

ORIGINAL

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21

BURO STAIRÉ MILEATA 1913-21

No. W.S.

869

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COSANTA.

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21.

STATEMENT BY WITNESS.

DOCUMENT NO. W.S. 869

Witness

Comd't. P.J. Murphy,
47 Glandore Road,
Drumcondra,
Dublin.

Identity.

Company Commander, Fianna Eireann,
Cork, 1912 - ;

Officer in Irish Army, 1953.

Subject.

National activities, Cork City,
1912-1921.

Conditions, if any, Stipulated by Witness.

Nil

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STATEMENT BY COMDT. P. J. MURPHY

47 GLANDORE ROAD, DRUMCONDRA, DUBLIN.

The "Rebel City" of to-day was not known as such during the early part of this century; it was known throughout the length and breadth of the land as "Rotten Cork" and "Khaki Cork" - names which made every honest Nationalist in the city blush with shame. There was little or no political activity at the time, but displays of loyalty to England were everywhere.

The first nationalist society to be founded in Cork was the Cork Celtic Literary Society. It was the local branch of the Cumann na nGaedheal founded by William Rooney as the advance guard to the Gaelic League. It was through the exertions of this society alone that no public body in Munster presented the King of England with an address when he attended the International Exhibition in 1903. To the credit of this society, too, is due the changing of the names of the bridges that span the Lee, now known as Thomas Davis Bridge and Peter O'Neill Crowley Bridge, and the sign names in Irish on the streets and the recognition of the Irish language in Cork Carnegie Library.

My uncle, Eamonn Lorton, was one of the first members to be enrolled in the Cork Celtic Literary Society, and during a number of its sessions was its Vice Chairman. There is one association in Cork with which the name of Eamonn Uí Lorton should be intimately connected with, and that is the Cork Industrial Development Association. While the association was launched by the Celtic Literary Society, it was Eamonn

who proposed it, and from its inception he laboured incessantly to further its objects.

Another good work in which Eamonn took part was the reformation of the G.A.A. To carry out this work effectively the Éire Óg Hurling Club was formed within the Celtic Literary Society and Eamonn was its first Captain and represented it at the G.A.A. Convention when the reformation was brought about. In passing, I may state that this club was the only one in the city that refused to play under the Union Jack in the Exhibition Tournament.

When Arthur Griffith began his series of articles on the "Resurrection of Hungary" and followed them up by enunciating the Sinn Féin policy, the Executive of Cumann na nGaedheal decided to give all the assistance in their power to Griffith, and in Cork the Celtic Literary Society launched the branch of the Sinn Féin movement. Eamonn was elected a member of the Executive of the National Council at its first public meeting.

He was also first Chairman of the O'Growney Branch of the Gaelic League, another protégé of the Celtic Literary Society.

In addition to his active interest in Irish Ireland societies, he was a leading Trade Unionist. At 18 years of age he was appointed President of the Boot & Shoe Operators' Society. The society at the time embraced Cork, Kerry, Waterford, and for a short period Dublin. He represented Ireland at Trade Union conferences on behalf of his society in England and

and elsewhere, and once in Glasgow he refused to honour the toast of England's King.

He died on December 27th, 1907, aged 30, at the North Infirmary, Cork.

The first Sinn Féin Club opened in the north side of the city on the 26th December, 1917, was called after him.

The writer's initiation into the Irish Ireland movements (Gaelic League and Fianna) at an early date was due to my education in the C.B.S. schools at Blarney St. and North Monastery, and to H. Lorton brother of Eamon who was a member of the I.R.B. In my primary education at Blarney St. schools I was taught Irish history by a Brother named Carew of Limerick, who brought home to us the sufferings of the Irish people and his hatred for everything English, particularly the army of occupation and the R.I.C. He used to impress upon us that anyone who took the "Saxon Shilling" was a traitor to his country.

On my transfer to the North Monastery I came under the influences of another great Irishman - Br. Clifford of Castleisland. This man was inspired to teach history, in fact history, Irish language, religious doctrine and drawing were his subjects. I remember well his prayers each day after religious instruction - "three Hail Marys for the welfare of Ireland, for the advancement of the Irish language, and that we may die for Ireland". He used to instil into us that we should neither sleep or

rest until our country was free. This Brother had a .22 rifle, and in the afternoons when school hours were over a selected few used go shooting with him.

In 1912 I joined the Fianna na h-Éireann. I was introduced into the organisation by my uncle, Harry Lorton. The Fianna Headquarters was called "An Dún", and it was located in Queen St., Cork. At the opposite side of the Street was "An Grianán", the Gaelic League Headquarters.

The officers of the Fianna were: Séamus Courtney, Jr. Healy and Mícheal Ó Cuiv (?). In the background a committee consisting of Tomás MacCurtain, Seán O'Sullivan, Tadhg Barry and Seán Hegarty kept a fatherly eye on our conduct and general behaviour. Outside normal scout duties we were taught history and Irish.

The Fianna at the period was not a very popular organisation. It had plenty of opposition from the Baden Powell Scout movement and the A.O.H. Boys Brigade, who had their Headquarters in the South Mall and Morrison's Island, within two hundred yards of the Fianna Headquarters. Twice a week we attended nightly parades, and every Sunday a route march. Easter and Summer vacations we held week-end camps.

In the Summer of 1913 we had a visit from the Countess Markievicz, Liam Mellows and Eamonn Martin. The Countess was dressed in the Fianna uniform, and she carried an automatic revolver. I can well recollect after speaking to us for sometime, she produced the revolver and told us how anxious she was to use it in a fight for freedom. It was around this period that Fianna put aside

their scout poles and began to drill with wooden rifles.

Formation of the Irish Volunteers, the Cumann na mBan and the Clan na Gael in Cork:

The Irish Volunteers was formed in Cork on the 14 December, 1913, after a meeting held in the City Hall and addressed by Eoin McNeill and Sir Roger Casement. Their headquarters was established in the Corn Market.

The Cumann na mBan had their Headquarters in "An Grianán", Queen St. The ladies that ran this organisation were: Miss M. MacSwiney, Miss Nora O'Brien, Miss Bridie Conway, Miss Barry, Misses Annie & Peg Duggan and the Misses Wallace.

The Clan na Gael a local body unconnected with the more important secret organisation of the same name were the younger girls and they wore a distinct uniform from the Cumann na mBan and they came under the leadership of the Duggan and Wallace sisters. Those girls gave outstanding service to the country.

On St. Patrick's Day 1914 the Irish Volunteers, Fianna, Cumann na mBan, Clan na Gael, National Foresters and Boys Brigade paraded through the streets of Cork. It was one of the biggest parades held in the city.

In June, 1914, the Volunteers held their first field day on the outskirts of the village of Douglas. Tactical exercises were carried out including company in attack. Tomás McCurtain was in charge of the attacking forces.

The next exercises were held late in September, 1914, in Carrigtwohill. Strange to relate the Volunteers were

split at this time but both sections took part in the days exercises. Lt. Trahy of the I.V. won the miniature range practice. This Officer was killed at a later date (23rd November, 1920) at the corner of Princes Street, Cork, as the result of a premature explosion of a hand grenade.

After the Volunteers splitting in September, 1914, the Irish Volunteers established their headquarters in a big store shed in Fisher Street, the Irish National Volunteers remaining in the Corn Market. No sooner had the Irish Volunteers got into their new headquarters when the hall was raided by the Irish National Volunteers and a number of rifles were taken. A revolutionary group of the Irish Volunteers wanted to carry out a reprisal raid on the Corn Market Headquarters but wiser counsel prevailed and the raid was stopped.

The National Volunteers consisted mostly of British ex-soldiers and supporters of the Redmondite party.

The Officers of the Irish Volunteers at this period were:-

Tomás McCurtain, O/C.

Terence McSwiney 2/2/C and Chief Organiser.

Sean O'Sullivan

Donal Barrett

Christopher O'Gorman

Patrick Cotter

Tadg Barry

Donal Óg O'Callaghan

Harry Lorton

Seán Scanlan

There were three daily papers published in Cork at this time:- the Cork Examiner, Cork Free Press and Constitution.

The Examiner supported the Redmondite party.

The Free Press was a Nationalist paper and supported the William O'Brien party.

Constitution was Unionist paper.

Late 1914 a Unit of the Citizen Army was established in a Trade Union hall on Merchants Quay. The name of the hall was 'Liberty Hall'. As far as I can recollect the Unit of the Citizen Army faded out within six months of its inception. The Fianna had a room in this hall for about twelve months. On the ground floor a rifle range was in operation and it was used by the Irish Volunteers from nearby Fisher St. Mr. Jennings (I.V.) looked after this range.

I met a Mr. Partridge of Dublin in this hall. He was connected with the Labour Movement. He was the first man to allow me to fire a rifle. (He paid for the .22 ammunition I used).

During the Manchester Martyrs Commemoration parade in November 1914, any Irish Volunteer who had not a rifle carried a croppy-pike. The Irish National Volunteers carried ropes indicating the space of their absent comrades in Flanders. A similar parade was held on St. Patrick's Day 1915.

After one of these parades an Irish-Ireland concert was held in the City Hall. I am not sure, but I think it was held under the auspices of the Gaelic League. The Irish Volunteers and Irish National Volunteers

attended and lined up on opposite sides of the hall. The Fianna occupied the back of the stage. During the proceedings a number of speeches were made, but one which struck me most was made by Major McBride. Before he spoke, Tadhg Barry, who had outlined his career, asked permission of the audience to allow him to speak. McBride spoke of the sufferings of the people and appealed for unity - earnestly appealing to the Volunteers to close ranks. He then turned to the Fianna and paid a glowing tribute to their work for Ireland.

Towards the end of 1914 the Irish Volunteers transferred their Headquarters from Fisher St. to Sheares St. The new Headquarters was a four-storied building with good accommodation. A room was allocated to each Company of the Battalion and the ground floor room was allotted to the Fianna. At the side of the building was a large shed, which was converted into a miniature rifle range. Mr. Jennings (uncle of Donal Óg O'Callaghan, ex-Lord Mayor) was responsible for the efficient running of the range.

The first Officers course of the Irish Volunteers was held in Sheares St. Hall during the last week of March, 1915. Colonel J. J. O'Connell conducted the course, the programme included drill, musketry and minor tactics (the Officers who attended were from the City and County).

The 23rd of May, 1915, saw the first big parade of the Irish Volunteers at Limerick. Units from all over the country were represented. Those present included - Owen McNeill, Patrick Pearse and Capt. Monteith.

During the parade through the city, particularly in the poorer quarters near John's Castle, the Volunteers were ridiculed by the people as well as having stones thrown at them. In the afternoon when the Cork Volunteers were returning to the railway station they were attacked by a hostile mob. The R.I.C. who were on duty did not interfere and made no effort to stop the mob from throwing bottles and stones. To protect the marching men, a Company of the Galtee Volunteers were rushed to the scene. They were armed with croppy-pikes and shot guns. A number of Fianna and Volunteers were injured in those attacks.

In the forenoon the parade was held. The route was through O'Connell St., around by John's Castle and the Treaty Stone. As the Units passed the Treaty Stone 'eyes left' was given.

In the afternoon a conference of the Munster Fianna was held. The Countess Markievicz was present at this meeting. The Cork representatives were Seamus Courtney and John Healy.

During the Autumn of 1915 the Volunteers ran a number of concerts in the City Hall on Sunday nights. Those concerts were a great source of revenue to the Volunteers and helped in the purchase of arms. It also encouraged new recruits.

Seán McDermott and Herbert Pim were visitors to Cork at this period and were frequently seen at the Volunteer H.Q. in Sheares St.

The Cumann na mBan and Clan na Gael were active in this period and helped the Volunteers in many ways i.e. running concerts, céilis, etc.

The Volunteer training became more intensive and route marches from 12 to 14 miles were the order of the day. One of the best exercises was the week-end march to Tracton, Kinsale. (They camped on Lynch's farm).

After one of these route marches, I remember Diarmuid Fawsitt (now Judge Fawsitt) addressing a meeting from the windows in Sheares St. Hall appealing for recruits etc. He was deported as a result. He went to the U.S.A. and became the Trade Representative. This man was connected with the Cork Industrial Development Association and other Irish Ireland organisations.

The Volunteer Hall in Sheares St. was kept continually under observation by the R.I.C. The two detectives, O'Sullivan and Carroll, were well known to the Volunteers. They were later joined by another detective sergeant named Maliff. O'Sullivan and Carroll were well known athletes. Carroll was a high-jumper. Maliff was shot in 1921. The wound was not fatal. He was shot on a Saturday afternoon outside the Courthouse in Washington St. He still resides in Cork.

Easter Week 1916

Brigade O/C	-	-	Thomas MacCurtain
Vice Brig.	-	-	Terence MacSwiney

Cork City Battalion.

Battn. O/C - Seán O'Sullivan
 Vice Battn. - Seán Murphy
 Battn. Adj. - Daithe de Bana

A. Coy.:

Seán Scanlon - Capt.
 Paddy Corkery - 1st Lt.
 Seán Hurley - 2nd Lt.

C. Coy.:

Patrick Cotter - Capt.
 William Barry - 1st Lt.
 Richard Langford - 2nd Lt.

B. Coy.:

Donal Barrett - Capt.
 Patrick Trahy - 1st Lt.
 Donal Óg O'Callaghan - 2nd Lt.

D. Coy.:

Christopher Gorman - Capt.
 Cornelius Collins - 1st Lt.
 Fred Murray - 1st Lt.

Fianna na h-Éireann

Seamus Courtney - Capt.
 John Healy - 1st Lt.
 Hurley - 2nd Lt.

Sluagh Leaders.

Frank McMahon
 Patrick Murphy
 Liam O'Callaghan.

Easter Week 1916:

The undermentioned Units paraded at Sheares St. Hall at 8 o'clock on Easter Sunday morning 1916, and marched to the Macroom Railway Station, where they entrained for Crookstown:

	<u>Strength</u>	<u>O/Cs.</u>
Cork City Battn. I.V.	160	Seán O'Sullivan Comdt.
East Cork (Cobh)	20	Michael Leahy Capt.
Fianna Éireann	24	Seumas Courtney Capt.

Thomas MacCurtain was Brigade O/C and Terence MacSwiney V/Brigadier and Chief Organiser. Both were present that morning at Sheares St. They moved off by motor car (open tourer) at 7.45 a.m. from West Cork and Kerry. I was under the impression on that morning that MacCurtain was I/C Munster and was moving out to meet Austin Stack.

The morale of the Volunteers that morning was very high. They knew it was no normal parade. They had been warned to be prepared. Every man was told to go to Confession the night before. They seemed to have sensed the time had come to strike a blow.

The armaments consisted of rifles (Howth and carbines) and shot guns. Some of the officers carried revolvers. The Red Cross van or ambulance was a covered float drawn by a horse and driven by an old warrior named Jack Murphy.

Each Volunteer carried three days ration.

At Crookstown railway station, the Volunteers detrained and after some refreshments moved in column of route for Macroom.

Before leaving Crookstown, a despatch rider on a red motor cycle arrived and looked for Thomas MacCurtain. I was later informed in Macroom that evening that this was a message from Owen McNeill cancelling the rising. I later saw Thos. MacCurtain that afternoon in Macroom and he seemed to be a worried man. I used to be on very friendly terms with him, and he had always a kind word, but when he passed me by without recognition I knew that there was something wrong.

The march to Macroom was tough. A number had blistered feet and Jack Murphy's old ambulance was a God-send to some of us. We arrived in Macroom about 6 p.m. After partaking of some food we were all marched to the railway station and entrained for Cork. On arrival in Cork a number of the city Volunteers went home, while the country lads were billeted in the Volunteer Hall, Sheares St.

The reaction on the Volunteers was mystifying. They could not understand with all the preparation - Confession and three days' ration - and then to return home. A great number realised that something had gone wrong and that MacCurtain and MacSwiney were not going around in a motor car for the good of their health.

Easter Monday saw great activity in the Volunteer Hall, Sheares St. MacCurtain and MacSwiney were back. A stand-to order was issued, sentries posted and preparations were made for the defence of the hall.

The Fianna were sent to the railway and barracks to report on any unusual activity.

I was detailed with another boy, named Liam Hennessy, by Thos. MacCurtain to report on military activity in Victoria military barracks. Information was sent back of activity in the barracks, soldiers being called off leave and confined to barracks. Telegram boys were intercepted and relieved of any messages for O/C of barracks. One of these telegrams gave news of the Rising in Dublin. I believe this was the first information that the Volunteers had that the Rising had taken place in Dublin. The information came through London via Rosslare to Cork G.P.O.

The seriousness of the situation was brought home to us when a British officer named Capt. Dickie approached Thomas MacCurtain and asked for the surrender of the hall. MacCurtain refused, and the British began selecting artillery positions and taking ranges. One of the positions selected was Wisnesfield, Blarney St. end. In the meantime the Volunteers prepared themselves for the worst.

The next day fresh approaches were made for the surrender, this time by the Bishop of Cork, Dr. Coholan, and the Lord Mayor, Alderman Butterfield. They were asked to surrender their arms to the Lord Mayor, who would be responsible for their safe custody, and that they would be returned again after things had quietened down in Dublin. (It is well to note that at this time the information coming from Dublin was very confusing. No one seemed to have any accurate or definite news).

That night a meeting of all the Volunteers was held in Sheares St. Hall. Those present outside the Volunteer officers were the Bishop of Cork, the Lord Mayor, and Capt. Dickie representing the G.O.C. Southern Command. The conditions were put to the Volunteers - the rifles to be locked in the Lord Mayor's safe or strong room and returned after the Rising. The British representative agreed to the conditions of the agreement (and I believe signed the undertaking on behalf of the G.O.C.).

A number of Volunteers refused to surrender their rifles. One in particular who stands out is Tadhg Barry

(who was shot in Ballykinlar Camp after the Truce). He was adamant in not surrendering his rifle. The meeting lasted late into the night, and at midnight some of the Volunteers brought their rifles down to the City Hall where they were locked in a strong room and the key was held by the Lord Mayor.

This agreement was signed by the Bishop of Cork, the Lord Mayor and the British representative, and it was like the old story of the Treaty of Limerick, before the ink was dry the British had broken it. A few hours after the Volunteers had deposited their rifles, the City Hall was raided by the British Army and all the rifles confiscated. At the same time another party led by the R.I.C. arrested all the Volunteer officers.

The next morning the Bishop and the Lord Mayor approached the military, protesting against the breaking of the agreement and the arrest of the Volunteers. The result was the release of the Volunteers - but it was only for a few days. They were arrested again and deported to British prisons.

This looked like the end of the Volunteers. Another Irish Rising failed - people began to speak cynically of their efforts to defeat the British Empire. In fact, when prisoners were being marched away to barracks by police or military they were subject to discouraging remarks from hostile crowds. Wholesale arrests went on all over the country. Even people who were not members of the Volunteers but were known to be sympathisers were deported to English prisons.

After Easter Week 1916:

After the arrest of the Fianna officers in Easter Week (Seamus Courtney and Seán Healy), a general meeting was held in the Council Chambers, City Hall, to elect officers. My nomination for leader was sponsored by the late Tadhg Sullivan. I took command of the North City Units, while Donal MacSwiney commanded the South. (Tadhg Sullivan was shot dead by a party of Black and Tans and R.I.C. while trying to evade arrest on the 19th April 1921.)

At this period Tadhg Sullivan, who was one of the Cork Volunteers, took a fatherly and controlling interest in the Fianna. He was active in organising throughout the county. I accompanied Tadhg on most of those missions. By attending aeridheachts we were able to contact the local Volunteer officers and through them the Fianna.

On the release of the Volunteers from English prisons in 1917, a welcoming party always awaited them. The Fianna used to parade in uniform and march to the station. On each occasion the R.I.C. tried to disperse us or break up our military formation. This action of the police generally led to numerous baton charges. The baton charges were not successful, so they brought out their carbines to clear the crowds. On one of these occasions a man named Allen from Blarney St. was bayoneted to death by a policeman nicknamed "Black Jack". This murder was committed outside the Opera House.

In one of these clashes I used a .22 revolver and a policeman named Brown was slightly wounded on the temple. As the result of this action I was paraded before the Volunteer Council and reprimanded for endangering life and was to be relieved of my appointments. As I was about to

leave the room Tomás MacCurtain, who was presiding (and up to this had said nothing) stood up and gave me a clap in the back saying, "I wish we could get the same spirit into the Volunteers".

I should mention that I had very close associations with Tomás MacCurtain - in the years that followed I did a number of jobs for him that did not require the services of a Volunteer. One of the jobs was contacting soldiers in Cork Barracks for the purchase of rifles. In one particular case a breadvan was used in taking the rifles out of the barracks. The driver of the van was a Volunteer.

Another incident was entering the Grammar School (or Church Lads Brigade) prior to a successful raid. I was also used as a contact in the purchase of revolvers from ex-soldiers. Being a youth of 15 years I did not come under suspicion and* was able to move around more freely than an adult.

As the result of imprisonment and poor health, our Commandant, Seamus Courtney, died. He was buried in Passage West. At the graveside we rendered military honours by firing three volleys with revolvers. The R.I.C. who were present closed in on us but did not get any of us. There were arrests made a few days later but none of the firing party were arrested. This was the first time after Easter Week that firearms were used publicly, and it was the Fianna who gave the lead.

I left school in August, 1916 and started to serve my time to a branch of engineering in Haulbowline Naval

Dockyard. Before six months was up I was ordered off all ships and confined to the workshops. The police apparently had made their report. A few years later I was imprisoned and my indentures cancelled.

I carried on with the Fianna until 1918 when I transferred to C Coy. 1st Cork Battn., 1st Cork Brigade. From then on I worked mostly with the engineering section.

C Coy. 1st Battn. supplied the greater part of the A.S.U. of the 1st Cork Brigade.

Coy Commander	-	Pa. Murray
1st Lieut.	-	Jerry Dennehy
2nd Lieut.	-	Dan Healy
2nd Lieut.	-	Mick Bowles.

The Coy. area enclosed Blarney St., Blarney Road, Sundays Well, Boyce's St. and Kerry Pike.

Our first activity was confined to procuring arms and ammunition. This was achieved by continuous raiding. Some places we were successful, others we were met with a hostile reception, i.e., Pratt's and Pike's of Healy Bridge, also McSweeney, Veterinary Surgeon, Sundays Well. One of the Volunteers was wounded in this raid. Mr. McSweeney lost a part of his arm as the result of the gun duel.

Mick Bowles, who was the Q/M of C. Coy, was a blacksmith by trade and acted as the armourer of the Unit. I assisted him in the making of grenade strikers, revolver springs and blank flanges for mines. I was able to manufacture this equipment in the naval yard

Haulbowline. Good work was done by Volunteers in this yard during the Tan period. A number were active workers.

The conscription scare saw the ranks of the Volunteers swell to great numbers. This popularity did not last; a great number faded out when the going got tough.

Sinn Féin Courts started to function. One of the trials was the eviction of a British ex-soldier from one of my father's houses at 63, Blarney St. The name of this man was Michael Walsh, nicknamed Mickeroo. After the trial he gave the names of the Court and the local Volunteers to the police. He was rewarded with money for this information. His sister got the draft and went to cash it in the local shop, where it was reported to the local Volunteers. He was arrested by the Volunteers and sentenced to be deported. He left the country and went to Wales. After a few months he returned. We made two attempts to arrest him, and on each occasion he got away from us, on the first occasion by diving into a shop full of women and children, and the second time throwing himself off a high wall. On each occasion he went to the military barracks and brought the military to our homes.

While with the British in Cork Barracks Walsh fell into bad health and they transferred him to the Cork Workhouse. One night in February, 1921, he was brought out on a stretcher to the backgate of the workhouse and shot dead by the I.R.A.

One of the most important call-houses for the Volunteers in Cork City and County was the Misses Wallace's newsagency shop in Brunswick Street, a small and narrow street at the back of St. Augustine's Chapel.

Towards the end of July 1920, information was received that the shop was to be raided by the British just before curfew hour which was 10 p.m.

An ambushing party was detailed to cover both entrances to the street, I was detailed by the Brigade O/C (then Seán Hegarty) to remain outside the shop and give warning of enemy approach. At the same time to ensure that the clerk of the Chapel would not close the side entrance to the Chapel, this was our only means of escape, if the enemy used both entrances to the street.

This detail was carried out for three consecutive nights and had no sooner withdrawn the third night when the place was raided. No arrests were made.

Police activity increased. Numerous arrests were made. Clashes with civilians and police became frequent, often with fatal results.

One of the first policemen shot in Cork City by a Volunteer was Head Constable Clarke. The police were raiding a house in Coburgh St. where a Volunteer named D. McNeillus resided. McNeillus fired on the police and wounded Clarke. He was arrested and lodged in the Court Jail. He was rescued a few days later by the Volunteers.

Around this period a training camp was established in Ballinhassig. I erected a bell tent which belonged to the Fianna on Hyde's farm. Seán Hegarty organised the Camp. Ald. Seán O'Sullivan was O/C of the City Battalion at the time.

On the 1st June 1920 Blarney R.I.C. Barracks was attacked by I.R.A.

This was the first major attack carried out by the Volunteers (Flying Columns were not organised at this time). The attack commenced about 9.30 p.m. by an explosion. The Volunteers got into the house adjoining the barracks (Smyth's Hotel) and placed a charge against the dividing wall. The explosives failed to breach the wall with the result the police were able to defend the barracks. The attack lasted about thirty minutes when the Volunteers withdrew. Owing to the close proximity of Blarney R.I.C. barracks to Cork and Ballincollig military barracks, and the fact that curfew was on at 10 p.m., it was necessary to get the attackers out of the area as quickly as possible. I was with C Coy., who covered the Faggot Hill side of the village; before the attack they put up a number of road blocks by felling trees and demolishing bridges outside the village.

This was the baptism of fire for most of the Volunteers. One or two were wounded on the withdrawal. I believe they ran into the military from Ballincollig Barracks. Before the attack started I delivered to Pa. Murray a grenade which I believe was gas or smoke filled. It was never used as the explosives failed to breach the wall. A few days later Blarney Courthouse

and the R.I.C. barracks was burned down by the I.R.A. On the 6th June, 1920, Healy's Bridge R.I.C. barracks was burned down by "C" Coy. 1st Battn.

The topographical features of Cork City, made operations very difficult. On its approach to the City, the river Lee forms two channels, the north and south channel, thereby enclosing the centre of the City. After an attack on British forces the routes of withdrawal lay over one of its many bridges, at which an R.I.C. barracks was generally located. At the sound of an explosion or shots, the bridges were manned by B. and Tans and everyone was subject to a search.

At one of these bridges - the North gate - is located the Abbey or Shandon R.I.C. barracks, noted for its murder gang headed by the infamous Sergt. Chance.

This black and tan (Chance) was notorious for his cruelty towards pursuers and for the murder of the six Ballycannon boys (referred to later). He carried two revolvers, one strapped on each leg.

Several unsuccessful attempts were made to get him including the charms of young lady to get him away from the vicinity of the barracks. A party of Volunteers including Pa. Murray, Danny Healy, Mick Boles, Seán McSweeney (Terences brother), Seán Murray and myself, waited four nights preceding the burning of Cork (on the 11th December, 1920). I mention those dates because on the last night (11th December) we carried a Lewis gun mounted on the sidecar of a motor bike, with the hope that after the ambush at Dillons Cross they would come out. The ambush took place at Dillons Cross

about 9.30 p.m, we waited until 9.55 p.m. (five minutes before curfew hour) and then had to withdraw. This Lewis gun was used a few weeks later, when Union Quay R.I.C. Barracks was attacked, it was fired from the back of a Ford car (by Seán Murray) driven by D. Cody.

During a raid on the Clogheen district on the 13th December, 1921, the gun was captured by the British (referred to later).

In the early hours of the morning of the 20th November, 1920, a party of Black and Tans raided Mr. Wall's of Blarney St. where some of the Volunteers used to stay. On leaving, they shot Jeremiah O'Connell through the mouth. O'Connell survived.

One Sunday morning while I was going to Mass at St. Vincent's Church, Sundays Well, with Humphrey Barry he put his hand into his overcoat pocket to pull out some coppers to give as collection. In so doing, his revolver fell on the porch and went off, wounding the man holding the collection box in the leg. The man's name was Mr. Brown of Blarney St. The R.I.C. barracks was only 50 yards from the chapel door.

Each evening a party of R.I.C. (on foot) left Union Quay R.I.C. Barracks for duty in Empress Place R.I.C. Barracks situated on Summer Hill. On one occasion the 4th January, 1921, they were ambushed as they crossed Parnell Bridge six or seven of them were wounded. One died later as the result of this action.

In order to keep the Tans confined to their barracks (Union Quay which was within 200 yards of the Ambush)

a Lewis gun was used on the entrance to the Barracks from the opposite side of the river with good effect. The gun was fired from the back of a Ford Car by Seán Murray, the driver of the car was a Volunteer named Cody.

The Tans came out shortly afterwards and a number of civilians were wounded.

Around this period, owing to the activity of police and Black and Tans, a number of C. Coy. could not sleep at home. We were accommodated in the Lunatic Asylum on the Lee Road. This place was raided a few times and a number of arrests were made, including one named Tadhg Barry who was shot dead after the Truce by a sentry in Ballykinlar Camp. Our next rendezvous was a number of friendly houses and barns in the Clogheen district (3 miles from Blarney). We established protective measures here by posting sentries throughout the night.

The columns were now being organised and all necessary arrangements were being made to get our arms and equipment in serviceable order. A number of visits had been made by us to the dumps, and although all reasonable precautions as to secrecy were observed, we had to contend with local informers. I mention some of the informers here.

1. Cornelius Sheehan (Long Con), Asylum Attendant, shot dead at his house in Blarney St.
2. T. Sullivan, Blarney St., British ex-soldier, shot dead in disused quarry on the Lee Road.
3. S. Flynn, ex British Army, Blarney St., several unsuccessful attempts made to get this man, eventually he left the country.

4. Michael Walsh ex-British Army, shot dead at back gate of the Workhouse.
5. Paddy Connors, ex Volunteer, shot in New York.

As I already stated, a number of us were sleeping in barns and outhouses in the Clogheen area. On this particular night, the 13th January, 1921, the party included Liam Deasy, Dan Donovan (Sandow), Tom Crofts, Pa Murray, J. Dennehy, Mick Bowles, Paddy Connors (informer) Tom Dennehy, Dan Murphy, Mick O'Sullivan, Dan Crowley, Jer. Mullane & Jerh. Deasy. A month later those last six lads were shot to death as the result of Connors giving information.

I was with the lads that night and did the last sentinel duty from 5 a.m. to 7 a.m. When they moved out in the morning - some of them to the city to their jobs - I remained behind with Mick Bowles and Connors and brought the guns and grenades up to Bowles's house. At this time we had the Lewis gun which was used in the attack on Union Quay and had brought it out to show it to Liam Deasy and some of the Brigade officers. We were proud of its possession.

About 11 a.m. the place was surrounded by military and Black and Tans. The few of us that remained behind were in a nearby house having a cup of tea when we heard the strange voices in the adjoining fields. We picked up our equipment and made our escape. A great deal of our equipment, including the Lewis gun, was captured.

The Lewis gun was lying near a fence covered with a ground sheet. Mary Bowles, a little girl of 13 years of age, tried to get the gun to a place of safety. She

was spotted by the Tans and arrested, brought to Cork military barracks, where she was interrogated without success. The Bishop of Cork intervened on her behalf as a result of stories circulating that she was being tortured.

The capture of the equipment by the Tans made them frequent visitors to the area, with the result that we had to go further afield for sleeping quarters. This brought us to the Carrignavar area where our Company Officers Jerry Dennehy, Mick Bowles, Seán MacSwiney (Terence's brother) and 5 or 6 more were arrested one night in a house owned by people named Carey. They were captured with arms and were sentenced to from 10 to 15 years imprisonment. The guns were not actually captured in their possession. They were found in another part of the house.

Curfew was now on from 5 p.m. to 3 a.m. on Saturdays and Sundays. Martial Law was enforced and anyone caught with arms was executed. The military patrolled the streets during curfew hours, and when they withdrew the Tans came out and carried on with their wholesale murders, burnings and lootings. These activities had a discouraging effect on some of the Volunteers. They feared repercussions on their families and returned their arms to the Unit Q/M. Physically those sleeping out were in a bad way. Scabies was rampant and those who returned home infected their families. Many others contracted T.B.

People who were friendly to us became afraid that they would be caught harbouring the I.R.A. No place was safe for more than a few nights.

As the British campaign intensified it was met by increased activity by the Volunteers. Trees were felled,

trenches dug across the roads, bridges blown up and everything done to hamper their communication.

On a Sunday afternoon the (19/3/21) I was in the Clogheen district. I was accompanied by a Miss Barry, whose family were sympathetic towards the I.R.A. As we approached the Clogheen Chapel we were suddenly held up by a party of Black and Tans and R.I.C. As one of the Tans started to search me, a Constable Kelly of the R.I.C. intervened and said he knew me and let me pass. I was released - luckily for myself because one hundred yards further on another party of Black and Tans had captured Paddy Connors with a revolver in his possession.

Connors was brought to the Abbey barracks and as the result of interrogation and ill-treatment he broke down. In the early hours of the 23rd March Connors brought the Tans to Kelleher's farm, Ballycannon, Kerrypike, where six of his comrades were sleeping - Jeremiah Mullane, Michael Crowley, Tom Dennehy, Daniel Murphy, Jerry Deasy and Michael Sullivan. The lads were brutally tortured and murdered. They cut out the heart of one, the tongue of another, the nose and skulls were bashed of the remainder. It was impossible to recognise any of them. After the foul deed the bodies were dragged in bags across the fields to the waiting cars.

The ultimate end of O'Connor I am not too clear on. Before the British evacuated this country he went to Liverpool. A letter addressed to his family who had been ordered to leave the district was collected by the Company I.O. A party went to Liverpool (Pa Murray, Dan Healy and Martin Donovan), but found he had left for

America. He was followed to the States and shot there. As to whether the wounds were fatal or not, I am not in a position to say. The names mentioned above are the only people who can give the facts.

On the 15th May, 1921, Rev. Fr. O'Callaghan was shot dead by a party of Black and Tans in Liam de Róiste's house, Jane Mount, Sundays Well.

About 9.30 p.m. on Wednesday night, 1st June, an attempt was made to blow up a destroyer in Haulbowline Dockyards. The destroyer was to act as escort to the sloop "H.M.S. Heather" which was carrying prisoners to Belfast jail. The destroyer was lying in the basin of the dockyard. She was after test and had steam up in one of the boilers. The charge was placed between the boilers. The charge went off at 9.30 p.m. and did sufficient damage to hold up the movement of prisoners. This job was done by Volunteers from Passage West. Next morning the yard was surrounded by Marines and R.I.C. I was arrested by the R.I.C. and handed over to a Marine Captain. He carried out the search of my tool kit. I was then brought to the Chief Engineer's office and interrogated there as to my movements the evening before. I was released and told to report again that evening for further investigation. I did not report but got off the island as fast as I could. My indentures were cancelled by the Lord Commissioners of the Admiralty.

On the 11th June, 1921, a number of the A.S.U. were arrested in Mrs. Stenson's public house, Douglas Street. They included Mick Murphy, Frank Mahony, Jerry O'Brien, C. Cogan and Jim Fitzgerald. Jim Fitzgerald was wounded; a few escaped, including D. Hegarty.

In order to fool the British as to the importance of their capture, three R.I.C. barracks were attacked that night: - Tuckey St. R.I.C. barracks, Shandon (Abbey) barracks and Douglas barracks. Douglas Barracks was attacked with gun fire, Shandon and Tuckey St. with grenades. I took part in the attack on the Abbey barracks (or Shandon). Ten minutes before the curfew hour a car came along driven by J. Cody and grenades were thrown at the barracks. I was with the party that covered the withdrawal of the car. A similar attack was carried out on Tuckey St. barracks.

Late in February 1921 an ex-soldier by the name of D. McDonnell (better known as Monkey McDonnell) was fired at and wounded in Evergreen by the I.R.A. McDonnell was brought to the barracks, and when he got alright again he used to come out in an armoured car, patrol the streets and pick out the Volunteers and have them arrested. He also went out at night with the raiding parties dressed in a British Officer's uniform. In one of those raids near end of June, 1921 I was arrested and identified by McDonnell. I was brought first to the Abbey barracks where I was identified again by another spy named Flynn, and from there to the "Cage" in Cork barracks. The "Cage" was erected on the barrack square, consisting of two huts surrounded by barbed wire 12 feet high. There was an outer circle of barbed wire which was covered with canvas. Between the two lines of wire the sentries patrolled. The outer wire had a number of spy holes which enabled those outside to see in. Prisoners in the cage were supposed to have taken part in the city shootings, and a notice was hung on the outside requesting identification.

After the Truce I was brought back to the guardroom cells in Cork barracks, and in the cell next to me the British had 'Monkey' McDonnell and another spy named Stephens. A row occurred in the Sergeant's Mess and the two spies were thrown into the cells. The prisoners in the "cage" brought the food to those in the cells, and when they found out who was there they threw the food on the floor. They were moved after a few days.

Denis Spriggs, a member of C Company, was shot dead by British Forces at the convent gate in the top of Blarney St. on the 8th July, 1921.

In order to gain a true appreciation of the 1916-21 period, particularly the six months prior to the Truce, there are factors which confronted the leaders to be considered i.e. armanent and morale.

The armanent of the Volunteers was poor and inadequate and sources of supply almost nil. The armanent of the company to which I belonged consisted of twenty revolvers, six rifles and one lewis gun. The rifles were handed over to the flying column and the lewis gun was captured by the British in January, 1921. The revolvers were of various calibres and manufacture some were obsolete with the result ^{ammunition} ~~armour~~ was very scarce. One was considered lucky if he had five rounds going into action.

Morale

The strength of the company during the conscription scare was around 200, it dwindled down to 20 active Volunteers before the truce. In explaining this decrease in strength it must be taken into account the increased activity of the British - Martial Law and Curfew was

enforced, the Curfew hour over the week-ends was from 5 p.m. to 3 a.m. That meant the cancelling of weekly parades, any meetings held were generally after curfew hours, and they were held outside the City bounds.

The morale of the active volunteers was high, but from continuous sleeping out in barns and outhouses their physical condition was poor, scabies was rampant and a number suffered from T.B.

The Morale of the people though outwardly high was not so in fact the raiding reprisals, burnings and nightly shootings by the Black and Tans had their effect. People who welcomed and sheltered us were now reluctant to do so they were afraid of being caught harbouring the rebels, such was the position in July, 1921.

Signed *P. J. Murphy*
 (P.J. Murphy) Comd't.
 Date 14th April 53

Witness *J. Kearns*
 (J. Kearns) Comd't.

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