaunted on a common platform and in pursuit of a common ideal. The stage was soon set for the grim tussle between the various opposing political leaders and as an inevitable consequence within the various groups that comprised the national movement - the politicians occupying the arena, while their followers in support of either side in the fray cheered those whom they favoured and cursed those whom they disliked, in the interest of or against the interest of the Treaty. To make matters worse, the I.R.A., that had ever

stood in the battle gap as the protector, the guide and the rallying centre in every other contingency succumbed under the common deadly virus of political discontent that fast invaded its otherwise well-protected armour and thus was bringing it to its own sad and merciless doom.

Time, and possibly circumstances, however, were to play a part in deciding the inevitable fate of the I.R.A. Before that was consummated the I.R.A. position deteriorated, and drift, rather than progress, fashioned its policy or became its only policy in a period of disillusionment and of uncertainty. Could it be otherwise when two, not one governmental authorities sought to exercise authority in national, political and military affairs, and a divided parliament addressed itself to a divided people, a divided country and a divided army? But out of the chaos created by such a sad and saddening situation a group of T.D.s. and of I.R.A. leaders came into being for the purpose of trying to preserve the unity of the I.R.A. and to prevent a split among I.R.A. men. Such a move had Dáil consent and support, it being generally contended that the national interest demanded that the I.R.A. as a military force should not be split on the Treaty issue, and because such would be a national calamity, and fraught with grave dangers to the national cause.

We had not then, fortunately, reached the stage of going for each other's throats. Instead, we in the I.R.A. were labouring on and trying to maintain, as our orders enjoined us to maintain, unity, if at all possible under such conditions as prevailed then. The thoughts uppermost in the minds of most officers and men, their feelings and desires, lay in wishing God speed in the endeavours to avoid a cleavage or a parting of the ways that would bring their honoured force to a sad end. Events, however, were taking very peculiar turns. Events, however, were taking very

One time there would appear to be a reasonable chance of agreement. Another time the opposite would be reported and then we drifted back to where we were and what we were - a divided and dividing force. Nevertheless, the I.R.A. still continued training, drilling and parading. Discipline was in no way impaired; orders were carried out as heretofore even though a difference existed among them on the vexed question of the Treaty. Besides, other things were receiving attention by the I.R.A. during the time. One of these was the plans for taking over military barracks and establishments which, towards the end of January, were being vacated by the British forces. New groups were formed from the ranks of the I.R.A. to "take over" these institutions. In Dublin a Guards Battalion had been formed from the survivors of the A.S.U. These generally were engaged on that duty, supplemented with others from various units of the Dublin Brigade. The formation of parties to garrison such vacated barracks etc. created problems for many an officer who was called upon from time to time to supply various categories of men for the purpose, and parting with men from their own to another jurisdiction, and perhaps separate force under different appointed officers. To all intents and purposes the I.R.A. functioned inside and outside the barracks. But it took a lot of persuasion to convince some officers and men that everything from the I.R.A. point of view was going well and according to plan. Not infrequently one heard remarks that a new army was being created. Time alone could answer that question.

To all intents and purposes the parent body, the I.R.A., remained outwardly intact. Inwardly, it encouraged and ordered men to be initiated into the new formation. These men automatically became a full-time fully equipped, uniformed and paid force. All was well, as we worked under the one direction - the I.R.A. authorities - who held jurisdiction

over all men whether they were voluntarily serving outside, or paid for serving inside the barracks. The same applied to the cases of officers appointed to command the said groups, serving as full-time in the vacated barracks etc. That some such arrangement had to be made for the purpose of facilitating the speedy departure of the British forces was accepted by all ranks in the I.R.A. as not only necessary but highly imperative, and the fact that the active service unit was availed of as a medium to provide the machinery for such a procedure could only be regarded as conferring a high honour which, as a force, it richly deserved. Not uncommonly, then, in the initial stages of that work, the average I.R.A. officer and the rank and file warmly applauded the men who took over from the British the places that had been in former use against native rights and national liberty.

In ordinary circumstances arrangements like these would not have occasioned any trouble or be thought to be fruitful of dangers; that is, providing that everything was as it should be, the proviso being that by doing so we were adding laurels to, or securing advantage to our force and our cause. But in this particular instance there seemed to be a vast difference between the plans to initiate the scheme and its actual operation. Not at first, perhaps, but as things developed was its weakness unfolded. Let us digress for a moment on the procedure of recruiting the new formation that was charged with the task of garrisoning the evacuated British establishments. In the beginning the Guards Battalion took over from the British. During the Truce that force - the A.S.U. of less than 100 men - had been in training and it was said that every man Jack of the force was a potential officer. As the scope of work associated with taking over garrisoning the different places extended, that force had to be augmented from company units. Thus, transferences occurred on, of course, a voluntary

basis the names of men so desiring to transfer having to be endorsed by their respective company, battalion and brigade officers. Another media was the preparation of a "roster" in which case a list of prospective transferees were prepared in advance. Beside men being required for garrisoning duties, other categories were sought and obtained, such as motor-drivers and motor mechanics, machine gunners, fitters, tradesmen of various denominations, etc. The requests for these also came through ordinary recognised channels from G.H.Q. to the company via brigade and battalion. That procedure was a normal one, backed by years of experience.

Everything being equal and properly apportioned, the scheme seemed to be a workable and useful one. But, as it extended, some strange facts emerged. Then it became evident that the men so transferred were helping to build up a new and a powerful edifice, on the foundation and from the materials of the old, the former structure. In many instances that transference of men in increasing numbers had a weakening and stultifying effect on companies, so much so, that company officers became alarmed and expressed anxiety lest the existing framework would suffer damage as a result of their dwindling membership. To add to the alarm, was the feeling that a new army was being formed, within the old one, and that to the advantage of the former and at the expense of the latter. Even comment was raised that men were to consider themselves under a new command, if credence was to be given to the allegations that were being made by some of the transferees on that point; at first they had been transferred as a kind of "loan" whereby the men involved would still consider themselves linked to their former units, associations and friendships. One particular stipulation, however, remained and that was that should circumstances demand such a course, the men by order of officers would return to their former units.

The procedure adopted in recruiting men for barrack duty was not generally applied to officers except in a few cases, as most of the officers appointed were made up from the Guards Battalion. In that way a new set of officers were added to the list of those already serving. That was a paradoxical situation at a time when recruitment for the I.R.A. was in suspension owing to specific orders as issued from G.H.Q. It followed that when the drain on company units caused by transferring numbers of their men elsewhere could not be made good by the infusion of new blood at the time; so that company officers had to make do with those who, for one reason or other, remained with their former units. As for the officers, many of these preferred to remain as they were. Some, however, made the change by going into barracks and in quite a number of instances gained higher ranks thereby. But even these were not perturbing, so productive of evil, or harmful to either one or the other, once evidence of good faith and of good intention were guiding principles to the proffered change, to serve in the new way for the old cause. To serve in the new way for the old cause! There was the enigma which the then position of I.R.A. affairs caused confusion to grow and foster as the ugly symptoms of disunity, which even the excitement and glamour of becoming full-time soldiers had not diminished, but rather was increasing despite the best efforts to breach the gap which the Treaty issue had so cruelly opened.

Of the officers and men who availed of the opportunity to join the new formation some were known to have very strong leanings towards the Treaty. A similar story could be told of a large proportion of the Guards Battalion. But the issue was not then as clear cut as that, because no such condition was imposed but that which insisted that they like the rank and file were obliged in adopting the new role to play truant to the old, the parent force. While these movements of officers

and men were going on, the impetus to put the Treaty in a secure position and the plans to establish the power and prestige of the Provisional Government grew apace with certain peculiar indications that seemed to suggest that the new force was being moulded to a pattern designed and fabricated to serve not the old but the new order. Not that all those who transferred in a proper way were involved in the political issue for or against the Treaty, or felt ourselves glamourised by the change; yet the feeling and the symptoms were manifestly present, especially after the first month or so of barrack life and barrack order.

Glamour there was, too; the glamour associated with getting into and appearing in uniform, of coming out from their secretive places and secret doings, and moving into the limelight amid the plaudits and acclamation of admirers of whom a large number showed a more than ordinary zeal for giving vent to their Treaty sentiments, which every succeeding demonstration in taking over vacated barracks so liberally bestowed. Certain types, mark you, of our men felt that glamour; but not all those who 'went over' in that way were unduly affected thereby. The occasion was such an auspicious one that some resigned their employments to take up regular soldiering; others who were unemployed got a certain preference. It meant to some of those who transferred a new vocation - possibly a new life in taking up the soldiers trade and once they recovered from the tiny heartaches and heartbreaks in leaving their former comrade-volunteers and company units, they tied themselves completely to the new formation. But not all the transferees acted thus, for quite a number of them who changed over maintained their old traditions, old associates and old associations, and did not forego to attend, whenever it was reasonably possible for them to do so, their former units, thus preserving their individual and personal identity with the parent body. The desire to

"keep in touch with things" governed their actions in that regard, which was their right and their privilege to exercise as no rule existed to deny them admission and they were free to come and go to our assemblies and parades whenever they chose, there being enough brotherliness and camaraderie between us to encourage their and our mutual relationships, as each party was fulfilling a purely military task though perhaps in different ways.

How often did we hear the remark "Isn't it grand to have a regular army - to feel that we can come into the open and carry on as proper soldiers? Isn't it grand to see 'our lads' taking over from the British and going into barracks away from the rut of our former existence and not always pleasant atmosphere and environments connected with our former training or training halls?" What other answer could be given to such questions but "Yes" and that a conditional "Yes" - because as yet we were not out of the wood; indeed, there was the likelihood that we would not be out of the wood until the Treaty issue as it affected the I.R.A. was satisfactorily settled that would preserve it as a military entity and as the Irish army. What other army could be visualised or spoken of? Surely not a new army to replace the old Volunteer force; surely 'our lads' were none other than those who had taken pride in calling themselves soldiers of the I.R.A.; they were the men, and that was the force which was entitled to the proud name of Irish army - no others were available and no others were entitled to the honour or to be utilised for such a grand purpose. There were even officers and men in the I.R.A. in Dublin who envisaged the position whereby the I.R.A. as a whole would be maintained as the standing army of Ireland. In our own battalion there was a considerable number of these of which the writer was one, who held that the paramount issue should be to preserve the unity, integrity and authority of the I.R.A., however the people might decide politically on

on the question of the treaty, but keeping in view the fundamentals, our oath and our duty to the Republic.

Why should we be asked to act as if the I.R.A. and the cause it and we espoused were to be regarded as of no avail, and that we should help in producing a new force that was to act as the I.R.A., the real I.R.A. Could we not at least hold the I.R.A. as a rallying point to prove our course and so lessen the effect which the Treaty position was having on our people, on our institutions, organisations and our own particular force? Difficulties had to be faced and overcome if the new force was to be curbed in abrogating the functions of the parent force or to make it appear that the former and not the latter was less capable of becoming the Irish army under the Treaty. But the main question was, could the I.R.A. exist for long, if it could exist at all, in such a mischievous and darkening situation.

As time went on anxiety grew as to the future policy and existence of the I.R.A. The increasing demands for more and more men to be transferred into garrison groups considerably reduced some units of the Dublin Brigade, and it looked as if these were to have only one function, to act as recruiting agencies for the purpose of transferring men to the other formations. There were signs that the new groups were assuming proportions and gaining authority much beyond what was intended or envisaged. Circumstances were playing a part in that. The drift in political affairs, the chaos and tension which was undermining the national movement and, in particular, the I.R.A. were decided aids in accentuating suspicion and distrust among the men outside, and centring around those inside the different barrack groups. A good deal of whisperings were heard from, and assertions made by, both parties on one or other aspect of the functions, authority and growing strength of the latter force. Not uncommonly one heard some member of either force complain that all was not going well, or did not appear to be

going on well between the new formation and the parent I.R.A., some alleging that they were being weaned away from their old traditions etc. Indeed, it was not unusual to hear the boastful assertions of some that they were potentially, if not actually, members of a new force, and that they were glad of it. The rift or strained relations then existing among the higher officers and communicating down to the lower ranks in the I.R.A. on the Treaty issue could be said to be responsible for a good deal of the unrest that unfortunately prevailed among all ranks in whatever sphere they served.

Rumours and speculations were rife concerning various phases of activities, promotions and general conduct of the garrison troops, all of which were pertinent to the points whether in fact a new force was being created, or that a cleavage was being fostered by them to split the I.R.A. as a whole, for political ends. In the light of the information that was in circulation at the time from those who were serving in the new formation, it appeared that one or other course was being promoted. There was even the suggestion that undue advantage was being taken of the, as then, division that existed in the I.R.A. on the Treaty question for as much political as for military purposes. One could not always remain dumb and mute to the persistent and foreboding complaints that were commonly aired by interested and involved persons of one group or other. Not the least of these complaints related to the types of officers and of certain of the rank and file whose selection to the garrison groups gave scope for acting for and propagating views in the interest of the Treaty. But these, though significant in many ways, were of less consequence and importance than the political help and encouragement that was accorded to the barrack groups by political-cum-military leaders associated with the Provisional Government and concerned in implementing the Treaty. What better chance, what more fertile ground could have been

available to them to carry out such a policy.

While these things were being complained of, discussed and alleged, the I.R.A., as such, was going through a very serious period of disquietude, uneasiness and a good deal of disorganisation. The Dublin Brigade was no exception in that respect. Discipline, always of the best, remained undisturbed. But politics was making inroads on its policy and influencing officers and men alike. Hope, the hope that had ever been a dominant and prepossessing virtue among our brave men, was fast receding, and it was no uncommon thing to hear men say "the game is up - we are no more". Unity, the grand and wholesome unity that we so long prized and that had brought us through many trials and much turmoil, was gradually fading away, leaving little goodness and less of value to replace it except the foul devouring viper of discord and disharmony among those men who were regarded as being the nearest thing to the brotherhood of men. One of the reasons that militated against hope and unity was the failure of the many attempts that had been made to keep peace in the I.R.A. and among the men of the I.R.A.

Such was the position towards the middle of March 1922, when enough was known, or was to be known, that a cleavage was imminent in our ranks, despite the efforts of many interested people, politicians and I.R.A. officers. The bubble burst eventually, causing the I.R.A. that was once a unified, self-contained and mighty military force to become a wobbling, a tottering and a decadent faction against which many a hand was to be bared in defiance, in division and anger because politics willed that such was wise in the national interest! No longer was it a question of one I.R.A. command or one I.R.A. authority to govern and control a single organism. Now there were two, or the making of two, military forces each bearing the title The Irish Republican Army, or I.R.A. for short, as we were all too commonly aware

or apprehended. Even the British view somewhat corresponded to our own when in the British House of Commons on the 21st March 1922, Mr. Churchill, in reply to a question raised by Sir J. Butcher, said;

"I must refer my friend to replies on this subject (I.R. Army); more particularly to my reply to a supplementary question addressed to me by him on the 14th February. The force known as the Irish Republican Army and the force which is being organised by the Provisional Government for the preservation of law and order are, as I have previously explained, not identical; but the Provisional Government, as I understand from time to time, use the so-called Irish Republican Army in areas where this force acknowledges their authority, to assist them."

The latter part of the question:

"Whether he will suggest to the Provisional Government that this description of the forces employed by them for keeping order should be discontinued at the earliest possible moment" does not arise.

Sir J. Butcher: "Does not my Right Hon. Friend think that it is extremely undesirable that a Government which is not a Republican Government should utilise forces which describe themselves Republicans?"

Mr. Churchill: "No, sir. I think in the difficult circumstances prevailing in Ireland the Provisional Government are doing their best".

Of course, we in the I.R.A. had not to seek information outside our own sphere. Our knowledge of current political and military affairs made such a task not one whit more interesting or desirable. Already during the previous month many strange and many startling things had occurred. These could be classified under various headings: The clash between the I.R.A. and the Ulster Specials on the Border; the introduction of curfew and martial law by the I.R.A. in the southern counties; the reinforcement of the British forces in the Six Counties; the renewal of the Belfast pogroms; the suspension of the British evacuation of the 26 counties; the holding of the Extraordinary Ard Fheis of Sinn Fein in the Mansion House when the Treaty was debated and the split in the organisation took definite shape; the Dáil agitation for reimposition of the Belfast Boycott and last but not least the holding of the banned I.R.A. Convention in the Mansion House

The latter event clearly demonstrated the existence of the "split" in the I.R.A.

Other issues were being fought or agitated within the I.R.A. sphere. One of these arose over the procedure connected with the taking over and occupation by the I.R.A. of the vacated military barracks. That subject became quite a controversial and contentious one especially among different battalions of the Dublin Brigade and went side by side with the procedure of transferring men from their former units becoming merged in the new formation or garrison groups. In our own 1st Battalion many a voice was raised by some of us officers in protest against the weakening effect which such transfers were causing units and in advocacy of the plan to permit our battalion to garrison barracks that were within our battalion area, the Royal Barracks (now Collins Barracks) at the Esplanade, and the Marlboro' (now McKee) at the Phoenix Park. We were bold enough to hope and to plan and the assumption that at least the latter barracks would be given to our care and in the belief that the best interests of the I.R.A. would be accordingly served. We, of course, relied on the case that unity would result and prevail in the I.R.A. As officers we were bound to safeguard the interests of the force, equally as much as it was our bounden duty to be interested in the welfare and discipline of the men under our commands. In making our case for "going into barracks" in that way, we made no special claims for preferential treatment as against other battalions which, as we were aware, were similarly agitating to be permitted to occupy barracks in their own respective zones. It was never, however, our intention and we had no function to refuse to obey orders as issued by our superior officers, but we had at the time in question sound reasons for complaint against the influences that were being exercised against many of our men who were then serving as full time soldiers, which, if all the news we were hearing was correct, was putting them in an awkward and

demeaning position as soldiers of the I.R.A. and was bound to create a split among us. Thus at every meeting of our battalion council the subject was debated, and our Commandant, P. Holohan, who supported our idea and viewpoint time and again, sought to impress the "higher-ups" but without result.

Our plan, if it wasn't the best that could be devised, could not be regarded as being the worst in the interest of I.R.A. unity. Neither did it appear an unreasonable request to make towards keeping company units united, integral and independent instead of making fish of one and flesh of another in the matter of rendering service, of sharing honours and out of sheer loyalty to the I.R.A. in general. Appropriate to the issue was the query: "If we are one, why cannot we act as one and not as two forces whereby we who are outside the garrison groups are being made to feel that our cause and our interests are different, just as the matter of our service appear to be different and of less consequence than theirs? As it was the whole business was tending to drive a wedge between us and to weaken us, whatever the reason assigned or howsoever the object in view. The arguments advanced by officers of our battalion could not be said to relate to any other but the interests of the I.R.A. as a whole and for the sake of the unity of our country. Individual interests or personal aggrandisement were neither desired nor advocated in putting forward this alternative plan to the one then operating. Most of the Company Captains had open minds on the question of giving whole-time service in the barracks - some indeed hardly favoured the idea but would have acquiesced should the battalion go in en masse. Others would prefer to serve in a voluntary capacity, assuming that some such system was adopted whereby a containing force would be maintained full time in the barracks and the rest be permitted to undergo training on a volunteer basis. A few officers would, in the event of the country attaining freedom, prefer to retire to their civilian status, to engage in their day to day avocations, trades or professions.

Our plan, however, never went beyond the stage of discussion within the battalion council and, as our commandant informed us, beyond the brigade council. None of us could fathom or surmise where we, that is the men of the I.R.A., would eventually find ourselves, if a matter so simple of adjustment could not be easily or satisfactorily arranged. It was strange, too, that the brigade command, knowing all the points in connection with the matter, as we assumed they knew at that time, could not bring influence on the situation, or was it the case that such a move had progressed beyond the limit of reason or etiquette, in which event greater difficulties would arise from changing the procedure that already prevailed and the course already in operation? So it appeared: and so we drifted on - as two forces - the main cause of which was predominantly and specifically the Treaty issue which, at that period, was a live and perplexing one for the I.R.A. and was bringing us, and the country, to engage in a split.

During all the time, since the signing and ratification of the Treaty; the political-cum-military leaders exercised more than their share of influence, generally for political purposes; the two conflicting groups of leaders who fought for or against the Treaty in the several arenas so familiarly connected with the independence movement in the Sinn Fein organisation, the I.R.A. and the I.R.B. But it was mostly in the I.R.A. that the political warfare was then waged. Perhaps this was inevitable as we were so completely and so singularly tied to the political chariot that was then being led and conducted by clever astute political drivers. Inevitable also, perhaps, from the point of view that our army, the I.R.A., was in a sense a political force, that pursued a political policy and served a political ideal. Politically disposed, politically inspired and politically led, our army and our cause was political. Besides these things we had given our allegiance "without mental reservation or purpose of evasion" to the

political institution Dáil Éireann as our governmental authority. Was it any wonder then that when political disunion occurred within the political camp as such the I.R.A. would escape even a portion of the consequences of that deadliest of all national disasters? Certainly the political upheaval that arose in the last few days of March 1922 testified that the I.R.A. was immediately and proximately split in twain.

Every avenue had been explored to preserve unity; many approaches towards keeping the I.R.A. intact had been made by the "Unity Council" that had been set up for the purpose, and if, at times, credence could be given to authoritative information, these efforts were producing good results. Much irreparable damage had already been done among officers and men in the I.R.A. that nothing short of a miracle could save them from the consequential split. Most of our troubles were from within and principally were caused by or encouraged by high placed officers, with an odd assortment of lesser personalities as backing for team work and team spirit, with and without help from the rank and file. Very little of this was known to the civilian population who looked upon the matter from a pro-Treaty or anti-Treaty angle and in which politics alone was the only consideration. But to many of us in the I.R.A. the matter was primarily and fundamentally a military one in which the status, the existence and wellbeing of our force were involved. Similarly, the ordinary civilian population, though aware in an abstract and detached sort of way that a state of disunity existed in the I.R.A., had not the means and possibly not the will to ascertain particulars of its existence beyond what they read in the public press, or from the lips of the various political and military leaders. In many ways they could be pardoned for their seeming ignorance of their uncommon blindness in and their total partiality in I.R.A. affairs in view of the fact, or in face of the great visible movement of the khaki clad British troops then

evacuating Ireland, leaving in their place the green clad soldiers of the I.R.A. as the military custodians of the new order.

But to the men of the Dublin Brigade I.R.A., and especially to the officers, the situation was known to have taken a serious course, when on the 2nd April, we paraded and marched to Smithfield for the purpose of being reviewed by our brigadier, Oscar Traynor, there and then to reaffirm publicly our oath of allegiance to the I.R.A. and the Irish Republic. That parade and review synchronised with the order recalling the men who had been transferred to the full time garrison forces to rejoin their former units. Judging by the huge concourse of officers and men on parade that day, the Dublin Brigade had not decreased to any great extent, although not all the men who were on barrack duty responded to the call. Some who did returned to the barracks after a while. Other men who failed to come out on that day did so later. From that moment transfers stopped. To add to that, the various units had made decisions on the question of not only the Treaty and regarding the Provisional Government with the result that supporters of the Treaty and the Provisional Government threw their lot in with the new army, and those who were against the Treaty and the Provisional Government remained with the parent force, the I.R.A. In that way each man proclaimed his allegiance, each knew where he stood and on which side his leanings were.

In our First Battalion practically all the company captains and most of the minor officers and rank and file remained with the old force. Enthusiasm never waned even during the previous few months; activities never slackened; the men by their continued and punctual attendance at parades etc. displaying wonderful fortitude, good conduct and exemplary discipline. To the credit of all, officers and men alike, politics as such was not made a subject for discussion or decision, although at that stage it was hardly possible to evade the question whether

one was in favour of or against the Treaty! seeing that some of us had taken our sides against it, and the others were for it, in different capacities and categories. No longer was it possible to disguise our views, our allegiances or our status.

Whatever doubt there was on these points were allayed when twelve days afterwards the Four Courts were seized and occupied by our, the I.R.A. Executive forces. That night, several companies, including our own company of the 1st Battr. moved to take possession of the buildings, on the orders of the Dublin Brigade authorities. After securing possession of the premises permanent guards were posted and a garrison post duly established. The Four Courts then became the headquarters of the I.R.A. Executive, most of the personnel of which took up residence there and carried on I.R.A. business from that source. Undoubtedly the occupation of the Four Courts was the culmination of the impasse in which the I.R.A. found itself at the time, due in the main to the wrangling that was going on in regard to the control of the armed forces, between various interested pro-Treaty officers on G.H.Q. When efforts to reach a settlement that would bring unity to the I.R.A. had failed, the higher officers on G.H.Q. who clung to the original I.R.A. decided the question and made the break. Anyway, the seizure of the Courts was a startling and sensational move, whether it was intended as a move to force an issue on the Treaty, or merely a form of demonstration to illustrate the gravity of the "army situation". To us in the I.R.A. it represented a complete break and an alignment against the Treaty, that brought, or was bound to bring, us face to face with the possibility of an alignment of the two distinct armed and militant forces.

Other buildings in Dublin were likewise seized, or to use a more common term "commandeered" by I.R.A. units; such places as the very British Kildare St. Club, the Masonic Hall in Molesworth St. and the Orange, or Fowler, Hall in Parnell Sqr.

These became military posts. In the latter place facilities were provided for the meeting and training of various companies of our 1st Battalion, each company being required to perform all night guard duty rotationally, day guards being provided from the battalion of men who were unemployed and otherwise free for same. Regarding the Fowler Hall, it could be early discernible that our presence there was hardly in keeping with such an anti-Irish and British Imperialistic institution. The Orange Order, we had every reason to apprehend, had been the controlling and compelling force in previous years against Irish Independence, and publicly and religiously fomented the ghastly pogroms in the north of Ireland, with such dreadful toll of death and destruction of property of Irish Nationalists. Heretofore, the Fowler Hall escaped the operations of the Belfast Boycott campaign as conducted by the I.R.A. and other national bodies in the other Irish counties. Ironically the Orange Order premises became, from the day of its seizure, a centre for the reinforcement of the Belfast boycott.

Our uninvited incursion into the realm of Orangeism at that time provided food for thought undisturbed by the sombre, dark and weird "Black Chapter" chamber, and the strange paraphernalia and regalia associated with that oath bound secret society. Some of the men made great play with these, looking funny in the extreme which seemed in contrast to the seriousness of the political and military business we had in hand. Perhaps the horse-play, the funny theatricals took men's minds off the more serious aspect of the work. Everything connected with the 'holy of holies' was illuminating and enchanting, not excluding the precious roll of members of the Black Chapter. Strange revelation of all very Irish names and some Catholic names were included with those of big business magnates and ordinary workaday artisans, some of the latter with residences in poor tenement localities. The fact that Catholics and ordinary working-class people were members of

an Orange Order was puzzling in the extreme. Small wonder that some of our men said "we are learning things!" Was it not an extraordinary phenomenon to behold: one of the outposts of the Orange Lodges being used as an armoury and garrison post of the I.R.A. and for activities repugnant to Orangeism. Truly a strange retribution enough! Strange happenings too, but strange and sensational as they were, Fowler Hall was turned into a domicile for a large number of Belfast refugees who, on account of the Orange pogrom fled from their homes and sought shelter in other parts of Ireland. Perhaps no better shelter could be provided except in the haunt, the very nerve centre of the Orange Order in Dublin, on the premises of the would-be pogrom collaborators. Was it not passing strange that in that peculiar place the refugees should be succoured, fed, clothed and protected by the men of the I.R.A. when they and we were so much despised, vilified and condemned.

The action of the I.R.A. in seizing and occupying these buildings caused flutterings in governmental circles in Dublin, Belfast and London. The Provision Government, the British-sponsored 'Northern' Government and the British Government were alike shocked at the news - the British Government and the Provisional Government were particularly alarmed on the score that such action might have serious consequences for the Treaty cause. In any case, the spokesmen of each contended that such happenings were lawless, provoking and outrageous, and were intended for the purpose of imperilling the Treaty. But, amid all the thunder let loose by political/partisans, the I.R.A. continued to hold the sforesaid buildings. Obviously we had taken on a new aspect of work, our 1st Battalion units, including our company, being as active as any other in the training sphere. Truly we were stepping out, but in so doing it was hard, at times, to comprehend the scope or the trend of events that were being enacted, or the road along which we were being led. We knew, however, that we had parted the ways, but few knew how far

we should have to travel to emerge into the light. Perhaps it was destined that we should, sooner or later, traverse that road. Would our men respond to the course that had been taken? not a few of us officers asked ourselves, or asked one another, whatever doubts we had on these points, were quickly allayed by the men, a large proportion of whom reacted nobly to the new and serious advances, and gave earnest proof of their approval of the course that had been taken.

Some little explanation may be given here relative to the latter statement. On the occasion of the "calling out" of the men of the I.R.A. who were serving in the barracks; many of such men reported back to their former companies. Opportunity was given for the officers and men to register their votes for or against the existing I.R.A. On the strength of the opinions on the question the men remained or resigned from their companies. Of course, the question of the Treaty was in a sense involved in the decision. In our battalion and indeed in our C/Company, the majority voted for the original I.R.A., a bare minority voting against. Hence the position became, as many thought, clarified. Some of those who resigned had been, or later became associated with the Provisional Government forces. What a hoax, indeed! It proved beyond a shadow of doubt that the edict of the Dublin Brigade I.R.A. did not run smoothly, nor was it effective in securing absolute compliance, among men who up till then were regarded as being loyal and trustworthy Volunteers. The most inconsistent and peculiar feature of the whole affair was the meagre response exhibited by the officers then serving with the "other" or garrison force, in striking contrast to the rank and file, who in fairly large numbers 'came over' or came back to their former units and associations. It was then realised that the endeavours to create a new army, under the aegis of the Provisional Government, had, to some extent, succeeded, and

that the 'split' in the I.R.A. was, in part, established. That became more pronounced when some of the men who had come out returned afterwards to the barracks by which process they turned their backs completely on the original I.R.A. and became instead part of the Provisional Government forces.

Such action was hard to reckon with, or even to understand, from colleagues and brothers-in-arms, in a great and glorious cause, in which they and we had engaged. No aspersion is intended on them, for any action they took on that occasion, if it could be shown that they were fulfilling a duty for purely patriotic, rather than selfish personal motives. Excuses could be made, and were made, on several grounds, among which utilitarian and economic factors were not the least important, to sway men in coming to such decisions and to act thus. Those who were unemployed, or had previously resigned their former employment on entering the garrison groups were deserving of consideration and, indeed, commiseration. But not all those so involved in the transaction were in such sad plight, or impecuniously circumstanced. With some it was a matter of politics, the upholding and predominance of the Treaty was their main concern, and accepted as a matter of principle for the same reasons and purposes that the political "Treaty" leaders accepted the new order. In other and more appropriate words, their support of the Provisional Government forces and of the Treaty could be summarised under the hypnotising pointer "What's good enough for Mick is good enough for me".

Nor was the matter finally disposed of in that way or on that occasion when the men had decided the question of renewing, or dispensing with, old allegiances, for even afterwards a number of men of company units, including our own 'C' Coy. of the Dublin Brigade, tendered their resignations on several grounds and for various reasons. Neutrality, the desire to be neutral, was the chief excuse put forward for

severing connection with the I.R.A. Some men resigned through disgust at the army 'split'; others that they did not wish to be involved in a fight against former comrades. Most of the resignations effected in our company, of men who were not otherwise on the other or Provisional Government forces, were in truth related to that of remaining neutral, and in the fear that an armed conflict would ensue between the two forces. Gradually our units were being depleted, some companies suffering worse than others by the consequential defection. Sadly we parted company with a good number of such men who resigned that way, to continue to exercise their privilege to be neutral although, to many of us who remained to see the thing through, the parting in some individual cases was not a pleasant one. Our company, our battalion and our brigade were going through a crucial and difficult crisis, thereby, perhaps greater than any we had faced and overcome in the past, not excluding that other split, in 1914, when for political ends the Irish Volunteer movement was, but for proper guidance and the right national spirit, undermined. Was it not strangely ironical that the same process was at work: one group seeking to gain control; the other trying to maintain control of the one body and when that failed two forces came into being?

#### CHAPTER 25.

In the description of the various evolutionary stages connected with I.R.A. disunity and of the I.R.A. split, only matters as they affected the Dublin Brigade have been treated. A slight departure may be admissible at this stage to study briefly the course of events in the period under review. Looking back in retrospect to the time when the British were undergoing the process of evacuation, we find that in many parts of Ireland the handing over and occupation of vacated British barracks, stores and establishments was not conducted

in the same way as it was in the Dublin command. Generally, local units performed those operations. Thus it happened that units and commands that were avowedly I.R.A. and anti-Treaty gained, in many instances, complete control of such places, particularly in most of the southern counties, as in a few other areas in other counties that rule prevailed. There were, of course, many places where power was equally or unequally divided between the two conflicting groups; in some instances the majority of the officers were Treatyites; in others the majority were anti-Treatyites. The same applied to the rank and file. In such circumstances no one ideology and no one command held sway. Differently disposed were those officers and men who were predominantly on one side or the other where not alone numbers but equipment materially assisted them.

Dublin, however, was paradoxically differently defined and, of course, differently circumstanced in the matter of securing and of holding vacated barracks, etc. where a one-sided force held an advantageous position of being on the spot, well-armed as a result of the change over, and thereby strongly entrenched. The fact that many of the officers and men of that force made power their principal objective in the service of the Provisional Government and in the interest of the Treaty were considerations of no mean importance. In the discharge of their function to build up a new army they held a distinct and distinctive position, and nothing was permitted to move them from their course, least of all persuasion to return to their former units, once their minds were made up to otherwise act. Bitterly we confessed our weakness in permitting the new formation to grow, to prosper and to flourish by transferring men from our units. Obviously we failed in undoing a wrong that had been committed with our consent and connivance.

The accession to power and prestige which the new full-time and well-paid new force attained were largely the result of patronage and the securing of appointments on a lavish scale,

There were ample opportunities for higher and better promotions for existing or former officers of the I.R.A. and even rank and filers were promoted officers and N.C.Os. at, in some cases, short notice. Many of these appointments would not have been available had the old order remained, or possibly had the split not come and the single I.R.A. force functioned there would have been more than enough and to spare of officers to fill the vacant positions. Such a condition did not apply in the case of the then Provisional Government forces which, starting from scratch, built up from the material that became available, created appointments and thereby made it worth while for officers and men to serve. One other feature, and one that had an important bearing on the situation, was enshrined in the word influence, the measure of influence that former officers of the I.R.A. would exercise in winning numbers of men to the new force was always a consideration that merited higher promotion. Any officer with a pull over his men was generally considered a good man to have; that course had worked in a number of units of the Dublin Brigade, before the actual split, but there were instances where it did not work according to plan, so deep and cross-grained were opinions divided on the political issue.

We had knowledge of such things happening within the previous couple of months; cognisant of their import and conscious of their implications, tendencies and ramifications in the force that was then considered to be one and indivisible. Unhappily when the boomerang of the split actually struck we were incapable, or too late, to ward off the blow, or to do little to avert the dangers that met us more than halfway, of the distance that lay between our survival and our eclipse. Our strongly built, highly sustained and cleverly devised structure toppled down on us, smothering us in the debris that resulted from the undermining influences of our erstwhile friends and collaborators, and leaving us little space and

as little scope for recovery from the devastation that had been so cruelly and so carefully wrought. Hence we lost them, the I.R.A. lost them in the confusion that had arisen since the signing of the Treaty and all that emanated therefrom.

With the passing of the days and weeks the I.R.A. Executive forces, mainly through the occupancy of the Four Courts, became a thorn in the side of those who sought to implement the Treaty; and many an anxious, jealous and hateful eye was turned on them from the governmental regions of London and Dublin. The remaining British military authorities at Parkgate and the British administrators at the Viceregal Lodge (now Árus an Uachtaráin) were no less anxious and troubled by such portentous and dangerous moves. Even at that period the British evacuation was still in the suspension stage, so much so that some of the most important military barracks in Dublin - the Royal (now Collins) Barracks at Benburb Street; the Marlboro' (now McKee) Barracks at Blackhorse Lane, as well as the Headquarters of the 'Irish Command' at Parkgate remained under British control. The Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, as the King's representative, and the British commander-in-chief still functioned, due, as it was declared, to the unsettled state of the country, but principally because of I.R.A. activities and the growing tension occasioned by the political and military unrest of which the Treaty was in a large measure responsible. Such activities were mounting and consisted of raids for materials for the manufacture of munitions - a grenade factory having been fitted up in the 'Courts' - raids for motor cars and lorries; and armed swoops for the seizure of Belfast goods - owing to the reinforcement of the Belfast Boycott. These did not show sign of diminishing but rather increased the tension, frayed the nerves and sharpened the tempers of Treaty promoters in Ireland and England, while at the same time they gave ample proof to all and sundry that the I.R.A. was still living and showing strength.

If any one form of activity conduced to create such an apprehensive situation, the capture by the I.R.A. of the official motor car belonging to the Lord Lieutenant and its safe custody in the "Courts" could be regarded so, although in plain fact the occupation of the "Courts" was primarily cause enough for disquietude on the part of the anti-I.R.A. partisans.

Around that time, full play and vent was given to varied political and militant designation and titles; such as the "Regulars" and the "Irregulars", the "Treaty" and "Anti-Treaty" forces, the "Treaty" and "Republican Army" forces, the "Provisional Government" and the "I.R.A. Executive" forces. Similarly, the use of the "Beggars Bush garrison" and the "Four Courts garrison" became quite commonplace by constant usage and repetition to denote those who supported and those who rejected the Treaty respectively. The latter descriptions applied to the source of military authority, as each of these was generally regarded by the different adherents as General Headquarters. Only people who were actually intimate and proximately connected with one or other side of the contending forces could assess the real significance of the terms or of the moves of which both were parties, which in more senses than one were secretive and potential and showed the way the wind was blowing!

Many strange and startling incidents occurred during that time to bring home to use the serious importance of disunity. One such incident occurred on the occasion of the removal of the remains of one of our former company officers, the late Joe McGuinness. A section of our company, fully armed, paraded at the deceased's home to provide a guard of honour on the removal of his remains to the pro-Cathedral. We felt we should pay him that mark of respect because of his last service with our company up to and including Easter Week 1916. To our surprise, another group under Brigadier Paddy Daly of the Provisional Government forces, were present for the same purpose.

That night, unhappily, a wordy duel ensued between his side and ours, in the presence of the bereaved widow. Blows or shots could have been exchanged between us then. Rather than having an ugly scene under such sad circumstances and over the remains of him whom, though his views were pro-Treaty, we esteemed, we gave way feeling, it must be owned, none too pleased for doing so. The Provisional Government forces did the honours while our men, though furious at being deprived of paying their mead of respect in that fitting way, acted as an independent entity, taking perhaps a lesser, but as it turned out to be a not totally insignificant part in the cortege. Never before in my long experience with our company had I found it harder to control men, nor was I so hard put to it to order them, or for them to obey the order to continue as if nothing untoward had happened. Indeed many of them would have rather had it out with them - to fight the others on the spot! To add to our embarrassment was the thought that the "other fellows", the Provisional Government forces, would regard the matter as being a victory for their side, and the fact that practically all our company were present that night and that special permission had been obtained from our I.R.A. headquarters to so attend and for the section to carry rifles inflamed us. In connection with the matter of our company's public display of arms for the occasion, it is well to mention that I had had to interview our leader, Comdt. General Liam Lynch, at headquarters in the Four Courts for permission to do so. It took more than mild persuasion to obtain his consent and he only agreed on the understanding that extraordinary precautions should have to be taken to protect them. Even the point that the deceased was not a serving member of the company, or on the anti-Treaty side, was of secondary importance. Liam, as far as I could ascertain, was particularly impressed by the efforts made by Joe McGuinness for I.R.A. unity during the previous months.

It is not appropriate to this limited narrative to recount the nature, scope and extent of the multitudinous incidents and events of a militant character which were of such common occurrence not alone in Dublin but in other parts of Ireland. Almost daily the public press had something or other to record, all of which, or any one of which was sufficient to prove that there was a "push on" by either of the forces to gain control not alone of the military, but also the national situation, especially during the month of May, when feeling was at fever point. Then it was a matter of "having and holding". Each sought to carry on in its own way, holding strictly to the motto "Here we are - we are what we are, and what about it?". To make matters worse and more confusing, the Provisional Government forces acclaimed themselves to be the I.R.A. "We are the real I.R.A. We stand for the Treaty - yes - but we are not anti-republican". Individuals would even assert: "I know the Treaty falls short of the republic that we fought for, but it seems to be the best bargain that could be got. Why not accept it and work for the republic?". On the other hand, those of us who were on the republican side made no other claims than that we were the I.R.A., we had not sought to make any change or revision of its policy or ideals. To us the I.R.A. was the same then as ever it was. We disliked the Treaty because it was not our idea of a republic - the Treaty was not the republic - it was a compromise.

Some there were among us who would have consented to work the Treaty if by so doing they could be assured that the principles and ideals enshrined in the I.R.A. oath of allegiance were maintained, the oath of allegiance to the Irish Republic. What guarantee had we of this when the Treaty prescribed a penalising oath of allegiance to a foreign monarch, his heir and successors, maintained and glorified the person and office of the English King's representative - a governor general - and provided limited status within a truncated and divided Ireland under the caption of a Dominion status. Better no Treaty than

one that displaced the republican status. These, in short, were the gist of the arguments advanced by the elements composing the two rival militant forces; and no amount of persuasion could alter in the slightest degree the opinions formed by either. As in the political sense, so also in the military sense the matter of the Treaty was made an all-important and vital issue. There was no happy medium, no half-way house between the two courses. Neutrality or passiveness did not count at all - the field was left open to one side or the other to explore and exploit. Individually we could not, perhaps, play any great part in face of such a dread and colossal dilemma; yet, as individuals, we wielded a power and possibly used our power behind the scenes, in which the chief actors, our leaders, received our support and our approbation in the drama that was being staged before our very gaze, to the accompaniment of the grand chorus "the gods" and the plain people, who were our supporters and lookers-on alike.

At this stage the issue was clear-cut and properly defined. No longer was it possible for Treaty promoters and supporters who had up to then been leading officers on the I.R.A. staff or on divisional or brigade staffs to exercise authority presumed to be in the interest of I.R.A. policy or for I.R.A. purposes. Their choice had been to "get in or get under" to stay true to their I.R.A. principles or to forsake them. They had chosen the latter course on the plea that they represented and were of the I.R.A. In reverse their opinions and their outlook were alike repugnant to the cause for which the I.R.A. stood. Even their profession to make the Treaty a stepping stone to the Republic falsified them, as it did not cut ice with those of us who clung to the original I.R.A., and for more than one solid reason, but particularly on the grounds that the Treaty abrogated the republic and the republican status, and because, within the framework of the Treaty, no such thing as a republic existed, or was permissible or possible. Was it any wonder that men who still adhered to the I.R.A., officers and men demanded

"Scrap the Treaty and maintain the republic". "We do not want any compromise that falls short of our demands to complete and absolute Irish independence". "Get back to where we were, even if it means toiling in blood and sweat, or immediate and terrible war with the English. Better those things than that we should accept and maintain a false peace or a false freedom".

Events moved swiftly in the military sphere when the conference of the divisional officers of the I.R.A. Executive forces was summoned and held in the Four Courts, Dublin, in late May or early June 1922. The night before the conference the Corporation Fish Markets, adjacent to the Courts were commandeered and occupied by units of the 1st Battalion, including our "C" Company, armed guarded being posted therein. The spacious premises, during the couple of days was crowded out with cars of all makes, Lancias, Crossley and Rolls Royce tenders and touring cars, and a big array of armoured cars, fully manned and fully armed. From all parts of Ireland they came, the southern divisions being well and greatly represented. It was enough to make us Dubliners envious, as we could not lay boast to many such, outside the few in the Four Courts garrison which then possessed only one armoured car. We had more than a variety of miscellaneous types, a good number of them corks, "tin lizzies" of their day. During our stay there, parties of our men were sent in relays to the Globe Hotel in Talbot St. for refreshments. Expectation ran high that the Provisional Government forces would attack us on this and during our guard duties, but such did not, however, occur; we were left to "paddle our own canoe" in our own way, although in investing the place much inconvenience was caused to business - men and provenders in the fish trade. This visit of our "country cousins" gave us many a thrill, to fraternise with them and to gain some insight into the course of events in the different parts of the country from whence they came. Judging by what information was imparted, our cause had many supporters,

some places particularly boasting of a hundred per cent adherents to our force; others less but all of them vigorous and sincere. Information was also gleaned that some of these had complete control of barracks, in other words, were effectively well placed and well armed as a result. The fact, too, that many of these men had served in the "flying columns" increased our curiosity and our admiration and gave us the idea that all the best fighting men were not "on the side of the Treaty" as some politicians boasted and wished us to believe. Why should we not be envious of them, such as were in a strong and flourishing position, when we considered our own weakness and our inadequate equipment, or compared our financial and material condition with the "other side", the Provisional Government forces, then revelling in comparative luxury, enjoying substantial remuneration and generally good positions. They, unlike us, were amply fed, clothed and housed, not to speak of the wherewithal to ply their soldiers' trade. Of their policy or their politics we had no envy, and only viewed their possessions in the light of being a positive and alarming danger to our cause. However, when eventually the convention of divisional officers was over, we had learned enough to convince us that no change of I.R.A. policy was possible or could be entertained. We still stood firm to the principle of the Irish Republic and were unshakeable in our opposition to the Treaty.

From that time onwards the Four Courts assumed a new character and attained a new significance. It became the virtual, nay the actual, pivotal point from which radiated the passion and flame of I.R.A. vigour and activities. Around it and emanating from it, events of historical national political and military significance were shaped. But the occupation of the Courts meant more than these things - it represented a challenge to the existence and the authority of the Provisional Government as such, a threat to the Treaty

and all it represented. As such it was accepted by those who sought to "work the Treaty". But to us in the I.R.A. it was the touchstone, the mouthpiece, the very citadel and core of our authority. It was the interpretation of our opinions and all we stood for, the old creed, the old ideals and the old sentiments so dear to and so revered by us. As a symbol and a warning it inspired us, making us feel as if we were again on the move as of yore, having passed the period of drifting and of doubting and entering at last into a clearer and a nobler atmosphere. For good or ill we were facing, realistically and fearlessly, up to the situation, having, as we thought, bid goodbye to the talk of peace among brothers, and of secret negotiations to maintain unity, when neither peace nor unity was possible in the I.R.A. on such promises as expediency, compromise or subterfuge. Apparently it had to be so this way. Far too much ground had been lost, overmuch wealth in manpower had been squandered, and more than enough prestige had been sacrificed during the previous few months to our, the I.R.A., decided disadvantage; that were we to continue in that way, there would be little worth while, or even little left, of us as a military force to exercise authority over more than a "corporal's guard". Of course, we who professed to be still soldiers of the Irish Republican Army had had to put up with much abuse, insult, contempt and condemnation because we opposed the Treaty.

We were derided for holding to the name of I.R.A., laughed to scorn because we claimed to be Irish Republicans, derided and laughed at by those who had been our former associates and accomplices. To these we retorted that they themselves were no longer soldiers of the I.R.A. and so it went on as was customary of the occasion, time and circumstance. They, the militant personnel of the Treaty forces, were so insistent on applying the name "Irregulars" to us and of using it so unsparingly and so vociferously that it was small wonder for their believing that we were so. The strange part about the whole affair was

that we did not change anything in the national sense, except to change partnership with them and to refuse to change over to the Treaty, which changed the course and the cause connoted by the term "the living republic". As they had compromised the republic for the Treaty why should we have to fall into the same error? We had, we knew, parted with many good companions, loyal friends and gallant comrades-in-arms. That severance was no great joy to us, at least. Our parting was neither personal or concerned personalities; it resided in a national issue, a vital and important issue for our country's welfare and its inherent right to be free.

If there was any hint of or any outburst affecting personalities in the controversy or quarrel then raging, such was of minor significance in comparison to the Treaty issue. Undoubtedly and specifically it played a major part in the then political and military sphere in influencing us in the I.R.A. to take sides, one way or the other in regard to its enactment and authority much though the presence and introduction of personalities became the stock-in-trade of Treatyites, leaders and supporters to the discomfiture and disedification of their republican adversaries, they were of secondary importance to the vital issue as to whether the Treaty should, or should not, be. Speeches, propaganda and, in many instances, the Press, copiously consigned I.R.A. leaders and those who stood for I.R.A. principles to the infernal regions, among the legion of the lost the wicked and the unrepentant, because they would not be realistic good patriots and honest-to-goodness citizens under the all-powerful all-mighty Dominion status form of independence! Human nature being heir to many blemishes and prone to many imperfections, it was difficult for us to avoid retaliations at the affronts and the thrusts that were levelled against us and the principles that guided our force, the I.R.A. and in defence of our leaders against whom it could not be said that they acted other than true in the fight for Irish freedom.

We had, of course, in the span of the existence of the national movement, learned many things, not the least potent lesson being that not always the best orator or political agitator was the noblest, the bravest or the most sincere. Popular public opinion had not always been right in acclamation of their heroes, or in condemnation of the unheroic. We had enough horse-sense to realise that public opinion was capable of being swayed or influenced by many of the stories in circulation about "the men who won the (Irish) war" by much of the vehement rhetoric and some silver-tongued plamais that clever men and clever brains could so freely circulate at a time like that when, as we learned to our cost, a good deal of the true to life characters and caricaturing though festooned with glory and in adulation were only of moment in furtherance of the Treaty cause. Even there was no omission in producing bogies or bogey-men - the republicans were generally regaled as such. In other words, were we to believe some of these highly featured stories, these same would-be "defenders of the republic" were only showing and perhaps only pretending love for the republic when they were more solicitous to destroy the Treaty, as if that was not cause enough to bring them to their downfall; anyway they were only an insignificant minority.

It is not always easy to engage in a wordy duel with an armed man. Neither is it easy to persuade any other man who is blinded by passion that he is wrong or going wrong in life's pathway, or that he has taken the wrong side in a political controversy or in a political upheaval. Supposing one tried to do either, what would be the natural, the human retort? Only mind your own business, leave me alone and I will mind my own. And so it was in 1922 with the men of the two conflicting militant forces. Former friends, they had now turned against each other, having, in common parlance, 'found each other out'. Far easier to overcome the assaults

and the opposition of an avowed enemy than to conciliate or placate a one-time friend, especially when he is armed. The former, under certain circumstances, might be prepared to give and take, or to cut their losses by concession or compromise; the latter seldom deigns to concede anything, to admit anything, for fear of affording an advantage to an opponent or to their own subsequent loss or disadvantage. That could, in some degree, sum up the position then. But, mark you, only in part, because there were other features, of a no less virulent, dangerous and explosive type present to contend with in the relations that existed between us. One of these was the 'whispering' campaign, the most deadly as it was the most evil and cruel form of assault, against which no defence could be sustained, and no endeavours made to offset it. Already that form of warfare had got full play, proper range and ample scope against the I.R.A. and the men of the I.R.A. Travelling far and wide it lost nothing in its telling, still less by repetition. It neither respected people or causes, for it was not represented by any code of honour, or any semblance of decency. With its poisoned fangs and equally poisoned darts it struck at anyone, anything and everything that stood in its path or against whom there was a grudge or an aversion. Setting out to achieve one purpose it inflicted injury, pain and wounds in order to destroy, if need be, its victims. The victims in this case were the leaders and men of the I.R.A., especially the former, the officers against whom the malicious circulation of evil reports was more generally levelled. This was carried to extreme limits.

Of all the charges made against our leaders none was less true than that they were fraudulent in their claims in regard to 'standing on the solid rock of the republic'. That was bad enough and equally reprehensible, but when they were accused of having themselves let down the republic, or denounced for believing that the republic existed, then it became evident

that a new offensive weapon was being fashioned, to counteract the achievements and the glory that hallowed the name and fame of those who, no matter what their other faults were, proved themselves to be good men and true. But not the least charge against them was that they were disgruntled and disappointed men because of their failure to seize and wield supreme power; they were not even men enough to admit their own weakness, to admit their own powerlessness in maintaining the republic and to drive the English out of Ireland, even to admit the impossibility of continuing the guerilla warfare. They, the officers of the Irish Republican Army, so it was hinted, were now showing a heroic desire to 'die for the republic' when, on account of the Treaty, the British were evacuating the country. Why not admit the stupidity and hopelessness of your task and throw in your lot on the side of those who brought you the symbols of freedom? These and many other arguments, charges and whisperings were advanced to laud the Treaty and hamper the republican cause.

It was bad enough to accuse the I.R.A. of being ultra-republican, but to charge them with being more warlike during the peaceful than in the more dangerous and troublous times against the British was just going a bit too far. It was, if anything, a too serious and a too sweeping charge to make or uphold. How could such charges be maintained in view of the fact that most of the leading lights, holding executive officers ranks in the I.R.A. forces were men of proven ability, bravery and élan, and had given military service when and where it was wanted. Such men as Liam Lynch, Liam Deasy, Rory O'Connor, Liam Mellowes and Sean Russell, to mention but a few of the many stalwarts of the I.R.A. could hardly fit into the category of 'peace-time fighters'. Other officers of lesser rank, as well as numerous rank-and-filers had seen service in flying columns in active service units or with their own units. Even to taunt these as 'Truce Volunteers' was downright arrogance, insolence and utterly untrue. Those who made them

were either fools or knaves, yet they knew the charges to be false. Unfortunately sufficient emphasis was given to their circulation that many people, who were not in a position to know better, fell to believing the falsehoods. Shame on the traducers, the vilifiers and the calumniators who lent aid or utterance to such foul, vicious and debasing sentiments. Whatever were our other individual failings, we of the I.R.A., it could be said in truth, were neither insincere in our beliefs or professed other than the right attitude to the republican ideal in 1922, as we had exercised in the previous years.

In the preceding paragraph reference has been made to the term 'Truce Volunteers'. Apropos of that description an explanation may be necessary. It refers in reality to men who joined the I.R.A. during the period of the Truce, in other words from the 11th July 1921 to the date of the signing of the Treaty on 6th December 1921. In a more loose sense it might apply to the time, say, up to April 1922, when the split crystallised. Those who used that term had one specific point in mind - to prove that they were not part and parcel of the I.R.A. The charge was made in the derogatory sense that the men so joining at that period were 'peace-time' soldiers and in the belittling sense that they were not fighters. Worse than that was the charge that such men were enrolled members illegally - or, if that is too strong - 'came in' when the fighting was all over, or when they themselves thought the fight was over and so as to share the kudoes of victory with the men who had won the war! In other words, they joined for ulterior motives, or they were false members. Such charges are untenable and, of course, unworthy of the men that made them. The nearest approximation to the truth is that the men offered their services and were accepted in the self-same way and by the same procedure as any other entrant. Their application for membership had to conform to certain standards and go through the accepted and ordinary

channels before they were admitted to membership of the I. R. A. In most of the period referred to the I. R. A. was an unbroken and undivided entity. Consequently, the regulation governing new recruits applied; proposals before entry had to pass from the company unit or group to which the aspirant sought to be attached on to the Battalion, to the Brigade, thence to the Division (where such existed) to General Headquarters, and before the recruit paraded with his selected unit, approval had to be accorded in every one of those branches passing from the G. H. Q. down to the Company via the intermediate commands. Then the next requisite was the men took the oath of allegiance, the same oath that all took who joined the I. R. A. Hence the accusation that such men were false members because they happened to join at that period can be dismissed, with an apportionment of blame to those who made it or fell victims to making the change.

While on the topic of "Truce Volunteers" it might not be out of place to refer to matters relating to recruiting during the disputed period of the Truce. In our Company as well as receiving a few recruits, we also benefitted in obtaining men who had been transferred from other units and from the Fianna. All such were bona fide transferees and had received the imprimatur of the various component commands. If they were new to us, at least they and their service were not new to the I. R. A. as a whole. Other Companies could, perhaps, tell similar stories. Perhaps their short period in the various units lent colour to the accusations that they were new or "Truce Volunteers" of whom a no more harmful or malicious charge could be assigned. But such charges as these riled many of us officers at the time, especially when we knew them to be false; all the more so when the charges

were made to belittle and defame us and the cause we cherished and made us all appear as false members of the I. R. A.

Why should the Treaty side in the conflict get all the glory and we on the I. R. A. side all the abuse, with hardly ever a good word in our favour? Could not we, equally as much as they, cite the cases of men, our men in the I. R. A., who had suffered in the cause, men who had helped to win the war, fighting through the guerilla campaign, suffered in prisons and internment camps, being "on the run", who had given time, labour and sacrifice as proof of their devotion, provided aid and succour without fee or reward, their losses being greater than their gains. These were as numerous on our side as on the Treaty side, perhaps more, perhaps less; we could be sure of either as no compilation or records of such things were made at the time? Why should they, the Treaty forces, claim a monopoly of great men and great deeds, and sing all the paeons of glory when these were shared by others - the men in the I. R. A. forces? Assuredly our complement of the old crowd, the old force and the old tradition was considerable, whatever we lacked in finance, pomp and power. Ours was a less frugal, a less spectacular and less inviting hoard; yet whatever volunteering we had to do was performed freely, gratis and for nothing, exception to the rule covering men who formed the Four Courts garrison and were permanent guards at the Fowler Hall and a few other places.

Of the latter groups only a nominal sum was allocated for their services. Many of these men were unemployed, some as a result of resigning to join the garrison or barrack groups from which they had come out

when they were called on to do so. All could have been more liberally treated had they been on the other side. It must be stated here that all the men concerned were contented with their lot, with or without payment or with small payment for that matter.

During that time the whole edifice representative of the Irish national resurgent movement was toppling to the ground. It had its repercussions in the numerous supporting organisations scattered throughout different parts of the world - in America, among the association for the recognition of the Irish Republic - in England, among the Irish Self-Determination League and kindred bodies - as well as in Australia, Canada and South Africa, the impact of disunity and dissension were felt. Obviously much of their and our hard work and unremitting endeavours were lost in the maelstrom of party strife which the Treaty occasioned. In Ireland, however, the word "lost" had an appropriate meaning. Nationally, Ireland had lost its Dáil, its constituent assembly or parliament; politically, Sinn Féin, the popular independent movement, had lost its unity; and as if our losses of these were not sufficient we, of the I.R.A. measured its losses in a divided high command and down to the humblest Volunteer, thus accentuating, not brotherly love but brotherly hate. For the first time in "six glorious years" we had two armies. While these things were happening the people, the ordinary folk, in Ireland were reacting in a kind of mixed way to the situation thus created. The press in Dublin at least, since the signing and the ratification of the "Treaty of Peace and of Freedom" waxed particularly eloquent in its favour, and was instrumental in moulding public opinion, some of its so-called republican opinion in the same cause and for the

same object. It could be said of the time that no opportunity was lost in winning adherents to the Treaty in the matter of the presentation of glowing tributes to those sponsoring and supporting the Treaty, as against those whose policy it was to render it null and void. That same press exploited the Treaty, the split in the Republican Movement, with special regard the split in the I. R. A. and drove bigger and greater wedges into the gap which, without their help, was already sufficiently open and was opening daily. It drove itself and the people headlong into a controversy, a conflict and an arena that were already charged with dynamic potentialities, generally using its great influence to asperse, condemn and vilify Republicans, the Republican ideal and Republican Army and republican cause.

As has already been seen that was no new policy for the Anglo-Irish press with which Ireland had been cursed for the previous seven years. Never had it been national in the sense of being republican. It could hardly be expected to be so in 1922. Nothing but a miracle could have made it other than what it was; forsooth, miracles seldom, if ever, happen in newspaper offices. How silly of us Republicans, to expect a miracle to be performed in favour of the press at that period of our sad and saddening plight? So in its absence, Republicans, and principally the I. R. A., had to bear the cruel oblique, harsh criticism and unjust attacks of a press that was pitiless, remorseless and bitter, beyond reason or proper proportion. Perhaps we were succoured by the thought and the feeling that our Irish press was "agin" us. It was sad to reflect that not all the people knew "their" press as we knew it, in respect to its want of national and republican principles

in the past years. The newspapers saw to it that Lloyd George's threat of "immediate and terrible war" was prominently and sensationally portrayed and propagated. Never before was the need for a real, live national and republican press felt than at that time in May 1922, especially such a press that would stand by the I. R. A. in the face of every opposition with which it was confronted and had to contend with then.

Yet, notwithstanding the harm which the press did or sought to do to our cause in that period, a slight ray of hope shone that, like a candle in the darkness would bring a flicker of light and succour into our political sphere. The pact entered into between our leaders, or to be more explicit, between the leaders of the contending political parties, and argued by Michael Collins as the principal Treaty leader, on May 20, 1922, gave such a ray of hope that a measure of peace was possible in Ireland and among Irish people. But elements outside of Ireland looked upon such a move with distrust and suspicion. Chief among these elements were highly exalted English politicians and members of the British Cabinet. They viewed the pact with misgiving and declared it to be an act, or a deal, contrary to the spirit and letter of the Treaty. That objection from such an influential and powerful source seriously affected the pact arrangements. By a very peculiar turn of fate the vapourings and threats of that outside influence carried the day. London's objection to the pact that had been intended to bring peace to a distracted and disturbed Irish nation, unfortunately found an echo among Irishmen, an echo strong enough and vicious enough as to cause a halt to be made in the advance of a people to unity.

As regards the move itself, of which the "pact" was the symbolic representation, it could be said in very truth that it bore the stamp of being genuine in conception, in principle and in every other humane and national essential. No other "Gentlemen's Agreement" could have been capable of being acceptable by the common fold than that, for it appeared to be an honest and a proper attempt, a means to an end, to preserve the status quo, the hegemony and real stability of our popular movement and to provide for a common policy a common platform on the basis of "agreeing to differ". In that light it gave satisfaction and excited elation to most, if not all, those who had the true interests of our country at heart, among them Republicans equally as much as the Treaty-ites, and many a prayer was uttered that it would prove a blessing in the midst of imminent and threatening dangers. Yet it was generally conceded that the pact suffered many limitations, such limitations as the Treaty imposed, that were of themselves directly antagonistic to the very essence of Irish unity, of which it had no specific regard except and only on the principle of its implementation as an instrument to achieve its purpose to set up and to exercise governmental authority in its own right in order to assert the supremacy of the Treaty above and before other considerations. (By the bye, the General Election "Southern Ireland" was in the offing, and according to the decision reached by the leaders, that election was to be conducted on a highly agreed basis, which permitted that, irrespective of their individual views for or against the Treaty, candidates presenting themselves for election went forward on a single party panel. Hence the term a pact election or an agreed election).

At its best the "pact" could be regarded as an honest-to-goodness attempt or arrangement to keep the two conflicting elements - the Treaty-ites and the anti-Treaty-ites in the National Independence Movement - from getting out of hands or going at each other's throats, thereby causing "fratricidal strife", a term that was then being freely used on political forms and in the public press. At the most it might serve as a makeshift, or improvisation, much in the same manner as a seamstress would patch a garment with materials of different textures and varying colours, or make a patch-work quilt or other accessory consisting of numerous sizes and assortments, according to design and pattern. All would be well if the "pact" worked out according to plan. Then, it would not leave us in any worse plight but on the contrary; if the right spirit was shown, it should produce satisfactory and, mayhaps, lasting and beneficial results, pay good dividends in the interest of the national movement and of the country generally.

Republicans welcomed it for many reasons, but especially because it gave promise of affecting complete unification of the tangled mass within the political, national and military structure. Were it to undo the harm that had already been wrought and to re-conciliate those who had been so cruelly estranged, Republicans, no less than Treaty-ites would have rejoiced. So it might have been had not a spanner been "thrown into the works" to destroy what appeared a promising enterprise.

Oh! the wiles, the inconstancy and the wickedness of mortals! Ere the "pact" was a month operating it was disowned, disavowed, torn to shreds like as unto a "scrap of paper" that had lost its meaning and its purpose.

On the 14th June in Cork City, Mick Collins publicly gave voice and desire to the declaration that the people should register their votes in the election in favour of Treaty candidates - in other words, to make the election on the 16th a party issue. No other meaning could be taken from his pronouncements but that he intended the pact to be broken at that General Election for the Parliament of "Southern Ireland".

The ruse to end the "pact" succeeded. Taken off their guard, the republican section were amazed, bewildered, and indignant at the turn of events. To them it meant a deep thrust against the letter and spirit of the "pact" agreement, conscious that the time available did not permit of redress they found themselves between the "devil and the deep sea" wherein all the fond hopes that were cherished to bring the distressed ship of unity to safety, went down with disaster and woe for them but not so the Treaty-ites - they won the day. The triumph was as much a British gain as it was an Irish loss, because the pact was broken at the behest of British politicians even though it was disowned by Irishmen, not only one Irishman but others as well. And in its defeat we learned that the Treaty did not imply that regard for a pact that would give equal power, rights and status to Treaty-ites and anti-Treaty-ites - those who stood for the Treaty and those who stood for "the Republic" - was not possible nor feasible. For inherent in the operation of such a pact was the fear, the Englishman's fear, that republicans might thereby gain a longer lease of life under a coalition government in which the Treaty would be secondary consideration to the advancement of their ideals - the existence of the Irish Republic. Ah, no! the latter was not to be, because the British political leaders declared against such a course.

They were listened to, they were appeased, whatever the price and however the sacrifice. The Treaty-ites prevailed, the pact was no more and in its passing perhaps the only real and genuine prospect of conciliation among brother Irishmen was cast aside.

To Republicans and especially to the I.R.A., the breaking of the pact had one meaning and that was that hope for unity was dead, or if not dead, swiftly dying. Was this to be the end of all the endeavours that had been made to preserve that comradeship and brotherliness that had been born in travail, that lived in travail, fought and suffered in travail? Nobody knew, and nobody was in a position to know. But one thing was abundantly clear: we were consigned to the parting of the ways, after having reached within sight of the goal, by, alas! many torturous paths. The ordeal and the sacrifice had been hard to endure but the price had been paid in blood, in tears, in suffering. It had taken us six glorious years to advance on the road to freedom. Six years - and now we were to be brought to a halt, or if not halting, go ahead, heeding or unheeding one or other of the signposts that pointed in various directions, one towards the new rendezvous - the Treaty; the other, the old to the Republic. Some there were who came up to the parting of the ways, and looking at the markings thereon, and the roads, asked the question: why should we have the choice, the personal choice in deciding which road we desire to travel? After all were we not always in step with, did we not always walk with these our comrades-in-arms? Was not the pace and the road always marked out for us, and as good soldiers did we not always accord to everything set out for us to do? These and a multiplicity of other questions sprang to the lips of men of the I.R.A. then at the cross-roads when the pact was broken and dishonoured.

The course of events changed rapidly; likewise tension increased, signalled by the parting of the ways which the millification of the "pact for peace and unity" made possible, whereby no avenue of retreat was left open to those who decided to carry on for the rest of the journey. Many of us Republicans, as a matter of necessity, and because of fixed principles clung tenaciously to the things and the cause that claimed our old allegiance. Anger and distrust replaced brotherly love and the brotherhood of man overnight in reward for the cleverly devised, and as it turned out to be, easily wrought coup d'etat which certain politicians had so cruelly and so wantonly accomplished at the expense of the Republicans. Unquestionably, the Republicans in the Sinn Féin organisation and the I.R.A. forces, and even the I.R.B. suffered a serious and a rude setback. The plighted word of some of our former respected and trusted leaders became forfeit on account of their recent nefarious and shameless actions. Conscious of being thwarted in our good intentions, and our honest endeavours to find a common platform for all sides in the political and military dispute, we were wittingly or unwittingly reduced to the position of playing second fiddle to those who had scored a march on us by skilful stratagem and a skilful technique.

Some few days after the General Election the authorities of the Four Courts garrison participated in a pilgrimage to the grave of Wolfe Tone at Bodenstown churchyard, making the journey by motor. Other groups from different units in the Dublin Brigade, including some members of our Company and the 1st Battalion, participated, though unhappily our particular party, meeting with engine trouble at Leixlip, were late in

arriving for the graveside ceremony and came on the scene when the main party were returning to the city. That assembly of armed I.R.A. men had more than sentimental reason in honouring the "Father of Republicanism" whom Davis immortalised when he penned the praises of Tone :

"For in him, the heart of a woman combined  
With a heroic life and a governing mind  
A martyr for Ireland . . . . ."

It was the first "spiritual communion" with the patriot dead, for some of us, since 1915 as, owing to the existence of the annual banning by the British authorities in the intervening years, few people made the pilgrimage. Small as the contingent was that June week-day it was none the less impressing because it was an honest and sincere symbolic act of reverence to the best traditions of Irish separatism and the principles of Irish republicanism as upheld by Tone and appraised by Pearse as "the greatest republican of them all" (meaning the dead generations of Irish patriots).

Renewed in national vigour and by increased national inspiration we returned to our respective duties, whether to man the military post, or, as in some of our cases, to watch and ward over our Companies. Indeed, it was always a case of watchfulness, wondering what was going to happen next. Sometimes we had strange premonitions of dangers and trials which rumours never seemed to allay. Other times we fancied that things political would take a turn for the best and old estranged comrades-in-arms return to mutual and lasting companionship "never more to part" and "never more to roam". Yet all the while the air was thick with gossip,

suggesting that some moves were in progress to patch up the difference between the I.R.A. and the Treaty forces. On other occasions different news was in circulation that no such thing was possible and that our break could not be mended. In other words, no agreement was in sight or was possible.

In connection with the foregoing certain observations may be necessary. At the time in question there was a feeling that negotiations were going on between the two contending Army Councils. How often at 1st Battalion Council meetings were Company Officers informed by the Commandant of the facts and of the principal points in dispute? We considered ourselves fairly well informed on the subject and perhaps at times optimistic that a settlement would be reached. Did we not hear of the crux on the question who should fill the post of Minister of Defence, or the other crux in regard to the appointment of Chief of Staff for a unified armed force? These, it appeared, were in the melting pot, the thorny points that had to be pruned or cut away before real progress could be made in the efforts to find a real and practical solution to the problem of unity. Was it any wonder then that some of us officers entertained hopes of a satisfactory outcome to the proceedings, in the belief that even at that apparently difficult period, such a happy ending would or could accrue to save both sides from greater and graver consequences.

One other possible encouragement to our hopes for unity lay in the project (whispered about during the time) of an armed move across the border. Here was sensationalism of a very peculiar order. The move or project suggested that the I.R.A. and the Treaty forces had combined to create hostilities in the six counties, that guns and men from the rest of Ireland, including the Dublin Brigade

and other units of the I.R.A. were being put into service for that expedition and it was even whispered that Mick Collins approved it and collaborated with the Four Courts Executive in its favour. It was even hinted that it was to take the shape of an armed incursion on Orange domain as a reprisal for the pogroms and the other ugly forms of repression practised there against nationalists and principally against republicans. Those who were supposed to be in the know, implied that it had secretive official or quasi-official sanction of the Treaty-ite and anti-Treaty-ite forces, although the full responsibility for the projected operation was to be borne by the latter regardless as to whether it imperilled the Treaty or otherwise.

Such a move had it the backing of these forces, implicitly suggested the existence of some form of unity, especially if the rumours circulated had an atom of sense that rifles were being "swopped" between the Provisional Forces and the Executive or Four Courts garrison, so that in the event of a miscarriage in the operational plans the rifles would not be traced to the Treaty side. No such cover up was necessary, we were told, in the case of the personnel, who comprised a combination of both forces. Quite a number of men known to us in the Dublin Brigade, inclusive of 1st Battalion men, were linked with that alleged enterprise and actually left Dublin for service in the North. Few, except those specifically placed on the job, knew much of the details beyond odd hints that some such move was afoot. But when eventually news became available that some kind of armed action had accrued, and when it was reported that a number of officers and men from this side of the border, including Seán Flood, were captured, that some credence was attached to the previous rumours and hints. It is important to note that

Seán Flood had since his return from Britain been Vice O/C. of the Leitrim Brigade, and with him were arrested officers and men, officers of other units, including the Tipperary Brigade. These were taken to Derry Jail, later to Belfast, tried and sentenced, Seán receiving ten years penal servitude, the others varying terms.

As part of the action or operation referred to above, hostages, consisting of prominent Orangemen were taken, others escaped capture through the fortunate (for them) circumstances that arms were not to be used. Some little glimpse of the operation was brought to light when in the British House of Commons the following information was imparted:

Around this time some of the buildings that had been seized and held by the I.R.A. in Dublin were vacated. Apropos of these events the "Derry Journal" of Monday, June 5th, 1922, under the caption: "Republican Forces leave Kildare Street Club", reported:-

"The Kildare Street Club, Dublin, which has been in possession of the Republican Army Executive forces, was handed over to Sir Frederick Shaw, the Chairman of the Club, and Mr. D. H. Bayley, the Secretary, on Saturday afternoon by Brigadier-General Oscar Traynor. A large crowd watched the guard march away from the premises. Sir Frederick Shaw afterwards said that a cursory examination showed that no structural damage had been done, and nothing had been taken away, but things were topsy-turvy. He added that it would be some weeks or months before the date of the re-opening of the Club could be decided".

From that moment both sides played their cards to secure the quickest and the best results, the republican forces showing particular vigour and activity in setting the pace in the race for survival and supremacy, which by reason of their entrenchment, or because of it, became imperative. The motto "To survive or perish" was most applicable in their case. Obviously the Provisional Government desired the latter course to happen, as by that means the ground would be free for them to exploit in the interest of the Treaty. The prevailing situation gave rise to the question: Was the task an easy one to secure, in view of the assumption of authority shown and wielded by the I.R.A.

in Dublin and in other parts of Ireland? Time would answer that question.

Every move taken by one side or the other was put to advantage by the other by means of counter-moves, designed for the purpose of gaining a decision on the relative issues involved. Any course was possible then, if the strange and startling incidents that were happening around us could be taken as a true index of the possibilities and potentialities of danger betokened. Innumerable reports of strange happenings in the country were becoming quite serious and of frequent occurrence, so grave indeed as to warrant the assumption that bigger moves were to follow in rapid succession. Where those moves would lead to, none could foresee or prophesy. Suffice to say that the pace quickened daily as the Treaty forces and the I.R.A. forces activated according to set plan or improvised purpose to make their preserve felt in the then threatening situation. There was enough and to spare of activity in Dublin alone to cause concern for either sides, but of major importance to the Treaty forces was the immediate menace which the continued occupation of the Four Courts, Fowler Hall and other buildings by the I.R.A. seemed to imply.

---

Chapter 26.

Bombshell as the violation of the pact was, it was of slight significance in comparison to the one that was timed to explode some twelve days later - the bombshell that was to usher in the advent of a civil war - that "fratricidal strife", that "war of brothers" - to avoid which the pact was solemnly consummated. It, the beginning of the Civil War, came about following a sequence of events that were both startling in their nature as they were extraordinary in their character. Whatever other causes or other motives, the main reason for the initiation of the civil war centred round and had their bearing in the Four Courts. British pressure was very strong. British politicians and the British Press demanded that a strong hand should be used to prevent its continued occupation - that the I.R.A. should be ejected from the place. Eventually something happened to set the machinery in motion for the attack to commence.

It started in a very small and a strange way from a point far removed from the actual building. A very, what might be termed, ordinary raid by I.R.A. was being conducted at a motoring establishment in Baggot Street. During the course of the raid Treaty forces appeared on the scene in great strength, and without further ado seized the I.R.A. Officer Commandant Leo Henderson. It was declared in I.R.A. circles at the time that the raiding party acted under orders which precluded them from using their arms other than for intimidation purposes. The incident produced results the direct opposite to that intended, for soon after the I.R.A. retaliated by arresting one of the Treaty Officers, Commandant General "Ginger" O'Connell, and detained him as a hostage for

Henderson. These incidents caused a wild furore in both armed camps; so important were they considered to be as to almost out-rival any other militant events so far. Each of them was capable of supplying enough tinder to the fire that was already alight, and the passions that had been aroused, to cause an extensive conflagration. There was also enough inflammatory material present to force an issue on the duel that was being fought out on the question of rightful authority and to exploit which any excuse might be regarded as sufficient to avail of a minor opportunity in order to secure a major advantage.

These happenings also caused a stepping up in activities of the respective forces. The I.R.A. forces particularly re-acting to the situation in such a way, as to afford proof that they were unyielding to the demands made by the Treaty side for the liberation of O'Connell, while putting forward counter-demands for the return of their officer Henderson. Viewed then in their purely military aspect these demands and counter-demands represented more than mere incidents; actually they could be regarded as ultimatums for other and probably greater military courses of action. Here was a situation that was pregnant with forebodings of very serious consequences to either one or both of the forces involved in what appeared to be a gigantic tussle to dominate a position by the application of might and fixed ideas of a "No surrender" policy to guide the course of events as they were or portended to be at the time. While these things were going on and perhaps because of them, events of no lesser importance were being shaped behind the scenes, especially among the rank and file of the I.R.A. Their re-actions to the new situation could be summed up in such a way as to suggest that such things

were bound to happen - they are inevitable. Better to face up to them now whatever the dangers or the consequences.

We knew not how the ordinary members of the Treaty forces regarded these tidings, but we had reason to assume that their attitude was similar to ours, and that they viewed the matter in no different light. Furthermore, we had enough sense to realise that they were desirous of coming to deadly grips with us; that they were impatient, as they were enraged, that the I.R.A. stood in their way or in the working of the Treaty, knowing that if such happenings as these continued, and the I.R.A. exercised any degree of effective authority their prospects for coming on top would be neither easy nor promising. In the long run they should have to grapple with the "Four Courts crowd", the "Irregulars". But the question was: How could it be done better than in this way? Why not have a show down now?

Both sides had by then stepped up in activity and were showing a certain amount of aggressiveness and martial spirit in pursuit of their respective policies to win through. That was no less noticeable with the Treaty forces as their adversaries the I.R.A. judging by the many exciting episodes in which either were parties to. The Treaty forces as the self-acclaimed "Regular" forces (which title the I.R.A. disputed) gave many examples of their "martial spirit" when on several occasions they "shot-up" the Fowler Hall during their fast-motorised escapades, at one time wounding an I.R.A. man as he was leaving the building. So serious had things become that the permanent guard apprehended an onslaught, many alarms having been raised that such was a possibility. Then again, the Treaty forces had I.R.A. halls under

surveillance by means of an intelligence system reminiscent of other people and of other times.

The Four Courts during that time was a veritable fortress. Armed guards were always on duty at the entrances, windows and other vantage points. They, Headquarters staff, workers and technicians, lived and had their being there. New designations were added to our military vocabulary - the Four Courts garrison - the Fowler Hall garrison, etc. and so on. These buildings were prepared for a siege, barricaded, sandbagged and fortified with rifles and an odd machine-gun, the Courts particularly so. In other words, it resembled a military establishment. Guards were posted at regular periods, with full ceremonial and in strict order. There was no entry to or exit from it only by the production of a pass issued by the garrison O/C. unless in very special cases or exceptionally well-known figures. Everything concerning it, emanating from it or centring round it was purely and principally military; nothing was left to chance, as a military post and general Headquarters. It also housed the personnel of other special services - transport, munitions, Belfast boycott, engineering, armouring and so forth. In other words, it was the core, the very essence of I. R. A. activity and of I. R. A. administration.

The men comprising that "garrison" were drawn from the Dublin Brigade, of various Companies, and engaged in different spheres of activities besides military personnel - motor drivers, mechanics, fitters, engineers and tradesmen, and professions of varying denominations, and those with none, doctors and chemists, University graduates and teachers, butchers, cooks, labourers, and types and grades beyond description. They were not all

picked men, in the strictest sense of the word, as in an army like ours, not all men could give all their time in that way, but generally the special type were selected for and engaged in the work, priority in many cases being given to such men who had the time and the aptitude for the allotted tasks. Possibly every unit, company and battalion, was represented there, some in a large or a small way, as was found fit or proper. Our own "C" Company was represented by Seán Myler, William Gannon, William Bannon, Seán Corcoran and Con Mulligan. Each Company was responsible when transferring men to the "Four Courts garrison" to supply each with a rifle, revolver and ammunition for same. Thus the garrison was armed; thus it became the best armed and best equipped unit in the Dublin Brigade. Few, if any, units could claim to be so well contained, armed and equipped as it. Indeed it could be said of most Companies that in transferring the men they bore twofold losses - men and materials - which we had perforce to bear at a time when not only men but materials were of equal necessity outside the Courts. Thus the same process of transferring munition from Companies started in 1919 continued. How we envied the Four Courts garrison? How often had officers, of our first Battalion, grouched over the transaction, by which we were being drained of our resources, with little, if any prospect of making good our losses, although in the main we were never adverse to supplying them during the former guerilla campaign, as we had little need for their use in Dublin then. But, during 1922, for more reasons than one, we would have appreciated possessing more than we could afford to transfer instead of being left with a miscellaneous assortment of guns. Groanings and moaning, however, went unheeded; possibly they were not taken

notice of at all, and many a Company Captain had to suffer in patience - all the while carrying on, and obeying orders which had to be obeyed in any event "for the sake of the cause".

These things had long since resolved themselves when events of a more serious and dangerous nature occurred - the order to battle was sounded, and both armed camps were thrown into the throes of civil strife.

SIGNED

Sean Prendergast  
(Sean Prendergast)

DATE

3. 11. 1952

3.11.1952.

WITNESS

M. F. Ryan Comdt.

(M.F. Ryan) Comd't.

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21
BURO STAIRE MILEATA 1913-21
NO. W.S. 755 (iii)