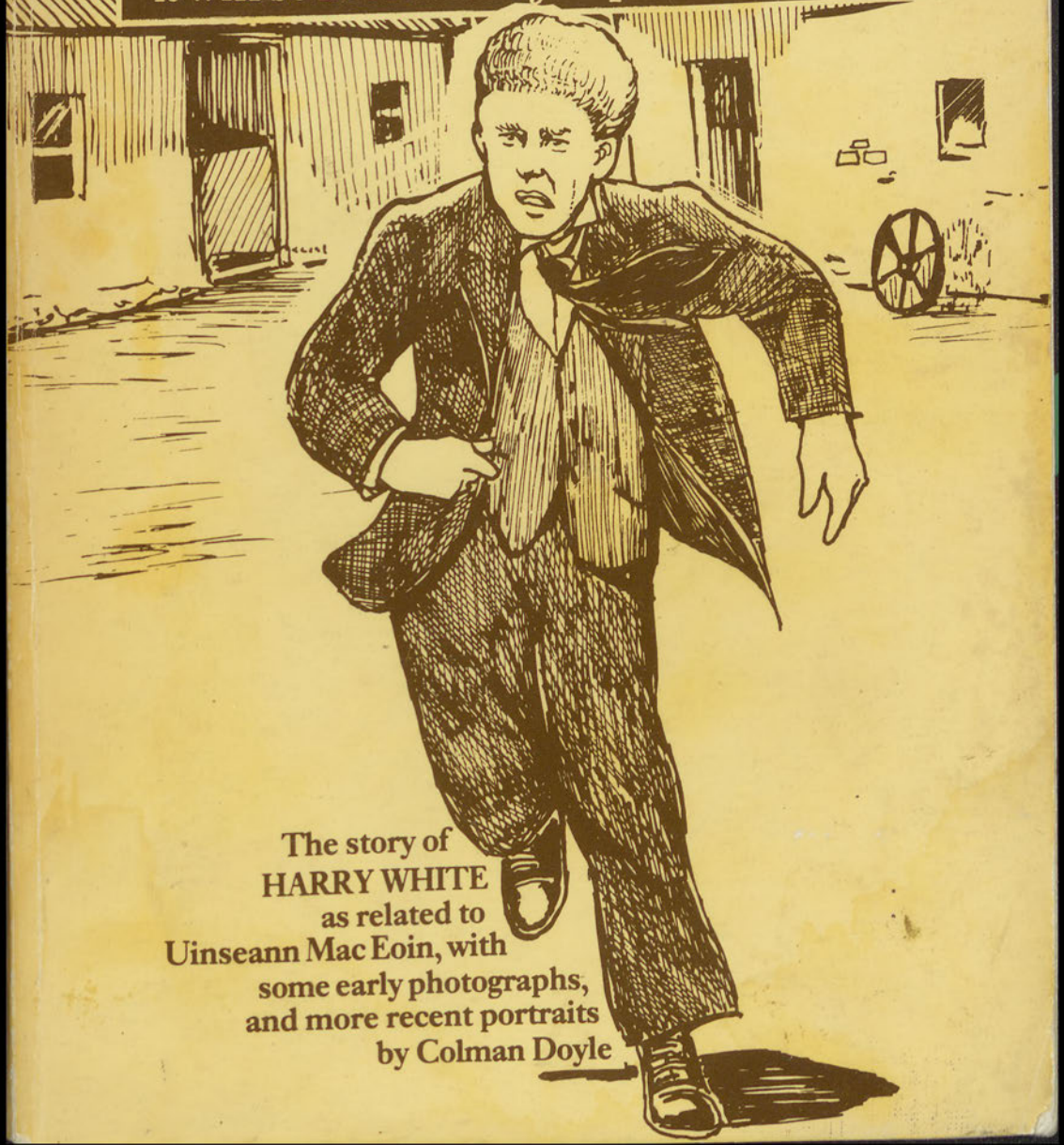
Harry

ARGENTA
PUBLICATIONS

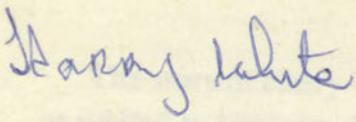
Harry

...and you know if the Free State gets you it will be no flowers by request—



The story of
HARRY WHITE
as related to
Uinseann Mac Eoin, with
some early photographs,
and more recent portraits
by Colman Doyle

Harry



Harry

The story of Harry White
as related to Uinseann MacEoin
with some early photographs,
and more recent portraits by Colman Doyle.

ARGENTA PUBLICATIONS
19 Mountjoy Square, Dublin 1, Ireland.

Published by
Argenta Publications,
20 Marlborough Road,
Donnybrook, Dublin 4, Ireland.

Designed and printed in Ireland by the Elo Press Ltd., Dublin 8.
Cover design by Don Conroy.

Contents

List of Illustrations

Hope for success, under all circumstances have your heart. You may live to see Ireland what she ought to be; but whether or not let us die in the faith.

James Hope, 1764-1847

From my earliest youth I have regarded the connection between Ireland and England as the curse of the Irish nation and felt convinced, that while it lasted, this country could never be free or happy.

To subvert the tyranny of our execrable Government, to break the connection with England, the never failing source of all our evils, and to assert the Independence of my country... these were my objects. To unite the whole people of Ireland, to abolish the memory of all past dissensions, these were my means.

Theobald Wolfe Tone, 1763-1798

And now Englishmen, listen to us! Though you were tomorrow to give us the best tenures on earth – though you were to give us the amplest representation in your Senate, and redress every one of your fiscal wrongs... we tell you by the past, present and future, we would spurn your gifts if the condition were that Ireland should remain a province. We tell you... come what may – bribery or deceit, justice, policy or war – we tell you, in the name of Ireland, that Ireland shall be a Nation.

Thomas Davis, 1814-1845

If you remove the English army tomorrow and hoist the green flag over Dublin Castle, unless you set about the organisation of the Workers' Republic, your efforts would be in vain. England would still rule you. She would rule you through her capitalists, through her landlords, through her financiers, through the whole army of commercial and individualist institutions she has planted in this country...

James Connolly, 1868-1916

One may reduce national freedom to a few simple propositions. That its end is human happiness. That its end is individual freedom; hence individual happiness. That it implies national sovereignty and, hence, implies control of all moral and material resources of the nation.

Padraic H. Pearse, 1879-1916

Introduction

What an indomitable tradition — if unsuccessful so far — is the hundred and ninety year old story of Irish Republicanism.

It began on that June day of 1795, on Cave Hill, Belfast, when Wolfe Tone, Thomas Russell, Samuel Neilson, the brothers Simms and Henry Joy McCracken made their solemn compact *never to desist in their efforts until they had subverted the authority of England over their country and asserted her independence.*

In a sense Irish Republicanism is a graft from the great revolution of France; it is not yet two hundred years old, scarcely a single millimetre in the tall pole of a nation's history. It flared through the springtime and summer months of 1798; had he seized the Castle in July, it might have come to life again with Emmet's rebellion of 1803. Dormant, and almost dead, Davis and his comrades attempted to breathe life into it again in the years before the great Famine. A few men around Skibbereen brought it to life as the Phoenix Society in 1856, culminating in the extraordinary growth and spreading tentacles of the Fenian Movement. It seemed to fade then, though kept alive behind the hedges and ditches of the Land War period, eventually shrinking to no more than a handful of whispering conspirators — the Brotherhood, that preceded the rise of Sinn Féin. Alongside them grew that multi-tongued cultural renaissance — the Celtic Twilight — which nudged Ireland towards a re-examination of its role as a nation, finally bursting forth as the insurrection of 1916.

'Oh words are lightly spoken',
Said Pearse to Connolly,
'Maybe a breath of politic words
Has withered our Rose Tree;
Or maybe but a wind that blows
Across the bitter sea'.

'But where can we draw water',
Said Pearse to Connolly,
'When all the wells are parched away?
Oh plain as plain can be
There's nothing but our own red blood
Can make a right Rose Tree'.

What seemed in the first weeks of its aftermath a calamity, was turned to

victory when the mass of the Irish people voted wholeheartedly for Sinn Féin. Again and again they trooped out in support until the opportunity was snuffed from them by the ignominious agreement of December 1921. It is upon an Act of the British Parliament, the Government of Ireland Act of 1920, and the agreement of 1921, that the two states North and South rest; Northern Ireland (Six Counties as it was always referred to, even officially, until 1970) and the Republic of Ireland (officially the Irish Free State, Saorstát Éireann, until 1938), the twentysix county element of the island.

What coals of fire that settlement has brought down upon the heads of the Irish people; a people whom, if they were given a fair opportunity, free from outside interference and media manipulation, would reject it. An incipient war has continued between the militant Republicans — the I.R.A. — and the forces of the status quo; those same forces being heavily fortified by British direction and support. Forty major coercive acts of parliament have been passed in the three states — the UK, the Republic and Northern Ireland — as the collective forces of conservatism seek to keep fastened this wobbly and insecure settlement. There has been hardly a single year since the twenties when Republicans, of all ages, have not died fighting it. And some of those who would uphold it, have died too. Civilians also have died in the ebb and flow of struggle. There has hardly been a single year when jails North, South, in the UK — even in America — have not held numbers of Irish Republicans whom, but for this shaky settlement, would never be in jail. At the present time there are in these jails, including numbers on remand, twelve hundred prisoners, among them many girls, children and women. Since this epoch of struggle commenced, over six thousand have passed through prison. Ireland, in relation to its size has now, and has had for some years, more political prisoners than any country in Europe (some of whom have none); in numbers alone it has many more than most European countries. In terms of sentences, they are demonstrably excessive; some are for natural life, many are for forty years; the norm is between ten and twenty years. No matter what the circumstances, no member of a security force, soldier or policeman, engaged against Republicans is now serving a sentence although they themselves have shot and killed more than 140 unarmed civilians, many of them in the most barbarous circumstances. The circumstances of imprisonment now are totally different from what they were at any other time in this century. After the 1916 Rising sixteen men were executed, but all the rest were released within nine months. While many were executed in the 1920-23 period, a twelve month sentence was the norm. Less than a dozen remained in Irish and British jails after 1924. We have to come to the middle thirties before we meet five year sentences again. Most were three month or six months, with one six year, a seven year and a ten year, and two life, of which only a brief period was served in the latter case. There were executions in the forties, and some long sentences, although internment that lasted four to

five years was the norm. By early 1948 the few that remained in jail in the South were released, while in the North, where all of those interned were released by the end of 1945, the few sentenced prisoners remaining were released by 1951. Prisoners sentenced in England in 1939 and 1940, had to do the full term in some cases, but all were released by mid 1948.

The position today is totally different. Men, women and children, in their scores are sentenced, caught up in the struggle against an oppressive regime, under a questionable legal system of loyalist appointees, and they are being left many years — many decades — to rot in the worst jails that ever existed in these islands. They are being watched over by thousands of warders and security personnel far exceeding their own numbers. On average there are two to each prisoner. With a few exceptions, these personnel, these warders, must be, indeed are, perverted and twisted by their job. That job entails close, frequent and intimate searches of the captives, male and female, and sometimes of their visitors; this nauseating practice has been imposed North and South evidently as a further twist of the screw of humiliation of Republicans.

Worse however is the role, knowing all the circumstances, of the legal men who live handsomely out of this system, and who have sent them there. Because the marriageable age is now much lower than in former decades and because men and women of very mature age are engaged in this struggle, there are now over one thousand children who may never, as children, know their fathers (or in a few cases their mothers). In their captivity and their poverty, they rest as a witness of the real Ireland, the hidden Ireland, the gagged Republican Ireland, the Ireland that is not allowed speak.

No matter what argument is advanced, this is one very rotten fruit of the 1920-21 settlement. One other fruit is the enormous drain directly and indirectly upon our economic resources. It is a safe bet that the Republic now spends 300 million pounds annually "upon security" arising from the "border situation" (these Irish euphemisms), and for the Six Counties (British Army expenses apart) the sum must be at least the same. Is there an indirect loss from tourism, travel costs, jobs, administration, national image, the economy, of 2,000 million annually on each side North and South? We think there is. Nor does it end at that. We have arrived at a two nation Ireland, an Ireland of establishment newspeak, of silent acceptance of the political status quo. No one speaks now of loyalty to Ireland — except — God bless them, the children. The economic oppression of government and the perversion by the media of our political and cultural aspirations has effectively killed loyalty. The media North and South, taking its cue from government policy, closes its eyes to the contradictions of its position. Government policy in the Republic has moved from outright rejection of the Six Counties in the early fifties to close support of the British forces of occupation there at the present time. The media has

turned logic on its head and followed suit. It is as though Frenchmen and Yugoslavs in the forties were to be persuaded by their own press that the Nazi occupation was good for them. There is no difference between the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland and a Nazi gauleiter like Heydrich or Frank. They are one and the same.

What is this nonsense about 1920-21 being a final settlement? What a patent and complete failure it is. What shameful lengths we have allowed ourselves to go attempting to uphold it. It has enabled a cosy divide of political spoils North and South while at the same time it has resulted in the impoverishment of a large mass of the Irish people, particularly the lower income groups in urban society.

The media people, and those members of the middle class who for their own selfish reasons support the repression of nationalism, should remember that they may count for little if real revolution comes. It is those with little to lose that are frequently the most discerning. It was not the middle classes who stormed the Bastille in 1789; it was not the middle classes who broke out of the bread queues in Petrograd in 1917; it was not the middle classes who made things hot for the Nazi occupiers in the forties; it was not the middle classes who trooped barefoot through the jungles of Vietnam in the sixties and seventies. It was the people with nothing to lose but their life or their liberty. If we follow in the wake of those people we will always be right.

These remarks are all the allusions that will be made in this book to what has become known as the current struggle. Even the exploits of Harry pale in comparison to the exploits, the escapes, the daring and the endurance of these times. We are concerned solely with Harry, and a period of the thirties and forties. A side show in a way, compared with the considerable popular support that the movement now receives.

Harry had to be written because it is a window from within the Republican Movement that reflects the thinking of those who were then involved in it. I cannot say that I have done full justice to Harry or to the others whose stories are touched upon. It is an effort to tell a story from their point of view, and from within. I have striven for accuracy on historical facts, but the viewpoints and presentation are not intended to be impartial. So many lean against Irish Republicanism that when one has an opportunity to write about it, to restore impartiality, one must lean the other way. Besides there is no such thing as impartial history. Even the schoolbook writers in Ireland today, as their accounts approach the present time, slide into a conformist presentation which will look totally unreal when the real Ireland of the submerged people, the Ireland of the Plough and the Stars, eventually takes over.

The real Ireland, progressive (in the sense of being economically progressive), neutral, prosperous and free, and forever with a taut, watchful relationship towards its former enemy, will, we hope, be

fashioned in the spirit of St. Enda's. What value is there in freedom, if it is a freedom that abandons the Irish tradition, that chases the whims and fancies and the will o' the wisp gurus of the international trendies? Real Republicans will avoid that snare. They will instead wrest us from the directives of the Brussels oligarchy, restore total and complete independence, quadruple national wealth, and spread it fairly over all our people.

In closing, I would make a plea for all others with a story to tell, to put it down, to record it. The tape recorder and the video have made this easy. Republicans have the most adventurous stories to tell; what tales must exist about the present epoch! They should be got down; they should not be lost. An archive of letters, pictures, personal stories and history should be established. This is of vital importance and, regardless of the difficulties, should be undertaken now.

Ar na daoine arbh cóir dom buíochas a gabháil leo, tá siad siúd; Liam de Burca, a chuidigh liom an scéal a chur le chéile, Seán Ó Mathúna, a cheartaig an lamhscríbhínn, Caitlín de Faoite, bean cheile Annrai (Cathleen O'Callaghan as Tráighlí), Leo Duignan (Liatroma), Paddy Brown (Áth Cliath), Clann Tuite (An Cabhán), Seán Ó Loinsigh (Corcaigh), Peter Walsh (Lonndúin), Vincent McDowell (Dún Laoire), Mrs. Duffy (Dún Dealgan), Willie McGuinness (Áth Cliath), Pat Shannon (Gaillimh), Albert Price, Harry O'Rawe (Béal Feirste), Jimmy Clarke (Tír Eoghain), Brigid Ó Catháin (Doire), Bob Bradshaw (Áth Cliath), Eoin McNamee agus morán duine eile. Tá mé ana buíoch dobhta go léir.

Caithfidh mé cuimhniú freisin ar mo bhean chéile Margaret, ar Patricia, a chlobhuail an chaipéis, agus ar Fionnuala a tharraing na leatscáil.

Uinseann MacEoin

Bealtaine 1985.

CHAPTER ONE

May the Lord in His mercy look down on Belfast

Prior to 1603, the town of Belfast was marked only by a castle, a square tower guarding the ford across the Lagan near the present Castle Junction. Seawards lay dreary mud flats reaching a bay or "lough" that was almost non tidal. It was not an exciting place for a future city, nor was the shallow lough suitable for the later industry of ship building. Indeed in the nineteenth century, the river itself had to be dug straight through the mud flats, and it was one of these cuts that created Queen's Island upon which much of the great industry was built.

But in 1603 there was no thought of that. After a nine year war, the great earl Hugh O'Neill, was finally vanquished in the woods of Glankankyne — the Glenconkeyne of today — in Tyrone. Ulster, the last free province of Ireland, could now be overrun and settlers planted upon it, settlers who were to prove more permanent and enduring than any of the other English plantations in Ireland.(1) The castle and lands of Belfast, the old Ballycooregalie and of Clandeboye,(2) were granted to Arthur Chichester, the genius who then supervised the plantation of the rest of Ulster. Chichester descendants were to survive as the Donegalls, wielding enormous power and owning most of the lands of Belfast until the middle of the nineteenth century. They appointed the Sovereign, the head of the Corporation, and two members of parliament, usually upon a lifetime basis. From 1610 it had a charter permitting it to return two members to the Dublin parliament in College Green. They were spokesmen there of the Chichesters and the interests of the Donegalls.

Fortified Carrickfergus, with its natural harbour and stern castle upon the Antrim coast, had heretofore been the obvious landfall for sea traffic in east Ulster. But now the small town on the Farset(3) enjoyed a steady, modest development, interrupted only by the Dutch wars of the 1660s and 1670s. Before the end of this century, the building of wooden ships for the merchant princes of the Lagan — Leather, Waring, Le Squire, Vesey and McCartney — had begun, and the seagoing trade of the little town of 3,000 was already six times that of Carrickfergus, heretofore the largest port in the North.

After the Williamite wars, which passed over Belfast leaving it unaffected (although William and Schomberg landed in June 1689 at Carrickfergus, and remained for a few days by the Lagan) the inception

of Penal Laws against Catholics in the early eighteenth century, also affected Presbyterians.

Public office, entry to Trinity College, and membership of Parliament was denied them. The all-Protestant corporation, following the lead of the Donegall family, became as a result time-serving "Church and King" Tories.

From 1780 onwards, industrial growth commenced in earnest with the development of the cotton industry. Smaller than Waterford and Kilkenny, and only one tenth of the population of Dublin, the city commenced to grow rapidly. By 1791, its population was 18,320, though Dublin, nine years later — second city of the Empire — exceeded 172,000. (The population of Ireland as a whole in 1780 was 4 million.)

It was at this time that the radicalism of Belfast was most apparent. (4) The Volunteers, founded in Armagh in 1778, paraded at the opening of the first Catholic church in Belfast, St. Mary's, in 1784 (rebuilt in its present form in 1868) and later that year called for an extension of suffrage *to our long oppressed brethern,* the Roman Catholics. Later still in 1795, just before Wolfe Tone fled to America, the sparks of revolution flared upon Cave Hill in June, when Tone, Russell, Neilson, Simms, McCracken and one or two more took a solemn obligation *never to desist in our efforts until we have subverted the authority of England over our Country.* The battle of Antrim with Henry Joy and Samuel Orr, and Ballinahinch with Henry Munroe and with the Rev. Steele Dickson and Rev. William Porter assisting from the wings, was only three years away. But too much must not be read into the Presbyterian radicalism of Belfast in the last decade of the century. Wages paid by the government at the behest of Castlereagh to their clergymen after 1803, in the form of *Regium Donum* snuffed it out in the nineteenth century, (5) leaving Protestants and Presbyterians sharing an identical view, that they fared best under English overlordship, and that fairness for Catholics would be to their disadvantage. The cleavage commenced with the foundation of the Orange Order in Armagh in 1796.

> It being the twelfth day of July in the year of forty nine,
> Five hundred of our Orangemen together did combine,
> In mem'ry of King William on that bright and glorious day,
> To march around Lord Roden's park and over Dolly's Brae,
> To march around Lord Roden's park and over Dolly's Brae.

The Order rapidly became strong, not only in the North, but in Dublin, in Wicklow, in the Midlands and throughout the South, officered by the clergymen of the Protestant Church. There were as many Orange processions in the City of Cork at the commencement of the nineteenth century as there were in Belfast. The British government dissolved the Order in 1836 when its membership stood at a quarter of a million, but allowed


Fanad
Glens
Derry
Cattlefinn
Lifford
Strabane
CO. DERRY
CO. ANTRIM
CO. DONEGAL
Stranorlar
Claudy
Maghera
Ballymena
Magherafelt
Larne
Donegal
Bay
Omagh
Lough
Neagh
CO. TYRONE
Belfast
Coalisland
L. Erne
Dungannon
Portadown
Lurgan
CO. DOWN
Enniskillen
CO. FERMANAGH
Sligo
Armagh
Dromore
Downpatrick
CO. ARMAGH
Monaghan
CO. SLIGO
Ballina
CO. MONAGHAN
Crossmaglen
Newry
CO. LEITRIM
Belturbet
Carrick on
Shannon
Cavan
Dundalk
Carrickmacross
Dundalk
Bay
CO. MAYO
CO. ROSCOMMON
Mount Nugent
Castlerea
Longford
Drogheda
Lough
Mask
Roscommon
CO. LONGFORD
Castlepollard
Navan
Athboy
Lough
Ree
Mullingar
CO. MEATH
Lough
Corrib
CO. WESTMEATH
Athlone
Liffey
CO. DUBLIN
Clara
Dublin
Dublin
Bay
Killiney
Bray
Galway
Galway
Bay
CO. OFFALY
Daingean
CO. KILDARE
Curragh
Kildare
Delgany
Shannon
Gort
Mountmellick
CO. WICKLOW
Wicklow
Castledermot
Nenagh
CO. LAOIS
Portlaoise
CO. CLARE
Ennis
Lough
Derg
CO. CARLOW
Thurles
Bagenalstown
Kilrush
Limerick
Kilkenny
CO. TIPPERARY
CO. KILKENNY
CO. WEXFORD
CO. LIMERICK
Listowel
Tipperary
Glenbower
Clonmel
Carrick on Suir
Tralee
Wexford
Waterford
Rosslare
Dingle
CO. WATERFORD
Dungarvan
Killarney
Fermoy
CO. KERRY
CO. CORK
Cahirciveen
Cork
Cobh
Dunmanway

The Belfast Battalion I.R.A. arriving in Milltown Cemetery for the Easter Commemoration.
Joe McGurk is visible under the starry blue flag of the battalion, with Liam Burke behind him and Maire Drumm to the right.

it to be revived in 1846, under the Earl of Enniskillen following the expiry of the Act.

INDUSTRIAL BELFAST

In the 1820s the Donegall estates, encumbered with gambling debts, were sold off piecemeal, thus enabling the commercial development of the centre of the city to begin. Remarkable to relate, the corporation continued as unreformed and corrupt as ever. Indeed it had been so despite the image of upright Protestantism right up to our own times, but this had in no way inhibited the commercial surge now under way. 1780 to 1830 was the great cotton era. (6) In 1806 there were two thousand weavers out of a population of twentytwo thousand, each weaver earning more than double a labourer's rate. It was followed by a 100 years of the Ulster linen era. It was the invention of the wet spinning process whereby the soaked strands of flax could be spun, that gave linen its great impetus, eventually leading to the situation where more than 60,000 were employed in Belfast alone. In rural areas flax growing for the farmer, although a difficult crop, became almost as important as cow keeping. Industrial Belfast in the late nineteenth century had that Victorian virtue whereby the men were absorbed in labouring and engineering while women and children slaved in the huge and unhealthy weaving mills. (7)

Saddled with a corrupt corporation, the police planned the new streets, set up the courts and organised the fire brigade; while the harbour people gradually pushed the docks downriver, eventually enabling big vessels to approach the wharfs and tie up.

The first ship builder, John Ritchie, arranged the removal of sand from the basin by having empty ships departing take it aboard as ballast. By the 1840s two cuts were made in the sand banks, thus straightening the Lagan and enabling it to reach deep water.

Throughout this century the population swept on apace, largely through an influx from the countryside. In 1801 it was 19,000, in 1851 87,000, thereafter rising very sharply until by 1901 it was 350,000. Housing conditions, as one might expect, were appallingly bad, thousands of houses being grouped in unsanitary little courts around Sandy Row and the Pound Loney; but from 1850 onwards there commenced a marked improvement. The rows of regimented kitchen houses — privies in the backyard only — cowering under the great mill, infilling the triangle between the Falls (8) and Shankill and later skipping the Lagan and spawning around Ballymacarrett provided markedly better housing conditions than had been experienced up to that time.

The election of 1832 was the first of the reformed elections. It resulted in a doubling of the Irish electorate. As a consequence of this sharp intake of largely uneducated voters, high feelings prevailed. The elections were

fought between Tories and Liberals, the latter having the radical landowner Sharman Crawford as one of its candidates. There were no nationalist candidates at that time. Catholic voters barely got a look in, having to choose between supporting a Protestant Liberal or, unthinkable, a Protestant Tory. The weight of the Protestant majority went with the two local Tories on this occasion, Chichester and Emerson. The result announced on Christmas Eve, was greeted with outbreaks of faction fighting; an Orange procession invaded the Catholic quarter of Hercules Street, which at that time was a narrow unsanitary street of butchers (since replaced by Royal Avenue) and when police and military fired on the crowd, they killed four people. In 1841, Dan O'Connell as part of his Repeal agitation, visited Belfast in what he hoped would be a triumphal procession. Orange mobs incited by the fundamentalist preachers Hugh Hanna and Dr. Henry Cooke whose statue, the Black Man, decorates College Square still, brought his efforts to naught and turned the screw of bigotry a notch tighter. Cooke, who reigned for nearly forty years until 1868, was paralleled at a lower level by another preacher, Rev. Thomas Drew of Christ Church. Drew was a Dubliner, and it is quite remarkable the number of leaders these fundamentalist loyalists have sought from outside — Drew, Edward Carson, Enoch Powell. Carson's grandfather Carsoni, was an Italian Catholic.

Throughout the century, right up to 1886, there were no Irish or nationalist candidates going forward for election to Parliament or corporation.(9) It was a choice between Tories or Liberals; the latter of impeccable uppercrust Imperialist character, were supported by Catholics, while Presbyterians and Protestants remained loyal to the Conservatives. Though their basic interests should have been divergent, yet over and over the big house landowner faction joined hands with the Protestant back streets to keep Toryism in power.

The 1840s resulted in a further spurt of town improvements. The Farset and Blackstaff Rivers were covered over and main streets were commenced, though they were not completed until the eighties. Victoria Street and Corporation Street, two very important thoroughfares, were laid out. Various stop-gap water supply schemes were undertaken until finally in 1891, the Mourne scheme from Silent Valley was commenced. The railway line to Dublin was completed and the tentacles of other provincial lines reached out. Tramways were started in 1872, and by 1892 had become a widespread network. From the beginning, the city controlled its own gas and electricity undertakings. A maximum ten hour day for women and children in the textile factories was prescribed.

My name is Rosie Mullan,
I'm a doffer in the mill,
My boyfriend doesn't know it,
And I hope he never will.

The new style housing dating from this decade had two bedrooms — two very small rooms upstairs, with a living room/kitchen, scullery and a tiny yard with a water closet downstairs. The average number of children per family was eight. Half the population was under twenty years. Life expectancy was half of what it was in the rest of Ireland. The fifties and sixties taken together resulted in another great leap forward; population went from 87,000 to 175,000 coupled with an expansion of linen, which became fully mechanised, and the birth of ship building in the real sense — Edward Harland arriving from Glasgow in 1854, and two other sizable shipyards commencing later, and a new and bitter twist to sectarian fighting.

The laying of the O'Connell foundation stone, in Dublin in August 1864, was followed by an Orange incursion from Sandy Row which resulted, after weeks of rioting, in 12 deaths. From now on the damage and deaths increased, while the first successful moves were made to hem Catholics into ghettos. The fact that the numbers of Catholics in the city had climbed in 1861, to its highest proportion ever, 34%, may have been reflected in these outbursts.

The triumph of the shipyards brought marine engineering in its train; engineering of all sorts blossomed, from the heavyweights of the ships' boilers and locomotives, to the more delicate and dynamic textile engineering; even motor cars (there was a Chambers built car until 1927) and eventually aircraft. But by that time, in the 1930s, the native upright spirit of Protestant self-sufficiency, the bible ethic, was on the wane, as though the partitioning off of the Free State had affected them too, creating North and South a begging bowl Ireland that we are all too familiar with. By the mid eighties, Belfast had the biggest linen industry (collectively), the biggest single shipyard (on 300 acres and employing at one time 30,000), the biggest tobacco factory (founded in 1863 by the Co. Derry man, Tom Gallaher), and the biggest rope works (on 40 acres), in the world. Along with these blossomed hundreds of ancillary industries, vehicle building, armaments, heating and ventilating, food and drinks manufacturing. These, and other striking industrial results, were remarkable for two reasons, because, apart from native flax growing, Belfast was out in the sticks, at the end of the line, as far as raw materials and sales outlets were concerned, the enterprises themselves being owned and controlled very largely by dour unimaginative native Protestants and Presbyterians. The sectarian divide was as rigid at the top as it was at the bottom. It is extraordinary, therefore, that despite the silk cravat sectarianism of the top, and the manipulated turmoil of the back streets, industry thrived and flourished and the great palaces of commerce came to be built.

The classical headquarters of the Belfast Banking Coy. of 1845, the Ulster Club of 1863, followed by the Custom House, then the building of Donegall Place and Royal Avenue, finally crowned by the palatial City

Hall of 1906, set the seal upon the city's commercial success, while out along the Lough shores, following a line of convenient rail halts, grew their mansions and palaces, at Sydenham, Hollywood and Cultra, or closer in, upon Malone Road over to Knock and the Castlereagh Hills. St. Anne's Cathedral by Sir Thomas Drew, was commenced in 1899, and opened unfinished in 1927. Almost all of these developments were conceived and planned by the native entrepreneurs; prompting or prodding from Westminster had nothing to do with it. It was the natural result of a development whereby Belfast was now becoming an entrepôt for half of Ireland, threatening Dublin's position; an exchange point from ship to rail, with tentacles, commercial travellers and trading reaching deep into the countryside in a way that would boggle our partitionist mentality of today. Sligo, Leitrim, Cavan, Louth and the West of Ireland were within its orbit.

It is understandable in a way therefore why, from 1886 onwards, the British connection should seem so important. Commercial prosperity was indelibly linked with the vast resources of empire, an empire whose colonies and trading stations stretched from Vancouver to China. It was the age of Kipling, and of an empire on which the sun would never set. The Titanic epitomised it — the ship that was unsinkable; the ship that put to sea still with many of its deck planks stamped (underneath) *to hell with the Pope.* It is a paradox then that its decline should have commenced almost from Day One of Partition — a solution no Northerner had sought — just as the rest of Ireland, part and parcel of the same English imposed process, oscillated from tepid prosperity to decay. There is obviously more to it than an illogical line drawn by Englishmen — for strategic reasons — along ten Irish counties. It separated the industrial North from the agricultural South; it separated enterprise from caution, a caution that was mixed with an element of sloth; it enabled a jackeen government employing tens of thousands of turnip snaggers to be set up in a ducal mansion in Kildare Street, while at the same time, it condemned the nearly equal groupings of Prods and Taigues to an eyeball to eyeball confrontation reminiscent of two cats tied together and slung across a line, condemned to claw each other until one was killed.

FACE TO FACE FOR 150 YEARS

There have been in all 24 major riots in Belfast, in almost all of which the Catholics came off worst in terms of lives, property and jobs lost. Jobs lost by men in shipyards and engineering works and by girls in the linen mills, were rarely recovered and were rarely chronicled, but knocking them out of jobs set them back and kept their numbers down; rioting had the effect of keeping the Catholics very much in their place, and out of work.

Almost all riots commenced in the month of July, the Orange marching month; and were sparked usually by fiery anti-papist sermons or speeches

from Protestant churchmen to simple-minded congregations. One such cleric was Henry Cooke whose speeches sparked off the 1857 and 1864 troubles, and his contemporary Hugh "Roaring" Hanna, of Berry Street Presbyterian Church. Elections were another frequent cause of riots. Before the introduction of the secret ballot in the sixties, they were, for obvious reasons, usually fixed for July 12th.

The following is a brief note on the main outbreaks:

1813 July	The first outbreak between Orange and Green factions. Two people killed in an evening riot.
1816 Feb.	Not a religious matter; this was an outbreak termed the hunger riot, centred in North Street and Peter's Hill, as a result of which two men were hanged in the middle of Castle Place, opposite the Bank buildings; the last public hanging in Belfast.
1832 July	A day of trouble around the polling booths results in four deaths.
1835 July	In Sandy Row when Orangemen attacked the military.
1841 July	Two days of trouble on the border between Protestant Sandy Row and Catholic Pound Street.
1843 July	A pitched battle between the Pound Street boys and Sandy Row continued for seven days.
1852 July	Seven days of trouble, following an election, results in people moving home for the first time.
1857 July	An Orange mob excited by a sermon, attacked the Pound area from Sandy Row. Fighting goes on for weeks. The late Maire Comerford's grandfather was Deputy Chief Inspector of Police at this time, coming under great pressure from the Orange oligarchy because as a Catholic — although just returned from the Crimea — he was accused of Fenian sympathies.
1864 August	Prolonged and widespread trouble with twelve killed, commencing at Sandy Row, but spreading to all areas. Sparked off by the laying of the O'Connell foundation stone in Dublin. As a result of this, the partisan town police were abolished and replaced by Sir Robert Peel's recently created Irish Constabulary. (The appendage 'Royal' was added for their assistance in suppressing the Fenian rising of 1867.)
1872 August	Public processions including Orange processions, were legal again after many decades. The trouble on this occasion was caused by a Nationalist procession confronted by a loyalist crowd at Carlisle Circus led by the Rev. Hugh Hanna. Five people were killed and 243 injured

in fighting which extended for a week from the Shankill to Ballymacarrett.

1876 August — Serious riots when the police raided Shankill Road.

1878 July — Outbreak at Orange celebrations.

1880 August — A Catholic procession attacked at Boundary Street/Dover Street; two deaths.

1886 June — Prolonged trouble commences in the shipyard, spreading and continuing for many weeks, fanned by preachers Hanna, Kane and De Cobain, the latter an MP. The riots continued until mid September, with Catholics attacking the police barracks in Divis Street. Much destruction, hundreds injured and thirtytwo deaths. Four months earlier, the syphilitic Lord Randolph Churchill had made the historic declaration at the Ulster Hall in response to Gladstone's promise of Home Rule: *Ulster will fight and Ulster will be right... Shall Ulster from Britain sever, by the God who made us, never.* This is the infamous Orange Card upon which much of Britain's Irish policy rests to this day.

1893 Sept. — Riotous outbreaks in Ballymacarrett. Attacks on the few Catholics still working in the shipyards.

1898 June — Interference by Orange mobs near Bog Meadows with '98 processsion.

1907 August — Two die in four days of trouble around Divis Street — trouble which may have been sparked off by a carters' strike. Catholics attack troops and police for the first time. These were eventually withdrawn, after which there was calm.

1909 July — Orange procession attacked in Grosvenor Road; six injured.

1912 July — 2,000 Catholics driven from the shipyards, and 300 expelled permanently from the city. In September 237,000 persons throughout Ulster signed the Covenant, a number that corresponds to the stated membership of the Orange Order. In Belfast the signing was at the City Hall, led by Carson, Lord Londonderry and Protestant dignatories. Some twenty men, led by Major Fred Crawford, signed in blood from their wrists.

1920 to 1922:

1920 July to — Springtime 1922. Widespread riots in all parts of Belfast following IRA success in the South. A total of 453, including Crown forces, killed in Belfast. Serious outbreaks in Lurgan, Portadown and Derry. 11,000 Catholics driven from jobs, 500 of their shops burned, and 23,000 driven from their homes.

1932 Sept.-Oct.	Outdoor Relief Riots. These are remembered as the first riots in which poor Protestants and poor Catholics joined forces. They were quickly manipulated apart. A Protestant and a Catholic die from police bullets.
1935 May-July	Corresponding with King George V's silver jubilee and continuing sporadically until July; 12 dead and 514 Catholic families driven from their homes.

There was a period of relative calm spanning World War Two between the Orange and Green camps until 1966, when petrol bomb attacks and shootings (two killed) culminated in the outbreaks of August 1969 and subsequently. In the immediate aftermath of August 1969, a period which does not concern us here — 1,500 Catholic homes were wrecked or burned (300 Protestant homes were also lost as a result of their own scorched earth policy around Farrington Gardens) and over 60,000 Catholics were eventually forced to move. This has been described as the largest forced population movement since World War Two.

> The world hath conquered, the wind hath scattered like dust
> Alexander, Caesar, and all that shared their sway;
> Tara is grass, and behold how Troy lieth low —
> And even the English, perchance their hour will come.
> *– Padraig Mac Piarais, from the Gaelic*

REFERENCES

1 Antrim and Down, already partly settled, were excluded from the new plantation.

2 Clann d'Aodh Bhuidhe, family of the yellow haired Hugh.

3 Béal Feriste, the mouth of the Farset: It came from below Black Mountain, along the north side of Castle Place emptying into the Lagan at the ford. In the nineteenth century, like so many other streams in cities and towns before the advent of main drainage, it became an open sewer.

4 As early as 1782, on 11th July, there was a harp festival held in the old Assembly Rooms attended by ten harpers, one of them a woman, Rose Mooney. It was of that occasion that the nineteen year old Wolfe Tone wrote: *harpers again, strum, strum and be hanged!*

Not so unmusical however was Thomas Russell, the man from God knows where, who was also present, with Samuel Neilson, editor of the *Northern Star* and William Putnam McCabe, later United Irishmen all. McCabe's father, incidentally, as a respectable Belfast businessman, led opposition earlier on to Belfast having any hand or part in the slave trade.

Henry Joy McCracken and his devoted sister Mary, were in the audience, as was Edward Bunting, assistant organist at St. Anne's Church. Bunting is probably given the credit for collecting many of these old airs, while at the same time he failed to give credit to Mary McCracken who herself collected and arranged many of them (particularly in his second volume published in 1809; writing in it also part of the article on Irish musical instruments),

employing Patrick Lynch of Loughinisland to assist her. Russell at the same time had commenced to learn Irish from Lynch. How far the man may have got in that we cannot be sure since Lynch travelled as far as Castlebar on the trail of ballads. In that town he tells how, passing a brogue maker's shop, he heard a good song. *I stepped in and stood him a pot of beer.* And so the song was obtained.

Do you remember long ago, Kathleen?
When your lover whispered low,
'Shall I stay or shall I go, Kathleen?'
And you answered proudly, 'Go!
And join King James and strike a blow,
For the Green.
– *Arthur G. Geoghegan*

The July 1792 assembly of harpers in Belfast, ten years later, is better known. It was again held in the great hall of the Assembly Rooms at the foot of North Street, and was once again attended by many of the patriot party including Henry Joy McCracken and Mary, prime movers in the event. Charles Fanning was placed first with the *Coulin,* and Arthur O'Neill second, with *The Green Woods of Truagh,* forty other themes being played. Samuel Ferguson, who was born in nearby High Street, was influenced by this tradition when he came to write, decades later, the song *Ceann Dubh Dilish.*

Credit for the harp festival however, must be given to Granard in Longford, which ten years earlier had started them, subsequently holding four more up to 1785.

For his part, Bunting was assertive enough when Moore published the first volume of his *Irish Melodies.* He complained that they were stolen from his collection, which indeed was the truth, kicking up quite a dust over the matter.

Music has always fared better in Belfast than theatre (and in Derry also), although as a city and as a people they are highly dramatic. The Ulster Theatre, later on the Ulster Literary Theatre, which paralleled in period Dublin's Abbey, petered out eventually at the end of the thirties. State aid and Mary O'Malley, since World War Two, has brought a welcome revival; the restored Opera House (1980) is a portent of continuation.

5 The Northern Presbyterians ceased to be an independent liberal and positive community and became a narrow, bigotry ridden, negative community. The Presbyterian community merely became a part of England's garrison. *A History of Ireland Under the Union,* by P. S. O'Hegarty.

6 The uncle and parents of Henry Joy McCracken were responsible for founding the cotton industry, setting up the *Belfast Newsletter* and commencing the Belfast Rope Works, later to become the largest in the world.

7 Life expectancy of the hacklers, in the dust and moisture laden atmosphere was a mere fortyfive years.

8 According to tradition, Cathal O'Byrne writes in *As I Roved Out,* the old Falls Road ran from its junction at Derriaghy to the foot of High Street. Near Suffolk was Kilwee old church and graveyard. The road then led past the lane that went west to the fort of the O'Murrays, and the old church and graveyard at Lambeg. Nearer town and on the left, was the residence of Waddell Cunningham, of slave trading fame, although Belfast never involved itself in that business. Callenders Fort (from Calluragh, an old graveyard) with a church and graveyard, stood on the Glen Road on the city side of St. Teresa's. Milltown cemetery was a brickyard owned by James Ross, while the district called Andersonstown was at this time known as Whitesidestown, from the people of that name.

The present Falls Road met the old road at Maryburn Lane. A high ridge, on which the bus

depot now stands, crossed the road at this point. Lake Glen in the old days contained a lake with a crannog in the centre. Past the Industrial School, the road cut off a corner of the city cemetery, through Glenalina, over the Whiterock Road and above MacRory Park. It then made its way across the brickfields past the fort on the Forth River, through Springfield village, and on to Shankill. Passing the old church it continued down Bower's Hill and Peter's Hill to the north gate of the town at the upper end of North Street, and thence to the river. It was a natural point of arrival for poor Catholic families coming from Down and Antrim.

9 Joseph Devlin, elected 1906, was the first Catholic MP in West Belfast. Wee Joe, former manager of Kelly's Cellars in Back Lane, had a quick and ready wit, but like all who stay at Westminster, was moulded in the role of a British parliamentarian.

CHAPTER TWO

Growing Up in Belfast

When my family arrived from the country in the period before the first world war they had a shop in a mixed area around the Newtownards Road. My eldest sister May, was born there. When somewhat earlier my father arrived first as a young man, he had a variety of jobs; he was a mill hand, working the usual mill hours from six in the morning to six in the evening. Rain, sleet or shine they went, mill girls mostly, in the dark of the morning, pitter patter, the small feet upon the pavements, once the wail of the mill horn went, desperate to make it, so as to be in their place by six a.m. All carried their lunch in their pocket, and all retired in their respective groups for half an hour to eat it when mid-day came. Everyone was hollow with hunger when at last evening arrived, and they rushed home to margarine and tea, or, if they were lucky, a smoked herring. Dad (Billy to his friends), was fortunate to land a job with the Water Commissioners but that came much later and started probably as a turncock. That's what they called them in Belfast, the men who lift the covers in the footpath to turn off the water. In the riots of 1921 and 1922 he was attached to the fire brigade. He knew the cocks and hydrants to stop off, and where to turn on to increase pressure for the brigade.

Funny enough, he had the job because of his religion. As a Roman Catholic he would not be absent for days around the twelfth of July when a crisis could easily blow up, requiring someone with expert knowledge of the pumps, valves and pressures. There was always accidental fires, the result of bonfires placed too close to gable walls around King Billy's day. Although there were very few Catholics employed by the Commissioners, there had to be at least one to control the network when everyone else was celebrating. That one was dad, earnest and quiet, a man who most of the time, kept his opinions to himself. That suited us; it suited him; and it suited the Commissioners.

We had just been put out of Blackwater Street by an Orange mob at this time, and we were in Ward Street, which was a nationalist area, although we were still strangers there. I remember one day he came home in a terrible state. In his waterworks uniform it was thought he must be a spy. No Catholic was likely to have that job they said. They searched him and found a rosary beads. *Any one could carry a rosary beads,* one of the young toughs said. Then a woman from across the street shouted: *Shoot him,* and he thought his end had come. But an old man, Gavin, from MacDonald

Street approached; my father had given him some of his coats; the waterworks uniform was fine once the brass buttons were taken off, and they all had a good pair of trousers. *He is alright,* he called, *he is one of ours.* He was listened to only because his son was in the I.R.A. My father was let go, but he knew that he had his old uniforms to thank for saving him.

I was born in 1916 in a red brick street, now demolished, Blackwater Street off Grosvenor Road, going towards the Springfield Road. The streets on the left were loyalist, Protestant; the streets on the right were nationalist, Catholic. They are all gone now, but the barriers in the new estates that replaced them are more rigid than ever. There were only three Catholic families in our street; Owens (who was a policeman), Frenchs, and ourselves. Everything was quiet and neighbourly there until the heave started around June 1921. Of course there had been some shooting before that, but it was mostly I.R.A. activity out in the countryside, with raids by Specials on homes in the city. But from June it was different. There was a truce in the South and the Orangies felt threatened. Catholics were cleaned out of the shipyards and other big places of employment within days. Knocking and banging on doors in the small mixed streets began. They knew where to go. Windows were pushed in, bricks and bottles lobbed through. Usually that was enough. A family would not wait to be burned or shot out. In a street where they were a minority they took the first brick as a warning. With young children and babies in a family they could do nothing else. They would go as quietly and as quickly as they could, their Protestant neighbours usually innocent of these proceedings remaining inside, fearing even to say goodbye. Of course it had to happen on the Catholic side also, as homes had to be found in "safe" Catholics areas for their own refugees. The Protestant minority in a Catholic street did not need a thump or warnings. They could read the signs. Their homes would be needed for the expellees from across the divide. Frequently a system of exchange — done almost upon a friendly basis — was arranged. Thus were the barriers, that over half a generation had been lowered, re-erected and the political/sectarian divide maintained.

I was about six when this happened and had been attending the National School of St. Paul's on the Falls Road. We could not understand at first what was happening. All of the younger children had played together in the street, but, as the tension mounted, we found now that our mothers came more frequently to bring us in. We would be told to keep quiet, not to stray or go into the neighbouring streets, and for God's sake not to talk about anything. But what do you do when neighbours' children begin suddenly to taunt, and say, *he's a Fenian.* We could not see the reason for it and at first wondered why.

Although they were both simple terrace houses alongside the footpath, the house in Ward Street was a big comedown from Blackwater Street, which, over the years, on my dad's income, my mother had made very

comfortable. Things were topsy-turvy and overworked for many weeks. For a while we shared house with the French's; they were upstairs and we were downstairs, all of us sleeping on mattresses laid upon the floor, and rolled away in the daytime. All three families, including the policeman Owens, had been put out, so we had to share.

I was now seven, and I can remember well bringing his lunch to him at the Commissioner's headquarters in Royal Avenue. What I did not know at the time, and not for a long time after, was that my grandfather on the White side, had been a paymaster in the British Army, and my Uncle Paddy, my father's brother, went all through the world war in that army. But my father himself, while in no way a Republican, was strongly linked into the Irish tradition by his love of its music. He was a skilled violinist, not just a fiddler; Irish music, classical, operatic, came easily to him. Even still, we have put away safely, a Stradivarius that came down through his family. It was for the music that my mother married him. She was Kathleen McKane from Moira, in the Lagan Valley, but her mother's name had been Kelly, one of the great family of Kellys that gave Australia Ned and Dan, a hundred years ago. They were the sons of a man who had been transported shortly after the famine. They were driven to bushranging, eventually being surrounded at Glenrowan, and Ned being hanged. My father came from Dromore, about fifteen miles south west of Belfast in County Down, where the Kellys also had moved to; there is still a farm there belonging to us. I remember in July 1939, when I had to get out quickly from Manchester, I hitched to Glasgow, to my mother's eldest sister, Susan, a Mrs. McGlone who was married there. When she heard the story of my involvement, she said, *Well, you didn't get your Republicanism from the White side; you got it all from the Kelly's.* My father was out and out Labour. The Hibernians who used parade in country parts on St. Patrick's Day, were poison to him. His great leader was Harry Midgley, until Midgley joined the Unionists at the beginning of World War Two. He hated the British though, blaming them for promoting loyalist extremism. After we were put out of our house in Blackwater Street and installed in the inferior house in Ward Street, my Uncle Paddy, fresh from the wars, arrived in British Army uniform to the door. Now my father had not seen him for a long time. Nonetheless, he rebuked him on the doorstep. *You need not come here, not with that uniform. Come back properly dressed and you will be welcome.* That shows how he felt about the British Army in 1921.

STREET AND SCHOOL

The footpaths that time in our street were made from tiny little pickers, cobble stones, the size of your hand. The streets themselves were made from stone sets, the size of bricks, more often called paviours. As children we used to root up these pickers and throw them at the cage cars manned

by Specials and R.U.C. crawling through our streets. The bigger fellows would dig up the stone sets, sometimes digging a trench, making it impossible for the car to come into the street. Then we would bombard it with stones. I was beginning to learn for the first time something of national policies, almost the only one in my family to show an interest. It may have been the return from jail and the *Argenta* prison ship of the men who had been there. *He is an I.R.A. man,* people would say, after he passed by, so very soon they became my heroes. In my imagination I saw them in uniform winning for Ireland. The De La Salle Brothers in St. Paul's also had an influence. They were not allowed to teach Irish or history, but if we stayed back, one of them, Brother Ignatius, would tell us history stories and teach us Irish words. Then there was a Brother Louis who taught us rebel songs:

The Germans are now on the waters; they're coming to Ireland
we're told,
We have given John Bull a fair warning, beware of the Green,
White and Gold.
Three cheers for our brave rebel heroes; three cheers for young
Emmet so bold;
The harp and the shamrock for Ireland; three cheers for the
Green, White and Gold.

This would be sung at the top of our voices with some of us, in our excitement standing upon our seats.

My Aunt Susan McGlone was the first one to mention republicanism to me when, on a visit to our home in Ward Street, she told me about the Kellys. I was now eight years of age, but with shootings going on nightly in the streets around us I was eager to know more. You could talk to her but I noticed she always changed the subject when dad came in.

At this time you went to school until you reached sixth class, after which you tried for a job, any sort of dead end job at first. Like most youngsters, I was not aware of the hardship around me; I was not aware that for most people there was no dole. Live upon those who had work; get a job or starve, were the choices. Those were the stark options. Industrial Belfast was a white bread and margarine society, with a strata of socio economic C.3 hollow-cheeked men, women, and rickety children, but in that respect it was little different from other industrial cities in the western world.

Although my mother had to work hard, my father, having a steady job, left us luckier than most; we were never actually hungry. Belfast at that time was a city of jangling tram cars. There were almost no motor cars. You walked within your own network of streets, and you only took a train on an annual excursion to Portstewart or Warrenpoint. Bangor, Donaghadee and Portrush were for blue noses, the Protestants; we did not go there. There was a good deal of horse traffic; indeed that was how some people

fertilised their window boxes and tiny gardens, scooping up the dung from the streets. You could listen all day to the four wheeler iron shod traffic as it rattled over the stone sets — Wordies, the G.N.R., brewery carts and the drays of private firms. There were plenty of pony and traps in from Hannahstown, and there were even a few sturdy men who travelled saddleback only. I can remember Dr. Kennedy who called upon his patients that way. Some of us would earn a penny for minding the hitched up horse while he was inside.

In normal times the police were on foot patrol; they were well known and they knew everybody else. If you were seen kicking a ball in the street, they would take your name; they knew it without having to catch you, and you would be summoned. Playing cards on the street was also an offence likely to result in a fine. But you would know their beat, and that way you could avoid them. When thus engaged the bigger boys asked the smaller boys to keep watch for them. I remember this day I was keeping watch for a card playing group in Granville Street. I saw the police pass at the bottom of the street. *That's fine,* I thought, *they have to come down MacDonald Street,* down which I was facing. Next minute I felt two big arms around me; I was helpless. They had crept up from the opposite direction and I was caught. I found myself brought along by the hand to the barracks and charged with gambling. I hadn't been gambling at all; I had only been looking on. I decided to say nothing about it at home; if my dad heard there would be an awful row. So when the summons came, I was on the look out; I collared it and went to court, where I was lectured by the magistrate and fined half-a-crown. Of course, when the police came to collect the fine, I was not at home: I was at school. I arrived in to find my mother in tears; fined for gambling and the police after me with a warrant for my arrest. She was distraught and upset at the shame of it. She was prepared to pay it, but there were costs on top of it amounting to five shillings. While there was always enough money for food in the house, she hadn't got the five shillings, so she borrowed it from a neighbour and paid it, because, as she said, if my father got to hear about it, he would have killed me.

Of course my friends who had been gambling did not think much of me as a watch dog after that; *the looker-out fella,* they called me in fun, and for a while the name stuck to me.

That was the nature of policing in the late twenties and early thirties in the North and around Belfast. Petty fines, keeping order, serving summons, collecting statistics, watching that the pubs observed closing, preventing children playing football, pitch and toss, or cards. There was almost nothing political on either side. Even when I returned from Arbour Hill in late 1935, walking along Leeson Street, I was spoken to by this policeman, Lamont from Ballycastle. *The sooner,* says he, *they get this border fixed up and I am able to leave my gun behind like the Civic Guards, the better I will like it.*

Sure, Albert Price tells how the two police on night duty in the Loney used to come into his house in Percy Street and sit awhile and yarn by the fire. When he was brought into Chichester Street in 1939 the C.I.D. man, Brunt, came over and said: *I have sent word to your people so they can get things into you.* With that he pressed a packet of fags on him. As a youngster, the old Head Constable, McKinsey, if he saw us standing at Raffles corner, would come over and chase us home. He hated corner boys; idlers he called them. They carried the Webleys in holsters openly, but nobody minded. And when Bridie(1) was hurt as Albert also told, she was in the Musgrave Hospital with Constable Minieley popping in at night to see there was no loyalist interference. Definitely, they were only coppers then. While outbreaks occurred in September-October, 1932, at the time of the Outdoor Relief riots, and stones were thrown, the mere fact that loyalists were also involved showed that it was not sectarian. If the Northern state was to succeed it had its best chance then. But the climate changed completely after the troubles of June, July and August, 1935, when the police and B men were once again seen to be on the side of the attacking loyalists. There was an increasing polarisation after that, and more and more young people felt that the I.R.A. was their only guarantee of safety.

Ward Street where we had lived since 1921 was a totally Catholic street, but the houses were small and as things improved and the city calmed down my parents felt, after a lapse of years, that they should move to a bigger house. The larger house we chose was in a red brick terrace in Distillery Street, now totally demolished — it marks the end of the M1 into Belfast today — but at that time it was quietly residential with Dunvilles big distillery at the Donegall Road end. I was now attending St. Gaul's school on the Kashmir Road half a mile away. In a tranquil year like 1928 it was not thought significant that your house was in a street predominantly Protestant and loyalist. Your sympathies stuck out, however, in a street like that; every July each house would have its red, white and blue bunting and its flag holder, while ours would have none. However, times were quiet and no one seemed to be paying much attention. We were giving non-sectarianism another chance.

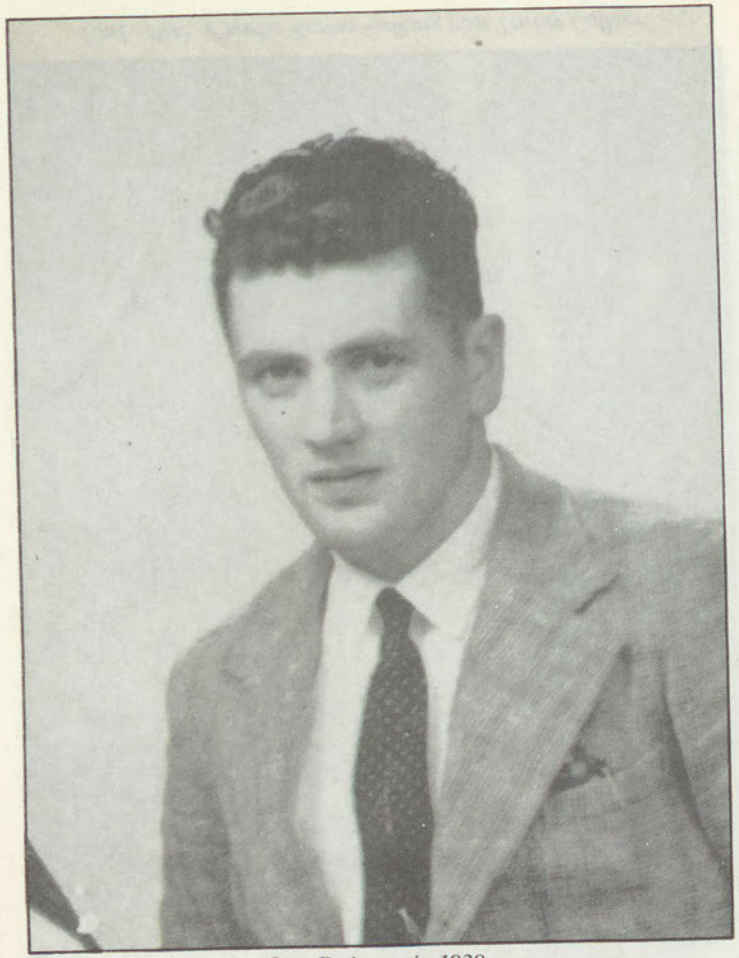
MUSIC AND HURLING

To make matters worse however, I was now in the Fianna; though we never tempted fate by wearing the uniform in the street. Indeed in Belfast we had no uniforms and a good job too. I was also in Granuailes hurling club when a fellow asked me to come to a lecture. It was a lecture on Sinn Féin given by Dan Turley. He was a good speaker and a good organiser. I attended a number of these; I was then invited into the I.R.A. Then around 1934 the police started to raid the house: it was a combination of the Pearse Hall and the music cases. The Hall was known to be Sinn Féin, while of course

guns could be carried in music cases. Jack and George, my brothers, were now playing in St. Peter's Brass and Reed band, while Jack also played in a dance band. I played in a ceilí; at home my father played his violin, while Jack played the sax and a fiddle; George played the trombone and clarinet, and I played the banjo, the accordion and the fiddle. It was a musical house. We practised as we felt like it, on our own. The sisters were equally musical; May played the melodeon, the others, while they did not practise as much as we did, could take a turn at any instrument. With a family of ten it was hard at times for my father and mother to keep going, but one sister, May, was now working as an embroiderer in Somerset's factory, from eight in the morning to six in the evening on piece work. She later married Hugh Downey, who became a Member of Parliament at Stormont and represented Labour for Dock in the early forties. I think, if I may digress, that I might have been responsible for his downfall. We had been receiving many messages from the prison in 1943 about the bad treatment in Crumlin Road. I asked Hugh Downey could he do anything about this as it was receiving no publicity. So Jack Beatty, a Protestant, read the communication in Stormont but Hugh was blamed for this as he had once been in the I.R.A. Anyway, as he represented a mixed constituency, the Unionists made sure he lost his seat next time out, and that, he used to joke, was due to listening to me.

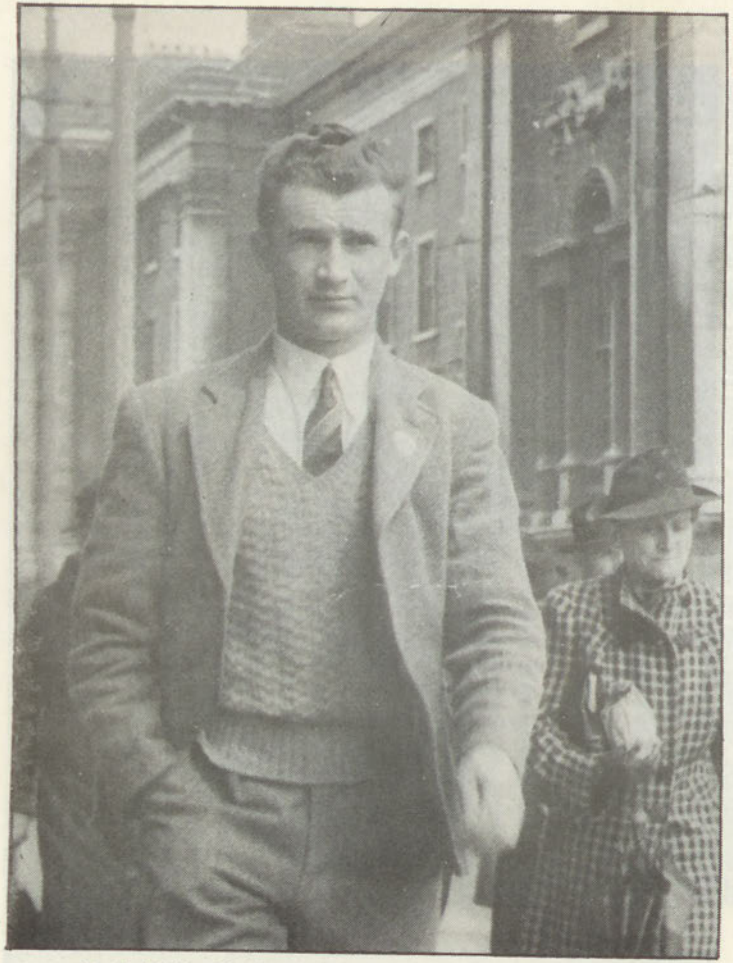
Jack was also working from the early thirties. He served his time with a Mr. Warnock at plumbing in Roden Street. It was hard for a Catholic to enter a trade, but due to my father's influence he got started. He moved up through other firms, into Christies which was a big firm. Eventually he got his license from the Water Commissioners, after which he worked for himself. Jack took no part whatever in activities, though early in the forties, when the R.U.C. were after me, they lifted him. *We have an offer for your brother,* they said. *Tell him to meet us on neutral ground, accompanied by a priest if he wishes.* The priest suggested at the time was Fr. Thompson who had once been in the I.R.A. *We are willing to give him £5,000 and a free passage to America. He must come, however, carrying no guns.* Jack communicated this offer to me. It was around 1944. I was on the run; there was no organisation, and I was desperate. But it was obviously a trap. I would be handed over to the Free State, or I would be cut down by a marksman on leaving the rendezvous. So I shrugged it off, telling Jack to let them know that I did not wish to avail of their offer.

Next in line in the family came Anna, who later married Tom Burke; she still lives in Beechmount in the Upper Falls from where she has seen many changes. I came next, starting as a messenger boy on a bicycle, then entering a film laboratory as a technician before being appointed to plumbing with Warnocks of Roden Street in 1933. The film processing interested me; even at that time it was highly mechanised, the prints passing on bulldog clips through a developer tank, then a water tank, then a hypo



Leo Duignan in 1938.

July 1941 in Dublin's O'Connell Street.
Charlie McGlade on the left with Sean McCaughey on the right.



Early 1942. Charlie Kerins walking past Trinity College.

September 10th 1942 the day after Dinny O'Brien was shot at Rathfarnham, Harry saunters down O'Connell Street, Dublin, with Crissie Dolan, later mother of Dolours and Marion Price.

tank for fixing before finally drying in a warm air tunnel. After me, Eileen, who became a nurse, worked for a while in England, returning to Belfast and eventually, like all her sisters and brothers, marrying and settling down in West Belfast.

George came after Eileen; he also went into plumbing; then Susan, who with Cathleen, the youngest, worked in a shop; then Seamus, who served his time to house painting; finally Willie who joined the Air Force. He was abroad for a while in the post war years before returning to civies in Belfast, after which he drove a truck for Lyle and Kinahan, beer, wine and spirit wholesalers. We were an example of a big family that all, somehow, got slotted into jobs; jobs that, maybe, were not wonderful, but in today's conditions that cannot happen. For most working class families in Belfast or Dublin today there is nothing facing them but the dole.

Apart from traditional singing of songs and ballads by my mother, and my dad's interest in Labour politics or Dan O'Connell, there was no overt political talk or history spoken of at home. In the charged atmosphere of the North today it is easy to see where youngsters get their Republican politics, but in the late twenties and early thirties defeat and disillusionment hung in the air.

REFERENCES

1 Bridie Dolan, later Albert Price's sister in law, was seriously injured in an explosion at a house in Leeson Street, a street of small Nationalist homes, now gone, in Belfast. It occurred in May 1938 at the home of the Brady's. Bridie had gone to move grenades. She lost both hands and the sight of her eyes. Later two soldiers from Kilroot Fort sent to move them were also injured.

Four years later her bedsitter in Ballybough, Dublin, was a toehold of refuge for the boys.

CHAPTER THREE

Touched by the Flame

In the end I was the only active Republican to emerge from our family of ten. I know that it has always surprised people that I could be so much of an out and outer, while the rest of the family to a large extent minded their own business. Not that they were completely disinterested. Blood is thicker than water, and nationalism has its own ties too. Jack, the oldest brother, and George did many turns for us, and my two sisters, Susan and Cathleen, set up the line into Crumlin Road jail from their wee shop in North Street, in the forties, a line that became such a thorn in the side of the police and prison authorities at that time. Then about 1934, shortly after I had joined the I.R.A., the R.U.C. started to raid our house in Distillery Street. Distillery Street is no longer there, but at that time it was a respectable loyalist area on the west side of the Grosvenor Road. The raid marked our house for the loyalist gangs who would eventually drive us out of the street, which is what they were probably intended to do. There was this Superintendant in charge this day. He came in and sat down while the raid progressed. Lifting a book, because he knew my father well, he read, A LIFE OF DAN O'CONNELL.

Ah, begod Billy, I see you read Dan O'Connell.

Aye, said my father, *I am a great admirer of O'Connell.*

Well, said the policeman, *so am I.*

What is all this about? asked my father then. *None of my boys have anything to do with anything.*

Well, said the Superintendant, *We are getting complaints about all these cases coming in and out of the house, at all hours and times.*

But they are music cases, said my father in astonishment.

As we all played instruments there were a lot of cases. Many a time there was a rifle or short arms inside them, but that was not for my father or the R.U.C. to know.

Away and search to your heart's content. Which they did, but of course there was an instrument in every one of them, except my father's, his was empty. He had a Stradivarius dated 1730, which he played himself, but it was not in its case.

This was the run up to the 1935 pogroms with the Ulster Protestant League ranting in the streets, and the R.U.C., assisted by the B Specials, raiding all the time. They were concentrating on homes in the exclusively nationalist areas of the Falls, and also in the mixed areas. For a Catholic

home to be raided in a street like ours that was predominantly Protestant, meant the death knell for that home that was raided. They were Fenians, and in the next pogrom, which if we had known it, was less than twelve months away, they would be burned out. Looking back on it now, I can see that it was all part of the British Government's policy of maintaining the religious divide. Their authority in Ireland rests upon supporting a Protestant community which allows itself to be used as a garrison in the North allied with a privileged section of the middle class, largely represented by supporters of the Fine Gael party, in the South. Whenever Protestants and Catholics tended to merge together in housing areas, an explosive atmosphere was deliberately generated which blew them apart. So it was in August 1969, when Catholic minorities in Rathcoole and other parts of East Belfast were sent scurrying back to their ghettos. So it was with us in 1935 in Distillery Street, when the knock came.

Funny enough, it was was mainly Jack the police stopped and searched. But there was now a fair amount of shooting going on and it was clear that sooner rather than later, there would be a trial of strength. That explains why in 1935, our company was sent to the training camp at Giles Quay. This shooting, by the way, was being indulged in largely by Glasgow Orangemen who arrived in boats. They would warm up at a weekend and then let fly indiscriminately with guns into Catholic areas. This was tolerated by the police and the government, but well dare any Fenian have the cheek to fire back. So it was arranged that around twenty of us would cycle to County Louth for a crash course with rifles and Thompson guns, practice which it would be impossible to get around Belfast. We didn't get very far I can tell you, but more about that later.

There were people, men then, whom I admired, older Republicans who probably had an influence upon me. Three that I do recall were Larry, Felix and Hugh Hennon. They had both been interned on the prison ship *Argenta.* Shortly after they were released in 1924, Hugh died.

Larry however, was a fine big man. He often came to our house in Ward Street, where he would box and trick with me. Then we lost track of him. He was now living in Dublin, we were told, but his younger brother Felix, stayed on in Belfast, he was my company OC. Then in August 1939, four years later, when I was being conveyed from Offaly to Dublin as a Free State prisoner, I met Larry again. In a special bus used for the occasion, a sergeant of the guards came over to me. *Who is in charge?* I asked. *Superintendent Hennon,* he replied. *Sure, you might know him, he is from Belfast.* So in the bus, conveying us to Mountjoy, I moved over and spoke to him. He looked at me blankly. *You don't know me,* I said. *No,* said he, *indeed not.* Then pausing a moment, I said, *Do you remember Ward Street? What about it?,* he queried, as remembrance flickered back. *Well in Ward Street you were many times in our house, and before you were interned on the prison ship, you often nursed me on your knee. Did I indeed,* and his face went

white. I returned to my seat and we never had a word together after that.

THE RELIEF RIOTS

Politics inevitably made themselves felt early on in a practical way, there was such widespread unemployment. There were relief works which kept skin and bone together, but these were only for married men who were paid twelve, sixteen or twentyfour shillings per week, depending on the number of children in the family. To spread this meagre sum around they were allowed only three days work in any week. This gave rise to the ODR riots; the outdoor relief riots of October 1932. They were the first political baptism of fire for a lot of us, and it was the frustration that arose from that, that consolidated the I.R.A. I do not say that it drove us into it because we were in it already. Catholic and Protestant, for a week and a half that they lasted, stood shoulder to shoulder.

The Falls men gathered and marched from Clonard Street on Tuesday night, 5th October, to where the Workhouse was — the City Hospital now occupies the site — on the Lisburn Road. We sat on the road to stop the trams. It was arranged that three hundred of us would sign themselves in as destitute, but only some got in. Before this we had dug up the paving stones and trenched streets in our own area.

The following Tuesday, it was arranged that four marches would converge on the Workhouse. Both Protestants and Catholics were now involved. I was in Clonard Street, on the Tuesday morning, but so were the R.U.C., and in massive strength. They threatened us at first and then attacked us with batons. We ended up by marching however, and headed down the Falls; but some broke away and fighting commenced. The R.U.C. then started shooting. One man was killed and quite a lot were wounded. I was not conscious of the shooting as we were behind the police, having come up the Grosvenor Road. There were a lot of B Specials among them. Naturally when we became aware we were being shot at, there was a right scattering match. Near Derby Street, a man was shot in the back. The blood spread like an oil stain on the old dexter coat he was wearing. Albert Price tells how Jimmy Ward was standing on top of a bin, firing with an old Martini rifle from Raglan Street. Every time he fired it, the recoil threw him off the bin. A big cheer would go up nonetheless. At the top of Agnes Street, the Inspector of Police read a proclamation and drew his sword, introducing martial law. The crowd had just wrecked a jeweller's shop, and I remember his coming to the front and reading from a document. Somebody said then: *When he pulls the sword, that's martial law.* Well, he drew his sword, and we were so impressed by this ceremony, that everybody scattered.(1) The coppers with their batons moved in then and cleared the street.

I remember another incident; a fellow called Donald McNaughton, went

and lifted a stone to throw at the cops, they fired and hit him on the hand, whereupon he fell. Immediately he cried: *Don't tell the auld woman.* While others, taking his wound as serious, and thinking he was killed, called out: *Remember McNaughton.* John Davey, who worked in Greenes garage got hit, while wee Tansey Burns received a bullet in the back. Albert Price was among those who marched to the Workhouse on the Lisburn Road but was not among those who signed in, as he was working for Jimmy McGrogan at the time. When he turned up the next day McGrogan said: *You're sacked,* but he did not sack him. *I was doing it for the workers,* Albert said. He had gone over to Sandy Row where there was a big shop, Hewitts furniture, suitings and shoes. They wrecked the windows, everyone helping themselves; he took a pair of boots, but he realised on the way home he could not go into the house with them. His auld fella would not tolerate anything like that, so he gave them away, but the man he gave them to came after him complaining that they were two left feet. None of us were mobilised for the O.D.R., nor was the I.R.A. behind it. Afterwards the R.U.C. lit upon anyone who was prominent, making them take down the barricades and fill in the holes. They rubbed their noses in it.

When it was over extra relief was announced, but it was relief with a purpose; they were going to concrete over the streets so that it could not happen again. During the riots we had trenched the streets and hurled the pickers at the peelers in the armoured cars. So this was their response. First they had the relief men lift with spades and picks the stone sets; they then brought them by wheelbarrow to one end of the street where they lay in a large pile awaiting the steam crusher. It made quite a din for days, but eventually enough stone was crushed to enable them to bring in sand and bags of cement in horse carts to commence concreting. As the men had no skills whatever and were under-nourished and hungry, the labour force was augmented with numbers of gangers and foremen.

There are many humourous stories about what went on. One of these concerned the Protestant foreman who was said to have been nearly arrested for illegal drilling in our street. Now you must first understand that this digging was being done by half-starved men who could hardly drive their shovels into the hard sub-soil under the sets. A policeman this day was said to have observed the foreman line up his men on one side of the street, mark time a dozen times, and then proceed in formation across the street, where the foreman immediately called halt. *What is this?* said the peeler; *Why have you got them marching? Well, it is like this,* said the foreman, *when I get them to do it this way, they lift more on their boots than they can lift on the shovels.*

They were poorly attired for the work; nor were there any special handouts, raincoats or footwear; even their cracked and thinly soled boots were letting in.

Harry Midgley was prominent at that time. He was a lively speaker and

well thought of on both sides. I remember being on a hunger march, Protestants and Catholics together, across the Queen's Bridge to Ballymacarrett. Harry was up in front. *I suppose*, he yelled as he mounted a dray cart that was being used as his platform, *that if I placed a loaf of bread at one side of this bridge and stuck a Union Jack at the other, there would be some among ye idiots enough to run over after the Union Jack.* We cheered him to the echo.

We did something then that the Brits would not let you do now. We marched from the Falls and Shankill across the centre of the city, picking up people from the Markets area, and ending up on the border between Catholic and loyalist zones at Ballymacarrett.

PARENTAL CONTROL

We were still in Distillery Street in 1932 for the year of the Eucharistic Congress in Dublin. We made no noise, of course, nor did we hang out flags. There were only three other Catholic families in the street, the Weldons, McConkeys and McDermotts, and we did not want to cause offence. We used to satisfy our curiosity instead by crossing the half mile to Leeson Street, where in all the little streets of that district there were lines of blue and white bunting and thousands of papal flags. Every street had an altar; some had two or three. In the Loney, Albert Price's village, which was strong Joe Devlin country, they had dwarf palm trees planted in barrels in the street. They had dozens of street altars also, each group of householders vying with the other in plaster statues, flowers, decorations and leafy garlands. Each evening, for the week that the Congress lasted the rosary was said publicly. It was a religious occasion. No one on the Catholic side thought of making it political, but religion or politics are highly combustible commodities in Belfast. Distillery Street, to which we would return, being loyalist, had no papal flags. There were a few Union Jacks, however, just to remind us who was top dog.

We remained in Distillery Street throughout the riots of June, July and August 1935 while I languished in Arbour Hill. The fact that I was arrested, and my name and address published by the Free State — insensitively as usual — did not help my family. They were cringing with fear that the knock or the stones might come flying. As it happened I was home before that occurred and able to give a hand with our third and final flit to an unfinished house in Andersonstown. Albert Price tells a story, which I don't remember, that when the Orangies came to get us I poured down acid from an upstairs window, and the fellow upon whom it fell still carries a bald patch. It must be true since Albert says he still knows him.

The Volunteers were not encouraged to be out of Belfast during the Congress period. Despite the pageantry in nationalist areas it was a time of tension also. The only difference between you and sudden attack was the

fifty yards that separated the two sides of the Grosvenor or the Shankill from the rest. An attack could come at any time, and with a gas main into every house, there could be a hundred in flames within an hour. That is the sort of powder keg we lived with.

Although I was now eighteen, I had to be at home before nine o'clock, as had the girls. We had a real respect for our father. If you were not in on time he would be waiting for you. If we did anything wrong he just unslung his belt and gave it to us. My mother controlled us in a quieter way; she would never lift her hand to you. It was only later we realised how hard she worked; baking bread, since no bakers bread came into our home; washing, mending, minding the house and guiding each one of us. On her feet all day, she was last to bed at night.

There was not what you might call a religious atmosphere in the house but everyone automatically and without question attended to their duties, regular confession and communion, and, of course, Mass on Sunday. While I was at school I was for years in the choir of Clonard Monastery until my voice broke. I was present for all the sung Masses and devotions. Later all the boys were in the confraternity, while the girls were in the Children of Mary.

There were no newspapers or periodicals in our home. At that time working people did not buy daily newspapers, neither morning nor evening. Apart from having to exist on low wages or dole, there was not the interest as seemingly there is now, in hearing instantly of events on radio or in the press. We got *The Irish Weekly,* which gave a summary of the news events, articles and competitions. We got *Ireland's Saturday Night,* the sporting paper. We took *Ireland's Own, Our Boys* and some of the religious journals. *An t-Oglach,* a small printed clandestine monthly appeared but it was advisable not to have it about you. We were a musical family, and musical families are not bookish. If we played outside, it would be for string money; admission into a ceilí or concert was three (old) pence. You played for them and, if you broke a string on a fiddle or banjo, you were compensated with a few pence. You might get a shilling, that would buy a string or two, for your night.

The ceilís were held in the Árd Scoil or the Pearse Hall; the latter being Republican controlled, you were less likely to receive payment. In the Árd Scoil you had to behave yourself; in the Pearse Hall you grabbed hold of the bird. We used to drill there too, forming fours and marching, while the peelers made notes from across the street. Cumann na mBan stored first aid kit there. They rarely wore their brown uniforms, but their badge, yes, with C. na mB. emblazoned on it. As it looked like one word we sometimes called them the Cnabs, or more vulgarly 'Come and get your man'. There were some great characters in it, May Laverty, Vera Burke, Sally Devlin, the Dolans. Also there was Winnie McGuinness, who married Bobbie Hope, a house painter, and who claimed descent from Jimmy Hope of

Templepatrick. The men in that family are always Harry, Bobbie or Jimmy.

The football club, Granuailes, with whom I played, also ran ceilís at Crown Entry which was famed from Henry Joy's day, but it was bombed out in 1941.

Living in a loyalist area like Distillery Street had its advantages. There was this night when I was returning from a ceilí in the Falls with two other lads, Paddy Boyle and another lad whose name I cannot now recall. They asked me to carry a Lee Enfield rifle in my music case. Just as we were coming up Milford Street, these two policemen stepped out in front of us. Like all of the R.U.C. they were armed. *Where are you coming from? From a dance,* said I. You would never say ceilí to a policeman. *Where do you live,* then he asked. *Distillery Street. Look son, run on home, this is no district for you to be in.* Then turning to Paddy Boyle: *Open up that case,* he said, brusquely, and they went over him thoroughly. Meanwhile I walked home thankfully towards Distillery Street, the rifle still inside my case. I did many silly things when I was young, but one thing I never would do was wear an emblem. Once you wore an Easter Lily you were marked. Going to and from Pearse Hall, you would be noted and eventually raids upon your home would follow. That explains why they started to raid our house. My connection with the Pearse Hall had been noted. It was not Jack or George they were after, it was me. The family did not know how I stood, that I was in the I.R.A., until I was arrested in County Louth in 1935.

Then they knew they had a black sheep on their hands.

FOOTBALL AND BOXING

For hurling and football we played at Corrigan Park and Falls Park, which was nearer. There was another gaelic pitch, MacRory Park, called after the Cardinal at Whiterock Road, and one out in the middle of the country at Hannahstown to which we used to walk. At that time no matter where they were, you walked it. You had no money for tram fares, and bicycles were not used much in Belfast. Falls being a public park, you were not allowed to play there on a Sunday. There were three or four pitches in each of these parks, with matches going on until late in the evening in summer. I played both hurling and gaelic; I had no particular preference, one over the other. Even if I say it myself, I was however, fairly handy at both.

The first big ceilí ever organised was run by Frank Kane in the Ulster Hall. There was trouble in the city at the time; some were saying we would have to cancel it, but Kane was determined not to. We ran it and it was a huge success. I had no problem finding a girl. I did not need one as I was in the band, seven or eight of us belting out as loudly as we could, there being no amplification those days. Frank was a barber and a great organiser. He stirred us into fixing up a hall near North Queen Street. It was quite large

and we made a good job of it, getting crowds at the ceilís, but then Frank, who was never strong, died, and we did not have the same heart in it after.

Belfast at that time had more hurling and gaelic clubs than any place I knew of. Their very existence formed the backbone of the I.R.A. Our battalion staff always had a shadow battalion staff, and on that was Jim Johnston, chairman of the South Antrim Board G.A.A. and another chap, Sean Carmichael. I remember taking a message to a house and being surprised to find them there, as I never knew they had any connection with the I.R.A. Other prominent young Republicans who were G.A.A. players were Dominic Adams, both a footballer and hurler; Frank O'Kane and another chap called Tod, hurlers, they played hurling for Sarsfields, a team in Leeson Street. George Nash, another hurler, in the early thirties was O.C. Belfast, and was also busy on the South Antrim Board, frequently acting as a referee. A small man, living off Leeson Street, he was looked up to in the neighbourhood as an example of republicanism. Paddy Nash, a brother, was O.C. of a company in Leeson Street, while Mary Nash, his daughter, did time in Armagh. The activities of the Nash family went back to 1920. He was followed on the battalion staff by Davy Matthews; he was tall, gaunt and always seemed to be looking down upon you, a brother of Hughie of Albert Street. Davy was very much in the Padraic Pearse tradition of Republicanism; when he gave talks on history, which he frequently did, he could make you cry.

Hurling and gaelic were popular then because the thousands of youngsters had no other outlet, though you dared not walk the streets carrying hurleys, that would bring the police on top of you. There was very little soccer, TV and big business has popularised soccer now almost to the exclusion of everything else, but in our day in the little streets and confined places you would kick a rag ball or hurl, and if it was too wet you could enter a dusty hall and put in a stint at boxing.

At that time no one having any money, there was no other indoor sport. Groups of streets formed a club together. Many of the young lads therefore would be sparring and fighting from an early age. Pat McAllister, I think he contended the world welterweight, had come back from the States. He gave us training. Some of us fought a few inter-club fights; but after 1935 I was too involved in the Army to fight anymore. I think the only professional match I ever had was when Pat McAllister used to have a boxing booth. If some boxer did not turn up, he would be looking for a substitute. They were short of a fighter this night that I turned up so he asked me. I fought for three rounds and I got four pence for it. I found I was up against a right hard scrapper. I nearly got killed. There is a tradition of boxing in the Catholic areas of Belfast and Derry; at that time it was the only cheap form of recreation. Others who reached the world class from Belfast were Jack Garland who fought the coloured American Al Brown, and Rinty Monaghan, who beat Merino and won the world title; Boyo

Begley, an uncle of Adams, and Jack McCusker. McCusker taught Johnny Caldwell who went on to win a silver medal in the 1956 Melbourne Olympics and later reached the world championship. Albert Price beat him on one occasion. Then there was my old coach Pat McAllister, a great old character, who in between times sold embrocation on the Custom House steps, but he would fight anything. He never made a shilling out of it, ending up a doorman in the Broadway Cinema.

CONFRONTATION

We had occasional short arms drill firing at targets in the countryside around Hannahstown. The O.C. would allow six or ten shots each and that was the extent of our practice over six months. For more extended gunnery training with rifle or machine gun, it was hoped to use the Free State: in the first two years of the De Valera regime it was safe. The principal meeting place in Belfast continued to be the Pearse Hall, where our football team, the McKelveys, which replaced the Granuailes, was based. Often I would go in there and look up the line-out and composition of the team only to find there were gaps — some of the lads had been arrested; they were replaced by that well-known chap A. N. Other. Nearly all of my friends were processed through the companies of the I.R.A., though strangely enough I did not run into many of them afterwards. Once in it, however, you were expected to stay in; you were not supposed to leave it.

My boyish ear still clung to hear
Of Erin's pride of yore,
Ere Norman foot had dared pollute
Her independent shore;
Of chiefs, long dead, who rose to head
Some gallant patriot few
'Till all on earth my aim became
To strike one blow for you, dear land —
To strike one blow for you.

You lived within your little world and you thought everywhere else was the same. If people wore shamrock and a small golden harp on St. Patrick's Day, you would conclude that all over the world they did the same. Certainly when I was a younger age I thought that on that day they must be wearing golden harps all over Belfast. No wonder then at the age of eight I found myself wandering along this loyalist street. The next thing I knew, I got a couple of clatters, just for wearing the shamrock. Of course shamrock was a nationalist emblem, an identity of who we were. It merged with Hibernianism which we did not like, and with Joe Devlin. While we lived in Ward Street in the mid twenties, Joe ran annually a free excursion, a kind

of benefit to keep himself in the local limelight and maintain his popularity. The excursion would consist of a bus trip to Bangor or Carrickfergus, with tea and buns afterwards. Anyway this year everyone in Ward Street was going on Joe Devlin's excursion. I was only a youngster and I resolved to go too. But when I went and told my father I was going he grew angry, clipped me about the ear, and scolded, *You are going on no Joe Devlin excursion.* That was the first time I learned that Joe Devlin was not popular with him. He was a fine speaker, though I never liked him. Over in the Loney where Albert lived he was well liked, and the Price family were all strong followers. Once in 1933, when Albert stood near Raffles waving a tricolour, his sisters stormed over and tried to snatch it from him. They were carrying a Devlin flag, green with a golden harp. They were almost as much opposed to the tricolour as they were to the Union Jack. I remember in November, 1933, there were elections in Belfast Central. I was a personation agent in the booth in Milford Street school, in the heart of the Falls, on behalf of the abstentionist Republican candidate, Art Thornberry. He was completely an I.R.A. candidate. Along with Sandy McNabb, Joe McGurk and Charlie Leddy, he was on the battalion staff. We scarcely knew them, and if we had met them in the street, we felt such respect for them that we nearly would salute them. Thornberry on that occasion was beaten by Devlin, but he was far from disgraced, receiving five thousand votes. You will not believe this but, when we were coming out on the night of the count, the police had to protect us from the mob. The Hibernians were there in hundreds and were for beating the brains out of us, calling us everything under the sun. Devlin died two months after that and his entire movement faded with him. Two years earlier in 1932, when De Valera was elected in the south, there was great excitement, the news being conveyed by bulbs on to the front of the Telegraph building in Royal Avenue. People came in throngs to watch in the final hours, *A Republic will be declared,* they said. Some of them were for marching up the Shankill there and then, which would not have done at all, so we contented ourselves by cheering, whistling and singing songs. We were excited because many of the lads had gone from Belfast to help in his election and we saw his victory as one up for us. But my father was unmoved by all this; he was Labour and he was not going to change.

When the Republican Congress was formed in Dublin after March 1934, we were informed by our staff in Belfast. We were called to St. Patrick's Hall and given the story, slanted maybe, of what had occurred, that it was a group who were intent on going political, like De Valera, and we were warned off participating with them. We were asked then to give an undertaking. We could give it or we could walk off. Most of us gave the undertaking willingly. The same was true of the Spanish Civil War after it broke out in 1936. Quite a few of the Belfast lads went there, but we were told we had a job to do at home, and that was our place. I did not take much notice of it myself.(2)

Mick Price came to Belfast in the earlier years. I remember him quite well on a parade in the fields around Hannahstown. There was talk later on there might be a rising; we were all placed on standby and told stay away from home. But after a week nothing happened; we could go home again. Rearmament was starting in England from 1935 onwards, so a number of our lads, having nothing else, started to drift away, drifting away to England looking for work. But before we drifted the old sectarian trouble started again. It had ended we thought in 1922, with nothing like it recurring in twelve years. But the scent of it in the ravings of the Ulster Protestant League was around, and in June 1935 it broke. Everyone was mobilised and assigned to certain houses. The vulnerable areas were the Short Strand, North Queen Street and the New Lodge Road. I remember being given short arms to bring to North Queen Street to Jimmy Steele. I was working now as a plumber, and plumbers at that time carried their tools rolled in a bag on their shoulder. That facilitated carrying guns as well. Jimmy was a prominent figure in his area; the whole family were Republican, although the only other one that I knew well was his brother Bill. The trouble started first with an Orange procession in York Street, but it quickly spread. Dickie Dunne was in Lancaster Street looking down upon York Street. He had a .303 rifle, a great rarity in Belfast, but he could not get a shot. Finally an orange cat walked out, so he shot that. Immediately a fat woman ran over, picked up the cat, shouting imprecations back at the Fenians. So he let fly a shot at her, and that sent her scurrying. 1935 was the first time that we used Thompson guns in Belfast. They made such a racket they sent the police flying. I was however, not involved in any fighting myself. I was on picket duty only, part of a squad of six or seven.

We remained within our own areas around Leeson Street and the Falls. We had to watch in case there would be an attack from across the Grosvenor Road. At night I used to get an escort home to Distillery Street on the loyalist side of the road, in which there were only two other Catholic families. We had already been told to get out because we had been raided by the police a number of times. But in July I was sent to camp in Co. Louth, following which I heard nothing.

TAR AND FEATHERS

Tarring and feathering was the traditional way for the organisation to bring shame upon youths and people who misbehaved within the ranks or in the community. Standing armies, like the Free State, have their glasshouses and their courtmartials. There is far more crime committed within them than the public are ever allowed to hear of. The monster killings in recent years in England have all been British Army, since armies by their nature must net in a proportion of psychopaths.

In Belfast, from the middle thirties onwards, there would be two or three cases a year to be dealt with. One unusual case was the tarring of two men outside St. Paul's Church in August 1935. I do not know what that was for — anyway I was in jail at the time — but being chained in a public place was an essential part of the ritual, as you had to make the disgrace known among the neighbourhood. The process was that the fellow was chained to railings, real tar being used, poured from over the head, with a pillow case of feathers shook over him then, followed with a placard with his misdemeanor on it clamped around his neck. It was usually a Sunday morning affair, so that the entire congregation would find him. I think it was more a disgrace and more effective than knee capping. It could happen for quite trivial things. Afterwards they would have to spend days in hospital being cleaned. Some of them we never saw again. I remember one funny incident however. There was this fellow, Paddy, in the Fianna. He had collected money in December to purchase a wreath commemorating Rory, Liam, Dick and Joe. He must have used the money improperly because he found himself without a wreath, so what better than to take one from a fresh grave and offer it to the committee instead. But he was observed and reported to the Fianna. So Paddy was tarred and feathered for disgracing the Republican Army. There was another lad also that I remember, Chuck; and he was wearing a new trench coat the night he was done. *Shoot me,* he cried, *but don't ruin my coat.* A good lad, he was allowed back into the Army afterwards. I was involved in only one such operation and I can tell you, you would not wear your best shoes or your best suit of clothes. You wore something that you could burn afterwards.

REFERENCES

1 On the 3rd of February 1889, D.I. Martin of the R.I.C. drew his sword in a similar gesture at Gweedore chapel, Donegal. His adversary on that occasion was the renowned An tAthair Séamus Mac Phaidin. The congregation, gathered after Mass, mistook the action, gathered around the Inspector, and killed him.

2 Albert Price tells how he was in Birmingham shortly after the start of the war. He himself and a number of other Belfast men put their names down for the International Brigade but they heard no more of it. There were a few Belfast men who wished to fight for Franco, and there was an ex Free State Army man who was recruiting for O'Duffy.

CHAPTER FOUR

In a Free State Jail

Every young nationalist in the North was sure that De Valera was on our side. I was not intoxicated that way myself but there were Republicans who would come to blows with you if you expressed the slightest doubt. Some saw him as an I.R.A. man, which he never was, while others told you about the two times he had been arrested for entering the North. Almost everyone believed that sometime very soon he would produce a plan that would unify Ireland once again. Therefore it was thought that the harassment of the I.R.A. in the South, which had recommenced in 1935 after being switched low for three years following the departure of Cosgrave, was just a ploy; all part of the tactics. There was considerable resentment among some Republicans at our official organ, *An Phoblacht,* reacting in bitter terms against this. Could they not see that this was all part of De Valera's tactics to fool the British? He was on our side, and eventually even the two armies might merge. Shades of 1922 when Northerners were fooled into joining the Free State Army, I thought, but for many people, now that De Valera was on our side, sure the whole Free State government, the police and their army was on our side too. Amazingly, people cannot differentiate between policies one day and policies another day; that while it may suit a police force to look the other way for a while, once they are directed to round up they will round up, their courts will imprison and their screws will screw you down.

It was not in that mood that we departed from Belfast on a Saturday early in June 1935 for Co. Louth. We were going to the Free State where the tricolour flew and where they sang the Soldiers' Song. We were going to a training camp where we would get target practice with rifles to leave us in a better position to meet the black police and the B Specials. We would be in a camp with other I.R.A. men, in bell tents by the sea. The thought that we could end up being arrested never crossed our minds. We travelled on bikes by the main road through Banbridge and Newry. It was the beginning of the July holiday so there was nothing unusual about that. For most of us it was our first time doing a long trip by bicycle, so the sixty miles took us the best part of the day. There were fourteen of us — not all travelling together — and we met around fifty others when we arrived at Giles Quay, six miles from Dundalk, on the south side of the Cooley peninsula.

We arrived at nightfall, and they raided us on Sunday morning, so I hardly got seeing the place. But the fact that there was a good deal of rifle

practice going on and that it was not concealed was bound to bring on a raid. I would say it was a policy decision taken at the highest level in Dublin to crack down on us. The Military Tribunal (1) had been functioning since the year before; there were now about sixty Republicans in Arbour Hill prison, so a move against the training camps should not have come as a surprise.

Our O.C., who had accompanied us from Belfast, was Charlie Leddy, brother of Dr. Farrell Leddy, both of whom were from North Antrim. Although their father was an Inspector in the R.U.C. they were in the I.R.A. I don't know how they came to terms with the situation. He could not but have known, because three years earlier Farrell had got a month for drilling at Carnlough. Farrell went to England later, and was useful to me in 1939. He reared a great family, very Irish, some of them appeared singing on TV shows as the Leddy Sisters.

Some died by the wayside,
Some died mid the stranger,
And wise men have told us
Their cause was a failure,
But they loved dear old Ireland
And never feared danger
Glory O, Glory O to the bold Fenian men
– *Peadar Kearney*

It was early on Sunday that the Guards struck. Accompanied by cars, with non-uniformed Branch men — Broy Harriers they were called at that time in the Free State — they lined us all up. They then walked along the line saying at random, *you, you and you, fall out.* They were not going to arrest everybody; that would overburden the system. They were content with a dozen, all of them the Belfast men. Over in Omeath there were more Belfast men, ostensibly on holiday, including Micky Traynor of the battalion staff, Albert Price and a few more. The weather was bad, and they had retired to a hut. It was evening time when they heard the lads had been arrested. We were held a night in the barracks in Ann Street in the centre of Dundalk while a noisy demonstration went on outside. Forty local men who had been at the camp, invaded the town. Joined by others they made as much noise as possible. They were shocked by the unexpected turn of events.

The next day, Monday, we were conveyed to the basement cells of Mountjoy. I remember the feeling of emptiness I felt on being pushed in there and hearing the heavy door clang behind me for the first time. Well, this is it, I thought as I took in the small semi subterranean cell. The only lift I got was hearing a warder humming outside, of all things, Kevin Barry. Between listening to the pacing of the warder and trying to figure out

all the scribbles on the walls, time passed until dark. Then I threw myself down on the bed.

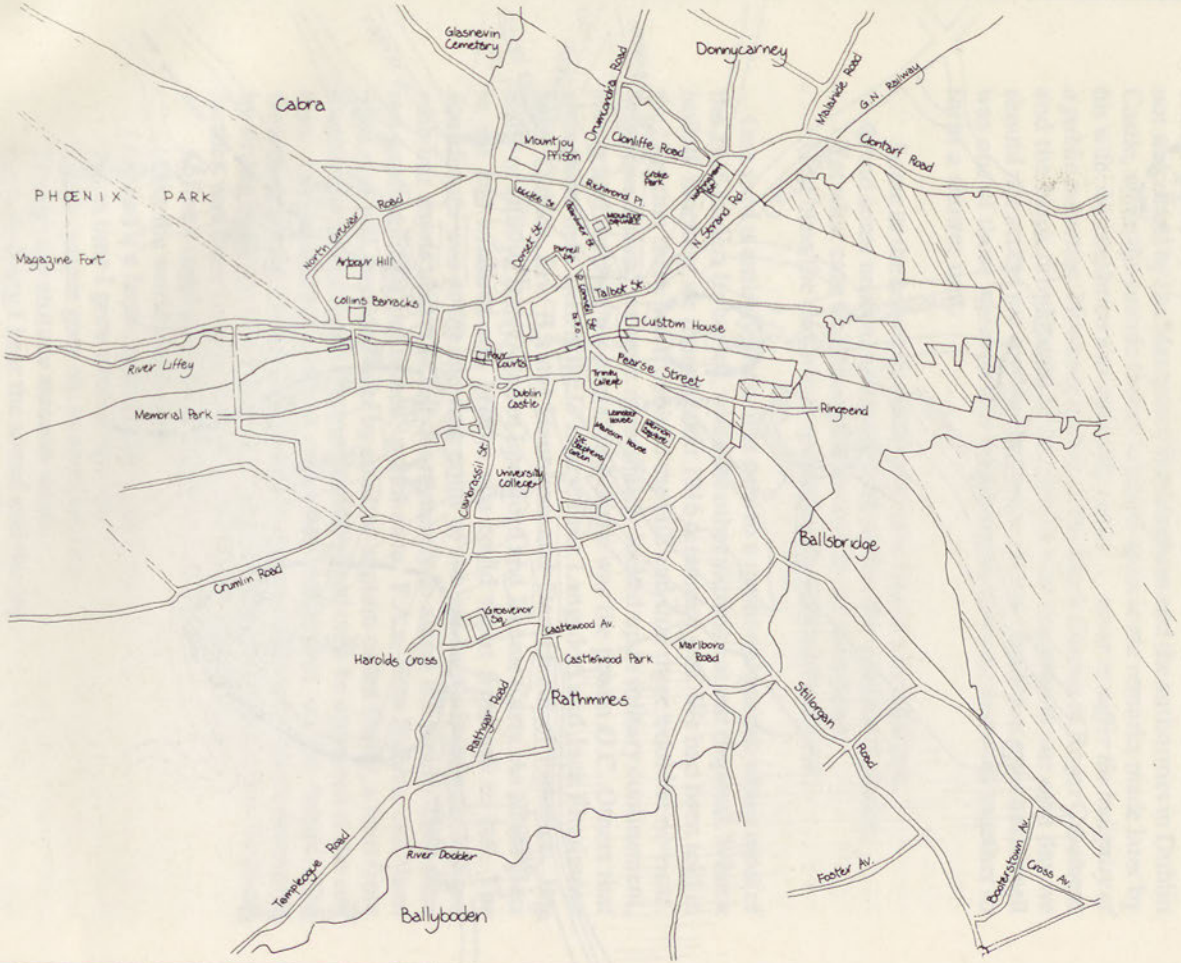
ARBOUR HILL

Just before I came away I had been considering, like a lot more, going to England for work. My father would not hear of it. *Haven't you bed and food here?* But I resolved to go, and I pawned my banjo to help buy a ticket. To protect my father's job, and particularly our address, now that I had landed in jail, I gave them the name John Brown, without supplying any address. Whether they came upon a record at the camp, the R.U.C. found out anyway and called to inform my mother. It may have been the pawn ticket which I still had, and which I later gave to Mrs. Murphy of the prisoners' dependants fund when she called upon a visit. She recovered the banjo and held it until my release. These visits took place while we were on remand in D Wing of Mountjoy; the organisation did not allow visits after sentence to Arbour Hill because of the rows then occurring there.

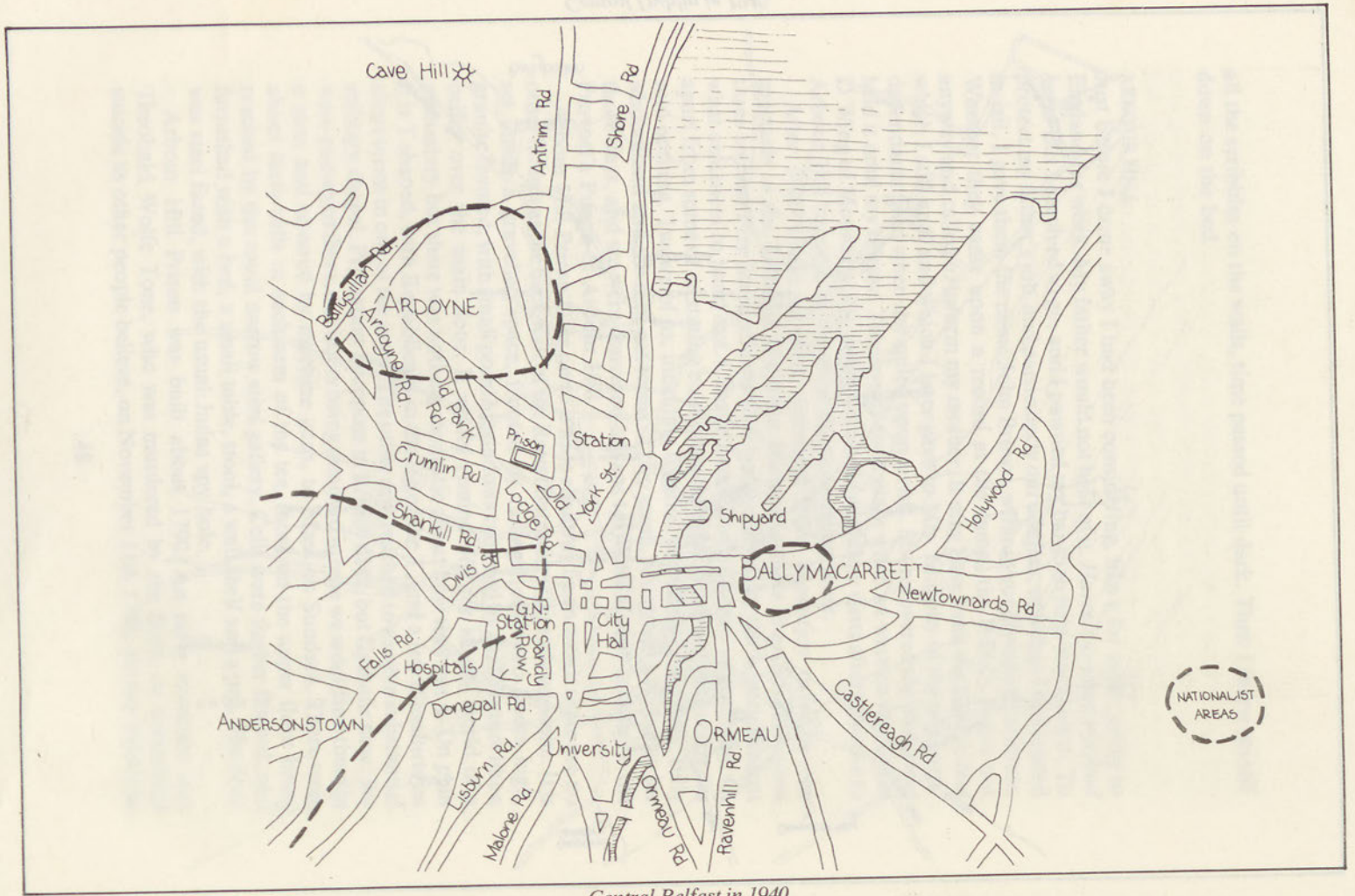
After four weeks we were conveyed from Mountjoy to enjoy the spectacle of the Tribunal at Collins Barracks, where in an upstairs room three solemn Free State officers were being advised by the Superintendent what sentences to hand out. Charlie Leddy had told us to say nothing; so, apart from some of us stating boldly that we did not recognise the court, we said nothing. Twelve of us, including Charlie, myself, Bobbie Hicks, Billy Mulholland and the rest, got terms of two years, which was a bit heavy for those days, and we were conveyed in vans to Wolfe Tone's bastille — the Provost's Prison of Arbour Hill.

Arbour Hill Prison faces on to a wide roadway upon which there are no other houses as the back wall of the Royal Barracks is directly opposite. It is set inside a gravelled space, fronted by railings, only two floors high, granite fronted, with small pointed windows crowned by a tall feature like a belfry over the main door. It would remind one for all the world of a monastery but there was nothing monastic about how they ran it. On plan it is T shaped, with Republicans in the leg of the T, and a few Blueshirts on short terms in one of the arms. The other arm reached towards a substantial military chapel, Protestant I suppose in British days, but Catholic now. We were conveyed there, our boots being removed in case we would use them in a row, and covered by machine guns, to Mass on Sundays. There were about forty cells in each arm of the tee, those on the upper floor being reached by the usual narrow steel gallery. Cells were timber floored, and furnished with a bed, a small table, stool, a wall shelf and a pot. The door was steel faced, with the usual Judas spy hole.

Arbour Hill Prison was built about 1790. An early occupant was Theobald Wolfe Tone, who was murdered by the Brits, or committed suicide as other people believe, on November 11th 1798, the day before he



Central Dublin in 1940



Central Belfast in 1940

was to be publicly hanged, lingering on until the 19th. The murder theory rests upon the fact that he was likely to obtain *habeas corpus* through a last minute effort by his friend, Philpot Curran and Peter Burrowes, an effort not welcomed by the Marquis of Buckingham and the authorities in Dublin Castle, while the suicide theory is based upon some remarks made later by his wife: *his resolution was inflexibly taken . . . never to suffer the indignity of a public execution.* However in view of the Black Diaries of Roger Casement and the black propaganda of the British war machine in our own day we should not accept too readily the suicide theory. Tradition says that his cell was one of those which at this time was part of a pair knocked together to form a shower unit.

Some in the convict's dreary cell have found a living tomb,
And some unseen, unfriended fell within the dungeon's gloom;
Yet what care we although it be trod by an alien band,
God bless the clay where rest today the felons of our land.

One yard is entirely given over now to a memorial garden where most of the 1916 leaders lie buried, while the other yard was at our disposal. What a hollow mockery we thought that 1916 ceremony was. We had been told in the 'Joy that there was trouble in the Hill and that there would be no visits. When we arrived we were immediately locked up in solitary confinement, seeing and meeting no one. Con Lehane was the prison O.C. Others that were there then were Mike O'Leary, Fritz Langsdorf and Jack Fitzsimons from Dublin, Eric (Lanty) Hannigan and Dan Quaid of Limerick, Jim Kelly of Offaly, Tom Quinn of Longford and Jerome Carty. As all the glass in the cell windows was broken you could shout from cell to cell. The guardroom was at the meeting point of the jail so we frequently banged with our stools upon the cell doors merely to alarm the guard. They were red caps, military policemen, políní airm, P.A.s, Free Staters, call them what you will, presided over by an army captain called Duffy, a man from somewhere in the South. Accompanied by red caps he appeared at the cell door each morning while a policeman called out on his behalf: *The Governor, good morning: Complaints?* It was our practice to show disrespect by sitting upon the bed, whereupon you were hauled to your feet. Nothing further was done to you and he would retire immediately.

At first I suppose I was young then and raw,
I take the world easier now,
I called it a farce, an imposture, gave jaw,
But in time I grew tired of the row.
So the custom goes on, to accept it I try
Though my attitude sarcasm taints,
Each morning I hear the sound and the cry,
The Governor, good morning, Complaints! – *Liam Ó Luanaigh*

The food in the jail was supposed to correspond to what their army got, namely a quarter loaf, butter and tea in the morning, a passable dinner, and a repeat of the quarter loaf, butter and tea in the evening. To aggravate the Staters we would not empty the slops, as a protest against the confinement, preferring instead to pour them through the window. Eventually they gave in and we were allowed out on exercise to the yard, where everyone clubbed together excitedly talking, while some kicked an old ball around. That was the original reason for the row; you were supposed to walk around a circle without talking to anyone; in other words criminalisation. When it came to go in again on this occasion we saw redcaps waiting in ambush, so we rushed them, and in the melee, people got hurt on all sides. Although the solitary confinement was not resumed again that year (2) the rows in Arbour Hill never completely died down. The most diligent of them, free with the baton, was a Sergeant Pollock from Tyrone; the others I would not have minded, though I notice that a lot of the screws and the warders in jails today are sons of these people. Either there must be a bad drop in a screw, or he gets a good living from it.

If the authorities had conceded political treatment, in the first place, and had not attempted to erode it, there would have been no rows, but both then and since the nameless martinets of the Free State Department of Justice prefer to take on Republicans in a game they cannot win. Four days before Christmas, five months after we had come in, there was good news. We were told we were being released. Passing out of the gate we were given rail tickets to Belfast.

IN CRUMLIN ROAD

I remained at home long enough in the early part of 1936 to help with the family's third and last flit to Andersonstown. I then went to England seeking work, and remained there for the best part of eighteen months. I returned towards the end of 1937. On the 8th of December I went to play a football match in Ardoyne, but finding the pitch frozen I came home. Hopping on a tram it brought me to the Falls depot from where I intended to walk the few hundred yards home. The depot was directly opposite the entrance to Milltown Cemetery from which a small group was just then emerging. Recollecting the date, the anniversary of the Four Martyrs, Rory, Liam, Dick and Joe, I recognised them as part of a Fianna commemoration that had taken place inside. Harmless ceremonies like this were of course banned, and there was always a heavy police presence to see that it was enforced. Right enough as I watched, I saw this wee lad being chased around inside by a fat policeman called Falvey. The wee lad was making for the wall but I could see he would not get over. Springing across to him I gave him a leg up and a heave. Instantly Falvey turned on me, pulling his gun; *You are under arrest. Oh, away out of that,* said I, *don't be frightening wee lads,* and I retreated out

the gate. But Falvey followed after, waving his gun, and shouting. There was a dozen police outside, and they closed around me. I was arrested, charged with obstruction and remanded to Crumlin Road Prison. A few days later I was in court before a magistrate on further charges. Falvey swore that he had seen me drilling Fianna in Milltown Cemetery, which was, of course, untrue. I was sentenced, however, to six months hard labour. So from December to May 1938 I was out of harm's way breaking stones in Crumlin Road. At that time in the North there was no such thing as political treatment. Apart from the long term men who were in D Wing, Hugh McAteer from Derry sentenced to seven years in 1935, Ed McCartney of Campbell College, and the Crown Entry men, Killeen, Kelly, Lavery, McCool, McAdams, Gallagher, Steele, McGlade and Rice, there were only a few like myself in C Wing. We wore the prison clothing and we broke stones with the rest of them. Each morning you sat in a small cubicle in the stone yard and a warder gave you a number of large stones to break with a small hammer. I was released in May and immediately became associated with a ginger group in the army that was planning an action in Belfast.

One operation, in which I was not engaged, had already been undertaken by them when Warder Smith, who had a reputation for beatings in Crumlin Road, was shot at and wounded. More reckless, and again I had nothing to do with it, was their next action, when they damaged the Republican monument in Milltown in a misdirected effort to rouse the people. They had plans also to lift Eddie McCartney, who was serving ten years following an abortive raid in the hope of nabbing 150 rifles from the arsenal of Campbell College on December 27th 1935. The rifles had been removed a short time before the raid, and the police had been alerted, and were waiting in the gate lodge. This pointed in a certain direction, bringing calamitous events for the Brigade in its trail. In the complex of buildings the eight I.R.A. men, firing wildly, got lost and were lucky to emerge with no casualties and only four arrested. One of them — Rooney — was cool enough, standing at a tram stop, to allow himself be checked over by police without discovery, though they lifted him later. To help discover the leak the Brigade O.C. Tony Lavery directed Furey, Hugh Keenan and John Monaghan, three of the members to be defended, resulting in their acquital in court. To McCartney, Lord Justice Best said: *I have no power to order you to be whipped, but I have power to impose a very severe sentence.* Recognition of the court by the three caused consternation at GHQ in Dublin with the result that Lavery was called to a courtmartial at Crown Entry on April 25th 1936. The courtmartial, upstairs in the Craobh Rua Club, was presided over by Jim Killeen, Adjutant General, and Michael Kelly of Roscommon. Present also with Lavery was the entire Northern leadership. Sean McCool of Donegal, John McAdams of Derry, Mike Gallagher of Tyrone, Jimmy Steele, Charlie McGlade and Liam Rice of Belfast. Shortly

after 3 p.m., acting on a tip off, the R.U.C. swooped with hatchets straight through the door and arrested the entire personnel of the meeting. They were arraigned in July before Lord Chief Justice Sir William Moore: *You will have as fair a trial as you can have under British law,* he told them. *If you do not recognise this court you will have to have my leave before you can speak.* They remained silent. Sentences of six years down to two years, under the archaic Treason Felony Act gave them ample time to rue their rashness in coming together for such a top heavy meeting.

Following this disaster, the Army in Belfast did its sums and decided who the culprit was. In January 1937 Joe Hanna of Brigade Staff, was courtmartialled in a club near Bow Street, found guilty, taken out to waste ground and shot.

He'll never serve it, they said after McCartney's trial, but unfortunately like many more later, he served it indeed. However, around the middle of this year he was in the Mater with an appendix, and it was planned to lift him out of it. The plan was put together in Albert Price's house in Percy Street. Pat McCotter was to dress as a priest, and Peter Farrelly and Sean McCaughey would be doctors. When the R.U.C. emerged with McCartney, Albert and John Rainey would be concealed with grenades. If there was anyone following they were to let fly with the grenades while the priest and the doctors moved in. It was far too risky, especially for poor McCartney. The Brigade got to hear about it, and it had to be cancelled.

In the light of these false starts the ginger group fragmented, coalescing back around the orthodox Brigade leadership. Sean Russell and a new staff were in power in Dublin since April, so perhaps now, we thought, there would be action. I again stepped upon the boat for England, this time going to London seeking work — anything from sheet metal to plumbing would do. It was September 1938, the summer of Munich and the umbrella man, and there was work in plenty. England was re-arming madly. I was not to know, nor did I, that the I.R.A. also was preparing a campaign, a bombing campaign in England, and that within five months I would be in the thick of it. It was Russell's old dream, the dream of the Fenians, coming true.

Though spring is come, to me it's still September,
That September . . . in the rain.

REFERENCES

1 A tribunal of three Free State Army officers sitting without a jury, and set up in W. T. Cosgrave's time under an amendment of his constitution. Having prorogued it when he came to power in February 1932, De Valera reactivated it in 1934 to deal, first with the Blueshirts (they wilted easily), and then with Republicans. The Special Criminal Court currently sitting in Green Street, Dublin, is a close relation.

2 Gerald Boland, Minister for Justice, banned the I.R.A. in June 1936. It had been

unbanned following De Valera's success in February 1932. With a wink and a nod the Department of Justice and police now regarded it as fair game. Bodenstown was banned, and some young Limerick city men on their way there in a lorry were lifted and brought to Arbour Hill. Things were much more rigorous and there was now close confinement. On September 12th, Sean Glynn, a young Limerick man was found dead in his cell. He was said to have been found on Sunday after mid-day hanging by two towels from a shelf support. It was pointed out that the shelf in question was so low as to make hanging unlikely. He had been to Mass and communion that morning handcuffed between guards, which was the usual procedure.

CHAPTER FIVE

The 1939 Campaign

The Campaign really opened on the Border, always a good place for openers, and one where it does least harm, except that in this case it seemed to have alerted the Stormont government and the R.U.C. that something was afoot.

What were described as shattering explosions, ripped huts on the Six County side from Derry along to Newry, the R.U.C. being rushed in too late to do anything; or being sent ineffectively on patrol. In all cases seemingly, the mines placed inside the huts on November 28th, after closing time, went off, injuring no one.

It would have been a splendid enough "propaganda victory" showing that the I.R.A. was still alive and well, were it not for the loss of three very useful men near Castlefinn, Co. Donegal. Obviously engaged in activating clock mines already prepared elsewhere, for use against customs in the area on that same Monday evening, Jimmy Joe Reynolds, O.C. Britain, John J. Kelly, Old I.R.A. man from Clady and brother of Patrick Kelly owner of the cottage, Charlie McCafferty, 29 year old local man, perished in what seems to have been a faulty clock bomb tragedy. The explosions were intended to signal to the I.R.A. at home and overseas that the organisation was now in new hands; possibly the operations were intended to influence Second Dail members still dithering at passing over their powers of government to the Army. In the event the huts blown up were easily replaced, the three men lost were not. It was not the end either on the debit side, for three weeks later, on December 22nd, numbers of men, mostly from the Belfast area, totalling twenty-three were lifted and interned.

The R.U.C. had learned that something was afoot — possibly they feared that an attack of some nature was planned upon the North, instead of what occurred four weeks later in England, but at all events the internment provisions of the Special Powers Act were used for the first time since 1924.(1) Assuming it was the start of the English campaign, McGarrity in Philadelphia called a news conference and gave out the word. The indiscretion was not noticed or taken up.

In the meantime, Russell had returned from an inspection trip in Britain, where he was accompanied by the new Adjutant General, Stephen Hayes. Hayes was succeeding Maurice Twomey who had agreed to remain *pro tem* six months in the post following the Abbey Street convention of April 1938, which swung the campaign and displaced the oldies opposed to it.(2)

Twomey himself had visited the units in the same month and he was not hopeful of the outcome, but his term was ended(3); he had been Chief of Staff from 1926 to 1936, the longest ever, and he now wished with his wife, the ladylike Kathleen McLaughlin from Inishowen, to be left run his cake shop and tobacconists in O'Connell Street (he was never able to shuffle off the responsibilities he inherited for within months he was to find the families of the first deportees knocking at his door).

In one way or another, Twomey, for old friendship's sake, continued to act as a link man for years to come. Hayes, then 37 years old, was from Enniscorthy, had occupied a post as clerical officer in the County Council since 1920, was in Fianna and the Army and was prominent on the local G.A.A. board. In August 1936, the I.R.A. in the guise of Cumann na Poblachta, had put him forward as a candidate, but he had received only 1,301 votes. He was not a person in hindsight to inspire confidence, even then, and by the time of his arrest in June 1941 by the I.R.A., he was prematurely aged, puffy, drinking too heavily and given to chain smoking.(4)

If Russell or Hayes had been really perceptive on their English trip in 1938, they should have taken account of the immense difficulties facing such a campaign on the score of supply, personnel, finance, safe houses, tactics, and realised that it could not succeed. A gesture it was to be, but to hope to succeed in forcing a British withdrawal from the Six Counties was ludicrous.

SEAN RUSSELL

Five foot ten inches tall, with reddish slightly receding hair, Russell in 1938 aged 42, unmarried, was from Dublin's North Strand where his family still live. In 1916, he had been stationed at Annesley Bridge under Captain Thomas Weafer who was later killed in action at Abbey Street, while Russell himself retreated into the G.P.O. On his return in 1917 from imprisonment in England, he was appointed O.C. of the 2nd Dublin Battalion where he was associated with Dick McKee and Peadar Clancy. He played more than a small part in wiping out British agents in 1920. Later that year he was appointed Director of Munitions, where he would have been close to the level of Brugha, Collins and Mulcahy. He got arms factories going, and was an instant success. It was then that he became acquainted with Seamus O'Donovan, Director of Chemicals. The two lost track of each other after 1924. O'Donovan shortly entering the E.S.B., later producing *Ireland Today,* and generally staying out of things until Russell sought his help in 1938. In later life he regarded this as a fatal turning point in his career. The odds in the Ireland of the forties were heavily stacked against a middle-aged suburbanite man viewing 'the struggle' in the same rosy light as he had viewed it in the twenties.

Sean Russell took the Republican side in the Civil War, and in 1923 was

41 days on hunger strike. With Gerald Boland in the same year, he had been in Russia trying to buy arms, but he always remained apolitical, aloof from right and left wing politics. Sitting on the Staff in the period 1924-36, with Twomey, Sean MacBride, Peadar O'Donnell, Jim Killeen, Tom Daly, George Gilmore, Harry and Charlie Price, Dave Fitzgerald, Tom Barry, Tom Malone, John Joe Sheehy, Johnny O'Connor, he clearly had a concealed talent to maintain his position among such a galaxy, a galaxy that outshone the mediocre talent of the Free State government itself. In prison briefly in 1925, he was again arrested in June 1931, on the eve of Bodenstown where he was listed as the principal speaker. In March 1932, shortly after De Valera came to power, George Gilmore and Russell were deputed to meet him.

Opposites in many ways, Gilmore who knew him well, could never be induced to speak ill of Russell. They drew a blank with De Valera; the objective he had in mind was a constitutional position as close to Document 2, as possible. Meanwhile he continued to be a regular speaker at parades up and down the country. Pat Shannon of Galway swore by him, but Jack Lynch of Dunmanway said he always wanted to be in control. He met him as Quartermaster-General on inspection in West Cork. You could be his deputy, and you still would not know what he was thinking. Sean chaired the courtmartial which dismissed the two leading Republican Congress men, Peadar O'Donnell and Mick Price. At this time he was involved briefly in market gardening. He was keeping out of the clutches too of De Valera's "Harriers", for unlike Donal O'Donoghue and other staff men, he did not expose himself. However his fixation with security did not always pay off. Moss Twomey told a funny story of this time, about receiving a message from Supt. Mansfield, of the Dungarvan republican family, to tell Russell to stop wearing a false moustache, that it did not suit him.

Abstemious, and a non-smoker, all his notes to close friends were signed simply ME. In the autumn of 1936, he went to the United States, and there met Joe McGarrity for the first time. Joe had swung away from supporting De Valera; Russell was the man he wanted. Meanwhile an antipathy developed between himself and Tom Barry, now Chief of Staff. Russell, as Quartermaster-General, had not properly looked after, so it was said, twelve Thompsons newly arrived which were seized in Kildare. There was a flimsy story that he had appropriated money, but it was sufficient to try to score off him. Sean, however, was equally Machiavellian, and in the end gained the upper hand on his detractors, all of whom retired to the sidelines. McGarrity, as leader of Clan na Gael, had just proposed that 1,500 volunteers should take the field in Ulster, and combined with that, there should be plans for demolition operations in Britain. Russell fell in with this plan, but Russell was out of favour back home at H.Q., and was in the U.S.A. without Army permission. It had already been put to Barry and

rejected by him. In January 1937, Russell was courtmartialled on other charges, removed from the position of Quartermaster-General, and suspended from the organisation. This, however, only spurred him on to drum up support and get control of the now shrinking organisation from within. He was assisted in this by the fragmentation proceeding after the Republican Congress in 1934, by the short lived attempt at politicisation under Cumann na Poblachta in 1936, by De Valera's coercionist pressures, by imprisonment of its long standing Chief of Staff, Moss Twomey, and by the expected retirement of the old guard, Barry, Malone, Johnny O'Connor, MacBride and others.

In the summer of 1937, Russell returned to the U.S., addressing Clan meetings in many centres. Had he been a more discerning man, he might have realised that the Clan was an ageing organisation, providing an insecure ledge of support. He returned to Ireland in October, where he found himself dismissed from the I.R.A. This spurred him to greater efforts, visiting units favourable to him and preparing for a make-or-break convention scheduled for early in 1938.

Preparations for the new departure went ahead meanwhile.

The convention was held in April 1938, and we have noted how it swung in behind him. No matter how critical one may be for what might be called his militaristic tunnel vision, no one can discount the herculean work put in by him in the months before the convention, and in training and supply work in the eight months following it. He saw nearly everybody in the old guard, Gilmore, O'Donovan, McGrath, and brigade leaders up and down the country, working hard to get them back. He called on De Valera and told him of his plans, hoping to obtain at least a benevolent neutrality. On December 8th an announcement was published in the *Wolfe Tone Weekly* (5) Brian O'Higgins' paper (Brian na Banban), that the seven surviving members (6) of the Second Dáil had agreed to transfer their powers of government to the Army Council of the I.R.A. Tom Maguire, of Cross, Mayo, being independent-minded in all things, needed convincing; in the end he agreed. About the same time was held an Extraordinary Army Convention to strengthen Russell's hand. It was held at the rear of a shop, the Home Market, near the corner of Cuffe Street on St. Stephen's Green (now demolished), owned by a long standing old Republican, Liam Lucas.

On January 12th, a formal ultimatum arrived posted to Lord Halifax, British Foreign Secretary. It called for the withdrawal of all British armed forces and civilian representatives from every part of Ireland. It was signed by Patrick Fleming, of Killarney, as secretary, and had appended the names of Sean Russell, Stephen Hayes, Peadar O'Flaherty (of Enniscorthy), Larry Grogan (of Drogheda), and George Plunkett (of Dublin). It also appeared on small handbills widely posted in Ireland. No notice was taken — evidently no notice whatsoever — and the bombs, when they did go off four days later, were unexpected and caused considerable surprise in Scotland Yard.

BLOW AND COUNTER BLOW

On Monday 16th, early in the morning, two bombs exploded in London, three in Manchester, one in Birmingham and one in Alnwick. They were keyed upon electrical lines and power stations, and were sufficiently diffused to cause alarm in England and glee amidst the high command back home, especially as more followed the next day. The first casualty occurred in Manchester where an early passer-by was killed. Then for more than two weeks there was silence. But there was not silence from the Yard. They were galvanised into action, going through their lists and sources, touching up the Castle in Dublin and the R.U.C. in Belfast, from both of whom they received wholehearted co-operation.

What activist is safely at home? Which one is away? Who are their relatives — their friends ? It is in this way, when the heat is on, that houses, flats, bedsitters and boarding establishments are traced. Anyone with the slightest connection comes under scrutiny. Dance halls, pubs, Irish language classes are all watched.

It is a process of narrowing down, narrowing down. Let ten places be watched, and one will come up trumps. Follow that one and he will provide a lead to others. In that way a whole network will be discovered, and the operator, who has taken every precaution, will be betrayed by a slip or the carelessness of another. It is like climbers linked upon a rope; one slip can bring disaster to the whole party. Many of the Irish, with their brogues, their fresh faces, and their 'fight caps', especially when unbuttoned, stood out a mile. Thousands of them were stopped, questioned and gone over. A secretive double life under the nose of an English landlady became impossible. They had a key for every room, a good reason now for entering, and could rummage through one's entire belongings. The only salvation was to live with one's own, an Irish family already set up in a flat, and whose loyalty was unquestionable. There was not many of those, and with the abnormal risks that collaboration ran, they became fewer. And they were just as likely to be gone over eventually and sifted through by the Yard, many of whom now spent their time listing all possible connections of wanted men, or of men suspected even vaguely of being in England.

The only hope of not being tracked down was to lead a completely English lifestyle, in total isolation outside the Irish web. Such a self-contained existence would have needed independent financial means, and would have been for other practical reasons, impossible. No, the I.R.A. man, the operator was intensely vulnerable; sooner or later he would be laid low, caught going to a call house, trying to obtain supplies, seen by a spying landlady, or tracked down by patient methodical police research, beating through names and eliminating all known contacts one by one. Nowadays, once the information had been fed in, the computer enables this to be done at the flick of a switch.(7)

In all cases of "terrorism", a subject nation, such as Ireland, biting,

kicking, tearing the hair of the bully to escape — which is all their pin prick bombs could do (compare the blockbusters killing men, women and children by the thousands over German and European cities within three years, culminating in the joint U.S./British raid killing 130,000 in Dresden, in the closing weeks of 1945), media manipulation from the centre by the oppressor nation is immediate, controlled and complete. In these circumstances there is no such thing as a free press; the journalists, the broadcasters, the presenters instantly become the venal paid whores of the authorities; the terrorist is rapidly turned into a figure of hate; minor injuries upon civilians are exaggerated and highlighted; there are always children, a cripple, or a person — a newspaper seller — to identify with. Large scale warfare, high explosive, nuclear or defoliant, by the nation in control of world media, is represented as peace keeping, sporting, oneupmanship, to be admired; while the pinpricks of the terrorist are quickly put across as shameful, cowardly, skulking and homocidal.

HATE SWITCHED ON

This quickly became the case in England; hate was switched on, and it leaped the Irish Sea. The campaign is remembered as the one where "they put bombs in letter boxes", which indeed they did, relatively harmless incendiaries, but the overall purpose was obscured. It never had a hope of success; it was a wild idea; it was close to stupid, but it is no cause for shame. Rather the cause for shame is upon the English side; that aggressor military aristocracy which bestradles Ireland, the most militaristic nation in Europe, out of whose grip these boys were trying to squirm. While England, from the highest to the lowest, vituperated in hate, middle class Ireland held its peace. (De Valera, however, went hastily to work on what he called an assertion of freedom, he placed before the Dail and had passed a Treason Bill. Its purpose was to compliment article 39 of the Constitution in reference to persons levying war, or conspiring to levy war, against the State. It was followed in March by a sweeping Offences Against the State Bill, which, amended and tightened, has remained the main legal vehicle against active Republicans to the present day.)

The atmosphere created in the first weeks, and carried to a new height after the death bomb killing five in Coventry in August, enabled the judges to impose sentences out of all reality to the suspected crimes. Directives, presumably, came down; make fifteen to twenty years the norm for anyone found with a trace of explosive, seven to ten for being an accessory or affording shelter. A tiny minority of the ninety Irishmen (one 77 year old woman and a couple of girls were also sentenced) received terms as short as three years. Three quarters, however, were in the band ten to twenty years. It is doubtful if any term in excess of seven years was justifiable except from motives of administrative terrorism and revenge. Revenge indeed it was; let

us set aside completely the picture of an impartial humane judge in the bewigged figure seated upon his dais under the crown and sceptre. In all cases, top English judges are ex-Army men(8): they have usually served terms in the main spy arms, MI5 or MI6, will have come from an upper crust family, and will have passed through Eton, Harrow, Ampleforth or other top class Tory schools. An Irish Republican is anathema to such a person; such a judge does not need a directive to dish out harsh sentences, he will do so knowing the system will uphold him, and that there can be no comeback.

Thus were ninety sentenced, some of them patently not guilty of anything. They served their terms in the classic penal prisons, Dartmoor, Parkhurst on the Isle of Wight, Leicester, Wandsworth, Exeter, Princeton, where they maintained a constant running battle with governors, warders and chaplains.(9) Those sentenced to ten years or under served the entire but gained some remission, remission in some cases being a quarter of sentence. Twentytwo sentenced to twenty years, served ten years each, being finally released under the Labour government of Clement Attlee — a government that due to the influence of Herbert Morrison and others, was a good deal less favourable to Ireland than Tory governments — in 1948. Their release in February was due largely to the patient work of two men, Eoin "Pope" O'Mahony KM, and Frank Pakenham (later Lord Longford), and more particularly to the fact that the Dublin government made no objection to their release.

Three men died while in English jails; Joe Malone of Belfast, in Parkhurst in January 1942; Terence Perry of Belfast in Parkhurst in July, and Charles O'Hare of Armagh, in the Isle of Man, in June 1944.

On Saturday morning, February 4th, two major bombs were detonated in the left luggage of Tottenham Court Road and Leicester Square undergrounds. They were clock bombs in suitcases timed to go off when there was nobody about, but of course in this case there were minor injuries. The left-luggage bomb, along with the after hours cinema incendiary, and the pillar box package, had now become the standard bomb permutation, with occasional feints at "lines of communication", as laid down in Seamus O'Donovan's S Plan.

By 6th February the S Plan had become public knowledge, achieving sensational airing on that day at Bow Street, London, when it was read at the commencement of a trial of twelve men. It called for action against military, air and naval operations. It homed in on the public services, the sabotaging of key industries, striking at commerce, banking, timber yards, cotton mills and spirit stores.

Its opening sentence showed how totally uninfluenced it was by the times; the war fever of 1938-9: *in order to exercise maximum world effect, the diversion must be carried out at a time when no major war or world crisis is on.*

On Saturday night there were four incendiary shop fires in Coventry,

none of which caused damage. Further explosions occurred two days later in London, while a mine went off against the walls of Walton Jail in Liverpool. Things remained fairly quiet then, until March 29th, when two large bombs left under the suspension cables of Hammersmith Bridge, caused a shattering explosion but resulted in no damage to the bridge. On the following day there were explosions in Birmingham, Liverpool and Coventry, and the day after, seven more in London.

On May 5th four explosions occurred in Coventry, two in London, while tear gas was released in two Liverpool cinemas.

THE TIDE EBBS

Joe McGarrity was back on holiday in Carrickmore in the same month, and was called upon briefly by the R.U.C. On May 19th fires were started in eight hotels by incendiary devices. On May 29th four magnesium bombs were released in the Paramount cinema in Birmingham.

Cinemas in London were then hit, while at all the famous sites, St. Paul's, Westminster Abbey, Buckingham Palace, the Houses of Parliament, Whitehall Buildings, the Tower of London and Windsor Castle, police and heavily armed guards appeared.

On Saturday, June 25th, there were three devastating explosions at the Midland, Westminster and Lloyds banks, in central London. There were five bombs in all, although injuries were minor.

Near midnight on July 20th, an attempt was made to leave a bomb in Lewis's of Liverpool, but George Whittaker was nabbed after a street chase. Two letter box bombs went off at Derby Street and in Old Swan.

On July 26th at 1.40 p.m. a suit case bomb killed a traveller — a Scotsman — in Kings Cross Station. It was the second fatality so far of the campaign. Mount Pleasant Post Office in Liverpool was damaged the same day, while a canal bridge at Maghull, five miles from the centre, was blocked by a blast.

The Prevention of Violence Bill, introduced a few days before, was now in its final stages. Its main effect was to enlarge upon the area of suspicion and arrest, to enable deportation and to prevent persons entering the country. It was to have a crippling effect; although under 200 were deported, many of the activists fled, while friends and relatives went too. The European war, now only six weeks away, brought even tighter measures and new complications in its train. Combined, they resulted in an almost complete cessation of activity after September. The campaign, dormant for most of February and March, reached its high point in June and July, waning to near nil in the aftermath of Broadgate, Coventry, August 25th.(10) It resulted in 200 explosions, two separate deaths, one in Manchester, one in London, prior to Broadgate, plus five there. The total number reported injured did not exceed fifty, and these all seemed to have

been minor. The I.R.A. lost Peter Barnes and James McCormack, hanged in Birmingham on Friday, February 7th, 1940, along with the three prisoners already mentioned, who died in jail. The total combined sentences served by 90 captured volunteers in English jails, exceeded 600 years.

Were they manipulated by the Germans now riding to power in Europe? The quick answer is no. Anyone in jail in the early forties would readily have found there were very few pro Germans there. That is not to say that there were not some who wished England to get a very bloody nose after they had come to grips.(11) Aren't they first cousins, and did not some of them — Lord Londonderry — hobnob with Nazis? For further proof, let us refer to the opening sentence of the S Plan again . . . *to be carried out at a time when no major war or world crisis is on.* One can allude too to the diaries of arch agent Hermann Goertz published in 1947, to find out how frustrating it was to tangle with them.(12) Then too, the campaign itself was first mooted by Russell in April 1936, and planned steadily from there on. It is true that Seamus O'Donovan visited Germany on three occasions over 1938 and 1939, twice as a result of an invitation from an agent Oscar Pfaus, who found himself in Dublin in January; nothing definite came from the visits. Joe McGarrity also took in Germany in the summer, but solely as part of his European tour. In April 1940, Russell went from the U.S.A. to Genoa, and thence to Germany, with the highly romantic notion of reaching Ireland by submarine. If one suspects anything else, there is plenty of documentation on his few weeks there, and also, one must explain the presence with him of International Brigadier and strong pro leftist, Frank Ryan.(13)

The I.R.A. link-ups then and afterwards with Germany, were a casual and tenuous probing contact of individuals; they in no way correspond to the tightly maintained formalities of the British and Free State police and military.(14)

Two days after the disastrous Coventry explosion, a bomb exploded at Blackpool Town Hall causing considerable damage. Other bombs were found nearby. The North Euston Hotel, in Fleetwood, and the Sandringham in Southport, were damaged by bombs left in bedrooms. At Winterbourne militia camp an officers' mess and an adjoining hut were burned down in a fire believed started by Irishmen. A bomb, hurled at midnight from a passing car, caused minor damage to a Red Cross post on East Prescott Road, Liverpool. Another damaged a post office at Toxteth, while other pillar boxes were blown up. On the same night a volunteer was arrested when another bomb he was carrying went off prematurely. *I did not expect the bomb to go off until 2.00 a.m. but one of the balloons must have been weak.* After throwing away a parcel containing thirteen sticks of gelignite, he was fumbling in his pocket from which smoke and flames were coming. A crowd then rushed him and he was arrested.

Early in September in the blackout (Britain declared war on Germany on Sunday, September 3rd), there were pillar-box fires in Birmingham — Bristol Street, Broad Street, and Edgebaston Street. Later that month there were three phone kiosk explosions in the early hours in the same city. On the same night in London, damage was caused to kiosks at Harrow Road, and Marble Arch in London, while an unexploded bomb was found in Paddington. About the same time, two unexploded bombs were found in the letter box of Lloyds Bank in Liverpool and in a block of offices there. Following Birmingham, an unexploded bomb was found in Coventry. Days later, more serious damage was caused in London when four shops were blown out and two unexploded bombs were found in central London. While it was obvious from these that bomb-making resources were now meagre, it was clear that a fragmentary organisation continued to exist. Fire bombs continued to explode in November; gelignite by then however was impossible to obtain. Besides, the organisation in Dublin was severely mauled in September and October. De Valera had new powers; whatever honeymoon there had been was definitely over.(15)

In mid December, coinciding with the death sentences on Barnes and McCormack, more fire bombs spluttered in post boxes and mail bags. Then on February 6th, 1940, the eve of their execution, some small bombs were exploded. There had been a tremendous campaign for reprieve in Ireland; the fact that a few useless and isolated bombs went off at such an inopportune time, pointed to the hand of *agents provocateur.*

That was the end however; definitely the end of the English campaign. It had frightened the English authorities; it had scared them and it had inflicted some moral damage in the year they went to war. But they had got their revenge; ninety prisoners on savagely long terms, hundreds deported, two executed. The I.R.A. itself was sadly mauled; it had under-estimated the difficulties of maintaining supplies and money to the campaign; it had been attacked from the rear by De Valera and Stormont, and the public estimate of it, affected by the adverse media propaganda, was low. It is doubtful if a Republican candidate would have got a thousand votes in any Irish constituency on the issue of the campaign. Within the I.R.A. itself, there was not even a hot debate on the matter; there was silence. In the narrow sense Russell was right in planning and launching the campaign; if he had not done so, the I.R.A. might just as well have dissolved in 1937. In fact the subsequent decades from the fifties to the seventies, underlines the fact that the Army limps from campaign to campaign — except that in the seventies, in the Six Counties, it has proved that it commands a great measure of public support. It was the total absence of this support which exposed the political naïvety of Russell.

DEMISE OF RUSSELL

But where was Russell? With the campaign launched and an awesome

need of money suddenly apparent, Russell had been persuaded by his fellow GHQ staff to go, publicise the struggle, and hopefully garner the dollars from America. On April 8th he sailed from Cobh, reaching the U.S. on the 15th. If he had the fell purpose that was adduced against him at his courtmartial in July 1941 in Castlewood Park, this certainly suited Stephen Hayes now placed as acting C.S. over the organisation. All his fellow signatories on the staff were plucked away quickly. Patrick Fleming in England in July, serving out his time interned on the Isle of Man. Peadar O'Flaherty and Larry Grogan (along with Willie McGuinness and Paddy McGrath) in a major haul on September 9th at 16 Rathmines Park, with the last of the original staff, Jack Plunkett along with Jack McNeela and announcer and scriptwriter Seamus Ó Mongáin, and solicitor Seamus Byrne, in the radio HQ, Ashgrove House, Highfield Road, on December 29th. George Plunkett, never hard to identify in his knee breeches, was picked up and interned in May 1940.

Once in America, Russell travelled all over the southern states to San Francisco and Los Angeles on his thirty day visa which was valid for twelve months. In June, prior to a British royal visit, he was arrested on a technically in Detroit. He was accompanied by Joe McGarrity, chairman of Clan na Gael. Two days later, following vigorous protests by Congressman James McGranery to President Roosevelt, he was released on a 5,000 dollar bond. A few weeks later, it was announced that he would be leaving the U.S.A., but his departure evidently was blocked by the outbreak of war in Europe.

Connie Neenan offered at that stage to bring him to California, where he could hole up indefinitely, but he did not wish to do that. Neenan thought that when he came to the U.S.A., it was not upon invitation from McGarrity, and that he was with him only on one occasion while he was there. Nor is there any evidence of sizeable sums of money being sent home. We have no idea how he felt now regarding the campaign. In June and July the notes being exchanged were quietly confident, but it was still going well at that time. The outbreak of war, however, must have made it plain that all his calculations were now wrong; that suddenly a new circumstance was present. In July he had written that *he would slip home quietly soon.* That was no longer possible. Neenan spoke to Mick Quill, of the longshoremen's union; Joe Curran and Blackie Myers of the Maritime Commission offered help to have him go as a stowaway. In April 1940, with or without their aid, he passed out of New York as a crewman on a Genoa bound Italian cargo boat. Italy was within ten weeks of war, but he reached mainland Europe safely. It was afterwards feared by Republicans that he had been taken off by the British at Gibraltar, but that was not so. In Berlin in mid July, he was confronted by Frank Ryan whose "escape" had just been arranged from Spain. They greeted each other warmly, although Ryan was out of the I.R.A. since March 1934, and was not privy to whatever future plans

A recent picture of Harry with the mistress of Donaghmoyne House, Carrickmacross, Mrs. Carragher.
An IRA column trained here in August 1942.

Harry in the Tuite farmyard near Mount Nugent, Co. Cavan, from which he escaped in October 1942. Paddy Dermody was killed on that occasion. The house, then a low homestead, is out of the picture to the left.

Russell may have had. While there, he was engaged in discussions with the Abwehr, but these could only have been related to a possible Six County campaign as the Germans were keen to respect De Valera's neutrality. He was introduced to some new forms of explosive and sabotage, and on one occasion on August 15th was called upon briefly by Von Ribbentrop, accompanied by Admiral Canaris, Irish Affairs Adviser Dr. Vessenmayer, Kurt Haller, and Lieut. Colonel Lahousen. All was ready for operation Dove, the return by submarine of the two men to Galway. On August 8th, they departed from Cuxhaven, but almost at once Russell fell ill. On August 14th, he died from a burst gastric ulcer and was buried at sea, only twenty miles off the coast of Galway. Nine days earlier McGarrity died in Philadelphia.

Frank Ryan returned to Germany where he lingered on, in failing health, until his death in Dresden in June 1944. Within months the rumours were abroad among Republicans that Russell had died mysteriously, that he had been taken off by a British warship at sea, that he had been shot dead in Gibraltar, or again, as Hermann Goertz believed, at St. Nazaire, before the evacuation of France. It was not until May 1941, that confirmation reached Gerald O'Reilly, one of the Clan people in New York; concealed in a belt brought by a German seaman was a letter from Frank Ryan stating simply that John had had a serious illness when he was travelling. His death, without giving details, was confirmed by the German Consul General in New York.

In Dublin, MacBride had earlier received from Stuart a similar message, which, in due course, was passed on to Twomey from where it reached Hayes. The complete lack of all details however, fuelled speculation from within the I.R.A., that he had been murdered by the British, a belief that persisted for many years despite the assurances eventually brought home to Ireland by Helmut Clissman, Francis Stuart and others who had been in Germany at that time.

AUTUMN IN IRELAND

While Hitler's invasion of Poland on September 1st, 1939, was very real, the outbreak of war itself was greeted with disbelief even in England. There was, however, instant blackout there; patriotism became very tight-lipped. In Ireland there was very little change. De Valera's immediate declaration of neutrality defused whatever little interest the war held for Ireland. With the collapse of Poland after six weeks, and a settling down to a phoney war upon the western front, interest evaporated completely.

The neutrality policy had the backing of ninety per cent of the people of the 26 Counties. There had not been widespread support for the I.R.A. before; there was less now. Many young men joined the part-time defence forces. The I.R.A. naively thought it could carry on its struggle in isolation.

It had failed in England, and that operation was manifestly being wound down; however, there was no reason why it should not strike across the land frontier with the Six Counties, and that partly explains the raid which took place two days before Christmas, on the Magazine Fort in the Phoenix Park to obtain ammunition for that purpose. (A simultaneous raid for rifles upon the nearby Islandbridge barrack was called off when a ruse to open the gates failed.) The incipient struggle between the authorities of the Free State (since 1938 offically Éire, or Ireland) which had gone on through the twenties and middle thirties, flared again as De Valera saw the I.R.A. threatening his neutrality. The paradox was that they were in favour of neutrality, but at the same time, wished to enjoy the luxury of carrying on business as usual; their business of course.

From the date of the re-imposition of the ban upon the I.R.A. in June, there had been a clamp down. Our subject, Harry, was arrested at a training camp in Offaly in August. Other training camps quietly went underground. Killiney and Silver Springs were closed. The Special Courts came into force a week before the outbreak. Early in September sixtyfour were arrested and interned in Arbour Hill. Perhaps if the I.R.A. had remained quiet from there on, no more would have been interned, but preparations were already under way to lock up maybe a thousand.

On September 9th, a raid on 16 Rathmines Park, netted one of the principal headquarters houses, bagging Larry Grogan, Peadar O'Flaherty, Paddy McGrath and Willie McGuinness, all HQ men. As the squad burst in, Stephen Hayes and Mattie Tuite sneaked out the rear.

There were sweeps in Belfast too, where some were already interned. In October fortyfive were arrested, while in the streets nationalist youngsters burned the gas masks. They had already collected and burned thousands the previous February. In the blackout bonfires were lit around Albert Street and Cullingtree Road. Police and B Specials were brought in to baton charge the crowd, many of whom fought back with their fists.

Jack Lynch of Dunmanway, was one of those held in September. With Dick McCarthy and Jeremiah Daly he went on hunger strike, while in Mountjoy, Paddy McGrath was also fasting. After fortytwo days they were released in November. Paddy McNeela brought them to the Drumcondra house of Sean Russell's fiancée, the tall, slender, fair Annie O'Farrelly. *We know now how far De Valera is prepared to go,* said McNeela. He had told the Irish people, twentysix days previously on radio, that he would not release them. *We will not release them, because if we did, we would fail as a government. Not alone would we fail as a government, but we would make it impossible for those who came after us to govern, so if they do not come off the hunger strike, they will die.*

As Jack Lynch relates, they were talking about this. *We know how far he is prepared to go but he will not let anybody die. Don't be too sure,* Lynch interjected, *Don't be too sure.* Within six months, he allowed McNeela's

brother Jack, and Tony Darcy to die, and the strike weapon wilted.

In November the Offences Act was held contrary to Dev's new constitution by Justice Gavan Duffy giving judgement in favour of an internee, Seamus Burke of Ballinrobe (henceforth know as Habeus Corpus Burke). As a result of this, all sixty four internees were released, though the Act quickly received a minor modification to part VI early the following year, and all sixty four, plus up to nine hundred more, were again rounded up and interned.

In December, there were reports of incendiaries at Birmingham's market hall, indicating that some fragmentary resistance continued. Then on the 23rd, occurred the Magazine Fort raid, proclaiming that the I.R.A. was still very much in business. Two days later the fifty internees held in Derry Jail erupted, holding their wing for several hours against a force of B Specials and police. The year ended with a significant victory, already touched upon, for the Free State police; a day off New Year they captured in Rathmines, the I.R.A. news transmitter, the Director of Publicity Jack McNeela, the editor Seamus Ó Mongáin (Seamus Mangan), the technician Jack Plunkett, and the tenant of Ashgrove House, solicitor Seamus Byrne.

All of this time, since August, Harry was locked up firmly behind bars; first in the Curragh glasshouse, and now once more behind the grey walls of the Provost's Prison in Arbour Hill.

REFERENCES

1 It is completely forgotten now that the I.R.A. campaign in England commenced eight months *before* World War II. It had nothing to with international events. To coincide with it, they planned an uprising later in the North. The Stormont authorities lifted them in December 1938. The officer corps was lifted, and anyone who was anything in Belfast, they had them all interned. Seemingly they must have known what was going to happen.

In November 1939, the internees held in Crumlin Road, were moved to the old battlemented style prison in the centre of Derry. Part of the prison was sectioned off for criminal lunatics. Thirty of the men had been held since just before the previous Christmas, while thirtysix had been lifted early in October, five weeks after the outbreak of war.

They were brought in four buses, early on Saturday morning, each handcuffed to a policeman or a warder. Arriving in the prison in Derry they were loudly cheered, and while some in the buses sang, others cheered back. Most of them were to remain interned for almost five years, while their numbers at one time rose to 400.

In 1940, they were again transferred, some hundreds of them were placed on the prison ship *Al Rawdah* in Strangford, a sea inlet. There Jack Gaffney died, and they moved the prisoners back to Crumlin Road prison, but that resulted in overcrowding, so they were transferred yet again in November 1942 to Derry.

2 April 1938 finally brought the break — for different reasons — between Tom Barry, Sean MacBride, Mick Fitzpatrick, all ex chiefs of staff, Tomás Ó Maoileóin, Sean Keating, John Joe Sheehy, Jimmy Hannigan, Johnnie O'Connor and hundreds more. Break yes, but never complete divorce.

3 *The organisation is poor,* reported another officer. *The men live in lodgings and have no social contacts. There is strict security in armament factories, among aircraft and at aerodromes. Only a few of our men are engaged in such work.* Irish families born in England and who could pass as English, like the Stapletons, Tom Hunt, the Stauntons and Seamus Murphy, were few and far between, and were tripped through organisation errors, too early in the campaign. Willie McGuinness, straight from Ireland, small, dapper, and dressed like an English bank clerk, survived until May when he withdrew.

Peter Walsh, known as Stewart, had come from Glasgow to help. Born in that city, his mother was a McIntyre from the Isles. He had visited Ireland, and had done a training course at the rere of the Home Market shop in St. Stephen's Green. The training officer then was Jim O'Donnell, but he met also Russell, Twomey and McNeela. *We need two years preparation,* he told Russell, who made light of it; *we have got to start now so as to bring the money from America.* Afterwards we were without money in London, and near starvation level. It was a ridiculous, ill equipped venture, he says.

As Quartermaster, Britain, he had an office in Oxford Street, but the location was sprung early on through Mick Fleming buying a typewriter and giving the address to the salesman. Fearing the worst Walsh went twice past, but seeing no activity ventured upstairs. Entering, he found himself covered by a Yard man with a gun. Others materialised from nowhere, and he was led off. Searching the place they found incendiary bombs in various stages of preparation. We would order goods in a large store to be sent to another part of Britain. We would leave a package with the assistant to be sent also to the same address. Invariably this resulted in a serious overnight fire in the despatch department.

He was charged before Justice Travers Humphreys and sentenced to fifteen years. Calling for the 1916 Proclamation to be read, he stressed Ireland's separate nationhood. *When I come out I shall start the fight where I leave off,* he told the judge.

Six weeks before he had met Willie McGuinness at Tottenham Court Road. *You need a disguise,* he told McGuinness; *Go in there and fit yourself with glasses. But I don't need glasses, there is nothing wrong with my eyes.* Upwards of an hour afterwards McGuinness emerged; *There was something seriously wrong,* he admitted, *and I had to have special lenses fitted. With a black homburg on his head,* said Walsh, laughing, *we had him looking for all the world like a little Jewish tailor from the East End. Still,* he added seriously, *I could never forgive him for the three hundred pounds he stuck in a kettle in our office, and which was collared by the Yard.*

4 The biggest mistake a man ever made, says Jack Lynch of Cork, was for Russell to appoint Stephen Hayes as his second-in-command. I believe he was the one man who should never have been in the organisation, in no way at all. I would say he was more intelligent than we thought. He wasn't the fool he let on to be, and he proved it when he was a prisoner. He kept telling them everything, biding his time in the hope that something would happen, and of course it did happen.

He came from nothing in Wexford; alright, he played for Wexford one time. He was a greyhound man and all that. I had a few greyhounds too, so we were friends, he and I, but I was amazed when I heard that he was Russell's second-in-command. I had played also for Cork, so we had plenty in common; still I was amazed.

He was a drunkard, I met him when he was Chief of Staff, a short time before he was arrested, and I got a shock when I saw him. He had always been round and fat, but here he was with the flesh hanging off him. He had got old. This was in May, 1941. I was O.C. of Munster at the time, on the run myself; I did not want to see him, but I had to go along. He would not talk about anything only greyhounds, this and that, as I tried to bring him back to what I was there for. I asked him had he any Army Council; he said no; who would I suggest? There is nobody here, he said. What about Moss Twomey? Oh, he is spun out. So I then said, what about John Joe Sheehy? An overrated man. There was only one man he thought was any good, and that was his brother-in-law, Larry de Lacy, of the *Irish Times.*

He then questioned me very hard about the shooting of Admiral Somerville in March 1936. Did I know anything about it? I had been in Cork that time with Barry, he reminded me.

Yes, I said, I went down to see my mother. He got angry then. Do you realise, he scolded, that you are talking to the Chief of Staff? Yes, I said, it is because I am talking to the Chief of Staff that I will not tell him. Afterwards when he was arrested, he admitted to me that he had been told by the government to find out who was on the jobs. I had a good idea, but I could not swear to it, and I was not going to tell a lie.

I was not on his courtmartial in Castlewood Park, though I knew about it as I was often there. I fought very hard to have him shot. After all he was sentenced to death; why they were playing around with him, I don't know. There he was, writing, writing, writing. A lot of what he wrote was true but at the same time he was saying anything and everything to kill time.

I am proud to say, I would have killed him myself. The bastard sold out everything, yet I believe it was because of de Lacy. He idolised him. Whatever he said was right. He had ensnared him gradually. Of course he was weak. I said to him in Castlewood Park, you wanted me to tell you who shot Admiral Somerville. I did, said he; I was asked to find out.

5 An eight page two penny weekly started in 1937 by Brian O'Higgins, from his office in Upper O'Connell Street, in preparation for the campaign. It went under with the commencement of military censorship in September 1939.

6 Professor William Stockley of Cork, J. J. O'Kelly (Sceilg) of Kerry and Dublin, Count Plunkett of Dublin, Brian O'Higgins of Dublin and Meath, Charlie Murphy of Dublin, Tom Maguire of Mayo, and Mary MacSwiney of Cork.

7 Leo Duignan arrived in London from Leitrim in January 1938. The electricity scheme he had worked on in Ireland was finished; he was encouraged to go over by Peadar O'Flaherty and Jimmy Joe Reynolds. They were told to be in position for the campaign. Leo was working for a contractor timbering the tubes. He recalls Jack Lynch being an officer in London at the time, but says that both he and Lynch were stood down when Moss Twomey came on a tour of inspection.

Leo was in a company in North Acton; he spent one night a week at an explosives class, with instructions to lie low until needed. Willie McGuinness, Mick Fleming, Mick O'Leary and Peter Walsh, known as Stewart, a native Glaswegian (see Note 3), arrived to help form a new battalion staff as the existing staff was thought to be already known to the authorities. Tony Magan was also there, and remained travelling back and forth until August when he finally skipped. McGuinness who had been O.C. Dublin, was on the London staff for four months. They moved around the London sections and the provincial battalions.

There was a rapid turnover. Leo would attend some nights and not know one. The next night there would be a new crowd again. They were falling off as quickly as they came in. They had short arms but no explosives. Billy and Fursey Walsh of Galway were there, but Billy, cynical as usual, was sceptical about its prospects.

There was not much point in arms drill in view of what they had in mind, but training was haphazard anyway. There were people on those parades who knew nothing of what was intended, and from whom the others held it secret.

Leo returned to Leitrim for Christmas 1938. It was to be his last Christmas out of jail for ten years. They had at last started explosive classes, learning how to make Paxo.

McGuinness and his circle stayed in "good class" hotels which gave them some immunity. (Though McGuinnes smiles at this: *We had money to stop only in the cheapest places; however, I always carried a brief case, and wore a hat rather than a cap.)*

Mick Ferguson and Jack McNeela, known as Gibbons, had been arrested in the late summer of 1938. They were in a van loaded with potassium chlorate. Ferguson disappeared to Dublin while McNeela stood trial, receiving only four months. Ferguson was then ordered back to London by Russell. Shortly after that he was arrested and got ten years. *Wasn't McNeela lucky,* they said.

Men were allowed £3 weekly; frequently they did not receive it all. They were encouraged to stay at their work as a cover, and to reduce expenses.

Leo was not aware that they were under surveillance in 1938; nonetheless, he feels MI5 had infiltrated them and could manipulate them. The evidence — McNeela's short sentence; the intended disbandment of the Special Branch in Dublin — points the other way.

Leo operated with the two McGillacuddys, Paul and Denis, of Kerry, Mick Griffin of Glencar, the two McCaffertys, Dan and Jimmy, and Sean Foley. Willie McGuinness says that a picture of Griffin outside the lily shop in Cork was in the hands of the British police after his arrest.

Jimmy Joe Reynolds from Leitrim, who was killed on the border in late November, gave it his unquestioning support. Leo remembers walking down Shaftesbury Avenue with him in the autumn of 1938; *Some will get shot,* says he, *some will be arrested and get ten years maybe, but we will have to go on with it; we have to get the English out of the North.* Leo describes Reynolds as full of wit and humour but terribly sincere at the back of it. His whole conversation centered on the Movement, and what he could do for the Movement. Jack Lynch — brother of Tadgh, both of Dunmanway — had been in a number of English cities since 1936. He was acquainted with Dinny and Jack Duggan of Manchester, and Jack Glynn, and with the London unit when it was under Sean Murray. He travelled forward and back via Liverpool — he knew a seaman — in late 1938 into 1939, until Russell ordered him to cease travelling. His sister was a nurse in London; he used to call on her as Jack Buckley, but it slipped out that he was her brother. Of the campaign itself, he thinks that yes, it had a chance of success, but that opportunities were missed, and good men were wasted. The deportations did not affect them very much, but once war broke out it should have been called off. *Whatever we could do,* he says, *it was nothing to what the Germans could do.*

Mick Griffin and Leo were the bomb makers for their unit, while Pearse McLaughlin from Howth wired them up, wiring being a delicate skill. One operation, he recalls, was the attempt to blow up a cable bridge on the Grand Union Canal at Harlesden. If everything had gone according to plan, the rush of water should have flooded the entire area. But they forgot that the canal could be controlled by the lock gates. The bomb, blowing outwards, did little damage anyway. About eight volunteers under Pearse McLaughlin were involved in the carry to the bridge. McLaughlin blessed himself, and told the others to stand back, but they kept crowding in anyway. McLaughlin was a young volunteer, a protege of Russell, and a great supporter of the campaign.

Jim McGuinness was in the group. He had been a labourer with McAlpine. He had journalistic talent, and used frequently write the Terry Ward reports for the *Irish Press* when Ward was under the weather. He was arrested for a while, but was let go after arguing his case with considerable skill before the Recorder, Sir Gerald Dobson. He made his way to Ireland then where he survived near the top of the Movement until 1942, after which he was interned in the Curragh. He later became the editor of the *Irish Press,* and eventually head of news in Telefís Eireann.

Leo was not involved at the outset, but was mobilised for February and March, along with Sean Keane of Limerick. The main source of supply of explosive material was through Jack Healy, a painting contractor, who was able to acquire many of the ingredients in the normal course of his trade. Others he recalls with him were Paddy Earley and Harold Bridges, both of whom joined the Communist Party, and Peter Campbell of Tyrone.

While shifting some stuff from Camden Town to Hammersmith, he was arrested. He had been living in Fulham at this time. He had been to meet Willie McGuinness, Mick O'Leary and Tony Magan, receiving ten pounds, to cover wages and travel expenses. O'Leary was then residing with Keane; in the house were explosive materials which they wished to have moved. Keane, O'Leary and McGuinness were always well dressed. Leo turned up and got a dressing down from Mrs. Keane for his dishevelled appearance. However, he removed the suitcase of material to the lodgings of Peter Campbell, whereupon Scotland Yard turned up at the door, sought out the case, and arrested both of them. Leo admits that he may have been tailed from the Keane household.

Leo and Peter were brought to Brixton after remand at Cannon Row, finally appearing at the Old Bailey where they were both sentenced to ten years, all of which they served.

8 As indeed are most of the Foreign Office corps, many journalists, broadcasters and newspaper men. Many of the big wigs of banking and insurance have moved up the same way. The British Secret Service, SIS, always had a grip too in the Dublin newspaper world, today more than ever.

9 At Easter 1940, the Republicans numbering under twenty took over D Wing of Dartmoor, staging a demonstration and withstanding a siege. For two years following this, and a refusal to wear prison uniform, they were left naked in the cells by day, all furniture and coverings being removed.

When war broke out they had been shifted to Dartmoor, you could opt for farmwork there. Food, however, was desperate, with the porridge meal being mouse ridden. They objected to making kit boxes for the British Army. Peter Walsh was O.C., and Mick Ferguson was quartermaster, the group managing to stay together and maintain their own discipline. They had the entire wing to themselves. This was an arrangement that was negotiated by Walsh and Ferguson. It happened to suit also the authorities who found the Republicans diligent at any work they chose to undertake. The calm was shattered by a rooftop and arson outbreak at Easter, a delayed protest following the execution of Barnes and McCormack. They had been painting their wing, the official prison colours being combinations of green, white and orange. In the process they were able to use the same paints to make large tricolour flags from sheets. Stewart and Ferguson were removed to chokey. This upset their applecart; there was a general crackdown and separation of all the prisoners. They were removed to punishment cells in E Hall, and because they now refused to wear prison uniform, were deprived of clothing and bedding each day until 10 o'clock at night. This went on for about five weeks, following which they were shifted in different directions. Leo to Leicester, Paddy O'Connor from Thurles, to Lincoln, and the rest in several other directions.

Leo continued to carry on the no clothes protest, although he was now entirely on his own. They thought he was mad. An older warder, Cottrell, who was once on Lord French's bodyguard, pleaded: *Jesus, you can't go around like that, there are lads here who would take the tail off you.* He was put in a strait jacket after that. After a lot of vicissitudes, a friendly warder in the kitchen sought him out; *I need help,* he said. *You should come in along with me.* So Leo learned baking, and helped in the kitchen for three years. All the time however, he continued to wear the boilersuit type strait jacket which he had now adapted to his needs.

From there he was transferred briefly to Wandsworth, to a bug infested cell, then to Winchester, and from there to Dorchester, after which he arrived at Dartmoor. There were many comrades there. They were not allowed together although they had opportunities of meeting, as their conditions had now much improved. They had served a large part of their sentence, and they were now in a condition known as stage, which gave them certain privileges. After a year or so in Dartmoor, they were all moved to Parkhurst, on the Isle of Wight, with the exception of Jack McCabe, who was held back because he was a good tiler.

Some months later, McCabe joined them in Parkhurst, where, with Joe Coilins — they were both twenty year men — they cobbled together a plan of escape. It nearly succeeded, although it is not too clear how they planned to get off the island. By this time, Leo had served nine years and six months of his ten year sentence, far in excess had he been given the normal remission entitlement. When Leo was released, he was given a ticket to London, but told he must be out of the country within 48 hours. In London he was befriended by Frank Lee of the Connolly Clubs, given an overcoat and a ticket to Dublin.

Peter Walsh was also deported. In Dublin he met Brendan Behan and, along with him and some other out of work Republicans, they departed in a van to Kerry, to plaster and paint the interior of Dan O'Connell's house at Derrynane. That story remains to be told.

10 Peter Barnes, executed later, played a major role in getting material; James McCormack, also executed, helped to make the bomb. It was brought on a carrier bicycle by another, intending to reach a power station but realising it was about to go off, had to abandon it in Broadgate.

11 I never denied that if the Germans could hurt England, I would applaud them, Jack Lynch told the writer, speaking of his feelings at the time.

12 Goertz had already been in prison for espionage,through his own stupidity, in England from November 1935 until the summer of 1939. In May 1940, he dropped by parachute in Co. Meath, promptly losing a second parachute which carried a wireless set. He then commenced a three day and night walk to the home of Mrs. Iseult Stuart near Laragh, Co. Wicklow. From there he was spirited by Jim O'Donovan, first to his house in Shankill, where he met Stephen Hayes, and then to the house of Stephen Held, "Konstanz" at Templeogue. This house was probably under observation already as its owner had just returned from a mission to Germany, carried out at O'Donovan's request. Here he was visited by Hayes, but Hayes he found very disappointing. Goertz was not invited by Iseult Stuart; he was imposing on her, nor was he invited by Held.

Two weeks later Held's house was raided, and a transmitter, documents and 20,000 US dollars found in a locked room; but Goertz himself was missing. Thereafter, until October 1942, he lived underground in Rathmines, Monkstown and Clontarf, serving no useful purpose to anyone. In February 1941, he prevailed upon the I.R.A. to help him return to Germany. Sean Brosnan, Johnny O'Connor, and Jim Crofton, making ready to depart with a sailing boat from Fenit, Co. Kerry, were arrested while Goertz himself watched from a hill overlooking the harbour. In October 1942, he was finally got in Clontarf, lodged in Arbour Hill, and a few weeks later transferred to Athlone, where he was held with nine other German civilians until May 1945.

Goertz expected to be left free in Ireland, and for some unaccountable reason was terrified of going back to a Germany under British/U.S. control. On a routine call to the Aliens Office in May 1947, he was informed that he was being conveyed to Mountjoy, whereupon he swallowed cyanide and died almost at once. He was buried in Deansgrange attended by Stephen Held, Seamus O'Donovan, Tony Deery, his wireless operator, and Capt. Charlie McGuinness, the man who tried to lift Schuetz (Hans Marschner) from Bray, and bring Frank Ryan back, and who had served three and a half years in Arbour Hill for his pains.

13 Twenty miles off Galway when Russell died, it is hard to understand why, with a submarine captain willing to nose in, Ryan did not land.

14 Witness today (1985) with Government departments, military, police, banking and commerce penetrated by United States, British and Israeli agents intent upon destabilising our affairs, affecting policy in relation to the North, and encouraging entry into NATO; a triumph in this respect being scored in March 1983, when a secret agreement on telecommunications was made with the Pentagon.

On the other hand, when Danny Conroy was arrested late in 1940, he had on him, according to an evening paper, "the name and address of a citizen of Hamburg". What was it but a source of war news bulletins.

15 Within weeks of the campaign commencing in February 1939, as already noted, De Valera introduced both a Treason Bill and an Offences Against the State Act, preparing again to set up military courts, which in fact followed on August 24th. Both measures were provided for in his 1937 Constitution but his Offences Against the State Act was to be amended again following a constitutional loophole in 1940. The Special Branch was augmented, Arbour Hill prison dusted out, and the military were instructed to commence building a big internment camp at the Curragh. In June the first blow fell when the I.R.A., unbanned following the demise of the former constitution, was again listed, and the Bodenstown ceremony for Wolfe Tone prohibited. The members of the military court were three usually sitting together — Col. Francis Bennett, Col. Daniel McKenna, Major John Joyce, Major Cornelius Whelan and Major Patrick Tuite. McKenna retired from the Court in February 1940, and was replaced by Major Felix Devlin. These men later sentenced to death more than ten Republicans.

CHAPTER SIX

On Active Service in England

Shortly after my arrival to work in September, I made contact with the London Battalion. The only one I knew was Bill McAllister, who had always been senior to me in Belfast. I did not know anyone else then on the London staff. I vaguely recall being mobilised and being told at a meeting of the coming campaign. I was delighted to hear this as it was what we all had looked forward to, striking Ireland's enemy at the heart. The only person in the group then that I remember well was Joe Malone who was working in the Post Office, and who died in jail afterwards. A quiet nice lad, around my own age, he thought only of freedom. One Sunday afternoon we found ourselves mobilised for an explosive class held in Hyde Park. It was the only afternoon we all had free and it was the only venue open to us. We sat there in the late autumn on a bench and upon the grass on our overcoats, and this fellow, I cannot remember now who he was, went into the methods of making Paxo from parafin wax and gelignite, while Londoners and visitors strolled by. I knew little about explosives at that time although I had plenty of experience with hand guns.

Shortly after, I met up with the O.C., Lanty Hannigan of Limerick, the Liar Hannigan as he was sometimes called because of his tall stories. He was a bricklayer, lean and weatherbeaten. His Adjutant was the tall, blond Joe Dillon, known also as Joe Bray. The engineer was Dominic Adams of Belfast; he later married Maggie Nolan, our principal courier. There was Gina Halfpenny of Dundalk, and there was Ned Stapleton. He was born in London and — very important at that time — could pass as an Englishman. His father Dan, and daughter Molly, a very reliable girl, were all deported, while Ned was later sentenced to a long stretch. I met Albert Price, up from Coventry, there too; it was a roasting warm autumn, and I was surprised to find he was wearing this heavy pullover. *I can't help it,* he said, *I have no shirt.* He had come over on a used half ticket which could be bought on the docks at Belfast for five shillings. Gerry Kerr, Frankie Duffy and Albert McNally came over that way. Maggie Nolan came too, penniless.

That is how it was; there was a shortage of money and resources, and almost nowhere to stay except with English landladies. A few of us got put up with our own, and as long as that happy arrangement lasted you were safe enough. It is quite remarkable, but in the run up to the campaign Scotland Yard seemed to have no suspicions. As noted already, they arrested Jack McNeela and Mick Ferguson with a van load of explosives,

gave McNeela a short term (Ferguson having flitted), and released him in November. In the same month, for openers maybe, there was a series of Border explosions on the 28th in one of which Jimmy Joe Reynolds (for a short time O.C. Britain), John J. Kelly and Charlie McCafferty were killed. It was an hors d'oeuvre that the campaign in England could have done without. Sensing something, but still not tumbling to it, the Six County police on December 22nd lifted twentythree, many of them battalion staff who should not have been sleeping at home, and interned them in Crumlin Road.

On the basis of what I will call Celtic solidarity the English campaign was to be confined to England only, Wales and Scotland being excluded. In practice it was limited to the cities; London, Liverpool, Manchester and Coventry, principally, where we had units. One very important safeguard, however, was imposed by G.H.Q., a safeguard which rendered some very inviting and destructive attacks impracticable; we had to avoid as far as possible death or injury. This was clearly evident in the statistics for, apart from the accidental Coventry explosion which killed five people in Broadgate, only two people died in more than two hundred bombings.

The campaign was directed at damaging communications principally, persons, even military and political personnel were exempt. Nor was the use of guns envisaged; we had no guns. The principal method of warfare would be by explosion, using an alarm clock or a balloon controlled detonator; the latter being extremely difficult to predict. To make up the type of bombs that were employed you would need the fingers of a surgeon and the mind of a scientist. Sean Russell or Seamus O'Donovan who inspired the S plan could never have foreseen the claustrophobic conditions working over a gas cooker in a crowded doss house with prying landladies, to which we would be exposed. On top of that, supplies of explosives were irregular and uncertain. You took your life in your hand going to a call house, or even attempting from your meagre resources to buy the components, suitcases, balloons or alarm clocks. A mere inquiry with an Irish accent after these in a shop — it is not like now where articles are on open display upon supermarket shelves — was enough to set the alarm bells going. In the face of difficulties like these it was inevitable that casualties would be high. In the end those who got back to Ireland were the lucky ones; half of our active personnel were caught, and were imprisoned for long terms.

The campaign, as has already been told, was the brainchild of Sean Russell, a Dubliner, Director of Munitions against the Tans in 1920, pulling to his aid Seamus O'Donovan, who had retired from the I.R.A., but who had been Director of Chemicals in 1920. He was supported from distant Philadelphia by Joseph McGarrity, one of the chiefs of Clan na Gael, who, being a Tyrone man, was ever mindful of our fourth green field. The two had come together in 1936 in the Spa Hotel, Lucan, and agreed in

principle to support the campaign. It was not original: it followed the lines of campaigns initiated by the Fenians in the early eighteen eighties and the campaign prepared by Rory O'Connor in 1921.(1)

Russell was not in charge of the I.R.A. at this time; he was under threat of courtmartial, but by early 1938 he had swung sufficient support to have himself elected Chief of Staff at a Convention in April. His own appointees were immediately put in charge; George Plunkett, Stephen Hayes, Peadar O'Flaherty, Larry Grogan and Paddy Fleming. I knew none of these people at this time, and those of them — always excepting George Plunkett — with whom I became acquainted later, I did not think highly of. Just to complete an account of, what for us practical volunteers on the ground was the semantics of the campaign, on December 8th an announcement was made in *The Wolfe Tone Weekly* that the remaining Republican members of the Second Dail — the all Ireland Dail of 1921 as distinct from subsequent Free State Dails — had agreed individually at Russell's request to devolve their powers to the Army Council of the I.R.A. Then as the Government of Ireland, the I.R.A. served notice upon the British Foreign Secretary Lord Halifax, demanding the withdrawal of all British armed forces from Ireland, and on Monday January 16th, with seven major explosions prepared, all was in place.

A DELICATE MATTER

As I say, having left Belfast seeking work in the autumn, I was not aware of these developments. Only in the last few weeks of November and December had I been introduced for the first time to bomb making. It was now our task to put theory into practice. First you mixed potassium chlorate and paraffin wax, a highly combustible combination, in a saucepan, usually upon a gas cooker, making sure to use a wooden spoon as a metal spoon could cause an explosion. Mixing the chemicals frequently caused violent headaches. You then filled a small suitcase with it. To produce an explosion you had to cause a primary explosion, and this could only be caused by igniting a fuse into a detonator concealed within this mass.

But how to time and ignite a fuse? The alarm clock was one way, but more frequently we used balloons. For this you took sugar, sulphuric acid and magnesium, magnesium being very flammable in contact with acid. It was necessary to seal the acid within a wax container within a balloon. Squeezing the wax containers would allow the acid to eat through the balloon, whereupon, coming in contact with the magnesium outside the balloon it would flare, melting the sugar compound surrounding a fuse, which being ignited, would travel in seconds to its detonator, which in turn — the primary explosion — sent up the whole mass.

At first the English had no idea how this primary explosion, in the absence of an alarm clock, could be caused. They did not appear to know about the wax containers. To make these, wax was separately melted and a test tube three quarters of an inch wide — a Dolly dye container was used — was dipped in until a thick layer was built upon it. A pinhole in the bottom enabled you to slide the wax container from the tube, whereupon you sealed the pinhole by dipping again, while the open end, after sulphuric acid was poured in on a spoon, was closed by heating with a match and working the fingers. How to insert this delicate container through the narrow neck of a balloon? French letters were experimented with, but this appalled the Holy Joes, so we went back to balloons. Fancy blowing up the Empire with french letters, we laughed. You took a one inch diameter metal ferrule, worked the neck of the balloon around it, dropped the wax cylinder inside, withdrew the ferrule and sealed the balloon. In a tight lump outside the balloon was taped the magnesium and sugar surrounding the fuse, and to this fuse was attached at short length a detonator. All of this required very careful handling, as accidental crushing of the wax would commence the process causing the bomb to explode. Before placing the suitcase at its target it would be discreetly opened and the container compressed. Thereafter the rate at which the acid ate through the balloon was unpredictable; it might go in ten minutes or it might take two hours. As a timing device, therefore, it was erratic, but there were disadvantages also with alarm clocks. I did not use any alarm clocks myself although I prepared a few for others. A small hardwood block was screwed to the back of the clock under the winder. Two holes were drilled beforehand upwards through the block, and upon being fixed, a positive and negative wire was passed up through each hole. On top of the block was screwed a piece of metal linking one terminal to a two volt battery. The other terminal was on top of the block, and a gap, which was closed when a penny soldered upon the alarm winder, pressed down like a hammer when the alarm went off. The device had to be wedged firmly within a small timber box so that it could not move. Accidental contact by the positive terminal would result in a premature explosion.

I was in digs in the house of Paddy McBrearty, formerly of Dunville Park, who at this time lived in Millford and to whom I was related. It was a safe base and the cover was perfect. They were married there and I lived along with them. Part time I played Saturday night in Blackfriars with a ceilí band. I always took my working clothes in a case with me as the distance was considerable. I would not return to Millford until Monday night.

This Monday morning in February there was this wee fellow, my helper, on the job with me. He told me that Scotland Yard had been at my digs looking for me. They were going over every Belfast Republican whom they knew in London. I realised I would have to go on the run. I immediately

moved to a flat with Jack Rice in Lambeth. I had to leave the job of course, existing as best I could. It would be touch and go from now on whether I would survive. Joe Malone had a friend, a young fellow from Belfast, who used to call to Jack Rice. Whether they followed him, I cannot say, but one day returning to the flats, someone dropped a heavy wet cloth from a balcony right in my path. Looking up, a woman leaned over; *the cops,* she called down. They were ensconced in the flat waiting for me.

I turned immediately. My tools and banjo were upstairs; they would get those I knew, but that could not be helped. Meeting Jack later in the pub — he was married and they detained him for a while but released him. I asked him about my tools and banjo. *Well,* he said, *there's a fellow in Scotland Yard. He says he is holding them for the present but if you ever feel like calling . . .* So, I have not collected them yet.

I was now really on the run. I managed, however, to remain on for about five weeks, still operating, still planting our balloon incendiaries. I even travelled to Coventry which had lost its O.C., and where I ran into Albert Price. I met a couple of other lads there including Jimmy Morgan. We were stopping with Mrs. O'Hara from Belfast, afterwards charged with Barnes and McCormack. Maggie Nolan came in one night off the London train. *I planted four letter bombs en route,* she breezed heartily. And sure enough next morning there they were in the papers, Watford, Northampton, Rugby, bang, bang, bang, just like that. She had nerves of steel. I gathered enough stuff then to make a small bomb which I slipped into the letter box of a bank. Fancy my surprise, passing half an hour later, to find a chap I knew in Belfast leaning against the door. *I wouldn't stay there too long if I was you,* I said. He took the hint, making off quickly. I was heading back to the train, and to London, so I did not care. I was now paired all the time with Maggie Nolan. Things, however, were getting too hot, with English neighbours thoroughly alerted and Scotland Yard closing in. It was clear we could not last. We would be run to earth. So we got enough money together and managed to get back to Dublin. We were directed at once to this Mrs. Byrne, a dressmaker, on the right hand side going up Harcourt Street. Among our first acquaintances there was the red head, Cathleen Kelly, who had been living in London and seemed to have well-off parents. She had a green sports car, one of the few possessed by Republicans, and one that obviously soon became well known to the police. While I was there I met briefly Stephen Hayes,(2) my one and only meeting. I had been sent on a message to Maeve Phelan's whose shop was a little way down the street. Maeve had a green-grocery shop next to Conradh na Gaeilge, and was a pillar of the movement. I don't suppose I exchanged more than a dozen words with Hayes and I never came across him again. From Harcourt Street, I was sent after a few days to the "Count" Heaney's place, Killiney Castle, where classes in explosives were being given to groups of twenty men.

We were under Paddy McGrath, and I must say we received a thorough training from him. He had one hand incapacitated from a gunshot wound in 1916, but that did not seem to deter him. He would be there all day lecturing, demonstrating, and stressing the dangers which could arise from carelessness. I already had some experience so it was not long until I found myself promoted into giving demonstrations myself. One of my first pupils was Brendan Behan. I knew nothing about him then. I found him quite serious and attentive. Along with the rest of us, he stayed at the castle. A few months later he went to Liverpool on his own bat, and was caught straightaway. The castle was our barracks literally, and so we had to keep it ship shape and tidy. Lanty Hannigan had also arrived back, and anywhere he was there was bound to be fun. I remember there was this girl in the neighbourhood to whom Lanty spoofed that he was an engineer. To impress her he conducted her through the more harmless sections of the castle. Shortly after, Lanty was sent south, too quickly evidently to allow him to say farewell. Imagine her disappointment on calling again to find that her "engineer" had departed and no one knew if he would ever be back.

REFERENCES

1 See *Tom Clarke,* by Desmond Ryan; *Ireland Since the Famine,* by Lyons; *The Irish Republic,* by Dorothy Macardle; *Bold Fenian Men,* by Robert Kee.

2 Acting Chief of Staff, after Russell's departure on April 8th for U.S.A. He was arrested by the I.R.A. on June 30th 1941 on suspicion of being a police informer. Escaping ten weeks later on September 8th, he gave damning evidence against Sean McCaughey who was condemned to death as a result. Hayes was probably indirectly responsible for the execution in March 1942 of George Plant. Coached into writing *My Strange Story,* by Peadar O'Donnell, his defence appeared in *The Bell* in July and August 1951. Hayes died in his native Co. Wexford, at the age of 78, in December 1974. His close associate, and fellow Wexford man, Larry de Lacy, mystery man and former *Irish Times* sub editor, died at the age of 86 near Enniscorthy in November 1973.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Accident in Manchester

Experienced men were in short supply in England; Scotland Yard had made deep inroads; others had taken fright and left. In May I was asked to go back as Operations Officer to Manchester. They were asking me to put my head into the jaws of the tiger, to risk twenty years in Dartmoor, a hanging maybe. However, I decided I would go. I travelled on the boat to Liverpool, and took a train to Manchester. Although I had no disguise everything passed off fine. My contact was a Mrs. Coffey in Chorlton; she had a small drapery shop. *You cannot go out,* she said the night I arrived, *as the house is watched.* That put me in a dilemma for I had to leave, but I had not bargained for what came next. There was an insurance man who called regularly. According to Mrs. Coffey he carried an umbrella and wore a bowler hat. She had these articles, so fitting me out likewise, Mrs. Coffey told me to depart from the street and go to another house. No one came after me. I had been taken for the insurance man. Following me an hour later to the new house she collected back the umbrella and hat. But I could not use her house as I had expected, I had to stay away. That was my first contact and it had not been encouraging. I then found digs for myself in Salford and managed to get in touch, through Mrs. Coffey, with Jack McCabe, O.C. of the local unit. He was an engine driver, and had been there for a long time. He was in lodgings like the rest of us. The one who preceded him was Jackie Griffiths, and the one before that, according to Joe Collins, was Ritchie Goss, both of them afterwards killed in Ireland.

I was there only a short while before I met Jack. Things were quiet however, as it was hard to get explosives. What we required was gelignite and, for the incendiaries, sugar, potassium, aluminium powder and sulphuric acid. Jimmy McGowan from Belfast was in charge of a distribution centre in Leeds so Jack went there and came back with supplies. All the stuff now came from Ireland. Earlier on some supplies came from Glasgow but that source had eased off.

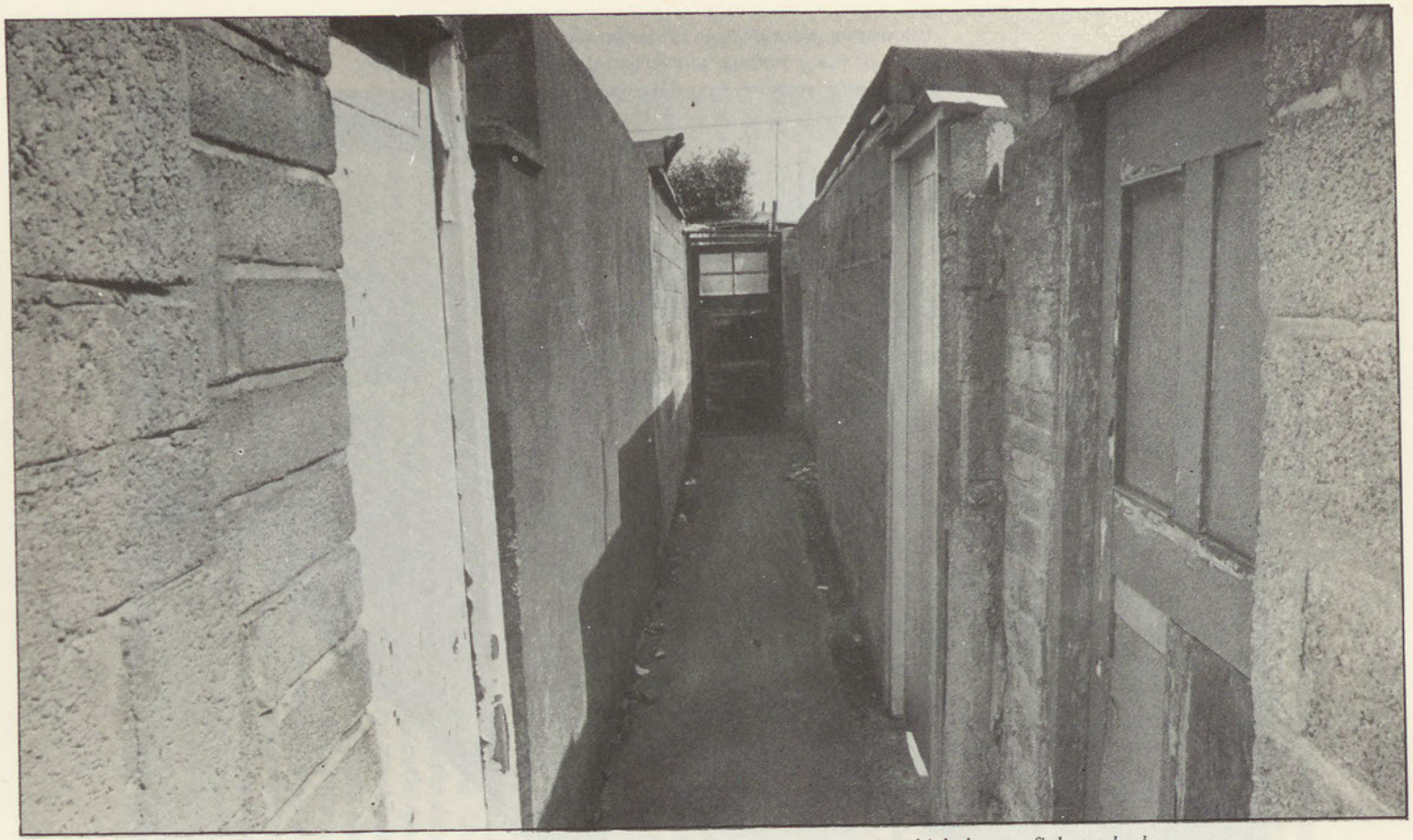
On Jack's return, he discovered to his consternation, that he had been followed. I told him he had better lie low and keep out of the way. Suddenly, however, there was a whole series of raids and Jack was arrested. Stuff was found at his lodgings; he was tried and sentenced to twenty years, so I saw him no more. Headquarters then sent a young fellow called Brady from Dublin, or maybe it was direct from Belfast which was his home base.

I don't know if he had much experience, I don't think he had, but we used to go out, ramble around and pick out what we thought was the best target that would do the most damage, make the biggest headline, and show that I.R.A. Manchester was still in business. We did not realise that shortly we might make the headlines ourselves. We had selected this big store. It was the 11th of July; so right, we said, we'll celebrate King Billy; we'll do it on the twelfth.

That evening we returned to the lodgings and started to put the mine together. So that it could be carried in reasonable safety, we used to form a wax container, put the acid inside and seal it. We used balloons with the wax container inside. However, the balloons, as I have remarked, were erratic. We used to hang them experimentally on a line of clothes pegs with the acid in them, and watch as, inside ten minutes, one might burst into flames, while another might require two hours. This night I made up the mine with five sticks of gelignite and tied them together using a commercial detonator. I then inserted the fuse. At the end of the fuse I taped the little bundle containing potassium chlorate, sugar and aluminium powder, all of which surrounded the balloon enclosing within it the wax container. On the acid inside igniting the mix, the spark would run to the main charge. You might then have two minutes before the explosion.

Anyway, we had this bomb all parcelled up and ready, with the sensitive corner containing the wax tube carefully marked. To young Brady, I said, don't tie it tight, put a bow on it. The upstairs bedroom was warm and stuffy. I had been bending over the stove preparing the wax and making Paxo at the same time. I lay back for a moment on the bed while I considered our route through the streets to the big store. Looking over, I saw to my horror that he had all the strings drawn tight on the packages. *Holy God,* I exclaimed, *that will smash the wax container.* Jumping from the bed, I rushed to open the packet but I was too late. It went up in a flash. I was near the window, so with that the curtains went up too. Everything was on fire. Shouting at Brady to get out, I struggled with the packages hoping to pull the fuse out and stop the action. But it was already too late. The main charge might go at any moment, so, with a bound, I was at the door and cleared the first flight in two jumps. At the bottom of the stairs the man of the house, alerted by the commotion, was standing with his two hands out to stop me, but I brushed past him, jumping the last half-flight and landing on top of him. He fell and I fell too, but in half a second, I was up and outside. It was still broad daylight, so rushing to the bottom of the street, I leaped upon the first tram that came along not knowing where it was going. *To the terminus,* I said to the conductor, fishing out my money, though in fact it was heading for the centre of town. Once there however, I saw a bus for Blackpool. I climbed into it and calmly sat down. I had no idea where the young fellow was; my only thought now was to get outside Manchester, as soon as possible. On alighting in Blackpool, an hour later,

22 Northbrook Avenue, North Strand, Dublin, home of Rosanne Collins, one of the few houses to which the lads had access.



The narrow back passage at the rere of 14 Holly Road, Donnycarney, in which the gun fight took place in October 1942 resulting in the capture and execution of Maurice O'Neill and the escape of Harry. The passage was then bordered by railings and privet hedges.

I started rambling around and the first person I ran into was young Brady. He was unscathed but nearly half his trouser legs were burned off. I could not have him going about like that, so leaving him sitting upon a seat, I entered a drapery shop and bought a pair of flannels at around a pound. He changed into the flannels and we got going again. We moved out into the countryside and shacked up in a barn.

TO GLASGOW AND AUNT SUSAN

I had been told the name of the contact house in Liverpool so we headed there, but when I called to it I was politely told they had no money, they could do nothing for us, that everybody was looking for us and that we had better scram.(1) I now had thirtyfive shillings left and this I divided with Brady. I gave him my aunt's address in Glasgow; I knew she was sound. I told him to head there.

I then got out on the Preston to Carlisle road, walked along till I came to a transport cafe which I entered. I ordered something, sat down, and after a while got into conversation with a driver going to Carlisle. He would bring me there, and that would be two thirds of the way. I got up beside him. After three hours as we were nearing Carlisle, suddenly, without warning, he turned off the road and passed into a British Army camp. I was startled; had he copped on to something? But he just remarked, *I've got to do a delivery here, you can say you are my helper.* We got out of there, and inside half an hour, beyond Carlisle, I picked up another lorry which brought me all the way to Sauchihall Street. My aunt lived in Rutherglen which is in inner Glasgow, south of the Clyde. Sitting in the bus waiting to bring me there, who should enter but young Brady. So we both presented ourselves at the door of her home, and I gingerly tapped the brass knocker. She was all dressed up when she came to the door. *Are you going out?* said I. *I am going to Lourdes,* she said, *but I held back because I knew you were coming here. I should have been on the nine o'clock for Dover, but I waited for you. I dreamed about you all last night. It must have been the lucky caul you were born with that saved you. Stay here now for a few days while I go for a later train.* Bringing me over, she introduced me as her nephew, to a woman in the flat across the way; then she said goodbye and left, but before leaving she gave us our boat fare — about two pounds — back to Belfast. *God spare and mind ye,* she said, as she slipped out the door.

We remained a few days, hoping the heat would cool off, then we both left Brumielaw, arriving in Belfast without incident. On arrival I recognised some of the political gang on the quayside; we both joined a queue, getting off the gangway safely, Brady going one way and I going another, home to Andersonstown. On arriving there, I found my mother nearly demented; *You had better get out quick because the police have been here looking for you.* I made off straight away to my sister's house.

The next day I reported to the O.C. in Belfast, Charlie McGlade, expecting him to slot me in. *You will have to go back to Dublin,* he said, *that is where you are attached.* So back I came by train to Dublin a second time, wondering what my next assignment would be.

REFERENCES

1 Pat Shannon, of Moylough, Galway, was based in Liverpool in 1939. Pat was born in 1899 and joined Fianna in 1913. He met Mellows, Padraig Ó Máille, Frank Fahy, James Haverty and all the activists of that time. He was jailed in Galway in 1919, in Limerick in 1920, and was interned in the Civil War in Tuam. He stayed in the I.R.A.; when Fianna Fail introduced a pensions scheme for I.R.A. men in 1933, Pat would not touch them. *I was always a physical force man; I seen no way to free Ireland only by fighting for her.*

In 1938, Stephen Hayes and Sean Russell came to Galway before the campaign opened seeking volunteers. Five volunteered. Reilly, Garrahy, two others from the city and myself, said Pat, but none of them went; only myself. I was trained in Killiney Castle and Silver Springs, Delgany, under Mixie Conway and Joe Bray. I spent weeks there. Paddy McGrath brought us to the mountains, and had us setting off explosions. In May I went to Liverpool with Christy Conneely, Jack Howell, Gerry McCarthy, Larry Meaney, all of us together. Paddy White from Belfast came too; he was a great singer; no relation of Harry; he went to Manchester. It was my first time in England, and Billy Kirwan had been over before us to make contact. My companions in Liverpool were Mick McBride, a Meath man; Jack Howell, Conneely, Gerry McCarthy from Skibbereen and Larry Meaney, all from Cork. We stayed at Ormskirk, lodging with this man and his wife, moryah we were on piece work. Conneely then went to London to meet Jack Lynch. Joe Deegan, Martin Staunton and Tommy Hunt were there too. The others were alright, if handled properly, but there was no proper leadership. Conneely took a room in Upper Parliament Street; he was our contact. This day I went there; I saw it was watched, so I buzzed off. Then I found this policewoman walking beside me, right beside me. Jesus, that woman kept beside me, and I going this street and that street with her beside me all the time. There was no chance to get out of her claws only to buzz off. So, I see this bus coming, not too fast, and I jumped on; *Thanks for the lovely walk,* I called to her as it careered down the street.

We were to do Aintree Bridge. Bill Kirwan of Kilkenny was to meet me outside the Adelphi Hotel but he never turned up. I had to go back to Stephen Rynne, my man at Ormskirk. I went out then to look up Kirwan, telling Stephen on no account to go to bed, and to see the door was not locked. Jesus, when I came back, the fecker, wasn't he fast asleep in bed, and the landlady had to come down and let me in. *What the hell are you doing here,* I told him upstairs; *You broke an order, you have no right to be here.*

I never got placing any explosives or incendiaries anywhere, and I got deported finally. I'll tell you how it happened. Christie was staying with a Kilkenny woman in Upper Parliament Street, and at the same time he was going out with Margaret McDonald. Now there was no call for that. Her father was a nice man, he was a good man, he was a Mayo man. He believed in the thing alright, but his wife was an English woman, and she was suspicious of her daughter Margaret going with Conneely, and he away with her to the pictures every bloody night of the week. So the next thing, the police watched them going this night to the pictures, and he leaving her back home, and when he went home himself they arrested him. We did not know about this. I arranged with Mick McBride and Bill Kirwan that we would do this job. They went to Conneely to get the stuff; he was picked up so they were picked up. The next day, a Sunday, I went in on the first bus, Jack Howell on the next and Stephen Rynne on the third. I went in the door of the house, and this English one looked over the stairs. *Are you looking for somebody? It is all right,* said I, trying to get away from her. *I'll show you where he is.* Jesus, weren't the police in the bloody house, and as soon as I got on top of the stairs, out they came

with drawn guns. I had a return ticket to Ormskirk so I stuck it in my mouth. They pulled me into the room, whipped the key from the door and tried to open my mouth with it. *Are you willing to poison yourself rather than give the game away?* But I got the fecking thing down; it was cardboard.

Jack Howell walked into it the same way. *How did it happen? Now you know as much as I do,* I said. With that I made a dive at the window. It overlooked the street, and they thought I was going to leap through it. But it was only to smash it so as to warn Rynne and anybody else. We were held ten days in Walton Jail, and then we were deported.

Pat was interned in the Curragh after February 1940 until May 1945. Shortly after that he shot at a Branch man who was annoying him in a Dublin street, received a substantial sentence, but was released after the change of government in February 1948.

CHAPTER EIGHT

Arrest in Offaly: Arbour Hill Again

I had not long to wait. Returning to the call house, Mrs. Byrne of Harcourt Street, I found myself assigned to a training camp at Silver Springs, Delgany. It was a beautiful place with bell tents to sleep twelve fellows each, pitched in a well sheltered field at the back of the hotel. We did our own cooking. It was now late July 1939, and glorious weather. I felt far removed from the nerve-wrecked time in London and Manchester. The hotel behind which we were camped was owned by a Mr. Fitzgerald who was sympathetic to the movement.

Mixie Conway was in charge and there was around twenty men in training. Mixie was quite a martinet, believing in keeping everyone on their toes: maybe that is why he ended in an order of monks. One Sunday morning the camp being largely deserted, I was approached by a tall man carrying a gun and having a dead hare on a cord. *You had better be careful,* I warned, *as Mr. Fitzgerald is expecting a visit from the Superintendent, and you know a hare is not game for the gun. Oh, is that so,* said he, going on to ask a few harmless questions about our 'holiday camp'. Leaving me then, he sauntered away. It was later I learned that he was the Superintendent and that the Gardai were well aware of our camp. We were enjoying the tail end of De Valera's honeymoon, but we could not expect it to last much longer.

Shortly after that, I was sent to Offaly, travelling by train, getting off at Clara, and looking up Paddy Muldoon. *It will take a few days,* he said, *to organise the lads to come to classes.* Meanwhile, I was staying at Paddy's house. There was a guard courting his sister Brigid. After a few days there, he came to me and warned that I was about to be arrested. *I'll get a bike,* said Paddy, *and I will take you to another house.* We met on our way, Walter Mitchell, a veteran Republican, living in a lock house with a spiral stone staircase by the canal. Meanwhile Paddy was calling our first class together. *It is hard to get them on the weekdays,* said Paddy, *as they are harvesting, but I will mobilise them for the fifteenth,* which was a holy day. We brought them together alright. I had with me a kit I had prepared. Candles to represent gelignite, an alarm clock rigged to act as a primer, batteries, wiring diagrams, the diagrams in series and parallel. I found this indispensable for bomb making instruction, as it added a touch of reality. We were in a small farmhouse out in the bog, where we could see for miles around. It was owned by an old bachelor. Inside the barn there were

around fourteen in the class. However, we decided to place Mattie Conroy, a very small little man, on watch in a tree some distance away. I took it that I could rely on Mattie, who had World War One experience and who had afterwards, as a prisoner, joined Roger Casement's Brigade in Germany. I gave him a rifle. *If you observe anything unusual fire a shot,* I said, and we *will scatter.* Meanwhile the class were sitting in this upstairs barn in front of my blackboard on which diagrams were drawn corresponding to the wiring and bulbs I had placed upon the floor. Depending upon how these were wired, I could demonstrate by lighting bulbs the meaning of 'in series' and 'parallel'. I had just begun to explain this when I heard a shout: *Get your hands up.* There were two plain clothes men in the doorway, with guns in their hands. At first they refused to come in, telling me first to dismantle the bomb. I refused to do this. Calling then on the rest to come out, I was left in the middle of the floor by myself, but they still would not come in. Suddenly I made a kick at the clock whereupon they scampered down the steps. However the fun was over and I went out to them. Meanwhile the police went rooting through the house upsetting the old fellow's bed. They turned out everything. To his objections they retorted: *What ails you, that bed hasn't been stirred for twenty years.*

The class was taken away in cars and I did not see them again until the following day in Tullamore. Mattie was arrested too. *Where were you,* I asked him. *The man of the house signalled me to come in for tea, so I left my rifle in the tree, and while I was inside the guards came.* We were held in Tullamore, before being brought the next day before a local magistrate in Daingean. The court was held in the living room of the man's home. His wife was cooking the dinner in the next room, where the kids also were kicking up a clatter. Every few minutes he went to the door, shouting in to her: *Missus, will ye keep quiet; I can't hear my ears.* He wanted to have nothing to do with us and could not get rid of us quickly enough. Outside on the roadway, a scattering of local people waited curiously and, as we walked to the special bus booked to bring us to Mountjoy, they came over pressing sweets and bags of biscuits on us. There were no precautions taken as we climbed in, but we could not have got away. It was upon that journey that I spoke to Supt. Hennon of Dublin Castle, formerly a Republican from Belfast, which I have already related.

We were on our own for a few weeks in D Wing, in Mountjoy, from mid August until early September. With the start of the war in Europe, there was a small spate of arrests. One big find was the capture on September 9th, of our headquarters staff in a house at Rathmines Park. Larry Grogan, Peadar O'Flaherty, Paddy McGrath and Willie McGuinness soon joined us. They were, however, considered of such importance that a plan was put together to get them out. Maeve Phelan was one of those who helped smuggle in gelignite during the visits which at that time were far less rigorously policed than now. It was prepared probably by Paddy

McGrath; I was not concerned at all. It was set to go off on a Sunday afternoon, but it did no damage. Either it was insufficient, not properly placed, or they picked the wrong spot on the wall; the explosion, although extremely loud, did little damage. It occurred in the blacksmith's shop which is against the outside wall, but 'tis said, there is a buttress on the other side, and they would not be aware of that. All I know was that we seized this warder, while the explosives were being placed, and his sole concern was that we would not break his glasses.

I was still there in D Wing when three chaps arrived from Kerry, Mick Dowling, Johnny O'Shea and another from Tralee. I wasn't able to understand a word they were saying. Grogan came out then; *They are speaking Irish,* I told him. He approached them with some curiosity, and I could see he was laughing heartily. *You thought they were speaking Irish,* he said, *and they thought you were speaking Irish! That's the difference between the Belfast and Kerry accents. Any wonder the country is partitioned.*

My Offaly twelve were brought before the Tribunal and got eighteen months each, while I got three years. It was a bit hefty for what they were involved in but nothing compared to the murderous sentences handed out now. We were then brought by lorry to the Glasshouse in the Curragh, where we were to remain a few months. The camp O.C. was Myles Heffernan, a Dubliner from the New Ireland Assurance, while I was camp adjutant. I think we saw the beginnings of the later split in the Curragh Camp of 1941, because when Larry Grogan and Peadar O'Flaherty came in, they insisted on their military status being recognised. This demand was rejected by us in the belief that all officers reverted to volunteer status on entering prison. We were on total political status but nonetheless these men decided they would go on hunger strike against us. It seemed ludicrous to me. I don't know what they were hunger striking against, or what in the end was the outcome of it. At this time, December 1939, there were around forty men in the Glasshouse, including five short sentenced Northerners. Liam Rice, Pat McCotter, Hubert McAnerney, Sean McCaughey under the name Sean Dunlop, and Paul Walsh. On their release in March, they escaped internment because their sentences terminated after the Burke Habeus Corpus case of November 1939,(1) and before an amendment to the Offences Act, early in 1940, which resulted in a new wave of internments.

After a while some of us decided it would be easy to escape. There was a corporal there in the Free State Army who carried communications out and in. It was decided that Mass time on a Sunday offered the ideal opportunity. There was only one military policeman in the compound and one at the gate at that time. In order to try out the system, one of us stayed back sick; after a while he knocked at the door and was let out to the toilet. Next Sunday it was arranged that two would stay back sick. Again the door was knocked, and again, the prisoner was let out. The system clearly

worked. All that was necessary was to obtain two guns from outside enabling the one let out to the toilet to hold up the PA, release the second 'sick man' and then hold up the rest of them in the chapel. The Glasshouse was a tiny place, without any security. Once outside the pair of gates into the compound, with transport arranged, we could be away.

Imagine our disappointment then, at the next meeting planning the escape, following a request for two weapons to be sent in by courier, to receive a reply from Stephen Hayes, Chief of Staff, that, as there were big moves afoot — the Magazine Fort, maybe — it was only three weeks away, we should have patience. As soon as anything happened we would be the first to be got free. Afterwards I wondered could that be another black mark against Hayes, or was it just a piece of faulty judgement on his part. Be that as it may, our linesman, the corporal, was arrested shortly afterwards and sentenced to two years. A further hint of a leak came in the following week, when, one morning, at a moment's notice, we were told to pack and get into Free State Army trucks, whereupon we were handcuffed in pairs and headed for Arbour Hill. It had just been vacated on the 1st December by 58 internees released as a result of the Habeus Corpus action. Staffed by trusty redcaps, it was a much more secure prison than the same Arbour Hill that I had left in 1935, except that there were no Blueshirts in it.

There was full political treatment also, except that we had no newspapers and no visits, and letters were tightly censored.

In the springtime of 1940, with the increasing military activity in Europe, there were rumours of a truce between the I.R.A. and the Free State. One of these concerned an alleged visit by Frank Aiken to Grogan and O'Flaherty, with an offer of amnesty provided the I.R.A. ceased all activities and came in under the Free State Army. Needless to say that offer, if it was made, was turned down. I was on the camp council at the time; we were not informed of it, but we would not necessarily be privy to such discussions.

Seamus Byrne the solicitor, who had been arrested with Jack McNeela, Jack Plunkett, and Seamus Ó Mongáin, our broadcasting crew in Ashfield House, Upper Rathmines, on New Year's Eve by Dinny O'Brien and a large force of police, were also there (McNeela was to die on hunger strike shortly after that, while Plunkett, who went 51 days, survived; they never came to Arbour Hill). Seamus Byrne had the idea that there was still a fundamental constitutional weakness on internment. Whatever it may have been, he worked hard upon it with the result that the Constitution was amended, and the loophole closed; for seven years after its enactment in 1938, the Constitution did not require a referendum for this purpose. A quiet and gentle person, he was unfortunate in his affairs afterwards, never thriving. He wrote a play upon prison life, *Design for a Headstone,* which was produced in the Abbey Theatre in the early fifties.

George Plant came in the late summer of 1940. They knew they had

him for the Devereaux case, but it did not suit their arrangements with Stephen Hayes to bring it forward at that time. They were not going to let him out of their clutches again; and meanwhile they would play cat and mouse with him.

He was a fine big man who had seen service in what is called the War of Independence, had gone to the U.S. and Mexico, and had then returned at Sean Russell's bidding, to help in the struggle back home. He was two cells from me; we frequently walked around together. Discussing our chances one day of getting out eventually, he drily dismissed his own: *You'll get out Harry, but as for me, they'll never let me go.*

He would have been a great man to listen to if we had not been in prison, and he could have unfolded and told the story of his career. He had a droll sense of humour too; about a certain woman whom we both knew, he remarked: *You know she is the sort you might take on your honeymoon and come back on your own.* I remember the physical culture classes he held briefly in the old shed, expounding the virtues of muscle control, until they were banned by the authorities, on instructions no doubt of some buck in the Department of Justice.(2)

Others that were in Arbour Hill in 1940 were Mixie Conway, Tony Magan, Seamus Ó Mongáin, the fiery gael from Geesala, along with his brothers Leas and Gearóid, Sean Dunne, who later became a Labour T.D., Joe Clarke, the Mount Street Bridge veteran, Martin Calligan of Clare, who had earlier escaped out of it, Tony McInerney from County Limerick, Mick Dunne, who later made his mark as an actor, and a host of others. It was as good, or better than you might find on the campus of a university, while the calibre of some of the lads would outshine most dons. The trouble is, that Ireland has no place for men like that.

REFERENCES

1 Seamus "Habeus Corpus" Burke was released on December 1st, 1939, and the remaining 53 internees one day after from Arbour Hill prison. It followed a case before Gavan Duffy, in the High Court, challenging the constitutionality of the Act enabling internment. This loophole was made good by an amendment in March which opened the way for a much larger wave of internments, in May 1940.

2 The series of trials which finally resulted in the conviction and execution of George Plant, are among the blackest in the unbalanced scales of justice of the Free State. Michael Devereaux, quartermaster of the Wexford battalion, was executed by the local I.R.A. in September 1940, on instructions confirmed by Stephen Hayes, then said to be acting in collaboration with the Free State authorities. Conveniently, Devereaux's remains were not found until a year later when, following Hayes' escape from I.R.A. custody, his lorry was discovered in a farmyard near Glenbower and his remains on a hill slope a few days later. George Plant and Joseph O'Connor, already in custody on other charges, were placed on trial in November 1941. A *nolle prosequi* was entered after two days. They were released and then charged before the Special Military Court in January 1942. Meanwhile Michael Walsh

of Kilmacow, and Patrick Davern of Glenbower had been charged with counselling and procuring. They had made statements implicating Plant but refused to give evidence. In reprisal, they now found themselves on the same capital charge also before the Military Court. In the meantime, on the 1st January, Sean MacBride brought a notice of *habeus corpus* before Justice Black in the High Court. On 2nd January, Davern and Walsh were again before the Court, but merely to have a *nolle prosequi* entered so that they could be brought before the Special Military Court.

Order 139, under the Emergency Powers Act, having been made, it was now urgent to impede the operation of that Court. The effect of this order was to permit statements made in police custody — in this case the alleged statements of Davern and Walsh — to be read out as evidence.

On 13th January, the High Court refused to grant *habeus corpus.* The case was then appealed to the Supreme Court before Murnaghan, Geoghegan and O'Byrne. They rejected it on the 27th January. The proceedings which had been delayed before the Military Court recommenced. An attempt was made by the Labour Party to upset Order 139 in the Dail. The principal government spokesman for it was the former Chief of Staff of the I.R.A., the architect of its non-recognition policy, Frank Aiken. (In June 1922 Aiken commanded an I.R.A. group which wiped out five male Protestants and one woman, members of an action group at Aughalane near Newry; a piece of history conveniently forgotten by the Free State media when it came to lay him to rest.)

The motion was rejected, so the Labour Party brought it to the Senate, where among the people who spoke in favour of Order 139 were Doctors Alton, Barnville and Farran, Miss Pearse, Seamus Robinson, Bill Quirke, Cú Uladh Mac Ginley, Frank McDermott and J. J. McEllin, a neat combination of Anglos and former Republicans. The Labour motion was rejected.

The trial of the Military Court could now go ahead to its inevitable conclusion. Plant, Davern and Walsh were sentenced to death; the sentence on the latter two was commuted to life, while Plant, the one they wanted to get all the time, was put in the death cell. Free State Military Police shot George Plant on March 5th, 1942.

It was of Plant that Jack Lynch of Dunmanway said: *A great soldier, and one with a great outlook, I knew him in the good years. What a pity we had not more like him.*

CHAPTER NINE

On the Plains of Kildare

I was due for release about the end of 1941. The Stephen Hayes scandal(1) was now public. There had been shootings and executions of our lads, and generally speaking the Army was pretty well flattened. We were forgotten. As far as the outside world was concerned the Germans now had Russia by the throat, but it was a struggle that, I could see from day one, they were not going to win.

The day came anyway, and as I was let out of the iron gates by the P.A., he remarked, *You're alright, I see no one around;* meaning that the usual practice of having the Branch men meet the released prisoner and take him to internment, did not seem to be operating that day. I crossed a gravelled space to the outer railings and out upon an empty street. I faced a blank wall, the walls of Collins Barracks on the other side. Not a sinner in sight. To be candid, I did not know where I was or how I could reach the centre of Dublin. I had not even my bus fare to O'Connell Street; I would have to walk, it could only be a mile or two, so the sooner I inquired the better.

I looked up and down the street; there was nobody about. I walked down towards where I saw two men standing at a corner. Approaching them I said: *Can you tell me the way to O'Connell Street? Get in the car there,* said one, *sure we are going that way ourselves.* So unsuspecting, I got in, to find myself beside wee Tommy Curran, from Dublin, who had been released an hour earlier that morning. *Harry,* said he, *would you be surprised if I tell you we are going to the Curragh Internment Camp?*

So within an hour we found ourselves driven over the rough stones and on to the most exposed and unfriendly part of the Curragh. It was a harsh day in October, the worst time to see the place. Was I sorry I left my cosy nook in Arbour Hill? I thought of Thomas Davis:

> Small shelter I ween are the ruined walls there
> When the storms sweep down on the plains of Kildare.

Here I was in a draughty timber-sheeted hut, with thirty other men, asleep at night on a hard little mattress upon the floor, clothes on lines stretched across the ceiling standing rigid with cold, men whom I should know, but who were unrecognisable in their Martin Henry suits, grey army shirts, big old boots and beards; everyone during the hours of recreation, walking endlessly around outside, in tight huddles. And around the

perimeter of the trench, the endless rings of barbed wire, and the plains of Kildare stretching seemingly as far as the hills of Wicklow, a blue line on the horizon.

Among the six hundred there were men from every county in Ireland, with a few from England also. The ages ranged from seventeen to seventy. Some were Fianna boys, one was a Land League veteran, while more were not in the I.R.A., but for reasons of principle would not sign out. There were three, possibly more Protestants, half a dozen teachers, the President of the Gaelic League, five all-Ireland footballers, from Kerry, Cork and Wexford, a brace of budding writers, but mostly they were ordinary men from the small townlands, from the cities; the unpensioned, unbought people of Ireland; the hidden people who will appear in no history, and about whom no books will be written. But there was fun too. One Sunday morning outside the hut that served as a chapel, an old priest approached this cluster which happened to include Brendan Behan. His subject was supplication to Our Lady, the Mother of God. *She was like any other woman,* he said; and joking at Behan, *She could be like your own mother! Ah no, Father,* replied Behan sadly, *she could not be, she reared a better Son.*

There was frequent confusion in this and other jails about which priest was giving absolution and which was not. Some conservative priests, and some who were brainwashed by the Free State, would not give absolution after confession, though why they chose then to come into a prison occupied solely by Republicans was a mystery to me. Pa Weymes, from Mulligar, was refused this day. *It is not my fault,* said the priest, *it is on instruction from the bishop.* Rising, Weymes crossed the hut, and entered the other confessional, where he received absolution from a priest, who, of course, had the same bishop. Crossing back he spoke into the first priest: *Tell me, which of you is the liar; you or the bishop?*

Not all of our time was spent aimlessly walking the one and a half mile perimeter of the wire. There was gaelic football, a bit of boxing and crafts. The crafts consisted of needle work and metal work, mostly nothing very original, although some beautiful Tara brooches were made. There were plenty of Irish classes — there were six huts (180 men) that were entirely Irish speaking — but there were also classes in all the principal European languages and in some specialised subjects. Beyond the fact that they were not interfered with by the Staters, we got no particular co-operation from them.

I was not there more than a few months — I was now O.C. of our hut — when Seamus O'Donovan approached me with a plan of escape. Seamus was the former Director of Chemicals of 1920, who had been recruited back into the I.R.A. by Sean Russell, and who had cobbled together the 1939 S Plan for bombing English targets.

His plan was to have the perimeter lights blacked out from the outside, and to make a break in the early hours for the barbed wire, crossing it

using folded blankets as a shield, and then to be met by Frank Driver with transport near hand who would disperse the party. Seamus had his own line for passing out and receiving messages; I was not too sure how secure it was, or how effective the escape plan was, but I was ready to take a chance. Army affairs had now reached a critical juncture. In December 1941, a staff meeting in the Longford Hotel, Dominick Street, decided to concentrate on the North, and abandon all offensive action in the Twenty-Six Counties. Key men from the Curragh were needed.

Well, the appointed night arrived, a Wednesday night in February 1942. The arrangements outside were said to be ready. I had released the hinges on the side door of our hut, a door that was rarely used, so that it would slip off. I had done this the previous Sunday when everybody was at Mass, leaving only one screw top and bottom for removal this night. There was a cover slip on top, but I pinned that back on again. Other huts were also ready; the intention being that selected persons numbering twenty or so would make the run. I am not sure who the others were,(2) but I know that I slipped as discreetly as possible into bed around ten o'clock with my boots and all my clothes still on. Imagine my surprise when little Pat Hannon, formerly of Leeson Street, Belfast, but who had been deported from Liverpool, slipped over with a plea that he be allowed to go too. *I saw you working on the door,* he said, *and I saw you go to bed with your clothes on. Look,* I said, *Pat, I don't know whether it's on or off tonight; I don't know whether it will succeed or we'll get shot down like fools. I'll come anyway,* he said, and he crept back, slipping like me under the blankets with his clothes and boots on.

In the event nothing happened. The lights were always left on in the huts as part of the Free State security, and this night it was no different. They did not dim, they did not flicker out, and the signal never came.

In the morning, sitting on my bed with nearly everyone out of the hut, and waiting for a chance to put the screws back into the hinges, who should enter but Gill, a military police sergeant, accompanied by a workman. Sauntering over to the door, the man started to screw up the hinges again, while Gill, turning around, addressed me: *Harry, the only way you are going to get out of here is through thon gate.* With that he turned on his heel and left. They never bothered; they never said a word to any one of us. The many messages passing through may have been tampered with; that they knew of the plan, and would have been waiting for us, was clear.

We did have a linesman in the Curragh too, although I did not know it at the time, nor does any suspicion attach to him over this. He was a personality we all universally disliked, Thackaberry, the medical orderly. He used to curse you from a height. I grew to hate the sight of him, but that suited him perfectly. It was an excellent psychological approach; it could not have been better. I don't know how he was tripped up, but he was copped anyhow and got eighteen months for it. You can work for the

Brits and not suffer at all, but if you are a Republican it is a different matter.

I got another shock when I came to the camp. There was quite a number of men ostracised. Liam Leddy, the camp O.C. from Araglen, informed me that I was not allowed to speak to them. Now one of them was Paddy Muldoon, O.C. Offaly, and I told Leddy plain and straight that I would speak to him. *I don't see why I should ostracise anyone,* I said. I did speak to him and that passed over. Then there was a new development. Neil Gould, thought to be the principal communist activist in the Free State, was interned and put into my hut. Once again Leddy came to me. I should keep an eye on him and what he was writing. Well, to be quite candid, I could not care less. Neil Gould was in there, a prisoner like the rest of us. Of course, I did not agree with certain communists in there whom, when Russia was dragged into the war, said it was our duty to go and join the British Army. Those who were loudest with that sort of talk, made sure themselves not to join the British Army. Anyway, the people around me decided they would have no part in the ostracisation. There were about sixty of us, and could make up two huts, including an Irish speaking hut. All these strands came together eventually under Pearse Kelly, when indeed, they formed more than half the camp, with no rules against speaking to the other half. But that happened later in 1942, when I had left the camp, out of the frying pan into the fire so to speak, and was on the run, this time for my life.

Sometime in April, Seamus O'Donovan and Sean McCool came to me again, now that the escape effort had failed, and asked me if I would go out another way. Following his release the previous year from Crumlin, McCool had been Chief of Staff from February until his arrest in March; he had been helping to prepare for a full scale campaign in the North, but he was now in here.(3) It would be easy for me, they said, to feign disillusionment; to say I wanted to sign out.

I could tell the Staters that I was finished, that I would give an undertaking. It was so vitally important, they said, that the right man go out with all the dumps in his head, and pass on the information. It could not be trusted to a linesman. *I could not,* I said; indeed I was amazed that they put it to me. But McCool persisted. *I could resign,* he said. *All the stuff had to go North, where it would be used.* He knew where the dumps were, and he would impart this information to me. *You can't trust this to a line; you will have to go.* He told me who I should report to and where to make contact. When I got out, he said, the person I should go to was Donal O'Connor at the Castle Hotel, Gardiner Row. He would put me in touch. When it came to going out, I found I had no money; I might have had two pence in old money. Jack Brady of Dublin was able to do better; he gave me half a crown. Jack was in my hut; in civil life he worked in the Brewery. Somebody else gave me some more money. I had seven shillings, thirty five new pence, on the morning in April that I was released. The Staters gave

me a free ticket to Dublin so I did not need to spend any of it. I made for the Castle Hotel where Donal made me welcome, and I stayed there a few days. The first person from the Army who came to see me was Charlie Kerins. That was my first meeting with him. I told him what had happened, and then we had a long discussion. *You will have to make an application to rejoin,* he said to me on parting. So I waited again, and after another week, the man who came to me was Jim Killeen. *Your case has been confirmed,* he told me, *and you have been reinstated by the Army Council.*

By this time I had left the Castle and gone into digs in a cul-de-sac off Ballybough, with Phil McTaggart. Bridie Dolan, aunt of the Price sisters, who had been blinded in an accidental grenade explosion on 28th May 1938, was in a bedsitter nearby. It was some weeks later in July that Liam Burke and Frankie Duffy arrived. I think I may have met them for the first time since their release in company with Charlie Kerins and Archie Doyle. Archie was one of the main movers in what was going on. Things were already serious in Belfast, where six of our lads were facing a murder charge following an ambush in which R.U.C. Constable Murphy was killed. By this time I was already tripping to the Border, moving stuff. It was there for the first time that I met Paddy Dermody. Along with him and other local fellows, we were already carrying, by hand at night, rifles and ammunition from Carrickmacross towards Newry. It was hard work but we never lost a gun. I was feeling a new upsurge of morale; Charlie from Tralee, Archie from Rathmines, and Paddy from Castlepollard were new to me; great lads and better than you would meet in any army. If the I.R.A. can still produce men like that, I thought, we're bound to win.

McATEER TAKES OVER

Hugh McAteer, in two separate newspaper series of published memoirs(4), recalls the period from the moment of his ticket of leave release from Crumlin Road in November 1941, and subsequently. As a nineteen year old boy, he had been sentenced in Derry to seven years by Chief Justice Andrews in July 1936, for possession of 6 lbs of gelignite, a pistol and some ammunition, contraband which up to then might have merited two years. There were six other top ranking I.R.A. men then in the long term wing, the group captured at Crown Entry. After five years and three months, he was released on ticket of leave, in November 1941. Eoin McNamee was then O.C. of the Northern Command. McAteer became his adjutant. In Dublin, Sean McCool, only recently released from Belfast, was Chief of Staff. He was to last only a few weeks, and would shortly, as an internee — be conspiring with Harry on how to leave the Curragh.

McNamee's instruction to Hugh was to get around by train, bus and bike, and reorganise the Command. The 1939 blow had misfired; now that the Gerries and the British were entangled in war, the I.R.A. must strike a

blow for Ireland. Because of the sheer weakness of the organisation, it was to be a blow without much impact. The decision was taken at a command meeting, attended by forty Ulster O.C.s early in 1942.

Hugh was based in Belfast at this time. Not being known there he had little difficulty in avoiding capture. To overcome the difficulty of identity cards, the I.R.A. had facsimiles of the small buff coloured card printed. The crest on the obverse side was a difficulty, and to overcome this they would split a stolen card — there were hundreds in Air Raid Precaution posts and workplaces — and stick it firmly upon the forgery. As Catholics and Nationalists did not take care of their cards, and frequently had them dog-eared and crumpled, it created a good impression to carry one's card in a special plastic holder, as most loyalists did. This had the additional advantage of keeping the crest hidden.

Hugh, at this time wore no disguise, though after his escape a year later, he dyed his hair black and wore glasses. In ten months in 1942, he lived in only three safe houses, a record surely. For food coupons for Hugh and dozens of others on the run, the I.R.A. simply robbed the extra food coupons required. On a Friday morning in February, they pulled off a coup of a different nature. In a large black saloon, a party forced a car containing ARP money into the kerb near Academy Street, and made off with £4,750.

Hugh edited *Republican News* for a while, a typewritten ten page reportage of events, of which 7,000 copies weekly were issued. It was a morale boost for the small streets. To obtain the foolscap, the sale of which was subject to wartime control, they simply entered on the form the name of any local industry and presented it, when collecting. That was sufficient as there was never any check up made.

To counter the wartime slogan: *Careless talk costs lives,* he ran his own instead — *Make your cigarette butt a saboteur.* There were a few welcome fires in official store buildings as a result.

Sean McCool had been arrested in the South by this time; Hugh immediately replaced him as Chief of Staff, while McNamee became Adjutant. It was the run up to the outbreak planned for the autumn of 1942; Tom Williams and his five comrades lay under sentence of death in Crumlin Road; arms were being moved into position, and dumps relocated; it was a testing time, and it was just then that Hugh was arrested.

Towards the end of August he met a policeman, Sherrard, from his native Derry. The man recognised him and greeted him warmly. Suggesting that he might have some useful imformation to impart he proposed a further meeting at his own home. On the night of the 6th of September in the blackout, accompanied by his Intelligence Officer, Gerald O'Reilly, he entered the small garden of the house, and knocked upon his door. Instantly torchlights stabbed the blackness and they found themselves arrested by heavily armed R.U.C. It was an act of stupidity on his part, and Hugh kicked himself for walking into it.

REFERENCES

1 Stephen Hayes' early career has already been touched upon. In the spring of 1941, mystified by the leaks and mishaps in Dublin, the Northern Command staff, Sean McCaughey, Liam Burke, Charlie McGlade, Liam Rice, Seamus O'Boyle, Joe Atkinson and others, considered the matter and decided that the finger pointed at Stephen Hayes, Chief of Staff, and his eminence grise and fellow Wexford man, *Irish Times* staffer, Larry de Lacy. Doubts had always existed about de Lacy since his role in the U.S., in 1917. McCaughey was invited from Belfast to Dublin by Hayes, and appointed Adjutant General. Almost at once he found himself under surveillance. The puffy, hard drinking Hayes was not the sort of man to inspire, rather one to suspect.

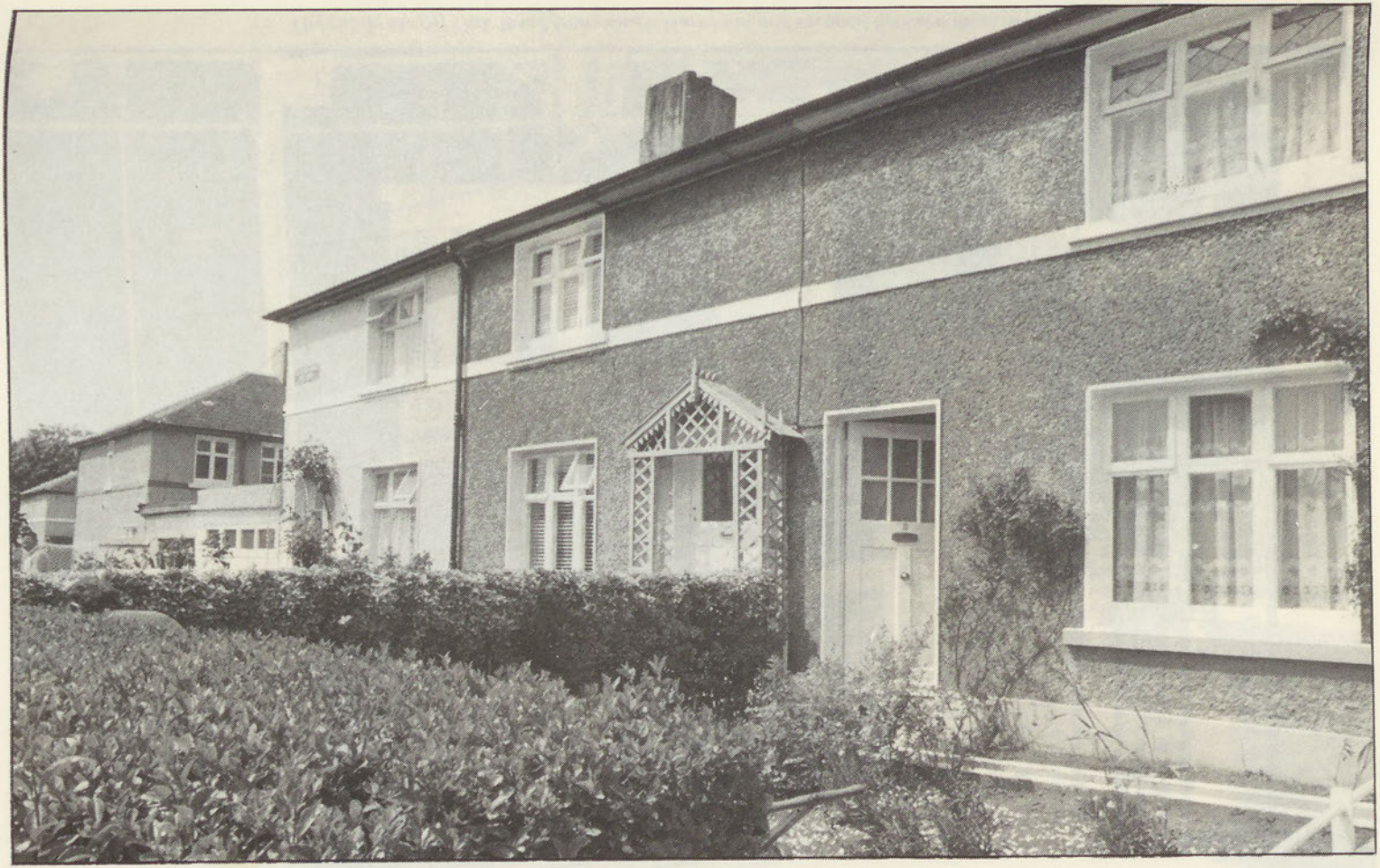
On 30th June 1941, McCaughey, Rice and McGlade arrested him at a house near Coolock, then a sleepy village, bringing him to the Cooley Mountains, north of Dundalk, back to that town, then to Clontarf, and finally to a cottage in Glencree where de Lacy was also held, though not under restraint. A week had now elapsed during which he was being frequently questioned. When de Lacy, becoming suspicious, suddenly made off, the party had to forsake the cottage, walking after midnight to a house in Castlewood Park, Rathmines. There he was held for eight weeks until his escape on 8th September, when he ran manacled to the garda station. While in Castlewood Park, on 23rd July, he was courtmartialed; other officers from Cork and Kerry being brought in to assist. He called no witnesses, and made no defence. McCaughey was prosecutor. He was condemned to be shot, but the sentence was deferred while he wrote a 79 page foolscap confession, and a further 81 page statement on de Lacy. He was manacled for part of this period, and he was struck a number of times with a broom handle, but as a family resided in the house, and would have observed maltreatment, it is not true to say he was tortured. To maintain their cover, the boys had to treat him as a paying guest like themselves. In truth, however, Hayes was now a weak and dispirited man ready to write anything about de Lacy, Dr. Jim Ryan, Free State Minister, Senator C. M. Byrne and anyone else his captors cared to mention, so long as it staved off the seemingly inevitable execution.

Fortunately for him, however, McCaughey was arrested near the house six days before his escape. He had just alighted from a tram in the centre of Rathmines. At his trial a few weeks later, Hayes gave an embittered account against him which resulted in conviction, and sentence to death by shooting. (It was commuted to life imprisonment which became a horrifying five year ordeal in Portlaoise prison, where he died on hunger — later thirst — strike on 11th May, 1946.) Hayes also informed upon every incident and personality that occurred in or who frequented the house. There was also the odd coincidence of the discovery, within two weeks, of Michael Devereaux's remains at Glenbower, followed five months later by the execution of George Plant.

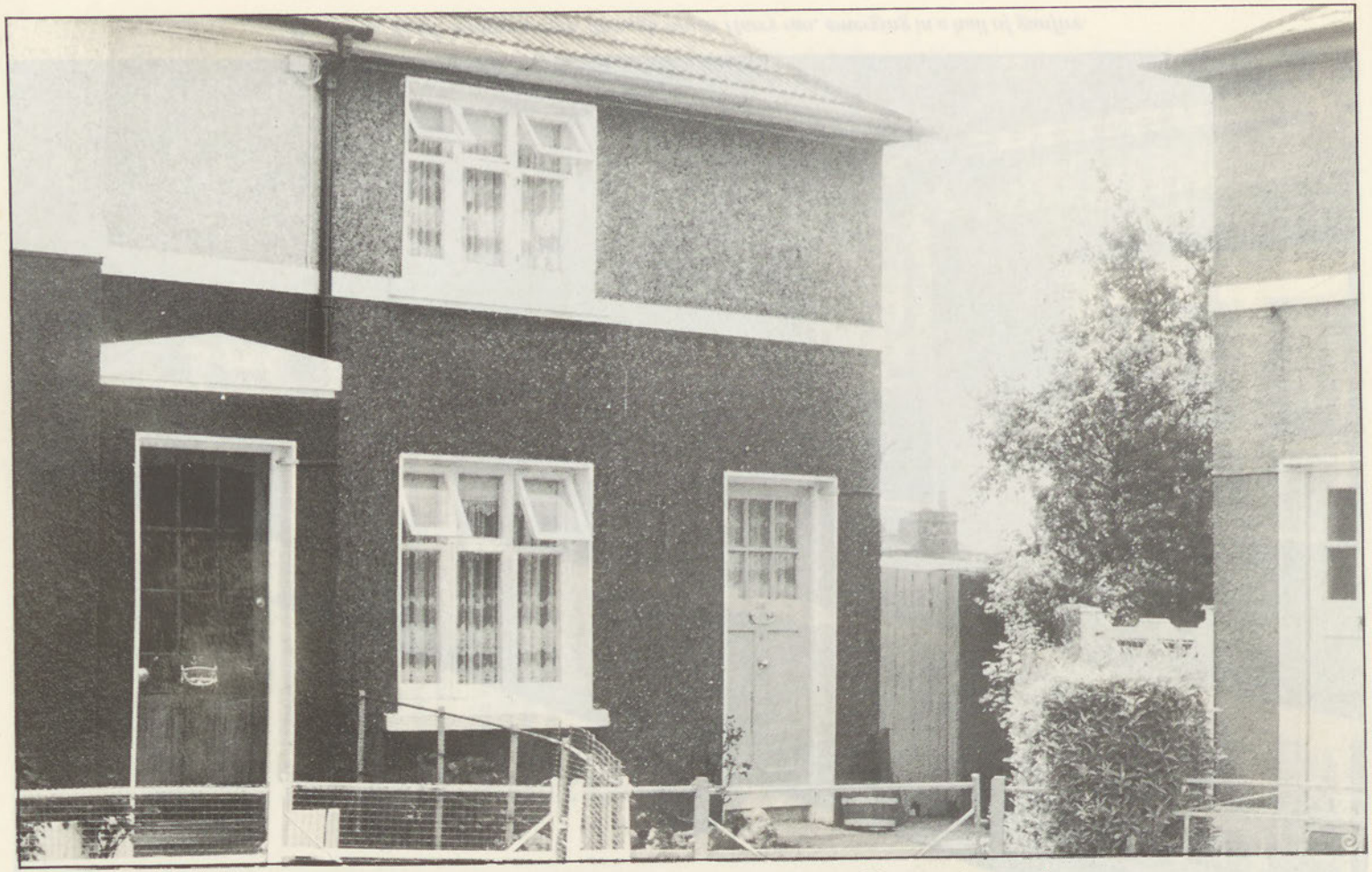
In October a closely printed summary of the confession was widely circulated as a "special communique" by the I.R.A. Most of it is a mish mash; Hayes was having them on, but Hayes was undoubtedly wrong. He did have relations with the Free State government, and convicted himself by his poisonous and lying evidence against McCaughey. At his own trial on 19th June 1942, when he received five years, Hayes in a letter to a fellow Wexford citizen, Maire Comerford, gave a spirited defence of himself and blew holes in some of the accusations against him. He related a more sober account to Peadar O'Donnell in *The Bell,* July and August 1951, as MY STRANGE STORY, followed by a sensational defence *(I am Shunned as I Try to Rebuild my Shattered Life),* in the English *Sunday People* of November 1962.

The I.R.A. leadership was naive in other respects. They thought, having caught Hayes, that arrests in the Free State would ease off, but they did not. They accelerated, and within two years the organisation was all but wiped out.

In the late forties, Hayes, who never married, returned to Carrick-on-Suir, where he was employed for some years as a fishery bailiff. He died at the age of 78, in December 1974, de Lacy preceding him at the age of 86, in Enniscorthy in November 1973.



No. 5 Oak Road, Donnycarney, through which Harry ran, emerging in a hail of gunfire.



The cul de sac off Oak Road from which Harry ran and escaped between these two houses.

2 In the hut where Liam Burke and Frankie Duffy waited were Gearóid Ó Misteál and Tommy Sheerin. Ten months before Burke had escaped from Crumlin Road with Phil McTaggart, Gerry Doherty, Eddie Keenan and Paddy Watson.

3 In the summer of 1943, along with Gerry Doherty of Derry, Seamus Maxwell and Terry McLaughlin of Leitrim, he went on a 49 day hunger strike for release. It failed. In 1948 he stood as a Clann na Poblachta candidate for East Donegal — he was a native of Stranolar, but resigned from the organisation when Clan entered a coalition. He died in the early fifties.

4 *Sunday Independent,* April and May 1951, and *Sunday News* (Belfast), March and April 1968.

CHAPTER TEN

1941, and the I.R.A. goes into Action

Although the I.R.A. had been almost decimated by its efforts in the 1939 English bombing campaign, the mass arrests and internments, north and south of 1940, and the scandal resulting from the defection of its Chief of Staff, Stephen Hayes in 1941, it still had enough punch to launch a vigorous offensive, mainly in the Six Counties, in 1942.

There had been two executions in England, Barnes and McCormack, in 1940, and three executions in the Free State, McGrath and Harte, and later Dick Goss; hunger-strike deaths, prison deaths, raids and shoot-outs. 1942 and the events arising from it would cause the toll to mount steadily.

Things had been warming up in Belfast where activity continued despite the oppression of the authorities. In January, £4,750, a large sum in those days, was taken at gunpoint from the H.Q. of the Air Raid Service in Academy Street. As I.R.A. sympathisers controlled the A.R.P. organisation in nationalist areas, one can assume that it was based on inside information. In February, a screw was shot dead cycling at Durham Street on his way to Crumlin Road. Warder Walker, a Protestant, like most screws, was in the Republican section of the prison, and had been identified among those beating prisoners. In March, Mary MacSwiney died in Cork. Sister of Lord Mayor Terence, she had sought inclusion in the Treaty delegation, had been refused by De Valera, and had through the correspondance columns of the newspapers, carried on an unremitting fight ever after on behalf of the legitimacy of the Second Dail, of which she was a member. In the same month, Jackie Griffith of Ringsend, Dublin, was sentenced to ten years. He had purchased on a regular basis a large supply of short arms from a Free State soldier in Islandbridge. Three girl civil servants, Maureen Twomey, Maureen Cullinane and Mary Spillane, were each sentenced by the Special Court to two years. They had allowed their flat at Clonturk Park to be used as a H.Q. by Tom Doyle, Adjutant General, and because of their position they got the maximum sentence. Three other girls from different parts of Dublin were also sentenced, Nora O'Higgins, Brigid Cunningham and Carmel O'Hagan. Brian Rafferty, from Dungannon, got seven years after an armed struggle near Clady, while in Belfast, following a raid on the Ulster Union Club, and a number of homes in well-to-do areas, a number of important Protestant associates of the I.R.A. were arrested. In the Curragh, still chaffing at the failure of an escape attempt that was never made, were top men, McCool, O'Donovan,

McGlade . . . while back in Belfast on the third last day of the month Sergeant William Fannin, cycling to Springfield Road barracks, was shot three times and seriously wounded. For that he received three months later the princely sum of £150 compensation. It was, politically speaking, a normal springtime.

Then in April, something happened in Belfast which would have reverberations. A young man, Tom Williams, aged nineteen, described as a house repairer, was arrested with five other young men(1) following the shooting dead of R.U.C. man, Patrick Murphy, of Springfield Road barracks. On the afternoon of Easter Sunday, while an attempt was being made to hold a small illegal commemoration, a diversionary ambush of a police car was set up in Kashmir Road in the Falls area. The police, heavily armed and now supported by others, pursued the men who had staged the relatively harmless ambush to 53 Cawnpore Street, a street of little houses. The men had now dropped their guns in a shopping bag, but Williams, seeing Murphy approach from the back with a drawn gun, fished his out and fired. In the shoot-out he was hit five times and killed, but Williams was hit twice in the arm and leg. He was brought upstairs onto a bed where he ordered the five volunteers, now evidently prepared to shoot it out, to surrender. The two girls, Margaret Burns (18), a waitress and Margaret Nolan (16), a stitcher, who had been waiting in the entry to whisk the guns away, were also held. Four months later they were released. The Crown saw Williams as the ring-leader and, whatever about the others, were determined that he would swing. Four months later, on 30th July, all six were condemned to hang by Lord Justice Murphy.(2) All, however, sprang to attention while Williams said: *I am not afraid to die.* After dismissal of an appeal, the date of execution was refixed for 2nd September. Hundreds of thousands signed a clemency appeal, including Cardinal MacRory. Sir Hubert Gough wrote a support letter to *The Times* and was encouraged in this by Professor Harold Laski, the Dean of Canterbury and Lord Strabolgi. Jimmy O'Dea wired J. M. Andrews, the Premier. Two days before the date fixed, word was received that five had been reprieved, Simpson receiving fifteen years, and the others life, while Williams only would die. *Don't worry about me,* he said, as he embraced the five. On the previous day, Saturday, thirtyfive miles away in Dungannon, other heavily armed R.U.C. police raided a small house in nationalist Ann Street in the early hours. This followed a Republican commemoration in nearby Edendork the previous day. While two knocked upon the door, two others sealed the narrow lane. They came upon two young men making their escape from the back yard. There was a shoot-out; two of the police were wounded — one fatally. The Republicans, although wounded, escaped. All of the Rafferty family who occupied the house were arrested.(3)

Four days later a young man, Frank Morris of Greencastle, challenged near Strabane, shot the R.U.C. constable, but in a follow-up was found on

the bank of the River Finn half submerged. He was surrounded by a party of B men and arrested. Three months later he was sentenced at Tyrone Assizes before Babington to ten years and fifteen strokes of the cat. In the month of June, in the run-up to Orange July, the King and Queen paid a visit to Belfast, unannounced until it was over.(4) In the same month weakling Stephen Hayes was sentenced by the Free State Special Court to five years. He continued to enjoy special treatment in Mountjoy. Wolfe Tone was commemorated faithfully by large numbers who had cycled from Dublin, Jim Killeen presiding, with Donal O'Donoghue reading the statement. A few days later thousands attended the funeral to Milltown of Terence Perry, aged twentythree, who died in Parkhurst, Isle of Wight. His brother William could not attend, being among the 300 interned without trial in Crumlin Road, scarcely two miles from the cemetery. In the same month, early morning police searches of Catholic homes were stepped up.

During July and August, there was an obvious lull, both North and South, as activists and sympathisers banded together to secure reprieves for the six under sentence of death. With five reprieves gained on the third last day of August, the I.R.A. readied itself for the offensive it had been preparing since Easter. But a disastrous dump find in Hannahstown, just outside Belfast, was to knock it off course. On 31st August and subsequent days, an extensive police comb-out yielded four Lewis guns, nine Thompsons, seven rifles, sixty revolvers, grenades, rifle and revolver ammunition. A man, Gerald O'Callaghan, aged nineteen, of Cavendish Street, protecting one of the dumps — they were disposed in four farms, owned by brothers McCaffrey and Jordan — was cut down as he attempted to open fire. Another volunteer was arrested and about a dozen were dragged in. It was a major score because it included a complete assembly. In an unrelated search following a tip off, 92 new Thompsons were lifted near Charlestown, Co. Mayo. Even so, the offensive, now somewhat blunted and deflected, went ahead: *The I.R.A. cannot recognise the right of England or any other power to maintain forces . . . in any part of Irish territory . . . and therefore reserves the right to use whatever measures present themselves to clear the territory of such forces.*

Among the offensive actions in subsequent weeks were:

Sept. 2 Armed attack by a column near Crossmaglen.

Sept. 3 Bomb attack upon Randalstown police barracks.

Sept. 4 Early morning gun attack on Belleek barracks.

Sept. 4 Leeson Street/Plevna Street: In a big round-up over fifty men "from Catholic areas" were detained.

Sept. 5 Gerry Adams (16½), (later father of the M.P.), was wounded in a police shoot-out in Sultan Street; another man, James Bannon (22), of Abyssinia Street was arrested with him.

Sept. 6 One police and one Special killed in gun battle near midnight in Clady village; another Special was wounded. Significantly, the

media, rushing to Cardinal MacRory for a statement, were rebuffed with the remark: *I might say too much.* Dr. Mageean declined to say anything.(5)

Sept. 8 A B sergeant's house near Rostrevor was fired into.

Sept. 9 Detective Sergeant Dinny O'Brien shot dead on his avenue at 10.00 a.m. near Rathfarnham.

Sept. 10 John Graham and David Fleming, of the Republican Publicity Bureau, overcome after a gun battle inside 463 Crumlin Road. It was a War News H.Q.: there was a duplicator and arms found in a concealed room.

Sept. 25 Two small bombs exploded, one at the rear of Brown Square barracks and the second in Library Street off Royal Avenue.

Sept. 30 Ten minute gun battle on Whiterock Road; one R.U.C. man injured.

So the month ended with activity winding down. But October would see a resurgence, and the inception of a nine week curfew in nationalist Belfast. However, it must be said that the pinpricks were never sufficiently dangerous to stretch the R.U.C. or to involve the British Army.

Oct. 1 Patrick Dermody shot dead by Free State Special Branch at sister's wedding celebration; one branch man was killed and another wounded.

Oct. 6 Four police injured by a blackout bomb thrown in Raglan Street.

Oct. 7 In two separate incidents, two bombs were thrown at Cullingtree Road barracks, doing little damage.

Oct. 8 Two gunfights and a bomb explosion near Cullingtree Road and at Carrick Hill, resulted in one R.U.C. man seriously wounded.

Oct. 9 Bomb thrown at Shankill Road barracks. Curfew was imposed from 8.30 p.m. to 6 a.m. in the area Falls Road, Grosvenor Road, Durham Street, Barrack Street. Meanwhile Hugh McAteer, Chief of Staff, was arrested.

Oct. 11 Special killed and another seriously wounded following an attack on Donegall Pass barracks.

Oct. 14 Figures given by Gerald Boland, Minister for Justice, for his Special Court, showed that of 623 persons charged from 1st September, 1939, 579 had been convicted, a record 93%.

Oct. 18 Due to overcrowding around 400 internees are moved from Crumlin Road to Derry jail.

Oct. 24 Special Branch man, Mordaunt, found dead after a shoot-out in Donnycarney, Dublin.

Oct. 26 Attempt made to burn down a stone built customs post near Newry.

Oct. 29 Bomb placed at Belfast Harbour barracks does little damage.

Oct. 30 Another black-out grenade injures two police in Belfast's Herbert Street.

The attacks became more sporadic and less frequent during November and December, curfew being lifted a week ahead of Christmas. But the smoldering flame was to burst into life again in the new year.

They gave me their best,
They lived, they gave their lives for me;
I tossed them to the howling waste,
And flung them to the foaming sea.

Emily Lawless.

REFERENCES

1 Henry Cordner (19), a fitter; Wm. James Perry (21), a labourer; John Terence Oliver (21), a painter; Patrick Simpson (18), a sheet metal worker; Joseph Cahill (21), a printer. The fathers of both Cordner and Williams had fought in the British Army in World War One.

2 In the archaic language of English courts: *Hanged by the neck until you are dead, and your bodies buried within the walls of the prison . . . and pray the Lord Almighty have mercy on your souls.* On the evening before, his five reprieved comrades were allowed visit and say a final farewell to Tom Williams. As related to this writer by Fr. Oliver who attended, Williams sat at the end of a table with the others crowded around, supervised by warders. They were too choked with emotion to speak. Somehow, with the priest, he kept the conversation going along other subjects until it was time for them to retire. They had already been removed from the death cells; he returned to his.

Carry on, no matter what odds are against you, he wrote to them that night. *Carry on, my gallant comrades, until that certain day.* They served nine years before being released in 1950.

3 Two days prior to Easter Sunday, at Ann Street in the heart of nationalist Dungannon, R.U.C. men going to raid a house, were gunned down in a confrontation by Jimmy Clarke and Sean Donnelly. Both later escaped across the border. Both were interned a year later by the Free State authorities (see Appendix, page 173). A few days after Easter, Tom Morris was involved in a shoot-out near Strabane. He did not escape, receiving ten years and the cat instead. The mounting toll of Republican confrontations were an added reason for Lord Justice Murphy's crackdown.

4 While there, Mrs. Brigid Murphy, widow of the shot R.U.C. man, was presented and received the police medal for courage and devotion. *The widow and family of nine children,* said Sir Dawson Bates, Minister of Home Affairs, *had suffered irreparable loss and the government had been deprived of a loyal and faithful servant.* In the same month, Judge Black in the Recorders Court made what he described as a good and generous award to the widow and children of £2,000.

The widow of Warder Walker, mentioned earlier, received £1,500.

5 Dr. Daniel Mageean, Bishop of Down and Connor from 1929 to his death in 1962, is remembered as the last and most outstanding nationalist Bishop of that diocese. The other incumbants since then, Dr. Philbin and Dr. Daly, have bent over backwards endeavouring to 'work with' the Orange/Masonic officials and British authorities governing the state. The result has been a near total alienation of their younger Catholic followers while Catholicism itself has gained relatively little in the fields of education, employment or preference. At all times during the thirties and into the forties when governmental oppression was most evident,

Dr. Mageean was foremost in his protestations against it. While these had necessarily a religious edge to them, his strong national sympathy stood out. In February 1942, for example, in his Lenten Pastoral, he spoke in these terms: *Catholics in the Six Counties may well view with dismay the encroachment of the state on the liberties of the individual.* At this stage he made a strong protest against the manner in which a young Republican was arrested: *A large* body of police crashed in on a funeral (of Jack Gaffney), invaded the cemetery, and as soon as the *officiating priest had said his last prayers, and while the clay was still falling on the coffin, they arrested one of the mourners. Neither the sacredness of the place, nor the solemnity of the occasion, was considered. Such an outrage cannot be allowed to pass without an emphatic protest.* He had walked the length of the Falls Road behind Gaffney's coffin. Equally strongly he protested against a round up which brought the number of internees to over 300.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

Dinny O'Brien

Tomorrow stay out of the way! That was the only intimation I had of the impending shooting of Detective Sergeant O'Brien, at Ballyboden, Rathfarnham. That shooting took place at ten on the morning of Wednesday 9th September, only three days after we had returned from the border. They were spoken to me by Archie Doyle, who was accompanied at the time by Charlie Kerins. O'Brien was fired on, in the long driveway outside his home at Ballyboden, as he travelled down at ten o'clock, on his way to Dublin Castle. The shots from a Thompson smashed the windows of his car, wounding him; he alighted and ran for cover to the gate, but before reaching it, he was cut down by a single shot in the head. I know all that from newspaper reports. The men then crossed a field, leaped over a wall, higher up, and cycled past the gateway on the way back to Dublin. They were in trench coats and one of them had a Thompson wrapped in sacking across the handlebars of his bike. At the Yellow House, he turned and cycled up in the direction of Grange, the other two sped on in the direction of Rathmines. Ciaran O'Kelly, who had had to leave his bike in the grounds of Bolton Hall, two hundred yards away, made his way back on foot. The four made it away, but they may not have realised what a lucky escape they had had. The O'Brien bungalow, up a long narrow drive, was at that time on the edge of open hilly country below the Dublin mountains. Although O'Brien had a car, it being the middle of wartime, there were no other cars about. The four men were on bikes; so also unknown to them was a branch man cycling past the Yellow House on his way upwards to cut turf. He saw two men coming towards him, one of whom afterwards he professed to recognise. An ordinary guard attempted to chase them through Rathfarnham village in a lorry, but the vehicle could not be turned quickly enough.

Three had come down past O'Brien's gate at which a small crowd had already gathered. That in itself, although wearing glasses, was a great risk. One of these three turned, as I have just said, towards the Grange, and headed up the mountains, while two sped citywards. The fourth, having left his bicycle at Bolton Hall, seemingly made his way by another route on foot.

Sergeant Dinny O'Brien was from a good family. Aged only seventeen in 1916, together with his brothers Larry and Paddy, he was in the Marrowbone Lane garrison. Later they went through the Troubles

together, and Paddy, who had been O.C. of the Four Courts, was shot dead by the Staters in the fight in Enniscorthy in 1922. He himself stayed in the I.R.A. until 1933, when, along with a number of other I.R.A. men, he was inveigled into the Broy Harriers on De Valera's plea that *we need you to fight the Blueshirt menace.* Within a few years, he was fighting and hunting his own, as rapacious as the most dyed in the wool Stater. In his time, he cut down quite a few Republicans, Liam Rice and Charlie McGlade among them, *shot while resisting arrest,* being the stock phrase. O'Brien built up his own secret network in pubs, hotels, at stations and among the newsvendors on the streets. By 1942, he had turned into a vicious and determined hunter.

Archie Doyle also had his own private sources of information and one of them may have reached into the Castle. When I asked him afterwards, he more or less gave me to understand that it was a case of who got whom first. Speaking to Charlie Kerins one day: *O'Brien is very cocky,* he said. *He thinks he knows everything that is to happen twentyfour hours before it happens, but we shall see.*

O'Brien's bodyguard had been removed at his own request, and it was decided then, that it was time to strike. He was like that. Back from Crossmaglen only three days, he was directing the operation in Rathfarnham.

He raved about the bicycle that was left behind. He was mad about that because Charlie Kerins had ridden it — although not that morning — and the finger print evidence was eventually used to hang Charlie.

He was so cool himself, so meticulous, and so calm in an emergency that he could not tolerate panic.(1) With the North already erupted following Tom Williams execution seven days before, all hell broke loose around us here. Many places that we thought were safe were raided. 12A Grosvenor Square, although an ordinary boarding house, was run by a friendly landlady, but was cleaned out a few days after. I had never stopped there but a number of H.Q. men had.

I was out of it, completely out of it, but it was hung around my neck and a reward for five thousand pounds(2) — enormous money in those days — offered for me.

WANTED FOR MURDER
HENRY WHITE, ALIAS ANDERSON

Every Harrier, every branch man, saw himself sharing a pot of gold, if only he could gun me down.

REFERENCES

1 In July 1927, on a Sunday morning at Cross Avenue, Blackrock, accompanied by Billy Gannon, one of Collins squad, and another man (believed to be Tim Coughlan of Rathmines, who was himself shot dead six months later by undercover man Sean Harling at Woodpark Lodge, Dartry Road; we will avenge Tim Coughlan, said Sean MacEntee), he shot Kevin O'Higgins, Minister for Justice of the Free State. They were on their way to play a gaelic football match and merely stopped off in Cross Avenue. It was an operation said to have been considered by George Gilmore (the brains of the movement, Paddy Brown says of George) but discarded by him. Doyle and Gannon got there first. Briefly held for a hold up at Kennys, the builders in Donnycarney, in the mid twenties, unobtrusive and slight, Doyle survived on H.Q. staff until 1944. Liam Burke can recall one afternoon in 1942, walking in Glasnevin cemetery, Archie pointed at a grave, remarking *there he is six feet down.* It was his only reference to the episode. Years later, he gave Harry as a memento a short Webley: *That is the one that shot O'Higgins,* he confided in him.

In 1980 when he was dying in St. James' Hospital, he called Harry urgently to his bedside. *My gun, Harry, my gun; have you still got it? I will be needing it shortly.* But Harry no longer had the weapon.

2 It is an interesting commentary on the times, Branch men cycling to cut turf and all that, and the enormous sums awarded nowadays to gardai for mere scratches, that O'Brien's widow received a mere £1,330 in compensation, while her two daughters, Fiona and Eithne, received respectively £144 and £180.

CHAPTER TWELVE

Donaghmoyne and the Attack on Crossmaglen

The Georgian mansion and the estate of Donaghmoyne, three miles from Carrickmacross and seven miles from Crossmaglen, across the border to the north east, is mentioned by Todd Andrews in his book *Dublin Made Me.*

"We went to a place called Donaghmoyne where we met the local Commandant named Carragher; this was at the commencement of the civil war in August 1922. I spent a week or ten days with him going around the battalion areas. It was agreed that Frank Aiken should come over to Donaghmoyne for a discussion. The Carraghers were comfortable farmers but the house was not safe having been raided several times. During the visit of Aiken and O'Malley, we were billeted each night in different houses. One night the three of us had to share a settle bed..."

Donaghmoyne House is a two storey, over vaulted basement, small, white, Georgian mansion, built nearly 200 years ago amid the lush land of south County Monaghan. Out the front window across rolling, daffodil filled parkland, covered in springtime by hundreds of flowers, the sombre squat tower of an old Protestant church dominates the opposite hill. The avenue, with its gate lodge, starts near it; perhaps the church on the hill with its vista from the house was all part of the landscape planning of the Protestant Boltons who once owned the place.

To the right of the house and behind it, is a long two storey loft in which some twenty lads slept in late August of 1942. A quarter mile beyond that, upon a small hill, are the ruins of a "castle" in which they had arms dumped. Guns arrived there all through the summer and were then carried by hand twelve miles over the border towards Newry. A large unoccupied mansion a half mile away, since pulled down, was taken over and used for classes, firing practice, and some small controlled explosions. The local volunteers had very little training up to that time but were eager to learn. Most of them knew nothing about guns or weapons; few had ever handled them. One evening this fellow came to Harry: *Ye know I cannot be staying away from my home like this. Ye can't go,* said Harry, *ye can't move out of here. I must,* said he, *my mother won't go to bed without me. Ye see,* said the boy innocently, *I sleep with my mother.*

There was never any jarring or drink at these sessions, though they ate well. One night in the big drawingroom fireplace they roasted a whole pig. There was spuds and cabbage with it, and plenty of buttermilk. Nobody ever thought of drink. Tom Carragher who farmed 100 acres around

Donaghmoyne, was a devoted Republican in the traditional mould. *Break the British connection,* he would say, *and all else will follow.* His family, for generations back, were from the neighbourhood. Now in his fifties, he had a young wife and their first baby. This day after Harry and Paddy Dermody had brought in packages of explosives and stored them carefully, in a dry shed at the rear, and when the recruits party was elsewhere, they sat with Tom and his wife, when suddenly the house was rocked by an unmerciful explosion. Bewildered, yet knowing it could not be their explosives, but fearful of what might happen next, everyone bolted into the hall, down the steps and raced along the drive, where they stood gaping, and watching the house anxiously. *Christ,* said Harry suddenly, *ye've left the wee baby upstairs.* He ran in, raced up the stairs, and brought her safely out. *I'll never be able to forgive myself,* said Tom, tears in his eyes. *Forgetting my own child. Harry, if she lives to be a big girl, you'll be the first at her wedding.*

Harry smiled (though that is how it turned out when a strange young woman called at his door, with a silver-edged invitation, twentytwo years later); he was puzzled by that explosion. There was no sign of damage, no splinters, no shattered windows in the house. It had come from the front; not from the rear. What was it? Then their attention was taken by a huge hole ploughed up in the parkland. Advancing cautiously over to it, the mystery solved itself. There, deeply buried in a crater in the ground was a huge hunk of burnt-out rock, a meteorite; a body from outer space. It had come millions of miles and landed yards from where they had been sitting. In the circumstances they decided to keep quiet about it; no one need know. The Donaghmoyne meteorite was kept from the newspapers.

We were one of a number of columns training to attack the border from Newry across to Belleek, on up to Clady and Lifford and into Derry. All the arms and material we could spare had been sent to hideaways in Belfast and other places, scattered throughout the North. It was hoped that, if there were to be executions in the Crumlin, then the resultant splatter of border attacks would set the statelet aflame. In the middle of a major war, and with the Americans on the verge of arriving, this may have been too much to expect, but we lived in our little world; to the North was English held Ulster; upset that, and the old moulds in Ireland would finally be broken.

In the last few weeks before the date fixed for execution — first of the whole six, then Tom Williams only — we waited, biding our time. No one wanted to be caught doing anything untoward while public agitation prevailed, but once that was over, and no hope remained, the attacks long planned would take place. On the 21st August the legal appeal was dismissed before Babington, Andrews and Brown, and a new date, September 2nd fixed. Three days before that, the five were reprieved for long sentences, while only Tom Williams was set to hang. We knew they would go through with that, so we made our plans accordingly. Crossmaglen barracks would be heavily shot up that morning, and if

things went well, we hoped to capture a British officer and hang him.

By seven a.m. on the 2nd September, we were seated in an open lorry with a party in a car ready to take up the rear. The boys had rifles, there was at least one Thompson, and a Lewis gun. Many of the lads wore Easter lilies, with peaked caps pressed tightly on their heads. In appearance they differed only slightly from a column of the I.R.A. back in the Black and Tan days. Paddy Dermody was O.C., but besides him we had Archie Doyle, Frankie Duffy, Liam Burke, Mick Quill, Liam Dowling and Maurice O'Neill. Some of the most important people still active in the I.R.A. were in that column. Liam Burke was in the car, along with Mick Quill, the driver and Archie Doyle. Apart from Frankie and myself, few of those on the lorry had any real gun experience. We had a mine on board with the usual bunch of matches at the end of the fuse. My heart was in my mouth when one of the lads' boots came down heavily beside it. *Move back,* I said, *or we'll all go up.*

Right at the start a hitch occurred. A guard in civvies arrived from Carrickmacross. We arrested him, but agreed to release him if he took no action. He promised he would say nothing and he was released, but of course, as events proved, Donaghmoyne House would be high on the list of Free State targets when news of Crossmaglen broke. So it was; they raided within days, finding nothing much, but getting our Lewis gun where we had concealed it in a quarry.

By eight o'clock we were on the road heading for the tiny northern hamlet of Cullaville. It was on the route north of there towards Crossmaglen, a mile away, that we were passed by an R.U.C. car with two occupants. They braked sharply on the gravel surface, as did we, then they swung around and within seconds, firing burst out on both sides. It was sporadic; I was out and off the lorry, moving up. Archie Doyle was out of the car, a Thompson in his hand. *Lie down, Harry,* he shouted, as he commenced firing.

The noise of the Thompson demoralised the police, one of whom had been cut with splintered glass, and they surrendered. One of our lads also was hit in the back, and later had to be rushed to Carrickmacross hospital. What were we to do with the sergeant and the policeman? I know what would happen these days, but at that time we had not been battle conditioned. We rendered their car immobile, we disarmed them, but we left them their uniforms. In the circumstances we could not pursue the attack. The firing would have been heard in Crossmaglen, and every barrack and troop in Co. Armagh would have been alerted. The element of surprise was gone; if we went in now we would not have a chance of taking the barracks. It was likely too that the Free State forces would move against us, would close in on Donaghmoyne, and arrest the lot of us. We did not want that to happen; we did not want twenty or more of us to end up behind bars. The two vehicles were turned around and we headed back.

The house was hastily evacuated by the party; the injured lad was conveyed away in the car. Arms were brought to a number of safe places. With the exception of the Lewis, nothing was found after, nor were any of the volunteers brought in. Everyone got away. However, it was a disordered retreat, in a manner of speaking, for some of us. Duffy and myself walked the rail line into Dundalk, ten miles distant. He was wearing only light shoes and, as he was rather short, he frequently understepped between the sleepers, causing him to land on the sharp flints. He kept swearing, swearing; all the time in a hoarse whisper. I paid no attention. At Dundalk we got a train for Dublin. Liam Burke and Liam Dowling made off in the opposite direction, ending up near Shercock. At a house along the way they stopped the night, telling the people they were two school teachers finishing a walking holiday, and were now heading towards Dublin. They caught a bus from Shercock, alighting on the outskirts, and heading for Chrissie Dolan's flat, near the North Strand. Eventually we all came together at 12A Grosvenor Square, the friendly boarding house in Rathmines, where they shared a large attic room. I did not stay there myself. I remember however, there was one chap there that Charlie Kerins was not fond of. He had a habit of spending too much time doing himself up, creams and hair oil being very much in evidence. *What did you do Christie?* Charlie addressed him. *When it was all over, I pointed my rifle upwards and fired a shot in the air.*

Charlie looked at him witheringly. *Pity you didn't fire it up your backside.*

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

Paddy Dermody is Shot Dead at his Sister's Wedding

I had known Paddy now for the four months since I had left the Curragh, and was well used to his company. We travelled everywhere on push bikes, around the border, and back and forth to Dublin. Paddy was well known in his own area, which was now Cavan, and also in Louth, Westmeath and Longford. We called to houses where I would not know the people; we went along roads and up boreens which I could never have found my way back to. The family name originally was MacDermott — Mac Diarmada — corrupted to Dermody. They had formerly lived at Hilltown near Castlepollard where the father had built himself a house. In the mid-twenties, desperately poor, he had tried to sell the house and bit of land for £500, and emigrate, but when he failed to do so, remained at home. Pat's mother died about this time, leaving four young girls and four boys. Growing up like that as part of a large young family made him one with the countryside, its hedgerows and its people, in the hungry lands of north Longford and Cavan. There was nowhere he went that he was not known; he was welcome everywhere. The fact, however, that I was now his constant companion may have been a liability for him. I was known to be one of the people behind the resurgence; they were after me, they were after Paddy.

Paddy was O.C. of the Eastern Command and on the morning of the day that he was to be shot dead, we left Gaughran's house in the Demesne, Dundalk, where we had stayed the night before. Judith, one of the daughters of the household, later married Paddy Duffy, who earlier on had spent a long while in the Curragh. A year before, Stephen Hayes had passed through her house, a prisoner, on his way back from the Cooleys to Glencree. Judith's brother Willie, had been involved in the English campaign, and had been arrested and sentenced to ten years. Three years before the expiry of the sentence, he was released, released to die of T.B.(1). So you could say it was a Republican household, and for once I felt safe. So safe that I felt like singing:

> Eileen Og, for that the darling's name is,
> Through the barony her features they were famous,
> And if we loved her, sure who was there to blame us,
> For wasn't she the pride of Petravore.

Anyway, that was it as we set out on our bikes early on the last day of September, from Dundalk, heading towards Cavan. There was to be a wedding of Paddy's sister Jane, later Mrs. Tuite; but I did not know of any intended wedding as we set out, and certainly would not have been keen to attend one. We passed through Kells, where we had a drink in a pub then owned by Bartle Maxwell. Jack Brady, an uncle of the Maxwells, came with us then, cycling as far as Lough Bawn.

We were heading for Pat Monaghan's near Mount Nugent, and as the day wore on, it grew overcast and dark. We had got off and were wheeling our bikes up this hill, and I will always remember what happened next. At a slow bend of the road, I suddenly looked across, and there was a woman sitting on the ditch. I passed a remark to Paddy: *Look, there is a woman sitting on that ditch.* It was cold and very dark, but you know what it is like in the country, so we both called out, *goodnight,* and passed on. Then I thought, *How did we see her?* We carried lights, but they were not on. It seemed so odd to me that I said to Paddy: *Look, I am going back, I am going back because I cannot understand it.* We both went back and used our lamps for yards as we scanned the road, but we could see no sign of anybody, nor was there an easy way for an ordinary person to make off. We both concluded that we had seen a ghost.

Eventually we reached Pat Monaghan's, and were welcomed by the mother and her two sons. I was a stranger to her, but Paddy knew her well. We were now close to Lisnacanigan, Lisnacanica, as it appears sometimes. It is five miles south west of Ballyjamesduff — the 'Duff — and a mile and a half from Kilnacrott Abbey and Mount Nugent. We had come about forty miles from Dundalk, and speaking for myself anyway, I was tired and cold. I was glad to get sitting down in front of a warm turf fire and to have a mug of tea in front of me. We were talking a while, then Paddy rose, he went ferreting a change of clothes that he knew would be here, shirt and socks. He commenced to shave. *In the name of God, where are you going?* said Mrs. Monaghan. *I am going to the wedding,* said Paddy, laughing back at her. *My sister, Jane, she got married this morning. God of glory,* said she, *don't go there, the police and detectives are all over the place.*

Half joking, Paddy reminded her of a previous occasion when he had disarmed the sergeant of Castlepollard: *Are you looking for me,* I asked him, *but I had a gun in my hand, and his was still in his pocket.* While Paddy was outside, to make conversation, I related the story of the *bean sidhe,* the woman in white, whom we had seen upon the ditch. There was a long silence, then she said solemnly, *Someone will die tonight. That's a sign. But it depends on you. If you don't go to the wedding, Paddy will not go.*

I have no intention of going to any wedding, I said. *We are after cycling forty miles.* I was tired and I had no notion of going. Paddy came in at that moment, all cleaned up. *Don't be going to the wedding,* said I to Paddy, *sure you'll see them time enough. It's all right,* said he cheerfully, *we'll slip in and*

The house, 135 Malahide Road from which Harry emerged dropping Kelly's overcoat.

50 Upper Rathmines Road, home of Dr. Kathleen Murphy and her husband, actor Paul Farrell, where the lads were always welcome. Charlie Kerins was arrested here in June 1944 and subsequently executed.

slip out; there is nothing to worry about. You had a sign tonight, son, said the old woman, *and someone is going to die.*

But Paddy laughed it off. *Of course, if you are afraid?* he said to me banteringly. He was keen to go. *Look,* said I, *I would rather sit here.* But in the end, I got cleaned up and made ready to cycle a mile to where the ceilí house of Mick Tuite,(2) Jane's new home was. I did not know where we were going. It was very dark, but we had not far to travel. I remember going through a gate and into a field where the bikes were hidden.

Of course, thinking about it afterwards, I realised how easy it was to position police in concealed positions to observe who was arriving. We thought we were making a careful approach, but in fact when a house is staked out, as this one definitely was, you might as well walk up to it with all lights on. To reassure me, however, Paddy remarked: *We are in the middle of nowhere at the end of a long boreen; there are local lads positioned around the house. No one can get near.* I am convinced from what happened later, that some of the armed detectives were hidden from early on in an outhouse. It was then a low eaved thatched house — it has been raised and slated since — set within a paved yard of small outhouses. Light shone out from the tiny windows; the yard was in darkness. We went over, lifted the latch and entered. Just within the porch was an open hearth fire; across on the left was a scullery, while on the right was a door into a parlour. They were low ceilinged timber sheeted rooms lit with oil lamps. It was midnight, but the party was going in great style; everywhere was packed. Finnegan, the fiddler, was playing jigs and reels from the hob. I commenced to move along behind Paddy; he had seen his father, so I held back, still close to the door. We could not have been there three minutes when the same door was flung open and a bunch of men with guns burst in. Bullets flew and Finnegan, the fiddler, was struck in the leg. They were shouting something while the women cried out and screamed. Paddy turned; he had a gun in his hand, his .38 revolver, and he started shooting. They fired back. I pulled my gun, my Parabellum, and opened up also, firing at them. With that the bunch firing from the doorway retreated while everyone else, guests and parents, threw themselves on the floor, hid behind furniture, or retreated to the scullery. I ran into the room where Paddy was; it was no more than twelve feet by twelve, with a tiny up and down window into the yard. It was bright, with a big oil lamp resting on a table placed at the window. I slammed the door, while his sister Cathleen stood against it on the other side. *Put the light out quick,* I shouted. As he leaned over to blow down the globe, the way you put lamps out, he was shot through the back from the yard. That was that; they had the place staked out all right, and Paddy's body falling over it, had put out the light anyway. I don't know what made me do it then, but, with my gun firing, I crashed head first through the top half of the same tiny window on to the street, as the yard in front of a farmhouse is called. As I lay flat on my face, there were gun flashes in the

darkness from everywhere. The bullets passed over me burying themselves in walls. I could see nothing, but I fired again in two directions, then ran wildly forward, stumbling and still seeing nothing, out between buildings, across a small paddock, smashed through a hedge, careless whether there was someone already positioned there to shoot me or not, ran on again, and crossed a field still running. I must have covered nearly a quarter of a mile, when I fell, I was in a shuch, crossing watery bottoms that lay between me and a bye-road leading past Kilnacrott. Of course, I did not know where I was. They were still firing around the house, and shouting. I stood up to move on again, but I could not. I collapsed, feeling sickish. What is wrong with me? I thought. I was in a clump of whins, a dense covert; I just lay there.

Years later, on going back, I was to see that I had reached a low hump of whins to the east, no more than half a mile from the house. I crawled further in and lay there. I must have passed out for a while, but after a time I woke up. It was still night-time and cold. I lay on. I did not dare move. I lay on until daylight came and all of the next day. I had a chance now to examine what was wrong with me, why I seemed wet, why I kept passing out. I had two bullet wounds in my right leg. One of the wounds was still bleeding, I tried to tie a hankie as tightly as I could around it. It was too short. I still did not dare move. There were voices all around. On the roadway, less than a hundred yards away, I could hear lorries. The army had been brought in to scour the countryside. I lay there hoping that I had left no blood traces behind. Tracker dogs were not in use at that time; had they been, they would have got me. Darkness eventually came again about seven o'clock. This was my second night in the whins; I knew I would have to move soon or I would die. There was this old shed a hundred yards away, so I crawled towards it. It was now nearly twentyfour hours after the raid and I guessed this place had already been checked out. Anyway, I had to get in. It was very cold now and I was freezing. I pushed open the door, entered and lit a match. It was a dead giveaway if anyone was looking, but I had to get heat. There was a few twigs on the floor, so I lit a wee fire and huddled over it. But I could get no heat from it; it went out quickly, so the following morning early I moved again. I crossed another field cautiously, hid again in a clump and waited. I heard a movement near me. It must be them. My gun was in my hand, so I advanced out and confronted a soldier; a Free State soldier. He was more surprised than I was so I told him softly not to move. He stared at me, just stared at me, not believing, then he said: *Are you the man they are looking for? Yes,* I said, *I am the man; what has happened? One detective was shot dead,* said he, *another wounded, and the chap that was along with you is also dead.* He mentioned his name too, Paddy Dermody, in a familiar sort of way, adding, *You'll never get away; they have cordons out for you; they're everywhere.*

I did not know what to do. I recognised only too well the truth of what

he said. Besides, I could only see him now in a daze as I felt another faint coming on. He talked on; I saw him through swaying eyes. I still had him covered as I tried frantically to think. Eventually he said he would have to report back to his unit; he could not wait there, but, he added, *I can help you, that is if you will trust me.* He could see that I had been shot and that I was nearly done. With that, he offered his shoulder to me, so between walking and half carrying, we crossed another two fields and entered a barn. A ladder led up through a trap door in one corner. How we got up into that loft, I do not know, but there was hay stored there. He pushed me up in front of him and I threw myself down, to be quite candid, I did not care what happened to me. I just lay there done to the world. *I'll have to go back now,* he said. *You'll bring the soldiers, I suppose.* I didn't care. He looked hurt. *No, no,* said he, *I won't, I promise you that. Let me go back and report now and when it gets dark I will be back.* I lay there and waited. The day passed, and, sure as anything, back he came. He had some milk in a can and a piece of bread. It was the only food I had tasted for forty-eight hours. He came back regularly then, morning and evening, each time bringing scraps of food.

With water and a cloth he washed my leg. That was the only attention the wounds got. Then, he asked, *Can you ride a bike? Things are not too bad now, but you will have to leave this area. I cannot travel,* I said. *If I go out on the road, I will get caught. That is all right,* said he; *They know me, if I am along with you, no one will ask questions.*

I don't know how long I was there but by now he was bringing me tea and sandwiches. I felt a little better. Early this morning anyway, he came, and he brought me to his own house. His mother was there and she made me a feed of bacon and eggs. I was starving; I was never so hungry, and I ate the lot. I washed then and shaved, and got my clothes cleaned. He arrived then with two bikes, I mounted one and the two of us rode off together and we never stopped until we reached Brown's house in Swilly Road, Cabra, where I was welcomed by his younger brother John; Paddy himself being out. He was on short parole, and while on parole, worked as a stone mason on the British war memorial at Island Bridge. (During this time, he was being closely tailed by a harrier, Paddy Ryan, which meant it was doubly unsafe for Harry to lodge in their house. Ryan had been in the I.R.A. 'till 1933). The soldier came every foot of the way, and he would not even come in for a cup of tea. *No,* said he, *I will have to report back;* and with that he started again for Cavan with the two bikes, riding one and wheeling the other by his left hand the whole seventy miles homeward. I often wondered what eventually became of Reilly, because that is what I think his name was, but I never met him again.

I was broken-hearted about Paddy. I had known him only a few months but held him in high regard. The country people in his own area loved him. He had a great way with them, and was a powerful organiser. To give an

example, he had an arrangement with the road gangers that he could use their caravans, which used to be parked beside the roadway. The key would be left and inside were sandwiches and a bottle of milk. We could not light a light, and we would have to be off early in the morning. He organised the border area, he organised the dumps, and he organised the transfer of arms that were made to Belfast, but he rarely went there himself.

Brown's house in Swilly Road was a small three bedroomed house, part of a Corporation estate. Paddy himself was on parole from the Curragh, so I could not stay there long; he brought me to Upper Gardiner Street, opposite the church, where his sister, Bridie Rogers, had a flat. I was attended there by Dr. O'Connor from Mountjoy Square. But I could not remain in the small flat for long, so I moved again to a bed and breakfast house in the same street. After about three nights there, as I had no money, I was collected by Liam Burke and brought on the bar of his bike(3) to Dr. Kathleen O'Farrell's house at 50 Upper Rathmines Road. It was a tall Georgian house, part of a terrace, with a hall door entrance and a basement door which we used. I had been there off and on before but it was now too risky and exposed for all of us to remain there.(4)

REFERENCES

1 The experience of the Gaughran and Duffy families was and is typical of the State violence and oppression used against Republicans, and, until matters are rectified in a free Ireland, bound to engender opposition. Paddy, whom Judith married in 1948, was interned without charge from 1941 to 1945. Thereafter for a long time he was debarred from any state or semi-state employment.

Paddy Dermody first came to her house in 1940, accompanied by Dick Goss, who was himself executed in Portlaoise in August 1942, for resisting arrest a few weeks earlier in Co. Longford. Dickie had been a lifelong friend of Willie Gaughran, then serving ten years in England. She remembers Paddy bringing a bag of sweets made up in a wee twist of newspaper, the way that bags used to be. It was so nice and innocent.

On the morning of their departure, she did not know that he was bound for his sister's wedding. *That was one thing; I never asked when a lad left the house where he was going or when he might be back.* Dickie Goss was her first love, and is still the best remembered boy from those days. I was shown a snapshot of him and Willie standing with his bicycle; it was a picture of two typical, nice tallish chaps of around 22. Both are buried in the cemetery at Dundalk. Ritchie had gone to England early in 1938, in preparation for the bombing campaign, with her brother and Gerry Halfpenny. Willie was arrested in March 1939, and got ten years in Camphill Prison, Isle of Wight. He contacted T.B. there. Three years before the expiry of the sentence, he was released to die. Ritchie used remark to her how he regretted that they had not both been taken together. *He is in jail, and I am free.*

She gave him the bicycle, and he had it when Casey's of Longford was surrounded by Free State police and soldiers in July 1941, and Ritchie arrested after a shoot-out.

On the eve of his execution, she stayed in Dublin with Mollie Gleeson at *An Stad,* in North Frederick Street. She could not get in to see him in Mountjoy. Nor could she confirm for me the story, although she had heard it, that he was escorted in the police car to Portlaoise preceded by a lorry carrying his own coffin. Jim Savage of Cork, has the same story. It could be true, for the meanness of the Free State was shown in another way. A farewell letter he sent to her, and letters to others around Dundalk, were not released until seven years afterwards.

2 Jane and Mick Tuite have a family of seven children, most of whom live close to Mount Nugent. Their son, Gerrard, was charged in Dublin with possession of explosives at Greenwich, London in 1978 and 1979, following his arrest there and escape from Brixton Prison in 1981. Coming back to Ireland, he was tracked down and arrested by the Dublin government, in Drogheda in 1982. In July of that year, he was sentenced by Justice Hamilton to ten years, and now languishes in the bastille of Portlaoise.

3 After Harry returned wounded from Cavan, Liam Burke and Charlie Kerins got word to the Brown's in Cabra. You know Cabra, with its crescents, avenues and cul-de-sacs, it's easy to get lost. Liam had only the vaguest notion where the house was, so he had to be doubly careful. Coming up to where he thought the street was, he alighted from his bike near to a little girl carrying a jug of milk: *Excuse me, love,* he began. Instantly she dropped the jug, running off screaming, *The slasher, the slasher,* after a wrongdoer who had been annoying the neighbourhood. Doors opened and lights streamed upon the street. Charlie, leaning upon his bike, could scarcely contain his laughter.

They brought Harry on the bar of Liam's bike from Cabra to Rathmines. Charlie, armed, rode behind. At that time every second car was liable to be police, so, whenever they saw headlights, they pulled into the shadows. Eventually they reached Hutchinsons.

Liam remembers one evening returning through the back, hearing an impassioned speech being delivered. What is afoot now, he thought. Creeping near he saw through a window, Pearse Hutchinson (later well known as a poet) declaiming in front of a mirror a piece from Scaramouche. Shortly after the O'Brien incident, a guard in uniform appeared at the hall door. Liam was in the hall talking with a sister of Gussie Eastwood. Taking fright, he rushed to the rear, scrambling over walls. Meeting some boys from the neighbourhood, he remarked sheepishly, *It's all right boys, I am just taking a shortcut.* Weeks later, when the boys were questioned by police, one of them said: *Oh, it cannot be; that man was too well spoken.*

4 Liam Burke says picturesquely, that at this time they preferred to stay within pistol shot of each other. Murphy's, at 50 Upper Rathmines Road, was a tall house, part of a Georgian terrace. It was a cosmopolitan house, with Paul Farrell, Kathleen's husband, a barnstorming actor, member of the Stephen's Green Club, known to every Tom, Dick and Harry in Dublin. *My one regret,* he said afterwards, *was that economics forced me to put a limit on my principles. When Siobhan Nic Cionnait withdrew from the stage in Belfast, rather than stand with the rest of the cast for God Save the King, I stood. I had only a pound in my pocket at the time.*

While the lads talked in whispers upstairs, Paul and his friends carried on uproarious poker sessions with a cosmopolitan set that included the Japanese consul, downstairs. Kathleen was the daughter of Dr. Con Murphy, a former Sinn Fein T.D., who lived around the corner.

Liam alternated for some of the time with the Hutchinsons, sheltered by Mrs. Hutchinson, who lived with her husband Harry, a meek civil servant, both of whom still carried their strong Glasgow accents. They lived with their son Pearse, a hundred yards up the Rathgar Road, on the left. After the Dinny O'Brien case, when the Wanted posters appeared, Harry Hutchinson could scarcely stand the strain of having to appear in the office, but his wife was fearless in the cause, although until then, she had not known who Harry was. One day, due to a false alarm, Liam had to make a quick getaway from the back, running into some boys. He thinks this may have marked the house, though no one was ever found there.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

Flight from Donnycarney; Execution of Maurice O'Neill; Return to Belfast

Other arrangements had now to be made swiftly but it was difficult. It was not like now when there are networks of houses available. We had only about five houses to circulate around — two in Rathmines and three on the northside. The two in Rathmines were Hutchinson's and Dr. Cathleen Murphy's, the three on the northside were Brown's of Swilly Road, Cabra, Russell's of Nottingham Street on the North Strand, and Miss Rosanne Collins of 22 Northbrook Avenue, on the opposite side. They were well known, and liable to be raided at any time.

I remained in Murphy's about four or five days, but as it was not safe we went then to a house in Cadogan Road, Fairview, that is Maurice O'Neill, Liam and myself. Liam and myself had five thousand pounds, an awful lot of money, on our heads. We had a room in the attic with three beds. There was an old fellow there who used to work about the house. He told us of this old tramp who met O'Donovan Rossa in New York. *Could you spare a dime?* he asked Rossa. Rossa demurred, but he reminded him that there was an occasion when he could have betrayed him. Whereupon Rossa handed him a dollar. The story was probably a make-up, for he added: *Now wasn't he a smart old tramp?* Then looking away he remarked: *I am a poor man myself but there is plenty of money in this house.*

When Charlie Kerins came in, we told him the story. Decisive as usual, he snapped: *That fixes it, we're leaving.*

Maurice was O.C. of the local company in Cahirciveen, and had arrived in Dublin on 2nd September, the day after Gerald O'Callaghan was shot dead guarding the dump at Hannahstown. Although a fine big fellow, yet he was real polite, always taking his cap off when introduced to a person. Sending him on a message one day, we gave him a map of the city. It was evening when he returned. *What kept you?* said Charlie. *It is a custom, in our part,* said he, *to call into every church that you have not been in before, and to say a prayer.* He had been in half the churches in Dublin.

I moved that night to another house, not far away, to a house owned by Mrs. Jim Russell in Nottingham Street, one of a street of tight little two storey brick houses, running in from the North Strand, backing against the railway. I was not long there when the entire area was surrounded by

soldiers, police and Branch men, and a comb-out began. It was the middle of the day and there were few people about. They will find me; it is the rope for me this time, I thought. They were advancing along the street, calling at doors. The western end was guarded too. I did not know where to turn when Archie Doyle breezed in. Pressing a cap firmly on my head, he said: *Come along, we are two gas company men, and if we are stopped, you say nothing.* We went out on the footpath. There were people and soldiers about, but Archie passed them by entering the first house and holding his hand over the cooker, sternly warned the woman about using the glimmer. *My God,* said she aghast, *have you come to cut me off? There now,* said one of the police, *sure you could let her go this time.* Archie demurred a bit at this, finally letting her off with a warning, but his ruse worked and we passed out to the North Strand Road. He parted from me there, saying he wanted to go back and observe what was going on. That was absolutely typical of him; cool as ice in the gap of danger. I walked on in the direction of Amiens Street station, when I found myself blocked by two soldiers: *I know you,* said one, *but you may pass on.* I made my way to Rathmines, back to Doctor Murphy's, which I had left only a few days before. It could hardly be described as safe, but we had no choice.

Things had now got so risky for me that I was persuaded to try clerical garb in order to move about. This day, as I was passing near the Gresham, I was spotted by Father McHugh. He used to train me when I was in the Monastery choir, and, of course, he recognised me. *Is that what you are at now,* he said to me. We had a few words then and, as we were parting, he smiled: *Now look after yourself and keep the collar clean.*

Right after that, I cut down by Sean MacDermott Street and found myself close to Amiens Street Station. There were always plenty of people there from Belfast because Dublin was nearly the only place where they could buy anything. As I was standing in a doorway along came this bunch of girls, and of course they recognised me; *Ah Christ, will ye look at Harry White and him dressed as a priest.*

Disguise for me was a dead loss.

From Rathmines I had now moved in rapid succession to the North Strand again, then back to Kathleen Murphy's, then on Monday night, 19th October, I was brought to Kelly's of 14 Holly Road, Donnycarney. Mrs. Kelly was a sister of Rosanne Collins with whom we had sheltered at 22 Upper Northbrook Avenue, North Strand. It was another small three bedroomed house in a quiet area, for all the world like a Corporation estate, with small railed-in gardens to the front and simple fences and hedges back to back with houses at the rear. Maurice O'Neill was along with me. It was to prove a fatal move for him. He was not thought to be on the run and as such could move about quite freely. However, you cannot be sure your absence has not been noted, especially when a local Republican disappears for some months from his home area, as Maurice in this case

did from Cahirciveen. Also you cannot be sure about the people in the house, or visitors to it, that they do not accidently talk, though in this case there were no visitors, none of our usual callers, no maid, and even the children were too young to know anything. However, I was a hunted man and there was a very big reward out for me. I had now dropped my first name, being known in the household as John Boyle, while Maurice passed as O'Connell. Later the police said they had come to arrest Maurice, which might indicate that they had tagged on to him. I should say that Charlie once called dressed as a Christian Brother. However, he could not have given them the clue as they would have arrested him there and then; Maggie O'Halloran was not responsible either, as the trap, all unknown to us, was already laid when she arrived to warn us.

We were there only five days, and it was the Saturday night about half past nine, when Maggie O'Halloran of 32 Gardiner Place, one of our couriers arrived. She said we would have to leave immediately, as the house was no longer safe. All unknown to any of us it already had a double cordon of detectives strung around blocking the narrow laneway at the rear. Crouched against the front door were Gantly, Gill, Mordaunt and Foley. They could hear us finishing a game of cards, and making ready to go. They had armed soldiers as a back up. On Maggie's insistence therefore we prepared to go, not wasting any time. Our bikes were at the back of the house, under the scullery window, but of course we did not know that the whole district was already staked out, and no matter from where we emerged, we would probably be fired on. Maggie's bike was still at the front door as we shook hands with the Kellys. She was leaving too, but we actually left seconds ahead of her, by the back. We were at the back garden and had reached the passage leading to the gardens — a narrow passage four feet wide only(1) — when I heard a shout *Halt!* and next thing the guns started to flash. I was in front of Maurice but I could see nothing except these flashes coming from the lower end of the laneway. We dropped our bikes and I fired back then three or four times. I advanced down the lane a piece, while they fired towards me. I then jumped across a hedge.

I was now hidden so I had no need to fire while in that garden. In fact, I wanted to pass through the back of a house into Oak Road, so why should I betray myself. Maurice was no longer with me. I did now know where he was. I learned afterwards that he had retreated towards the house. The detectives were still not in there because they waited until Maggie O'Halloran emerged at the front before rushing in. Then, it transpired from the evidence afterwards, Superintendent Gantly, Detective Sergeant Gill, Mordaunt, who was killed a few moments later, and another, Detective Foley, rushed in. Mordaunt, being an eager beaver evidently, ran right through the house and into a back garden, while Maurice, finding his way blocked in the back passage, came in again and was promptly arrested. Police evidence at his trial was that he had five shots fired from his

revolver which, if it happened at all, must have occurred while both of us fired back at the flashes in the passageway.

I was now in the rear garden of 3 Oak Road, which nearly backs upon the rear garden of 14 Holly Road, but with the access passage intervening. Of course, I did not know those numbers at the time; I had no idea of the gardens; that all transpired from the evidence of the so-called trial of Maurice, nine days afterwards. I passed into the garden then of No. 5, and burst in through their back door. The family were inside of course, and started shouting and screaming. I told them to keep quiet; I would not harm them; I had to come in or I would be killed. I slipped out through their hall door and crossed as quietly as I could, garden to garden, until I reached No. 15. I reckoned I would have a better chance of crossing a road if I did not emerge from where I had entered. But there was a man with a machine gun in the road. He opened up at me and I fired back, whereupon he dived for cover. I streaked across Oak Road,(2) down a short cul-de-sac and jumped across a hedge into another garden; I passed through another small house on the Malahide Road, accidently dropping a light overcoat given me by Kelly, at that point. Quickly looking up and down, I crossed the Malahide Road, scrambled over a wall and found myself in an enormous field. It was Clontarf golf course but I just kept running, running until I reached a low wall, which I leaped also, falling down the other side among briars. I lay there panting. I couldn't move; I was on the side of a railway cutting. Meanwhile I could hear the voices in the distance: *He went this way. No! He went that way.* I crossed the railway line and stayed put where I was. I lay there that night and all the following day, lying in the undergrowth in the back of somebody's garden; I could still hear them hunting for me. So I stayed another night before venturing out. It must have been when getting away from there that I lost my gun, because it was found near the Howth Road. It slipped from my pocket without my being aware of it. I had lost my coat too, the coat loaned to me that night by Mr. Kelly. I realised that I looked odd on a biting October day walking down this road with no coat, but I did not care. Number one, I did not know where I was, or even what part of Dublin. I learned that it was at 116 Howth Road, I emerged. Eventually I ventured on to it and saw a bus heading for O'Connell Street. Right, I said, and I got on. I walked up O'Connell Street, got on a number 22 bus and headed back up to Brown's. *My God,* said Mrs. Brown, as she stared, *look at the cut of you.* The face was scratched off me with the brambles, and I was covered in mud; I had not realised I looked so bad. *I don't know what we'll do,* said she, *but you will have to stay.*

So I stayed for a few nights, not in Paddy's house, as with Ryan tailing him that was far too dangerous, but across the street with Mrs. Staunton, a woman trusted by the Browns. Meanwhile, Paddy's 22 year old brother, John, sat up all night in their house keeping watch. Paddy was married this time and living in Ballsbridge Terrace, on the south side, in another

well watched house. (It was from there that Jackie Griffith was coming when he was shot dead, in July 1943.) I got washed and cleaned up and a few days later, Paddy himself slipped in from his job on the War Memorial and brought me on the bar of his bike down to a house at the far end of Sean MacDermott Street. It was the basement of a house next door to a trade union hall, the Carpenters' Hall, and as far as I know, it is still there. The woman was a Mrs. Fitzpatrick, with her family and her husband Sean, who was a cataloguer and valuer in Battersbys.(3) She did not know me but I remember her saying that the last patriot who had stayed there had been Dick McKee, of the Dublin Brigade, murdered by the Tans in Dublin Castle in November 1920. I stayed there for a good while, unaware of Maurice's trial or anything else.(4) One night as she knelt to say prayers, she recited one for *that poor fellow White, wherever he may be, that he has a roof over his head this night.*

I know the road by which you came,
What mountain peaks you left behind,
What torrents travelling down the rocks,
And heather singing in the wind.

I left there shortly after that and returned to Murphy's in Rathmines, to find Charlie Kerins and Liam Burke there. They kept the papers from me, but after a while I learned that Maurice had been shot.(5) Meanwhile Frank Kerrigan, Jim Smith and Jackie Griffiths had escaped from Mountjoy over the wall around midnight on the 1st of November; they arrived in time to catch what was left of us in a right witch's cauldron. I was not in touch with them but Charlie and Archie Doyle were doing their best to find houses for them. Farrell's was an extraordinary house at an extraordinary time. While the three of us rested, fully armed and keeping out of the way upstairs, Paul and his wife Kathleen, the Japanese consul and other friends from Dublin town, played night-long games of poker, punctuated by roars of laughter in the drawingroom below. Shortly after that I moved again to a house in Foster Avenue, owned by two Miss Collins, Madge and Bella, known to me as Bee and See. I was accompanied there on the bus by Eileen Tubbard of Ballsbridge. She later married Paddy Fleming, and afterwards was secretary to Tim Pat Coogan. There I remained for four or five weeks, until finally, we moved North. The Misses Collins, if my memory serves me right, were sisters of Dominic Collins, a Kerryman, who had a farm in the Santry area, and who received some of the dumped ammunition following the Magazine Fort raid of Christmas 1939. Foster Avenue at that time was a quiet place, and the house where I stayed was attached to a shop near the top of the Avenue on the corner of Roebuck Road. It is still there though vamped up a bit.

It backed onto the grounds of a large house owned by the Plunketts,

and it was in the grounds of that house that I used to walk at night. I would leave through a ground floor window that opened directly on to the grounds. That was my only means of exercise. I received no one there, no visitors, nobody. The chase after me was merciless and relentless. I could not afford to run any risks. I would be shot like a dog. Then one day the whole area was surrounded by soldiers. One of the sisters came in: *There are soldiers crouched against the wall of the shop. What are you going to do?* she asked anxiously. *If they are after me,* I said, *don't you get in the line of fire; keep out of the road.* I knew myself it would be curtains, but I intended to shoot it out. I would sell myself dearly for De Valera's hangman.

I glanced out and could see the soldiers. They were spotted all about, rifles cocked and at the ready. There would be no way out of this one. I waited, waited; not a sound. Minutes passed, ten, twenty, half-an-hour. Then, suddenly, on a barked word of command, they all departed. They had been withdrawn. What was it? Miss Collins quickly learned from a customer: *the Army on manoeuvres.* There was general relief.

When it came to move finally, we decided to head northwards. Steele had been captured as had McAteer a short time earlier on the 6th September. He had gone to meet a school friend, now in the police, Patrick Sherrard, later known as the singer Patrick O'Hagan. Mick Quill, on his keeping in Belfast, was arrested too; that was a real cause for concern, were he to be handed over. Burke, Duffy and myself had to fill the vacancies on the staff. The heat was on in Dublin and safe houses were hard to find. We were going to a place we knew well; we knew our way about and we knew people. Once we got our identity cards — fakes of course — we would be all right. I had no regrets leaving Southern Ireland. In my opinion De Valera was as bad to Republicans as the Northern junta. I had been brought up in Belfast to regard Dublin as the promised land, and the government of De Valera the heart and soul of republicanism. But those dreams died swiftly when I was arrested at Giles Quay in 1935 and condemned to Arbour Hill afterwards. I learned very young what it was like being in solitary custody in the Free State. That soon changed my opinion. When I was arrested again in 1939, I saw McNeela and D'Arcy die on hunger strike; Paddy McGrath, whom I knew very, very well was executed; so also was Tommy Harte whom I also knew. George Plant I also knew, and am convinced De Valera wanted rid of him. He was in a cell close to me in Arbour Hill for nine months. They had to have a special order to enable them to execute him. We all agreed with the policy of neutrality, but as far as the North was concerned — and this is still their policy — I felt that the Dublin government was simply holding the ring for England. They were England's policemen in Ireland, and that is even more true today than it was then.

Three of us travelled north together, Liam Burke and myself being in one seat, Jim Toner in another. Frankie Duffy was already there. We left

around the 20th December, taking advantage of the pre Christmas passenger rush.

I never used a facial disguise, but on this occasion I was talked into it. A few nights before I had been brought to the home of Hermann Langsdorf, brother of Fritz of the Dublin Brigade, in Kimmage. Hermann squinted at me, and said, *What shade do you want?* He meant the colour, but in Belfast we always take that to mean which side do you want the parting? So I said, *Shaded from left to right.* He laughed because he had heard the expression. With my fair hair dyed a dark colour, eyebrows died black, and a dark moustache, I was close to being unrecognisable when we emerged. Liam, who accompanied me, decided that he need not have a hair dye.

Members of the Dublin Brigade queued for us for a bus for Sligo, on Aston's Quay, in the dark of the morning, a red GSR bus. It stopped for a break in Longford, and the three of us, Jim Toner, Liam and myself emerged for a cup of tea. We were heavily armed. Toner, from Donegal, tall and dark, had been active with McCool and McAteer. He was present for the jail break from Derry in March of the following year. Jim later went into insurance.

It was late when we arrived beyond Sligo in Bundoran. We had been directed to a house where there were three Army men; ours. I remember they were excited about a U.S. seaplane that had landed in the bay. They had been out to it and planned to remove some guns, but U.S. servicemen had been brought to help it off.

We did not dare wait there however, but tramped a back road into Beleek in the North, where Liam had relations called Campbell, one of whom was in Crumlin Road. Jim parted from us here while we stayed with them a couple of nights; then, accompanied by one of the sons, we cycled to Enniskillen, where we boarded a bus for Belfast. Those days they travelled in and out of every village, so it was quite dark when we reached the city, and, as the blackout was on, we were not sure where we alighted. For safety reasons we had no intention of staying on until it reached the depot.

We guessed we were at the end of the Lisburn Road, so we walked a short distance to where we could see a curtain opening and shutting. It was the entry to a pub, a pub in Sandy Row, the Orange quarter. But we knew we were home when we heard the barman call to a customer: *Jimmy, did ye see the Ulster tonight?* (the sporting paper).

We walked through the darkened streets to Beechmount, in the middle Falls, the Nationalist quarter. It was hard to recognise some streets; their railings had been removed for scrap. Lights peeped out from chinks around windows, while some street lamps burned with a dim blue colour. An occasional car crept past, dim lights emerging only from thin slots. In some streets we had to pick our way over water mains laid upon the surface. Dim signs showed the way to air raid shelters.

I made for Anna's in Beechmount Avenue, but she slammed the door in

my face. She had not recognised me. I followed Liam around to his house in Logan Street. Later we learned that Anna's house was raided that very night. We could not stay long where we were, so the following night we moved into McGladdery's brickworks in Beechmount, where we slept in a kiln. The night watchman there, by name Crawford — he had a son shot dead in the current troubles — accommodated us in the long flat wheelbarrows where we lay just in our suits. The snag was that Crawford's mate was an Orangeman, so we could make no noise.

After four nights like that we were invited into Loughrans, a small house next the works in Amcomri Street where we remained a few more days. Eventually we got settled into a number of different houses.

REFERENCES

1 The actual width is only three feet six inches. Both sides of the passage are now walled, but at this time it was lined with hedges.

2 Fortyone years later, when Harry retraced his escape across Oak Road, he was met by residents who could recall the eventful night.

3 An honoured member of our staff, says Noel Judd, who served with distinction at the sales of mansions of the departing gentry.

4 Maurice O'Neill Trial: 2nd November 1942. Charge: Shooting with intent to resist arrest. Executed Mountjoy, 12th November.

The trial opened before the Special Court at Collins Barracks on 2nd November, a bare seven days after the events at 9.50 p.m. of 24th October at Donnycarney when 42 years old Det. Officer George Mordaunt was shot dead. (Mordaunt from Courtown, served in the Free State Army from 1922 to 1935, when he joined the Special Branch).

The members of the Court were Commdts. Devlin, Tuite and Col. Joyce, with Mr. McCarthy K.C., Mr. George Murnaghan K.C., and Mr. Sherry, instructed by Mr. J. A. Geary of the Chief State Solicitor's Office.

Sean MacBride complained that the defence would be prejudiced by not having all the information which the authorities had from eye witnesses and others. The President said the Court was satisfied that the accused man had been given reasonable facilities to prepare his defence. They were prepared to give a short adjournment if required, to allow for any defect or lack of time which might have taken place in the preparation of maps, photographs etc. This last phrase is clearly not what MacBride was complaining of. As is clear from the trial four years later of Harry White, what was defective now was:

(1) The very nature of the court, namely military officers unassisted by a Judge Advocate and in the absence of a jury.

(2) The deliberate withholding of information, as for example the refusal (in the White case) to exhibit the record book showing weapons issued to the police and ammunition expended.

(3) The withholding of information showing — preferably on a large scale map — targets found by police shooting. Later on in the White case, there was evidence to show that they had fired at a glasshouse and at other places wildly off target, apart from the deadly fusilade up the passageway itself. It was asserted that the police fired first in this case.

(4) The selection and coaching of witnesses. One was a 13 year old girl, Carmel Bergin. Police inevitably have the power to choose whom to invite and whom to leave out.

(5) Collusion among themselves; it is an open secret that numbers of policemen go over their evidence together to iron out ambiguities and to frustrate the defence.

(6) Undue haste: O'Neill was not a wanted man in the general understanding of that term. At 25 years of age he suddenly found himself at seven days notice upon a death charge, with only three days, 29th, 31st October and 1st November, in which to consult his lawyers. They, on their part, would not have transcripts or sufficient evidence from the State with which to mount a defence. The trial of Harry White, four years later before a conventional court, shows that Maurice O'Neill was probably wrongly convicted and should not have been executed.

Mr. McCarthy outlining the case, said O'Neill fired five times. They had left by the rear of 14 Holly Road. On Saturday, 29th October at 8.00 p.m. Gardai took up positions at the rear and saw two bikes underneath the scullery window. At 8.45 p.m. Maggie O'Halloran, who had been expected somewhat earlier, arrived. At 9.30 Gardai arrived at the front, and by 9.50 were positioned to strike front and rear. Supt. Gantly, Insp. Gill, George Mordaunt and Joseph Foley were at the front. When Mrs. Kelly opened the door to allow Margaret (Maggie) O'Halloran (Mr. McCarthy said Rose O'Halloran) to leave, they all rushed in, taking the two women with them, while Mordaunt ran right through to the scullery and out to the rear passage way evidently intent on laying, not only O'Neill, but the other man White by the heels.

The two men meanwhile had reached the gate to the passageway and had probably proceeded as far as a right hand bend where it turns out to Holly Road. Each arm of the passageway was 35 yards long. One shot, Mr. McCarthy said, was then fired in the direction of the gardai at the road end of the passage. (This is unlikely as it was quite dark and the two men did not suspect that there were police present. What happened in fact was that they were met with a volley from the Branch men; Harry replied to the flashes with two or three from his Parabellum, while Maurice expended five from his Webley; the sixth one in the chamber did not fire. He was then literally defenceless, although he carried twelve rounds, until he reloaded. That partly explains why he retreated back into 14 Holly Road, where he was captured.)

One man, McCarthy continued, disappeared into the garden of 3 Oak Road (on the opposite side of the passageway) from which he disappeared into the garden of No. 5 (where the dead body of Mordaunt was found, face down, a bullet through the centre of his forehead, and with his gun still clutched in his hand underneath him, in the early hours of the following morning by a detective who had gone back to look for a lost fountain pen. That in itself shows laxity in the roll call arrangements).

Mr. McCarthy traced the other man as passing through No. 5, on to the front garden of Oak Road, where he squeezed from garden to garden, numbers 7, 9, 11, 13 and 15, escaping two bursts from a Thompson and some other stray shots before he passed through a cul-de-sac which gave on to 135 Malahide Road. There was a number of women and children about at this point.

He passed through that house, speaking to Mrs. Hannah Brennan in the kitchen, out to the front garden, where he dropped the raincoat loaned to him by Patrick Kelly. He was again fired on in the Malahide Road but escaped on to Howth Road. A half mile away, in the rear garden of 116 Howth Road, owned by one Warren Airey, he dropped and lost his Parabellum.

Gantly, Gill and Foley, took O'Neill into custody when he returned into the house where he cast his Webley down angrily upon the table. His hands were bound behind his back.

(That concluded Day 1. Miss Rosanne Collins of 22 Upper Northbrook Avenue, North Strand, gave evidence on the next day. She disclosed nothing.)

Giving evidence on the 3rd day, Maurice O'Neill told how he came to Dublin in September; they were leaving Holly Road for good on 24th October. He did not know that the house was surrounded or that he was wanted on any charge. They had only gone along the lane about 15 feet when shooting commenced from the far end. (He may have meant fifteen paces, which would have brought him to the right hand bend.)

At this point, Mr. McCarthy asked him who his companion was, did he believe his name was John Boyle, was he at 12 Grosvenor Square on 16th September, who put him in touch with Miss Collins, did he know a Mrs. Russell, to all of which he refused to answer. He had the gun outside for the first time that night as they were leaving for the North the next morning. The other man never left Holly Road since his arrival.

Mr. MacBride concluded his case by saying that O'Neill's only intent in shooting that night was one of self preservation. Whoever killed Mordaunt, it was not he. He would offer no other evidence for the defence.

On the fourth and final day, 5th November, MacBride in his address stressed that O'Neill's intent was one of self preservation. He had not shot anyone. The court should be careful not to allow recent events to weight against the accused. He was then sentenced to death by shooting on a charge of shooting at detectives with intent to resist arrest. If the government, the President of the court said, declined to remit the sentence, execution would follow within 48 hours.

On 10th November, it was announced that the government had refused to commute the sentence and that this decision was conveyed to the Adjutant General who was to arrange the execution.

Execution took place by shooting in Mountjoy Jail, on 12th November 1942.

There are no reports of efforts made for reprieve or protest meetings, though the very short space of time and wartime censorship partly explains this. However, only nine weeks before, a protest meeting for Tom Williams had filled the Mansion House and had overflowed down Dawson Street.

5 They did their level best to keep the papers from him and to distract his mind onto other topics. But it was to no avail. Harry worried intensely over Maurice. He felt that if they had got him they would not shoot Maurice. He wanted to give himself up. *They will execute both of you,* he was told.

Liam Burke relates (although Harry does not recall this) how one day in the street, he had to be restrained from shooting a high Free State officer in a passing car. Liam stayed constantly with him; he was not nervous, he says, just despondent, especially after Maurice was shot. We had considered taking a hostage, Liam said, but where could we hold a hostage? We were powerless, a few men without a safe house anywhere. On one occasion, when I ventured as far as Tipperary, I stayed in the house of Dan Breen. We did not have much talk. He simply said: *You will be safe enough here.*

6 As McAteer told it in the *Sunday Independent* (1st April 1951): Towards the end of August 1942, I met a policeman whom I had known as a schoolboy in my native Derry. He recognised me, and greeted me warmly. Accepting his invitation, I went to his house where we spent a pleasant hour recalling memories of our home town. As I was leaving, he urged me to call again in a week's time, when he promised he would have some really useful information for me. The very next week, curfew was clamped down on a very considerable area of Nationalist Belfast, an area in which we were given almost one hundred per cent support.

On the night of 6th September, I took with me my comrade Gerald O'Reilly, and together we hurried through the blacked-out streets to the house of my police schoolmate. In the pitch darkness we had difficulty in making our way, but eventually we found the right house and, turning up the little path, knocked at the door. As we waited for an answer, a slight scuffling sound behind caused us to spin around and we found ourselves blinking in the midst of a circle of blazing electric torches. A dozen voices roared at us. *Put up your hands,* and, as we raised our hands, someone kept repeating: *Don't move now or we'll shoot. Don't move now.* We didn't move.

Vincent McDowell thinks that the policeman may not have been responsible. He may already have been under observation from within the force.

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

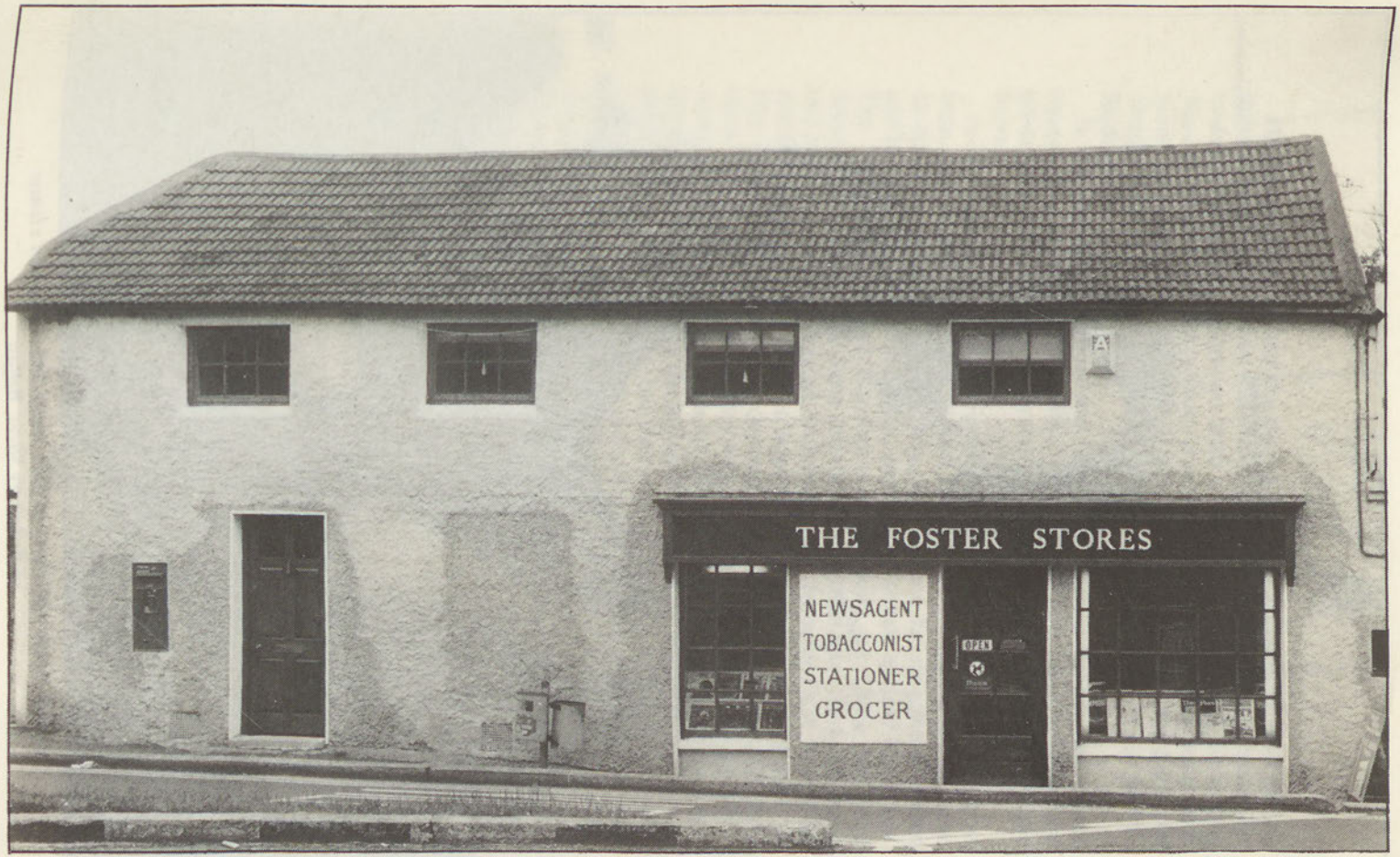
1943-1946, Twilight for the I.R.A.

It is a measure of how poorly off the Army was at the start of 1943, that its two principal officers upon their return from Dublin, could find shelter only in a brickworks. The grand offensive against the rearguard of the enemy had fizzled out after only three months. The Free State was forbidden territory now, more tightly patrolled then ever. Over the Six Counties there was a rigid clampdown, which limited individual movement and made all thought of coherent planning impossible. And yet it was to be a year which, at its commencement anyway, sparkled with hope, Mick Quill of Listowel, who had been captured by the R.U.C. in Belfast in October, and lugged to the Border, faced almost certain rope from the Staters, yet escaped again in January with his life. Four intrepid men, including McAteer and Steele, broke their way out of Crumlin Road jail in the same month; in March twentyone tunnelled their way out of the bastille in Derry, while a propaganda coup was scored at Easter by the appearance on stage in Belfast of McAteer and Steele. Even so, for all their gallantry, for all their idealism, for all the smartness and occasional brilliance of the I.R.A., their way was downward; downward into a tiny dugout, which by the end of the two years, was to contain Harry at Altaghoney in south Derry, still Chief of Staff of an organisation that had all but disintegrated.

MICK QUILL'S TRIAL

Mick Quill was arrested by R.U.C. Special Branch off his bike in Queen Street, in Belfast, on 2nd October. He seemed likely to be charged with being concerned in the shooting of Dinny O'Brien on 9th September, at Rathfarnham. On 4th October, he was brought to Carrickarnon and pushed over the Border. As police expressed it in the Special Court afterwards, *a man was put out of a car on the Northern side, and when he crossed it, we arrested him.*

There was strong police evidence against him. One, a Branch man, who happened to be cycling towards the mountains on his way to cut turf, saw two men on bikes come towards him, one of whom he identified five weeks later in the Bridewell as Quill. The identification broke down somewhat in court: before going to the identification parade, he was told Quill would be on it and was given a photograph and description of him, such nudging being standard police procedure when they wanted to nail a suspect.



The shop on Foster Avenue where Harry lodged in November and December 1942, before his final flight from Dublin. Then owned by Madge and Bella Collins.

Eithne Sands with Harry in 1943, inside Mrs. Loughran's house in Amcomry Street, Belfast.

He did not think he had any doubts but that Quill was the man he saw. Pressed further, he said he was *almost sure of it.* There was supplementary evidence including recognition from a fellow guest from 12A Grosvenor Square, where Quill, for a short time resided in the boarding house with other suspects, Sean Maguire (Liam Burke), Chris O'Callaghan and Charlie Hanly (Kerins), prior to a massive police raid on it on 16th September.

In the boarding house he was known as Michael Barrett, and passed himself as a student of chemistry. He returned there shortly before the police raid upon it on 16th September, when of course all the birds had flown.

In his evidence, the twentyfive year old Quill, said he had been in Belfast from 23rd August until 2nd October, returning to Dublin on one occasion on 4th September. At this stage, Mrs. Sara Malone, her daughter Maureen and Mary McGuigan from Belfast, were put in the box by Sean MacBride. The I.R.A. had cobbled together a strong alibi for Quill, and were determined to meet Free State subterfuge with their own. Sara, Maureen and Mary were three attractive Republican girls from the Falls; both Quill and McAteer had stayed in their houses. Mrs. Malone was a step-sister of Dan Turley. Con Lehane was deputed to go over the case carefully with them beforehand, as to what they would say and not say. Using his office over the Bank of Ireland on Ormond Quay as a mock up, he rehearsed them through the proceedings of the military court at Collins Barracks. They had never been in court before, but they emerged from it with flying colours.

On the sixth day of his trial, the girls gave evidence that he had been in Belfast on 9th September, and for a period before and after. The evidence, in camera, was accompanied by a State undertaking that their names would not be passed back to the R.U.C., an undertaking that was, needless to say, dishonoured.(1) Quill was acquitted on the death charge although he now faced two and half years in the Curragh. However, there was much joy at the back when the three military officers returned and gave their verdict: *The court has decided to give him the benefit of the doubt and find him not guilty of murder. When my boy is released from internment,* said his dad tearfully, *he will have to marry one of these girls.* But they had already received a more tangible reward: the boys presented them in Belfast with three of the new reversible coats, then all the rage, purchased for around six pounds each in Andersons & McAuleys. The coats rewarded the girls while at the same time the switch of attire upon the train disguised their arrival from Branch men on the platform at Amiens Street. Army funds, however, did not extend to meeting the expenses of counsel; MacBride never received nor took money from the Movement.

McATEER, STEELE, DONNELLY AND MAGUIRE ESCAPE

Early in the morning on Friday 15th Jan. the boys received another fillip.

Hugh McAteer, Jimmy Steele, Pat Donnelly and Ned Maguire escaped over the wall from Crumlin Road. McAteer and Steele had been there for only three months; McAteer on a fifteen year sentence, Steele on ten, Donnelly on twelve and Maguire on six. Arrested in the blackout outside the home of a young Derry Catholic policeman resident in Belfast, in September, McAteer had been arraigned along with David Fleming and John Graham, both of whom operated the publicity H.Q. at 463 Crumlin Road. McAteer was sentenced by Justice Brown to fifteen years. *Ireland is still worth fighting for,* said the Protestant Graham(2) who got twelve years. But McAteer was determined that this time he would not stay.

A plan was put together by Steele, McAteer and Donnelly. Maguire was brought in because he was a slater by trade. Noticing that one could pass from a trapdoor in a topfloor toilet, into the roof space, they worked for weeks on a scheme which entailed a bed sheet rope ladder, a wall hook swathed in bandages, and a tall demountable pole, the leather jointing ferrules of which were made in the boot shop. Even when they found the trapdoor padlocked, and an ordinary prisoner got to know about it, they persevered. On the morning appointed — "summertime" prevailed so it was still dark — they separately received permission to go to the wash house, where they broke a hole in the roof and escaped into the yard. From there they passed through to the wall fronting Crumlin Road, threw a sheet rope on which the bandaged steel crook was attached to the top, and on climbing that, they dropped to the ground at the gable of the screws' cottages. In fact it was not quite that easy. The demountable pole for placing the hook upon the barbed wire on top of the wall, was found to be six feet short, and Maguire had to stand booted upon McAteer's thin shoulders. The other three had ascended and disappeared over the top, but when it came to Hugh's turn, he lost his grip and fell to the ground, severely injuring an ankle. However, he persevered, and with bleeding hands climbed over.

There were crowds of men at that time of the morning coming down the Crumlin Road with coats buttoned up, so the four men in their strange attire were not noticed. They had become separated anyway. Hugh in fact was lost, and had to backtrack in the face of a search party of warders. He was in trouble too with his ankle following the drop from the high wall. Steele, however, had plenty of friends around North Queen Street, where he knew of an empty house, and the three made their way there, Hugh being found too, and guided there shortly after. Once inside, Jimmy got word to friends who provided them with food which lasted a few days until H.Q. got them separately fixed. After a few weeks, Pat Donnelly and Ned Maguire moved to Dublin but McAteer and Steele remained in Belfast to face the biggest security rumpus the North had seen.

They had propounded their plan and escaped completely without any outside assistance. Right enough they had sent out word by the "line"

from the prison a few days beforehand, saying what they hoped to do, but we never received the message as we were in Derry all the time. The "line" was operated from a wee general shop owned by my two sisters, Cathleen and Susan, the latter being the mother of Danny Morrison. There was a warder who used call to the shop. For the sake of getting a bit over the ration in sweets and chocolate, he was willing to take and deliver messages. No one ever knew who he was; he had business at the shop and no one ever saw him but my two sisters. Messages were passed to them, we replied, and the replies were placed with my sisters. The authorities were perplexed and annoyed, but they never found out.

MOUNTAINSIDE COURTMARTIAL

We had no intimation, as I said, that this escape was planned. In fact most of the staff were not in Belfast; they were in South Derry near Swatragh, where we were holding a Belfastman, then a prime suspect for a number of arms seizures that had occurred in the city. I will not mention his name, as sons of his have done good work in the struggle in the North at the present time. I was there as O.C. Northern Command. Liam Burke was prosecutor, and he was accompanied by Frankie Duffy, Jim Toner, and Archie Agnew. Toner, a big man with an expressionless face, never had a word to say, beyond *thank ye mam for the tae,* in any of the houses we called to. Archie, as O.C. of the area, was President of the court. Bob McMillan was there too. Bob had been shot in the ankle during a wages raid near the Air Raid headquarters in Academy Street, on 21st January 1942, where a squad under Patsy Hicks forced a clerk, driver and two assistants to the kerb, £4,750 being taken. He had gone to Dublin, couldn't stay there, and came back to us in South Derry. He could barely limp. We were living rough in this barn, the prisoner and the rest of us as best we could, and eating what came our way. We got a tin of Spam this evening; it was pressed meat produced for the American Army, and widely on sale. To disguise what they were about, the family had the practice of bringing out the food in a farm bucket; afterwards I wondered in this case, had it been clean. Anyway, not thinking of anything like that, I ate the better part of it and Bob finished it. The next thing, he was rolling about the floor in agony. Then I got it too; Bob recovered but I got worse. I got that bad that they wondered if they should send for a doctor, but they were afraid. I was brought to the farmhouse where the bean-a-tighe gave me hot milk and anything she thought might relieve the terrible cramps I had.

While I was in bed anyway, and rolling about, still in desperatre pain, the courtmartial proceeded and concluded eventually with a verdict of guilty. It was clean cut, and no doubt about it. He was indeed guilty of having lost arms in Belfast. I cannot remember who it was that came in and told me.(3) He was supposed to be taken out then and shot and buried in the

mountain. A good while elapsed while I lay in bed thinking over things. I had not heard a shot, but as they were to take him half a mile away, that would be unlikely. Suddenly, one of them appeared with the culprit, accompanied by Duffy. *What's wrong,* I asked? I was still as sick as could be. *I'll tell you what's wrong,* piped the lad, *I'm innocent and they know it.* Meanwhile it was whispered in my ear, that being a night of severe frost, the ground was too hard for them to dig a grave; the execution would have to be postponed. But the lad cut in; *I wanted to stand in front of them and tell them when to fire.* That evidently was too much for them, so they brought him back. I don't believe it was the ground at all. What really unhinged them was the lad's next remark. *There's my hand,* said he, holding it over my face, *not a tremor; I am not afraid to die. I knew before this at all that you were the only man that would shoot me, but God struck you down. You have been poisoned and that proves my innocence.*

We moved then a few days afterwards to a house outside Swatragh, on the side of a hill. It was owned by a bachelor man living by himself. We were still holding the lad, the four of us now, McMillan, Duffy, Liam and myself. We were taking him back to Belfast, but meanwhile we had to hold him. They were in bed this morning, while I was on guard; the lad being tied in a chair, in a room off the kitchen. Next thing I heard this clatter at the door. *Come on, get up,* said the voice. *I know you're there, but how do ye expect me to get in; sure the key is on the inside of the door.* There were old lace curtains on the windows, but, standing sideways I could see a face, the face of an R.U.C. man. *What are ye doing there,* says he then to the prisoner. *What are ye doing tied in a chair?* I could not be seen, but from where I stood, I could keep your man covered. *Oh, they've guns, have they?* finally came from the peeler. Burke and Duffy meanwhile were fully awake. *Look,* I said, *the place may be surrounded, but our only chance is to open the door and make a bolt out.* Not knowing that it was just a single policeman calling for the wartime harvest census, we agreed on that. We would make a bolt. That would mean leaving your man behind, but anyway what about it; our lives were more important. It was broad daylight as we opened the door and made a dash through, what we fully expected was a hail of bullets. It was then we discovered it was just this policeman, already jumping on his bike and departing down the boreen like the hammers of hell. Someone fired a shot after him.

The fat was in the fire though. We had to get out now, so the five of us collected everything and made for the hill where we watched a full-scale raid for four desperados and a man tied in a chair, nothing being found. Then to make matters worse, there was a body fished out of the river a few weeks after, and the peeler identified it as the man he had seen tied in the chair!

Following the escape, in mid February, Charlie Kerins and Archie Doyle arrived in Belfast. Archie had been in Belfast before, Charlie had not. They

came by train. We controlled the Auxiliary Fire Service in the Falls; so we quickly had them into uniform with proper stamped identity cards complete with authentic photographs taken for us by the girl in Jeromes, the firm officially appointed for that purpose. They could then relax in reasonable safety, remaining for about a fortnight. Charlie was Chief of Staff, but he now deferred to Hugh, becoming Assistant Chief of Staff himself.(4) Archie had the post of Quartermaster General on the staff. Hugh was appointed because his training lay in administration; he was less a hard man than Charlie, Archie or myself. I continued on as O.C. Northern Command while Liam remained Adjutant General, a position for which with his passion for early morning meetings, and attention to detail he was ideally suited.

MASS BREAK OUT OF DERRY JAIL

We now knew that there was to be a mass escape by internees from Derry jail, where 300 Republicans were held.

To raise funds for it — as we had no money — a hold-up was sanctioned in Strabane which brought in £1,500. It was an early morning raid by the O.C. Tyrone and his Adjutant, on 2nd February, Jim Toner and Joe Carlin, on a horse drawn mail van as it left the rail station.

Two men, one shining a strong light upon the driver, ordered him and his helper to dismount, while the other searched for and removed registered packages. They made off on bicycles. Toner and Carlin had planned the operation without any knowledge of the impending escape, knowledge witheld even from Steele and McAteer. The money was lost temporarily, though some came to Belfast, while Paddy Clarke (originally from Ardee) had £700 in his possession just before the Staters closed in on the quarry at Kilacalley, as he waited there with the escapees. He slipped it to a local farmer and recovered it from him later. A few months previously in November, Billy Graham and Eddie Steele had commenced a tunnel from under the floorboards of their cell with Harry O'Rawe and Jimmy O'Hagan in support. The grim gothic edifice of Derry jail — now gone — was built upon a hill, and the work facing the lads was arduous and dangerous. They had to sink a fifteen foot vertical shaft before burrowing a tunnel eighty feet long. The excavation was done at night, and while two of the men worked, the third kept watch for the night patrols who flashed their lights on the beds, and satisfied themselves that no prisoner was missing. As soon as the man on the watch heard the patrol, he signalled the two men below who shinned up a rope, jumping fully clothed into bed. The tunnel, propped up in places by boards and sandbags made from pillow cases filled with soil, was for bellying through, being too narrow to turn in. The clay removed from it, some fifteen tons of it, was placed under other cells, flushed down manholes, or discreetly scattered on soil beds in the

yard. They worked with the aid of "candles" made from salvaged cooking fat, carried on tin lids. When the candle, through lack of oxygen went out, the men knew it was time to come up.

There was little we on the outside could do to help other than direct them towards the Logue's house in Harding Street, giving them a fix upon a tall chimney behind it. Paddy Adams, uncle of the M.P. who was O.C. prisoners, could signal and receive directions at a high window from Liam Burke outside. Burke, who had been in the jail knew the layout well, and had chosen the backyard of Logue's as the place for the tunnel to surface. For some time previously Adams had been more assiduous than usual when writing Annie Hamill, his fiancé (sister of Sean, also imprisoned). His letters contained a secret message in the blank space between the lines.(5) In their touch and go passage they suffered everything, a roof collapse which temporarily trapped Billy Graham; a flood of underground water which had to be bailed out and then plugged, and, most unsettling of all, a well preserved coffin which had to be passed by digging under. Some of them, on the final morning fainted as they bellied through the suffocating tube, and had to be dragged along by the hair by their preceding comrade. At last, early on Sunday morning the 20th March, twentyone young men poked their way upwards through the small coal shed of the Logues at 15 Harding Street, off Abercorn Road, just south east of the old prison, passing through their small kitchen, to the stunned astonishment of the family. Pat Scullion, all black and with a long beard floored them; *Holy Saint Patrick,* cried the father, *Daddy, it's the devil,* cried the daughter.(6).

Along with Jimmy Steele and Liam Burke, I was concerned with communications out and into the jail; what direction they should come and how far they would have to travel. Louis Duffin, moving by train from Belfast, checked the ordnance map against conditions on the site. We knew exactly what house they would come up in. Tunnelling like that cannot be done now because of listening devices and the intense security precautions. Yet still they break out. Louis had, a few weeks earlier, been one of a party which attempted to raid an RAF barracks off Newtownards Road. The raid was not a success, and as he charged out, the car he was to board, sped off. He fell clutching a gun, in the roadway. At the same moment an R.U.C. squad car drove up. *They nearly killed you, son,* said the policeman, helping him to rise. Thrusting his gun into his pocket, Louis was conveyed in the police car to a tram stop. Burke and Jimmy Steele travelled in the furniture van with its driver to Derry. Liam had booked the van from Currans a few days before, then travelled there accompanied by the driver and Steele. At the last moment when he realised what they were about, the driver opted to stay with them. All were accommodated in a friendly house in the city. It was parked in Abercorn Place, awaiting zero hour which was 8.30 the next morning.

Shortly after that time, the first of the muddied men came sprinting

down the short residential street, down a flight of steps and over to where the van was parked, crowding inside.

One of the men, however, did not make the van that morning. As the others climbed aboard, Jimmy O'Rawe of Belfast got stuck in the tunnel. For 36 hours he lay low around Derry; then on Sunday night in the black-out, he was accosted by the R.U.C. and hauled back. He later received twelve months hard labour on top of internment. Five others, Harry O'Rawe, Hubert McInerney, Brendan O'Boyle, Chips McCusker and Billy Graham did not make it either. They headed into the City Cemetery, and from there reached Letterkenny on foot where a priest brought them into a restaurant giving them a four-course meal. He then brought them by car to Ballybofey where Dan McCool put them into the hands of Jimmy Clarke, his training officer. Clarke ferried them to Sligo where, armed with sticks, they boarded a train as cattle drovers. Unfortunately on arrival penniless in Dublin, they made straight for the Republican boarding house, An Stad, in North Frederick Street, where early next morning all, excepting O'Boyle who had stayed north, were arrested. In the hunt for them even Maud Gonne's house at Roebuck had been raided.

The main body of escapees, fifteen men plus Ned Maguire with the driver, sped towards Carrigans, jumped the Border and dashed through the village. There was to be a lorry to meet them, and they were also to have received money to enable them to disperse. But although £700 was on hand with Paddy Clarke, the other arrangements fell through.

Having jumped the customs post, they were followed closely by Free State police while Branch men and Free State Army at Letterkenny were already alerted by the Brits. Five of the men detached themselves and escaped, but ten were found unarmed and leaderless near the top of windswept Kinacally mountain. *Come forward, ye bastards,* came from the armed Staters, as they approached them. The only arms the lads had was an old rifle and a forty-five.

They were brought and lodged at Rockhill military barracks, Letterkenny, where, after being held for a week (viewed meanwhile by screws and police brought from Derry), they were conveyed the 180 miles to the Curragh Internment Camp. I immediately recommended that Albert Price, Billy Perry, Rocky Burns, and five others should come out, which they did. Albert, Billy and Rocky then returned to Belfast. The furniture van ordered from Curran Bros. of Belfast on the Friday, was left near Sion Mills, and the sum of nine pounds hire was forwarded to the firm. Burke and Steele arrived back safe and sound by train, alighting at Midland station in Belfast, Burke this time travelling as a priest while Steele had on his Fire Service uniform.

PUBLIC APPEARANCE OF McATEER; ARREST OF BURKE AND STEELE

Easter Sunday we suffered the loss of Liam Burke, at that time Adjutant

General, and Alfie "Shuffles" White — not related to me — who were arrested in the house they were staying in, Carmichael's of Windsor Drive, near the Lisburn Road. It was a loyalist area and we thought they would be safe, but evidently suspicion was aroused because the R.U.C. approached front and rear. When the two men ran out the back they found that way blocked too. Alfie had escaped from Derry only five weeks before. Three months later, they each got twelve years. An arms dump, which they were unaware of, was found under boards on the first floor. It consisted of a Thompson, two Lee Enfields, nine revolvers and an assortment of magazines and bomb cases. To save Carmichael, who had already got offside to Dublin, they took responsibility for them. As the police evidence on this was sloppy, Liam pressed them why they had not discovered the arms until days after. *I gave it a cursory examination,* said the policeman. Liam slipped a note to Shuffles, whose education had been neglected; *Surely that is an unique procedure,* was scribbled on it. Taking his cue, Shuffles piped at the bewigged judge: *Sure that is a unikay procedure!* One way or another, we would never know where officers were staying, we had call houses where meeting places were arranged, but one kept very dark indeed, the location of the house where you stayed. Their loss at that time was unfortunate as we had gained a small propaganda coup through the public appearance on Easter Sunday afternoon of McAteer and Steele during the showing of the film *Don Bosco* at the Broadway Cinema, Falls Road. Of course, the location and most of the audience was favourable, but the district bristled with R.U.C. determined to block an Easter commemoration. That it might take place in public in a cinema never occurred to them.(7) It was two Army lads Joe Doyle and Dan Diffin who came up with the idea. At first it was simply that a slide be flashed on the screen, JOIN THE IRA, but we turned it into a full dress commemoration.

I was stopping in the house of the projectionist, Willie Mohan, whose brother Jerry was interned, having left the private home of the Mater where I had been confined by the food poisoning. The box was kept locked, but there would be a three minute break between films during which they stepped out for a smoke. We could act then. The cinema had been well gone over; armed volunteers were inside the doors, on the roof and across the street. McAteer and Steele were already below.

When the projection box door opened at 5.25 p.m. our men slipped in, handed over their slide which was flashed upon the screen.

> THIS CINEMA HAS BEEN COMMANDEERED BY THE IRISH REPUBLICAN ARMY FOR THE PURPOSE OF HOLDING AN EASTER COMMEMORATION IN MEMORY OF THE DEAD WHO DIED FOR IRELAND. THE PROCLAMATION OF THE REPUBLIC WILL BE READ BY COMMDT. GEN. STEELE AND THE STATEMENT FROM THE ARMY COUNCIL WILL BE READ BY LIEUT. GEN. McATEER.

The two men then mounted the stage, reading from two documents, which were greeted by thunderous applause. Meanwhile Frank, the manager, who was an uncle of the projectionist, was held in his office and his phone seized. It was all over within twenty minutes, but he was so frightened that he did not call the police until an hour later. They then arrested him but released him quickly. A statement had already reached the papers, and it was from them that the police first learned of it. We all scattered quickly. I was not far away anyway; I was in Loughran's, still suffering from the Spam eaten in Co. Derry, but getting over it.

By the end of April only three of the twentyone from Derry were still at liberty, and Ned Maguire, who had escaped from Crumlin Road in January, was taken by guards in Donegal. About forty Republicans were pulled in on these sweeps. There was no let-up north or south. In Dublin, Sean Hamill, one of the escapees, and Frank Kerrigan, who had escaped from Mountjoy with Jackie Griffiths and Jim Smith, the previous October, were rearrested. Early in May, Jimmy Steele, then O.C. Belfast was arrested at 11 o'clock at night at 96 Amcomri Street, Beechmount, off the Falls. Jimmy, now 34, had already served five years following the Crown Entry 1936 raid. Before his death in the early seventies, he would have served a total of twenty years in His Majesty's jails in the cause of freedom.(8)

Steele's arrest — the little street was staked out by seventy armed policemen — was a lesson to me on how careful one needs to be reading the signs in advance. We were stopping with Mrs. Loughran; Jimmy Trainor, Steele and myself. There was a wee lad Gerard Loughran, aged seven in the house. This day — there was no one else there — a knock came to the door. *Look,* I said, *no matter who's there, say that nobody's in.*

Hello, son, is anybody there?
Naw, there's nobody here.
I'm looking for my saw.
Naw, we have no saw here.
Can I come in and look?
No, ye can't, come back when my mammie is here.
Isn't there anybody home?
Nobody.
So there's nobody in the house at all?
No, there isn't.

It was a tight spot and a stressful one for a seven year old to be in, but it illustrates to a tee the cuteness of those old shites of policemen going through a house when there are only children or nobody about. For as he departed down the street, I recognised him for a policeman. Very odd, I thought as I watched him go; what can be happening? Then I remembered that a week before, young Gerard reached into my coat in the bathroom and found my gun. Deeply embarrassed, I told him: *Not at all, that is not a*

real gun; it is one like Tom Mix has for the pictures. It seemed to satisfy the boy, but imagine my dismay going down the street a day later, when he ran to me with a shout: *Lend me your Tom Mix gun.* Walls have ears, and they might have had that day because, a few days later, I had word from a police contact: *If there is anybody in Beechmount, have them cleared out.* I was still worrying over this with three of us there, when this day, a Sunday, the tenders suddenly drove in and the street was sealed off. Mrs. Loughran had her coat on and was on the point of going out. *You go on,* I said, *as though everything was normal. Go out and turn the key,* which she did, taking her young son with her. Steele then went upstairs to the back room while Trainor went into the front room. I stayed in the scullery. We were all placed and ready to shoot it out. Fancy our surprise, when we found it was the end house on the opposite side, the home of a British soldier, they were raiding. Was it a misfire, had they mixed up the numbers? Would it be our house next time? *I am not staying here,* said Tommy Trainor that night, setting off to Malone's, while I headed for Ballymacarrett. Steele, however, decided to remain. It was a gamble anyhow, to know whether to move or to stay; you could be moving out of the frying pan into the fire.

THE WILLS FACTORY RAID; DEATH OF JACKIE

I knew nothing of the plans for this raid until afterwards. It happened in Dublin on Thursday morning at 10.20 on 1st July, and £5,000 was taken. Charlie Kerins, Archie Doyle and Jackie Griffiths organised it, riding up on stolen bikes which they left behind. The money was badly needed; it was a a case of getting it merely to survive. They arrived at the factory gate on the South Circular Road minutes before the van and its three occupants. Whereupon they stepped forward with scarves over their faces and demanded the money. It was quickly handed over; Archie Doyle climbed in, started the van, turned it, and as it moved slowly towards the gate, the two jumped aboard and away. Turning right, it headed for the canal, ending up undamaged behind Dartmouth Square.

Jackie did not last long after that. The Branch men were determined to get him, dead or alive. He had been sentenced to ten years in March 1942, but had escaped from Mountjoy in October. Thereafter he was on the run, dodging his way on a bike by day and by night through Dublin. Liam Burke had sent him briefly to Mooncoin, where, with his English accent, he was held briefly as a spy, until Liam confirmed otherwise. On Sunday 4th July at 1.30 p.m. he had made his way from Paddy Brown's in Ballsbridge through Lower Mount Street into Merrion Square. He was being tailed by a heavily armed Branch car, which at that point, according to the police, attempted to squeeze him towards the kerb. They say he drew a pistol and fired; they replied with a Thompson, cutting him down. That Branch man became prominent in business in Dublin afterwards.

On the 11th July in the Curragh, a hunger strike that had lasted 49 days,

came to an end. It was a brave effort by Sean McCool, Terry McLaughlin of Leitrim and Gerry O'Doherty of Derry, but in the circumstances of the time, doomed to failure.

Meanwhile, Lord Justice Murphy handed out heavier than ever sentences to Steele, Liam Burke, Louis Duffin and a string more. Most of them were put away for twelve years, with twelve strokes of the cat to James Mooney, of Raglan Street, and the birch for Joe Doyle(9) and Arthur Steele. Murphy, a member of the Black Preceptory, had his loyalism aroused.(10) Twentyone prisoners meanwhile, had gone on a clothing protest, and were joined by the newcomers. On and off, it was to last a year, being joined after his capture in November, by McAteer. Refusing to wear prison clothing, their furniture and blankets were removed each morning at eight, being left thus through the winter of 1943 into 1944. Although this grim protest was accompanied by hunger strikes, they got nowhere, and were forced to conform eventually.(11)

> Dear isle across the ocean, dear loving land of ours;
> May your days be sunny and your way a way of flowers.
> Wide though we are scattered by alien vale and hill;
> All the love we gave to you we keep and cherish still.
> If you sigh we hear you, if you weep we weep,
> In your hours of gladness, all our pulses leap.
> Ireland, Mother Ireland, take what may befall,
> Ever shall we hold you, dearest, best of all.

Ye syphillitic bastard, yelled Louis Lascelles, a negro up on a charge of abortion before Murphy, who handed down two years, whereupon Lascelles promptly fainted. *What did you get?* he asked Louis Duffin as the two were being led through the tunnel. *I got twelve years,* said Duffin matter of factly, whereupon the coloured man collapsed again.

PRESSURE ON THE LADS

The heavy raiding continued. Up to 1943 the Army in Belfast had maintained its company organisation, and with around 300 volunteers, was relatively intact. But, as in the South, the authorities were now determined to steamroll it out of existence. Groups of ten and twenty were dragged in, some to be gone over, questioned, and released, and others to be charged or interned. August brought more widespread raids, and the discovery of one important dump. In July, Bob McMillan was arrested and later charged with the ARP raid of January 1942. He was a good operator, and in the circumstances, had lasted pretty well.

Republican News, issued by the Publicity Bureau, continued to appear monthly, handed out for small subscriptions or for free in the back streets,

and brought in wrapped parcels to the provincial outlets. It was considered seditious by the authorities, although its contents were harmless, but the mere fact that it was appearing and being distributed, was an act of defiance in itself. It was recommenced in a new form the previous August, published from the Publicity Bureau H.Q., at 463 Crumlin Road, until John Stuart Stephenson Graham and David Fleming were raided there on 10th September.(12) Overnight it was set up elsewhere; typed, copied, and 6,000 copies were on the streets next day. Despite the harassment, we continued to produce it through 1943, and into the early months of 1944, when I am afraid, it got too much for our resources. In the early months of 1943, Steele wrote most of it, watched critically by McAteer. *Jimmy, you are using too many adjectives,* he would say: he was a tall, brave, upright man, being a favourite description of his.

When Steele went early in May, McAteer took over, writing most of it until his demise in November. I then took charge of it, writing it mostly by candlelight in Dan Turley's house at 54 Drew Street, where he had a hideaway entered from a built-in press into the roof space, under the slates. Eventually, following our detention of Frank Moyna,(13) Dan's house was raided early in 1944, and our equipment seized. Dan got six months, and that was the end of *Republican News.*

Liam Burke tells an amusing story of James Lynam, an innocent lad, who lived near Cyprus Street. Chased by police after a shooting, a volunteer rushed through his open front door dropping a revolver on the settee intending to retrieve it afterwards, a tactic that was not then unusual. He continued his rush out to the entry — the narrow laneway at the back — passing into a house on the other side and taking his place with the family. In hot pursuit, the police nabbed James, who was handling the weapon curiously. He was charged before Warnock. It was his big moment to be a hero for Ireland. Seeking permission not to recognise the court, he was disappointed when refused by the organisation. He had to accept representation from James McSparran, K.C., who made the best possible case. *This man is a loyal subject,* commenced counsel. "Loyal subject" in the mind of James identified him with Orangemen whom he abhorred. Warming up, McSparran continued: *His father fought in the Boer War;* at which Warnock interjected, *There was no I.R.A. in those days.* James could restrain himself no longer.

Wasn't there? he shouted, rising, *have none of ye heard of Bob Hope and Robbie Emmet?*

Some people ask me how the relatives of the prisoners fared. Considering that there were at least twelve hundred prisoners, north and south, those who had dependants fared poorly. Fortunately, less than one in five were married; even so, many were the sole support of their homes, yet nothing was provided in the social services. Many depended on charity, on St. Vincent de Paul, and on the very limited resources available within our

own prisoners relief organisation. In the North, Green Cross was set up in 1941; it was ultra respectable, it was not a 'front', but it did splendid work. In 1943, a spokesman said, £23,000 had been subscribed in the previous two years. The people, through house-to-house collections, had taken the cause to their hearts.

Comrades were going all around me now but I survived on in Belfast. I wore glasses and I wore a cap, because in a house I could take them off. I had an identity card, but no identity card will stand up to close examination. So I carried my Parabellum automatic always, though I did my best to keep out of harm's way. In the circumstances, that was not always possible. This day, I was standing at a bus stop in Castle Street, when along came Dick O'Rawe, a docker, father of Harry, one of our volunteers. He knew me well enough, though for security reasons he always called me Casey. *Casey,* he called to me, *how are you keeping; come on around here and we'll have a drink. No, no,* said I, *I have got to be moving;* but he pressed me and I found myself walking around the corner, only to be stopped by two men, policemen obviously, who stepped out of a doorway. *Who is your companion?* one said to O'Rawe. *That's Casey,* said he. I could see one had a gun in his pocket. *Where is your identity card?* he turned to me. *This is it,* said I, as I pulled my automatic on him. I jumped back around the corner while he fired, the bullet penetrating my trousers. I let fly at him then, and the two of them ran. I ran too, but in the opposite direction, emerging into Royal Avenue. I then made my way back safely to where I was stopping. O'Rawe was arrested, of course, some time later. I think they gave him a bit of a shaking before he was released. A while after, I thought I should go and see how he was. He lived nearly opposite the Broadway Cinema. When he saw me, however, he was startled; *For God's sake, will ye run off. I'm bad enough without having ye here.*

McATEER ARRESTED

Hugh was arrested in Crocus Street, in the early afternoon of Saturday 21st November 1943, after leaving St. Paul's church, armed detectives closing upon him. He rarely carried a gun, but in any case he walked into a dragnet that was already prepared. He was to spend the next seven years behind bars in Crumlin Road, serving out a treason conviction, just one of the hundreds of Northerners incarcerated so that the South could enjoy what it thinks is freedom. As a fugitive with £3,000 on his head, he realised that capture was inevitable. After the propaganda coup at Easter, he had told a friend: *Any form of effective military action is now impossible. All we can do now is hold the pass until the jail gates open.* He was particularly galled by the arrest of the Derry escapees on 20th March; *The Southern government is co-operating with the British,* he said; *internees guilty of no crime are imprisoned in what is supposed to be the sympathetic South,*

About his own life then — and particularly about his future wife, Nora McKearney of Odessa Street, interned for three years(14) — he was to say afterwards, *I have few regrets; there have been mistaken decisions, but those were days when there was little opportunity for careful deliberation.*

The McAteer family came from Fanad in the north end of Co. Donegal, an area that was particularly hit by the famine of 1847. His grandfather Hugh was the only survivor, three brothers and two sisters dying by the roadside. Hugh himself joined Fianna at eleven, and by nineteen he was already a convicted felon.(15)

We heard the news the same evening. Hugh gone, who is next? It was another gloomy milestone. In Dublin, Charlie Kerins took over again as Chief of Staff. In Belfast, there was still myself as O.C. Northern Command, Seamus Rocky Burns as O.C. Belfast. Albert Price, Liam Perry, Paddy Meehan and Harry O'Rawe on the staff.

About this time there was a dump in the Parochial Hall in Seaforde Street, near the Markets which we were asked to move. It had been placed there in the riots of 1935, to protect the people. A new priest found out about it, and insisted that it be moved. We arranged for a woman to take half of it away in a pram. She was tailed by this fellow from the locality who guessed what was afoot. He saw enough to inform the police. They raided the house and got the stuff. We knew who had done it. For a paltry sum of money, he gave the game away and got a good lad, Dan Diffin, arrested. He involved the whole family, but he was dying of T.B. so he was not worth shooting. We let him go.

ROCKY BURNS

We lost Seamus Rocky Burns, of Cupar Street, on 12th February 1944. Rocky had been interned in the Crumlin and Derry, escaping from there in March 1943. He was around Dublin then for a while, but returned to Belfast in May, succeeding Steele as O.C. Belfast. Permanently armed, and permanently on the run, he had some narrow shaves. On one occasion the police swooped on a trolley bus he was in. *Is this your identity card?* said the R.U.C. man eyeing it. *Of course it is mine,* said Rocky, now clasping his revolver, *I got it at the food office. Well, they gave you the wrong one,* said the policeman helpfully, *it's a child's card. You should bring it back to them with your ration book. I'll do that, Constable,* said Rocky. Rocky had a smart, quick mind and loved difficult crosswords. He was a great Gaelgoir too, and a first class Irish speaker. A joker as well, he was in the cell next to veteran Republican Joe McGurk in Derry. Putting on a female voice he would call through the cell window: *I say, is that you Mrs. Donaghy, did you hear that poor man McGurk was lifted again? Oh dear, oh dear,* would come back. He would then simulate a vigorous row with a non-existent B Special battering on his cell door; *Get down, get down from that winda ya bastard.*

Oh, is it me? would be replied innocently. *Mind, ye wouldn't talk like that to Joe McGurk.* Sterling Republican that he was, the racket coming while he was immersed in his books, drove Joe mad. Then, on this afternoon in February, in daylight, Rocky and a companion were stopped by two police in Chapel Lane, where he had been staying, and not satisfied with their identity cards, they commenced escorting them to nearby Queen Street barracks. Rocky, knowing the game was up, broke away pulling his gun, the police doing likewise. Shots were exchanged on both sides at close range, his unarmed companion meanwhile escaping. One of the police was shot in the shoulder, but a policeman in civilian attire, coming from the barracks, shot Rocky through the stomach from which he died a few days later. He was aged 23. Albert remembers Rocky going out that morning; he was going down the entry from Ardoyne. We usually went down the back of the houses. *I'll see ye the night in the bar down in Francis Street,* he said. Harry O'Rawe, Liam Perry and I met there that evening. Joe the barman, wiping the counter, moved along: *Get off side, Rocky is shot in Queen Street.*

He had my coat. I had been given an overcoat by a woman who dealt in second-hand clothes in Beechmount. I wore it to Ballymacarrett where I was staying, and Rocky coming out further up the street, I gave him the coat for he looked cold even though I had none myself. That was a few days before, but Mrs. Loughran who knew the coat, saw Rocky on the ground, and thought it must be me.

We gave him a soldier's funeral into Milltown, even though the few of us that were left had to stay away. All traffic on the Falls was stopped, and thousands turned out to watch the cortège. There were hundreds of R.U.C. men there, and two cage lorries as well. The authorities had their final kick at him; his sister Madge, who was interned for over two years in Armagh jail, had her request for parole turned down.

A bhuachaill aoibhinn aluinn óig,
Badh leathan do chroidhe, badh dheas do phóg,
Mo lean gan mise leat féin go deo,
Is go dteighidh tú a mhuirín slán.

The net was tightening on us all the time, but as long as one of us remained, we would not give in. I kept in touch with Charlie in Dublin through occasional notes brought there to Eileen Tubbard who passed them on. Otherwise there was little contact between the two parts of the organisation. We no longer travelled to the Free State. Everyone was lying low, and we had no money. Our main task was to hold together the framework of the organisation, and to look after the communications in and out of the prison. I spent all my time now in Belfast. We still kept the *Republican News* going; there was two of us on that, almost fulltime. As

I said, it was done on a Gestetner in Dan Turley's house, Then he was arrested and that finished the paper. That happened, I think, because of Moyna whom we had interrogated there. Arriving off the train in Great Victoria Street one night, I was accosted by him: *Away ye old bastard, we should have shot you when we had you,* but I went straightaway to Turley's house. *I don't trust that old bastard,* I said, *we'll move everything.* There was a fair share of arms, so my brothers Jack and George helped me with those. They raided then, but they found only the Gestetner. Dan got six months; he was immediately accepted by the Army and was moved in with the politicals.

Albert Price, Paddy Meehan and Harry O'Rawe were lasting. Sometimes the four of them would meet in the loyalist Victoria Bar on Crumlin Road, or in the Oak Lounge on the Grosvenor, or in a café known to them in Wellington Place; all out of the ghetto.

By late 1944, things were so low in the organisation that Harry might say, as they sauntered back in the blackout: *O'Rawe, you are in charge of the city tonight; I'll take over as O.C. tomorrow.* They were allowed ten shillings a week to subsist on. A few grocers helped out with tea and rations, while some nuns helped with money. Price and O'Rawe were billeted in Lower Broadway, and with a Protestant woman in the Village — now an intensely loyalist area. They were fed like turkeys, but in November they had to appear wearing poppies. Patsy Hicks, another officer, used to stop sometimes with Albert in Shankill Road; divisions those times being less rigid. It was around this time when Harry, with O'Rawe, got a firm offer of an air-lift from Shannon to New York. Harry dismissed the idea, *Sure what would we be doing there?* Charlie Kerins was arrested in a 4 a.m. swoop on the home of Dr. Kathleen Murphy at50 Upper Rathmines Road, in Dublin on 16th June 1944. He was held until his trial at the no-jury court in Collins Barracks in October; McLaughlin, Murnaghan, Hooper and Humphries, along with military officers, Bennett, Joyce, Whelan and Tuite being arrayed against him. He choose not to defend himself, and was sentenced to death. Rigorous censorship was applied to notices of reprieve meetings. Despite this, 77,000 names appeared on a reprieve petition. Charlie, however, took no part. He was hanged by Pierpoint in Mountjoy, on 1st December, the announcement being published as a five line item in the newspapers. To a friend, Liam Burke, in Belfast, he posted a leaf from a calendar, the month of December; *A month I shall not see,* he had written upon it.

> What, said Cathal Brugha, if our last man's on the ground.
> When he hears the ringing challenge if his enemies ring him round.
> If he'd reached his final cartridge — if he'd fired his final shot,
> Will you come into the Empire? He would answer, I will not.
>
> *Gearóid Ó Murchada*

Brigid O'Kane with Harry at her home, then a shop, at Altaghoney in County Derry, where he was finally tracked down in October 1946.

Harry emerging from a preliminary court hearing at Chancery Place, Dublin, in October 1946, handcuffed, and accompanied by eight armed Branch men.

That was Charlie.

Archie lasted for some time after that, I am not sure how he was run to earth, or if he was run to earth at all. He was such a seemingly colourless transparent person, he could merge into any group and cease to be noticed. About this time I was stopping in a house in Seaforde Street, with a Mrs. Weir. But I had to get out of there as we had interrogated the chap who gave away the dump nearby, and that may have drawn them to me.(16)

I had a hidey hole in the roof space. This morning about 4 a.m., I was awakened in the upstairs room; *they are raiding the whole street,* said Mrs. Weir. Her son-in-law, a seaman home on leave, was sleeping on two chairs downstairs. I climbed into the roof, while he came up into my bed. Shortly after that, the heavy knock came. *Where is he; where is White,* as they tramped through the house.

The bed occupied by the son-in-law threw them off. They did not search too hard, although they took him away, but released him later. I stayed in the roof until the streets were clear. Then Mrs. Weir came; a neighbour Mrs. May, had walked around the block, and finding nothing had reported to her. I got out then and did not go back to that house. I moved to County Derry, and then for a while into Tyrone, but I was just running, running now and getting nowhere. It was then that it was decided that I should acquire a new identity entirely, new papers, and settle down as a farmland with the O'Kanes at Altaghoney, Claudy, Co. Derry.

REFERENCES

1 Their homes were raided, but they were not interferred with. He stopped also at the home of Mrs. McDowell in College Square; she was the mother of Vincent, Civil Rights leader in the seventies. Their house was available to a wide raft of the leadership. Paddy Dermody on his infrequent visits to Belfast stayed there, but then he knew them from their Omeath holiday home; Vincent's mother being a native of Newry. As a result of their nationalist activities, three of the McDowell family were imprisoned; Vincent himself for three years, his mother for four, his sister for three and brother Charlie for ten.

2 John Stuart Stephenson Graham of 525 Antrim Road — cast in the mould of '98 as a friend described him — was not the only Protestant at that time in the I.R.A. in Belfast. In one company there were seven officers, and only one a Catholic. Richard Magowan was first lieutenant, Rex Thompson was Finance Officer, Billy Smith was Training Officer, Harry Crowe was Quartermaster, while another officer was Headley Wright, son of the head of the loyalist Portora School, Enniskillen. Gideon Close was there too, a boilermaker, he remained an unswerving Republican. Smith, a printer, has been described as a boy scout person; when he came to a conclusion he stuck to it. Thompson, a commercial traveller, was an associate of Smith. Magowan was a civil servant in Home Affairs. On the command staff, he contracted T.B. in prison. All of them were highly honourable; not one betrayed anybody.

3 Burke's recollection — not that it matters now — was that it was far from clear-cut. The chap had opted to defend himself and Burke had his reservations.

4 Following Sean Russell's departure in April 1939, the mantle of Chief of Staff fell upon Stephen Hayes, until 30th June 1941, whereupon it was taken up by Sean McCaughey of Belfast, who lasted until his arrest in Rathmines ten weeks later. Pearse Kelly from Dungannon then stood in, until his arrest visiting Dr. Herman Goertz, in Clontarf on 27th November 1941. Sean Harrington from Munster took over briefly until his capture a few weeks later. He was then followed by Sean McCool from Stranorlar, who had been released from Crumlin Road following a six year sentence only a few months before. McCool fell to the Branch men in Dublin in March 1942, following which he overlapped briefly with Harry in the Curragh before the latter's departure. When Harry emerged, he found Hugh McAteer of Derry City in command. He lasted in Belfast until 6th September, whereupon Charlie Kerins of Tralee took over from the Dublin HQ. He deferred to McAteer following the latter's escape in Belfast on 15th January 1943. When McAteer was arrested there the following November, Kerins again took over. He lasted until his own arrest in Rathmines on 16th June 1944, whereupon the mantle fell on Harry, who presided over the decimated army from hideaways in Belfast and South Derry until his arrest on the 20th October 1946. In lasting a total of 28 months as Chief of Staff, Harry easily exceeded all of his predecessors.

5 Years after, Paddy bought a typewriter in Smithfield for half a crown — twelve pence — and hammered out the story upon it.

6 Hubert McInerney, Billy Graham, Tom McArdle, Jimmy O'Rawe, Chips McCusker, Brendan O'Boyle, Sean Hamill, Alfie White, Jimmy Trainor, Rocky Burns, Paddy Adams, Billy Perry, Dan McAllister, Albert Price (all from Belfast), Jim O'Hagan, Kevin Kelly (Tyrone), Jimmy McGreevy (Co. Down), Jimmy McCann and Hugh Mor O'Neill (Lurgan), Sean McArdle (Newry) and Pat Scullion from South Derry.

7 In any year in the Six Counties, there may be up to four hundred Orange processions, some being conveyed through areas where they are deeply resented. Republican commemorations at this period, were always banned. However, a few were still surreptitiously held, in graveyards at night, at ceilís and dances in South Derry and the Glens.

8 His greatest loss was the death of his only son, a little boy, run down on a pedestrian crossing in the Falls.

9 Joe, Paddy and two other brothers Doyle, had reached the I.R.A. through the Fianna. There was a reserve amounting to nobility about Joe Doyle.

10 Apart from Jim Mooney, Pat McCotter, Ned Tennyson, Jimmy Greenway, Albert O'Rawe, Joe McGuigan, Pat Donnelly and John McMahon, both of Armagh, were sentenced to strokes of the cat, a particularly vicious way of passing a judgement on a political prisoner. In the Free State it was administered to Billy Stewart of Dundalk. Harry's verdict: *It shatters a man.*

11 Concessions did follow, bit by bit, giving the political prisoners, up to the time of their release in 1950, a measure of respite. Their protests in 1943 and 1944 were suffocated by wartime censorship, the press and authorities being equally guilty. William Beattie, M.P., and Harry Diamond, M.P., raised the matter many times. An issue of the *Standard* for November the 30th 1945, gives details.

12 Like *War News* issued from Dublin, a few copies have survived the raids and fears of raids. A Belfast issue of March 1943 (No. 8), is two typed foolscap pages folded over and stapled. *In Ireland today,* its leader commences, *there is a body of Nationalists who sincerely believe in the Irish Republic as a goal, yet persist in thinking that freedom may be achieved through the twenty-six county Parliament.* There were three items on prison life, North, South

and in England, a poem on the Crumlin escape, and a note congratulating Mahatma Gandhi, then on hunger strike, *against the Robber Empire.*

John Graham, (Editor, *Republican News*) Gideon Close, Bill Smith, Rex Thompson, Bob Clements, Walt Mitchell, and a dozen others — most renowned of all being George Plant — represented the Protestant wing of the I.R.A. With, at the present time, around thirty-five Protestants in the Free State army, the I.R.A. had at this time more than that number in its ranks.

13 Frank Moyna was a Sheriff's bailiff with an office near Chapel Lane in the centre of Belfast. He offered on many occasions to help the I.R.A. with intelligence, but this intelligence was of a questionable nature, such as his solemn oath to Harry, who was persuaded to meet him, that a close comrade was a spy. Sergt. Mick Heffernan of the C.I.D., he said, had passed on this information to him in great secrecy. Both Harry and Steele laughed at this report.

14 The McKearney family were heavily trodden upon. Frank served a six year sentence, Seamus and Joe were interned for five years, and Nora for three.

15 In 1950, Hugh McAteer while still in prison, contested the Derry seat as an abstentionist candidate, polling 22,000 votes. As he said at the time, *without making a speech or kissing a single baby.*

16 Mrs. Weir's house at 74 Seaforde Street, is now occupied by her daughter Mrs. McElhone, whose husband was shot dead by loyalists while defending St. Matthew's Church from a raiding party in 1970.

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

On My Keeping in County Derry

Altaghoney is a quiet place, a shop by the side of a by-road, no more than four miles south of Claudy in Co. Derry. It is just over the county border from Tyrone, in the foothills of the Sperrins, with the thousand foot Crockadooish, a steep grassy mountain above it. The Glenrandal, a good trout river, flows northwards behind the house to join the Faughan river at Claudy. Altaghoney, as nice a place as you could imagine, is in the neck of a narrow valley, opening out northwards from the high slopes of the Sperrins. It is not great land, but it is pleasant country, Nationalist mostly, and Catholic.

> Donal Óg O Cathán sits high amid Sawell's snow,
> The woodlands wide of Glenconkeyne and the valleys lie below.
> And of all the fair land and the far on which he looketh down,
> There is not one acre left to him by the knaves of London town.

Brigid O'Kane was in charge of the shop, with her sister Rose who minded the land. The shop and the house combined was a typical long white-washed two storey, slate roofed place, set a few yards back from the road. At the left hand end, through a doorway which led into the living quarters, was a drapery shop with, beside it on the right, a general store and pub. Further on, on the right, was a two storey meal store with a loft over, all under one roof. At the back of the house and upstairs, were living quarters, rooms for the two sisters, for the wee girl who helped in the house, and the servant man, Mick Browne, who remained with them. I have been using the past tense to describe the property, but in fact it is still there, still to the good except that the shop, in common with most country shops of that sort, no longer functions. The supermarket in Claudy or bigger shops in Strabane and Derry have replaced it.

The O'Kanes were of noble family, very proud of their descent from Ó Catháin, chieftains of South Derry, whose family seat was Dungiven. Brigid and Rose were two ladies — you would have to call them that — in their thirties. They had that soft ladylike speech, and an indefinable carriage which placed them apart. You would never confuse them with country people. They had some rare books in the house, and many valuable pieces handed down through the family. Their grandfather had his home in Clarendon Street, Derry, one of the finer streets there, where he published a

Land League paper in the eighties. For a living he owned a bonded warehouse. Another one of the sisters became a nun, while a brother Louis was a solicitor in the Free State, in Buncrana. Shortly after I came to their home in mid 1944, the organisation having all but disintegrated, one of the very first things I did was to paint upon the timber signboard, where the name O'Kane adorned the middle door, the salutation *céad míle fáilte,* in small letters underneath.

I had come in response to an advertisement that the organisation had got the sisters to put in the *Derry Journal.* There was no bother about that; Hugh McAteer and a few more had stayed there earlier. The advertisement said, simply: "Man wanted to work land, and to assist in general running of property". I was Harry McHugh, a discharged merchant seaman, invalided from a torpedoed vessel, and I had all the discharge papers to prove it. I could prove in fact that I was the nephew of a real policeman in Andersonstown.

That sort of thing would not work these days, but it worked then. I was known to the police in Claudy, and I became known to and accepted by the people of the neighbourhood. They were a tightly-knit community, not eager to take to strangers. I was so much part and parcel of Altaghoney, of Stranagalwilly and Claudy, that a local Orangeman Harley Boyle, approached me to play in the Orange Hall. I used to pass the time in the house strumming the banjo, the fiddle or the accordion, when Harley heard me. He knew me anyway; he was the local auctioneer, and we often had discussions. They were one-sided, because I always ended up agreeing with everything he said. Why would I go against the man? *I believe ye play the banjo? Will ye play for us?* he said. I needed the money, it was only shillings anyway, so I started and played with a dance band, the Magnet, that was already going around all the halls in that part of Derry and Tyrone. There were plenty of house dances that time as the nearest place was Claudy, four miles distant, and there was not much transport except bicycles. The girls arranged the house dances; there would be thirty or forty couples, and never too much drink. I must have played at dozens of them.

I worked about the house, on the bit of a farm, and went cutting turf. There was always plenty to do. It was the Sergeant in Claudy, Sergeant Murdock, who first told me I should blast the rocks out of it. *You'll get a grant for it,* he said. *Where will I get the material,* I asked, taken slightly aback. *We'll give it to you; sure we have plenty of gelignite for that purpose. You know how to use it?* he then inquired. *Oh, yes,* said I, *they train you in everything in the navy. Right,* said he, on next Tuesday, if you call to the barrack, *I can you give a pack,* and he mentioned a figure: *take that and see how ye get on.* So Rose filled in the permit and on the following Tuesday I collected a pack that contained ten sticks, strapped it upon my bike and brought it to the house. There were detonators and fuse wire too; I blasted the rocks of course, but half of the stuff I kept back to send to Belfast. From

then on I got a lot of gelignite, sending more to Belfast, but they had no longer any use for it there, and gelignite is not the sort of material that can be stored for any length of time.

Then one day in the barracks, under a good likeness of myself, the wanted Harry White, the sergeant said, *I'm afraid there is no gelignite here today, but if we go to Derry we can collect it there.* So to the arsenal in Derry we went, passing through the security and into the stores where the gelignite nestled neatly in racks. I thought to myself, now if they really knew who I am, as I helped the sergeant lift it out.

I also found myself doing a bit of barbering. I had done it a couple of times in jail so I was handy enough. One day a local chap came into the shop; *Would you cut my hair?* I asked him. The job done, he turned to me and asked me to do the same for him. When he went home they were all delighted; *Where did you get your hair cut? Harry McHugh cut it for me.* So there and then I got the job of cutting everybody's hair. Then this day, I was in the kitchen cleaning a gun which I kept hidden. There was no one in the shop as the sisters were sorting out fowl at the back.

I had a gun broken down with the parts sitting upon a chair beside me. I heard the bell and the shop door clang and a heavy step in the passage from the shop to the kitchen. Hastily planting a cushion over the parts, I looked up as the door opened. There standing in it was the local R.U.C. man, Constable McFarland, with his gun out, and pointing it straight at me. Then, swinging it around on one finger, he laughed as he put it back in its holster. *That's the way we do it in the R.U.C. My God,* said I, *ye frightened the life out of me. Now,* said he, *I'm only joking. I believe ye are a good man at cutting hair; will ye give me a hair cut?* With that he took off his gun belt and cap, and I gave him a hair cut. I made sure not to seat him upon the armchair that still had the cushion concealing my gun. He stood up, delighted. As he left he remarked: *Next time I see you in Claudy, I'll buy ye a drink.* When they came to arrest me two years after, Head Constable Carson roared at him: *Could ye not recognise him, and his picture there on your wall!* He was livid with anger calling him for all the fools. Notices had come from the Free State in October 1942, with my photograph, but the R.U.C. circulated their own with a more recognisable photograph. At my trial in Dublin, he had to give evidence that he had indeed met me, and that I had cut his hair a number of times. Sergeant Murdock was made tell about the gelignite and his other encounters with me, all to his great embarrassment. I believe they were both discharged out of the force.

I moved to and from Belfast on rare occasions for the purpose of checking on messages that came through on the line from Crumlin. There was nothing I could do but send back encouragement. G.H.Q. was flat; since the arrest of Charlie Kerins in Dublin in June 1944, there was effectively no G.H.Q. except myself. There were units and personalities, above and below ground, up and down the country, but they existed largely

at the pleasure of the local police superintendent. So long as there were no operations, no exploits, in the locality, surviving Republicans were left alone. They were being augmented by the first dribble of releases and three months parole people from the Curragh after the middle of 1944. By May 1945, only forty remained interned in the Free State, together with around thirty sentenced prisoners, and by June all of the internees were released, while eighteen months later, in December 1946, twentyfour of the long sentenced ones were left free. In the North around two hundred, between internees and sentenced men, were held; the last of these internees were released in December. Very important for me, the military court — death or acquittal — was terminated in the Free State also in May 1945, at the end of the war in Europe.(1)

The swelling flood of releases brought no joy to me. I was glad, of course, for the sake of the men but the fact that they were through the mill and were out, free to patch up their lives again, only made me more isolated. I was still wanted, still on the run, certain to be executed in the Free State if I was caught. Charlie Kerins had been hanged by Pierpoint in Dublin in December 1944, and Sean McCaughey had been let die in Portlaoise in May 1946. They would do the same for me, if they could; vengence is mine, saith De Valera. I was not afraid to die; it never worried me, but the fact that I was now the only Republican on the run meant that I must stay away from all other Republicans. I could be alive and well as Harry McHugh in Stranagalwilly and Altaghoney, but apart from the occasional hurried visit to my folks in Belfast, I had to stay in South Derry. There was nowhere I could go, and few, extremely few, whom I dared contact. Archie Agnew of Maghera knew; he was the local stalwart who stood by us all, and Mick Browne who lived with me in the house and the two sisters; but that was all. To everyone else, I could be dead. No wonder the rumour was widespread that I had long since flown out from Shannon.

Organisationally speaking, there was almost nothing that I could do; the political swings and roundabouts were beyond me. In the springtime of 1946, I met, by arrangement, Sean McCool in Strabane. McCool had been released from the Curragh ten months previously. He told me that Patrick Maxwell, a member of the Stormont parliament, was leading a party of so-called Northern nationalists to the United States. I intended issuing a statement there that would inform our friends of the sort of people they were. Maxwell had spoken the previous December at a National Amnesty meeting in Derry. A fellow Nationalist M.P., T. J. Campbell, had accepted a Stormont judgeship. Maxwell later accepted a judgeship. Cahir Healy had earlier said he would support Stormont, and of course, into our own time, you have seen the somersaults of Lord Fitt, Hume, Currie and the other so-called Nationalists. To my mind the only sound Irishman that ever went through Stormont was Harry Diamond. He recognised it for what it was, a Quisling regime, to use his own words. He was at our beck and call,

ready always to do what he could; even in London in 1939, he allowed a select few of us to make use of his house. Diamond was a man of the people; he never tried to fool them into believing that slavery was freedom.

I was still around and at liberty when an attempt was made in Dublin to reconstitute an Army Council in March 1946. Efforts on these lines had been proceeding since late 1945. All of them pointedly ignored my existence.(2)

That summer, I found myself unexpectedly, and much against my will, over the border in the Twenty Six Counties. As some goods were in short supply in the North, people travelled over for what they could get. Drink too was much cheaper and quite plentiful and so were smokes. Bus trips were organised. One such was arranged for this Sunday from Claudy. *I am not going to Donegal,* I told the man trying to rope me in; *I have no wish to see the Free State.* But I was popular, and they were not going to give in easily. The bus was standing there, and a couple of big lumps of fellows just came over, lifted me, and carried me in. It started at once and I just had to sit there. After an hour it passed from Strabane across the bridge into Lifford. Within a few hours some of them were roaring drunk and crazy for a fight. I did my best to keep to one side, drinking lemonade interspersed with the odd bottle of stout. I went out then, rambling up the street, not going too far, but trying to stay out of trouble. Eventually they were all herded on to the bus, but they were no sooner there than there was another burst up and the guards were called. The bus was driven to the barracks and everyone was told to step out. We were lined up, names taken and identity cards called for. There was a picture of myself on the barrack wall; nobody passed remarks because it was the one they published after Donnycarney, and I would not have recognised myself in it. Anyway they knew I was sober, so after noting the name, Harry McHugh, I climbed back into the bus. There was no harm done, but it was the sort of silly lark that could be your undoing.

There was a Father McGillaway there while I was about with the Magnet Dance Band, and we were great favourites with him. Accompanied by Dan Keenan, I met him this day. *I notice you stay here all the time though you don't go to the altar; are you on the run? I am,* said I. *Is it political? It is. Well, I'm on the run myself,* said he; *I'm here, and I will be here 'till the end of my days. I was sent here by Bishop Farren* — long-time Bishop of Derry and notorious Brit bootlicker — *because I helped one time to blow up a barracks. I'll tell you what ye'll do.* Then he went on: *The Bishop comes here next Tuesday for Confirmation; we always have a wee concert. But this time we'll put on some good rebel songs, and you're the boy will sing them. I used to like the 'Tricoloured Ribbon',* then he added, *and the 'Three Flowers'.* I went one better; I got Father Thompson from Belfast,(3) and I accompanied him. He had to come back and sing again and again, and the Bishop sat stoically through it all.

I had been at Altaghoney two and a half years, from mid 1944 to October 1946. I was returning this Saturday evening from one of my monthly visits to Belfast, after picking up some communications from the jail and sending notes back in. Waiting for me near the house was Mick Browne and another local lad. We strolled along the road not talking about anything in particular. On the way we passed a policeman well known to me. He of course knew me as Harry McHugh; we both saluted, and I thought no more of it. But it was early the next morning we were raided, so his presence that evening had some significance, if only to make sure that the bird has returned to the coop. They may have tracked me from information put together over the years, but my own opinion is that it was Killarney Pat; he was the only one out of Belfast that visited me, and then on only one occasion. Two years earlier he had lived for a while in Belfast, frequently visiting Albert Price's house in Percy Street. *I'm going to Dublin,* he would say; *do you need any messages?* Rocky Burns, Harry O'Rawe, Harry Megan and all were there. After a while one of them said: *Look, I think this fellow is all right; let him do courier for us.* That way he came to visit Altaghoney; none of the others had ever been there, and that is the first time that the penny dropped. When I was being interrogated by Fannin and Davidson in Belfast, I overheard one of them mention his name. It is not conclusive, but along with everything else it is a pointer. Personally, I think the tip-off to the R.U.C. came from Gill in Dublin. He had detained Pat some time before that, so there is a strong suggestion therefore that he did a deal by disclosing my whereabouts. Dublin then informed the R.U.C., stipulating in all probability that there need be no long-drawn-out deportation process; just a secret handover at the Border, which is what was done.

It was at 8.00 a.m. on a Sunday morning, the 20th of October, that they swooped. I had heard a movement outside just before they broke in the door, but I was already in my cache under the counter. As I have remarked, it could not save me. They knew. The wee girl may have disclosed about the dump behind the fireplace; she was terrified. Combing through the house, they came upon my other dump, entered through the ceiling of a built-in press, and found twelve hand guns, parts of others and two thousand rounds. There were two English mapping surveyors staying in the house for some weeks; they observed nothing. That may have helped the O'Kane sisters who pleaded ignorance. They were charged with explosive offences, but after making four court appearances, were discharged on a *nolle prosequi.*

The raid was led by District Inspector Corbett, assisted by some very red-faced constables from Claudy. In support were the political men from Belfast, Pootes, Davidson, Carson and Fannin.(4) I was brought to Victoria Barracks, on the Strand Road in Derry, placed in a cell, and interrogated by them. *If you tell us the name of the line into the Crumlin,* said Davidson, *you will not be handed over the Border. And you know, if the Free State get you,* added Fanin ominously, *it will be no flowers, by request.*

REFERENCES

1 The Special Criminal Court — non-jury, with selected judges, was and is retained. Coercive law and coercive courts — scarcely recognisable as courts — are now a permanent part of the ruling process in the Six Counties and Twenty Six Counties.

2 Arrested in Ardee Street in the Coombe, Dublin, on March 9th 1946 were: Michael Conway, Cathal Goulding, Terry Sweeney, Dan McCafferty, Larry Grogan, John Joe McGirl, Peadar O'Flaherty, Paddy Fleming, Donald Keane, Tony Magan. These ten were nearly all from the 'right wing' or the Leddy camp, of the Curragh, and almost all were to remain actively trying to give a reorganised I.R.A. a push off; a push off that did not get properly under way until 1951.

3 Fr. Jack Thompson was from Hannahstown, near Belfast. He had been in the I.R.A. in the early thirties. His brother and sister were also involved. He was a close friend of Harry.

4 District Inspector C. Pootes, Co. Inspector Davidson, head of the political branch of the C.I.D., Head Constable Carson and Head Constable Fannin. In an amusing situation in Hillsborough court in the early fifties where Harry appeared as a witness in a civil case, Pootes gave the judge a glowing account of Harry's character.

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

Handed Over

The next day I was brought by car, heavily escorted, to Crumlin Road Prison, Belfast. Three days later, on the Thursday, I was released at 8.00 a.m. only to be bundled into a police car, handcuffed, and still heavily escorted and driven to Tyholland, on the Monaghan border where the car stopped on the southern side of the bridge. There was no legal authority for my deportation, but neither the R.U.C. nor the Free State were worried by trivialities like that. Their Free State counterparts were late, twentyfive minutes late, but when a car containing Detective Inspectors Gill and Weymes, and a posse of their gunmen arrived, I was bundled out by R.U.C. man Gibson. Gill approached me and confirmed who I was, after which he charged me formally with shooting George Mordaunt. I was then handcuffed to one of his men and driven to Dublin. That afternoon, I was charged in the Dublin District Court, in the Grand Jury Room of Green Street Courthouse, before Justice O'Grady, with shooting Mordaunt on 24th October 1942, at Donnycarney. There were no members of the public present and the only press man was Pearse Kelly, who had been in the I.R.A., and had been interned for three years, but he ignored me. Passing out, handcuffed, Gantly walked across; *Don't worry, we'll get this over quick and you'll hang, you bastard.* Ten days after these proceedings commenced, I was sent for trial to the Special Criminal Court. Proceedings there, however, were delayed by a case of *habeus corpus* which my lawyers commenced in Belfast.(1)

On 28th October, I was again heavily escorted into the District Court which for security reasons was held in the Circuit Court rooms of Chancery Place, where I sat in the jury box between two Branch men. On the suggestion of Murnaghan, who was assisted by Walter Carroll, the public were excluded from the court. The interests of justice might be served . . . if the public were excluded, said Murnaghan. A sister, brother-in-law and two Belfast friends were allowed to remain. After a few moments, Murnaghan looking around, noted that there were still press men present. In the interests of justice, he told the judge, he wished them also excluded from the preliminary hearing. *Do you seriously press that,* asked O'Grady, *to exclude the press is rather stern.* However, after a strong objection by Con Lehane, they were allowed to remain.

On that occasion, Lehane made a statement which Chief Superintendent Gantly attempted to deny, that I was illegally before the Dublin court,

that I had been kidnapped as a result of a conspiracy and brought here. This was boldy reasserted by Lehane much to the annoyance of Gantly and George Murnaghan, whose forbears from Omagh made their living in the service of the Crown. The Branch men then commenced giving their versions of the shooting which occurred at the rear of 14 Holly Road, in the late evening of 24th October 1942. Anyone reading those now would realise that there was a considerable amount of cross-fire and that ninetyfive per cent of it originated from the Branch men themselves, many of whom shot wildly in all directions.

They had staked out the house, they said, from 8 p.m. by which time it was already dark. Later a moon appeared, but there was also some cloud. Dozens of Branch men, police and army were engaged. At 9.30 p.m., Gill, Gantly, George Mordaunt and Joseph Foley, were crouched on both sides of the front door, waiting to spring inside. Maggie O'Halloran's bike was underneath the window, while in the yard outside the scullery window were the bikes of Maurice and myself. Ostensibly they had come to arrest *a man called Maurice,* but realising I was there they called in reinforcements.

Inside they could probably see that, having played a game of cards all unsuspecting, we were making ready to go. Patrick Kelly went ahead down the short garden to open the gate in the corrugated fence for Maurice and myself. I was four steps in front with my bike, but I cannot say if our lights were on. At that very moment, Maggie O'Halloran was being shown out the front door by Mrs. Kelly — she was a Collins, a family that had stuck with us through thick and thin — when the four police concealed there burst in.

Evidence was given by the five persons, including Branch man Donegan (who had pursued me that night through the gardens of Holly and Oak Road), and who were brought to my identification parade in the Bridewell. Only Donegan on that occasion positively identified me as having been in Donnycarney.

On the third day, Gill made a long plaintive complaint to the court, *of which I am only a very humble servant,* on the charge of conspiracy and kidnapping, twice made against him by Con Lehane. He requested the court to put an end to this conduct, *until I am charged and proven guilty,* adding, *even a criminal has his rights.* Lehane was not to be put off: *I am satisfied,* he said, *that the manner in which Henry White was brought from Belfast to Tyholland was not a legal manner; that he was in fact abducted and kidnapped. I say that the presence of officers of the Special Branch at Tyholland to meet Henry White and his kidnappers, fixes Inspector Gill and his superiors with previous knowledge that he was going to be so kidnapped by Sir Basil Brooke's R.U.C. On the last day the Court sat,* added Lehane, *there was an attempt at intimidation by Chief Supt. Gantly, but I will not be intimidated or deterred by threats.* Lehane had to make the most of this, but it was only a curtain raiser for the serious business to come.

Finger print evidence confirmed that I had been in 14 Holly Road. Patrick Kelly, who with his wife resided at the house, identified me in the Bridewell as a man "resembling" one of the lodgers Maurice O'Connell alias O'Neill and John Boyle (myself).

We had been there, he said, from Tuesday evening until Sunday at 9.50 p.m. and we were departing when the raid took place.

Evidence of the route followed by me was given in detail. No. 14, to the rear of 5 Oak Road, through the back and front doors to Oak Road, then along the cul-de-sac facing it to the rear of 135 Malahide Road, through the kitchen of that and on to Malahide Road. Then due east across Clontarf Golf Course, down to the railway, and up again into the back garden of 116 Howth Road, where I backed off and lay concealed in the hedge overlooking the railway. Naturally, I had no idea where I was running to that night; I was simply trying to escape being shot. I must have dropped the overcoat Kelly gave me, in the front garden of 135, while a little further on, at the rear of 116 Howth Road, I must have dropped my trusty 9mm Parabellum.

There was prison evidence from Mountjoy that I had been finger-printed on 22nd August 1939, and photographed on 18th August. The photograph, said the chief warder, was *not a good likeness.* I was older now and worn, he added.

Gantly in evidence denied that he had colluded with Gill to meet the R.U.C. at Tyholland on 24th October; the instructions came from someone higher up, he said. Someone at the level of Peter Berry, later Secretary of the Department of Justice, I suppose. But I would doubt very much if Gantly was not a party to it. He did, however, confirm that when Maurice O'Neill rushed in through the back door of 14 Holly Road, he had his long Webley with him and five shots had been fired from it while one had been struck by the hammer, but had misfired.

REFERENCE

1 Within a fortnight, on 15th November, proceedings were started in the court in Belfast before Lord Justice Andrews for a conditional writ of *habeus corpus* which, in effect, sought the return of White on the grounds that he would not receive a fair trial by military officers in Dublin, unassisted by a judge advocate, and in the absence of a jury. White had been kidnapped, his Counsel said, and illegally deported. It is noteworthy that both sides then constantly refer to what is now officialy called Northern Ireland, as the *Six Counties.* The application was refused five days later by Andrews and, the appeal, before Lord Justice Babington in December, also failed. By that time White was already under sentence of death in Dublin. The Belfast proceedings were begun as a desperate attempt to bring the case back there, where he could not be charged with murder. Brigid and Rose O'Kane were returned for trial in Belfast on explosive charges. They were let go after four months on *nolle prosequi.*

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

Before the Military Tribunal

Special Court Trial: Fixed 18th November

Trial: Tuesday 3rd December to Thursday 12th December 1946

At the Special Court fixing, at which I was not present, in the old stone-built Royal Barracks, now Collins Barracks, overlooking Kingsbridge and Bullys Acre, where many of the '98 men lie buried, held four weeks after my arrest, on 18th November, my team consisted of Con Lehane, Sean MacBride S.C., and Noel Hartnett. Lehane had once been O.C. Dublin, while Sean MacBride had a long career in the active service units, in the fight against the Staters and on up to the enactment of the 1937 Constitution. I had met him on one or two occasions previously. Noel Hartnett, a man with a sharp mind and an incisive speaker, at this time was in Fianna Fáil. The military officers were Bennett, Joyce, Whelan and Tuite. On the prosecution side there was again, George Murnaghan S.C., Felix Sherry and Walter Carroll. The court fixed Tuesday 3rd December for the commencement of the trial.

On that day, as the *habeus corpus* appeal in Belfast had not concluded, a strong effort was made by my counsel to have the trial postponed. In might only mean a few days, but every day counted now as death by hanging was my certain fate before this court. It was two years and three days since they had brought over Pierpoint to hang Charlie Kerins in Mountjoy and eight months since they had let Sean McCaughey die. I expected a similar fate from them and I must say at that time, I was totally unmoved at the prospect. However, this objection, not unexpectedly, was overridden by the officers. They were there to hand down a sentence as quickly as seemed decent. Likewise they overrode objections to their participating at all; the case being made by my counsel, that having already heard evidence purporting to link me in the earlier trials of Mick Quill, Maurice O'Neill and Charlie Kerins, they would be prejudiced against me. This elementary precaution to prevent injustice, was cast aside. On the third day of the trial, Murnaghan, despite MacBride's objection, produced the *Wanted for Murder* advertisement of 29th October 1942. In a normal court, character evidence produced in this way would be sufficient to cause a discharge of a jury, though, personally speaking, before such a court as this one, I did not think that it really mattered.

So the trial proceeded. It was opened up by Murnaghan, followed by Branch man Foley, one of the raiders from the front; Michael Gill, in his usual crawling fashion, giving nothing away, and Patrick Kelly, in whose home we were that evening. He was worried and frightened by the proceedings; his wife was made of better stuff. It quickly emerged that they had no real case against me, that they would have to rely on the very thin and questionable ballistic evidence available which would contrive to show that a Branch man never shoots another Branch man, even by mistake.

That one was exploded thirteen months later when one of them shot Chief Supt. Gantly(1) while he was heading a search for a smash-and-grab man, James Nolan, in the Hammond Lane Foundry close to Pearse Street, Dublin.

The second day brought out the fact, after Sean MacBride cross-examined Detective Lanigan, that the Branch men at the open end of the rear laneway, had opened fire on *three* figures, myself, Maurice and probably Mordaunt. I knew also that they had opened first and that we had replied with a few scattered shots *directed down towards them.* Also, we had to conserve our ammunition; they could reload as often as they wished, and everyone knows — even to this day — how wildly they shoot when they think they are under attack. When MacBride pursued this, to find how much and what sort they had fired that night, they refused to allow him inspect the record book of weapons used and ammunition expended, even though the book was in court.

Such information could be useful to the organisation we are fighting against, said Gantly. He then proceeded to read only selected entries from the book, entries which were not even in chronological order. It made it impossible for MacBride to prove the point he wished to bring out, namely that wild shooting had occurred that night.

The fact that Lanigan now said that there were three figures was concealed by him at Maurice O'Neill's trial in 1942, when it might have made some difference. On this occasion also he improved his evidence, as did Guard Dowling who followed him, by saying that when they first opened up, they deliberately aimed high. The purpose in this of course, was to remove the suspicion that he or his fellow Branch men might have killed Mordaunt. Gantly, in his evidence agreed that Mordaunt travelled a hundred feet in the lane, while Guard Dowling admitted, that at Maurice O'Neill's trial, he said Mordaunt may have been in the line of fire.

On the sixth day I went into the box and faced Murnaghan. I had nothing to fear, because I did not care, so I was not going to let myself down. I admitted that when I carried a gun, I always had one in the breech. I said that this was done on the orders of my superior officers in the Republican Army. As Maurice and myself emerged from the rear gate of the Kellys' house at 14 Holly Road, into the four foot wide passageway, bounded on both sides by corrugated iron, I was just barely in front with my bicycle.

We had lamps, but I don't think they were on. I told him I had scarcely covered four steps, when a volley rang out from the bottom, where it turned towards Holly Road. There were shots fired in front of me and I retaliated, I told him. I fired at the flashes. When he came to cross-examine me on day seven, Sean MacBride reduced it to a very simple question: had my gun killed Mordaunt? There was no evidence to prove that it had. Their case rested entirely on circumstantial evidence. In this matter of life or death, they could not act upon a balance of probabilities, he said. They must be satisfied beyond all reasonable doubt.

After disposing of a number of matters which were before the court, not as evidence given but as questions thrown at me by the prosecution in order to colour their case, he dealt with the fatal bullet that killed Mordaunt. The police all had forty-fives, and he had been shot by something smaller, my Parabellum, they said. But the technical evidence on this was almost comic. The State Pathologist used a two foot steel rule graduated in thirty-seconds of an inch, to measure the bullet wound. The difference in the measurement of the skull wound, attested by him and a forty-five bullet, is only 1/80th of an inch, a measurement he was not capable of accurately making.

On the eighth day, Thursday 12th December, after a long address by Murnaghan, during which he sought to score a questionable point on the contradictory account of who fired first — Donegan or myself — outside the front door of 5 Oak Road, the house backing onto Holly Road, and through which I escaped, the inevitable conclusion was reached. Inevitable, I say, in such a court and in the political circumstances of the Free State. I was sentenced to death by hanging, and these Free State Army officers graciously gave me until the new year, Friday 3rd January 1947. Another trip for Pierpoint, I thought. At least they refrained — there being three of them — from the British practice of putting on a black cap before sentence. I did not even say to myself, God's curse upon them; I felt like smiling at it all. Indeed, I might have smiled.

After carefully considering the medical evidence, the court was satisfied beyond reasonable doubt that a .45 bullet could not have passed through this hole, and consequently he could not have been killed by a bullet fired from any of the detective officers on duty in the passage between Holly Road and Oak Road. The only gun of smaller calibre in the immediate vicinity, was that carried by Henry White . . . the President intoned. But the medical evidence he referred to, was that given by the State Pathologist using a two foot steel rule. A carpenter would have been more accurate.

When the usual question came up, whether I had anything to say, well, I never had very much to say but I was quick enough to remember Lehane, MacBride and Hartnett; *I just wish to thank counsel for their magnificent defence on my behalf.*

An application for a certificate of leave to appeal was refused. I was led away, back to the 'Joy, this time into the condemned cell. And that night,

Harry outside the house of Tomás MacCurtain, Cork, June 1948.

Hugh McAteer, Eoin "Pope" O'Mahony and Liam Burke, after the two had been released from Crumlin Road Jail in 1951.

Pat Shannon of Galway, the only other Republican in the jail, hammered his door until they relaxed the rules, and let him in to see me. He is dead now, but I shall always remember him.

REFERENCE

1 Among Republicans, there were mixed views about Sean Gantly, killed by one of his own detectives at the age of 49. A Dubliner, he was in the 2nd Battalion, I.R.A., from 1919 to 1921. He joined the guards in 1923, and he was appointed Superintendent in 1925, and Chief Superintendent in 1941, when he was placed in charge of the Special Branch in Dublin Castle. His remark to Harry quoted above, was uncharacteristic. On the other hand, there were no mixed views and few tears wept after the death of Dinny O'Brien in 1941, although most Republicans considered it an unwise action at the time. As already stated, O'Brien himself and many of his family had been in the I.R.A., and a sister of Dinny performed a voluntary and very valuable service on an occasion in the fifties. Michael Gill from Buncrana, was a cute old policeman. He was never in the I.R.A., and was always last in on a raid. Generally speaking he took a soft line with prisoners. He died in his bed.

CHAPTER NINETEEN

A Kiss and Twelve Years

Appeal Trial: Thursday 26th January to Tuesday 31st January, 1947

Verdict: 5th February 1947

A defence fund had been set up to defray expenses. There was very little money around at that time, so my lawyers and their few helpers inevitably had to carry the entire cost of all proceedings. Looking back now at those twenty-two names(1) of late 1946, I marvel that, apart from Mrs. Patsy O'Hagan, and Roger McHugh, and of course myself, all the others are now departed. Charlie McGlade, laid to rest in Glasnevin in September 1982, was the last of them.

On the day after sentence, on Friday 13th December, Con Lehane came to me in the condemned cell in Mountjoy, to have my formal signature upon an application of appeal to the Court of Criminal Appeal. Lehane was in his usual jocular form; swapping yarns and telling stories. Maybe he was keeping the bright side out for my sake; he had been into six or seven men on the same task in the last few years, and none of them had ever emerged again. I was gloomy, very gloomy, as I lay awake wondering if I would ever see Belfast again.

The appeal was fixed for Thursday 26th January, which of itself automatically postponed the hanging. The hearing was before Judges Gavan Duffy, James Geoghegan and Martin Maguire; when I look back and consider the personalities now sitting on the Free State Supreme Court bench, I was lucky. Duffy and Maguire were men of stature with impressive legal backgrounds. Their function was to review the trial that had taken place to see that it was carried out in accordance with legal principles, and particularly that the evidence was sufficient to justify conviction. MacBride, never a man to be carried away, thought that the chances were middling good.

One is not present at appeals of this sort. They are argued out on legal principles. The main body of evidence is restated by both counsels. In this instance Sean MacBride introduced from the start his principal argument that, even if I had fired at Mordaunt, I was not guilty of murder. If police were killed in the course of an arrest which was not legal, it was not murder; likewise if an arrest was carried out in an illegal fashion, the offence was reduced from murder to manslaughter. This was a reference to the manner

in which 14 Holly Road was staked out in darkness and then assailed by police without prior announcement, and with guns blazing.

There was nothing new in the counter argument put forward by Murnaghan. All relevant evidence had been tendered, he said; but it had not been tendered. (The record book for instance, or particulars where police bullets, many of them wild, had found targets.) Police all over the world hold back evidence where they can, when it does not suit their case: they rehearse their evidence, just as actors do; they coach and doctor it to get convictions. The State Pathologist had not admitted an error, said Murnaghan, the furthest he had gone was to admit the possibility of an error of 1/80th of an inch.

In his concluding address, Sean MacBride remarked that the prosecution had fallen into the error of ignoring two cardinal rules of evidence, the first being that where the evidence was reasonably capable of two or more constructions, then, as a matter of law — not of discretion — the court must give it that construction which was most favourable to the accused. It had occurred to him, that in every single matter to which Mr. Murnaghan had referred, the furthest he had been able to put it was on the balance of probability. That was a feeble position where a man's life was at stake.

One week later on 5th February 1947, the Appeal Court decided that a conviction of manslaughter was the only correct finding on the facts before the Special Court. There was no lawful authority for my arrest, they said. It was therefore manslaughter, even though I was, as they expressed it, forearmed to resist arrest. I could not lose the benefit of the law even though I might know that I was firing at police. They treated my application for leave to appeal as the hearing of the appeal, and, proceeding on their view that a conviction of manslaughter should have been recorded by the Special Court, they sentenced me to twelve years.

I had been brought from Mountjoy to the Four Courts to hear the verdict, my first outing since 12th December. There were many friends there, Ruaidhrí Ó Drisceoil, May Laverty, Mrs. Stack, nearly all the members of my own family. My mother was too overcome to say anything; she just held my hand. Then they all pushed forward, shaking hands, smiling, though a few were quietly weeping, with relief, I thought. Mrs. Diamond rushed over, hugged and kissed me; she was overjoyed. I was too overcome to say anything. It had been a gruelling time and I had not realised it, and now I felt the life draining out of me. I could only look at them and smile, just smile. I just could not say anything. For the first time in my life, I really felt like bursting into tears. Then a Branch man approached, and with another one flanking me, I was led into the courtyard.

REFERENCES

1 *Henry White Defence Fund:* Charlie McGlade, Ben Doyle, Ruaidhrí Ó Drisceoil

(Cathaoirleach), May Laverty, Mary Nelson (Hon. Secs.), Madge Daly, Madame MacBride, Mrs. Buckley, Bean Cathal Brugha, Bean Aibhistin de Staic, Bean Tomás Mhic Curtain, Mrs. O'Hagan (Dundalk), Maurice Twomey, James Killeen, Joe Clarke, Domhnall Ó Donnchadha, Roger McHugh, Charlie Reynolds (Tuam), Seamus Ryan (Strokestown), Clr. D. J. O'Driscoll (Carrick-on-Suir), Patrick MacLogan (Portlaoise), John Joe Sheehy (Tralee). Their names still ring like a Who's Who of the Movement of fifty years ago.

MEMORIES OF HARRY WHITE

His Arrest and Trial as told by a local Bard

Tonight my thoughts are turning to my comrade Harry White,
Whose music on the violin would any heart delight.
The saxophone, the banjo, accordion and all,
He could master any instrument and play on great or small.
For oft times we've watched him as we used to gather round,
And our memories he could carry to many a distant ground,
Or to the darkest Penal Days, or days of William Orr,
Robert Emmet, Wolfe Tone, Mitchell, and the cause they perished for.
And the times of Pearse and Plunkett, and when the rising they did plan,
Or the men who died in Manchester for the smashing of the van.

In athletics he was perfect, when shall his likes be seen,
Playing Gaelic at Stranagalwilly or dear old Claudy Green.
In the dance halls we did miss him,
When shall we see him stand, in the halls of Cumber, Claudy,
Donemana or Craigbane.
Brave Harry was a soldier, a soldier brave and true,
In the I.R.A. battalions against the Red and Blue.
When surrounded in fair Dublin with slender chance for flight,
On him they opened fire, but he soon returned the fight.
A man was killed that evening but Harry ventured through,
The cordon of detectives and armed soldiers too.

He made a dash up North and used his clever brains,
And refuge found both safe and sound with the friendly Miss O'Kanes.
A nice reward was offered for clues that might soon lead,
To the swift arrest of Harry whom they said had done the deed.
Four years he stayed amongst us, with his games both old and new,
And we missed his cheery presence, when he made his swift adieu.
The English gold is tempting, as we only know too well,
Some men will stoop to anything and hero's lives they'll sell.
Oh, well we do remember that far off autumn day,

The golden corn was waving and everything was gay,
When the sound of Crossley tenders that morning at the dawn,
Woke up the sleepy valleys as they raced and rattled on.

We watched with much amazement as the soldiers did surround,
His hiding place and plant their guns on every vantage ground.
The ladies in the shop I'm sure had a very dreadful fright,
When they quickly were arrested along with Harry White.
They hurried him to Belfast to stand his trial there,
But after all was finished no charges proven were.
But scarcely had he reached the street, when kidnapped there was he,
And deported straight to Dublin as this was told to me.
Four years he had his liberty, and to you all is plain,
They meant to execute him and add him to the slain.

At the Military Tribunal Harry White he did appear,
His features they were manly, and bore no look of fear,
Then to the silenced court room, this verdict was given,
You die the third of January, nineteen and forty seven.
The news of the injustices spread this country like a wave,
All eyes they gleamed with vengeance, and hearts for rights did crave.
Here's a health to Sean MacBride, and all honour to his name,
He had the case appealed again and won renown and fame.
For he had this hero's sentence commuted I declare,
For twelve long years confinement within a prison bare.
God bless such noble heroes who bravely fought and fell,
And lay in lonely dungeons and damp and dreary cell.
When these cruel British tyrants are driven from our land,
Let's think of those who met their foes and manly took their stand.
So now I'll close these verses and bid you all goodbye,
The old Tricolour soon, please God, all o'er our land shall fly.

James Sharkey
Stranagalwilly,
Claudy, Co. Derry

CHAPTER TWENTY

Ireland's Bastille

Conditions in Portlaoise (Maryborough) Prison were hard for the four Republican prisoners there. I knew that, of course, but I was not daunted by the prospect. The twelve years though were another thing; I did not relish that. There was one queer thing though that made me feel kind of bitter that day going into Portlaoise. I was sitting there in the car after being driven from Mountjoy, handcuffed between two Branch men. Waiting to go in I was fumbling awkwardly to reach for a cigarette, — I haven't smoked for years now — when this one pulls out a fag, stuck it between my lips and struck a match. I had never taken a cigarette from a policeman before but in the circumstances, I thought sure, ah well, it's not a time to refuse. Lighting it up while I pulled on it, he remarked, *Go on smoke, for it will be a long time before you smoke another one, you bastard. Will it,* I said, as I spat it out on the floor of the car, *Whenever I do, it will not be in your company.* I knew I could afford to be brave; I was not going to get fags in Portlaoise anyway.

Entry into the jail itself was the usual routine. Check in, name, age, weight, name of relatives, all the usual. Then down to the basement, off with all the clothes, into a bath. The warders, I must say, could not have been nicer. I was there in the basement cell with nothing but a towel, when one brought a set of the prison clothes, shirt, trousers, the lot. I suppose they had to go through this routine, but I knew enough not to wear them. *No,* I said, *I cannot wear those. That is all right,* said he, as though prepared for it. He had taken my own clothes away by this time, so I got into bed while I studied my position. I was lying there only a few minutes when he returned again. This time he brought a grey prison blanket with a hole cut in the middle of it. You passed your head through this and let it fall around you. He had a wee pair of shorts too, made from the same material and a pair of slippers; very rough and ready they were too but adequate.

You'll have to wear these, said he, *if you are going out on the landing anyway,* he added cheerfully. *You will be up with the other lads tomorrow.* The other lads were Eamonn Smullen and Jim Smith of Dublin, Liam Rice from Belfast and Tomás MacCurtain from Cork, and they all are, I am glad to say, still alive and well, although Smith is in California. All of them had previous jail experience on behalf of the Republic. MacCurtain's father had been murdered by the Black and Tans in March 1920, and he himself had been within hours of Pierpoint's rope in Mountjoy, in July 1940; he was now eight years in this awful place. Rice had received two bullets through his lungs

from Dinny O'Brien resisting arrest in Rathmines after Hayes escaped in September 1941; he was six years here. Eamonn Smullen of Sandymount had been arrested five years before following a shoot-out with Branch men near Abbey Street. Jim Smith had escaped with three others from Mountjoy in October 1942; had fired on Branch men who had gone to take him in 1943, and now found himself here. The lightest hearted of them all, he was also the one who was now failing rapidly.

I was looking forward to meeting them although Rice was the only one actually known to me. They were at this time confined in cells, in what was known as the hospital wing. At one time there had been ten of them, and since 1940, when the first one, Tomás MacCurtain, had arrived, they had had a very hard time. Portlaoise — the small Republican section — was a jail spoken of by the few who knew it in horrified whispers. It was the decision of some — hopefully now the bugger is in hell — policy maker in the Department of Justice who persuaded Gerald Boland that anyone who offered armed resistance, or who had his sentence commuted from death, should be sent here. No visits, no clothes, no letters, no reading, no talk to anyone, never leaving the cell, that was the regime almost up to the death of McCaughey, in May 1946.(1) Prior to that they had really been in solitary, never outside their cells, confined all day and every day and seeing no one except when the food was handed in to them, for over three years. Sean McCaughey's death ended that although the solitary confinement aspect had been relaxed after June 1943. They were now allowed out to talk to each other for one and a half hours in the morning and one and a half in the afternoon. We met in an old machine shop upstairs. It had a timber floor so we could walk up and down. Sometimes we tried to play handball against one of the walls, but that was all. It was cold enough in the attire we had for there was no shirt or second layer. Of course, you could throw another blanket over you, and when you were back in the cell you could sit up in bed. I think that is what most of us did. We read a lot; there was a good county library service, which had been laid on for some years. You could not get any books in, but you could change your books through the library as often as you wished. There were no newspapers of course, but now and again one of the ordinary prisoners might fold up small a page that he thought was of interest and leave it for us. Where they would get it, I do not know, as newspapers also were kept from them. Shortly after I arrived there, I had one visit. It was from Con Lehane and Sean MacBride. They had told me that after a certain period, I should apply to see them; the excuse was that I was going to appeal. The real purpose, however, was that I could report on the condition of my four companions. No one outside had spoken to any of them for many years so there were worries about their condition. There was really only one that I would be concerned about and he straightened out all right after. That was Jim Smith, originally sentenced on an arms charge. but because he escaped from Mountjoy, found himself down here. For weeks he would

not come out of his cell; no one except the warders would see him.

Someone should do something or he will go off his head altogether, said this old warder. Then this day he came to me quite agitated. *Come and talk to this man.* They used to take us one at a time to have a bath. Well, there was Jim, sitting in the bath, but with his cap on. *Hi, Jim,* said I. *What are ye doing with your cap on in the bath? Harry,* said he back, *if I take it off, I'll get the cold.* It was hard to come up with a ready answer to that one.

I wanted to escape, of course, because I was still thinking of those twelve years, and I had no idea that within a year I would be out anyway. It is the duty of every Republican prisoner to try and escape. Now, I had seen something from our yard which made me think that it could be done. But help from outside would be essential. We had begun to be let out this year for the first time on exercise. The yard was next to the main road, and had a big gate leading towards the road, with only a low wall beyond that. Armed warders used to parade in the space between the high wall and the low wall when the gate would be open. After a while, they ceased being armed, and the warders used to escort their prisoners up the corridor between the high wall and the low wall. It would not take much, I thought, for a person like me to cut through a few strands of barbed wire enclosing our yard, rush through the gates, vault the low wall beyond, and be out on to the road. And if there was a car pointed in the right direction, you could be away.

To arrange a getaway like this, transport on the road was essential, otherwise, on that road, you simply need not try it at all. There were not many cars about in 1947, but I knew that Padraig MacLogan, the prominent Armagh Republican of the twenties and thirties, who had licensed premises in the middle of the town of Portlaoise, could fix it, if anyone could. What better man, I thought. He had a great record in the area, and was later to pick up the threads again with Sinn Féin when the Border campaign started in the fifties. MacLogan was a Republican of the most outstanding type, a man of high principles, not one to tangle with Free Staters.

Clann na Poblachta was formed about this time by Sean MacBride and Donal O'Donoghue, but MacLogan, I heard after, would have nothing to do with them. He was the man, but how to reach him, how to make arrangements with him, that was the problem. There was no underground line from outside to us Republican prisoners. There never had been; there were lines into most other prisons where there were Republicans, but Portlaoise was tightly screened. An attempt to establish a line had never been contemplated. I would have to make the link with the outside world myself.

There was this oldish warder on our landing. I noticed that he was quiet and not unfriendly. We always exchanged the few words. Anyway, this day in conversation, I suddenly said, *Would ye do something for me?* He never said anything to that, nothing. He just moved off. Then after a few days,

he came to me and said, *What was it? What did I want?* I asked him would he take a message out for me. That perplexed him, I could see. He said then, he was on retirement, and that he did not want to lose the lot, but if I had in mind something that did not involve carrying things into the jail, he would help me.

Do you take a drink? says I. *Then if you do would you take a message to Paddy MacLogan?* He had been in MacLogan's and he agreed to bring him a message. So I wrote in the message, which I now prepared, that, with a bit of help, there was a good chance that a few of us could escape out of the place. Of course, up to this I had not discussed my plan with any of the other four; indeed I doubted if any of them, except maybe Liam Rice, would join me.

The message was safely delivered all right; safely into the hand of MacLogan himself. Imagine my surprise when the reply came back — not in a note — but by word of mouth from the old warder: *The only communication I wish to receive from the Republican prisoners is through the prison governor.*

The Governor at that time, and for twelve years before, was Major Barrows. He used to boast that he was the only governor who had been a prisoner in his own jail. That came about while he was in charge of the prison in Dundalk, in July 1922. The Republicans under Frank Aiken captured the town and promptly clapped the governor in a cell in his own jail. But it did not last long, for the Free Staters counter-attacked. He was in charge in Portlaoise during McCaughey's period and was obliged to give evidence at the inquest following the end of his thirtytwo day fast on 10th May 1946. It was a dramatic inquest which the coroner tried to muzzle, and had nearly ended when MacBride asked Dr. T. J. Dunne, the medical officer: *If you had a dog would you treat it in that fashion,* and he answered, *No.* During the time I was there, I found Barrows all right, but I wouldn't like to be an ordinary prisoner under him.

MacLogan's attitude, needless to say, was quite a gunk for me. It was disappointing and frustrating but I never could understand the man anyway. I was even more amazed when I came out the following year to find that he was in charge of the Movement. What sort of leader is this if he will not help men to escape, I thought. I called on him, of course, but I did not bring up the little matter of my attempted getaway. What use would it have been? That happened a short while after I came out when I was passing through Portlaoise on my way to Tralee to call upon Elsie Kerins, Charlie's sister. I went into Paddy's which was on the right hand side near the wide part of the street. We just had a few general words, and I said where I was going. The next thing, a few days after that, I got a telegram to return, inferring that he had something important to talk about. He knew that I knew the West pretty well; they were reorganising there, he said. Would I be prepared to go and give a hand. I said I would. We talked for

a while over the details, and who to contact. *We don't want too many,* he said. *They should be formed in little cells.* I thought to myself, he is going back to the Brotherhood?

What sort of training will we give them? said I; *will it be arms or what?*

Oh, there is going to be no arms, said he.

What are you reorganising then, I asked.

Sinn Féin, of course, he replied. *We must organise Sinn Féin throughout the country.*

Well, Paddy, said I, rising; *I was never in Sinn Féin, and I am not going to join it now.*

Five or six weeks after that I received a notification to attend a meeting in the Castle Hotel, Gardiner Row. MacLogan was there with a number of others whom I knew. Coming towards me and addressing me, he announced that I was no longer required in the Republican Army: I could go. So without a word I left.

Father Patrick Harris, curate in Portlaoise, was also the prison chaplain. On instructions, presumably from the Bishop of Kildare and Leighlin, or perhaps upon his own bat, from the time he was appointed about 1944, he never once offered to say Mass for us, hear confession or give communion. Some men, I am aware, prior to my coming in did manage, despite their attire, to attend in the prison chapel, but our five did not. We felt in the circumstances we should have been separately catered for. The fact that we were not did not worry us, but it was a small gesture the priest should have made. His excuse might have been that we were not properly attired for the chapel, (that was certainly the reason given by the governor), but that need not have stopped him assembling us all in one cell in the hospital wing, and having a Sunday Mass, communion and a chat session there. We were all average Catholic, involved principally in a struggle against English domination of Ireland, and for Father Harris, and the Bishop of Kildare and Leighlin, whose name is not worth remembering, to have taken this stand, siding with the Free State Department of Justice in the way they did, showed eloquently to me the subservient nature of the Church when the chips are really down.

Bad and all as Father Harris was, he could not have been as bad as his predecessor in the jail, Father Thomas Browne, whom I did not know, but who was parish priest for most of the McCaughey period, 1941-1944 or thereabouts. I was told that relatives outside begged him to visit Sean, to secure visits for them, and to do whatever in his power was possible to alleviate conditions. The man is dead now; I hope I do him no injustice, but that is what I was told. This is not to say we were on bad terms with Father Harris. Far from it; we were not. He visited us and we chatted with him on every subject under the sun. He was, however, a strong believer in Eamon De Valera — which we were not — so one day we played a little joke on him. He arrived in the exercise yard this morning to find us all wearing black

arm bands. *Oh, my poor lads,* he said, *has someone dear died belonging to you? Yes indeed, Father,* we said, *someone very dear.*

Who can it be, and I will pray for them?

It is Eamon De Valera, he is politically speaking on the way out, said I, grinning. He was not a bit pleased, not a bit, but sure it relieved the monotony for us.

When we were released eventually from Portlaoise, I thought to myself, I will call and see Father Harris. He gave a warm welcome. *Come in, have a drink.* I went inside the presbytery and had a good chat. Then, after a while, he asked: *Were you at the Sacraments yet?*

No, said I.

Why is that? said he.

Look, Father, said I. *Sure you are one of the ones that is to blame; you refused us.*

Me, he exclaimed. *I never refused anybody anything.*

Look, Father, said I, rising, *maybe you forget what conditions were like in there, but I do not. You are talking to a free man now, not a prisoner in Portlaoise,* and with that I walked out and left him.

As I have already said, during the time that I was there we had no bother with the warders, none of whom ever interfered with us. There was one, however, that I did have words with. He had been a corporal in the Curragh, and was a bad pill. I remember seeing him there hammering Skipper Mahony with a baton. Lately I read, when he retired from Mountjoy, his home was petrol bombed. Signs on it, his son is now a screw and is another bad pill.

The one occasion that I called upon Governor Barrows was when I had been there a few weeks and I sought a visit from my legal advisors, Sean MacBride and Con Lehane. The one other time I recall was the night before we were released in March 1948. We had received back our own clothes now and we were also receiving newspapers. MacBride, he was Minister for External Affairs now, and Lehane called again to inform me. *Eamonn Smullen and Liam Rice will be released first,* he said. *MacCurtain and Smith next, but there is a sticking point about you,* he added. *They think you are not really here that long; they may keep you another year.* I said that if the four were released I would be very pleased, I did not really mind another year. Then one night lying in bed — Smullen and Rice having gone — I heard our cell doors banging. *What is it,* I thought. *Can it be a routine search of the cell?* In bounced Governor Barrows exuding good fellowship. *You are going in the morning. Make ready anything you have.* Of course, we had no possessions; what I had was easy carrying, and quite candidly I did not think I was hearing right.

The next morning he appeared again. The three of us were brought into the lobby. MacCurtain, I think, had a case. Smith and I had brown paper parcels. He looked us over. *My instructions,* he said, *are to release you*

individually at hourly intervals. We said bluntly we would have none of this; we would refuse to go. *We are all going out together or not at all.* He stared back and lost his temper: *Jesus Christ! I am a Protestant, but I have often prayed to get you fellows out because I never had a day's peace since you came into the place.* Turning to a warder he then said: *Open the gates and let these men out.*

We had rail passes so we went in the direction of the station. I returned to Dublin briefly, promising to follow MacCurtain to his home in Cork within days.

I did that, staying with him about six weeks. I returned to Dublin then seeking work through the union. I was pretty rusty at my old trade, plumbing, as I had done nothing for twelve years. They sent me to the firm of F.K.M. at Charlemont Street bridge. A Fianna Fáil man, called Tommy Finlay, was the head man there; there were two others, Kelly and Moore. One day as I returned from a job a man passed me quickly from the office. There was something vaguely familiar about him, though I took no notice. Calling into Finlay, he remarked: *There is one of your friends away out there. Friend?* I said puzzled. *He wanted to know what you are doing here; he is from the Special Branch. He made sure to tell me your entire record; was I sure I would want to employ a man like you? So I told him that what you did outside working hours was no concern of mine; you were a good worker, and that was all that mattered.*

Ach a óig bhean, ná géill suas,
Is leimnigh go mear gach claidhe.
Go b'é tús is deire mo scéal-se,
Go mbheidh Éire fós ag Cáit Ní Dhuibhir.

REFERENCE

1 Sean McCaughey, who died in May 1946 after 32 days on hunger and then thirst strike, was from Aughnacloy, Co. Tyrone, but spent most of his life in Belfast; Frank Kerrigan of Cork city, had escaped with Smith and Griffith from the 'Joy' in 1942, had been recaptured in 1943 and sent here; Patrick Murphy and William (Bill) Stewart of Co. Louth (Stewart had received the cat) and Michael Walsh of Kilmacow, Co. Kilkenny. There was also Jim Crofton, the Wexford man, the spy in the Castle, a Branch man for whom a special punishment was reserved. By the time that Harry arrived their sentences had expired or had been remitted; Stewart, Murphy and Kerrigan being released in December 1946, just before he arrived there.

Appendix One

Account of Jimmy Clarke of Ballyfermot, Dublin, on the events of Easter Sunday morning, when P.C. Forbes and another was shot; his escape and thereafter in Donegal and elsewhere.

Jimmy Clarke now lives for many years in Ballyfermot — *I would not leave it* — after having reared five of a very successful family.

In Dublin, in the fifties he was a prime helper of Jack Murphy of the Unemployed Action Group in his election to the Dáil in 1957, and was the one who eventually counselled him to leave it two years later. *You will do no good there until the entire procedure is changed.*

I am a socialist and I am an Irish Republican, he says.

On Friday night, 3rd April 1942, as part of our Easter commemoration — commemorations in the North being always declared illegal — we were in Edendork, a very Republican part of Tyrone, near Coalisland. I was training officer of the Tyrone battalion. I was then 22 years of age. I had joined the British Army in 1938, under the Hore Belisha scheme — six months in and six years on the reserve — as Fusilier James Corry, and shortly after being demobilised I joined the I.R.A. I was proficient in the use of guns, so I was quickly made training officer. The way I trained them was very different to what they had been doing; there was no broom sticks and no forming fours. Instead we met in a field and cut the hay with scythes. We would sit down then for a mug of tea. We would meet and we would bank turf, and afterwards we would have our ceilí in a farmhouse. That was where the real business was done. But to get back to Edendork.

We had two checkpoints on the main Dungannon-Coalisland road while we held our commemoration in the graveyard, over the grave of Felix Mallon, a volunteer of the twenties. Holding up and checking the few motor cars there were at ten o'clock at night, was training for our men. It gave the I.R.A. a visible presence, and was a morale boost for the people of the countryside. But it was not liked by the local loyalists and word quickly went back to the R.U.C. in Dungannon. By that time we had dispersed. I went back to Ann Street in Dungannon, with Jimmy Rafferty — the family were well-known local Republicans — accompanied by Sean Donnelly of the Bush, Coalisland. We were there about two hours, when the police came knocking at the front door of the wee terrace house. Sean and myself ran down into the tiny yard at the back. I don't know what happened, but they seemed to go away again so off to bed we went. About an hour later

they came back in force. We ran down once more, this time only in our shirt and trousers. Marley's, a public house, was next door. We climbed on to the tin roof of an outhouse. It creaked. Someone fired and I fired back. It was evident that I had scored a hit.

I dropped down then into Marley's yard, hoping to open the heavy gate and get into the entry. But there was a peeler standing there and I slammed it shut again. Sean Donnelly had been badly wounded on the roof, falling off into a crate of bottles. When I got a chance to look at him I could see he had been shot through the neck, the bullet being lodged in his jaw. He could not speak and was bleeding profusely. I lifted him, and linking him, emerged towards the front. I did not know what would happen but I felt we would have to take the risk and get out on Ann Street.

It was a full moonlit night and we emerged from the front door of Marley's in full view. As far as I could see the R.U.C. were crowded around their comrade who had been shot a few minutes before. I could have picked them all off, but my only idea was to get away. At that moment, Constable Forbes — I did not know his name then — looked over. He had his gun in his hand, raised and fired. At the same instant I fired back and he fell. There was confusion then, and I managed to say to Donnelly: *Can you make it to the Donaghmore Road?* (a quarter mile distant); *I will follow you there.* Holding his hand to his neck, he made off.

I backed away slowly, keeping an eye on the R.U.C. group who had run for cover. They did not know there were only two of us, and that one was wounded. I caught up with Donnelly sitting on a doorstep on the Donaghmore Road; he had fainted. I am only a small man, and he was bigger, but there was nothing I could do but heave him up on my shoulder, and carry him, as best I could in the direction of Killyharry, heading for Galbally. I expected to get help and shelter there. Now remember it was early April, and we were in our shirt and trousers and bare feet. I had cut my foot on glass in Marley's yard. Every step now was painful. I had to leave Sean down, but fortunately he had come to, and, with a bit of help, was able to accompany me.

We got on to the railway and followed it for two miles. Provided we stuck on the sleepers it was alright, but in many cases stones covered them. Knowing I had to get help soon, we got up on to the road, and knocked at this wee house. It was around four in the morning. *Who is there?* came from inside. *There's a lad here and he fell off his bicycle, hurting himself badly,* I lied. The door opened, just a chink. Instantly I stuck the Parabellum in it, *Go on,* I said, *open up.* A man opened it then, and at the same time, I saw hanging on its hook, a B Special uniform. We had come to the wrong house. There was nothing for it, but I had the gun, so I just said: *We had a serious accident. Son,* said he, looking me over — John Hamill was his name — *I am no informer. I don't know what ye done, and I don't believe in it, but come in.* He sat us down in the kitchen, boiled a kettle, and his daughter

washed Sean's neck and face, bandaging it up with bits off a flour bag. Then she washed my feet. They had no boots to fit us, so we left them, still barefoot. The man is dead now, but he told no one of our visit.

There was a B Special block when we reached the village of Donaghmore. I saw it near the old stone cross at the top of the village. We ducked into an entry then and passed into the shelter of a hen coop. But we could not wait there, so after a while — it was daylight now — we crossed the river that flows at the back of Donaghmore and we were once again on the railway. We kept on 'till we reached a bridge where the road goes from Kilnaslee to Galbally. We had to travel then on a newly chipped road for a mile and a half to Packy Tully's house. He brought us in but as he was well-known we knew we could not stay there.

Packy went to the house of the Brigade Finance Officer, McCourt, who was in business with a car and a lorry. The Monaghan border was only twelve miles distant over the mountain road. Once there we would be safe. But McCourt slammed down the upstairs window; *No,* he said, *I can't go. It is too dangerous.*

We walked then the long road to Inishative near Carrickmore, meeting a B Special along the way. We told him a story which I am sure, in the state we were in, he could not believe, and he probably reported us. Denis Grugan, seventy years, at whose home we called, was expecting a raid, so he put us into a bundle of hay in a wee shed on the mountain. We were told to watch from there, and to move out if we saw anything. Sure enough, in the daylight, a cordon of Specials started combing the fields. We slipped out and down into the river. We sat there in the reeds, partly submerged under a bank, from seven in the morning to six that evening.

Coming out then, we found that Dr. Bernard Lagan of Omagh, had called. He was not able to bring surgical equipment as he would be suspect passing through cordons. (Later he was charged before a court in Omagh and fined fifty pounds for withholding information.) It was now Sunday night; *If you can get to the other side of Carrickmore by tomorrow, I will come.* We had boots on us now, though they were far too big for me, and we had ganseys and coats. We would have to make out for Aughnagreggan, north of Carrickmore, three miles away.

In the dark on the road a hackney car approached. There were very few cars on the road then, so we leaped over the ditch. We heard after that the driver, Paddy Donaghy, saw our shadows; he said, when addressed by one of the policemen in the car — because that is who they were — *I saw nothing. Stop the car,* shouted one; *Ach, you're only imagining things,* muttered the other.

We arrived safely near midnight at Tommy Molloy's house at Aughnagreggan. We lay down. On Sunday we heard that Dr. Lagan would not be coming as he had been placed under arrest. I was getting anxious about Sean. Because of the wound in his throat and face, he could pass

down nothing, and with the rigours of the weather, and the fact that sometimes we had to cross fields and ditches, he was visibly failing. He needed help and a rest, and he needed that soon. Frank Morris joined us now and together that evening we walked the loanin with Jimmy Maguire to McCallions of Clar, where our wounds were dressed by Brigid. We stayed a while there, then headed for Binnafreaghan to the home of Francy Donaghy. Arriving early Tuesday we were now in a valley of the Sperrins, the Owenreagh, leading into Gortin. We were told that Fr. McSorley of Greencastle would help us, but when we arrived at his house, he was not there. We returned to Donaghy's then, where Francey, using TVO in his unlicensed car, made ready to drive us to Draperstown.

His mother, seeing the state we were in, and knowing the country was being scoured for us, fell upon her knees begging him not to go. *You will all be killed,* she cried. *Mammy,* he said, *if you had more of this in your young days you would understand why I have to help them now.* With that we got into a car that was belching smoke and made off. The sorry part was, that while he was gone, his mother had a heart attack, and he found her dead on his return.

We were not to know that, as that Tuesday evening we arrived at Nora O'Kane's house — we were now in County Derry — where she was accompanied by Mrs. Jimmy McGurk. Here there was another disappointment; the local doctor, who was thought to be favourable, was on leave. Then fortune intervened. Dr. Deeney, whom everyone trusted, arrived to see Nora. He took one look at me, then approached Sean, in whose cheek the bullet was still lodged. With a lot of tut, tutting, he said, *This man will have to be attended to now. If I use an anaesthetic here though,* he added as an afterthought, *the smell will hang over the house for a week. If the place is raided, we will all be arrested. There is nothing for it but to extract the bullet and stitch him up without using an anaesthetic.*

Turning to Sean, he said, *Son, it will hurt ye.* He took me first — I was not a problem — and washed out and dosed my foot with antiseptic. He dressed it then, enabling me to walk comfortably. Sean was put sitting on a chair and, attended by Nora, the doctor removed the bullet, doing all that was necessary, and then stitched up his throat and temple. He was fully conscious. Afterwards, he told me that he just pressed his toes awfully hard upon the floor, clenching his fingers tightly. The local curate, Fr. Jim Collins, we were told, was willing to help us. We waited until evening in O'Kane's, and then in darkness approached the parochial house. *You can't stay here,* he explained, *because my housekeeper is a terrible ould chatterbox. I will drive you to Breen's, a country house near Desertmartin, where you will be safe.* We arrived there, and the next morning, Wednesday, Archie Agnew of Maghera came in. *Arrangements are being made,* he told us, *but stay where you are for the present.*

On the Saturday following, Father Collins appeared again. He brought

with him a complete nun's habit which he instructed me to put on — I was slight enough to pass for a girl in it, while, turning to Sean Donnelly, he cracked, passing him a priest's rig-out: *You are big and ugly enough for that.* In no time we had slipped out of our clothes and put on the clericals, then, sitting into a motor car driven by local man Paddy McKenna — nephew of Commdt. Gen. Dan, head of the Free State Army — we were driven off from Desertmartin across the country to Castlederg, in close proximity to the Donegal border, while Frank Morris made for Belfast. In Nolan's house there we changed again, and then, in the darkness, walked northwards over the mountain road to Castlefinn. I well remember it was a starry night and, as I kicked the stones of the road, the sparks flew. We knew we were relatively safe now; we were in high good humour. Sean had recovered amazingly; he was able to eat and drink again.

We were met in James Kelly's house near Castlefinn by Danny McCool, a brother of Sean, who drove us in a car to Mountcharles. There, in the house of a well-known Republican, Dan Sheerin, we had our first prolonged rest. We got our stitches out, were well fed, and got complete sets of clothing.

AFTERWARDS

Shortly after this, I found myself appointed assistant to Dan Sheerin in 5 Area, that part of County Donegal that stretches from Beleek to Fanad. We were getting ready now for the big push across the Border that was to come in the autumn of 1942, in the immediate aftermath of Tom Williams' execution, as it turned out. The days now were spent in gathering intelligence and preparing the units for a series of border attacks that we confidently expected would commence whether or not executions took place in Belfast. I had my eye on the barracks in Beleek as our first target. The time eventually came for the attack on Beleek, early in the morning of the 3rd of September, the day after Tommy Williams was hanged. We had a few rifles and a few short arms only, so all we could do was make a lot of noise. We first cut the telephone wire, and then placed a mine against the front door, but that failed to explode. Police came from Kesh and other areas, so quite a battle developed, although in the darkness no great harm was done. We exchanged around fifty shots with them before we withdrew. Ned Roddy, Jack Cassidy and Mick McCann, came along with me. Jack had returned from his honeymoon to take part. Along the way we found ourselves pursued by five gardai and, our guns having been dumped, they arrested Ned and Mickey. I was not having any of that, however, so drawing the Parabellum which I always carried, I ordered the sergeant to release them again. We headed then for Ballintra, to Dr. McSorley's, after which we took the road to Donegal town dispersing along the way.

In the months following this, with activity heightening in the North, I

found myself travelling by bike, and sometimes by train, to meetings in Belfast. I knew that coming back into the Six Counties was extremely risky. I had an identity card of course; in another name. In fact I changed it as often as I changed my shirt. I met McAteer there; I did not consider him altogether suitable for the post; he was too much of a pacifist to make a good Chief of Staff. He rarely carried a gun. Early in 1943, I met Harry White in Belfast at a command meeting in the Falls Road, and again in Ballymacarrett. Steele was there too.

JIMMY CLARKE INHERITS A FARM (OR DOES HE?)

Some years later in 1947, Jimmy was informed that his aunt Mary Doherty of Aughnagreggan had left him her farm in which he had been brought up, and which was now worked by his trusted friend Tommy Molloy. There was one condition, however, that he must return and reside in the farmhouse, otherwise it would pass to the local parish priest, Canon Kerr, an old man respectful of the British connection, and one who had a couple of land hungry relations about him in the neighbourhood.

The will had been drawn up by solicitor Roderic O'Connor, an upstanding member of the Catholic establishment, with executors Paddy Quinn and Master Quinlivan. With Clarke still on the run from the Northern authorities, the effect of the condition would be to hand the farmstead over to Canon Kerr. Jimmy was having none of this, and resolved to return and fulfil the condition in his own way.

He was at that time working as a barman in Castlefinn on the Co. Donegal side of the Border where he used frequently meet Leslie Cahoon, a sergeant of the B Specials and other members of that force when they would drift across for some late night drinks in the Free State. He explained his predicament to Cahoon, and they both got drunk on the story, Cahoon promising before leaving, *Look, Jimmy! I'll be back a Wednesday, and we'll cycle back together; you'll be all right when you are with me.*

True to his word, Jimmy accompanied by the B man, cycled after darkness, eventually reaching the lonely farmhouse at Carrickmore, where, after rousing Tommy Molloy, he told him solemnly: *You have to leave, you're evicted.* He then added: *Come back tomorrow morning, offer me £300, and ye can have the whole lot.* That is the way it happened. He resided in the farm for a night and a day, then sought out the two executors, who, confronted by witnesses, agreed that indeed he had fulfilled the conditions. Going then to the solicitor's office, to the astonishment of that man, he sat down confronting him. *There is £195 here, the residue of what was sold off,* said O'Connor, *here is a cheque. Do you think I am going to walk down the street with a cheque while you ring for the police,* said Clarke. *Have your clerk go for the money.* On the notes being handed to him, Jimmy warned, *Stay away from that phone for one hour; there are two men waiting outside to see*

that my instructions are obeyed. Leaving the protesting solicitor, and the fictitious volunteers stationed outside, Jimmy then cycled leisurely back across the Border.

It was not the end of the story, for Cardinal D'Alton, Canon Kerr's superior, appealed to the Queen's Bench. When the judge inquired, *Why would a man living in Dublin not take up residence,* and counsel duly replied, *because he is wanted for murder, my lord,* it sealed the case. Canon Kerr, with the aid of an anti-Republican prelate, won; but did he? Tommy Molloy remained in possession of the farm, while Jimmy Clarke had the spending of the £300.

Appendix Two

Account of Eoin McNamee of Brocderg, Tyrone, of events in England in 1938 and 1939, and subsequently in the North.

Eoin McNamee came from Co. Tyrone to London in 1936, and for a while was on the dole, but eventually found work as a labourer on building sites. He lodged in Rowton House — a sort of Salvation hostel — in Hammersmith. Sean Murray, who had been a training officer with the First Cork Brigade in the twenties, was Battalion O.C. London of the I.R.A. He had served as a lieutenant in World War One, and had been through Ireland's civil war. Eoin had a particular regard for him: he seemed to belong to a land Where Mountainy Men Had Sown.

It was early in 1937, from Billy Walsh of Galway, that he first learned of the intended Campaign, but it was Jack Lynch of Dunmanway — also in London — who first officially conveyed the news to the unit. Not everyone in the unit could be trusted; some of the older men saw the English organisation as a support group. They now faced a stormy and unpredictable future in the front line. Those in the inner circle whom he recalls were Frank Weafer from Mayo, Jimmy Joe Reynolds and Walsh. There were still fragments of Republican Congress in London, still talking sentimentally of uniting the organisations.

By April 1938, when Eoin was selected as a delegate to attend the Dublin Convention, which gave Russell authority to proceed, many of his men were already in place in England. Mick Ferguson spent all his time there, Jack McNeela of Ballycroy was backward and forward. Jimmy Joe was O.C. Britain, although he was recalled by Russell shortly after.

The General Army Convention meeting over Saturday and Sunday in Abbey Street, Dublin, in April 1938, was attended by Eoin, though not by Russell himself, as he was technically barred by an earlier suspension. Tom Barry, bitterly opposed to the idea, was also there. The driving forces, as Eoin remembers them, were Tony D'Arcy of Headfort — his brother had been brutally killed by the Tans in March 1921 — McNeela, Charlie Dolan of Sligo, John James Kelly of Castlefinn, Co. Donegal, Ted Moore of Kilkenny, George Plunkett, Victor Fagg (a Protestant from Westmeath), Ned Carrigan of Tipperary.

It was a bitter pill for Eoin to oppose a man of Barry's reputation, but it was already clear how the vote would go as those who supported the Russell policy of striking at the heart of England, had been meeting in one

place, while Barry's supporters had been coming together in another. When it came to a vote, MacCurtain, John Joe Sheehy, Sean Keating, Johnny Machine Gun O'Connor (the latter three from Tralee), Paddy McLogan (very anti Russell, Eoin avers) and Con Lehane, with some more, were on one side (eventually many of them resigned), while the young Turks, Eoin, McNeela and a weight of others, were on top. The new Council were firm campaign men, Plunkett, Peadar O'Flaherty, Stephen Hayes, Larry Grogan, Máirtín Ó Cadhain and Paddy Fleming.

In London, on his return, Eoin found that his O.C. Frank Corrigan was also opposed; he resigned, was later deported and eventually joined the Free State Army. Eoin now found himself appointed Battalion Adjutant, and with Moss Twomey still Adjutant General, all the communications came through him. He formed them into three companies, A, B and C. They had guns only. Russell used visit, and when he came, stayed in Sean Murray's house. But Murray returned home, got the Cork view on this "fool idea" from Jim Gray, and would have no more to do with it. Eoin was upset because he had tremendous respect for Murray.

Tons of potassium chlorate now began to arrive; provided by Russell, and shipped, Eoin thought, from the continent. There were ample supplies also of paraffin wax, aluminium powder, detonators and fuse. Billy Heron and Frank Dunne, men who were fairly well off in business in Dublin, and close associates of Russell, may have helped to provide much of it. The unit was now offered a two week training course in Dublin; the indoor sessions were at the back of the Lucas shop, the Home Market, on St. Stephen's Green, and were directed by Seamus O'Donovan, Paddy McGrath and other instructors. For practical demonstrations they drove out in cars to the Dublin Mountains. But Eoin thinks that the time was too short. As he says, *signs and symbols on a blackboard; what the blazes would I know about them, and me only past the third book in Brocderg School.*

Jimmy Joe was there also at class. In view of the fatal explosion to himself that year, Eoin wonders did the fact that he was constantly being called away by Russell, cause his skill to be blurred, or was it the fact that he always wore a prominent ring? The ring may have made contact. Nonplussed by this tragedy, he was still not perturbed by this brief Border campaign (though it alerted the Stormont authorities). Some of us in London thought hopefully there was a plan for a general uprising; and if we thought it nobody tried to dissuade us.

Eoin has a theory about the dominance of different parts of Ireland at each struggle; Cork and Tipperary were on top in the Tan days; Dublin led the English campaign, and the North is in charge today. He feels he was not favoured by some of the Dublin lads in London; Willie McGuinness, Pearse McLaughlin, Eugene Timmons, although McLaughlin had good hands and a nimble brain.

We were decimated by arrests in March and April. Eoin puts this down

to the high profile previously maintained in commemorations and meetings by the future activists. The two roles should never be indulged in *together.* Be out in the public eye or stay away. By March he had moved to Coventry, and then to Birmingham, where he stayed with Sean Fuller, brother of Stephen whom the Staters thought they blew up at Ballyseedy. Sean was great, he says; a sound man and a great Republican until a few years ago. He was with Sean in Birmingham, staying with Behan's Grannie Furlong. Reading the signs both of them flitted back to Ireland ahead of deportation, photographing, finger printing and everything else, in June. Struggling for an oppressed nation against a bigger one, you have got to be smart (which reminds me as I write this in the middle of the Miners' strike, with opprobrium heaped upon them every day from the ponces of the National Union of Journalists, of Marx's maxim: *a nation that enslaves another cannot itself be free.* I wonder when Ireland itself becomes free will it remember to keep the English Tory nation permanently at arm's length, be permanently on guard, because sure as anything, those people, would jump us again).

Scarcely back in Dublin, Eoin was sent as an organiser to East Tryone where he stayed in the home of Francis Ruadh O'Neill. It was close to there, in the old keep of Mountjoy, that he was arrested on June 11th. Brought to Belfast, he was charged with membership, received twelve months, and was stuck in D Wing. While there, he could talk to the few internees held in C Wing.

Released in May 1940, just before the big round ups of hundreds in the South, he remained on, occasionally meeting Mickey Traynor, the Adjutant General, and the big four of the Northern Command, Kelly, McGlade, Rice and McCaughey, along with seasoned men like Hugh Matthews, Sean Dolan, and younger men like Patsy Hicks, Dan McAllister and John Graham. They were now actively planning a Six County revolt, the only role possible for the I.R.A., and one that eventually came near fruition two years after. One communication he received from Traynor — himself to be arrested in Dublin very shortly after — made him smile sardonically ; *you will instruct Eoin McNamee to return to his home as it is quite obvious that he will not be arrested.*

Eoin kept a low profile and did not return. He reported to his local company and within a week was active again with Francis Clarke, John Anthony McCullagh, James Devlin, and more. He was appointed Section Commander, Batt. A.G., Brigade A.G., then O.C. Tyrone/Donegal and Fermanagh. With the wind on its tail, the I.R.A. was now growing, particularly in Tyrone, where he had formed two brigades. In the spring of 1941, he was appointed O.C. Northern Command at a convention in Belfast, where the news was conveyed to him by McGlade. The reason for the seemingly too quick promotion was soon obvious; most of the Belfast staff were about to transfer to Dublin where rumours surrounding Stephen

Hayes were now rife. Eoin stayed on with Pearse Kelly, Gerald O'Reilly and Brendan O'Boyle, but the lack of experienced officers was telling. Running between Belfast and Dublin, not alone exposed him, but left him high and dry. In November 1941, following Kelly's short stint as C.S. Sean McCool became A. G. while Eoin was Quartermaster General under Sean Harrington. On Harrington's arrest after a few weeks, McCool took over, not to last long, and was then succeeded by one of the finest thinkers in the Army, Hugh McAteer.

What was their thinking now in the spring of '42, with big operations planned for the Six Counties, the U.S. Army newly landed in the North, the war in Europe beginning to turn in the Allies' favour, and things at home commencing to slide irrevocably against them? Some of their best officers were gone; McCaughey was a terrible loss, but McAteer was now in command, and a few morale boosting operations were carried out. McAteer had emerged from Crumlin Road, a ticket of leave man, on October 23rd. He reported to us in Belfast straightaway. I did not have his train fare to get him home to Derry. So some financial operations, as O'Boyle called them, were necessary. A couple of combined bank raids; the Army shot a few nasties among warders and police. Hughie had good ideas; Eoin and he got along well; they felt the future was theirs. And on the Belfast staff some of the best were their Protestant members, Graham, Bill Smith, Gideon Close and Rex Thompson.

Early in 1942, I had to go to Dublin and join Sean McCool as his Adjutant General. I did not like the city; staff there were going like ninepins. Then on May 23rd, it happened. I was staying at a house in Drimnagh in the south west of the city, No. 201. There was a dump of a hundred Thompsons in No. 102. I knew that because I had been informed of it by Noinín and Ruairi Brugha, who for some reason did not wish McCool to know. The squad closed in upon me on Brandon Road, walking towards my billet. But they did not get the dump; Cathal Goulding got that for the 1956 Campaign. Eoin was interned then in the Curragh, and was not released until after the European War had ended in May 1945.

Index

Harry

The man with six lives

Put out the light quick — I shouted.

As he leaned over to blow down the globe, he was shot through the back from the yard. They had the place staked out all right, and Paddy's body falling over it had put the light out anyway. I don't know what made me do it then, but, with my gun firing, I crashed head first through the top half of the tiny window on to the street. As I lay flat on my face, there were gun flashes in the darkness from everywhere. The bullets passed over me burying themselves in walls. I could see nothing, but I fired again in two directions, then ran wildly forward, stumbling and still seeing nothing, out between buildings, across a small paddock, smashed through a hedge, careless whether there was already someone positioned there to shoot me, ran on again and crossed a field still running. I must have covered nearly a quarter of a mile when I fell. I was in a shuck, crossing watery bottoms that lay between me and a bye road leading past Kilnacrott. They were firing around the house and shouting. I stood up to move again but could not. I collapsed, feeling sickish. What is wrong with me, I thought? I was in a clump of whins, a dense covert. I just lay there.

Price £6.00 net.

ARGENTA PUBLICATIONS
19 Mountjoy Square,
Dublin 1.