

ORIGINAL

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21

BURO STAIRÉ MILLEATA 1913-21

No. W.S. 1721

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BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21

STATEMENT BY WITNESS.

DOCUMENT NO. W.S. 1721.

Witness

Seumas Robinson

18 Highfield Road, Rathgar,  
Dublin.

Identity.

O/C. South Tipperary Brigade.

O/C. 2nd Southern Division, I.R.A.

Member of Volunteer Executive.

Member of Bureau of Military History.

Subject.

Irish Volunteer activities, Dublin, 1916.

I.R.A. activities, Tipperary, 1917-1921

Conditions, if any, Stipulated by Witness.

Nil.

File No S. 132.

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SEUMAS ROBINSON.

1902. Joined the first Fianna (Red Branch Knights); founded by Bulmer Hobson in 1902, Belfast.
1902. Joined "Oscar" junior hurling club, Belfast.
1903. Joined Gaelic League, Glasgow.
1913. December. Joined the Irish Volunteers, Glasgow.
1916. January. Attached to Kimmage Garrison.
1916. Easter Week. Stationed i/c. at Hopkins & Hopkins, O'Connell Street (Bridge).
1916. May. Interned Richmond Barracks (one week), Stafford Gaol, Frongoch, Reading Gaol. Released Christmas Day, 1916.
1917. February. Assisted in reorganising the Volunteers in Tipperary.
1918. October. Elected Brigadier, South Tipperary Brigade.
1920. Elected T.D. to Second Dáil, East Tipperary and Waterford.
1921. November/December. Appointed O/C., 2nd Southern Division, I.R.A., in succession to E. O'Malley.
1922. Elected Member of Volunteer Executive.
1928. Elected Senator.
1935. January. Appointed Member of M.S.P. Board.
1949. Appointed Member, Bureau of Military History.
1953. (?) Appointed Member of Military Registration Board.

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STATEMENT BY Mr. SEUMAS ROBINSON,  
18, Highfield Road, Rathgar, Dublin.

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- Introduction -

"A SOLDIER OF IRELAND" REFLECTS.

Somewhere deep in the camera (or is it the anti-camera) of my cerebrum (or is it my cerebellum?), whose loci, by the way, are the frontal lobes of the cranium of this and every other specimen of homo-sapiens - there lurks furtively and nebulously, nevertheless positively, a thing, a something, a conception (deception?), a perception, an inception, that the following agglomeration of reminiscences will be "my last Will and Testament".

All of which is very profound, dear reader if you exist, dear reader! The profundity is so profound it shows, or I hope it shows, that I am being merely facetious. This facetiousness is my camouflage to hide my ingrained shyness.. Yes, in all seriousness I feel compelled to squash my shyness and get on with my apologia - and I don't mean "apology".

For the last thirty years or so I have felt the urge to do this thing: to write my reminiscences, my "apologia pro vita sua" (my apology for non-suicide?), my message to future generations, my story. You may call it "his story", if you wish, but oh, not "history", please.

History is for the historian to write. Those of us who were involved in the making of our recent history were, and are still, like the storied man in the forest who couldn't see the wood for the trees. We were so intimately and urgently wrapped up in vital and mortal details that we had no time or opportunity, whatever about our inclination,

"to stand and stare" or to be "a chiel amang ye takin' notes" (unless "your Grannie was Doherty") or to be bothered or distracted by anything outside our immediate ken. No bird's-eye view for us! Each responsible officer had to have, of course, his own mental bird's-eye view of his own campaign and immediate tactics; but what happened to the other trees in the forest was not his particular concern, and, so, it should be left to the historian to collect and collate general data. Details were much too close to our eyes for us to be able to focus them and distant objects at the same time. In any case a bird's-eye view would not convey to other minds a life-like picture of the forest itself, or of the animate denizens of the forest - unless that bird had also lived its life in the forest. And a bird that lives in a forest is much more concerned with the absorbing facts of life, growth and death in the forest than with the impersonal appearance of the wood as a whole.

To change my metaphor: I have gathered like the cow so much mental fodder in the last sixty odd years that all I want to do now is to rest and chew the cud (not "chaw the rag") and, without any shyness I say it: I pray my Maker that in spite of my inherent mental, aesthetic and physical pettiness I may finally produce a little at least of the milk of human kindness. If there be not much butter-fat in my milk - well! isn't that a good reason for not skimming it? I hope no 'cute critic will stigmatise my milk as "a mere bovine production" or brand my cream "scum!"

Please forgive another wooden metaphor. As I have already suggested this statement will not aim at being a history: I wish it to be regarded rather as a monologue on the mental meanderings of a babe in the woods. I will try to be guileless and candid and as "wonder-full" as a child. Childlike (not childishly, I hope, though

perhaps, foolhardily) I will make statements on ethics, but statements that I wish to be taken rather as postulations. To me they will be dogmatic, I'd be self-deceptive otherwise, but I am humble enough to realise that despite all my efforts to see things correctly I may be objectively wrong. But I must be allowed to say of myself that I am at least subjectively right and conscience clear. If my politico-religious ethics be wrong, proved wrong, I will publicly burn this statement.

Quite a large number of people have been asking me from time to time, mostly importunately, during the last thirty odd years to write my memoirs. Why, I don't know: unless perhaps on the general principle that those of our generation who took or "who had thrust upon them", some responsibility during the campaigns for independence from 1916 to 1923 should write their memoirs for the benefit of future generations. Everyone's story is unique and will almost certainly be of interest to someone and may be of interest to a whole section of the community.

There are many books, pamphlets, stories and articles written about and on our struggle for freedom. Many of them are factual - at least a great deal of what they say deals with "facts". But that raises the eternal question: "What is a fact?" . . . "A lie and a half?"

Some "facts" of history as told by some historians. lie, I think, mostly somewhere between half-a-lie and a lie-and-a-half. They never present the whole absolute truth - and that is about the only constant truth or fact in the records of all mundane history. Only an angel can record the truth-absolute.

We are taught that there are two kinds of truth: objective and subjective. And though there is a whole infinite world of a difference between them they must harmonise to strike a true chord. Objective truth cannot be defined until God Himself can be defined. Subjective truth is the sincere effort to reflect objective truth - the effort to state unequivocally what we believe to be true. And I suppose that would exonerate even the man who has "couéd" himself into fantastic beliefs: his fault or sin, if any, lies in his previous acts of "coué-ing" himself wrongly. Subjective truthfulness pre-supposes a reasonable effort to find and to record objective truth.

In the light of the above dictums I believe that much of what is written as history is neither subjectively nor objectively truthful - at least in its general trend, and often in its intent. History can "lie like a trooper" by suppressio-veri, by wrongful juxta-positioning, by wilfully drawing wrong or misleading conclusions, by over emphasis or understatement, by "drawing red herrings" by "throwing monkey-wrenches" and by crass ignorance; but mostly by paucity of judgment, lack of charity or want of thought - "With desolation is all the land made desolate because there is none that thinketh in the heart".

I think it well to record now that I had occasion to write the "Irish Press" in connection with some publications dealing with South Tipperary Brigade, but <sup>most of</sup> these letters were refused publication.

(See <sup>appendices</sup> ~~addendum~~). I, II, III, IV

Chapter 1.

We are told that Dean Swift cursed the day he was born. He must have been a very precocious day-old chick! Now, it was God's Will that I should not be born a precocious little chicken or duckling either nor to become a precocious youth - but just a normal Irish Catholic Nationalist boy. I hope that boy is still father to this man.

I had the advantage, shared by millions of others, of being born into an normal Irish Catholic family. We were cursed (?) with bad tempers but, thanks be to God, not with temperamentality. Our nervous systems were highly strung but also very strong. Sparks of temper would fly on occasions, but never an unprintable word. If my parents are still in Purgatory, which God forbid, they are not there for any curses or other bad language nor for giving bad example. Our faults and failings as a family were many, but it was always a case of "thus far shalt thou go and no farther."

There is nothing abnormal or unusual in all that: it is common to Catholic families the world over. Like other normal Catholic young people when a serious decision of judgement had to be made there was always subconsciously present in our minds the subject-matter of the last words of the 'Hail Mary': "now, and at the hour of our death, Amen": "now" - the present decision; "the hour of our death" - the ethics of that decision; "Amen" and be it so always! Religion and prayer were entirely undemonstrative, that is, there was neither ostentation nor shyness. These things were taken for granted as fundamental, necessary, logical, almost casual, but, under the rule "thus far etc" no essential was ever ignored or skimmed, nor was casuistry tolerated.

I am saying all this for a purpose: I want to show that the insurgent Separatists of Ireland were the normal, natural, (common) - sensible people in Ireland - all others must be adjudged as in some degree, abnormal, unnatural; that, because we youngsters were normal, that is, without a taint of heresy or near-heresy natural or theological, we were Irish Separatists.

I feel that I may be using the words "normal", "natural", "commonsense", usque ad nosiam. I can't help it. I will be measuring the standards of our Separatist ideas and ideals against our opponents', and these words are recognised and easily recognisable criteria; they are, when properly applied, useful and dependable indicators that a correct solution has been reached, whether it be in physics or meta-physics; they are invaluable when used as catalysts to bring about quicker and better results: they short-cut many wearisome syllogisms for the sympathetic, inquiring, open mind. However, "You may jump on them if you wish" as Neptune is reported to have said when he had sharpened the prongs on his trident "it will only improve their impression."

Let us now try to build up, and present in nutshell form, the logic of our Separatist philosophy and show that it was based on sound natural and, therefore, good theological law.

Commonsense, a kindly and helpful fellow-traveller, will be our guide, judge and gap-filler. Gaps, big and small in my logic, may irritate the sensitive, scientific-trained academic mind, which is often more concerned about how a case is presented than with the case itself; but we ordinary folk have neither time nor inclination to make or to follow detailed, vivisected, distracting syllogisms on the analysis of how reasoning is presented. Pre-digested, desiccated soups for the epicure, the blazé, the delicate palate, but solid food for thought, with its percentage of roughage to aid digestion, is what

we work-a-day healthy minded people recognise and, only, can appreciate properly.

Therefore, without undue worry about the pedantic accuracy of my syllogisms or the mechanical order of the sequences of my logic, let me indicate as reasonably as I can: "The reason for the faith that is in me."

To start with the dictum: All true faith being in essence spiritual comes under theological law. My political faith is not only based on but it is an integral part of my religious faith. Theology (God-science), is the only science exact and complete to the Absolute. It is the only one worth worrying about, too, because it produces effects that last for eternity. Without it all else is ephemeral and a waste of precious time. Theological law is to the natural law as the woof is to the warf. But the material that theology deals with goes far above and beyond (and includes) all human knowledge, science, logic, conception.

No "human"logical sequence will ever span the gap that separates human science and knowledge from Truth. Faith alone can do it. Faith alone can intellectually accept It, although It cannot be "defined". And faith accompanied by good will, commonsense and humble prayer, can make a child a perfected theologian.

As one such child (I hope!) I make bold to lay down the following statements as axiomatic . . . and let him, who will, gainsay them.

Every normal person is bound in conscience and commonsense, theology and nature, to put his own family first in his charity, then his own country, then all mankind. No man can truthfully be said to love all mankind who doesn't love his own country more. No man can truthfully love his country who doesn't love his family more. Let us ruminate on these computations once in a while. It is so easy to

forget first principles in the turmoil of the application of secondary "principles" under the influence of instinct and selfishness and want of thought, "With desolation etc. . . "

Love, in its proper order of precedence, has never yet lessened one's love for anything else: "I could not love thee half so much loved I not honour more."

First things must always be put and kept first. Now, anyone who, for example, puts another country before his own, and, say, joins an imperial or other foreign army that is known to have crushed or that simply dominates other countries or people, that recruit commits, de jure, a serious sin. Can any Catholic theologian legitimately gainsay that? That recruit puts another nation before his own country contrary to theology and nature. He unjustifiably puts himself in the position, under a false and, therefore, blasphemous oath, of having to attack all mankind, even his own countrymen struggling for freedom, even his own family - it has often happened. That man is guilty, de jure, of a crime against theology, against international decency, against down-trodden man. He is guilty theoretically in the sight of God whether he injures anyone directly or not. And every time he fires a lethal weapon be it rifle, mine, cannon, flame-thrower, grenade, or other missile, he is guilty either de facto or de jure, or both (according to whether or not his ignorance be crass) of all the direct and indirect results thereof. He is further guilty, de jure, of the absolute maximum of deaths and maimings and their attendant evil consequences, that each such missile is capable of theoretically.

Anything wrong theoretically or theologically or in commonsense in that statement?

Ignorance may excuse the individual if ignorance be not crass; but oh Ignorance!, what crimes are committed and tolerated in thy name!

The next question that arises automatically is who is guilty of the cause of the prevalence of such appalling ignorance of apologetics, natural law and human decency among our people at home and abroad?

It has been estimated that there is now about ten million people in Britain of Catholic Irish descent, by emigration during the last three hundred years. Yet there is a total of only four million Catholics in Britain today; and that includes many English families, French, Italian, German, Spanish, Portugese, Poles etc. who settled in Britain during that time. Catholics from the North and West of Ireland who mostly emigrate to Scotland have stood the test much better. Catholicism has steadily increased in greater proportion to the rise in population in Scotland. Even in Scotland a small proportion of our people disgrace their religion and country by displays of both ignorance and "ignorance"; but there is not so large a falling away from the Faith.

What is the cause of this softening and consequent leakage? Does not the absence of an intellectually satisfying, character-building catholic-Catholic education with all the fundamentals taught and elucidated to suit the mental development of the individual, and coalesced into a unified completed philosophy of life . . . does not the absence of such a catholic-Catholic education explain the "softness" in the make-up of 60% of our emigrants? If knowledge be power then ignorance must be weakness.

Very little investigation is required to show that our people have had little or no training in the irrefutable logic, and the universality of application of Catholic principles. Instead, in our schools, a good

deal of thought, energy, patience and care is expended (in inverse ratio to their importance?) to impart a practical knowledge of three of the "Rs". But the fourth "R", religion, gets little but the law beaten in with the leather. No appeal to the intellect. The unfortunate lay teacher has his work cut out by "Exams", and often his bright pupils (and only his bright pupils) are 'accepted' by a religious teaching Order which one would expect to be more concerned with the sub-normal than with the super-normal child.

And does it not prove to demonstration that on the whole, our people receive little character-forming instruction, or are even trained to think; trained to detect the difference between catch-cries and full truth, fiction and fact, and, instead, treated with suppression of the *verum* and completely wrong interpretation of Catholic teaching, that so many of our people still voluntarily join Freemasonic Imperialist armies to stamp out God-given freedom the world over?

And will it not astonish future generations to learn that for nearly 300 years Irishmen who were anxious to shake off foreign yoke, were hampered ("hamstrung" as the Yanks would say) by the Jansenistic fulminations of so many of our religious mentors? These teachers taught us not to render to rapacious, murdering Ceasars what is their only due - the business end of lethal weapons. Instead they encouraged Irishmen to join the British seizers' army, and commanded us voluntarily to contribute ~~for~~<sup>to</sup> our own and other peoples' tribulation, because these Jansenists misconstrued the episode of Our Lord counselling prudence when the "stater" was handed over to the Tax Collector.

It is notorious that heretics base their errors on the very passages in scripture that confound them. Every Jewish republican or militant nationalist who listened to Our Lord's historic reply and

witnessed the discomfiture of the Publicans and Pharisees and the delicious side-stepping of the British (I mean the Roman) spies, must be now laughing in eternam at our pseudo-Publicans and Pharisees who imagine that Our Lord told the Jews to submit to Ceasar or to pay him tribute! Oh trap! where was thy spring?

Could any other heretical teaching be more than equally absurd? Why don't our Jansenists pray for a sense of humour the saving grace of which is a sense of the ridiculous? Already the rising generation are asking: "What reason did the Bishops give for condemning you?" "None. They just condemned us." "But surely they must have said something to justify such an appallingly serious matter? They must have said something; what was it?" "Well, each one of them said: 'The lord knows,' that's all". The children being still very young thought I said 'The Lord knows'. But naturally that didn't stop them. "You'r' coddling us Daddy." Bishops would have reasons, and we want to know them." It was now a case of telling the truth or skilfully side-stepping it, or perhaps scandallising youngsters who believe that all our clergy are like Ceasar's wife . . . So I said "Jansenism", followed by suggesting charitable possible explanations that left their young minds utterly perplexed, and, using modern Yankese they declared, "That doesn't make sense!" The only reply I could make was: "There is no gumption in heresy and nothing in all nature so blind; and good men, even good Bishops (and our Bishops were all holy men) can develop a blind spot through an overdose of "the lord knows".

There is no intelligible explanation of the majority of our clergy's attitude to Irish Separatists in theology except Jansenism, or in natural law except the creed of the Janisary, or in logic except woman's (?) logic: "It is so because it is so".

Heresy being a piece cut out of Faith, and Faith being a gratuitous gift of God, reason, even the closest human reasoning, cannot percolate through the opacity of heresy. Heretics may be as sound as a bell in everything else, but their monomaniacal heresy cannot be exorcised except by a spiritual miracle, and spiritual miracles require an apostolate, prayer and even penance on the part of the Faith-full.

In order to remove at once any misunderstanding between my attitude to Jansenism and my absolute allegiance to the Catholic Church let me make a confession of Faith with, briefly, some of the reason, for "the Faith that is in me."

I believe and confess that the teaching of the Catholic Church (her philosophy) covers, unifies, explains and directs every phase of every action, thought, word and thing, in human affairs and conduct. However, Catholic apologetics is a deep study requiring quiet reflection or ruminaton, the exercise of commonsense and intelligibly intelligent direction of each individual <sup>and</sup> association. As Catholic philosophy deals, too, with divine mysteries it is clearly in keeping with commonsense to expect these mysteries to be above commonsense. But a commonsense corollary is: No true Divine mystery, law or ordinance can be contrary to commonsense and will not perplex the understanding that is animated by good will. The Church stands by that dictum. She stands or falls by it. And that stand taken in conjunction with her unique claim (going back unbroken to the First Book of Genesis) to be God's one and only oracle on earth is proof positive, and also by elimination, that she is the one true Church - God's Oracle. Therefore, when "she opens her mouth . . .".

But when Heresy speaks it is not She.

To conclude my profession of faith: I acknowledge the divine authority of the Ten Commandments because the Church demands it -

they are also sound natural law for intelligent beings. I accept the Six Precepts of the Church because She is His only Oracle: and I acknowledge her authority behind every dogma She promulgates ex-Cathedra, and for the same reason. I recognise as the Vicar of Christ the successors of St. Peter to the See of Rome because the Church has always acknowledged it so, and because commonsense dictates that a hydraheaded Church of the One God would be a monstrosity and there is no other claimant to such authority. I accept the discipline of Rome and, from Rome, of the Bishops and clergy: but I'm not bound to believe in its efficacy; nor am I always bound to accept as morally binding the application of just any interpretation of any particular Article or particle of the Church's teaching or discipline by any particular member of the clergy, when such interpretation is contrary to commonsense or natural law and, therefore, not the universal teaching of the Church. To say otherwise would be a denial of the inalienable right and duty of man (homo sapiens) to have "reason for the faith that is in him". Catholic philosophy is not a fetish! If it were we would all be simple "saps" to be bothered with it. Finally it is my absolute conviction and belief that if the Catholic Church is not our only infallibile guide, then it could only be because there is no God. And if there be no God then this world and this life would be an inane, mystifying and cruel hoax! It is entirely opposed to an intelligent view of the fitness of things to think that the marvellous wonders of this visible and invisible creation with its panoramic complex multiplicity (in-finity? - to us finites) of perfectly harmonised immutable laws - laws made to co-operate and co-ordinate in perfect unison in the production and reproduction of inevitable results, ad infinitum (perpetual motion all round us, yet no man has yet discovered it) that this astounding creation, and most astounding of all - human

intellect, self-realisation, free will and sensibility, that all this just happened by accident or by some kind of auto-suggestion was self-created, is an insult to reason, ignores commonsense and outrages every generous human instinct.

No one, no thing, no mere fortuitous chance could possibly have brought into being such an intricate and continuous positivity, governed by such an in-finity of laws, forces and results (results so inevitable as to be calculable if we had the brains to know how) except, <sup>by</sup> an Infinite Mind and It good.

If it can ever be proved to my intellectual satisfaction that what the Church teaches, ex-Cathedra, or what she claims to be is wrong there will be only three reasonable alternatives left to me, or to any homo sapiens:

- (1) Leave the Church and turn athiest.
- (2) (Better still?) Consult a psychiatrist.
- (3) (Best?) Suicide: to forestall the horrors of having to live under inevitable Jungle Law.

Luckily, that is providentially, the latter two alternatives are dependent on the first one, which I deliberately declare can never arise, because I know, and it has been known to countless millions down through the ages by and from the cream of human intelligence right down through every strata of society to the innocent child that as sure as life there is a God, the King of Kings and that The Catholic Church is His only Kingdom on earth of which Peter received the Keys.

Perhaps I have shown enough "reason for the faith that is in me."

Now for the application of my Catholic philosophy. There are innumerable facets and aspects to the application of Catholic philosophy. To cover the whole ground fully a million years with the

greatest human intellect working full time would not be enough, because it covers so much: every viewpoint, both positive and negative, of every thought, word, deed, thing and omission of every human being and of each and every kind of association of people in every generation until the end of this world. The Catholic Religion is catholic in every respect.

I will be satisfied if I can show that Soloheadbeg ambush and the Tan War and the Civil War were carried out on our part not only in good faith but as an incumbent duty, and if I can show that the opposition to us on religious grounds as voiced by the majority of the Hierarchy was based on Jansenistic-Gallicanism, and if besides that I help to clarify some historical facts . . . then may the Lord dismiss his poor servant.

Chanter . 2.

This question is often asked: How, when and on whose authority did the hostilities begin after 1916? The "how" and the "when" would be coincidental. To take the last first: "On whose responsibility or initiative did fighting begin?" I would say that it was the leaders of the 1916 Rising by their heroic deaths after an historic fight that left us survivors (and all who were imbued with the Fenian ideal) no honourable alternative but the slogan: 'They shall not have fought and died in vain'. I'm afraid that our motives became a little untheological: "Vengeance be . . ." (as Paideen O'Keeffe emphatically declared once to British journalists). I would say deliberately that nowhere - in camps or gaols - did anyone ever suggest how or when "a beginning must be made": it would have been foolish. No prisoner or internee knew what the conditions were like outside nor how they would develop. I have no firsthand knowledge of what took place in the convict prisons nor in Frongoch after my two or three weeks there when I was picked out with S. T. O'Kelly, Walter Cole, M.W.O'Reilly, Tom Craven and Darrell Figgis and sent to Reading Gaol, because I was blamed for starting a strike against road-making in the Camp "unless we get Trades Union wages"(!) We didn't get Trades Union wages: they didn't get the roads and I was 'paid off' by being sent to Reading Gaol.

In Reading Gaol with Arthur Griffith, Sean T. O'Kelly, Herbert <sup>Mo</sup>re-Pimm, Darrell Figgis, George Nicholls, Seán Milroy, Ernest Blythe, Cathal O'Shannon and others, all leaders in Sinn Féin, it was only natural that the revival of Sinn Féin was 'Operation No. 1' with them. Most of these men (Seán T. O'Kelly certainly excepted) had their own good sound reasons for thinking that a united passive resistance policy was all-sufficient to win our independence. We younger men had a tremendous regard for the intelligence, clearsightedness, integrity and

zeal of these eminent men. And commonsense told us Volunteers that without a strong, vigorous, vociferous political Party the Army would be swamped by pro-British partisan propaganda of press and pulpit. Also, we could see the usefulness, the importance, the necessity of the moral-legal support of an elected Government . . . the 'Constituent Assembly' of Arthur Griffith's talks to us. We were sensible to the necessity of having the will of the people behind the coming struggle. The Volunteer Officers in Reading (men like Terence McSweeney, Tomás McCurtain, J.J. O'Connell, Eamonn O'Duibhir, Joe Robinson, Seumas Reader, Mick Brennan, Padraig O'Maille) were enthusiastically in favour of the political movement as the nation's second arm . . . for what it was worth, and it was equally with the army of vital importance to the success of a revolution.

After the releases from internment in December, 1916, the Volunteers saw that the political movement had such immense support from the people as a whole that it soon was unnecessary for the Volunteers to waste their time on it.

Sinn Féin became the cloak for Volunteer meetings: the first Volunteer Convention after 1916 was held under cover of a Sinn Féin Convention held on the 26th (?) October, 1917. Most of us who were present at the Volunteer Convention were delegates to both Conventions.

At that Convention there was not a mention of the renewal of hostilities. My estimate of the number at the Convention would be between 300 and 400, but they represented only the units then existing:- Companies. No wonder there would be no thought of opening hostilities. It was at a later meeting of Brigade officers that the first hypothetical plan was mooted. Hypothetical because it was conditional on possible British action: wholesale arrests or

conscription. If fighting broke out anywhere it was up to the Volunteers everywhere to strike at everything and anything, cut communications and disrupt British movements. There was no suggestion of the Volunteers taking the initiative.

The I.R.B. had lost prestige after Easter Week 1916, their authority moribund where not already dead. Many had, apparently, shirked the Rising. There had been some movement started in Frongoch which aimed at reviving and getting a change in control of the I.R.B. Shortly after the releases from internment young chaps mixed among us broadcasting the news that every member of the 'Organisation' was requested to attend a meeting in Parnell Square - No. 44 I think. At that meeting I saw young fellows with notebooks rushing round and about the ground floor (there were about 150 present) button-holing individuals with anxious whispers - "We must make sure that no one will be elected an officer of the Volunteers who is not a member of the 'Organisation'" - as if that were something new or something that we would be allowed to forget, and without adverting to the fact that that sort of thing would undermine the authority and efficiency of the whole Volunteer movement. Without waiting for the meeting to start officially I walked out in disgust thinking of Tamanny Hall. I never again bothered about the I.R.B.

After the election of the Volunteer Executive in October 1917, whatever authority the I.R.B. retained became redundant and illegal for the Volunteers. After the first meeting of the First Dáil it had only a nuisance 'value' to the whole movement.

After the Oath of Allegiance to the Dáil the I.R.B. became a sinister cabal. The Volunteer Executive had full power for peace or war until the First Dáil met and/or when the Volunteers took the Oath of Allegiance to the Dáil.

From October, 1917 to January 21st, 1919, the Executive of the Volunteers determined policy; G.H.Q. carried it out; and from October, 1917 organisation of the Volunteers for an armed struggle was the only possible policy. Neither the Dáil nor G.H.Q. could or would declare war; it was also unnecessary.

The Dáil declared that the war was still on from 1172. It was clearly and cleverly but clandestinely left to circumstances to re-open active armed opposition.

The passive resistance policy of old Sinn Féin and the apparent policy of the Dáil, was not the policy of G.H.Q.: "Oglach" 14th October, 1918, three months before the First Dáil met, stated: "Passive resistance is no resistance at all. Our active military resistance is the only thing that will tell. Any plans, theories, or doubts tending to distract the minds of the people from the policy of fierce, ruthless fighting ought to be severely discouraged." Inference: Ruthless fighting encouraged.

That attitude of G.H.Q. was not either condemned or altered by the Dáil which, on the 21st January, 1919, the same date and about the same hour that Soloheadbeg ambush took place, declared to the nations of the world: "The existing state of war between Ireland and England can never be ended unless Ireland is completely evacuated by the armed forces of England": a declaration of war - in existence.

This brings me to the Soloheadbeg Ambush, and "The Ethics of Soloheadbeg".

#### The Ethics of Soloheadbeg Ambush.

My reasons for concentrating first on the ethics of Soloheadbeg Ambush are :

(1) What I have just said has a bearing on the case pro and shows at least that there were no legal grounds on which it could be

condemned, though one could imagine "Timidity" querying: "Prudence?"  
And prudence was the only moral consideration.

(2) Because no one else is in a position or has the right to state the case, for I was the Brigade O/C. in charge and took responsibility.

(3) A controversy in The Irish Times in February, 1950 illustrates the widespread lack of equity in judgment on this matter. For some weeks this controversy was carried on in The Irish Times on 'The Ethics of Soloheadbeg'. When I considered all had had their say, I wrote the Editor the attached letter with a covering letter stating my authority to speak on the subject and explaining why I could not write under my own name . . . being a member of the Bureau of Military History. I wrote under the nom-de-guerre 'Dalariada' because of my association with Antrim-Down and Scotland, the ancient Dalariada. (See attached letter to Editor, Irish Times, 6/2/50).\*

No further letters appeared on "The Ethics of Soloheadbeg".

When the news of the ambush reached the city there were some violent condemnations. Arthur Griffith said something like: if that sort of thing were allowed to continue we would soon be eating one another. Arthur Griffith was possibly (to him probably) expecting the suppression of the Dáil would follow, and his life's work thrown back a quarter of a century. Others too were equally shocked, the clergy in particular or those of them who were unconsciously (I hope) influenced by Maynooth Jansenism or Gallicanism and/or had blood relationship with the British Forces, especially the R.I.C. - those Irish Janissaries. All these could voice their opinion or prejudice with impunity. No one, not even St. Joan d'Arc (who should be recognised as the patron and exemplar of all peoples struggling against pagan imperialism) would have been allowed to voice or publish anything that

\* See Appendix on III



weeks time - he could not find out the exact date, which was kept under sealed orders. He wanted to know should we capture it. When I looked surprised that anyone should ask for such an obvious answer he added that there would be from two to six R.I.C. guarding the cart, that they would be armed and that there was the possibility of shooting. "Good", said I, "Go! ahead, but under the condition that you let me know in time to be there myself with a couple of men from the local Battalion" . . . men with whom I would go tiger hunting. Then Seán Treacy said "Will you get permission from G.H.Q.?" I looked inquiringly at Seán to see if he were serious, before I replied "It will be unnecessary so long as we do not ask for their permission. If we ask we must await their reply." Transport was slow in those early days and it might take so long that the gelignite could easily arrive before permission was received. "Who will take responsibility?" he queried. I said : "I will". I have seldom seen anyone look so pleasantly relieved. When Seán was suddenly pleased with anything his quizzical eyes opened for a flash and the tip of his tongue licked the outside corner of his lips.

This was to be the first Brigade operation. The Brigade had been formed just three months before (October 1918) at a convention held in Tipperary town and presided over by the Chief of Staff, Richard Mulcahy, while Eamon Ó Duibhir and I were both in gaol in Belfast for drilling.

I had been invited to go to Tipperary by Eamon Ó Duibhir while we were in Reading Gaol, to help reorganise the Volunteers . . . if and when we were released. I had accepted gladly because I had taken a solemn resolution on Easter Monday morning, when we were sure the Rising was definitely on, that I'd soldier for the rest of my life or until we had our freedom. During that week I realised the foolishness of being

a target for overwhelming British forces. I saw what casualties could be inflicted by snipers and that the British were not averse to using any weapon against us: they burned us out. It became abundantly clear to me that we could hope to survive and win only if we were a ghostly army of sharpshooters operating all over the country combining to deal with small bodies of the enemy and making Ireland too costly to hold; always choosing our own ground, and our own targets, and always avoiding any move initiated by the British unless we had inside information and could surprise them, which would be tantamount to choosing our own ground. Succintly: make the King's writ run in Ireland.

I think I can state (tho' it might be perhaps better to say 'postulate') that Soloheadbeg was the accidental starting point of what became known later as 'The Tan War'. -X- I have said 'accidental' (1) because 'providential' might sound a bit presumptuous, tho' in point of fact there is no such thing as an accident not known beforehand to, and not allowed by Providence; and (2) because Volunteers all over the country were as prepared, as anxious and as willing as we to see the ball started rolling and would have started it in similar circumstances; and we certainly would not have been able to carry on if the Army and the country were not prepared to help us.

There had, of course, been a number of shootings from 1917 in Dublin, Kerry, Cork, Mayo, Clare and in Tipperary itself, but there was no 'follow through'. Soloheadbeg was the first time that Volunteer Officers known to the R.I.C. had decided to take action (in this case the capture of arms and explosives) and shooting to kill, if necessary,

-X- 'I.O.' page 57: "The beginning of the year (1919) was marked by the murder of two constables by masked men and armed. This was the beginning of the state of things that has led to the terrorism of the whole countryside. The terrorists are young men many of them tools of designing criminals".

"This was the first murder of R.I.C. since 1916".

and it was necessary, and then standing their ground. The rescue of Seán Hogan at Knocklong was the 'follow thro'' of Soloheadbeg. We realised the possible consequences to us, and the probable consequences to us if the Army were not prepared to stand behind us. We did not rush in without thought of the consequences to the about-to-be-set-up Government and the Movement as a whole. I thought long, deeply and anxiously and I almost panicked when I saw the date of the Dáil meeting drawing near and no sign of the gelignite coming. I was most anxious not to compromise the Dáil by starting anything that might be tagged on to them. If we had the ball rolling before the existence of the Dáil had been fully promulgated the British authorities would be pleased to think that Soloheadbeg was the action of irresponsibles and the Dáil would be saved by righteous indignation speeches of dyed-in-the-wood pacifist members. I knew that our Gallican clergy would help unconsciously in the delusion that we were pariahs. After the ambush I was most anxious to see how the Dáil had reacted, but Seán Treacy flashed the tip of his tongue to the corner of his mouth, rubbed his hands and gave vent to one of his pet idiosyncrasies with: "What will the Bishops say!" So anxious was I about the legalities that I had given strict orders that no despatches and no papers were to be brought to me on the 21st, nor until after the gelignite had arrived. Luckily (is there such a thing as luck?) the cart arrived on the 21st and about at the same time as the Dáil met.

With regard to the actual ambush itself: for several reasons there would be little or no use in describing the action in full detail. To begin with it was a very small affair compared to later developments. Its merit consisted almost solely in the fact that it was the "premier coup", and "it is the first step that counts" as the French say. Again, modern warfare has so completely changed that there is no similarity, no worthwhile tactical lesson to be gained for future use from almost any of

our engagements; and, also, Soloheadbeg has been dealt with already by several participants. However, none of these has mentioned (perhaps they have forgotten) some general instructions which, as O/C., I felt should be issued. These instructions have a bearing on the ethics of the ambush. It was laid down as an order that if only two R.I.C. should accompany the cart they were to be challenged, but if there were six of them they were to be met with a volley as the cart reached the gate. The reason for the difference was that there would be so little danger to us if only two appeared that it would be inhuman not to give them an opportunity of surrendering, but if six police turned up they, with their rifles, would be too great a danger to the eight of us to take any such risk as to challenge them and thus hand over our initiative. We had only one Winchester Repeater rifle and an agglomeration of small-arms.

On the morning of the 21st January, 1919, Sean Treacy's agents reported that the gelignite would be removed that day. Captain Paddy O'Dwyer was posted about a mile away with his bicycle on the road to Tipperary town ready to speed ahead of the cart the moment he saw it in the distance.

Naturally we had already discussed the plan of attack. I had encouraged everyone to give his views in order to size-up his ingenuity, commonsense and judgment. The final consensus of their opinion was that we should lie concealed on either side of the gate, rush out with a yell, overawe and overwhelm them the moment the cart reached the gate. In summing up I suggested that I thought that that would resemble gorrilla warfare rather than guerilla tactics, that it would betray an unsoldierly lack of discipline and self-control, and would create a false impression of headstrong, headlong hardihood. Then there was the danger of men keyed up with excitement not knowing when to shoot, (orders would not be heard above the din), triggers would be pulled instead of pressed to the

grave danger of our own men bunched together and milling around. Then it was suggested that we spread along the hedge with two to do the rushing out at the gate, the rest to cover off the retreat and the advance of the R.I.C. But they all wanted to be one of the two at the gate . . . which warmed my heart because I could see that those "cocks" would fight tho' not one of them had been in a fight under fire before. I insisted that no one should risk life or limb, that all were to remain behind the hedge tho' only two police were reported coming. Seán Treacy and Dan Breen, at the last exciting moment, started to insist that they should be allowed to rush out. Breen seemed to have lost control of himself declaring with grinding teeth and a very high-pitched excited voice that he'd go out and face them. I gave an upward nod of my head which meant "cui bono", but I made a mental note that that man should never be put in charge of a fight. I did not want any Balaclava-like heroics, which, as the French Military Attaché declared, "is not war"!

I had already asked Treacy to remain behind the hedge at the left of the gate where there was a very convenient arm-rest. Treacy had a small-calibre Winchester repeating rifle; and a rifle is comparatively cumbersome in a hold-up unless firing from an arm-rest. The hotheaded tension of Breen made it even more vitally important that Treacy should be collected and cool in order to be able to deal with any emergency. One could depend on cool riflemen. Small arms in the hands of men in their first fight, no matter how cool those men may be, are almost useless at a range of more than two yards. There was nothing for it but to walk over to Seán and say quietly: "Seán you must take that as an order". Seán grimaced and with a little shrug of one shoulder got down on one knee and cocked his rifle 'at the ready'. The rumbling of the cart was drawing near; I walked quickly the five or six yards

to the left where Paddy Dwyer was waiting for me. Our job was to spring over the hedge the moment the challenge 'hands up' was given, and seize the horse while the R.I.C. were covered. A few yards farther back the R.I.C. had unslung their carbines, but it was clearly just routine. Still, it meant they were ready. The R.I.C. were behind the cart, and, as they appeared opposite the gate, the high-pitched challenge "Hands Up" rang out. Before the first sound had time to re-echo<sup>f</sup> Dwyer and I were over the ditch and grabbing the reins. The R.I.C. seemed to be at first amused at the sight of Dan Breen's burly figure with nose and mouth covered with a handkerchief; but with a sweeping glance they saw his revolver and<sup>v</sup> Dwyer and me . . . they could see only three of us. In a flash their rifles were brought up, the bolts worked and triggers pressed . . . two shots rang out, but not from the carbines: the cut-off had been overlooked! The two shots came from Treacy and Tim Crowe. Those shots were the signal for general firing. At the inquest the fatal wounds were "caused by small-calibre bullets".

When Paddy<sup>c</sup> Dwyer and I landed on the road the horse took fright. I had only my left hand free to catch the reins and when the shots rang out it became frantic; it reared up on its hind legs and tried to break away; the reins slipped about two feet thro' my hand, but I recovered my grip near the bit when the horse's feet reached the ground again. Paddy Dwyer took charge of him and had him under control at once. Seán Treacy remained near his post until I went in thro' the gate. He was jubilant and danced around, he kissed his rifle and said "That was a comfortable place to fire from."

Seán Treacy had made all the arrangements for dumping of the gelignite. Dan Breen and Seán Hogan mounted the cart. Breen, standing up with the reins, whipped the horse and away they went clattering on the rough road. I had thought that Dan Breen, who had worked on the

railway, would have known the danger of jolting gelignite that was frozen . . . the weather was very cold. Hogan told me afterwards that he tried to caution Dan but either Dan couldn't hear him or he put no "seem" in it. The cart had been brought from the town dead slow with the driver leading the horse by the head.

It was Tom Carew who hid the gelignite so well that it was never discovered tho' every inch of ground was searched and poked for miles around including the place where it was hidden. I was unknown in the district and I remained behind until all had cleared out.

It had been arranged beforehand that Treacy, Breen and Hogan should meet and go 'on the run' to Mrs. Tobin's of Tincurry. I went to Kilshenane to fix up contacts and to find out what the reactions were. Mrs. Cussin, Eamon O'Dwyer's sister, was very perturbed; she asked me: "Seumas, how will you go to Confession and . . .?" "Mrs. Cussin" said I, "when I go to Confession I go to confess my sins not to boast of my virtues!" "Oh, that's all right then" she said, brightening up, and proceeded with her preparations for a great feed which was the first I had had for nearly a week.

I had no intention of staying in Kilshenane, even that night,<sup>X</sup> so I asked Jimmy Brown, a Volunteer who worked there, to brush the mud off my trousers which I had to change. I left as soon as I could

-X- The R.I.C. knew that I was the O/C. of the Brigade from the previous April - eight months - because they always called on me (tho' I was supposed to be only a farmhand on Eamon Ui Duibhir's place) whenever anything of a military nature occurred in the district as when Jimmy Leahy, O/C. Mid. Tipp. Brigade and some of his men coming from an aeireacht, broke some pillar-boxes in Dundrum, the R.I.C. visited me first. Jimmy Brown and I were in the garden. I picked up a fork<sup>K</sup> as ~~as~~ I went to meet them followed by Jimmy Brown. The Sergeant was indignant that I picked up the fork<sup>K</sup>. He asked me why. I told him that I wasn't going to be arrested alive again. He said they were not there to arrest me; there had been some damage done to pillar-boxes in Dundrum and H.Q. (R.I.C.) had to have a report on my comments. "Why to me?" "Well, to whom else would we come?"

and Jimmy promised to do the needful. I had warned him that the police would be along any moment. Jimmy didn't get time to do the brushing during that exciting day; it was about 12 midnight when he started to clean the trousers. After about ten minutes he turned them inside-out, as "half the mud of the Soloheadbeg quarry must have been on them." He threw the trousers over the end of his bed and started to undress.

Jimmy hadn't time to get into bed when the police arrived looking for me. Jack Cussin, Eamon's brother-in-law, was in bed but he got up and dressed quickly before the police got in. Finding his bed warm they concluded that I had just escaped. They searched every corner, nook and cranny for any tell-tale evidence, but none was found. Jimmy Brown told me afterwards with chuckles how the R.I.C. pitched the trousers from one place to another as it got in the way of their search. Those trousers were new and looked very innocent with the clean inside out.

Two days later Mick Davoren accompanied me to Glenough where I met the O'Keeffes, Paddy Dwyer and also Paddy Kinane and a number of Mid Tipperary Volunteers who brought me to where Treacy, Hogan and Breen were. Almost as I walked in the door Seán Treacy, who was in touch with Maurice Crowe, Brigade Adjutant, handed me, with his whimsical smile, a despatch from G.H.Q. calling me to Dublin. Next morning Seán and I set off on bicycles for the city, leaving Dan Breen and Seán Hogan behind. We stopped at O'Farrells in Carlow: Seán seemed to be known and liked everywhere. Next morning we set off again for the city. On arrival in Dublin word was sent to G.H.Q., and almost immediately we had a despatch telling us where we were to meet Michael Collins. But Michael was waiting for us on the street with his note book out. This meeting which was in the street instead of in an office was the first indication we had that if we ('the big Four') were not exactly persona non-grata, at best we were decidedly not warmly welcome in any H.Q. office,

except in Peadar Clancy's shop in Talbot Street where we were always received hilariously. They were rightly afraid of our blazing trail being followed by spies.

Mick seemed to be keeping his eyes peeled watching everyone in the street without moving his head. His glance would come back to us. He greeted us with: "Well, everything is fixed-up; be ready to go in a day or two". "To go where?" I asked. "To the States" he said. "Why?". "Well, isn't it the usual thing to do after . . ." "We don't want to go to the States or anywhere else". "Well", said Mick "a great many people seem to think it is the only thing to do". I began to be afraid that G.H.Q. had begun to give way to Sinn Féin pacifism, and with a little acerbity I said: "Look here, to kill a couple of policemen for the country's sake and leave it at that by running away would be so wanton as to approximate too closely to murder." "Then what do you propose to do?" "Fight it out of course".

Mick Collins, without having shown the slightest emotion during this short interview, now suddenly closed his notebook with a snap saying as he strode off with the faintest of faint smiles on his lips but with a big laugh in his eyes: "That's all right with me".

Seán stood deep in thought without looking round after Mick: he had expected an enthusiastic welcome. I touched Seán on the shoulder and said: "Come on Seán, that's great!" "What's great?" "Well, I expected only tacit recognition. G.H.Q. naturally want to sit comfortably in their armchairs organising until they can see the daylight ahead. If we can blaze the trail they will then encourage the rest of the country to do the same". "They'll repudiate us if we get caught, I'm thinking". "Who cares? I'm sure you don't! Dead: we will still be interested . . . tho' from very far off. But I'll be hanged if I'll be caught alive!" I think my pun put Seán into good humour

again; but he was unusually silent on the way down to Tipp.

Dan Breen was angry when he heard the news. Young Hogan, only, seemed to appreciate correctly the position of G.H.Q. Seán Treacy had the innate refinement of most lads brought up in the country and seldom looked one straight in the eyes when being spoken to. Seán didn't see the laugh in Mick Collins' eyes and that, coupled with Mick's abruptness (despite his "That's all right with me") made him still think that G.H.Q. regarded us as at best a nuisance.

Seán Treacy had a genius for organisation and making friends. We were kept busy going round the brigade area contacting officers and trying to get things going. We were being searched for daily. From two to five thousand soldiers would concentrate on an area, search every house and field rounding up all the male population of military age . . . and always we were just outside one of the apices of the triangle, with field glasses enjoying the sight. We had to get men in every Company area to be ready to scout for us, and to do it armed and be prepared to join us if attacked. Soon we began to be envied, the men wanting to be with us all the time. The Volunteers were told to go 'on the run' rather than lose liberty or their arms, and to be ready to fight for both. As these men increased in numbers they were banded together into what we called "Active Service Groups". When I reported this to G.H.Q. they adopted the idea but gave them the better name of "Active Service Units". Columns were the next step suggested by G.H.Q.

I was not enamoured of the idea of large Columns. To me they seemed to approximate too closely to a small standing Army which was objectionable from several points of view. (1) They were a permanent large body and therefore too easily located and the loss of a Column would have meant almost completely disarming the Brigade. (2). They required every available rifle. They required too many Volunteers as extra guards and despatch carriers, most of whom were needed <sup>at home</sup> to keep the

home-fires burning and the pot boiling for us as well as for themselves. Big Columns used eat, almost out of house and home, a whole townland; and, compared to the usefulness-beyond the nuisance 'value' to the enemy-of their military actions during long periods, their upkeep was rather costly. (3). There was the danger of the slow-moving British wakening-up to the one counter action that I feared: organising ten Columns to our one. It was putting the idea into their heads. In fact it was in our Brigade area that they first experimented with a large Flying Column. Captain . . . and two Lieutenants set out with 100 N.C.Os. and men from Templemore across country to the borders of South Tipperary at Boherlahan. They arrived fairly late in the day and immediately camped on both sides of the bridge across the Suir. They had not been reported, they had travelled so secretly, and in their camp they were well concealed. They left the bridge clear. No one was challenged from the side he started from (he could see nothing) but when he reached the other side he was challenged and held up. From a distance no one could see a soldier. They were highly trained and knew their business! About 5 a.m. next morning a Volunteer on horseback crossed the bridge and was held up and searched. Nothing found they didn't release him, probably because they had nothing to interest them up to this so the rider was held till the officers came. They probably had become a little bit suspicious of the Volunteer for they searched him more thoroughly again and found nothing until one of the soldiers noticed something on the sole of a boot. They prised open the sole and discovered a despatch. But what a despatch! There can be little doubt that the Captain had been well warned about our wonderful Intelligence system. He was so careful to play safe that he didn't let his Lieutenants know where he intended to go until they were ready to march each morning when each Lieutenant got his marching orders for the day. They had taken three days to come to our borders. The Captain kept his intended itinerary to himself concealed in a diary which he

kept in a pocket inside his tunic. When he read the despatch that poor Captain was not only mystified, he panicked for he left at once on a forced march to Clonmel. Why? Because of what he saw in the captured despatch. He read: "To O/C. <sup>H</sup>Capt. <sup>N</sup> and two Lts. with 100 N.C.Os and men set out from Templemore on the morning of . . . He encamped at . . . Next morning the Column left under sealed orders and arrived at . . . They are now camped on the south side of the Suir at Boherlahan holding both bridgeheads, concealed. They have seen no I.R.A." This was splendid intelligence work surely by an invisible enemy. They had not only noted his every movement but had got his name (and who knows perhaps the names and addresses of them all). This was disconcerting enough but when he read further his hair must have stood on end: "He intends to go from here to . . . , then to . . . and . . ." - right to the end of his secret itinerary. It was too much for the poor Captain. Clever ordinary military intelligence is bad enough to have to contend with (and he had seen for himself how perfect our intelligence was) but this clairvoyance was diabolical; the utterly impossible was not impossible to the I.R.A. Intelligence!

Whence came that despatch? The simple answer is Mrs. de Vere Hunt. Mrs. Hunt was a very tall stately and cultured lady. A non-catholic she was suspected by the locals to be anti-national. Some months earlier a Mid-Tipperary officer, Jimmy Leahy, approached me and requested me to let them 'remove' the Hunts to get the land for division. The reason advanced being that the land had been sequestered some long time ago. To add a little weight to the request he added that the Hunts were a danger because of their political views. He agreed that they had done nothing yet to justify deporting them but he thought prevention was better than cure. I told Jimmy that that would be very far removed from the spirit of the Volunteers who should try to win these people rather than alienate them. To make sure that the Hunts would not come to any harm

I went to the local Battalion O/C. to warn him of the need to see that the Hunts were not interfered with; he, Tadgh Dwyer, smilingly said: "Let them think she is against us it will make her place all the safer from the British. I have already warned these fellows off. The house is being watched. It is one of the most comfortable places in the whole Brigade area. Always we are welcome."

The capture of that despatch was the luckiest thing that could have happened to us. No 'flying column' was ever tried in South Tipperary again. In some of our border areas the British occasionally used to send out a Column based on a strong point (or between two strong posts) to which they could retire within twelve or fourteen hours. The real flying column seems to have been tried with a little more success in Cork where the I.R.A. Columns had their own near miraculous escapes.

Mrs. Hunt told me afterwards that she approached the Captain and bade them "welcome in these dreadful days". It was a pleasure to meet and see them around and would he and his Lieutenants have dinner with her. He agreed with alacrity. Mrs. Hunt gave her maid the evening off "because maids are dangerous to have around at times like this, they talk so much!" she told the officers. This gave her the excuse to do the serving herself. They enjoyed the meal and when it was over the Captain dismissed his two Lieutenants and settled down to peruse his diary while Mrs. Hunt busied herself clearing the table and chatting, keeping on the move. The Captain's back was mostly towards her. She is a very tall lady and her sight must have been astonishingly keen and she must have had a photographic memory, for, as he turned the leaves slowly she managed to steal a glance at each and memorised the gist of it. She had the despatch ready in no time and had it sent to the local officer. The rest of the story is already told.

By February, 1919, the R.I.C. were very bitter because none of us had been captured and I got reports of torture to civilians, including

Hogan's and Breen's relatives, and the British Government imposed martial law on Tipperary prohibiting fairs and markets. There was nothing for it but to hit back and I produced the following draft Proclamation and sent it to G.H.Q. for approval :-

Quoted in 'Red Terror and Green' by Richard Dawson (John Murray) p.240.

PROCLAMATION.

Whereas a foreign and tyrannical Government is preventing Irishmen exercising the civil right of buying and selling in their own markets in their own country, and

Whereas almost every Irishman who has suffered the death penalty for Ireland was sentenced to death solely on the strength of the evidence and reports of policemen who, therefor, are dangerous spies, and

Whereas thousands of Irishmen have been deported and sentenced solely on the evidence of these same hierlings, assassins and traitorous spies the police, and

Whereas the life, limb and living of no citizen of Ireland is safe while these paid spies are allowed to infest the country, and

Whereas it has come to our knowledge that some men and boys have been arrested and drugged, and

Whereas there are a few Irishmen who have sunk to such depths of degradation that they are prepared to give information about their neighbours and fellow countrymen to the police, and

Whereas all these evils will continue as long as the people permit:

We hereby proclame the South Riding of Tipperary a military area with the following regulations:

(a) A policeman found within the said area on and after the \_\_\_\_ day of February 1919, will be deemed to have forfeited his life. The more notorious police being dealt with, as far as possible, first.

(b) On and after the \_\_\_\_\_ day of February 1919, every person in the pay of England (magistrates, jurors etc.) who helps England to rule this country or who assists in any way the upholders of foreign Government in this South Riding of Tipperary will be deemed to have forfeited his life.

(c) Civilians who give information to the police or soldiery, especially such information as is of a serious character, if convicted will be executed, i.e. shot or hanged.

(d) Police, doctors, prison officials who assist at or who countenance or who are responsible for, or in any way connected with the drugging of an Irish citizen for the purpose of obtaining information, will be deemed to have forfeited his life and may be hanged or drowned or shot at sight as a common outlaw. Offending parties will be executed should it take years to track them down.

(e) Every citizen must assist when required in enabling us to perform our duty.

By Order.

Back came the reply from G.H.Q. within twenty-four hours: "That proclamation must not be published!" . . . that was all. I didn't think at that time that Headquarters would have balked at what the Proclamation implied. I lost confidence in G.H.Q.'s vaunted "ruthless warfare". There were about seven of us Volunteers 'on the run' for our lives in South Tipperary at that time. We were on the alert 24 hours in the day, while the R.I.C. were able to move about with impunity, lording it over all the people, mandhandling them, arresting them, questioning them, searching them, raiding their houses, allowed to move around freely day and night.

In those early days our young blood would boil at "caution" which we then regarded as "the better part of cowardice." We began to think

that G.H.Q., situated in Dublin which was very quiet indeed at that time (February 1919), had little notion of what we of the Southern Counties were up against. In fact G.H.Q. never did get any practical first-hand experience of the fight in either the City or the country. Not a single member of the G.H.Q. staff ever came down the country to see things for himself. They depended entirely on reports of local officers, and, later, on reports of H.Q. Organisers who were trained in the City on Regular Army military manuals. The best of these by far, Ernie O'Malley, wasn't a week with us when he realised the difference between organisation on paper and on the field, that guerillas and guerilla tactics and training were nearly as far apart as the poles from Regulars and their "orders are orders" training. Regulars are trained to be hide-bound automatons, while it is necessary for Volunteers to be trained as autonomous freelances.

When Ernie came to us he had a typewriter and a porter, trying to satisfy G.H.Q.'s insatiable maw for written reports, until after we had twelve of our most important houses burned after the Cullenswood House raid, ~~and~~ when we told Ernie that we would stand for no more written reports from South Tipperary being sent to Dublin. Ernie very much sympathised with us. It was his despatches that had been captured!

To get back to the Proclamation. I had called a meeting of Battalion Officers in anticipation of Headquarter's consent, and I had had the Proclamation printed. The bundles were in the house where the meeting was held. I explained what I had done and quoted H.Q.'s reply. I added that I was sorry H.Q. would not sanction the promulgation of the Proclamation; and that I wished G.H.Q. were here for one week even, and they'd probably change their minds: but that wasn't likely to happen.

The men had read the Proclamation and seemed very disappointed that they were not to be allowed to paste it up. I then said with significant deliberation: "As H.Q. has forbidden me to post up this

Proclamation I hereby warn you all that if I see anyone pasting up one of these posters on telegraph poles, trunks of trees, walls or on the gable-ends of R.I.C. barracks or doors or windows, and especially if I see you pinning one on to the tail of a Bobby's coat you will be severely punished!"

They took me literally at my word: I never saw a more enthusiastic scramble to get those papers out of my sight. In spite (?) of my warning they were posted all over South Tipperary and a bit farther away too. The above copy must have been the draft I had sent to G.H.Q., the date was not inserted. If that be so it <sup>must</sup> have been left behind in Cullenswood House along with a lot of other important papers.

Seán Treacy's flair for organisation was only one outlet for his enthusiasm and like Michael Collins (at least in this) he liked to have a finger in the pie of every department. He acted Adjutant to me sending out Orders as well as his own department of Vice-Commandant. Dan Breen had been elected Quartermaster, but Seán seized every opportunity to buy arms or ammunition and sell them to the Volunteers. He had got some small arms from Peadar Clancy and he had been asked by Mick Davoren to get him a revolver. We went to Kilshennan to see him, Davoren, and Eamon O'Dwyer. Eamon had been acting in the Brigade area as Quartermaster from the start of the reorganisation in 1917. He had been proposed for Quartermaster at the Convention, but his nomination was not accepted by the chairman as he was then being deported to England under the German Plot scare. When the need arose Eamon was always prepared and willing to assist us with, or to get for us, financial help. Seán Treacy dearly loved a chat with anyone who was interesting. He wanted to spend the night in O'Dwyer's, but Mick Davoren wouldn't hear of it. He knew his Battalion area and his R.I.C. "It would be far too dangerous to stay any length of time in

Kilshenane, and madness to sleep there." We compromised by sleeping just across the road in O'Brien's!

Next morning when the Volunteer Guard was dismissed four R.I.C. arrived. We four were in the diningroom having our breakfast and didn't know a thing about it until they had gone. Mick Davoren had arrived with a big fork ready to join in the fray. He had crept up close to a constable who was on guard in front of the house. Mick was a very puzzled young man when he saw the R.I.C. coming out and going off quite unruffled. He rushed in to find out the explanation of the mystery. They were only looking for the dog license. When Mrs. O'Brien and Mick Davoren started talking excitedly, we walked out of the diningroom to find out what was the excitement about. "Wouldn't it have been awful, Mick," said she "if the police had leaned against the door, it would have opened" - this is in reference to the diningroom door - the lock was worn and flimsy. "Mam", said Seán Treacy, "a couple of buckets of hot water would clear away all the bloodstains."

The previous day Seán had shown Mick a .45 revolver "and the price is £6." Mick knew that the Company hadn't six shillings but he was to run a dance in Ballagh on the coming Sunday night, and invited the four of us to go. It meant a long stay in one Battalion area and Treacy thought <sup>that</sup> would be too long. But I knew we were as safe as could be in Kilnarnagh Battalion, and it was the first visit I had been able to pay to my old Company and Battalion since Soloheadbeg. We stayed. The dance was a great success. Mick Davoren had a few pounds over for the Company funds after paying for the revolver. This taste of the old care-free life was only an appetiser to young Seán Hogan. After dancing all night in Ballagh he went off with a pretty girl from Glenough to another dance in Meagher's of Enfield. I had left the dance in Ballagh early in the night, Seán Treacy and Breen followed some time after. We knew that

Hogan was with the O'Keefe girl at the dance in Ballagh, and we expected he'd be late. Seán Treacy had warned Mick Davoren to keep an eye on Hogan and make sure that he'd come straight to O'Keefe's after the dance. Mick has told the story of how artfully the dodger dodged him.

Next morning the three of us were wakened by Paddy Kinane who burst into the room and almost indignantly asked "Do you fellows not know that one of your fellows is arrested?" It was no surprise to us to be told that a Volunteer had been arrested. "Who?" Excitedly Paddy pointed at us and repeated "One of your chaps". "Is it young Hogan?" asked Dan . . . The three of us got up and dressed quickly in silence. The first thing that came to my mind was one of Seán Hogan's dicta: "Ireland will never be free until she can produce a Robert Emmet who doesn't give a damn about women". He evidently didn't think Éire was capable of producing any such thing.

There was from the beginning a gentleman's understanding among us, never spoken but as clearly understood as if it had been an oath, that we would all four stand or fall together. There was never a doubt in our minds that we'd rescue Hogan or pass out for good; but we wanted to do it to the best advantage that is, with a clean getaway. Treacy was even jocular about the sensation the rescue would cause.

First we thought of cycling or getting a motor car and rushing the R.I.C. barracks at once. This would have been feasible if we were sure they didn't yet know who the prisoner was. Paddy Kinane was able to tell us that they didn't know him yet but that policemen were on their way from Tipperary town to identify him. By the time we would be able to get into Thurles they'd know and be well prepared. We sat down to reason out the problem. I enquired of the older people what was the usual routine for dealing with ordinary criminals. There had been so

little crime committed in the district that it was some time before we could get any information. We finally learned that prisoners taken to Thurles could be taken either to Dublin, Cork or Tipperary town . . . nothing very definite to work on!

If Hogan were taken to Dublin I knew I could organise between the Kimmage Garrison and the Dublin Brigade (men well known to me) sufficient numbers of determined men to storm the Court. If he were brought to Tipperary town it would be a relatively simple matter, but if to Cork - that was terra incognita to us then - well, he must not be allowed to reach it.

The first station the train would stop at in South Tipperary area would be Goulds Cross. I sent a despatch to Mick Davoren ordering him to have twenty-five men or as many men as he could arm mobilised under cover not more than half a mile from Goulds Cross, and await further directions. Davoren carried out the order and was a very disappointed man when no further orders arrived.

Seán Treacy, who was Vice Commandant and therefore Director of Organisation (than whom there was none better) suggested that it would be better not to attempt the rescue before Limerick Junction to see if Hogan would be brought to Tipperary town where there were more arms, and more Volunteers could be mobilised more easily and quicker. I agreed sorrowfully but not reluctantly. I would have liked my old Battalion and Company to have had the honour of assisting us. It was then decided to attack the train at Emly or Knocklong. Treacy was deputed to mobilise the Galbally Volunteers whom he knew to be first class men. His despatches were many and quick. The Thurles Volunteers were asked to display no curiosity or excitement either at the barracks or the railway station. One man was to be casually knocking about in the station and to board it if Hogan were on it. Micksy Connell was the man.

Any earlier information was to be sent by wire in code. Treacy, Breen and I went to Danny Maloney's about a mile from Knocklong Station. We watched every train from early morning - one man only unobtrusively watching with local Volunteers there 'on business'.

When the train with Hogan on it arrived Seán Treacy was on the platform, Breen and I concealed outside at the gate. Word was to be sent to Breen and me immediately it was learned that Hogan was on the train. I think it well to mention that I guessed or surmised after the rescue backed up by other incidents that Seán wanted to carry out some things on his own. It had been arranged that the Galbally Volunteers would board the train at Emly if Hogan were on it. When the train arrived Treacy immediately led the crowd to the carriage where the R.I.C. and Hogan were. He did not send word as ordered to the two of us waiting at the gate. The first notice we got was the report of firing. Dan Breen seemed to have guessed at once that Hogan was on the train he made a burst thro' the gate. I followed with vengeance in my heart. I thought that as Treacy hadn't sent word that some fool Volunteer had seen a soldier armed and couldn't resist the temptation to seize it. That would have put the 'caoi bais' on our hopes of a surprise attack when the train did arrive. In the heat of that awful moment I was determined to shoot off-hand whoever was guilty. As I got to the platform I noticed Micksy O'Connell with the newspaper in his hand and realised that Hogan was on the train. Dan Breen hadn't reached the carriage where the fight had already taken place when Constable O'Reilly started to fire at the already retreating Volunteers. Dan was such a big target that O'Reilly didn't miss him. This constable <sup>B</sup>picked at least two others - ~~John Joe~~<sup>Red</sup> O'Brien and ~~his brother Ned~~<sup>A</sup> and Scanlon. We were soon all outside the gate attending to Breen who got a severe bullet wound below the collar-bone. I asked anxiously what on earth had happened when someone said "Where is Hogan!" I dashed into the station and found Hogan smiling

with his handcuffs on trying to scale a wall! I led him out. "But where is Seán Treacy?" I wanted to know. No one knew. "He was in the carriage with us" I was told. As Seán didn't turn up I became very anxious and got the whole crowd to disperse after Hogan's handcuffs were removed. Breen was weak with loss of blood and they hastened him away with Hogan. There was general delight among them all because of the success of the rescue. It didn't occur to any of them that anything could have happened to Treacy. "He must have got out the other side of the train". I thought that was probably true but Seán would have made his way to where the rest of us were. But there was no sign of Seán. I moved along the station outside the hedge up to just beyond the engine where there was another gate. I stood up on the gate and scanned the fields and hedges. I saw two civilians searching the hedge on the other side of the train. They looked like two British officers in civies. With my trench coat, leggings and my hand in my pocket I glared in their direction to let them know they were being watched. After a few minutes one of them glanced round and saw me. He at once furtively put his revolver into his pocket and spoke at the same time (without looking at him) to his companion who immediately straightened up, dusted his trousers and the two sauntered back towards the train but keeping close to the <sup>side</sup> hedge. The fact that these two had been searching the hedge was a good indication that someone had gone that way. I waited till the train started to move off, and then I made my way to Maloney's . . . the only house or people I knew in the whole district. It was a bit nerve-racking as the wires must have been hot with calls for police and military. I had about a mile to go before I could get off the main road and under cover. To add to my discomfort the chain of the bike kept coming off. When I reached Maloney's I found them all hilariously delighted. "J.J. is rescued! J.J. is rescued!" ("J.J." stood for John Joe Hogan). When I spoke of my anxiety about Seán Treacy they all laughed it off: "Yerra, nothing could happen to Sean!"

Some little time before this we had been in this area and, noticing a peculiar formation in a mountain, I said "That <sup>peculiar</sup> particular shape must be noticeable for miles around." "Yes" Seán had replied, "and there is a great family living at the foot of it, Foley's". "Then if ever we get separated for any reason we could all make towards Foley's", I suggested. We all agreed, not thinking that the occasion would arise so soon. On our second visit to Maloney's we had been so taken up with the need to rescue Hogan that we never thought of fixing a rendezvous in case of necessity. In any case we couldn't imagine the four of us being separated after the coming rescue.

When I told Danny Maloney what we had agreed (about making our separate ways to Foley's), Danny said, "That's just where they have taken Dan and J.J. Hogan." I had to wait till nightfall before anyone could risk going to Foley's. When we arrived there we found that Seán Treacy had made his way there too. Seán had been shot thro' the neck the bullet passing between the windpipe and the jugular vein. He was not bleedin' too much. A doctor was got at once. He patched up Breen and started on Seán Treacy, probing to find the passage of the bullet.

When the probing instrument came out at last at the other side of the wound the Doctor stepped back with arms akimbo, head to one side admiring his handiwork like a thrush eyeing a worm. He was a clever doctor and, like most really clever people, was quite a simple soul. While still holding his admiring posture he explained the near (?) miraculous passage of the bullet. The Doctor turned up early next morning and went thro' the same routine. He ordered Breen immediate rest; he was not to be removed. Dan was raving by this time. He went through the same operation with Seán. I noticed that Seán's wound must have begun to heal for I could see the effort he was making to show no sign of feeling any pain. That the wound was healing was

clear enough to me because the passage was closing and it took the Doctor a long time to get the instrument thro'. When he succeeded he went thro' the same posing. When the Doctor came the third time (he was very attentive) he began on Seán again. This time I ventured to ask the Doctor if this probing were necessary. I remembered my very young days when girls had to go thro' the agony of keeping a string or wire ear-ring moving in the lobe of the ear to keep a passage open, and it struck me that Sean's flesh was already knitting as the Doctor was having great trouble trying to get the instrument through and I feared that Seán would be able to wear a necklace thro' his neck instead of round it. The Doctor immediately said "No, it is really not necessary". I then said apologetically that I thought the patient was suffering great pain. He said quite simply "I just wanted to see the passage again".

The Doctor was insistent that Dan Breen should not be removed; but there was no alternative as the Foley's were too well known to risk staying any longer there. By this time I was so fagged from want of three nights' sleep without sitting down except to snatch a meal, that I scarcely remember our leaving Foley's. Dan was in great pain. The pony and trap we took to the road in, was so very jolty on the hilly roads that Dan had to be held from falling forward or backward. We reached West Limerick and were brought to a house on a hilly place where we had a short rest.

Seán Treacy's wound did not damp his spirits, he was as full of energy as ever and I don't think he lost a moment's sleep. But I have no doubt that he secretly suffered a lot because he'd turn away suddenly on occasions (pretending he had something urgent to do) with his hand to his throat and a little cough . . . it must have been very painful to cough at all.

Seán had made all the arrangements with the local Volunteers, whom he knew, about procuring transport to take us to the Shannon, on our way

to Clare. There were few motors in those days and fewer still whose owners could be trusted. But lorries and official motor cars were plentiful and constantly on the road since Hogan's rescue. When scouts reported that a motor car had turned off the main road and was coming towards us I became alarmed. Treacy and Breen were soon ready to take the road. When I begged the two of them to move off at once, (as their progress would have to be a slow one) while Hogan and I would fight a delaying action, neither would move. Treacy saw that Breen's revolver was in working order and had his own ready for action. Hogan and I went out with bombs (the pins out!), carbines and revolvers, to meet whatever the Fates had sent. Scouts had moved down and discovered that they were friends just in time.

I would like to interject here a word on Sean Hogan. (See attached letter to Secretary, M/S. Pensions Board, September, 1935)\*. He had just come thro' the nerve-racking experience of his capture and 'bloody' release without a quiver. He was only 18 years of age and he stood beside me as cool as the proverbial cucumber. When the men in the car came up to him to shake hands he smilingly warned them that he thought it would be better to wait till he could get the pin back in the bomb!

In a couple of days we got to Mick Brennan's Brigade area where we were comfortable for some weeks while Seán Treacy and Breen recuperated. I gave them some lessons in swimming and diving at which I was (relatively) an expert. Clean-living lads they got well in a remarkably short time. [We had been so long away from Dublin that we thought it well to go there to see how things were developing at

Headquarters and be on the prowl for arms . . . our chronic need! While there we were summoned to a meeting to form a G.H.Q. A.S.U. When, later, a Dublin Brigade A.S.U. was formed the other one became known as "The Squad". Mulcahy, the Chief of Staff, presided. He told us that we would be expected to do all sorts of 'jobs' but nothing

\* See Appendix 2, XIII

that entailed more than the minimum of risk; he warned us that if any of us were caught or killed we would be quite possibly disowned. The meeting was horrified at this latter suggestion but no one said anything. Mulcahy dismissed us telling us that there was no compulsion on anyone to become a member of the Unit; that we were to go home and consider things for ourselves and come back to another meeting fixed for some short time later. Seán Treacy and Dan Breen were highly indignant at the idea of our being told that we would be repudiated if caught; Mulcahy's "possibly" was ignored! They discussed it with most of the other men after the meeting. I argued with them but I could not convince them that at that time it was the only sensible thing for G.H.Q. to do. The political and Army headquarters were still comparatively free; nothing of a military-action nature was so far traceable to them. Dáil Éireann had not been proclaimed an illegal organisation. This was good for the Movement as a whole. When the four of us arrived at the second meeting the only other man to turn up and sign on was Jim Slattery. Some weeks after another meeting was called and this time a large number of names were given in. What changed I don't know. At first we were put on the track of "G" men, then spies, then big game: Lord French.

The first time I found Mick Collins to be a bit of an artful dodger, was when he arranged the first, the 'phoney' attack on French. Volunteer officers were up in Dublin for a Convention under cover of a Sinn Féin Convention in the autumn of 1919. When the Convention was over and before the officers had time to go home Mick Collins rounded up officers from all parts of the country. He came personally to Mrs. Boland's to waken up Breen and me and ~~the two~~<sup>to Ned</sup> O'Briens <sup>of Fenelon</sup> of Galbally (who were on their way to U.S.A.) for, as Mick said: "An attempt on French's life". Mick gave Seán Treacy and me "they shall not pass" point to hold: the last corner French would pass before the Castle was reached. We were told that the convoy was to be attacked all the way from Dunlaoghaire; if French

escaped these ambushes we two were to see to it that he didn't get past us alive. We were to keep moving as if we were innocent civilians and yet we were to stay at our post! We were told that French was coming on the early mail boat to Dún Laoghaire, that he'd be driven by convoy to the Castle, and that it would not be later than 5 a.m. As Treacy and I killed time walking up and down not turning round till we saw that no one was in sight to notice that we were loitering, I began to realise that Seán always strode in front of me particularly as it drew near 5 o'clock. I knew that Sean's sight was not very good so I kept close to him. At last Seán stopped and said with his usual grin: "Would you mind taking the driver? I want to get the old 'josses'". "All right Seán!" It was so close to zero hour that we didn't care who saw us: we were out in the middle of the road to block the car.

As 5 o'clock struck we heard the noise of a number of men walking round the corner talking loudly and laughing. We wheeled round to see what or who was coming. Round the corner from Dame Street came Mick Collins, Seán Ua Muirliú, Seán McGarry, Thomas McCurtain and others. "It's all right" shouted Mick "he isn't coming!" I was delighted to see Thomas McCurtain whom I hadn't seen since our Reading Gaol days. Thomas was delighted, too, not at meeting me, but at having got a splendid revolver which he declared he wasn't going to part with! I learned much later that French, instead of being in Britain was in his Roscommon estate and there was no word at all of him coming that time to Dublin. However, Mick was able to give the impression to the Volunteer officers from all over the country that he not only organised the attacks on spies that had begun in Dublin but that he also led them, taking part in them! Certainly Mick organised this "attack" on French; he mobilised the men for it and he was out himself that morning. And that was the nearest I ever saw Mick Collins to a fight.

Towards the end of 1920 and the beginning of 1921 the British press had been changing its description of Collins from a "thoug" and "murderer" to "a daredevil"; romanticising him with damnation that praised him in the sight of the Irish people. He was "seen" all over the country leading the columns from Dublin to West Cork where he had been "seen" riding on a white charger like King William at the Boyne. But it was Tom Barry who rode the horse because of a strained foot and King William rode a brown horse! This sort of journalism is not history but it is blatant propaganda. In the case of Mick Collins it put him on a pedestal where he did not properly belong. It enhanced his undoubted influence beyond all bounds. "What's good enough for Mick Collins is good enough for me." -X- It is clear that the British press had got its directions and the anti-national press in Ireland simply quoted the English press without comment . . . knowing the reports were false. They could see the aim behind this personal propaganda. And when Collins treacherously signed The Articles for a Treaty in 1921 the anti-Republican press to a sheet became fulsome in their praise of Collins whom they would have handed over to the British if they could from 1916.

I think it well to state categorically that Mick Collins never fired a shot at British enemy during the whole of the Tan war nor during Easter Week 1916. No exception can be taken to me making that statement even now that Collins is dead because I challenged him (and any Deputy who cared to take up the challenge) to say if he ever fired even one shot at

-X- . . . . as Deputy after I.R.B. Deputy declared before announcing his decision to vote for the 'Treaty', thereby renouncing his Oath to the Republic determined to swear (false?) fealty to his Satanic (excuse me) his Brittain Majesty.

the British enemy during the Tan war or during Easter Week 1916. I made that challenge during the debates on the 'Treaty'. -X-

No blame attaches to Collins for this: it would have been wrong of Collins to have exposed himself during the Tan War, he was too important to the Army. And I should like to add no one ever heard him lay claim to the fantastic things attributed to him by the British press copied by the sycophantic Irish press without comment!

This dummy attack on French was followed by several other apparently serious attempts; but they all failed because of inaccurate information. Seán Hogan and Treacy were on these attempts. I was back in Tipperary at Headquarters. I got word in time to be at the only serious attack that came off at Ashtown. I have written an account of this affair in the 'Evening Telegraph'. - (See copy attached). *Handwritten note: Appendix 14*

Dan Breen was taken to Malone's of Grantham Street. He was weak from loss of blood and only half conscious. A very young priest was brought to hear his Confession, but someone had rushed in proclaiming aloud that Martin Savage's body had been refused admission to Phibsboro' Chapel. Dan refused to go to Confession saying: "If my dead body isn't fit to be taken into the Church then I'm not fit to be in it alive". The young priest was very nervous. The house was full of armed men. He was fumbling nervously with his stole. Arguments started for and against but when the Bishop's condemnation was referred to, it seemed to put 'finis' to all argument. I hadn't said a word up to this but I was very anxious about

-X- Having heard me make the 'challenge' the Minister of Defence, Cathal Brugha, requested me to ask officially at question time what status Michael Collins held in the Army; to which I thought it well to add the further question: whether it is recorded anywhere that Collins had ever fired a shot at the British?

One looks in vain to find either the question or the answer in the new editions (27/2/25) of The Dáil Debates.

Dan not going to Confession. It occurred to me that this was one occasion where a Hail Mary was called for. I whispered it to myself, then, like an inspiration an idea occurred to me. I stepped up to the bed and said: "Look here, Dan, the way I look on this whole business is this: I won't mind so much going to hell for something I will have got a damned good kick out of but I'll be damned if I'll go to hell just to please the Bishops!" The apparent logic, coupled with the flavour of a fighting spirit behind it, worked. Dan thought for a moment then nodded towards the priest.

Dan Breen was Brigade Quartermaster and it suited him to remain almost permanently in Dublin. In "My Fight for Irish Freedom" the claim is made not only that he was in Tipperary during all the fighting but that "the men who were with me were . . ." at the capture of Drangan Barracks and at Hollyford Barracks and other places, as if he were either in charge or worse still "the group in charge" (which always included himself) - as if the I.R.A. in South Tipperary were a mob-led gang. Dan Breen was never put in charge of a fight from and including Soloheadbeg during the whole of the Tan War, nor was he present at either of them. His name is not mentioned on the official lists. *See also the names I, II, III, IV*

Following the capture of a despatch-rider with a despatch, with the names and numbers of the battalions then existing, Seán Treacy as Vice-Commandant and Director of Organisation for the Brigade suggested a change of the numbers of the battalions. What was the First became the Fourth, the Second became the Third and the latest formed at Rathsallagh became the First. This latter Battalion soon became the Headquarters of the Brigade; the Battalion O/C. Jerome Devin's home was Headquarters for the Battalion also. The Devin household was at the disposal of the Volunteers; every member of the family was in the armed forces except the eldest son who was studying for the priesthood - Father Frank Devin.

\* See references also I, II, III, IV

Besides local Volunteers and Brigade staff-officers there were so many callers from G.H.Q., the eight battalions and despatch-riders that the Devins were getting into straightened circumstances financially. This state of affairs applied to a big number of farmers. These people housed, fed and gave us change of underwear. Whole columns would on occasions be billeted for from two to three days at a time. These good people were too proud to drop even a hint of their embarrassment. It was only by an accident that I discovered this state of affairs so I decided to spread the burden a little more evenly by asking G.H.Q. to allow us to issue a levy-appeal to the people.

I sent a copy of the suggested appeal to Dublin. This suggestion was incorporated in G.H.Q.'s General Order No. 15 (copy attached) <sup>\*</sup> and it was quoted in An t-Oglach at the time, but ~~even~~ that is suppressed in the later edition.

In about the end of March, 1920 the R.I.C. left the barracks at Lisronagh very near our Brigade Headquarters. I immediately wrote G.H.Q. pointing out the necessity for its destruction and suggesting that this applied to all other vacated R.I.C. barracks all over the country, and that if a General Order were issued for a definite date the element of surprise would be ours.

\* See Appendix on PA  
XV

I feared that if we burned Lisronagh barracks first the British authorities might awaken to the advisability of reoccupying these barracks, strengthening them and manning them better. G.H.Q. issued an order to destroy all vacated R.I.C. barracks in the country. ~~It~~

~~It~~ Word seems to have been sent to the R.I.C. in Clonmel because Lisronagh barracks was reoccupied secretly and greatly strengthened the day before the order for the destruction of all vacated barracks was to be carried out. The R.I.C. were lying in ambush for the Volunteers who were under orders to destroy the barracks. The police opened fire and our lads, taken completely by surprise, had great difficulty in fighting their way out of the hornet's nest; they did so without any serious casualty. Jerome Davin, the O/C. of the Battalion, realising that Lisronagh was close to the borders of the 5th Battalion (Clonmel) had sent word to Clonmel to have the roads leading to Clonmel blocked on the day the vacated barracks was to be destroyed. No barracks were destroyed in the 5th Battalion area that day. Whether or not there was any connection between all this and the ambush at Lisronagh it had already ~~become~~ become, otherwise, clear that some of the older I.R.B. officer personnel of Battalion 5 had become more passivist Sinn Féiners than Volunteers. Sometime in 1919 Seán Treacy and Dan Breen had convinced me (I being a young and little known City man) that it would be better for us and the Movement as a whole if someone better known who would command the respect of the people in general were Brigade O/C., and Treacy suggested Frank Drohan as the most suitable man. Drohan was an I.R.B. man and in local politics. Thinking that Treacy knew his countrymen's psychology I agreed. Treacy wrote G.H.Q. making the offer of the change. But the C/S., Richard Mulcahy instead of a direct reply sent me a letter written to him by Drohan in which he (Drohan) complained that the four of us were going round the country creating disturbance! We instituted an inquiry into the whole working of the 5th Battalion. The result was that the whole staff was reduced to the ranks except the Battalion Adjutant, Sean Quirke who was the only officer able to clear himself beyond doubt.

Towards the end of 1920 the British were very active raiding continuously especially at night and always in large force: they'd slow up the lorries, some soldiers would drop out, lie in ambush for whatever would come along. Lorries seemed to break down fairly frequently and on enquiring from the Engineers I learned that Crossley tenders were very vulnerable in their axels. The roads were not repaired for quite a long time (road workers were afraid of being shot or taken prisoner) and the pot-holes took a heavy toll of the crossleys. It is easy to guess that it struck me that if we increased the number of pot-holes it would be to our advantage. I thought it well to ask G.H.Q.'s permission and at the same time they could take the hint to spread the idea further if they approved . . . and I couldn't think of any reason why we shouldn't be allowed to go ahead. But G.H.Q. replied after about a week that the Department of Local Government would not sanction "the destruction of the peoples' property". This was the first time G.H.Q. had given any reason for their decisions in a despatch, and that, taken in conjunction with the delay in answering led me to think that G.H.Q. was not pleased with this Government decision. I prepared a letter to G.H.Q. emphasising the necessity to slow up and make more costly the raids of the military and that the Volunteers had too much guard work and that casualties were on the increase. I don't remember whether or not I sent that letter to Dublin, but I do remember that I got round the difficulty by issuing a Brigade order to all Companies to enlarge the existing pot-holes! I guessed that the ordinary Volunteers, knowing the idea behind the order, would not likely stop at merely enlarging the existing pot-holes, they would make some holes to enlarge, so I included in the order that they were to make sure that the holes were so arranged that carts could pass around them. It wasn't very long before Headquarters won the consent of Government for the Pot-holing Policy and issued an instruction on the matter. Included in the Brigade Order was an

instruction that where a section of road was made impassable they were to make sure that a getaway into the adjacent field was available for country carts to pass. If lorries tried to use these fields they'd get bogged down.

About midsummer of 1920 I issued an instruction to the Brigade that Volunteers caught inside houses where civilians were living should not fire until they were outside the house. This was not an order . . . because circumstances might arise where the Volunteers would have no alternative. I had had occasion to note that some very good Volunteers thought that the civilian population was at best only a secondary consideration. One night (I think it was when I went to Dublin to investigate the tragic Fernside affair and the consequent death of Professor Carolin and Seán Treacy) three of us were in The Monument Creamery in Camden Street when about 5 a.m. we were awakened by Tans and, or, Auxies, breaking into the rear of the whole block of buildings. Mrs. Ryan said that if they came to her place that she'd scream, and scream so as not to be forced to say anything incriminating. When they started to break into the back of the Creamery I said that we had better get out to the back so that the British wouldn't know which house we had come out of, and fight our way out. Mick Sheehan who was extremely brave but devoid of much imagination insisted that it was our duty to defend ourselves by taking any and every advantage and therefore we should stay inside and fight it out from inside the house. I cut the argument short: "We'll get outside first!" Luckily they did not search any of the houses: they were looking for some motor car, possibly the one we had come to Dublin in but it had returned to Tipperary.

With regard to the Fernside affair Dan Breen reported verbally to me. I had made up my mind much earlier that written reports were too dangerous. Even a letter I had written to Dan about a month previously had been left behind in Carolin's. The <sup>attached</sup> ~~following~~ copy is taken from :-

\* Appended to XVI

"The Administration of Ireland," By I.O. . . .

"The allusion to Dwyer in the above letter is interesting. Edward Dwyer was 'Adjutant "G" Company, 1st Battalion, 3rd Tipperary Brigade, I.R.A. Francis Dwyer, his brother, was 'Captain "F" Company' of the same battalion and brigade. They were shot dead by masked men outside their houses at Ballydavid, near Tipperary, about 11 p.m. on the 18th October 1920. It is not too much to infer that they were suspected of dangerous weakness by their accomplices, and paid the invariable penalty in such cases."

(The Administration of Ireland 1920). I.O. Published in  
April 1921.

Philip Allen & Co., Quality Court,  
Chandery Lane, London.

The foot notes are I.Os. It should be noticed that I.O. has suppressed my signature 'S. Mac.R.' This is one of many indications to me, at least, that the British did not want it known that I was the O/C of South Tipperary Brigade. Someone once said to me that Dan Breen's physiognomy was more suitable for British propaganda! Not only did I.O. suppress my signature but he deliberately changed the context for example: He changed "E. O'Dwyer" to "E. Dwyer" and couples this with "his brother Francis Dwyer, both of whom were murdered by the I.R.A. because of "suspected weakness".

(See letter attached) \*

"I.O" is a typical Orange-Free Masonic British propagandist. He hides behind anonymity; he is so choke-full of inane hatred of Ireland and Catholicism that, like the Free Masonic Englishman, he "will always be able to find sound practical reasons" for getting round any inconvenient principle, even truth. He has the temerity to claim that

\*  
XVI

almost all the burnings of the British and all their killings of  
civilians were attributable to the I.R.A.

SYNOPSIS OF LIFESEUMAS ROBINSON.

Born in Belfast January 6th, 1890. Attended Dominican Convent Schools (Falls Road); Irish Christian Brothers (St. Mary's, Divis Street), and De La Salle Brothers, Clonard, Belfast. My family had to leave Belfast in 1903 and migrated to Glasgow, where I attended Marist Brothers' Schools, St. Andrew's, and St. Michael's College, Dumfries, where I passed Scottish Intermediate. Two years later I gave up study owing to eye strain and took up Domestic Engineering in Montcalm and Moncouers, Edinburgh.

Joined Gaelic League in Glasgow in 1903. My eldest brother, Joe, had been the first Fianna boy to join in Belfast when Bulmer Hobson started the organisation there. In 1902 the Belfast Fianna were first called 'The Red Branch Knights'. Joe had always been determined to devote his life to the Fenian ideal and did not want me actively engaged in the movement so that I should look after the old people at home while he would be carefree.

My active service began in 1898 when, with more audacity than wit, I joined in a counter attack (made by an advance party of a Nationalist procession celebrating the '98 centenary) on a charging crowd of Orangemen. This Orange attack was launched from the fields where the new Celtic football grounds now stands. I had not the least fear - eight years of age. But as I grew older and developed imagination so did physical fear grow in me, until now I am afraid of my life - of my wife.

Later I became an expert stone-thrower in our own special "No Man's Land", (between Protestant and Catholic communities) which was the field at the rear of Traver's factory, Springfield Road. Here the younger boys of both faiths used to delight in trying to knock hell out of one another - for the love of God and King Billy. The Protestant boys were usually four to five times our numbers. I learned a good deal from the Orange boys, who used always have a rough discipline and would move in organised bodies. They had the rudiments of strategy and tactics, while our bigger boys had no stomach for order, strategy, tactics, or any other darn thing except an unholy desire to get down to single combat by the shortest possible route. The Orange boys would be drawn up in two lines, one line straight in front of our crowd, the other "moseying" round our left flank (that is, if a crowd has a flank) until the two Orange groups were fairly well separated. Then someone would start a charge on our side. The swiftest boys led off, the others followed according to their fleetness; and our lads soon had the formation of an arrow head, quite unintentionally, of course. As no point in the Orange ranks was prepared to receive that spear-point and the weight behind it, well, the Orange boys turned and ran, keeping their rough formation. When they ran we increased our speed instinctively, and made rapid progress until someone woke up, as it were, and saw the Orange flank closing in on our left rear. When that occurred, we turned and made those Orange boys run; we surely made them fly - but they never were able to catch us.

There was the usual Nationalist tradition in our family, that is, Home Rule; but I was thirty years of age when I learned for the first time that my grandfather had been a Fenian and that that was the reason my father and the younger members of his family were born in

France. The grandfather had been enabled to get to France after '48 with the help of his Protestant employer who had a great regard for him and his ability as an Engineer. However, the Bishops must have put the caoi báis on most of the family as they acknowledged the Hierarchy's power to impose their Jansenistic condemnations. He set up machinery all over North-Eastern France and North-Western Germany, thus helping to start German industry at the middle of the 19th century.

To cut this narrative short I didn't accept the right of the Hierarchy, and I took the Fenian oath in Glasgow in 1915. The amount of thought, theology and passionate longing I went through and suffered to bring my conscience into line with the I.R.B. ideal I cannot attempt to describe, but in the end I was able to take the I.R.B. manly oath in good faith.

The Glasgow Volunteers had many in their ranks who were working in munition factories and shipyards. These men brought out information and keys, and the Fianna under Joe Robinson and Seamus Reader constantly raided for explosives. The years leading up to 1916 in Glasgow, and the daring, the astuteness and ease with which even Scotland Yard was "coddled", is an episode that should some day be written.

In the meantime our I.R.B. Centre (Tom McDonnell) told us that all able-bodied young men with any engineering training were to report at once in Dublin. Next day a number of us dodged the "G" men (it was easy; we knew them, and they did not know the rank and file) and we got to Dublin safely. The batch I came in was the second to leave Glasgow.

When the Irish "G" men were taken into the confidence of the Scottish Police Headquarters, the sabotage in the shipyards and the raids for explosives that had been going on (several submarines never came up on their first trial) and other destruction which had been attributed previously to the Anarchists, was now rightfully attributed to us, and therefore we were very much on the run once we left Glasgow. We were employed in the Kimmage Garrison making cases for bombs, funny looking bayonets for shotguns, buckshot, and sharpening swords (!) at least once; and we even attempted to make a gun. There was something of a joke in this gun-making business, and I spiked the gun literally in order to spike it metaphorically. George Plunkett wanted a long-range buckshot gun, which simply could not be made out of a piece of malleable iron piping - even though it be called "gun metal". The charge was doubled and jammed tightly. The "gun" was fired. I have heard of Peter Pan losing his shadow and getting <sup>it</sup> back again. When that gun went off I thought I had lost my zenith, that it was trying to fall on my head - something nearly hit me.

Our life in the garrison was only mildly exciting. There were no baths, and few disinfectants. Existence became most uncomfortable; a dry shampoo against a wooden stanchion was not much of a palliative. It did, however, turn some backbiters into bosom pals.

When the Rebellion did not come off on Sunday there were growls and mumblings among ourselves; but it came off on Monday, and all was well. Some of us burned our papers, saying we would soldier for the rest of our lives. We thought the Germans would help and that the country would rise with us.

On Monday morning George Plunkett put me in charge of a section. On the way to O'Connell Street, Peadar Bracken showed me an order signed by James Connolly telling him to take Kelly's Gun shop and also Hopkins & Hopkins. He then told me to take over Hopkins & Hopkins, while he took over Kelly's on Bachelors Walk corner. I halted the section at O'Connell Bridge and explained what we had to do. We walked over quietly, I wondering how long we would be bursting into a burglar-proof jeweller's shop - steel shutters all round. The section scattered to find a ladder, and in the meantime I held up a mountain of a D.M.P. man. With my little shotgun I must have looked like a Lilliputian threatening Gulliver with a peashooter. I had to break into something bordering on blasphemy before I could get that good-natured, and only mildly-scared hobby to stand until we could get inside the building. He kept backing and repeating that he had nothing to do with us, that the military would deal with us. I told him, as seriously as I could, that if he didn't stand his wife would be a widow and his children orphans. No good. I was getting worried. He kept backing away. I did not want to shoot the man, but also I didn't want him to go away too soon to tell his precious military that we were out - until I was in. Again, no good. At last I yelled, as savagely as I could: "Stand or" (and I took aim; I couldn't tell to a yard or two where his heart was) "by God or the devil, or both, I'll let you have two ounces of indigestible buckshot in your stomach". He stood. I thanked God and forgot the devil.

On glancing along Eden Quay I saw a large body of cavalry coming in my direction. Heavens! Now I stood for an instant, marvelling that the British could have got word and have acted so quickly. I could see none of my men. A dictionary may define

panic, but at that moment I knew what it was. I realised at once that I wasn't too cowardly (though I had often previously wondered how I would react to danger) because I was willing (although I had no liking for it), to put my body and its miserable little shotgun with composition bayonet between the cavalry and the G.P.O. I have always dreaded being, or even appearing to be ridiculous. I think I have always had a sense of the ridiculous, ( a sense of the ridiculous is the saving grace of humour), and it surely made me feel and look ridiculous to the passer<sup>s</sup><sub>A</sub>by, when they beheld a little fellow looking grim - at least I felt that way - lying flat on the road in the slight protection of the foot-kerb, with his little gun aimed at the halted column of cavalry. Some elderly gentleman in a motor car, who had passed the G.P.O. and had seen what was happening, dashed up to the cavalry as they came on to O'Connell Street, and was soon holding up the cavalry leader and gesticulating towards the G.P.O., evidently telling the officer all about it. The leader looked up O'Connell Street once or twice, then shook his head and pointed over his shoulder. In moments of real danger how quick and clear instinct becomes. I saw as clearly as if I had heard him speak the words, that soldier say he was in charge of a party escorting something, and was simply under orders to do just that job. He shook the reins and moved off, crossing O'Connell Street from Eden Quay to Bachelors' Walk and on to the Four Courts, where they were met with fire. The Volunteers there were evidently in possession by the time the cavalry reached the Four Courts.

There was nothing for it now but to break into the house next to Hookins & Hopkins and wait for the return of what remained of my original section. I found, to my delight, that two of my men had

had already got in before me. They were Seamus Lundy of Liverpool (R.I.P) and Cormac Turner, a Glasgow Battalion man. Together we broke through the walls into the jewellers', made what barricades we could on the ground floor, and waited all day for the charge we expected to take place at any moment. About an hour after we were inside we managed to get word to the G.P.O. that there were only three men holding the buildings from O'Connell Bridge to the D.B.C. on the south-eastern side of O'Connell Bridge. The rest of my men had gone on to the G.P.O. Three <sup>(A.)</sup> men were sent to us: Andy Fitzpatrick, Andy Conroy, and another Citizen Army man whose name I've forgotten.

The week was a hectic one, especially whenever we had to cross to the G.P.O. under machine gun fire. It became so dangerous that I had to do most of my own messages. A bit foolish, though, for an O/C. to do; but, after all, perhaps the whole fight was rather foolish from a military point of view. It became much too hot when the buildings (I think ours was the first to be set on fire in the G.P.O. area) began to crackle. We got across to the G.P.O. on Thursday night under terrific fire and I was from that on between the G.P.C. and the Metropole Hotel. After the evacuation of the G.P.O. I was in Moore Street and Moore Lane. On the Saturday morning Plunkett asked for Volunteers for the third charge down Moore Street. I volunteered (I couldn't help it, with Plunkett looking at me), but it was called off just in the nick of time and negotiations were begun. By this time we had advanced a good deal nearer to the British barricade in Moore Street, and the charge then would not have been quite so balaclava-like as the previous ones.

After the surrender I was held back in Richmond Barracks for about a week while all my fighting companions were shipped to England. I do not know why I was held; what I do know is that a big "G" man, on hearing my name, pounced on me and handed me over to some soldiers - probably mistook me for Joe. At the end of a week I, too, was shipped to Stafford Jail, and later removed to Frongoch. After about a month at Frongoch I was sent to Reading Jail, where most of the "big fellows" were; that is, those who were interned, as distinct from those who had been sentenced. I had been concerned in an non-possumus strike against road-making in the camps unless paid trade union wages!

We were released on Christmas Eve, 1916.

While in Reading Jail, Eamon O'Dwyer, from Ballagh, County Tipperary, learning that I would not go back to Glasgow invited me to Tipperary to help in reorganising the Volunteers there. By the way I should like to add, even emphasise, I had made up my mind I'd never leave Ireland again should I have to beg my bread, and I would willingly sweep the streets. None of the Glasgow Battalion boys ever tried to hide his identity in the camps. We had all previously agreed among ourselves that when we would appear before the Sankey Commission we would tell the chairman that we wanted neither mercy nor anything else from him or his government, unless and except a rifle in our hands and we'd find our own targets, no matter where we were, be it at the front or rear. The bluff worked. True, the War Office had had two years experience of the Glasgow "desperados", and I am informed that the War Office sent word not to interfere with us. Not one of us, then or ever after, was threatened with conscription, and that fact itself lends colour to all I have said about the Glasgow battalion. The London and Liverpool men were harried.

The Glasgow Battalion got busy immediately the men began to return home, and I had to handle some of the munitions brought over here early in 1917. I was living at this time (that is while waiting until O'Dwyer was ready) with Joe O'Doherty, T.D. (2nd Dáil) in Andy Clarkin's, Pearse Street - <sup>then Brunswick</sup> ~~then~~ Street. I would like to record that I spent the first fortnight after my release from Reading with Mr. and Mrs. Arthur Griffith. My only comment on this is that I never have and never will forget their kindness.

When I went to O'Dwyer's - about April, 1917 - I found almost the whole population sympathetic. The Volunteers there were just wild because the Rebellion had come and gone and nothing had happened in proud Tipperary. What goaded the Volunteers more than anything else was the parody on "The Soldier's Song" which the British soldier elements used sing on the least provocation - "Soldiers are we, who nearly fought for Ireland". To their credit be it said, the Volunteers saw the humour of it, felt it, in fact, and were anxious to redeem the implied stigma.

What a splendid soil, what a glorious atmosphere to find oneself in! I gave a talk on my own experiences in Easter Week in the hall in Ballagh, and I declare that, when it was finished, the crowd would have rushed at and stormed anything, anywhere with sticks. No wonder we made great progress. From Ballagh to Dundrum and Cashel, Volunteers flowed in. Similar work was going on spontaneously in Tipperary town, where Treacy and Breen, Maurice Crowe and the Barlowes were working like Trojans. Clonmel made good progress, too. We had formed a battalion and were about to get in touch with other areas to form a brigade when I was arrested in May, 1918. I was sentenced to six months in Belfast jail for

drilling. Some of our cute boys maintained that I got, and deserved, the six months for daring to sing "My Dark Rosaleen" in the Court during the trial. We had a glorious fight in Belfast Jail, which I enjoyed nearly as well as Easter Week.

While still in jail I heard that a convention had been held in Tipperary to form a brigade. On my release in October I went to Dublin. At the Plaza Hotel, Headquarters at the time, I met, or saw, rather, Michael Collins, who was just going up the stairs when I entered. "Oh, they let you out", said he. "Well, I am here anyway", I answered. I was naturally anxious to know who had been chosen Brigade O/C. Not modesty, but the merest common sense prevented me thinking for one moment that there was the least chance that a stranger like me would have been chosen to take charge of the newly formed brigade. Mick told me that Mulcahy had just returned from the Tipperary convention, and asked me had I heard the news. I told him that I knew a convention had been held and was anxious to know who was appointed O/C. "A fellow called Seumas Robinson", said he, grinning at my stupefaction and walking on up the stairs. I confess I was surprised, and was also pleased indeed. When I told Joe O'Doherty the news he laughed: "Congratulations: you'll be one of the next '16' executions!"

I had been in Dublin in Easter Week '16 and had determined that the next time Dublin or any other place started to fight ~~it~~ it would not be left to fight it out alone. I felt that I would not let the men of Tipperary down when the time came. I expect that the fact that I had service in 1916 was as likely as not the reason why I was chosen.

It did not take me long to realise that the Volunteers would have to be brought by gradual stages to the sticking point - I mean

the bayonet-sticking point, and that nothing would be done by a large body of Volunteers until a lead was given by a few. The Volunteers were being arrested wholesale and without death-dealing resistance, and they could feel that these arrests and the attendant hunger strikes were a direct challenge from the British. Our difficulty was to take up that challenge in a clear and clean way which would be unmistakable and would not be a mere flash in the pan, or that would peter out in, say, the U.S.A. One could hardly get a group of men together to storm a barracks without some sort of a declaration, or without permission from G.H.Q. And G.H.Q. would not give permission before the whole country was ready, yet commonsense dictated that when the whole country was ready they would probably all be in jail. It was becoming increasingly difficult to keep proud young men merely drilling and getting jailed or interned for it. It was clear to me, too, that the pacifism of Sinn Féin was perceptibly gaining ground. Most Volunteers would, I think, deny this, and even give proofs of how Sinn Féin was not attracting youth. However, we know that the political end of the movement (had to be, in the nature of things and under the circumstances) was becoming more passive. A very vigorous sort of pacifism, if you like, but it was certainly not a military force.

#### ELECTIONS OF 1918. DETERMINATION TO SET UP DÁIL.

Here was a danger as far as the Volunteers were concerned. We all heartily desired the formation of a Republican government, but what I feared was that the Government, once formed, being our moral superiors, a state of stalemate would be inevitable unless war was begun before the Dáil could take over responsibility. Who could, for example, expect a government situated as the Dáil would be ever

to make a formal declaration <sup>of</sup> war? Physical, psychological, and personal elements would be against this, for a moral certainty. The Volunteers had no stomach for a war of attrition where they suffered all and the enemy nothing, except in name: and a war of attrition only it would be if active resistance was dependent on a declaration of war. There had been a General Order in existence that we were to arm ourselves by the use of force if necessary, but to shoot a policeman or two merely to get their carbines, and then leave it at that by running away, would bear too close a resemblance to murder to be comfortable. The same could be held good if there were no plan to continue, or if there were no reasonable hope of success. It occurred to me that if one could only get the ball rolling before the Dáil met then the Dáil could not be so easily connected with what would be regarded as a regrettable incident or two (which is what the beginning of the Tan war was thought to be) and guerilla tactics might be begun surreptitiously, developed imperceptibly, and seriously extended. But how was a beginning to be made, and in time?

My mind was occupied with these thoughts when during the Christmas of 1918 Sean Treacy, my Vice O/C. came to O'Dwyer's with his fiancée (Miss May Quigley) on an official visit. When tea was over Treacy informed me that some gelignite was soon to be taken to a quarry near Tipperary town. He was not sure of the exact date, and added that anything from two to six police would be guarding it. He wanted to know should we capture it. I said it would be something bordering on treason not to try it. "Will you get permission from G.H.Q.?" Sean asked. "No". "Why wont you?". "It is such a small thing" I explained, "it might take weeks to get a reply (communications were slow in those early days) we could not legitimately act until a reply came back; after all, asking for permission entails waiting for

it; the despatch might get lost or captured and the gellignite might come and be used before a reply could be received". "Then who will take responsibility?" asked Seán. "I will; but on one condition: that you keep me informed so that I may be there myself with a man or two from my local Battalion here." We fell to discussing details. Seán was to supply the scouts and four or five men. I was to bring Ned Reilly, Dan O'Keeffe, Paddy Dwyer (Grub), Pat McCormack and Mick Davoren. O'Keeffe, Davoren and Reilly had farms to attend to and could not remain the whole week night and day that we had to lie in ambush. They were unlucky; it came off while they were away.

One thing special I laid down before Seán left for home: if the policemen surrendered at once, we would have to accept their surrender; if they did not, and shooting was resorted to, we must shoot to kill. I feared if there were any shooting and one policeman escaped alive, and if the British authorities failed to capture the men who actually took part in the ambush, the live policeman would later probably swear away some innocent life or lives. They did this after Knocklong.

Seán sent word about the second week in January, 1919. After waiting in ambush about a week, during which we had to keep under cover from everyone in the vicinity except certain close friends (we had to eat sometimes) and during which we were nearly frozen stiff owing to a very severe frost at the time, and during which I was in a mental ferment lest the Dáil should meet and we should get official cognisance of it before the police arrived with the gellignite. Emulating Nelson and his blind eye to the telescope I cut myself off from all long distance despatches and from newspapers so that I would not see any official announcement of the setting up of the Dáil, before the gellignite arrived. It did arrive, and just in time - the day the Dáil met for the first time. The police did try to fight. We took the

gelignite when it was over, and Treacy, Breen, Hogan and myself went on the run.

I had a few things to straighten out first, including fixing up methods of communication and contact, then I joined the other three men in the mountains. We had no intention, however, of remaining in the hills, or anywhere else. We had too much to do getting around our brigade, trying to keep things going, and getting men in every part of the area to scout for us. Soon we began to be envied; the men wanted to be with us permanently.

Men were told to go on the run, and, rather than lose liberty or arms, to be ready to fight for either. As these men increased in numbers they were banded together. In the meantime Collins sent for me. Seán Treacy and I went to Dublin, and Collins informed us that he had arrangements almost completed to get us away to the U.S.A. In less than two minutes Collins realised that we were not going to America or anywhere away from Tipperary; that we had gone into this with our eyes wide open, realising the consequences to the full, and that we meant to keep the ball rolling; that we wouldn't have started if we thought that that was to be the finish. Collins, to his credit, was rather tickled at our attitude, and said that he thought that we might want to get away. In fact, he "had been given to understand that it was the thing to do, according to some people (didn't say who these some people were), but that if that was the way we looked on it", it was all right as far as he was concerned. I think Breen and Treacy were very much upset because Collins didn't slap us on the back literally. On the other hand, I had expected something like this to happen, and therefore wasn't surprised. I was rather pleased, in fact, with Collins's quick appreciation

of the situation. I was pleased also because it gave us the status I had hoped for - tacit, yet definite recognition, not condemnation or censure from our legitimate superiors.

Shortly after our return to Tipperary from Dublin, Sean Hogan was captured coming from a dance, to which he had gone without my knowledge. The first thing that flashed through my mind was one of young Hogan's dictums: "Ireland will never be free until she can produce a Robert Emmet who doesn't care a damn about women". His going indicated that he did not believe Ireland was capable of producing any such thing. He had gone to the dance with a very pretty girl. Paddy Kinane announced the news to the remaining three of us in O'Keefe's, Glenough.

Now, there had been a gentleman's understanding, never spoken, but as clearly understood as if it had been an oath, that we would all four stand or fall together. There was no doubt that we would rescue Hogan, or pass out for good, but we also wanted to do it to the best advantage, that is, with a clean getaway. Sean was even jocose about the sensation the release would cause. First we thought of getting a motor and rushing the barracks at once. This would be feasible as long as they did not know who the prisoner was. Kinane was able to tell us they didn't know yet who Hogan was, but that policemen were on their way from Tipperary to identify the prisoner. Before we could get into Thurles they would know who he was and be well prepared. We sat down to reason out the whole problem. I enquired what was the routine for dealing with ordinary criminals taken to Thurles. Hogan could be taken either to Dublin, Cork, or Tipperary town. If he were taken to Dublin we could there organise a fairly large force and storm the Court (I knew my Dublin men). If he were brought to Tipperary town, it would be a relatively simple matter, but if to Cork (that was

terra incognita) - well he must not be allowed to reach it. Treacy being Vice O/C. (i/c. of Organisation) and knowing everybody, was deputed to send off the despatches. Scouts were got moving in Thurles to keep us posted, and we had only to decide whether we would make the attempt to release Hogan at Emly or Knocklong; that is, we would attack the train if he did not change at Limerick Junction for Tipperary town. By the way, had Hogan not been on the train he came on, we would possibly never have released him. The local East Limerick boys who had been called in to help were so enthusiastic that they were on the station, contrary to my urgent warning, before we could get confirmation of Hogan's presence on the train. However, he was there all right. The release was a near thing tho'. Sergeant Wallace was killed; so was <sup>Constable</sup> Charlie Enright and Constable O'Reilly was and sturned/in the melee his carbine slipped unseen out of sight under the seat. O'Reilly came-to (or had been playing 'possum!'), picked up his rifle, and fired down the station at the retreating crowd. Sean Treacy was shot through the neck by Wallace during a hand to hand struggle; Breen was shot under the left shoulder by O'Reilly, who also slightly wounded Ned O'Brien and Scanlon. Young Hogan's handcuffs were removed. We got scattered. Sean had got out on the far side of the train and was not to be seen. Dan had to be hurried off to get medical attention; Hogan went with him. I had to remain until the train left the station before I could be sure Sean had got away. That took about twenty minutes. By an extraordinary coincidence, or so it would seem, we all made separately for the same house at the foot of the Galtees - Foley's. One of the Foley boys was hanged later for this, though he took no part in the actual release. This, roughly, is the story of Knocklong.

I had a month of very anxious days and nights nursing Dan and Sean back to health. They had to be removed from the district, though it was unsafe to shift Dan at all, he was so dangerously ill from loss of blood. However, the Limerick boys turned up trumps, got a car, and we got by stages to the Clare side of the Shannon.

Cleaning living boys, Sean and Dan got well rapidly, and young Hogan never lost his nerve for a moment. Hogan stood by my side, bomb in hand, pin out, to defend Sean and Dan the night we left East Limerick for West Limerick. We did not know a motor car was coming that night to take us, and we thought it was one of the military and police cars that were passing the main road every few minutes. Just in time, Volunteers, advancing down the road, stopped the car and found they were friends they were expecting.

The rest of my story is, if possible, still more completely merged in the Brigade. When anything big was on, I tried to be there, such as in the attacks on barracks or troop trains. I was on the roof at the destruction of Hollyford barracks with Ernie O'Malley, and on the roof at the capture of Drangan barracks with Sean Treacy. Both these fights lasted about six hours. But when Sean was killed in Talbot Street, Dublin, I found it a wholetime job to attend to the organisation (which was Treacy's work as Vice O/C) of the Brigade and the activities of the Columns from a centre which, though constantly raided, had to continue to carry on as a co-ordinating point. This needs no elaboration.

By '21 we had the area cleared of all small enemy posts, and the large columns became cumbersome, so I decided to break up the columns into Battalion columns so that a greater amount of smaller activities could take place. The smaller the target we presented to the enemy the safer for us. Big operations were impossible and dangerous and what the enemy would have liked.

The principal reason for the dug-out policy was that it was unfair to the harrassed civil population, whom it was our duty to protect and comfort, to have armed men in their homes who were determined if trapped in the house, to fight their way out. It was very nerve-racking to civilians to have us sleeping under their roofs, especially if there were children, and be left holding the "babies."

Early in 1921 Liam Lynch asked me to go to a meeting in Cork to discuss the pros and cons of co-operation among Brigades. The Cork delegates, including Liam Lynch, insisted that I be Chairman of the meeting. Con Moloney, my Adjutant, was asked to act as Secretary, and within an hour we had the headings for a report to G.H.Q. This would be, I should think, January-February, '21. The reason for getting a bigger command was the fact that the enemy posts were now all large ones in the two areas which later became 1st and 2nd Southern Divisions. G.H.Q. turned down our suggestion, but later adopted it, but they divided the area into two and put Ernie O'Malley O/C. of our Division. This was about April or May, 1921. The nomination of officers was a new departure.

*See O. 1.*

In 1921 the Volunteers asked me to stand for election to the Second Dáil, and I was elected for East Tipperary and Waterford in the place of the late Pierce McCann.

Came the Truce. The Treaty. I spoke and voted against it. Came the first split in the Army; then when O'Malley was called to Dublin I was elected by the Brigades to the Division on the suggestion from Dublin. The Pact: I was keen on it. The Four Courts: I represented G.H.Q. on the actual taking over, with Sean Fitzpatrick's South Tipperary Column and members of Dublin Brigade. I remained in

the Courts constantly, day and night, for a week. The Kilkenny and Limerick incidents brought about by the "Staters" not keeping their bargain to allow the local Volunteers, by majority, to take over vacated barracks. O'Malley came down to help uphold the honour of his old Division. Lost my seat at the "Pact" elections. Attack on the Four Courts. Left the Courts at midnight on the 27th of June, after a whale of an argument with Liam Mellows and Rory O'Connor on the foolishness of the Headquarters of the Army having all its eggs in the one basket. Escaped out of the city on the afternoon of the 28th. Met Sean McSweeney and Liam Lynch on the train leaving for the South. Learned of the meeting in the Clarence and was delighted - this the morning of the attack on Four Courts, June 28th.

All the way down until we separated outside Kilkenny City (which Liam Lynch would try to go through and got captured, but which we - Sean Hayes, T.D., Mick Burke and I - avoided) we debated almost to argument the foolishness, as I thought it, of the policy of each Unit staying home in its own area and having a "bump off of them".

Father Lynch (Liam's brother) was in Clonmel when Liam arrived there later. He was witness, without knowing what it was all about, to my despairing effort to get Liam to command the whole Army, to march on Dublin and cut out the cancer before it spread. Couldn't move Lynch. I didn't want another split, so I resigned. Lynch wouldn't hear of it. I told him how it felt in Easter Week when the country did not come to our aid; I explained that before I left I sent word to Traynor that my Division would be rushed to Dublin, and that I had to keep my word. At the time I thought Lynch believed it would be too difficult to get to Dublin, and, as an inspiration, the idea came to me: if we sent a hundred men to Dublin to establish contact (and I had not

the slightest doubt it could be easily done in the first two days) and when Lynch would see how easily it was done, I had hoped he would change his policy. He agreed to let a hundred men go, and he got me to withdraw my resignation. They went. Did good work. I believe the "Staters" were almost as afraid of the Tipperary men coming to Dublin as if they were the Ghurkas. The line-fighting. The River Suir with a good road on the north, and south sides, and a railway, all running parallel, was an ideal position for fighting on interior lines.

With about five hundred rifles we held that line for weeks. It was never broken. The "Staters" passed on beyond us on both our flanks, wiped up the First Southern Division, and they were at Mitchelstown in our rear before the order was given to break up into Columns and harry the enemy with guerilla tactics.

Mr. de Valera was with me (perhaps it would be better to say I was with him!) during the hottest part of the fighting, and had he had charge of the whole Army he would have turned the scales. But, the "have a bump off of them in your own area" style of Field General Headquarters would put the caoi báis on Napoleon himself.

After this the war was one of attrition, which at best could be indecisive only. Yet we held on, hoping against hope that someone in some other area, not so worn out as we were, would plead with the new Republican G.H.Q. and change our military police. I am convinced that even two months after the break up of our lines in August, had the Army been organised from Dublin in one last concerted attack on the enemy citadel - Dublin - we could have brought the war to a close, one way or other. That would have been more generous to the country, and probably we would have been successful. However, no use weeping over lost opportunities.

I felt it would never be attempted - because Dublin was shell-shocked by the loss of the Four Courts and for the second time in six years Dublin was let down at a critical moment by the rest of the country.

Our Tipperary men came back to us when they saw the Dublin Officers would not contemplate a march on Dublin with such infinitesimal help from outside.

Perhaps one of the most interesting things about this post line-fighting with us was the fact that we managed not only to establish a stationary permanent central Headquarters for the Division, but we even ran a weekly newspaper, "Chúic an Lae", with Nora O'Keefe as our Director of Publicity, from a foolproof dugout at Maher's of Blackcastle. The weekly became known as "Tune and Lay". I wrote the first leading article to indicate our policy. After that it was in Nora's and Sean Fitzpatrick's hands . . . . .

SIGNED: Seumas Robinson

DATE: 16th Feb 1957

WITNESS: *[Signature]*

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21  
BUIRO STAIRÉ MILEATA 1913-21  
NO. W.S. 1721

APPENDICES.

- I. Letter to Irish Press (refs. to page 4). Refused publication 7/6/'49.
- II. Letter to Irish Press (refs. to page 4). Refused publication.
- III. Letter to Sunday Press May 1953. Refused publication. Refs. page 4.
- IV. Letter to Sunday Press 17/3/'54. Refused publication. Refs. page 4.
- V. Letter to Major O'Donoghue. Refs. Page 31, (formation of I.R.A. Divisions) and Liam Lynch. 3/3/'55.
- VI. Major O'Donoghue's reply to above. 5/3/53.
- VII. My reply to Major O'Donoghue's letter of 5/3/53.
- VIII. Letter from Major F. O'Donoghue in reference to "Spy O'Neill". 17/4/'53.
- IX. My reply to above. 21st April 1955.
- X. Major O'Donoghue's acknowledgment of above. 27/4/'53.
- XI. Letter to Rt. Rev. Dom Benignus Hickey, Abbot, Mellifont, together with a letter to Sean Fitzpatrick, Adjutant, 2nd Southern Division, and a letter to the Secretary, Soloheadbeg Memorial - April 1953.
- XII. Letter published by Irish Times, 6/2/'52. Refs. page 20.
- XIII. Letter: reference to Sean Hogan for Military Service Pensions Board, September '35, para. 1, page 46.
- XIV. Article published in Evening Telegraph on the Ashtown Ambush (attack on Lord French) page 50.
- XV. General Order No. 15. Page 52,
- XVI. Letter from me to Dan Breen, Brigade Q.M.; left behind in Fernside. 26/9/20. page 56.

Addendum.

- ✓ No. 1. Talk delivered on the Radio Train on Soloheadbeg-Knocklong, 12/9/50.

A Talk by Mr. SEUMAS ROBINSON, delivered on invitation  
and broadcast on the Radio Train, on Sunday, 12th September, 1940

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Go mbeanmhuigh Dia agus Mhuire a mháthar naomhtha Bean Ríoghean  
na h-Éireann, díbh ulaig.

By way of introduction I may say that I've been asked to say something today because I was at one time the O/C. of the 2nd Southern Division :- the area through which we are now passing. It comprised all County Kilkenny, two Brigades in County Tipperary, two Brigades in County Limerick, and, during the Civil War all County Waterford.

Now I look upon it as a very great compliment indeed to be invited to say a word to Dublin Brigade men - but I feel a bit uncomfortable and diffident about it, because it puts me in the position of a past pupil being asked to address his old teachers - the men who taught him as a pupil nearly all he knows, and who put him on the way to whatever success he had achieved.

There is an old saw about comparisons being odious. That maxim like most of those old sayings is not completely waterproof: after all what could anyone do to form any judgment on anything except, on or by comparisons? At the moment I'm concerned about comparing certain honours that were at different times 'thrust upon me', and I am doing this so that, by means of comparing these honours with my membership of the Dublin Brigade, I may be able to compliment in excelsis the now much too modest Dublin Brigade *men*

According to ordinary human standards the highest honours I've received are : (a) I was asked by the Volunteers to stand for T.D.ship to the Second Dáil. (b) I was appointed O/C., 2nd Southern Division; (c) and I ~~have~~ <sup>had</sup> been, earlier, elected by a .....

(at Enniscorthy and Ferns) - by the Kents in Cork, by Mick O'Callaghan - on his own and alone in Tipperary - and also by the men from the North (from Louth and Belfast), who crossed the Boyne and marched under great difficulties and dangers - and not without having to shoot (at Castlebellingham), marched to the relief of Dublin, yes, and succeeded in reaching their rendezvous and sending in word to the G.P.O. that they had arrived on schedule and were ready for their next allocation. Perhaps, the most interesting point about that great march, (remember they were the only body of men who succeeded in carrying out their original Easter Week orders to the letter) at this moment as we are passing through Knocklong in East Limerick is the fact that these men from the North were led, and ably led by an East Limerick man - Commandant General Donal O'Hannigan. (I wonder is he on the train today).

All that I would claim for Soloheadbeg-Knocklong is that it initiated a new phase, or rather re-started the Easter Week Rising where it left off. The plan for Easter Week after the intended evacuation of Dublin was to be guerilla tactics on a grand scale. Soloheadbeg-Knocklong merely started those tactics on a modest scale, involving no one but ourselves. It was lucky for us that at that time the whole Army was like a network of compressed high-explosive mines; and we are thankful that the fates chose us to be, I think, the battery that set off the first explosion of the chain of explosions all over Ireland that blasted the way to the Truce.

Perhaps I'm talking too long and I'd better close with a word in praise of the men who rescued Seán Hogan at Knocklong (we have just passed thro' the station of Knocklong), especially the young *men f* East Limerick Brigade. They deserve great credit; first, because it was to them fell the greater part of the brunt of the actual

attack on the train; second, because, being as they were, all intelligent young fellows, they were fully alive to the risks they ran . . . risks physical and metaphysical - or moral. These young men were not the sort who were out merely for excitement or daredeviltry or fun: they knew all the possible and probable consequences of their action. Thirdly, because not a single one of these men (whether from Tipperary or Limerick) who were concerned in the rescue at Knocklong had been under fire before, not even at Soloheadbeg, for there the police had failed in their efforts to fire. For inexperienced young fellows to rush four seasoned, hard-bitten, well-trained, alert R.I.C. men, killing two of them, knocking out one of them - the fourth fled, and snatching away their prisoner took some courage, especially in those very early days when the British forces seemed invincible, and at a time when the British had just come out of their greatest war in history, intoxicated with success and no one in all the world to fight or fear - except the untrained, inexperienced, ill-equipped and, as yet, not fully organised I.R.A. and which had been beaten militarily <sup>only</sup> about three years previously.

I feel I have been talking too long and I'm probably spoiling the enjoyment of this pleasant trip to Cork. So may I now, before I finish, try to express my appreciation and thanks ( and I'm sure I speak for all those on the train) to our announcer Seán Dowling, O/C., the 4th Battalion, Dublin Brigade, for the splendid entertainment and instructive talks he has given us. Unlike me, Seán Dowling is always worth listening to! But I want my very last words to be (and no one will appreciate this better than Seán Dowling) I want my last word to be the defiant shout that went up after Easter Week 1916 all over Ireland and all over the world where Irishmen and women dwelt after Easter Week 1916: "Up Dublin!"

Appendix No. I

18 Highfield Road,  
Rathgar,  
DUBLIN.

June 7, 1949.

Editor,  
"Irish Press"

Refused publication by the Editor.

A Chara,

In your issues of May 10, 11, 13, and 14, you published extracts from Mr. John McCann's book "War By The Irish" in which my name is mentioned a number of times.

As sufficient time has now elapsed to allow the original thrill, the thrill of Mr. McCann's stories of the Soloheadbeg, Knocklong and "Fernside" affairs, to settle down, may I make one or two remarks?

As I was the Brigade Commandant from the formation of South (3rd) Tipperary Brigade in October 1918, until about 3 months before the outbreak of the Civil War in June 28th. 1922, surely I should be consulted by those who set out to write an authentic account of these episodes. Therefore, I should like to put on record that neither Mr. McCann nor those others, except Mr. Desmond Ryan, who have written on these historic happenings, have sought information from me.

Incidentally, I would like to mention that the Commemoration Programme, issued in connection with the Presentations made to the survivors of the Knocklong Rescue, contains a number of mistakes. Some of these were, naturally, quite accidental, but I wonder was it an accidental mistake not to mention my rank anywhere in the Programme, while every other officer of the Brigade Staff had a rank attached to him. Of the other 3 members of the staff mentioned in the context of the Programme only one rank is given correctly, namely Sean Tracey "Vice Commandant". Of the two others, one, Denis Lacey, is wrongly named Brigade Commandant from April 1921. The truth is that I (being Divisional Commandant at the time) appointed Denis Lacey to succeed me

in about April 1922; the other, Dan Breen is given no rank officially by the compilers of the Programme, but they publish a portrait of Breen taken from the "Hue and Cry" which states among other things "Calls himself Commandant of South Tipperary Brigade". Yet the compilers of the Programme were aware that Dan Breen's rank was that of Quartermaster.

Mise, le meas,

*PN*

Refused publication in "Irish Press".

The Editor,  
"Irish Press".

A Chara,

Would you kindly allow me a space to make a few remarks on Mr. Healy's eulogy in prose appearing in your issue of 12th inst. on Mr. Dan Breen, T.D.?

Many people, especially in Tipp., in blissful (?) ignorance of the whole truth will have got copies to treasure as trilling, authentic history, redounding to the glory of Tipp; yet every officer in Tipp., living and dead knows that Mr. Healy's panegyric is bolstering what will one day be surely known as "The great hoax of Tipperary." Little blame can attach to Mr. Healy.

Why doesn't some Tipperary officer or group of them, prick this bubble that has been flying aloft for the last 30 years and redeem Tipp's good name?

Let truth prevail.

- (1) It was Mrs. Seamus O'Doherty who wrote "My fight for Irish Freedom" ask her.
- (2) Dan Breen was never elected Brigade O/C. He was elected Quartermaster only. Ask Gen. Rd. Mulcahy, chairman at the Volunteer convention held in Oct. 1918 to form the Brigade.
- (3) Dan Breen was never in charge of an organised fight during the whole of the Tan war. Ask anyone who is a first-hand authority.
- (4) Dan Breen was not even present at the capture of Drangan barracks or Hollyford Barracks much less "one of the group in charge" or "The men who were with me" . . . an insult to intelligence and the Irish Republican Army alike. Ask anyone who was there.

(5) Dan Breen received only two bullet wounds in the Republican Army . . .

(a) At Knocklong, below the collar-bone.

(b) Thro' the calf of the leg at Ashtown.

At Fernside he received cuts only from the broken glass of the green-house. Doctor Alice Barry and certain Cumman na mBan girls attended him. Or ask the Brigadier who came to Dublin specially to enquire into the matter.

(6) Where in Ireland could, or rather did Dan Breen get a bayonet wound?

(7) With the exception of the last two innocuous paragraphs there are holes to be picked in each of the other twenty six.

(8) I nearly forgot Sologheadbeg. Seamus Robinson, the Brigade O/C., was in charge. Dan Breen was not even second in command.

Signed:  
(Mrs.) Kathleen Kincaid,  
(née Keating)

/X

Appendix to Q

18 Highfield Road,  
Dublin.

May, 1953.

Not published

A Chara,

May I make a few remarks about your serial, "No Other Law" by F. O'Donoghue?

I have no intention of criticising, nor have I any desire, nor is there any need to criticise the text.

Florrie O'Donoghue is so meticulous in recording that he will not record anything that he has not got something tangible aback of it. The unavoidable difficulty here is, I imagine, that it would be impracticable and almost impossible to include all the relevant factors in most cases where policv is involved.

But it is about some of the pictorial illustrations appearing in the Sunday Press, and which will naturally be associated popularly with the context of the book, that I wish to say a word. These photos are, sometimes, irrelevant to the context and, what is more, at variance with truth. Statistics, with judicious or injudicious handling can so easily be made the superlative of lies.

I hope these illustrations are not all part of the book itself - at least under their present captions. Some of the illustrations are obviously deceptive (up to a point - though not on the part of the Sunday Press) and the captions occasionally spoil whatever historic value they would otherwise possess.

For example, in last week's Sunday Press one photograph, apparently purporting to show men on active service, depicts such sartorial perfection that anyone who had been 'out' in those days would smile and ask, "Are these officers or gentlemen?"

Obviously this photograph was a Truce-time production and could have its own historic value if it purported to illustrate the difference in "make-up" between war-time and truce-time fashions - between Hollywood "stills" and the real thing.

Had some of the photographs I've seen lately been brought to my notice while we were at war, I would have regarded them as matter for courtmartial, or severe censure and confiscation. They were god-sends to the Hue and Cry.

May I ask is the book written mostly about Liam Lynch and Cork, or about an officer who was eleventh in precedence in another county and brigade? Whose photograph has appeared most often in your illustrations of the book? What book is, in fact, getting the greater share of Sunday Press illustrative propaganda?

And may I ask, also, what constitutes a "Southern Leader" as distinct from a leader anywhere else?

Seán Moylan, whose photograph is included in last week's issue of Sunday Press could and should be described as a "Southern Leader". He had been in charge of a fighting Column. He became a Brigade O/C., and later a Divisional O/C. He was also a member of the Volunteer Executive. He succeeded Liam Lynch in the Brigade. Therefore, his photograph and the title of "leader" are relative to both the book and historic truth.

But a man who had spent, at most, about three weeks during the period from July 1919 to December 1920 in the South, and who was never called on to lead an organised fight, much less to organise one during the whole of the Tan war, should not be termed a "Southern Leader" merely because he may be a fellow country man, or because he

belongs to a certain political party.

In conclusion, and apparently apropos of nothing at all:  
has generosity, not to say gratitude, died in South Tipperary  
thirty years ago? If so, I wasn't even invited to the funeral.

Mise, le meas,

(Signed) Seumas Robinson.

The Editor,  
Sunday Press.

Editor,  
Sunday Press.

A Chara,

In your issue of the Sunday Press of the 28th February, 1954, I noticed with pleasure and a good deal of pleasant surprise, that the name "Seumas Robinson" was at last mentioned as being the "most notable".

It was the Volunteers of Scotland, however, who had not forgotten him. I happen to know that Seumas Robinson was quite upset at your correspondent singling him out as "the most notable" when Scotland's own Division had its own "big shots": his brother Joe was G.O.C. in Scotland with the same rank as his brother Seumas, that is, Commandant General of a Division, and Seamus Reader who succeeded Joe Robinson as Brigadier were not mentioned. Seamus Reader reached top rank in the I.R.B. though he was then only a lad in his teens. Reader was the most active and the most effective Officer in Scotland - especially when the older Officers were in gaol.

The fighting men of Dublin, too, remember Seumas Robinson. They remember that he came over from Scotland with 50 or 60 other young men to fight by the side of the Dublin Brigade in Easter Week 1916. There are men in Dublin who remember that Seumas Robinson was put in charge of the farthest outpost from G.H.Q., that is, nearest the enemy, in Hopkins & Hopkins at O'Connell Bridge. They can remember he was twice promoted on the field in that glorious week: from Volunteer to Section Commander and almost immediately after to 1st Lieutenant to Captain Peadar Brackin, C/C., No. 2. Company, Kimmage Garrison. This No. 2. Company was formed on the eve of the Rising. George Flunkett was in general charge of the Kimmage Garrison from its formation towards the end of 1915. The Garrison was known as the Standing Army or "Shock Troops" of G.H.Q., before and during Easter Week.

The block of buildings in which Hopkins & Hopkins was situated was the last outpost to be vacated on Friday morning. All other outposts between it and the G.P.C. had been vacated earlier in the week under heavy gun-fire; but the Hopkins & Hopkins block of buildings held out until it became a mass of flames.

Seumas Robinson had won his spurs long before Soloheadbeg, Knocklong, Hollyford, Drangan, Ashtown etc. He went down to Tipperary to make sure that at least the great fighting men of Tipperary, would have one man who would see to it that Dublin would not be let down again by timid or hide-bound British Army text-book trained officers in the country.

There are men and women in Dublin today who remember discussing with Seumas Robinson months before he went to Tipperary, ways and means of re-starting the fight along the lines that he started at Soloheadbeg.

In "My Fight for Irish Freedom" we read "the men who were with me (under me? - Dan Breen) had no previous experience of fighting". There is also the suggestion by foreshadowing in retrospect, his (Breen's) "democratic election" as Brigade Commandant. This suggestion is clearly a calculated deception worthy only of a woman (God forgive me) with an axe to grind. And Dan Breen must also have known that his Commanding Officer was "democratically elected" his Commanding Officer for no other reason than that he had previous fighting experience in Easter Week 1916, and had training in Kimmage Garrison. Seumas Robinson had also studied tactics and manoeuvres in Reading Gaol under the late 'Ginger O'Connell, a Colonel of the U.S. Army. Michael Brennan, O/C., 1st Western Division, is witness to that as he was chairman to one side in sham battles - on paper;

and Michael Davern, T.D., and Jerome Davin, O/C. Battalion I. (Battalion, Brigade, and Divisional Headquarters were situated in his father's farm) could if they wish vouch for most of what I have said, from different angles.

I have said that the Volunteers of Scotland and of Dublin have not forgotten Seumas Robinson. But the men of South Tipperary seem to have forgotten him, or, what is worse, ignored him. Why? Surely it could not be, that, because Seumas Robinson hails from the same part of Ireland as Sean an Daoimhis, Roger Casement, Jimmy Hope, Henry Joy McCracken, Willie Orr, General Monroe, Betsy Gray, Joe McKelvie and many others, Tipperary men are ashamed to acknowledge Seumas Robinson as the man solely responsible for starting "the racket" at Sologheadbeg and leading South Tipperary all through the long fighting: that Seumas Robinson was the originating and directing brain behind the fight in South Tipperary.

The young people of Tipp. seem not to have heard of Seumas Robinson judging by "Coffey's Forge". "Coffey's Forge" may not be young in years but his letter "sounds" kiddish to anyone who knows more about Sologheadbeg than he seems to know. He, or she, mentions the names of three Tipperary men only, as if they were not only the most important names but the only ones worth mentioning. Another thing that makes me think "Coffey's Forge" is young, or at least youngish is that he actually mentions the name of Sean Hogan. Now he should know that the spirit behind the suppression of real truth especially in the 4th Battalion area of Tipperary, treats Seán Hogan as only a sort of mascot instead of a Column leader second to none in South Tipperary during the Tan War. Humorously enough Sean Hogan's Column was known as The Second Brigade Column. Dinny Lacey and

Sean Hogan were the only two Brigade Column Leaders ever appointed by Seumas Robinson during the Tan War; all other claims are spurious.

Anyone anything to say about that?

I have been making such startling statements (startling only to those kept in ignorance of the truth) that it behoves me to state my own authority. Well, here it is for what it is worth.

During the years 1916 to 1923 I was a very young girl; too young to take an active part in militant activities like my elder sisters. But my home was the storied "71" Heytesbury Street. I say "storied" because it is mentioned in every book dealing with the stories (I hesitate to call them histories) of South Tipperary Brigade.

"71" was the recognised Dublin Headquarters or "Centre" of South Tipperary Brigade, and later of the 2nd Southern Division. It was a meeting place for private discussions on policy and action to be suggested to G.H.Q. Oscar Traynor, Ernie O'Malley, Peadar O'Donnell, Seán McBride are a few of the living men who were present at some of these meetings. There were so many meetings, and names were seldom mentioned and excitement ran so high that I cannot at the moment remember all the other living witnesses to these important meetings. I would be grateful for any reliable information on this or any other aspect of "71". But please write me; I am a busy housewife.

In "71" I met or saw and heard nearly everyone of the real fighting men whose names have been appearing in your paper for months past: Liam Mellows (my elder sister did secretarial work for him),

Liam Lynch, who was nursed through two illnesses in our house, Joe McKelvie, who left Heytesbury Street with Seumas Robinson in my mother's car to reconnoitre the buildings in Dublin (with G.H.Q., Beggars Bush, tacit consent) to decide on what buildings to take over as a General Headquarters; the taking over of the Four Courts was the result; Ernie O'Alley (countless times), Oscar Traynor, George and Count Plunkett, Seán McBride, Irish Citizen Army men like Dick McCormack (who brought rifles and large supplies of Parabellum "stuff"), Bob de Cour, Roddy Connolly and Frank Murray, the Brennans of Clare, officers and couriers from the 1st Southern Division - Liam Deasy, George Power and, I think, Tadg Byrne, and P.J. Rutledge, Richard Mulcahy, Harry Boland and Michael Collins, all visited "71". There was a continuous stream of callers, never empty-handed, from Scotland with munitions, and dozens and dozens (no exaggeration) of South Tipperary officers and men. "The Big Four" were constantly <sup>calling</sup> and staying there: Seán Treacy left "71" to go to his heroic death; Seán Hogan, Denis Lacey, Paddy McDonagh etc. Dan Breen, whose duty as Quartermaster, kept him in Dublin almost permanently, knows "71"; Robert Briscoe, T.D., will tell anyone, I feel sure, that when he rushed back from the continent where he had been sent to get munitions, knew that whatever place or whosoever was, or was not, on the right side on the outbreak of the Civil War, it would be safe to call first at "71".

It is a disconcerting commentary, that, while the crisis of actual warfare continued between 1918 and 1923 the officers and men of South Tipperary Brigade did not hesitate to select Seumas Robinson to be their Commanding Officer; nor, when the 1920 Elections for the Second Dáil were mooted, did they even suggest that anyone other than Seumas Robinson should represent them and the

constituents of East Tipperary. Seumas Robinson stood loyally by the "Pact" in the following elections of 1922.

And did not a certain other person well known to you, Sir, and who has bourgeoned on another man's soil, break that "Pact" which had been given the force of law by the Second Dáil, and approved by the unanimous decision of the Sinn Féin Convention, by putting himself forward "for both sides" as was said humorously at the time, but certainly he was not put forward by those who voted against the Articles of Agreement, illegally signed in London by Ireland's representatives who were not absolute Plenipotentiaries?

Now, Sir, we have had one "fake" Michael Collins in our generation. Heavens, let us not tolerate another! I hasten to explain that I do not wish to cast aspersion on the real Michael Collins, but the British newspaper - manufactured "Mick Collins", whom they made appear to be not only omniscient but omnipresent in all parts of Ireland physically leading ambushes and columns from Dublin to West Cork. The real Mick Collins was great beyond controversy - at least from 1915 to 1921 - but the British paper-manufactured "hayro" (copied by the Irish press of the time without comment) influenced a minority of Republicans to swallow their oath to the Republic and to become bed-fellows of all the Free Masonic, the anti-national, anti-Catholic, anti-everything-Irish elements in the country. Is it not astonishing to see all these diversified elements still taking, seemingly, a sardonic delight in seeing their "ideals" stretched or mutilated or smelted in their communal Procrustean sarcophagus?

It took ten years for a minority of the minority who fell away from the Republic, to realise that they had been deceived and to

return to their old allegiance to the real Republic. Surely this is an obvious observation: disruptive elements, who are always ready to settle their consciences (with a hatchet?), are forever open to a remunerative compromise.

Now let us suppose ('tho' it is, I'm afraid, more than a supposition at the moment) that Dominion Home Rule for all Ireland is, or is soon to be, on the tapis as the "ideal solution of Partition" (God help us); then it does not, or will not, require clairvoyance to foretell who is, or is likely to be Britain's and her Irish Procrustean's (cut and dressed to a nicety) next paper-manufactured "hayro". Disruptive elements the world over are past-masters in propaganda. And we will hear again, as soon as the opportunity is opportune: "What is good enough for our greatest "hayro" is good enough for me", as the variant of the 1921/23 catch-cry for the unwary.

Fantastic? I hope so.

If any of your readers want to cross swords with me on any statement I have made or any inference I have drawn, let him or her or them, give his or her or their, name or names and their authority and I'll meet him, or her or them at Phillipi.

I have written all this only to show the weight behind my own evidence. I was young, but, with the deepest respect I can say that I, "kept all these things pondering them in my heart". And I know with all human certainty that Seumas Robinson was recognised by all during all those years between 1918 and 1923 as the authority, the beginning, the driving force and the brain behind Soloheadbeg and all that."

Signed: Kathleen Kincaid.  
Mrs. Kathleen Kincaid (née Keating)  
22, Sundrive Park,  
Kimmage, Dublin.

*JK*

12

22, Sundrive Park,  
Kinnage.

17/3/54.

Dear Mr. Editor,

The enclosed letter is not mere news: it is history.

Please publish it in full. If you cannot see your way to do so, could you kindly state your reason or reasons,

& oblige,

Yours sincerely,

(Signed) Kathleen Kincaid.

.....

The Editor thanks you for your letter, which he has read with interest. He regrets that, owing to pressure on space, it has not been practicable to publish it in the SUNDAY PRESS.

ADDENDUM to IV (Contd)

The Editor,  
Sunday Press,  
Burgh Quay,  
Dublin.

Dear Mr. Feehan,

As you see, I have learned your name. I have also learned that you are a South Tipperary man from Clonmel.

I met many men and some women from Clonmel in the old days in "71"; but I never heard of you. You must have been as young as myself then - too young to do anything. I remember Frank Drohan, Bill Myles (Editor of The Nationalist), Sean Cooney and his sisters, O'Keeffe and O'Gorman and Mick Lambe who was brought, wounded still bleeding and semi-conscious, and literally "dumped" in "71", because they knew no other place to bring him. Many Column men, despatch-riders and others from Clonmel called and were housed and fed in "71". My family and I surely have a claim on every "Clonmellion". What do you say?

Your refusal to print my letter surprised me. I 'phoned my brother-in-law Seumas Robinson. He, too, was surprised - at me being surprised. He murmured something about "Truth in a noose when it comes to trying to get any Tipperary man to expose the 'Great Tipperary Hoax'". No Tipperary man can be expected to espouse my fight for Irish freedom" he said. "But, didn't Dan Breen write that?" I asked. "No, it was Mrs. Seamus O'Doherty who wrote 'My Fight for Irish Freedom' and the Sunday Press is anxious to expose it - for sale".

You say you can't publish my letter because of lack of space . . . Shades and rattling chains of "Coffey's Forge" and other anonymities.

Please return my typescript, and,

Oblige,  
Yours faithfully,

(Kathleen Kincaid).

27/3/'54

Appendix no 5

18 Highfield Road,  
Dublin.

3.3.'53.

Major F. O'Donoghue,  
Cork.

My dear F.,

The enclosed may or may not interest you. It is an extract from my manuscript notes for, perhaps, a book - certainly for a statement.

These notes have been written at odd moments as inspiration or desperation or "ennui" moved me during the last decade or so. Dove-tailing them is my present nightmare. They are wild oats sown at broadcast and the harvest may not be worth gathering.

Best regards.

(Intld.) S.R.

V (Lynch)

I. R. A. DIVISIONS.

I postulate that the germ of the idea of forming the Army into large divisions arose incidentally to, and developed subsequently during a "dispute" between Brigadier Liam Lynch of Cork 2 (North) and the O/C. of Tipperary 3 (South) Brigade.

Early in October, 1920 (as the war was rapidly rising to a crescendo of violence and the British were systematically bringing to perfection their tactics of sudden mass concentrations of scattered forces for large-scale round-ups), Liam Lynch travelled to Davin's of Rathallagh, near Cashel, (our Brigade Headquarters) and complained with what seemed to me to be a good deal of pent-up feeling and politely-suppressed indignation that the South Irish Horse (a British Cavalry Unit stationed at Cahir Military Barracks) was continually raiding southwards into his Brigade area. He informed me in measured terms that it was my bounden duty as the O/C. of the area in which Cahir was situated, to put an instant stop to these irksome, disconcerting raids - by sealing them off from the South.

I told him that these same S.I.H. had been doing the same thing north, east and west into our territories from 1918 until a few months previously when they gave up coming our way because they had got nothing but headaches from us (?). "They must be finding it less uncongenial to raid Cork 2", I badgered in the good-humoured banter we all inflicted on one another in those days, especially if there was even a slight danger of a debate degenerating into argument.

But Lynch was deadly serious. Liam was ever a man in a hurry to get something done.

I had come to know many, if not most, of his idiosyncrasies.

When he visited Dublin, on the run, from 1919 Liam always had his private hide-out at our Brigade's Dublin Headquarters in Delaney's of 71 Heytesbury Street. Whenever Liam fell ill or was worn out and needed an undisturbed rest, he retired to Delaney's.\* Only a few of his own men knew where to find him. George Power, his Vice Commander, Tadg Byrne and Liam Deasy visited him there. So did the Chief of Staff, Richard Mulcahy, meet him there during the Truce. It was inevitable that I too, should meet him there. I got to know how seriously Liam viewed everything. I felt that he ignored if not deliberately suppressed, as a waste of time and energy, his own sense of humour. Yet he must have developed a good sense of humour. No man could possibly have lived and worked so long and so much with so many of the Cork boys without being smitten by a reasonable dose of the contagion.

Seán Moylan, who succeeded him as O/C. Cork 2, could and did enjoy a joke at the beginning or middle as well as at the end of a serious "scrap" or talk, and he could properly appreciate its value and timing. Moylan was leader of a very active Column. He knew that humour and panic (of any sort) are mutually allergic.

But if Liam had a sense of humour he certainly had no time for it when he was in a hurry to accomplish an objective. He was "Liam in a hurry" now.

So, soberly, I pointed out that if we attempted to deal with the problem the way he had suggested, we would have to keep a very large well-armed force permanently isolated in the narrow Aherlow Glen, hemmed in between big British forces situated in Kilworth Camp and Mallow in the south and Cahir and Clonmel in the north and, at the same time, hedged in by the Galtee and Knockmealdown Mountains on the

X. This happened twice I think, during the Tan War and once during the  
 Truce period. *DR*

west and east. I laid emphasis on the fact that neither our Brigade nor any other Brigade on its own had the equipment necessary or the numbers to spare, and that our Brigade had neither the inclination nor any intention to attempt such a suicidal commitment. The Glen of Aherlow was constantly being fine-combed by combined forces from Cork, Waterford and Tipperary Counties. Seán Hogan's Column, for example, got out on one occasion during one of these enormous concentrations only by a miracle of coolness. Lacey's column captured D.I. Potter in the process of fighting its way out on another occasion.

Liam recognised the difficulties. I think he sensed the latent hint that this particular cap fitted more than one head! Nevertheless, it did not absolve me in his eyes. "You will have to do something about it", he insisted.

Knowing Liam's penchant (probably G.H.Q. engendered) for paper organisation and knowing how wasteful of critical time it could be with so many unforeseeable factors involved, I made the obvious suggestion that the only possible way to deal with the situation was to combine at once sufficient forces on lines parallel to the British.

Liam murmured it would be necessary to get permission from G.H.Q. before making even a tentative change in Army formation. I had suggested a try-out combination on a voluntary basis among a number of local Brigades. We could begin with an association of the three Cork Brigades, East Limerick Brigade and the 2nd and 3rd Tipperary Brigades. These six Brigades were all of a timbre. They were contiguous. The slight psychological differences among us were complementary rather than divergent. There would be a mixture of different kinds of good milk, but there would be no addition of water in the mixture. They would make an almost irresistible force. They were all of good will,

keen; they all had all the practical experience necessary for larger combinations. They could be augmented as necessity or opportunity arose.

As the piece-de-resistance for Liam, I harped on the immediate necessity of liquidating (though that word was not much used among us then) Cahir Military Barracks. As an initial test, it had much to recommend it. If successful, even if the success were only relative, we should then have concrete demonstrable proof of the value and necessity of combining Brigades for super-brigade actions. The necessity of combining Brigades should have been self-evident even to our G.H.Q. hidden (and rightly so) in the fortresses of their Dublin dug-outs. Their only vision was the reflection of the City activities. It was only after de Valera's return from the U.S.A. that the attack on the <sup>CUSTOM HOUSE</sup> ~~Four Courts~~ was mooted. They could not focus large-scale operations. Though at that time I felt confident that G.H.Q. would have been delighted to see such a spirit of initiative among us, I was too anxious about the time element not to press its claim.

I gathered from monosyllabic hints from Liam that (1) he would prefer to start with all Munster and (2) that he had no intention (thought) of initiating anything without prior permission from G.H.Q. I remember thinking at the time that Liam's attitude resembled, somewhat a D.D. refusing to write a thesis unless and until he had first got his Bishop's imprimatur. In fairness to Liam it must be added that that attitude seemed to please G.H.Q.!

Liam made no sustained argument. He was, as ever, in a hurry for a decision that he could accept at its face value without question or conscience searching. To Liam, unless a decision were legitimate, it could not be moral. On the other hand, it was my conviction that, during revolutionary periods, if a thing be morally right in itself and at the

same time be urgent and necessary, it would be legitimized subsequently - for what pure legalities are worth (in a revolution with the enemy taking full advantage of our slow moving, hobble-skirted Army formation and regulations! Here were we lying in wait for permission to surprise the enemy with a new tactic while he was all ready and afoot to attack us! It would have taken a truce of three months' duration to enable us to organise all Munster into a unified fighting force by any other means than by concrete example. Example would bring in every unit automatically and instantly.

I think Liam imagined I was inviting him to put the telescope to a blind eye - which he had not got. At best he must have suspected that I was handing him the wrong end of a telescope to look through! Liam must have got the low-down on me from G.H.Q.!

It was well known to me and to other Brigade Officers that G.H.Q. was Sanctum Sanctorum to Liam, that the Chief of Staff was its High Priest, and that Liam and all Cork were as the children of light to G.H.Q. And rightly so. As a County, no place was doing as much; as a man, no one had done more than Liam Lynch to break the British connection. This is not an "admission" on my part. "Admission" savours of reluctance to say a thing: I have no reluctance whatever to declaring, no apology to offer for saying as I now repeat, that Liam Lynch and all Rebel Cork were outstanding and were deservedly courted by G.H.Q.

To get back to Liam. He was quietly fidgeting with obvious impatience at what must have seemed to him my "dialectics", and, in his usual quiet, strictly polite manner, his intriguing slight impediment of speech a little accentuated, he put his proposition direct, unequivocally and with finality: "Will I call a meeting of Munster Brigade Officers, get their views and send a report to G.H.Q.?"

The question was knit: either Liam's doctrinaire - legitimate scheme or none.

What else could I do but take his hand, shake it warmly and say: "I'm behind you, Liam."

This conversation took place in an open field, Liam's two companions (who they were I do not remember) keeping a sharp unbroken look-out. All three moved off at once. I returned to Rathsallagh dug-out.

Liam Lynch lost no time in calling the meeting. It was held in Glanworth, Co. Cork. Most of the Brigades <sup>MUNSTER</sup> <sup>EAST</sup> <sup>(PA)</sup> west of the Shannon were represented. I received the great honour and courtesy of being moved to the Chair. Ceh Moloney was requested to act as Secretary for the purpose of drawing up the report. There was complete unanimity. The report was duly forwarded to G.H.Q. G.H.Q. subsequently (and without any acknowledgement reaching me as Chairman) informed us through E. O'Malley (who had not been at the meeting) that Munster was to be divided into four separate divisions. The Rebel and the Premier Counties were isolated anew and more effectively. Cahir was never seriously attacked. On paper, the country as a whole was partitioned into sixteen divisions.

Was it method in their madness or was it madness in their method that killed a scheme that would have borne quick fruit?

Perhaps G.H.Q. were aware of the beginnings of peace negotiations about that time, and perhaps the Chief of Staff wanted to be able to say (as he said later), with some semblance of conviction, that "The I.R.A. could not attack a reasonably sized Police Barracks". (Dáil reports, December, 1921).

*Appendix No 6*

LOCH LÉIN,  
Eglantine Park,  
Douglas Road,  
Cork.

5th March, 1953.

Mr. Seamus Robinson,  
18, Highfield Road,  
Rathgar,  
Dublin.

Dear Seamus,

Thank you very much for sending me a copy of the very interesting notes which you have written as a basis for a statement. I hope you will continue to expand them and eventually make a book of them.

What you have written on Liam Lynch does convey a pretty accurate impression of his character, although I think you have perhaps over emphasised the idea of Liam in a hurry, and of his sense of discipline, which I think was the only reason why he was always anxious, not so much not to do anything without G.H.Q. sanction, as to carry G.H.Q. with him in any developments which he felt we were capable of undertaking.

In regard to the proposals for the formation of the divisions it would be interesting if you can show why your original idea was not adopted at the Glanworth Conference. I am including in the book on Liam, the recommendations made at the Glanworth Conference, as recorded by Con Moloney, and they do not include any suggestion for the formation of division organisation, although undoubtedly the ideas for co-operation between the Brigades which we put forward at Glanworth were the germ of the divisional idea.

Another point I think you might check is on what you say of his visits to Dublin. What you have written would give the impression that he frequently went to Dublin and always to Delaneys at 71 Heytesbury St.

Neither would be accurate. Apart from the two months which he spent in Dublin in January and February 1920 all his subsequent visits were never of more than two days duration each, and the number of these visits up to the Truce was three. In justice to Liam I think you might distinguish between the pre-Truce and the post-Truce visits.

I am afraid I could not agree that the basis on which you put the formation of the divisions includes all the relevant factors. In what I have written on the formation of the First Southern I have depended largely on two documents; the recommendations which the Glanworth Conference made to G.H.Q. and the G.H.Q. Memorandum on the formation of divisions which I have. I must say that reading them for the first time 30 years afterwards they did not conflict with any recollection I had of the views which we held at the time.

I hope you will not take it amiss that I should make these observations because I do so solely in the interests of historical accuracy. I think the general impression you give of Liam makes it far easier for the uninitiated to visualise the man than anything I have been able to put together in an effort to convey some idea of his character. I hope you will continue to work along the same lines.

With kind regards and best wishes.

Yours sincerely,

(Sdg.) Florrie O'Donoghue.

18, Highfield Road,  
Rathgar,  
Dublin.

16th March, 1953.

My dear Florrie,

Many, many thanks for your generous comments and your most helpful advice.

My short reply to most of the points you made is: "I'm not a historian; I have neither the time nor the patience nor the ability to be one"! In my introduction, which I had already sketched out before I started my statement, I point out" ..... you may call it (the statement) 'his story' but please, not 'history'. History is ~~not~~ for historians to write". That means you, Florrie.

Historians have to take all our statements and relative documents and weigh the evidence before collating it. Little bits of verisimilitude will lend weight to the evidence; and that's why I went into some little personal details on what, to me, was an historic meeting between Liam Lynch and me. The Glanworth Conference was more in the nature of a formality, and I, not being "the makin's" of a historian, nor "a chiel amang ye takin' notes", details have become forgotten or obscured. But the personal meeting is still vividly clear.

I had better make some attempt~~s~~ to deal with the points you raise, seriatim.

Yours: P. I, par. 5. It is obvious (though, as you point out, not in the "extract") that other factors had a bearing on the formation of the Divisions. Those other factors are in your bailiwick as a historian. All I meant to convey to you was that the Lynch-Robinson meeting was one important (paramount?) initiating factor. I sent you a copy of the "extract" in case you were seeking the originating motive behind the idea of unification of effort in the Army - as distinct from

divisions in the Army. My penultimate paragraph will give some idea of the reaction G.H.Q.'s final decision had on my mind at the time - a decision that divided Munster among four Divisions; the practical result of which was a minus quantity - unless my last paragraph is an approximation of G.H.Q.'s intent.

Yours. par. 3.

(a) You will remember I was given the courtesy of being moved to the chair.

(b) The Cork officers had drawn up an agenda.

As Chairman it was my duty to carry out the agenda with all soldierly brevity. My recollection of that agenda is that it left organisation in the air or to G.H.Q., and, therefore, my personal wishes were not excluded. I accepted the agenda and the decisions knowing that Liam had already known my views. In any case I had agreed to get behind Liam as the only practicable policy.

I think it is the heading under which the "extract" appears that justifies your remarks. There is no such heading in my original script notes. I was puzzled trying to find a heading for the "extract". All I have a right to say in this connection (or under any heading) is that the meeting between Liam and me set the ball rolling towards greater unity rather than divisions. But, Divisions technically mean greater unity, and so "formation of Divisions", "unity of action"<sup>Or</sup> cognate ideas.

Perhaps it would clarify things if I changed my first paragraph to read: "I postulate that the germ of the idea of forming the Army into large Divisions crystallised incidentally during ..... etc."

Yours. par. 2. I thoroughly agree. Mine, par. 4: "Liam was ever a man in a hurry" is gratuitous. After all, I wasn't for ever with Liam! It was a hurriedly recalled general impression I had of Liam that I had in mind. I should have qualified the statement.

I think it should be changed to read: "It was never my fortune to meet Liam Lynch but it seemed to me he was in a hurry to get somewhere definite with something concrete".

Yours. par. 4. Your comment is fair. Still, I think the context would go to show I was concerned with the fact that Delaney's was Liam's private hide-out when ill. Geo. Power would probably be able to disentangle the pre and post Truce visits. I met Liam 2 or 3 times there - and only there - though I was not like Dan Breen and Seán Treacy very often in Dublin during the Tan war: I was kept too busy in Tipperary.

Liam's brother, the Christian Brother, his brother Tom and an uncle and Liam's mother visited Delaney's at one time or another. There was one fairly lengthy stay by Liam in Heytesbury St. I remember he slept in Lawlor's, about four doors away, and worked in Delaney's during the day owing to Delaney's being overcrowded. Fintan or Dermott Lawlor works with "Tod" Andrews in Bórd na Móna. Being young he would surely recall Liam's visits.

Yours faithfully,

(Signed) Seumas Robinson.

Major Florence O'Donoghue,  
'Loch Léin',  
Eglantine Park,  
Douglas Road,  
CORK.

LOCH LEÍN,

Eglantine Park,

Douglas Road,

Cork.

17th April, 1953.

Mr. Seamus Robinson,  
Bureau of Military History,  
26, Westland Row,  
Dublin.

Dear Seamus,

May I trouble you to look at the enclosed letter, although I am afraid you will find it very difficult to read.

I would be glad to know if this story of a British Intelligence Officer is well founded. What became of him and the date on which the thing occurred if it is true.

I would be grateful also for your opinion confidentially as to whether the writer is a reliable person. Please return the letter to me.

With kind regards and best wishes.

Yours sincerely,

(Sdg.) Florrie O'Donoghue.

Appendix No IX

18, Highfield Road,  
Rathgar,  
DUBLIN.

21st April, 1953.

Dear Florrie,

In case you should be in a hurry to get an answer to yours of 17th instant, herewith this note.

Seamus Babington was, as he says, our Brigade Engineer. He had a genius for invention and whether or not this genius penetrates into his story-telling I don't know. In case I should be misunderstood, I hasten to declare that Seamus Babington is always subjectively truthful. However, like all fundamentally truthful people he is relatively easily gullible to exaggerated details. If his lillies are painted it was not he who "donnit" but cute "re-talers" of the latest news.

My present conclusion and recollection is that he is referring to the spy O'Neill case. "O'Neill" was the name the spy gave us and I have a "hunch" it was his correct name. Physiologically he was clearly an Irish type. He had an ordinary English accent (admitted he was ex Br. Army) but he had control over his hs. His accent was cultivated not cultured. He said he lived in Waterford with relatives. Would give no address but addressed his last letter to a girl in Waterford. I sensed at the time that he had got himself into some trouble and needed money to get out of it.

He had nothing on him that would indicate either rank or position - a circumstance that had its own value as evidence. The only thing found on him was an ornamental clip of .303 ammunition. This "innocent" clip was his final undoing. He had persistently denied spying (naturally!); he was "looking for work". We traced no application for work. Then Jerome Davin, O/C. Bn. 1, shot a bow at a venture: "This ornamental clip gives you away completely". "That's only a souvenir".

"Yes! Well the last spy we shot told us before he died that it was a secret identification among Intelligence Agents". "Oh! The dirty, mean, dastardly, cowardly bastard". I don't guarantee the order of the adjectives he used but he used them all and more; but he did not use in my presence any of the usual filthy British Army lingo.

He was a Catholic and Fr. Kingston of Rockwell College attended him the night he was executed. Just as he was about to be shot he made one last dramatic outburst of denial that he was a spy. I went over to him and said quietly: "Young man, you are about to die. Don't say anything that may sully your conscience at this awful moment". Instantly he had himself under control. "I'm not afraid to die" was all he answered.

Seamus Babington's letter returned herewith.

Best regards.

Yours sincerely,

(Sdg.) Seumas Robinson.

Major Florence O'Donoghue,  
"Loch Léin",  
Eglantine Park,  
Douglas Road,  
CORK.

*Appendix no 8*

LOCH LEIN,

Eglantine Park,

Douglas Road,

Cork.

27th April, 1953.

Mr. Seamus Robinson,  
18, Highfield Rd.,  
Rathgar,  
Dublin.

Dear Seamus,

Thank you very much for your letter of the 21st. and for the return of Seamus Babington's letter to me. I am very grateful for the trouble you have taken in giving me the facts of this O'Neill case. It looks as if he may have been on the same mission as was Lieut. Vincent in Cork 2. Brigade area. For the reason that I thought this may be possible, and that there is useful evidence of similar activities in other Brigades, I was interested to get the facts of this case.

With kind regards and best wishes.

Yours sincerely,

(Signed) Florrie O'Donoghue.

Sincere sympathy on your  
bereavement.

(Signed) Florrie.

Appendix No XI

18 Highfield Road,  
Rathgar,  
Dublin.

'Phone 92094 (Dub).

My dear Lord Abbot,

If it pleases you would you kindly pass the enclosed copies of two letters - (1) addressed to "Sean Fitzpatrick" my one-time adjutant, and (2) letter addressed to "Sec. Soloheadbeg Memorial Committee" to Father Colmcille.

The context of (1) above shows, sufficiently clearly, I think, the reason why I do not desire to write to Father Colmcille directly. The other letter shows that the plot to ignore me (and worse) is long-standing and widespread.

I would like both Father Colmcille and you to consider the "attacks" contained in (1) enclosed as rebuttals to statements intended for publication by Father Colmcille, the Tipperaryman-Historian - not the priest, God bless him.

Truth and "Justice though the heavens fall" is my reason and excuse for writing you.

Subjective truth is all right with the Almighty, but only if a serious effort has been made to find out if it is in consonance with the objective truth.

Will you both please excuse me and pray for me?

I am, my Lord Abbot,  
with great respect and reverence,  
Yours faithfully,

Seumas Robinson.

Rt. Rev. Dom Benignus Hickey,  
Abbot, Mellifont,  
Collon,  
Co. Louth.

Appendix No. \_\_\_\_\_

18, Highfield Road,  
Rathgar,  
DUBLIN.

21st April, 1952.

Dear Seán,

Thanks indeed for the opportunity to peruse the typescript of Fr. C's. "History".

I could begin my comments in a dozen different ways, each one more sarcastic than its predecessor, but, in charity, I'll begin in the mildest manner I can command.

I cannot make up my mind whether Fr. C. is simple (the virtue); or is a simpleton (within strict limits) or is suffering (enjoying?) a certain complex monomania - 'Danbreenofile' with its usual concomitant counterbalance :- S.R.-ophobia.

Do you know, Seán, I'm beginning to suspect there is something "great" somewhere in my make-up; I'm finding out, that, like most great men in history, the Great de Valera and myself (God and de Valera forgive me this coupling) have many people who hate us; hate us for different reasons, of course, and, or, generally for no reason at all. Why are we hated so much (and strangest thing about it is that it is often our should-be friends who voice that hatred most) seeing that neither of us has consciously done or said (up to this at least) anything to justify it.

A little more expression or display of this hatred or dislike, or expressed or implied contempt, and I'll begin to feel "great".

So many lies (I know that is not a nice word, but there's no use denying there is such a thing as lies: "All men are liars") have been told and reiterated against me and about South Tipperary Brigade, that it behoves me to get on quickly with my "The Great 'Oaks' of South Tipperary."

As you know, I've said elsewhere that I've waited 30 years for some generous-minded Tipperary man to undo some at least of the ungenerous treatment I have received at the hands of so many 4th Battalion Tipperary men. During the two wars who would have thought that when they were finished I would be damned by slight praise and worse for the 30 years that followed!

If Fr. C's. superiors permit him to publish his "History" as it stands, the glaring fact that he never met, saw, knew or consulted me (the one and only officer who held Brigade rank from the moment the Brigade was formed until the start of the Civil War - when I was promoted - and not only Brigade rank but the one and only officer ever in command of the Brigade during the whole of the Tan War) will be the first deadly shot, out of a locker-full of deadly shots that I will discharge at his book.

In this respect Fr. C. reminds me of the Yankee lady who, fairly recently, declared that she had examined every religion in the world, looking for an intellectually satisfying religious philosophy - "every religion in the world, except the Catholic, of course." As writers would say: the italics are mine, the brilliance, hers.

Fr. C. is more astute. By gathering his jig-saw pieces, and, by judicious selection, manipulation and juxtapositioning, and with sufficient suppressio veri he has produced his own (?) pet solution - or is it his own pet's solution?

If the latter, and he is honest with himself, he will know that the original claim doesn't tally with Fr. C's. own (?) present, but even more illogical version of Dan Breen being Brigadier. It is simple historic fact that Dan Breen was never O/C. of the Brigade. He was never even i/c of an organised fight in Tipperary.

Breen's original claim to be Brigade O/C (vide "My fight etc") was the pretence that he had been elected Brigadier: ". . . and later when I became Brigadier . . ."; then the book goes on to describe "the democratic method" of electing Brigade and other officers, adumbrating, in retrospect, his own election as Brigade O/C - carefully calculated deception! Fr. C. isn't standing over that directly: his new stand (you and I know it, too must come from Breen) is not upright; and the only thing "cute" about it is its acute angle to the perpendicular.

It is neither intelligent nor honest to try to bolster-up falsehood by arguments still further out of plumb; it is neither intelligent nor honest to speak of a man being Brigadier or a Battalion O/C before either of the units concerned had been formed. Before the Brigade was formed the only unit recognised was the Company. In any case isn't all this miserable pettifogging business a piece of blatant sophistry, unbecoming a serious and sincere student? Surely Fr. C. knows how to weigh evidence. He knows where to look for it. He knows how to collate it. He knows, he must know, that the truth doesn't lie in the tissue of "My Fight etc". He is too astute to fail to detect the many direct and indirect falsifications and mean innuendos of the authoress and the reputed "author" of "My Fight etc." - unless his "Grannie was Doherty"! -X-

Why does Fr. C. consult Dan Breen so much? Dan Breen knows nothing, or very little, except on hearsay, of what went on in Tipperary during the greater part of the Tan War. From July 1919 to July 1920 he was in Dublin. Yet Breen claims we were with him at Hollyford (May) and Drangan (July). Fr. C. must know Breen was in Dublin then, and was at neither of these affairs. In July 1920, after Drangan, Breen came down to Tipperary for about two weeks, then back to Dublin until about December 1920 when he was going round

-x- Mr. Seumas O'Doherty wrote the book for him.

Tipperary, (Dublin had become too hot for him after Fernside) with George Plunkett - mostly "parading for review". Offhand, I'd say that Dan Breen didn't spend a total of three weeks in the Brigade area during the Tan War from July 1919 until O'Malley relieved me of him early in 1921. O'Malley thought he had a "catch". He had to dump that catch rather quickly - (let him ask O'Malley).

Surely Fr. C. should be able to realise the colossal impertinence and impudence of "My fight etc". Breen had no responsibility either for policy or action. I never even consulted Breen on anything except his Q.M. Dept. and his numerous "assistants". I've never known Breen to make an original constructive suggestion. He merely listened in ("takin' notes") like an uneducated Boswell. But Boswell didn't pretend he was Dr. Johnson!

Did you, Seán, ever hear of an original Breen suggestion yourself, or come across anything constructive (except in "My Fight etc.") that could have emanated from Dan Breen? It wasn't very original to keep in his possession routine and special field despatches, dead against orders (vide Fr. C.) nor was it very original to "take the first train home" at Kilcash and leave the rere of Lacey exposed to the Staters in 1922; nor was it very original to let his party down (Jinks had forestalled him in originality here) and enter the Dáil on his own and take the oath of Allegiance without any public or private reservation. Breen had already broken the Pact Election at the behest of Staters - that wasn't very original either. Did Fr. C. ask himself why Breen did all above things? ~~Has he even noted himself why Breen did all above things?~~ Has he even noted them? Has he noted that the Staters gave Dan Breen a house and farm, gave him 200% disability pension (he had only two bullet wounds in the whole of his I.R.A. career in Ireland - wounds that healed up immediately

and, why did these same Staters, when they got back to power as a Coalition, in the first 24 hours, almost, of their existence rush a bill through the Dáil granting him (not by name!) £3,000 for Doctors' bills "contracted in the U.S.A.". This was done without enquiry into the bona fides of those bills.

Does Fr. C. see the different significance in the historic facts (1) that when the Truce came the Brigade officers came in a deputation to me asking me to stand for the 2nd Dáil and the 3rd Dáil - for the Pact, not against it like Dan Breen. (2) The Government selected me for membership of the M.S.P. Board and the Bureau of Military History. <sup>(3)</sup> -x-

I couldn't stomach reading past page 14. Brigid read the remainder - I couldn't.

Another bit of 'rank' nonsense! "Comdt. Gen. Dan Breen"  
"Comdt. S. Fitzpatrick!"

If Fr. C. could manage to ask Bill Quirke's opinion, say, when Quirke had been to Confession and before Communion, then Bill's language would probably be printable.

It might be no harm to ask Fr. C. to get Mick Davern to write his opinion of Dan Breen - not to state it in sound-words, either before, during or after Confession.

No time or inclination to write more of this.

Best regards.

SEUMAS ROBINSON.

-x-(3). That I had won my spurs in 1916 being promoted twice on the field - long before I went to Tipperary.

A hurried P.S..

I showed the above to Brighid. She was furious because I left out some dozens of broadsides. I asked did she want me to write a whole book, or to write without ceasing - a babbling brook. She insisted that at least (this "at least" business is becoming a habit with me). I must remark on "the very important work in connection with discussions at G.H.Q. on the formation of Columns and other important matters which kept Breen and Seán Treacy in Dublin" or words to that effect: I didn't read them myself.

Seán Treacy was in Dublin to see May Quigley off to a new position in Clare, where he could have seen her as easily as in Dublin; but he was also in Dublin for the fixing up of the legal side of his patrimony. These are the only cold and hot facts about that - the suggested impertinent back-stair hugger-mugger with G.H.Q. to the contrary notwithstanding.

Dan Breen at that time was busy going round with Jimmy Walsh of the bleeding statues fame. He actually brought the already notorious Walsh to 71 Heytesbury St., our Dublin H.Q.! He brought Walsh to "71" the day Mick Lambe of Clonmel was brought and dumped there, badly wounded, semi-conscious, raving and still bleeding profusely. Bill Myles, Frank Drohan, O'Keeffe and O'Gorman of Clonmel left Lambe in sole charge of Bridgie who was the only one at home that day. Before Dick McKee and Paddy Daly arrived to take Lambe to the Mater Hospital, Dan Breen arrived with Jimmy Walsh hoping to get Walsh to invert his "bleeding" miracles.

No wonder Fernside followed soon after.

No wonder "71" was raided for the first and second times immediately after.

Brighid reminded me also (though I hadn't forgotten) that at this time my third urgent letter arrived, this time demanding the return of a big number of South Tipperary Officers who had been enjoying themselves

and "Willie Reilly and his Colleen Bawn" at a Ranelagh picture house (I think it was ) long enough.

Denis Lacey, J.J. Hogan and Seán O'Mara returned at once.  
No wonder I trusted them enough to put them in important positions.

(Intld.) S.R.

22.3.'52.

18, Highfield Road,  
Rathgar,  
Dublin.

25.4.'52.

Dear Seán

In re mine of 22nd and 23rd instant :-

P.P.S.

This post-post-script is like what the children call "a folly-up" in an Alice in Wonderland film:

Curiouser and curiouser = two photostat communications purporting to come from Maurice Crowe as "Bde. Adj." to "Dan Breen Commandant South Tipp. Bde." dated April 1918.

The "Hue and Cry" must have been presented with one of these jokes or hoaxes found lying (?) around somewhere:- "Daniel Breen. Calls himself Commandant South Tipperary Bde."

No doubt Dan preens himself, but why did Maurice crow?

Did (or will) Fr. C. enquire into the bona-fides of the circumstances (if any) of time and place of, or into any reason (rational, or otherwise) advanced for the appointment, or selection, or election, or nomination to (even by default) or assumption of Brigade ranks at a time, and in circumstances under which G.H.Q. itself had no power to recognise a Brigade much less a Brigade staff; and yet not only before the Brigade was formed but before there was even a properly created Bn., these photostat copies purport to be communications between two Brigade staff officers!

I've already hinted at "The Great 'Oaks' of South Tipperary"; these two photostatic copies must be a pair of little hoaxes. Maurice and Dan must have been playing at being "officers and gentlemen" before the curtain was raised on the first performance - before even the preview.

The production of the two photostats at this time of day brings to my mind the old adage about the three degrees of lies: "lies, damn lies

and statistics". They also auto-suggest (they do suggest) a parallel: A Jesuit once said that "a little bit of verisimilitude, especially if it is in the concrete, can turn an ordinary lie into a calumny".

The object in producing (whatever about the reproduction) of the two communications goes much further: they are meant to turn what was obviously at the time a harmless joke into serious statics (ref. the above superlative).

The discovery of two perfect wax replicas of the swallow wouldn't be proof that it was double-summertime.

Yours sincerely,

(Sdg.) Seumas Robinson.

18 Highfield Road,  
Rathgar,  
Dublin.

16th January 1950.

W.F. O'Connell Esq.,  
Hon. Sec. Soloheadbeg Memorial,  
St. Michael's St.,  
Tipperary.

A Chara,

Your formal invitation to attend the unveiling of the Memorial to Soloheadbeg Ambush has been received.

For reasons that seem good to me I must decline the invitation.

As a member of the "Bureau of Military History 1913-1921" I have to be careful that my presence and silence at a function such as the unveiling of the Memorial at Soloheadbeg Cross (where I was the Officer in command) and where speeches and addresses will be made and delivered, will not be interpreted as lending even the appearance of any shade of official authority by me, either personally as the Brigade Officer Commanding at the time, or as a member of the Bureau of Military History, to statements that may be made in connection with the function.

Judging by what happened in connection with the presentation made to the survivors of the Knocklong rescue, in May last, I must be doubly on guard. Extracts from a book had been printed in the "Irish Press" dealing with some incidents in the history of South Tipperary Brigade as part of the boosting of the then coming celebrations. The original book from which the above mentioned extracts were taken was written by one who had no first-hand knowledge of the events, and, judging by some of the contents, the author seems to have based his incidents and conclusions on a previously published book; and this latter book had no authority from the G.H.Q. of the Republican Army at the time or of the officer commanding the Brigade or Division. I read those extracts. On the whole I prefer Buck Rodgers.

The Knocklong Rescue Committee had not the courtesy (not to say the good sense) to ask my opinion on what should go into print as historic fact. The Chairman (half a Tipperary man) of that Committee gave me his word that I would see the drafts of the brochure before final printing. His word was not kept. The fact, also, that I was presented with an address at the reception (the address, by the way, does admit I was something more than a mere "also ran", but which was not published in the daily press or in the brochure - nor did I receive a copy of the address until Christmas Eve 1949!) may be intercepted by some as giving my imprimatur to the whole proceedings. At least my silence at the reception (I had been requested to say little more than "thanks" and I had been unable to read the brochure until some days later) may well lead some people to think I have agreed with everything then printed or stated. I wrote the "Irish Press" quite a mild letter, little more than pointing out that I was not taking any responsibility for the truth or untruth of any statements made in connection with the Knocklong rescue celebrations. My justification being that the "Irish Press" had published my name quite a number of times in this connection.

The "Irish Press" refused to publish my letter.

In the brochure already referred to, it can be seen that the ranks held by the living officers concerned are not mentioned anywhere in it, nor in the advertisements or reports of the proceeding; and this was done deliberately so that it might not appear anywhere in the brochure who was officially and in truth the Officer Commanding . . . . he not being a Tipperary man?

To that suppressio veri, and to lend verisimilitude to certain false claims (that they are false is well known to every officer and men of South Tipperary Brigade living and dead) that anyone, at any time during the whole of the Tan war, but I, was ever in charge of South Tipperary Brigade, those responsible for the production of the

brochure made use of the "Hue & Cry" (the organ of our bitterest enemies, the R.I.C.!) by reproducing two photographs of Dan Breen, the Brigade Q.M. (not to flatter him certainly - they are almost libellous) and under them was the legend: "calls himself Commandant of the South Tipperary Brigade". Need I labour the underlying motive?

Now to connect all this with your Committee's invitation.

A number of Tipperary Officers were associated actively with the above-mentioned Knocklong Rescue Committee, and I believe some at least of these are associated with your Committee. From what I have gleaned (and may God and your Committee forgive me if I am wrong) I sense that my presence at the coming ceremony will be used further to bolster up the suppressio veri I have referred to.

I have never yet tried to sound my own horn, nor have I ever yet attempted to wash dirty linen in public - I have never even complained in public - because I had hoped (forlornly?) that some generous-minded Tipperary man would some day try to redeem what other Tipperary men have done (or left undone) to a stranger who went amongst them out of love for Ireland to do a certain job for Ireland and Tipperary and who did it.

Until that is done I will continue to feel that, had I served my country in any other part of Ireland as I have served her in South Tipperary, I would not have been damned with slight praise and worse, for the last thirty years.

I am sure that you will now appreciate properly why I cannot with any semblance of self-respect, accept your Committee's invitation - or any other similar invitation from South Tipperary.

Mise, do chara,

(Sgd.) Seumas Robinson.

*Appendix No. 21 (cont)*

Mellifont Abbey,  
Collon,  
Co. Louth.

22nd April, 1953.

Dear Mr. Robinson,

The Abbot passed me on your letter with enclosures and I am replying immediately so as to make my position quite clear.

In the first place, I should wish to make clear that the notes sent you by Seán Fitzpatrick represented a rough draft of the book and were not, by any means, intended for publication. I pointed out to Seán Fitzpatrick that there was bound to be many errors and omissions in the notes and asked him to read them over and bring to my notice anything which he thought would need revision, correction, or emendation, etc. I think it is a pity that when he sent you those notes he did not make that clear.

I have no desire to set down anything but what is true. I know there will be certain matters on which there is bound to be controversy. Where those matters are of no importance they can, of course, be omitted; but where they are of importance it will be necessary to get all the evidence on both sides and lay it before the reader. I have no brief for any individual. I am not writing to bolster-up any case for or against anyone. I welcome any corrections which may be made and any omissions which may be thought desirable to rectify, and for that purpose I am fully prepared to let you have the typescript and make any notes you wish as to suggested changes, additions or omissions. I can assure you that any such emendations will receive the fullest possible consideration from me, and I am as anxious as you are that no statement should be set down which would in any way do an injustice to you or anyone else.

On my last visit to Seán Fitzpatrick, before leaving him, I asked him for your address which he gave me. I had fully intended then calling to see you, but a chance remark which he made decided me to write instead. Rightly or wrongly I got the impression from Seán Fitzpatrick that I might not be persona grata to you, due to the fact that I had been in communication with Dan Breen. I intended writing, however, and had drafted the heads of a letter with a number of queries concerning Brigade matters and only waited a favourable opportunity for writing. Your letter yesterday made it necessary for me to write at once. I was out when it arrived and so did not get it in time to answer by return post.

With regard to those notes, I think the matter to which you mostly objected was something I had written regarding the October election 1918 when you were elected Brigadier. I am only going by memory because that particular sentence or statement was queried by Seán Fitzpatrick when returning the notes to me. I wrote to Maurice Crowe then and he also said the statement was incorrect in more than one particular. I thereupon omitted that particular statement.

With regard to the question of whether Dan Breen ever held the rank of Brigade Commandant or was called such I had no source of information but Maurice Crowe. Dan Breen himself never told me anything on the matter, nor did I ever ask him. In fact, on only one occasion did I receive any communication either orally or in writing regarding the actual work on hand from D.B. and that was a statement re the election of Brigadier in October, 1918; the statement, I think to which you took objection and concerning which I had received an intimation from Maurice Crowe that it should be changed. My other statement, that re the early stages of the Brigade organisation, was

based on evidence supplied by Maurice Crowe - not by Dan Breen with whom I never even discussed the matter - and the reason I wrote to Maurice Crowe was that Seán Fitzpatrick in a letter to me in December, 1950, had told me that for the early days of the organisation in S. Tipp. the principal men were Seán Treacy, Dan Breen, Maurice Crowe, Artie and Matt Barlow, Brian Shanahan and others. M.C. sent me two dispatches (from which were made the photostats you refer to) and gave me written and signed statements concerning the whole matter.

With regard to the Tan war, I have nowhere denied that you were Brigadier during the whole period, not only of the war itself, but from the time of your election in October 1918 down to March or April 1922 when you were promoted to be O/C, 2nd Southern Division. Nor have I received any information from Dan Breen on the matter. I don't think I am exaggerating when I say that the information given me by Dan Breen is practically nil. There was a statement made by me, indeed, in the original notes which was based on a statement in Desmond Ryan's book and which would seem to imply that you were only the nominal head of the Brigade while Seán Treacy was the real head. I was not the author of that statement. On reading through my notes I came to the conclusion that Desmond Ryan, writing Treacy's biography would naturally enough try to magnify the hero of the book - though I don't think Treacy needed to be magnified - and so I decided when re-writing those notes to omit that sentence, which, in fact, I did. Then there is the question as to why Breen and Treacy remained behind in Dublin. I, following Desmond Ryan's account, said they were interviewing G.H.Q. in connection with the Flying Columns. In following Desmond Ryan's account I was under the impression

that he knew what he was talking about as he gives you as one of the sources from whom he received first hand information. Of course, if you, as Brigadier, deny this, I shall give your denial full prominence. Mention is made of Hollyford and Drangan and you point out that Dan Breen was not present in either place. I quite agree. I neither state nor even hint that he was present and I give you full credit for your leadership in Hollyford, Drangan, and Bearcross.

Of course, I have no interest in anything except getting the story of the fight and getting as near to the truth as possible. I do not want to indulge in personalities or to take part for or against any individual or any group. I am trying to get at the truth - not only the subjective, but also the objective truth.

With reference to "My Fight, etc." I have used it very little and have only quoted it in a very few instances. For the account of the Barrack Attacks my versions have been based mostly on the story as told by Ernie O'Malley with additions as found in Desmond Ryan's book, but mostly on O'Malley's version.

Finally I would like to emphasise the fact that I have no intention of either manipulating or selecting my material so as to give a one-sided account, still less that I am actuated (as you would seem to believe) by any ill-will or even hatred of you. I have no "phobia" in this matter. I cannot help thinking that it is a pity that Seán Fitzpatrick when sending you the notes referred to did not explain that they were intended by me not as a final but rather as a draft-version and that I not only had no objection to but actually welcomed their correction. I think that if you agree to my suggestion that I send you the text as it now stands with the very considerable additions, omissions, emendations and corrections which

have been made since you saw what were the draft notes, more or less, on which the final version was to be based, you will come to the conclusion that you have (unwittingly) done me an injustice in imputing to me motives which do not exist.

I think I have explained my position sufficiently clearly and await your reply with interest in the hope that you will see your way to agree to my proposal to forward you the typescript to comment on as you wish and to note down any corrections, additions, omissions or emendations which you may deem desirable in the interests of historical accuracy. In that case, of course, I would, when I have received back the script with your notes, revise and correct where necessary and let you have a copy of the revised version when completed before taking any further steps in the matter.

Assuring you of my best wishes and a remembrance in my prayers,

I am,

Yours sincerely,

(Signed) B. COLMCILLE.

(Br. Colmcille).

"Irish Times" 6/2/50.

Sir, - Surely, the "letters to the editor" column of a newspaper is not an appropriate place to initiate a debate, with each correspondent flying off at his own pet tangents, on the ethics of Soloheadbeg ambush, or, say, on the morality of French partisans shooting down German soldiers "going about their peaceful duties" after the official surrender of France; or, again, on the morality or immorality, in the light of international decency, not to say Christian theology, of Irishmen joining the British Army and killing people who were fighting for their own countries?

What do some of your correspondents hope to achieve? Do they want to show (with secret delight?) that the British Empire - excuse me - that this wee mutilated State of ours was conceived and brought forth in iniquity, and must come to a bad end (their "bad end" justifying their means?). However, at least one of your correspondents, a lady, seems to be genuinely worried; perhaps the following relevant points may help:

(1) The existence of the First Dáil had not yet been promulgated throughout the country when the ambush took place.

(2) The men at Soloheadbeg ambush acted under standing directions of the Army to obtain arms and munitions when and where they could be got. Virtually tons of explosives had been captured in Scotland by the Fianna and I.R.B. and sent to Dublin for the 1916 Rising, and at least one big raid was carried out in Dublin before Easter Week. These raids for munitions were a well-established routine.

(3) That the two unfortunate and brave R.I.C. men refused to surrender is abundantly clear to anyone who read the evidence of the inquest, and remembers it. What is not so clear is that the policemen tried to shoot after they were called on two or three times to surrender.

(4) - Oh! What's the use! The more light you show to a bigot, the more he shuts it out, like the pupil of a cat's eye. -

Yours, etc.,  
"DALAQTADA".

Dublin, February 6th, 1950.

Seanad Eireann,  
Tigh Laighean,  
Baile Atha Cliath

*Conroy*

Sept. 1935.

Secretary,  
M/S. Pensions Board.

A Chara,

With regard to Sean Hogan's application for a M/S Certificate, I wish to draw the attention of the Board to the fact that Sean Hogan deserves special consideration.

Hogan's service previous to 1917 can be vouched for by Mr. Dan Breen, T.D., and others. His subsequent service is known to me - and to everyone in Tipperary.

Hogan took part (while still in his "teens") in as many military engagements as anyone in Ireland. He was at the ambush of Soloheadbeg in January 1919 and was on the run for his life from that time until the Truce. He took part in many if not most, of the bigger activities of the Dublin A.S.U. He was present at the formation of that unit and was an honorary member of it.

Hogan had charge of a large Column during the "Tan" war, and he handled it excellently. He was an officer who could be entrusted with any special service or commission.

It might be as well to point out that Hogan received no pay; and if men who had not as good a record as he, and who had been in the receipt of pay, have got special recognition under the 1924 Act (some being given the highest rank) then I beg to submit that Sean Hogan should receive similar treatment.

Misc *Seumas Robinson (Senator)*

(Signed) Seumas Robinson.  
O/C. 2nd Southern Div.

# THE ASHTOWN AMBUSH

## PREVIOUS PLANS TO KIDNAP LORD FRENCH

### AN ADVENTUROUS CYCLE RIDE

(By Senator Seamus Robinson, O/C. South Tipperary Brigade, I.R.A., 1918-'22, and then O/C. 2nd Southern Division).

SHORTLY after the Soloheadbeg ambush of January 21, 1919, when Dan Breen, Sean Treacy, Sean Hogan and myself (of the South Tipperary Brigade, Irish Republican Army) were "on the run," we were awakened out of our sleep one night in Mrs. Boland's house, in Dublin, by the sound of tramping footsteps and loud voices on the stairs.

The leader of the invading party was Michael Collins, who explained that they had made good noise to show they were friends—a wise precaution. The sound of stealthy footsteps was always the signal for us to get our guns, in case of surprise by the enemy. Mick soon let us know the object of his visit, saying: "Get up at once, you are to ambush Lord French." At first we thought he was joking, but he explained that he had received word that Lord French was to drive to Dublin Castle at 5 o'clock the following morning.

So Treacy, Hogan and I took up our position in Church Lane, off Dame Street, awaiting the coming of Lord French, trying meanwhile to follow our instructions to keep on the move, yet remain on the spot—not a very easy thing to do. At different points all along the route men from all parts of the country, who had come to Dublin for an Army Convention, were stationed, some of whom were to take part in the attack, and others who were to cover the retreat of the attackers.

But Lord French never came, and we learned afterwards that our information was wrong, and that he had no intention of passing through Dame Street that morning. Thomas Mac Curtain, later the Lord Mayor of Cork, was with us that morning, and I remember his saying to me afterwards that the only good thing about the ambush was that he was given a revolver, which he had not been able to get before.

Lord French seemed to have had a charmed life, and although plans were made later to kidnap him and hold him as hostage for Eamon de Valera, President of the Republic, who was then in prison, he was always able to slip through our hands.

#### ASHTOWN.

Some time before the Ashtown ambush I was present at a meeting of the Active Service Units, drawn from the various battalions and presided over by Dick Mulcahy. He explained to us that we would have to carry out active warfare in such a way that there would be no casualties on our side, that is to say, that there was to be none of our men killed or taken prisoners. He said this was necessary, because the Government was anxious that no military action should be traced to its authority or to the I.R.A., and that if an attack could be traced to the I.R.A. they might find it necessary to repudiate us. Mr. de Valera had nothing to do with this decision, being in gaol at the time.

We accepted these terms, although they opened up very unpleasant possibilities for us, for we would then be outlawed by the British, repudiated by our own Government, and also might suffer the censure of the Church.

On Friday, the 19th December, 1919, the party drawn from the A.S.U. of the various battalions, including Dan Breen, Treacy, Hogan and myself, and numbering in all eleven men, proceeded to Ashtown to carry out the attack on the Viceroy. Our information was that Lord French would come by train to Ashtown at 11.40 a.m., and that he would not go on to Broadstone, but would leave the train there, and travel by motor to the Viceregal Lodge.

We rode out the Cabra Road on our bicycles, cycling two by two, and I remember that Martin Savage sang all the way, among his songs being, "A soldier's life, the life for me, a soldier's death, so Ireland's free"

#### BARRICADING THE ROAD.

Arrived at Kelly's public house, Ashtown, which stands about two hundred yards from Ashtown Station, and about 100 yards from the Phoenix Park gate, Paddy Daly, who was in command of the party, gave us our instructions. A large body of men standing about the road would be sure to attract atten-

tion, so we were to go into the public-house, and mingling with the customers, order some minerals, as if we were cyclists passing along the road. Shortly before the train was due to arrive, we were to line the inside of the hedge on the right hand side of the road for about thirty yards. Breen, Martin Savage and Tom Keogh were to barricade the road at the last moment, by drawing a country cart,

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which stood by, across the path of the coming cars. This had to be done in order to slow down the speed of the cars, which always travelled at a terrific rate. Breen and his two comrades had to do this with an air of innocence or stupidity, because if they looked too business-like about it they might rouse the suspicions of some of the people in the public house.

#### A PROPOSAL.

The usual order in which the Viceregal party travelled was first a motor car carrying Lord French's armed escort, then the car in which Lord French sat and then another carrying the rest of his escort. Daly instructed us not to attack the first car.

The look-outs brought us word that the train was signalled, and we moved quietly and quickly to our allotted posts along the inside of the hedge, keeping out of sight. In order to prevent civilian casualties, men were placed at the cross roads, whose duty it was to prevent people walking into our range of fire.

Realising that Daly might not have given cool consideration at this eleventh hour to a proposal I had made to him, I made up my mind that I would withhold my bomb until after the second car was dealt with. I felt with absolute certainty that if this precaution were not taken, our whole action might be marred by heavy casualties on our side, and our instructions from G.H.Q. were that we were to avoid casualties.

#### D.M.P. MAN INTERFERES.

The cars were starting from the station. The time had come for the road party to get into action, and they began slowly to pull the country cart across the road, to block the way of the viceregal party. While they were doing this a D.M.P. man appeared suddenly on the scene, and, taking our barricaders for countrymen engaged in their work, began to argue with them that they could not bring their cart that way, feigning stupidity and obstinacy, and not wanting to have a tussle with the policeman, our men tried to carry on with their duty, but the policeman, explaining that the passage must be kept clear for "his Excellency," could not be persuaded to move.

At this point one of our party settled the argument by throwing the only missile he had at the policeman, namely, a bomb. Of course he had not drawn the pin from the bomb, so that there was no danger of its exploding and injuring him or any of our men. This surprise attack threw the policeman into confusion, but also confused our barricading party, and almost at the same moment the Viceroy's cars came into range.

The cars came close together as I had hoped, and immediately the action began. All of our men, remembering their instructions, concentrated their attack on the second car, in which Lord French was thought to be travelling. I, however, side-stepped orders and, waiting until the second car had been bombed out of action, hurled my bomb at the first car. What effect my bomb had I never heard with any certainty, but the car bounded away, crashing past the slight barri-

cade. It was discovered afterwards that contrary to the usual custom, Lord French was seated in the first, instead of in the second car.

#### CASUALTIES.

Immediately after bombing, I rushed to the end of the line, at the main road, our weak flank, where Dan Breen, Martin Savage and, I think, Keogh were standing without cover. I was anxious to make sure that there would be no enfilading of our lines.

Now the third car, the rear of the escort, came dashing along at a furious pace, bumping over and pushing aside obstacles on the road, the occupants prepared to defend their charge with their lives. This was an open car. Its fire took toll of our party.

In the back of the car stood a soldier, with his legs braced between the seats, his rifle held tight to his shoulder with the left hand, and his right hand working evenly, almost gracefully, on the bolt and trigger. This soldier was a sharp-shooter. His first shot gave young Martin Savage his death wound; the second went through Breen's hat, grazing his head, and the third hit Breen in the leg, wounding him seriously. Breen, now out of action, limped painfully to cover in the public-house door, and a milk-cart which, fortunately for me, came along the main road at this moment, provided cover from which to continue the attack. I was sorry for that milkman, but I had neither the time nor the inclination to consider his point of view.

The second car had been badly damaged by our fire, and could not proceed any farther, and as his comrades had fled, leaving him to our mercy, the soldier who had been driving it walked out with his hands up. The ambush was over. All our party came out on the main road, and the soldier was disarmed. He was trembling and evidently expected to be shot; but we treated him with every courtesy. He was obviously surprised and relieved when some one said: "We are soldiers, too, and do not shoot unarmed prisoners."

**ON BICYCLES.**

Savage had been killed outright, shot through the throat by the sharpshooter. We debated whether we should take his body away with us, but it was decided that it would be impossible at that time, as we had only bicycles, and we had a wounded man to bring to safety. Treacy and I remained behind the others, until Breen was got away.

Breen was very weak from loss of blood, and his leg was useless, so that he could neither walk nor cycle by himself. He was helped on to his bicycle, and Paddy Daly, riding his own bicycle, and supporting Breen on the other, started on a difficult and perilous journey to reach the house of Mrs. Toomey of Phibsborough. Later we learned that Daly and Frank Thornton and others got our wounded comrade there in safety, but it was more than a month before Breen was able to move about without assistance.

As soon as the remainder of our party were safely away, Treacy and I jumped on our bicycles, and started to ride at top speed from Ashtown, for we knew that the district would soon be swarming with British military searching for the I.R.A. We cycled along the path in case we should meet with a military lorry or armed motor cyclist, as it would be easier for us in this way to get across a hedge and through the fields in case of an encounter.

**BORROWED MACHINE.**

Unfortunately I had hardly started when one of my pedals struck a stone, and came off; so, throwing my bicycle over a hedge, I got on the back of Treacy's machine. The bumping over stones made me press down on the rear mudguard, and Treacy soon found he could make no progress. Luckily for us a man came into view, wheel-

ing a brand new machine, and politely but firmly we told him that we would have to borrow it from him for a few hours. He was very indignant, and obviously did not believe me when I promised that it would be left for him at a certain place and at a certain hour that evening. I heard afterwards that this man was an R.I.C. pensioner. The bicycle was handed over to the Dublin A.S.U. to return it as best they could.

With the unwilling help of that ex-policeman, I was able to resume my journey into town with Sean Treacy, and at last we arrived at Lynch's, (Continued on next column.)

Dolphin's Barn. Thinking at the time that Breen would be in Grantham St. where his fiancée lived, we dared not go at once to 71 Haytesbury Street, our Dublin H.Q., for fear of drawing too much attention to the district. After a wash and shave we went out to enjoy the sensation caused by the attack on the Viceroy. Very soon wild rumours were circulating through Dublin, and we, who had been on the spot, really believed that Lord French and his car had been blown to bits at Ash-town. I am sure that he was as delighted as we were disappointed that this was not really the case, but although the action was not successful in one way, it certainly caused a panic in British Government circles.

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SENATOR REUMAS ROBINSON.



"Tipperary No. 3. Brigade."

26-9-20.

"Re yours to the Chief of Staff.<sup>-x-</sup> For God's sake, Dan, have a bit of sense. What the hell do you or I need to care about the Dublin Corporation? Besides, Dan, the evidence that Beatie really was there to burn the Town Hall wouldn't hang a cat in any court of justice. <sup>6</sup> Of course he may really have been one of the burners and the Corporation may be wrong, but is that any reason why everyone in the army // should get out and leave it all to the Dublin Corporation? I should think not. Try to reconsider the whole matter and let me know. I'll hold over your resignation until I hear from you. E. Dwyer is resigning because there is too much fight. He thinks the enemy's way of burning is a knockout blow to active service. I felt like chucking it myself because like yourself I think things are too slow and that we should burn England, but there is such a lot of terror creeping into the Republican Ranks that my monkey is up and I will see matters through this crisis if I can. Re yours to myself. I quite agree with you, Dan, and I don't at all think your idea a bit too wild. As to your suggestion of a South Tipp. Contingent going to England, I'll speak to G.H.Q. on the matter. However, I believe G.H.Q. is quite alive to facts. They don't want to start till the world sees England's acts clearly. That takes a little time, I assure you. Write soon, cheerio."

-x- Richard Mulcahy, one of the ablest members of the murder gang.  
See Appendix B.

<sup>6</sup> This appears to refer to the burning of Tipperary Town Hall some time previously.

// The I.R.A.

*My signature finally - addressed  
H*

*x: The original of this letter was left behind after the escape of Trinity & ...*

*from ... & ... candle was ...*

*It is a matter of 100 ... of ... I ... E. Dwyer ...  
I ... that it was ... (Bando) ...  
Account of ...*