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ROINN COSANTA.

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BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21
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Statement by John Hanratty.

Early in October, 1913, about six weeks prior to the meeting on 25 November, 1913, in the Rotunda at which the Irish Volunteers were inaugurated, I attended an open-air meeting of strikers in Beresford Place, Dublin. I cannot fix the date any closer.

The time, however, is fixed in my memory by the fact that I was then an oven-hand in Jacob's Biscuit Factory, the staff of which were on strike, and a member of the Committee of No. 16 Branch of the Irish Transport & General Workers' Union, 77 Aungier Street, the membership branch consisted almost entirely of employees of Jacob's and that its President was Robert de Coeur. (See footnote).

The meeting was addressed by James Larkin, General Secretary of the Irish Transport & General Workers' Union. He spoke about the need for workers organising to protect themselves against the savage attacks by the police, in many cases unprovoked.

As an instance of the disability under which the strikers conducted the strike, I will cite one instance. The right of picketing was denied to the strikers by the police although granted to them by the Trades Disputes Act, 1906. Members picketing, including myself, were assaulted by the police without provocation.

It was in that atmosphere that Larkin addressed the meeting. It was one of many meetings, and in referring to the savagery of the police, he spoke of the need for a disciplined force to protect the workers and signified his intention of forming a Citizen Army.

He introduced Captain Jack White and spoke of him as the son of General George White, and told the meeting that Captain White had offered to place his military training at the disposal of the workers.

All those desirous of joining the new Citizen Army were to attend at Croydon Park the following night. This was the beginning of the Citizen Army.

About 8 p.m. I was in Croydon Park with about 40 others, including Robert de Coeur. Neither James Larkin nor Captain White was there. We waited about an hour, but there was nobody to take our names.

Among those present there was a man named Kavanagh, whose christian name I cannot remember, who had been in the Fianna and was a member of the National Guard, an offshoot of the Fianna, with headquarters at Blackhall Place, Dublin. He was idle at the time.

Reacting to his Fianna training he lined those present on the gravel drive in front of Croydon House and put them through some foot drill. He took no names and there was no enrolment, but we regarded the Army as formed.

We started drilling almost immediately in the headquarters of the No. 16 Branch, Aungier Street. There were two British ex-service men named Kearns and Armstrong, members of the Branch, on strike from Jacob's. Both were on the Reserve of the British Army and N.C.Os. Sergeants.

Armstrong belonged to the Rifle Brigade; Kearns - Dublin Fusiliers. They drilled the Aungier Street Contingent in the early stage.

The subsequent history of the Citizen Army as given by R. M. Fox in his "History of the Irish Citizen Army" is correct and is officially endorsed by the Irish Citizen Army Old Comrades Association.

As far as I am aware no approach to anybody connected with the Citizen Army was made by the Provisional Committee of the Volunteers, nor were they affiliated in any way until Easter Week.

In fact there was a certain amount of mutual hostility due to the fact that each underestimated and misunderstood the other. This feeling, however, was gradually overcome by the efforts of James Connolly.

Footnote.

Robert de Coeur was present at the inaugural meeting in Rotunda as I was myself, and always boasted right up to the time of his death, that we of the I.C.A. were first in the field by six weeks, that is what fixes the date in my mind.

Roll of Honour.

On the occasion of the 25th Anniversary of the Rising of 1916, in April, 1943, there was initiated the Easter Week Roll of Honour, which is at present in the Museum.

Garrison Committees were organised for the purpose of checking up on the garrisons with a view to ensuring that only those entitled by their services in Easter Week to sign the Roll, would be permitted to do so.

Domhnall Ua Buachalla claimed he was entitled to sign the Roll for the Castle Garrison by virtue of the fact that he with a party of Maynooth men had been sent from the G.P.O. by James Connolly to reinforce the garrison of the City Hall on Easter Tuesday.

He contended that when he arrived at Mason's, the Optician, Dame Street, close to the Castle Yard, he observed that the offices of the Evening Mail were in the hands of the British military with two sentries posted outside. This naturally barred his progress. Domhnaill claimed that he dropped on one knee and fired and by good luck got the two sentries with the one bullet. Sergeant James O'Shea, who was in charge of the Garrison Roll of the Castle Area, denied O'Buachalla's claim to sign the roll and refused him permission to do so, despite the fact that O'Buachalla was strongly supported in his claim by Joseph O'Connor, O/C., Third Battalion, Irish Volunteers.

It is inconceivable that James Connolly would have sent reinforcements to a position which he knew had already fallen, as the garrison of Henry and James which was opposite the Mail Office had been forced to evacuate on Monday night on the fall of the City Hall and had reached the G.P.O. early Tuesday morning. Seán Byrne, one of the Garrison, says the time would

be about 10 o'clock a.m. (This man is at present a patient in St. Kevin's Hospital. I had thought to get a signed statement from him but his condition is too critical).

All day Monday the garrison of the City Hall and the Mail Office and Henry and James were under fire from Ship Street Barracks. There were repeated appeals to the G.P.O. for reinforcements. At 6 p.m. on Monday Evening Connolly, in response to last frantic appeal, called Sergeant George Nugrove of the Citizen Army and gave him eight men, and told him to go and reinforce the City Hall, that this was all that could be spared as the G.P.O. were hard pressed for men.

He said: "Your rere is secure", "any attack will come from the front", meaning that it was expected that the garrison in Jacob's of Bishop Street would spread out and occupy Stepehn Street, principally Booths, and dominate Ship Street and the Castle Yard from their rere. This incident is not mentioned in Fox's history.

These facts were told me by George Nugrove whose two daughters were in the City Hall during Easter Week.

The plans for the occupation of Booths, Stepehn's Street, were told me by Cpt. Robert de Coeur of the Irish Citizen Army. (Deceased).

It was de Coeur who brought Commandant Michael Mallin, James Connolly's Chief of Staff, of the Irish Citizen Army, around the houses in Stepehn's Street before the Rising in order that Mallin should reconnoitre the positions which would be useful for occupation in the event of the Rising.

I was not in the Rising myself as I was in Baggot Street Hospital as a result of a gun-shot wound in the leg received in Liberty Hall at the end of January, 1916.

In regard to Joseph O'Connor, O/C. 3rd Battalion, there was a broadcast over Radio Éireann on the occasion of the 25th

Anniversary of the 1916 Rising in 1941. In his broadcast he publicly made the claim over the wireless that O'Buachalla and his party of Maynooth men had arrived to reinforce the garrison at City Hall. only to find that the positions had fallen.

It was this broadcast which made the Citizen Army Old Comrades Association, including myself, realise that it was time to write the history of the Citizen Army, and on my recommendation the Committee commissioned R. M. Fox to do so, and he did so on material supplied by myself and other surviving members of the Irish Citizen Army.

After the book "The History of the Citizen Army" had been completed and while it was still in manuscript it was read to the members of the Committee, eight in number :

Seumas McGowan, G. P. O.

Seán Byrne, member of the Henry & James Garrison.

John Hanratty (in hospital).

Stepehn Murphy, G. P. O.

Martin King, G. P. O.

Walter Carpenter, G. P. O.

James O'Shea, Stephen's Green.

George Tully, G. P. O.

Maeve Kavanagh McDowell (carried despatches from
Connolly down the country prior to the Rising).

chapter by chapter in order that they might be satisfied as to the correctness of the records.

History of Citizen Army.By R. M. Fox.

When I was searching for data for Fox, contacting surviving members of the Army and he was examining existing documents in the National Library, Museum and elsewhere, I remembered a man I had known from about 1909-1913 when I lost touch with him. He was a member of an athletic club of which I was also a member at the time - Ned Walsh.

On the foundation of the Irish Volunteers, Ned Walsh, carter in MacMasters, joined the Hibernian Rifles. I was informed by a friend of his who worked with him, Thomas Calvery, not a member of any organisation, both employed by MacMaster Hodgson & Co., 117 Capel Street, that he was killed in Easter Week on the roof of Shortalls in Parliament Street.

Calvery called on me in hospital immediately after the Rising and told me about Ned Walsh's death.

When Fox's book was being compiled I called on Thomas Calvery who was still working in MacMaster Hodgson & Co., Capel Street, and I repeated what I remembered of what he had told me of Ned Walsh's death and asked if my recollection was correct and he replied that it was. Walsh had been shot in the groin getting through a skylight in Shortalls. Walsh's son, a young man, was with him at the time and he was sent home by whoever was in charge of the party.

I asked Calvery was Ned's son alive, and he told me he was and that he saw him almost every week. I asked him to make an appointment for me to see the son. He told me I could see him any day in Leinster House. He was one of the ushers there. So I went over to Leinster House and I saw him.

Neither of us recognised each other. So I introduced myself and he remembered me alright. I asked him what he could

tell me of the position which was occupied by himself and his father and other men in Parliament Street in 1916.

He then told me that the man who was in charge of that party on that particular day was Tom Byrne, then (1945) Captain of the Guard at Leinster House. Walsh's son did not want to talk about the matter and preferred that I should discuss it with Tom Byrne who would be back from his dinner any moment.

So I pressed him. "You were there when your father was killed". "I was". "And you were sent home". Is that right?" He said that is right. "I was sent home by Tom Byrne who was in charge of the party". "And what day was that?". "On Easter Monday".

Just then Tom Byrne arrived. I knew of him but I had never spoken to him before. Walsh's son also told me that Tom Byrne had published a full account in the "Independent" some years previously dealing with the whole matter. I never saw that account.

When Tom Byrne arrived I told him what I wanted to see him about. He asked me whom I wanted the information for, and I told him we were compiling the list of the Citizen Army and that I knew Ned Walsh who was killed on the roof of Shortalls, and that it was just routine work checking up.

He told me that he was in charge of a party composed of H.R. and Maynooth Volunteers. He stated that Ned Walsh was killed getting through the skylight. They had entered Shortalls from the rear. Their instructions were to hold that roof top, but that they were not to work up towards the City Hall and towards Henry and James' corner. He understood that there were men up there. They remained there until Wednesday when they were withdrawn by orders from the G.P.O. The parapets were barricaded by rolls of wallpaper and defenders repelled two

attacks by military from City Hall.

The reason I mention this matter is that in conversation with men who were in Henry and James up to Monday night of Easter Week, ^{I learned} ~~under hearing~~ from them they had no idea that there were any men in Shortalls.

The strength of the Citizen Army as given to me by James Connolly about six weeks prior to the Rising when I asked him in Surrey House, Leinster Road, Rathmines, residence of Madame Markievicz, who was a member of the Irish Citizen Army, was 300 armed men. (This is given in Fox's book).

Signature

John Hanrahan

Date

18th February 1948.

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