

# SURVIVORS

ARGENTINA  
PUBLICATIONS

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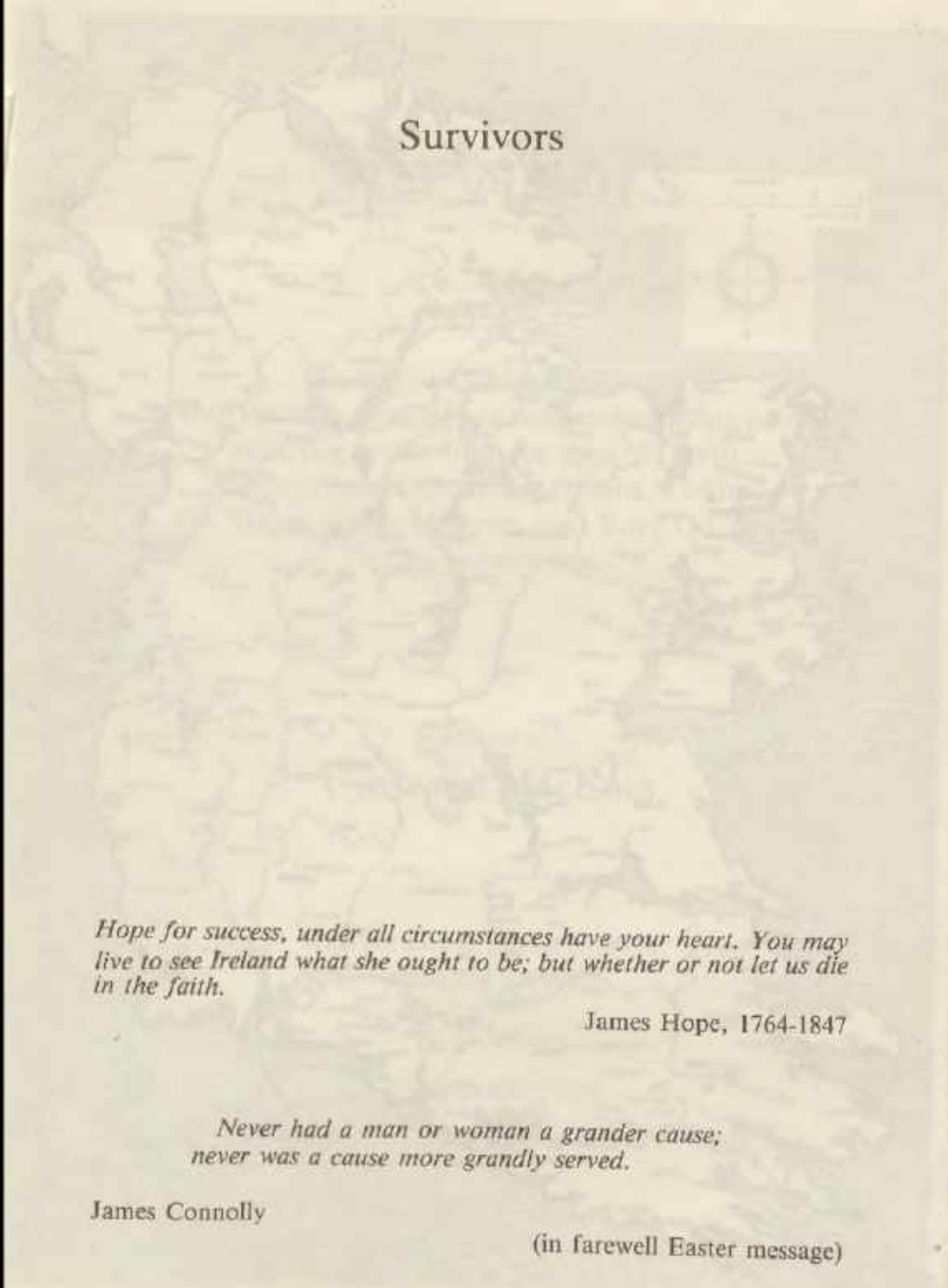
New and Enlarged Edition



The story of Ireland's struggle as told through some of her outstanding living people recalling events from the days of Davitt, through James Connolly, Brugha, Collins, De Valera, Liam Mellows, and Rory O'Connor to the present time.

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## Survivors

*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

*Never had a man or woman a grander cause;  
never was a cause more grandly served.*

James Connolly

(in farewell Easter message)



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**Uinseann MacEoin**

With portraits of the Survivors by:  
**Colman Doyle**

SECOND EDITION

with additional accounts, notes and appendices

Argenta Publications,  
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By the same author: *Harry*



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## Introduction to the Second Edition

On the Eve of the Battle of the Curlew Mountains August 1596

*Red Hugh O'Donnell's Address to His Soldiers*

We, though a small number, are on the side of the right as it seems to us, and the English whose number is large are on the side of robbery, in order to rob you of your native land and your means of living; and it is far easier for you to make a brave, stout, strong fight for your land and your lives while you are your own masters and your weapons are in your hands, than when you are put into prison and in chains after being despoiled of your weapons, and when your limbs are bound with hard tough cords of hemp, after being broken and torn, some of you half dead, after you are chained and taken in crowds on waggons and carts through English towns through contempt and mockery of you.

My blessing upon you true men. Bear in your minds the firm resolution that you had when such insults and violence were offered to you that this day is the day of battle which you have needed to make a vigorous fight in defence of your liberty by the strength of your arms and by the courage of your hearts, while you have your bodies under your own control and your weapons in your hands.

Have no dread nor fear of the great number of the soldiers of London, nor of the strangeness of their weapons, but put your hope and confidence in the God of glory. I am certain if ye take to heart what I say, the foreigner must be defeated and ye victorious.

O'Donnell won that battle. That was the message then. That is the message now.

England was and (so long as she continues to occupy Ireland), is the enemy of the Irish people; the entire Irish people; and no pretence on her part can disguise the fact that her occupation is as heavy and ruthless as Nazism. The glorious epoch which was opening for Ireland after the defeat of the Norsemen as evidenced in the Annals of that period, was rudely fractured by Strongbow's invasion. It was not until the seventeenth century however that English hegemony was established throughout the island, more especially in Ulster, the last province to be conquered. Their occupation has blighted us; it has fractured our social and cultural and mercantile development. From the time when a Cromwellian soldier hurled Teig, the aged Ollamh of the O'Briens, from a cliff top in Clare with a cry, *Sing now your*

*rann, old man*, our progress has been stifled. England is a dangerous and unfriendly neighbour. In her attitude to Europe – her constant interference there over the centuries to maintain the balance of power; even today her readiness to become a huge aircraft carrier for American missiles; in her bloody execution at Goose Green of the Argentinian conscripts who invaded the Falklands, she has shown, especially through her ruling classes, that she is not to be trifled with. In the current Northern troubles she has welcomed two decades of insurgency as preparation for counter insurgency tactics within her own cities; she welcomed the Falklands because, as one would bloody hounds, it blooded her land, sea and air forces in a full scale war experience. Were Ireland to be free, entirely free, we would have to maintain a *taut* attitude towards England. She would jump, stubborn and invade us again at the first opportunity, just as she did in those brief periods of semi independence following the rising of 1641, following the declaration of Grattan's parliament of 1782 and her attempted subversion of the state in recent decades. England sees us as an integral part of her territory. Look upon the map, how our island nestles geographically with England. She will never willingly let us go. We could never, were we free, cease to be watchful.

Our revolutionary leaders from 1916 onwards, showed no awareness of what a future independent Ireland might have to contend with. They do not show in the accounts that follow nor in any writings that one comes upon, a realisation that, once free, we would have an immensely difficult task to maintain that freedom and our neutrality. The 1916 leaders could not have foreseen that in time our government could be made adjust its policies by offers of aid and by subtle diplomatic and media pressure, orchestrated by interests within the administration itself. They would surely have rejected any notion that a pliant, extravagant and heavily indebted leadership could be purchased and imposed upon the Irish people and with the help of discreet media control, come to love and respect it? Yet watchfulness is the key to national independence as we can see by casting an eye upon the few non aligned countries of Europe. Ireland (26 Counties) is not in their league, particularly since, in the seventies we allowed total control of our affairs to pass to the anonymous bureaucrats of Brussels. These extravagantly paid administrators, and their spokesmen in Ireland, care nothing for the well being of the Irish people.

#### IRISH POLITICS: A LOOK BACK

Republicans have been at the centre of struggle in Ireland for the last two hundred years. (In another four years they may commemorate the anniversary of the foundation of the United Irishmen.) It is about time they won. In the struggle which is central to the



accounts in this book, the Republicans might have gained independence had they had the political direction of a Lenin. But they had no one as far seeing, as wide horizoned . . . or as ruthless. De Valera was too moderate. James Connolly, had he lived, placed too much faith in socialism (nowadays, as we have learned to our cost, socialism is all too frequently a platform for scoundrels. Witness that miserable rump, the Irish Labour Party, throughout the seventies and eighties, supporting the worst right wing forces in Ireland; how they hounded David Thronley to his death for standing upon a Sinn Fein platform in 1976; how their spokesmen in the Six Counties support the proliferation of massive military barracks for the sake of "the work" it provides). Can anyone imagine the anti national forces who reared their heads in the academic and ecclesiastical world immediately upon signing the Treaty, and that still prevail in Ireland today, being allowed to raise their beaks in Moscow in 1920, in the Havana of 1961, or in the Saigon of 1975? Our revolutionary leaders had no conception when they went out in 1916, when they fought from 1919 to 1923, what they had embarked upon. When one reads their laudable intentions, one can see that their hope was to create an independent and prosperous Ireland; their mistake was to think political independence of itself would leave the Irish people in unfettered control. We can therefore assume that if the Sinn Fein party had obtained outright freedom for the entire island in 1921, economic and social conditions would not be much different today, in the nineteen and eighties, to what they are. The more likely option in 1921 however was not freedom for the entire island, but control only of the 26 Counties. Although this option of May 1922 was vigorously opposed behind the scenes by the British let us suppose nonetheless that Republicans, everyone from Liam Lynch to Michael Collins was willing to become involved in a Republican government that would set out to make the most of the Treaty. Would conditions have been much different today? The answer is that they would not have been very different. An indicator of how a Republican government might have performed, is the programme, political, social and economic of the Fianna Fail government of 1932 (and of the next wave of Republicans, Clann na Poblachta, in 1948). The 1932 programme and the manner in which De Valera tried to put it into effect, was laudable, but it did not go far enough, nor did it come to terms with *the key issues and the key structures* i.e. total Irish/Ireland control of the burgeoning administration, the financial establishment, the media establishment, the academic establishment, and last but by no means least, that obese octopus, the legal and judicial establishment.

Economically and socially De Valera's programme was a Sinn Fein programme, though the Sinn Fein of those days might have gone much further than he felt able to do. I say *felt able*, because, like Dan

O'Connell and Parnell, he may have perceived the inherent limitations of the Irish people. Yet he had then — and Fianna Fail still has — the best of the Irish in the South, the most traditional of the Irish people supporting it. In the years 1932 to 1937, they would have followed him through fire had he chosen to lead them.

It is not unfair then to equate a Republican government of 1922 with Fianna Fail's performance after 1932. The Republican government would have been more altruistic, it would have wished to go further, but it also would have made many mistakes which the Fianna Fail government of 1932 avoided because it had the benefit of watching the performance of the Cumann na nGael government that preceded it. Therefore I say that a Republican government in 1922, with Lynch, Brugha, De Valera, Michael Collins in cabinet, would not have achieved real control for Ireland, and would not have varied greatly the unsatisfactory conditions of today because they would not have come to terms *with the key issues and the key structures*; in fact they would have scarcely recognised them. Lenin, and perhaps Connolly, would have, but they did not.

#### THE PERFORMANCE OF CUMANN NA nGAEL (AND STORMONT)

Republicans look upon the creation of the Provisional Government of 1922 as an English inspired counter revolutionary action; the sort of counter revolution that has become familiar in the last three decades as the two great world blocs jockey for control. In this case it was the powerful British Empire (it became in 1931 the British Commonwealth of Nations), which was determined to control through loyal surrogates this large island at its own back door. It is imperative that the Irish people should recognise that this is how England thinks about us, and recognise the imposition upon them of Arthur Griffith's Provisional Government as a classic piece of English inspired counter revolution. It is possible however for a counter revolutionary government to do good things; hence credit may be given to the government presided over by W. T. Cosgrave from 1922 to 1932 for accomplishing a limited number of objectives.

If we look upon Lenin as the Christ of the Russian Revolution, we can view Richard Mulcahy and those around him as the anti Christ of the Irish Revolution. Once into the Civil War they never deviated; they went all out for a narrow and bloody victory at a fearsome cost. However, in the eight years that remained to them, they built upon its confines an efficient state that was capable of development in a number of ways (and Fianna Fail did this, as we have seen, but did not go far enough).

Cumann na nGael disbanded quickly their 50,000 mercenary army, reducing it to less than ten thousand men. They set up a garda force of seven thousand. They restored bridges and railways, and rebuilt the



burned out heart of Dublin. They promoted education — the vocational schools for instance — in a big way; they began to look at home industry; they pioneered the first sugar beet factory, and they built the Shannon Scheme. They created in Ireland a replica of the British civil service, a replica that was small and efficient then, but that has since become burdensome and inefficient. Could we have progressed under the Treaty stepping stones, and could the two states, north and south, have drawn together? To that one must say two things; namely that Stormont could have been a better and more happy state if they played fair with Catholics, while the South, in view of its neutrality in World War II, could have become in the sixties as prosperous as Switzerland, Austria or Finland are today. In that way north and south might have drawn peacefully together: it is not the fault of northern unionists but of the Dublin administration that it has not done so.

#### THE IRISH ADMINISTRATION: DESERVING ONLY OF SCORN?

The six counties, or Northern Ireland as it is now officially, has an area of 5,500 sq. miles (14,000 sq. Kilometres) and a population of 1.6 million. It is half the size of Holland but Holland has an embarrassingly high population of 12 million. Its nineteenth century industrial history shows its capability; in the middle years of its existence it had flashes of inspired development in agriculture, the environment, housing, roads and a general air of tidiness that even today makes visiting southerners wince; but that appalling penchant of its Orange substrata for flag waving and coat trailing, for obvious employment injustices to Catholics, for the ridiculous royal visits in the weeks preceeding July, has caused this humpy dumpy to fall, and all the efforts of the people, be they in Westminster or Iveagh House, cannot put it together again. Had Stormont pursued an even handed policy; had it distanced itself from flag waving visitations; had it moved towards a federal relationship with the South, it could have survived and progressed. But it is now one of the might have beens of history.

The northern Nationalist people have given England notice that they must go, and one hopes that they do go. *It is imperative to create a new framework free of all English involvement in Ireland.*

In association with a progressive Six Counties, the Twenty Six in the last three decades should have been a better place for its people. With an area of 27,000 sq. miles (70,000 sq. kilometres) and a population approaching 4 million, it is more than twice the size of Holland, yet with one third of its population. The island as a whole has 15 million arable acres (21 million altogether), is on the perimeter of the two most prosperous continents of the world, is entirely seabound, and as a result of international conventions could control — were it not for E.E.C. interference — a 200 mile fishing limit, worth six billion to us, while other Law of the Sea decisions give it mineral controls over an

area immensely greater than this. Consider how well off we are compared with the inland states of Europe, Czechoslovakia, Austria, Hungary, Switzerland or the Baltic States, oceanwise they cannot enlarge their boundaries one inch. Yet our unemployment is four or five times theirs, and in our towns and cities thousands of children are hungry, ill clad and with no hope in the future. Upon the foundation of this state, it was left with a physical infrastructure of railways, roads, harbours, public buildings, townships, cities (the heart of Dublin was then among the most splendid in Europe), that placed it in the front rank of countries. It has failed to maintain that position.

In fact, the government of the Twenty Six Counties, the Irish government and its administration has so failed its own people that it deserves, not their loyalty, but their scorn. It has failed them in many ways, but most of all through the growth of poverty, in a world — the western world — of affluence, and in denied opportunity. There are many, many more gifted children, albeit hungry ones, who will never be heard, in our working class areas than there are in the better off quarters. *Our greatest problem is poverty and the lack of opportunity*, and this permeates not only the poorer classes but into the middle classes as well. Our government, our political leadership, our administrators, our professional, academic and financial establishments have let the nation down; wrong policies have been pursued since the inception of this state, but never as wrong or so confounded as since the late fifties. Extraordinary courts have been created to deal with political offences and these, because of the turbulent situation, north and south, has resulted in this island having more political prisoners than any other nation in Europe. Extremely heavy sentences have been meted out; many hundreds of prisoners have already spent half a lifetime in jail. No account is taken by the justice departments north and south that, but for the state of guerilla war that exists, few, very few, of these young men and women would ever be in jail.

If Ireland as a nation is to survive and to avoid being swallowed by the military industrial interests of the E.E.C., there must be a reversal of national decline and a determination to promote for all, and free from outside interference, the immense wealth resources of this island.

Only in that way, and by a total reversal of the social and economic policies now being followed, can the impoverishment of wide sections of the Irish people be ended. There is no justification for the hopelessness that has now taken a grip upon this nation.

Michael Quinn, July 1987.

## Acknowledgements

I salute and thank the Survivors (those of the band who are still with us) who patiently answered all my enquiries and allowed me to gather them into this book. I am amazed at the crystal clear memories they have of events that may have taken place eighty years ago, in few cases less than sixty. It has been an honour to speak to these men and girls.

I thank the many Survivors whose names are footnoted or in appendices throughout the book, but whom, for reasons of admirable modesty, did not wish to participate at greater length. While the transcripts are a near faithful recording of what was said, historical backgrounds and carry over paragraphs are inserted for reasons of the narrative.

Michael MacEvilly was invaluable with Tom Heavey, the *St. George* account and the story of John Joe Philbin. The authority however on the I.R.A. in Mayo is his good friend Willie Sammon of Carramore, Newport. Eibhlín Ní Cruadhlaich formerly of Belrose (See Upton), now of Ballintemple, confirmed that Mary MacSwiney had sought to be on the Treaty delegation, and for that and more I thank her. Fr. Michael Buckley of the Carmelites gave me that inspired account by his father, Patrick, which appears in the appendices. Seamus Ó Dochartáigh, Captaen, gave an insight on the contribution of his own family in South Donegal/Leitrim on pages 180/182.

George Morrison kindly allowed me use upon the cover his picture from page 16 of his *Irish Civil War*. It shows Republicans on guard outside the Glentworth Hotel in Limerick in February 1922.

I got enormous help amounting to plagiarism from Desmond Greaves of Liverpool; on selling, from the ever bouyant and knowledgeable Pat Kissane, and finally (in avoiding a total reset) from our printers. All others, and there are many, many, are acknowledged in one way or another, throughout the text.

Uinseann Mac Eoin, 1987.



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## Frank Edwards

*Lieut. Waterford City Battalion IRA  
Sergt. XV International Brigade, Spain*



My father and mother had no background in the national movement, none whatsoever. My grandmother was from Limerick and a great nationalist. I remember her well because she remained with my mother from the time we left Belfast — where I was born in 1907 — until we had settled in Waterford. My father had gone out to the Great War; he died shortly before the end of it. My brother Sean, or Jack, as I always called him, was a railway man, an engine cleaner at the terminus in Waterford. He had started that in Dundalk. It was oily, dirty work. He always came in black. Through the job, he became interested in labour affairs, becoming an organiser in the ASLE (Associated Society of Locomotive Engineers). I can recall the day of the one day strike against conscription in April, 1918; he was the chief marshall of the union in Waterford. People had a tremendous regard for him. He was tall and with a commanding appearance. He had suffered some injury at work, and I can still see him marching along with his arm in a sling. Sunday, April 21st, was the day for signing the pledge outside the churches. We had them on our side that day! Tuesday, 23rd, was the day fixed for the national strike. The Germans had removed their troops from Eastern Europe, signing a Peace Treaty with the new Soviet State(1). They were quickly assembled on the Western Front and thrown in there against the overstretched French and British. Of course the British included almost a quarter of a million Irish whom the parliamentarians had helped to send into the fight. The Kaiser's war lords hoped by a new offensive to forestall the arrival of American troops on the scene(2) and bring off the long sought coup de grace. The British looked desperately around, and decided that if they introduced conscription in Ireland they could raise half a million men, cannon fodder of course. The one day strike was a great success. Everywhere in Ireland, except around Belfast, shops and factories were closed, and trains and trams suspended. No

newspapers appeared in the South. The pubs were closed; a lot of shops and hotels. My brother was then only nineteen.

Waterford City, I know, has a connection with Redmondism, but it also had a strong Republican and Labour influence. To be called a scab in Waterford was one of the worst sorts of disgrace; the reputation of a scab travelled along families like the reputation of an informer or landgrabber in rural parts. Marx mentions Waterford in his writings pointing particularly to the strength of the Bakers' Union there.

I myself never heard of politics until Jack became involved in the Volunteers; he brought in my brother Willie, who died in the great 'flu a short while after, and received one of the earliest Republican funerals. I joined the Fianna; that was in 1917, and I was ten. There was a Volunteer hall in Waterford; imagine the British allowing Volunteer halls and allowing Volunteers parade in uniform! The hall came into some use during a brief strike of student teachers in the De La Salle College against the poor quality of the food. The Volunteers offered the use of the hall when the students retired from the college.

#### REDMONDITES AND SINN FEIN

I can recall the three of us marching out the Cork road to a meeting at which De Valera spoke. That may have been prior to the great election of December, 1918. The meeting, billed to take place in the city, was banned, so it was held outside. I remember John Redmond, but not Major Willie Redmond. He was killed on the Western Front in 1917, blown up without trace, one of the best-loved members of the Irish Parliamentary Party, they say, and brother of John. It was as a result of his death that De Valera was selected for Clare. John Redmond was a fine looking man too, very nice looking and popular. I can still feel the belt I got on my head from some of the Ballybricken people when I went shouting for Dr. Vincent White, the Sinn Fein candidate at that election. Redmond, as I said, was very popular. His son, Captain William Archer Redmond, was elected of course; he died sometime in the thirties. He took ill in Ballygunner after the funeral of an old Redmondite. Waterford was one of the six seats out of 105 that they won, but Parliamentarianism was wiped out. Cathal Brugha was elected for us in the county.

The Redmondites in the city had plenty of punch, and I mean punch, in that election. Their followers had many ex-servicemen. We brought in Volunteers from Co. Clare to deal with this situation. Later on, when Dr. White was elected in 1918 as Sinn Fein Mayor of Waterford, he was dressed in robes of green, white and orange, for the annual St. Patrick's Day procession. Everything went fine along the Quay and up the Mall until he came to the corner of John Street. There was a great

crowd there of Redmondites, ex-soldiers mostly and their wives. As soon as the procession came abreast, they let fly, not at the people in the procession, but at St. Patrick!

Waterford was not all that active in the Tan struggle of 1920-21. D Company was said to be one of the most active, and Jack was a section commander in that. It was made up mostly of manual workers, railwaymen and so on. He was then promoted O.C. of C Company, which was made up of shopboys and clerical people. I used to hear him say he would shake them up. Things got too hot for him however; he had to go on the run. He joined a flying column, the O.C. of which was Patrick Paul, a former British soldier. He went with the Free State afterwards. During that period the White Cross(3) looked after us. They were in the Comeraghs, based on the Nire Valley. They were in some engagements, that I do not know much about, but I do know that they attacked successfully a train in Durrow. It is hard to say what support they had among the people. There was a big swing around alright, and the people were afraid to inform on them. They could move about freely, stopping where they liked. The military would not be told.

I was on my way to Ring College, for an Irish summer course — it was a small scholarship I got — on the day that I heard of the Truce. It was a priest, who was a strong Sinn Féin and Gaelic League supporter, who took us there. My only thought was, now Jack can come home. He did too, for a while, but went off again to assist in training camps, and to help in the Helvick gun-running.

Waterford was held by Republican forces in the run up to the Civil War. I remember Collins coming to address us in the week before the Pact Election in June, 1922. There was a crowd of Republicans heckling and attacking him. What a pity, I thought; a few months before he had been a hero to them, now he was dirt. I made my way over; I reached up to shake hands with him. He reached his down to me and grasped mine warmly. I did not know afterwards whether to regret or cherish the only contact I ever had with him. Jack at that time was in command in the military barracks. It had been taken over under the terms of the Treaty from the British. He was one of four officers who took it over formally. Like everywhere else, they were wearing green uniforms, the uniforms of the Provisional Government, the Free State of course. That was what later on made the decision so difficult, when it came to tearing off those uniforms, as it did when Jack heard about the attack upon the Four Courts. He would have made ideal officer material; who knows one day he might have been a Commandant General in their forces.

#### THE CIVIL WAR

I cannot say how they made their decision when the crunch came. Frank O'Connor was there too, a captain, one of the great Republican



families in Waterford. One of his brothers, Peter, was with me in Spain afterwards. Another brother, Jimmy, the eldest, was in charge of the Fianna. He told me that one day in the run up to the Civil War, they were sent out by Commdt. Lennon, in connection with agrarian disturbances, which had now become frequent. They were told to load up. *When it comes to firing, says Jack, I know where I am going to fire.* Nothing happened and they were ordered back. But you can see there was a basic clash between Republicans who had a radical background and the people who make officer material in an army like the Free State Army. When the time came to resist the Staters entering Waterford, it was people like this who chucked it in and had no more to do with it. There was another agrarian outbreak, I am jumping ahead of course, to the late summer of 1923, after the Civil War had ended. It was a localised civil war, but maybe a more logical one. It was centred in the countryside around Kilmacthomas, between the farm labourers and the big farmers. Houses and hay barns were burned down. The Free State Army had to convoy the farm crops and stock to the towns.

There was no military plan when the Civil War started. Resistance in Waterford was minimal. They just melted away. There was an effort made to block them at the approaches, but the Free Staters just moved around and landed a force from the river. Nobody was prepared for that. The proper thing would have been to attack the Free Staters rather than await them like sitting ducks. Jack was in charge of the G.P.O. here. They shelled it and took it easily enough. He was now their prisoner. That was sometime in mid July. He was taken to Kilkenny where, after a few weeks, he was shot dead by a sentry on 19th August. It was known to be a reprisal for the shooting of a Free State Officer, a Captain O'Brien, in Waterford. Someone called him to the window of his cell. A sentry had his rifle pointed and fired it. *Shot while attempting to escape*, they said, but we knew differently.

I went to Kilkenny to claim his body. In spite of everything, there was a great turn-out when it arrived in the city, but the doors of the church were shut against him. The Christians and the Provisional Government, you could say, were hand in glove.

There is a three verse ballad written of him, the last verse, sung to the air of "Kevin Barry", going like this:

March with stately step and solemn,  
Lightly tap the muffled drum,  
For the gloom around is now cast  
There's a soldier coming home.  
Make this grave upon the hillside,  
Where he fought in days gone by,  
Fire three volleys o'er the graveside

Where our soldier lad will lie,  
Let us wipe out fault and fashion  
And when Freedom's day will come,  
Let us prove ourselves in action  
As Jack Edwards often done.

I had no part in the Civil War, being still too young. *Go home to hell*, Jack said to me outside the post office, when I had tried to get in. I carried some messages, but the area of activity moved on from Waterford very quickly, although they executed two lads in the jail there(4). For us it had hardly started when it was over. It then became something that we read about in the newspapers as the Free State Army tightened its hold upon the country

#### BUILDING UP AGAIN

In 1924, I joined the now re-organised Waterford Battalion of the I.R.A., taking the bloody oath prescribed for them by the Dail in August, 1919, the same Dail that two and a half years later let them down.

I, A.B., do solemnly swear . . . . . that I shall support  
and defend the Irish Republic . . . . . against all enemies . .

This political oath followed the take-over of the Volunteers by the Dail earlier that year, when they were promised that the state of war would persist *until the British military invader evacuated Ireland*. I am glad to say that the I.R.A. after 1924 had a bit of sense about oaths and replaced it with a declaration. I was in it now anyway; I suppose it was a feeling of family loyalty, of not wanting to let Jack down. I was in it, I remember, while I was in the training college, at De La Salle. I was there from 1925 onwards. I came out to a few meetings. There was nothing very much happening. The members were a scattering of ex-prisoners, mostly disillusioned, as far as I could see. Some silly things happened; I suppose that is inevitable at times. A volunteer went to disarm a Free State soldier, and shot dead the girl who was with him. Then there was a raid on pawn shops, for binoculars of all things, and a pawn shop assistant was shot. I remember another time when two Free State soldiers were held up and disarmed by two volunteers. They came straight to my house, leaving their two Webleys with me. Then they went to Johanna Norris, a great lady; she kept a piggery. She hid the two rifles in some dry straw at the back of the piggery.



## SAOR EIRE

In 1927, having largely dropped out of things, I was approached by Jimmy O'Connor, to become active again. Jimmy was a brother of Peter and Frank, whom I mentioned earlier. There were three companies based on areas in the city; Ballytruckel was one of them. *We are on the verge of something now*, I thought. I was now a teacher. I did not bother seriously about my job, getting married or anything. I remember a bloke came to me selling insurance. When I saw in the fine print that it would all be invalidated in the event of a revolution, I told him to take it away. I was sure we would be on the hills by 1928, but the years went by and still "we were on the verge". About 1930 Peadar O'Donnell came to address a meeting on the Annuities issue. I remember, because we organised it. It was held opposite the boat club, and I can recall Peadar making some slighting reference to its membership. It made me wince because I was in it, one of their foremost oarsmen. I was very glad I had not told Peadar that I also played rugby. The meeting was called to aid a Wexford man who had withheld his annuities and was imprisoned in Waterford jail. Things were developing however, Cumann na mBan was established on a firm footing. Bobbie here(5) was a member of it. She succeeded in getting them to drop their allegiance to the Second Dail, which, I am afraid, drove Mary MacSwiney out of it. I received at that time an invitation to the foundation meeting of Saor Eire, in the autumn of 1931 in Dublin. When I think of it, it was a most undemocratic way to send out invitations, just the Commandant, that was Jimmy O'Connor, and the Adjutant, that was myself: it was I.R.A. through and through. They got a Co. Council member from Co. Clare as a chairman of the meeting. He startled everybody by commencing with a religious invocation. And then to cap it all Fionán Breathnach stood up later and said we should adjourn the meeting as some wished to attend the All Ireland in Croke Park that afternoon. It shows you how seriously they were taking their socialism. *Religion cannot be much good*, Sheila McInerney cracked afterwards about the invocation. *It did not work for Saor Eire!*(6)

Maybe it was the crest of the Fianna Fail wave that was carrying us along. We were, in some eyes, the left wing of them. When it came to the 1932 election we worked for them although I threw in my lot with Labour. I was secretary to the local INTO and through that a delegate to the trades council. Had I shown any inclination to go with Fianna Fail, they would have been glad to have me. The Edwards name meant something in Republican circles because of the connection with Jack. I could have done the usual, cashed in on the dead. We sold a lot of *An Phoblacht* around that time, as many as six hundred copies weekly. I suppose it was people who voted afterwards for Fianna Fail who had bought them. We Republicans had nothing to offer them politically.

## RADICALISM IN WATERFORD

I had got the writings of Marx and Lenin by this time. I had also met Sean Murray, formerly I.R.A., but now the secretary of the Communist Party. He encouraged a group of us here, among the I.R.A. people, to study the manifesto. When I went to Dublin for the Saor Eire meeting, I called down to Connolly House, in Great Strand Street, the Communist Party headquarters, where I met Johnny Nolan. I bought a lot of books from him. At that time we held packed discussion groups every Sunday night to which the public were invited. But it was 1934 now. Dev was in power for two years. We had the Economic War. We had the Bass boycott, and still we were "on the verge". Well, be the hookey, *you can't be on the verge for seven years*. You can't keep people, potential revolutionaries, going for ever on a diet of hustings, commemorations, flags, banners and Bodenstown. I felt it was time to make a break. When the idea of a Republican Congress came up it attracted me. There was an I.R.A. Convention held in Dublin on 17th-18th March, 1934, at which the Congress idea was put forward by Peadar O'Donnell and strongly supported by Frank Ryan. It was considered "too political" by many of the 120 delegates. Nonetheless it was defeated by only one vote. Half the delegates then withdrew, and those people, Peadar, Ryan, Mick Price, George Gilmore, later with Charlie and Harry, along with Sean Murray of the Communist Party, Roddy and Nora Connolly, Jim Larkin Jun., William McMullan, the I.T.G.W.U.'s man from Belfast, and many more set up the new organisation.

A manifesto was issued and an organising meeting called for Athlone on April 8th. It was not the success we had hoped for. A paper, *Republican Congress*, was published. It was edited by Frank Ryan and was very much on the same lines as *An Phoblacht*. It lasted only from May until December, of the following year, nineteen months altogether. Our second Congress was held in Rathmines Town Hall in September 1934. We had all been waiting for it. There was a disastrous split, however, between the moderates represented by Peadar, George Gilmore, Sean Murray, Frank Ryan and ourselves, and the "Workers' Republic" group led by Price, and the two Connollys. That in short was the history of Republican Congress.

Now I will tell you, how it all began in Waterford. We were involved in a big way from the start. Most of the local I.R.A. supported us. They were working class. The O'Connors had a substantial trade union connection. As soon as Congress was founded, we tackled the question of slum landlords, of which there were a few in Waterford. We helped to organise tenants and the unemployed. Two representatives of the unemployed were later elected to the Corporation as a result. We also had a firm policy of supporting strikes. I will not now go into the



wisdom of that particular policy. For months we kept Waterford on the front page of our own paper. It was very much a collective effort. The details were supplied to me and I did the writing up. At the same time there was a prolonged strike by builders labourers, in Hearnese, the local big contracting firm. Some other building firms became strike-bound as a consequence. By a coincidence, John Hearne was at that time carrying out a big extension at our school. Republicans of all shades became involved. The strike was sharp and prolonged. The local canon, Archdeacon Byrne, who was acting bishop at the time, was co-manager of the school where I worked, Mount Sion, Christian Brothers School. He intervened in the strike on behalf of the bosses. John Hearne was in confab with him, constantly in and out of the presbytery. This was known because you cannot do much in Waterford without it being known. This same priest was trustee of some of the slum property I had investigated though I did not know that at the time. However quite unknowingly I had been making a direct attack upon himself.

The strike ended eventually after five weeks in what was both a compromise and a partial victory. Canon Byrne made a speech saying how delighted he was it had ended, but at the same time how perturbed he was that certain people had intervened in it who had no right to do so. These people were attempting to set up in Ireland a state after the model of Moscow. Interference by these people in the affairs of Waterford must stop. He made some reference to the anti-slum campaign, but he was on weaker ground there. My major sin obviously was to have mentioned his property, though we were unaware that he had any connection with it. Finally he warned off all and sundry against attending the forthcoming Republican Congress in Rathmines, in September.

Now, to return to that gathering. Two lines of approach were put forward, one, the united front approach, by Sean Murray, Peadar and the Gilmores; the other a workers republic approach, by Mick Price. In reality he wished simply to make it another political party, and one which, unfortunately, could have only a miniscule following. It surprised me that Price could now be so leftist, since he had been so lukewarm to Saor Eire. He came to an I.R.A. meeting in Waterford late in 1931, in *Grace Dieu*, and referred to Saor Eire in rather disparaging terms. He did not want it to interfere with orthodox army activities, he said. A great militarist, you know; he had us on parade and addressed us as an O.C. Mick had no time for discussion groups.

#### THE SPLIT IN CONGRESS

Our hope in coming together in Republican Congress that time was to create an umbrella sheltering Republicans, trade unionists and

Fianna Fail people. That was our hope, and it did not work. That was the intention of one resolution, the united front resolution. This was the course that all of us in our talks in Waterford before the meeting had agreed was the correct one. The other one, Resolution Two, I will call it, you would need to be De Valera to understand it. I found it hard to make up my mind. Frank Ryan was rushing us to come on his side. He did not bother trying to explain his to us either. I spent nights and nights turning the two of them over in my mind before I could decide.

Bobbie was here in Dublin for weeks before that. She was involved in all the preliminary discussions. She recalls at the Rathmines meeting Roddy Connolly speaking for the Workers' Republic lobby, whipping off his pullover in the excitement of addressing the delegates. His name, the Connolly name, swayed many of them. Nora was there too, throwing her full weight in with Roddy. We could not wait until the end of that Sunday evening. Us country delegates had to rush away at five o'clock for our trains. Bobbie remained for the elections. She was elected to the executive. Before we left the Town Hall we knew however that the movement was finished. We were called into a room. Peadar explained to us that, although we won by a small majority — ninety-nine to eighty-four — the movement was split down the middle. The resolution was worded as follows:

*We support a United Front campaign by which worker and small farmer leadership in the whole Republican struggle can be achieved.*

Mick Price was very dissatisfied that his Workers' Republic resolution failed. Nora Connolly O'Brien agreed with him and withdrew.(7)

Then swear we one and swear we all,  
To bear it onward 'till we fall,  
Come dungeons dark or gallows grim,  
This song shall be our battle hymn.(8)

They all missed the real issue, the danger of fascism developing from the Blueshirt movement(9) of Eoin O'Duffy. You may say that the orthodox Fine Gael politicians, Mulcahy, Cosgrave, O'Higgins etc., did not want to have anything to do with a mobster movement like O'Duffy's but I would remind you that Hindenburg did not wish to soil his hands with Hitler.

There was a fairly strong radical movement continuing in Dublin. We thought we would get somewhere on rent strikes. We had activities on things that were real and that mattered.



Cora Hughes went to jail. Nellie Clover went to jail. Charlie Donnelly, who was afterwards killed in Spain, was also in jail. It may have been over the strike in Bacon Shops Ltd., which occurred in 1934, and which was supported also by the I.R.A.

There was never a deep cleavage between Congress and the I.R.A. although a Congress group was attacked by people at Bodinstown in 1934 and again in 1935. (10) A party with Congress emblems at the tail of the Republican procession to Glasnevin in Easter 1935 was attacked by onlookers. In June of that year *An Phoblacht* (11) was finally suppressed by the government although there were a few mimeographed and printed issues afterwards. The Republican Congress newspaper was very opposed to this form of censorship. They also got greatly worked up about the prisoners whom Fianna Fail was again flinging into Arbour Hill in 1935 and 1936, and were treating abominably. Con Lehane was the O.C. there. There was a big fight in November 1935 and some vicious things were done, resulting in them being forced into solitary confinement. That struggle continued until the following August when Sean Glynn of Limerick was found hanging in his cell. He had been sentenced for attempting to attend Bodinstown in June.

From the springtime through the summer,  
And 'till Autumn harvests fell,  
They endured the fiendish tortures  
Of that awful silent hell;  
'Twas God's grace that helped them bear it,  
For 'twas meant to break and kill,  
And one brave heart burst asunder  
In the cells of Arbour Hill.

Republican Congress held a protest meeting in December, demanding freedom for the I.R.A. to pursue its training and organising. Meanwhile I had been sacked in January 1935 from Mount Sion. I had been warned against going to the abortive Congress meeting the previous September. Following my return from that I received three months' notice. I suppose it could not happen now, but Archdeacon Byrne had his eye upon me because of my success among the workers of Waterford. Bishop Kinnane, a dyed in the wool Tory, issued a rescript in January condemning me. The I.R.A. immediately issued one of their statements, which I suppose was meant to be helpful, saying, that while I was not a member, they supported me. Dr. Kinnane replied to that one with a real salvo, charging that the I.R.A. was *sinful and irreligious*, quoting their appeal to the Orangemen in 1932 as proof of it. He lumped all their small farmer

and nationalisation proposals together, thundering *there you have enunciated the fundamental principles of socialism reprobated by our Catholic teaching.*

On Sunday 26th January, Maurice Twomey, Pádraig MacLogan, Mrs. Brugha and Tom Barry arrived to hold a protest meeting. Despite a statement read in all the churches forbidding attendance, over 5,000 attended. It was a sock in the eye for the bishop, but despite the tremendous support I received from every quarter, including resolutions from An Fainne, Fianna Fáil, the Trades Council, the Mayor, Ned Dawson, I was bested. I had to leave Waterford.<sup>(12)</sup> They would not leave even my mother alone. She had a post as a public health nurse. They boycotted her and she had to resign, dying very shortly afterwards.

#### THE WAR IN SPAIN

What were your feelings Frank when you heard of the military uprising against the Spanish Popular Front Government on 17th-18th July, 1936?<sup>(13)</sup> I was in Dublin then; I was unemployed of course. I had got three months teaching work in Sligo, but nothing else. I came to Dublin, first to help Frank Ryan with the paper, and then when that folded, I remained on at the University to complete my B.A. I had been staying in An Stad, the hotel, or boarding house for Republicans in North Frederick Street.

It was around August that I decided to go. I was delayed however by my mother's illness and death in September. For that reason Ryan put off his departure also. In the meantime I had obtained a passport — it was not like now when everyone has a passport — and I had got a letter from Owen Sheehy-Skeffington. It was a letter of introduction, *mar eadh*, to a school in France; a pretence that I was off seeking a job. He was the son of Hannah, who had edited *An Phoblacht* along with Frank. The story is told that, when Frank would be rushing off, he might direct that a blank space in a column be filled with a quotation from Pádraig Pearse. *I will not*, she would say, *I have a far more appropriate one here from James Connolly.* They were great in those days for Holy Scripture! We left on 10th October.

We arrived in Spain in November and were put through a very rudimentary training at Madridejos. It was pretty harmless training. I remember the battle of Lopera, south of Madrid, was on; that was just after Christmas. We had been flung into a night attack upon the village. I remember streaming down a hill towards it, firing. They had a couple of machine guns well placed. We never took that village. The next day we spent trying to hold our position against a counter-attack. It was pretty grim. Their fire-power was far greater than ours and their equipment much better. The first shot I fired as I advanced, the rifle

broke up in my hands. I did not know what to do. I had no gun. Just at that moment a comrade fell so I grabbed his rifle. That was in Andalusia, where most of our fighting was destined to be, and most of our dead now lie. It was a dry stony country of rolling hills and olive groves, small primitive villages with very little cover for soldiers. We were on the Andujar front, two hundred miles south of the capital. In that attack, it was just run, run, against the enemy. Like the Irish at Fontenoy, only here we sang, when we were gathering for the attack, *Off to Dublin in the Green*. They were all I.R.A. men of course, and, as we charged up that hill in the initial assault, I remember many of us shouting *Up the Republic*. They were nearly all young Dublin lads, a terrific bunch.

We were not there as a separate unit, we were part of a British company. Frank was fighting hard for a separate identity, but he was too optimistic. He was outvoted. There was no way we would be made a separate Irish unit. He was right from the point of view of local politics in Ireland. He always had one eye on Ireland. This was a demonstration against the fascists at home. There was a total of 132 Irish, direct from Ireland. There were in addition other Irish-born from England, Scotland and America. Many others claimed they were Irish merely to get in with our section. At Lopera, we were 150 going in, after ten days there was left of us, active and still able to fight, only 66. Ralph Fox, the young English writer, and John Cornford, the poet, were killed there.

Donal O'Reilly, a young left-wing trade unionist was appointed political commissar of our section. I took over when O'Reilly was wounded. I was also fighting of course. It was my job to try to keep up morale, to shout *Adelante*, in a charge, *Comunisti pirote!* (Communists in front!) My first experience of being under fire was when a plane flew low over us in the olive groves, spraying the area with machine-gun fire. A chap near me got hit. He was killed instantly. We were just sitting there, but there were bully-beef tins lying near us which may have attracted the light.

You stopped worrying after a while. You scarcely even thought of it when a comrade died. You did not stop and say: *Ah, me poor whore*. No, nothing, you did not have to banish the thought, because you had ceased to think of it anyway.

After ten days fighting and heavy casualties we were pulled out and taken to the Madrid front, to a place called Las Rozas, ten miles north of the city. Talk about out of the frying pan into the fire! I was at Las Rozas only one night when I was wounded. The XII and XIV International Brigades had been thrown in to prevent a Franco advance which would have cut off Madrid. We just managed to block them though there were thousands of men lost on both sides. The



German Thaelmann Battalion fighting for us was almost wiped out. If you could forget that it was war, it was beautiful to look at. An immense and ever-changing fireworks display rolling along the hilltops in the dark Spanish night. And we were expected to advance into that. I felt bad under heavy artillery fire. George Nathan came up and removed his helmet. Pointing at a hole in it, he said: *You know this is not much good. A stone did that. Still, fixing it back on, I suppose it is better than nothing. Spread out now,* said he, *We have lost two men already.* Shortly after Dinny Cody and myself got hit. I did not feel too bad as I walked down the hill. *Send up stretcher-bearers,* I told them, but Dinny was already dead. I was soaked in blood myself from a wound in the body. I remember Mike Lehane and two Austrians helped me to an ambulance. It was one hell of a rough ride over stony roads to the first-aid hospital. Later I was transferred to a proper hospital in Madrid. Nathan was a brave soldier, no matter what is said or may be suspected of him. He was killed, still rallying his men in that devil-may-care manner of his, in the Brunete salient north of Madrid, in July 1937.

After a few weeks in hospital, I was back at the front. This time I felt like a seasoned warrior. I had been through it. I had been wounded. I got reckless. I felt that, as I had been hit once, I could not be hit again.

Could anything be more silly? A ridiculous notion. But you get indifferent like that. While I was in hospital, the fascists attacked south of Madrid at Jarama again. They were trying to close their pincers on the capital. Ryan was there. There were an awful lot of casualties and he was wounded. When we were not fighting we engaged in argument and discussion with other members of the battalion. There was every sort there, anarchists, British conservatives, church-goers and non-goers. I used to be in a church choir. I knew many hymns in Latin. This used to astound some of the Spaniards; *Ah, you were a Catholic before the war,* they would gasp. Many of them had been Catholics too, but only in a very superficial way. For a while we were beside anarchists. They supported the government in a loose sort of way. They were idealists, but without the slightest idea of discipline or organisation. Meanwhile the communists in the army, from being a very small part of it, gained more and more control. They fully supported the government, a centrally controlled government.

I left Spain at the end of 1937. It had become a practice to pull out the veterans, as we were now called, so that they could train fresh volunteers or proceed abroad on lecture tours. They asked me if I would be willing to speak in Ireland, or would I go on a tour of the U.S.A. with Fr. Michael O'Flanagan. Fr. O'Flanagan was then living in Sandymount, near Tony Woods and Maire Comerford. He had been out of politics for some time, but still kept closely in touch with Peadar.



He had as both housekeeper and secretary, Mary Nelson. She was a great woman; she married Gerald Elliot afterwards.<sup>(14)</sup>

I came back to Dublin and returned to Waterford where Bobbie now was. Fellows came over to me in the street to shake my hand. *I don't blame you for going out to have a bash at them*, one said, thinking I had gone to Spain to have a crack at the Church. I found however, a complete change. The Christian Front was gone, so too were the last fragments of Republican Congress. All of my old friends were retired to the side lines. No political organisation existed in which they could play a part. My task now was to try to get a job, any sort of a job; it was not going to be easy.

First of all I got digs in Clonliffe Road, twenty-five bob a week, all in. I got a job with Pye Radio, but got thrown out when I tried to start the union in it. Then through some of my rugby contacts, believe it or not, I got a job as a labourer, digging and laying pipes. I was about six months at that when I got the opportunity to get back into teaching. It was in the Jewish national school on the South Circular Road. It was July, 1939, and the war clouds were enveloping Europe. I got one week's work there, before the holidays in July, earning ten pounds. On the strength of that, and the promise of more, I got married in August.

In 1946, following the tremendous showing made by the Soviet armies in Europe, we set up here the Ireland-U.S.S.R. Friendship Society. We filled the Mansion House at the first meeting, but, as you say, it is always easy to fill the Mansion House the first time. It was hard going, with the commencement of the Cold War, after that. There was a Miss Early, secretary of it then; she was succeeded by Hilda Alberry, who did trojan work, but in the end had to resign, because of the pressures and intimidation upon her. When I took it over in 1955, its membership and its influence was very small indeed. Hard diligent work has changed that; we are now almost a respectable institution.

#### REFERENCES

- 1 Treaty of Brest — Litovsk, March 1918, which followed the Russian collapse and Lenin's desire to get out of the war at any cost.
- 2 The U.S. entered World War One in April, 1917, but was slow in making its presence felt on the battlefields of Europe.
- 3 The Irish White Cross, a Sinn Fein charitable organisation.
- 4 Michael Fitzgerald and Patrick O'Reilly of Youghal, on January 25th, 1923.
- 5 Miss Bobbie Walsh, now Mrs. Edwards.

6 The foundation congress of Saor Eire was held on September 26th-27th, at the Iona Hall, North Great Georges Street, in Dublin. It was attended by 150 delegates. An attempt to hold it in the Abbey Theatre or the Peacock Theatre was refused. Its objectives were the abolition of private ownership of lands, fisheries and minerals, a state bank; state control of imports and exports, with wide state support for the creation of industrial workers co-operatives. It gained neither public support nor I.R.A. enthusiasm. When Fianna Fail came to power Saor Eire was quietly forgotten.

The members of the National Executive were as follows: Sean McGuinness\* (Sub. F. Breathnach), Sean Hayes (Clare), May Lavery\* (Belfast), Helena Moloney, Sheila Dowling, Sheila Humphries\*, D. McGinley, M. Fitzpatrick, Sean MacBride, M. Price\*, Peadar O'Donnell\*, David Fitzgerald (Dublin), M. Hallisey (Kerry), M. O'Donnell (Offaly), Pat McCormack (Antrim), Tom Kenny (Galway), L. Brady (Laois), Nicholas Boran (Kilkenny), John Mulgrew\* (Mayo), Tom Maguire\* (Westmeath).

Asterisks denote those who later signed the manifesto of Republican Congress.

7 In the issue of Republican Congress of 27th October, 1934, George Gilmore castigated Price, dubbing him a reactionary in his I.R.A. days. The vote was close; 99 for a Front, 88 for a Workers' Republic.

8 Verses from the *Red Flag* written by Ulsterman Jim Connell and set for singing to the air of the Green Cockade. A single issue of the paper once carried a red flag on the masthead. It caused nervous readers to protest that they were already under sufficient pressure from public opinion, without actually going out seeking it. It did not appear on it again.

9 Under the leadership of Dr. T. F. O'Higgins, the Army Comrades' Association had expanded dramatically in 1932, and towards the end of that year they adopted as parade uniform, the blue shirt. The following July, subsequent to Fianna Fail's second election victory and the peremptory dismissal of Eoin O'Duffy as Chief of Police, on February 22nd 1933, the leadership of the A.C.A. was offered to him. In standing down Dr. O'Higgins spoke of the burden of leadership which he said had grown too heavy for him. He outlined to the delegates assembled in Dublin's Hibernian Hotel, the objectives of the Association, *to prevent the spread of communism, to protect life, property, free speech, and democracy in the country.* Anyone with the slightest taint of communism was then having a thin time. With each Lenten pastoral, the bishops thundered against both Communism and Republicanism. In Gardiner Street, the Jesuits manipulated the simple God-fearing sodality men into attacking Connolly Hall, in Great Strand Street, and Mrs. Despard's Workers' College, in Eccles Street, in April 1933. Both were wrecked and Charlie Gilmore was arrested when he tried to frighten off the mob with a revolver. In Leitrim there was another *cause celebre*, James Gralton, a left wing Irishman who fought in the Tan War, returned, settled down and commenced to run a dance hall. He used it as a platform for publicising his left wing views. The local clergy accused him of creating a communist cell in Drumsna. Fianna Fail quickly bowed to Achonry, and Gralton, (now a U.S. citizen) was served with a notice of deportation. Always a man for lost causes, Peadar O'Donnell went down to Leitrim and attempted to hold a protest meeting; the local P.P. Father Cosgrave, called it an anti-God meeting. O'Donnell was stoned out of the village. A year earlier he had lost a famous libel action against the *Irish Rosary*, which had said that in 1929 he had been sent to study at Lenin College, Moscow, although O'Donnell had never visited that country. It would be difficult now to imagine just how easily at that time anti-Communist feeling could be stirred up in Ireland, and as year succeeded year, the position worsened. In pious circles, O'Donnell was cast as Ireland's leading anti-God figure. In the Ireland of the Thirties, there was no bonus for a political movement that trumpeted socialism or friendship for

Russia. The I.R.A. was caught between the anvil of Fianna Fail and the hammer of episcopal anti-Communism.

O'Duffy accepted the O'Higgins accolade; he loved to strut, and straight away announced a new name for the organisation, the *National Guard*. Its first objective, (and one always dear to the heart of the former O.C. Fifth Northern, was to promote the reunion of Ireland.) He announced a national parade in Dublin for Sunday, August 13th, at which he expected 100,000 to attend. It was to prove a silly boast. P. J. Rutledge, the then Minister for Justice, thirsting for such a confrontation, banned the parade, and O'Duffy climbed down. It could be said that from the first weeks of his leadership, his fangs had already been drawn. In August the movement was banned altogether, but it quickly reformed within the now united Cumann na nGael and Centre Party, (henceforth Fine Gael), and in September adopted the new name, *Young Ireland Association*.

We need not follow it much further, beyond recalling that in the following December, (1933) it was banned again, whereupon the leadership changed the name once more to League of Youth. 1934 saw a considerable rise in violence between their supporters, police, and I.R.A./Fianna Fail people. There were a number of deaths on both sides. But from now on the movement commenced rapidly to decline. Fissures appeared between the ebullient O'Duffy/Cronin/Jerry Ryan leadership and the more conventional politicians within Fine Gael. In September he resigned without warning, but to their evident relief, and was replaced by Commdt. Cronin. 1935 saw the organisation shrinking further with control passing into the hands of Cosgrave, James Dillon and McDermott. The days of the great rallies and marches were definitely over. Finally in October 1936, the politicians at Fine Gael HQ, at 3 Merrion Square, locked out Commdt. Cronin and wrote 'finis' to their Blueshirt period. The League of Youth, a pale shadow of its former self, was laid to rest behind the stuffed keyhole of the Georgian head office.

10 Congress had their banners seized in 1934. They had agreed not to carry any. Their banners were again seized in 1935 and some of the forty-two members taking part were attacked. They retired to Sallins and were addressed by Peadar O'Donnell, George Gilmore, and Sean Murray. The oration was given in the graveyard by Sean MacBride. Referring to the Congress group, he said, *Had they marched, the Imperialists would have made propaganda out of it.* Evidently the I.R.A. might have been dubbed "red".

11 Edited at this time by the widely respected Donal O'Donoghue, shortly to be married to Sheila Humphries. Donal O'Donoghue was imprisoned the following April in Arbour Hill.

12 The essential difference between Saor Eire and Republican Congress lay in the fact that the former sought to marshal the whole people behind the Workers' Republic programme. Congress was prepared to work through individuals for limited revolutionary objectives, such as rent strikes which it organised under Cora Hughes in Gardiner Street, in Dublin, thus creating a revolutionary situation. They hoped for support from individual members of Fianna Fail, but their methods and programme were too utopian for a canny political organisation whose base was firmly on the ground. No one from Fianna Fail joined them.

One of their first actions was to send George Gilmore to the United States, where he remained during most of 1934. He tried to collect money but with very indifferent results. Some of the Irish ex-bond holders sent on in good faith receipts for bonds they exchanged in support of Mr. De Valera's *Irish Press* share issue of 1928. The receipts, which were remarkably similar to the bonds themselves, were of course worthless. When Gilmore returned the organisation was already on the decline. They had founded a paper *Republican Congress* which lasted from May 1934 until December 1935.



13 The Civil War, long boiling, broke out in Spain on 18th July, 1936. Within a few days the country was evenly divided, with Franco and his generals (these were known as the Nationalists) holding the western half, backing upon Portugal, and the government forces — (the Reds in the Irish Catholic papers) — holding the eastern half flanking the Mediterranean. Madrid, from the start almost, was in the front line, and held by government forces; the extreme north along the Biscay coast was also in government hands, being part of the Basque province of Vizcaya, and also the adjoining provinces of Santander and Asturias.

The Popular Front was the legal government of Spain. It had been elected in the previous February but with an extremely slim majority.

For the Popular Front, the votes cast were:	4,176,156
The others consisted of:	
Basque Nationalists	130,000
Centre Group	681,047
National Front (Right Wing)	3,783,601

There had been turbulence before the election, but this turbulence increased afterwards. It was easy for the conservative forces, the Church and the Army, to persuade many Spaniards, and of course people abroad, that the disparate grouping of Socialists, Republican Left, Republican Union, Catalan Left, Communist (there were 17 of these only in a Cortes of 473), who made up the Popular Front were in no position to maintain order or to guide the destinies of Spain. They were obsessed too with the fear that what had occurred was the prelude merely of a Bolshevik take-over, a Putsch after Trotsky and Lenin, as in Russia in November, 1917. While the Left Wing, now in government, squabbled and lost control of their followers, the conservative forces in opposition, and the centre groupings, consolidated among themselves, and prepared for insurrection. The immediate cause of the outbreak, when it came, was the murder by left-wing police and civilians of the Monarchist leader Calvo Sotelo on July 13th, but it was clear that considerable preparations must have been made by the Army generals beforehand. Not all of the Army supported the Franco forces; within a few days many soldiers found themselves before his firing squads, among them seven generals.

The course that the 33 month long fratricidal war now followed was bitter and cruel in the extreme. Not only were many of Spain's finest art treasures, in the way of buildings, destroyed, (fifty churches burnt in Madrid within the first week) but civilians on both sides suffered. It is estimated that upwards of 50,000 were executed by the Nationalists in the course of the war (many more afterwards), most of them in the first weeks. All but one of the Popular Front deputies found in that half of Spain were executed. Many of these killings were carried out in the most brutal fashion. On the Government side retribution was equally swift and summary; no one can estimate the total numbers who died in the war as a whole — but it must be near half a million.

The world powers declared against intervening at an early stage, but the non-intervention pact was made a mockery of by the open participation of Italy and Germany. Both these nations contributed handsomely to Franco's victory; the Italians some 50,000 trained soldiers at one time, and the Germans upwards of 16,000 Luftwaffe and anti-tank personnel. Each of the dictators saw their future to some extent bound up with a victorious Fascist Spain, and Franco, to some extent, lived up to their hopes. At the end of the war, in March 1939, he dutifully joined them in an anti-Comintern (anti-Russia) pact. He was clever enough to stay out of World War II.

Was it the sort of war in which any foreign nation should have had an involvement even as volunteers? And could they hope — short of massive intervention like Hitler and Mussolini — to sway the issue? Passions in Spain are generations deep, and issues which might seem clear-cut abroad, were by no means as clear-cut in Andalusia, Catalonia or



Castile. The government side had most of the volunteers, some of them adventurers maybe, but most of them liberal and left-wing idealists. Those who sought service as combatants were grouped in a section of the army known as the International Brigade. The Brigade was the brainchild of Europe's communist parties (principally Maurice Thorez, the French leader) though they welcomed non-communists. The first arrivals reached Albacete in October, and from then on continued in a steady trickle from most European countries and the U.S.A., until their number built up to 18,000 (though 40,000 in all could claim to have been in the Brigade). The Soviet Union could take credit for being the inspiration for the Brigade, but in most other respects, Russia's aid to the Government of Spain was disappointing. Some 85 million dollars worth of war materials are said to have been delivered, though the Spaniards maintained that all of this was paid for in gold bullion transferred to Moscow. Stalin's cautious foreign policy was reflected at home in purges which had a disruptive effect upon left-wing people the world over. The disappearances, the confessions, the executions of his most important policy-makers and generals, including many of his principals within Spain, Oyseenko, Berzin, Gaikino, Orlov, disheartened international communism. The infighting going on between Communists and the powerful Trotskyists (POUM) even at the most critical period of the war had a debilitating effect. Was this the witches cauldron into which Frank Ryan and his comrades, Peter Daly of Wexford, R. M. Hilliard of Killarney, Michael O'Riordan of Cork, Paddy O'Daire of Donegal, Charlie Donnelly of Armagh, Kit Conway of Dublin, Dick O'Neill and Bill Henry of Belfast, Joe Monks, Alec Digges, Mick Brennan, Jack Nalty, Jim Straney, Dan Boyle, Bill Beattie and Tommy Patten of Achill — to mention only a few of them — should have thrust themselves? Or even General Eoin O'Duffy and his 650 volunteers? It is doubtful, though it must be said that none of these who survived this bitter war ever expressed the slightest tinge of regret for taking part in it. Politics in Ireland were at a loose end; for some of them there was nowhere to go but Spain. That they were heroic there was no doubt. It was an end to boasting, and for most of them an end to the seemingly endless drilling of their I.R.A. days. In this struggle for democracy, they were putting their life where their mouth was. Many of them believed that victory for the government forces in Spain would put a stop to the gallop of fascism in Europe. Maybe so, but would it really have stopped Hitler from going to war, if not in 1939, then perhaps in 1941 or 1942?

#### FEELING IN IRELAND

What was the feeling in Ireland about the war? Historically the ties between Ireland and Spain have always been strong, for religious reasons as much as the romanticism of history. The majority of the Irish were horrified and bewildered at the atrocities of the war. They were presented in a totally one-sided way as Red atrocities or Nationalists' victories by all of the newspapers north and south, with the exception of *The Belfast Telegraph*, *The Irish Press* and *The Irish Times*.

The Irish Free State was a party to the non-Intervention Pact and retained its ambassador to Madrid (later Valencia); the radio and official viewpoints therefore behaved with exemplary neutrality. Not so the Fine Gael Party and the remnants of its Blueshirt following. On 31st August, 1936, the Irish Christian Front was founded at a mass meeting called for the Mansion House, Dublin, by Mr. Paddy Belton, (father of Paddy, and uncle of Luke, the Fine Gael politicians), Dr. J. P. Brennan, the Dublin City Coroner, and Miss Aileen O'Brien. Interrupters at the meeting who shouted remarks about James Connolly were removed. It concluded with *Hail Glorious Saint Patrick and Faith of Our Fathers*. The following month there was an announcement that General O'Duffy would organise a brigade. 2,000 volunteers were sought. About the same time the Christian Front held a mass meeting in Cork. They continued to progress around the country by holding meetings in Sligo and Longford, culminating in a throng of 30,000 in College Green on 25th October. 2,000 Catholic Boy Scouts took part. President Paddy Belton declared: *The religion of Ireland is our sacred heritage and its protection demands immediate action.*

It has been said in some quarters that at this time Irish Republicans did nothing. But the official movement had its back to the wall, with almost the entire leadership locked in Arbour Hill, and the Crumlin Road, due to the concerted Fianna Fail and Stormont pressures now being exerted upon them. Donal O'Donoghue and Tomas MacCurtain were on hunger strike in July and August. Sean Glynn died in Arbour Hill in August. Mick Conway lay in the 'Joy' under sentence of death for the Egan of Dungarvan episode. In Belfast, Sean MacCool and Jim Killeen (arrested at a courtmartial in Crown Entry the previous April) were on hunger strike. An attempt to form a political movement Cumann Poblachta na h-Eireann, and to contest elections, was a dismal failure; their candidates in two bye-elections in Galway and Wexford were wiped off the map. Abroad the big Soviet trials were rumbling along; Kamenef and Zinovieff with fourteen other leading members of the Politburo, after making the most abject confessions, were shot.

The previous April, before the Spanish outbreak, Republican Congress and the Communist Party attempted to hold a meeting in College Green, but were set upon by a shrieking mob. O'Donnell, Jim Larkin Junior, Willie Gallacher, M.P., Sean Murray and Barney Conway, were down to speak. The attempt to rally the people on the high ground of the Republic had narrowed itself to a partnership of those two small groups. *Don't let the police save O'Donnell*, shouted the crowd, as 2,000 yelling young men sang hymns and surged towards him. There was no meeting. The crowds then marched off and ransacked the Congress office in Middle Abbey Street, but Congress was on its last legs, and was soon to shut up shop anyway.

But despite the bewilderment of the ordinary people about what was happening in Spain, the Blueshirt/O'Duffy/Independent line-up made it quite certain that few I.R.A. men sided with Franco. There was no "ambivalence" about this, (though pious people like Scelt and Brian O'Higgins might have had other views), and when Fr. Ramon Laborda visited Dublin in the spring of 1937, his talk in the Gaiety on behalf of the Basque people, was crowded out with Republicans. But it was certainly not a time for heroics, besides which the Movement, with the best of its young men leaking away to the International Brigade, did not wish to encourage a flood. They clamped down on volunteers going there. A total of 132 Irish (Ryan himself reported 350, counting the Belfast, Liverpool and American Irish), fought with the brigade from the first battle at Jarama, south of Madrid early in 1937, to the last skirmishes of springtime 1939. Over sixty of them died.

There is a valley in Spain called Jarama,  
It's a place that we all know too well,  
For 'tis there that we wasted our manhood,  
And most of our old age as well.

O'Duffy's 650 Irish faced them for a brief period on the opposite front, though neither side knew this. Ryan has left a colourful account of the part played by the Irish in a *History of the 15th Brigade*, published in Spain in 1938, and since republished. (While O'Duffy has told his somewhat more modest story in *Crusade in Spain*). A third of Ryan's men were killed or wounded at Jarama; he himself was hit in two places.

Paradoxically the Irish were attached to a mainly British battalion commanded by Captain George Nathan (under Kit Conway) an ex-Black and Tan soldier reputed to have been concerned in the killing of Lord Mayor George Clancy of Limerick, the former Mayor Michael O'Callaghan and another leading citizen, Joseph O'Donoghue, during curfew hours in March, 1921. This did not lead to the most amicable relations, especially when the *Daily Worker* failed to give the Irish credit they conceived to be due to them for action on the Cordoba sector of the Madrid front. Was it Irish touchiness or English upper-crust prejudice? Many of the participants these days would deny either.

One Englishman at least, Ralph Fox, had an abiding interest in Irish affairs and had written a pamphlet covering the many references by Karl Marx to Ireland. Yet something must have occurred since many of them opted for transfer to the Abraham Lincoln (US) Brigade, where they formed the James Connolly Battalion shortly afterwards.

Frank Ryan returned to Dublin for a while in 1937, and was put forward as a candidate in Dublin South Central in the General Election, of July 1937, in which Fianna Fail slipped back, barely carrying their *New Constitution* with only one third of the twenty-six counties voting in favour of it. In a statement, the British Government said that the Constitution made no fundamental alteration in the status of Eire, which name they would recognise as applying only to the twenty-six counties. (De Valera won strongly the following year, when, after recovering the Ports and terminating the Economic War, he sprung an election and was returned with an overall majority). Ryan was not elected. He received only 875 votes. Support for Republicans had sunk to an all time low, and Frank, because of the Congress split, was in no position to mobilise that support. The I.R.A. itself was passing through its ebb tide, or interregnum phase, between the "politics" of the early thirties and the "militarism" of the 1939 period. The fall of Twomey as Chief of Staff brought in succession Sean MacBride, Tom Barry and Mick Fitzpatrick to the helm before the arrival of Sean Russell on stage in April, 1938. Bodinstown 1937 was a measure of the support. Tom Barry was the speaker; there were 1,500 present where two years before that there were 30,000. Mick Fitzpatrick, who would shortly succeed Barry as Chief of Staff of the shadow army read messages from jails, north and south, holding one hundred Republicans. Frank had tried to speak in Dublin on May 11th, at an anti-Coronation meeting (Edward VIII had abdicated the previous year because of Mrs. Simpson, and George VI, his brother, was taking over instead). The I.R.A. was advertised as taking part, and, since the I.R.A. was illegal, the meeting was banned. There were scuffles with police as Barry, Ryan and others tried to address them. They moved in mercilessly and laid about them with batons. Others in front of the old Liberty Hall that night were Tadgh Lynch of Cork, Sean Keating of Kilkenny, Nora Harkin, Bobbie Edwards, Larry O'Connor, Sheila Humphries, Jimmy Hannigan, Con Lehane and many more. The girls brought some of those who had suffered from the batons up to their small flat near Parnell Square. Peadar O'Donnell arrived later, and was upset to find the flat crowded with wounded and bloodied men. The following night a much diminished meeting took place at Cathal Brugha Street — the old pitch — in which the speakers were Tom Barry, Frank, Donal O'Donoghue and Peadar Rigney. So much for those who say that the I.R.A. and Frank were irretrievably parted over Congress, and Spain. They were not; far from it. Militant Republicanism was in the marrow with Frank.

In August, twenty wounded Irishmen returned home — fourteen of them from Dublin. Things were not going well in Spain, but despite his doubts and his arm in a sling, Frank had returned there. Lying in the same bed before the College Green meeting, he had told Tom Barry of the bitchiness and the splits between the left-wing factions. *You may think things are bad with Republicans*, he said, *but you have not seen Spain. Then why go back?* said Tom. *Would you have left your men to find their own way out after Crossbarry?* replied Frank, *I will go back and bring them home.*

Highlighting the other extreme of Ireland's woe, was the death in September of ten Mayo tatie hokers in a fire at Kirkintilloch. They were from Achill, and had been doing the autumn migration since time immemorial. Merrion Street immediately appointed a committee to investigate the migration problem.

[4] See a note on Fr Michael O'Flanagan in Appendix.



## Peadar O'Donnell

*Commandant General,  
Irish Republican Army*



My mother's name was a good west Donegal one — Brigid Rogers. There was some radical tradition in her family. She herself was a strong Larkinite, which was quite unusual in a country district. There was none at all in my father's family. The national movement when it came along, simply caught us up and carried us along with it. The people that really made it are never heard of. Their names never came to light. It was a people's movement. We had no Fenian background, no Parnellite loyalty; not even a memory of moonlighting. West Donegal had not the same land problems of other areas. The patches were too small for a landlord to covet them. There was no land worth struggling for. We lived by subsistence farming, there was no cash crop. They went to Scotland for that.

I was one of a family of nine, born in February, 1893. Our farm of five acres ran straight down to the edge of the Atlantic. My father had a boat and a source of income from a lime kiln. You could survive if you were thrifty. There were nine of us; five went to America. It was my youngest brother, Barney, that eventually took over the farm.

At an early age I went on a scholarship to a teacher training college, St. Patrick's, Drumcondra. I was there from 1911 until 1913. I did not like teaching particularly — I would probably have emigrated eventually — but I was lucky enough to have an uncle, Peter Rogers, who came home from Butte, Montana, where he had been an active member of the "Wobblies", the Industrial Workers of the World, which had been founded in Chicago in 1905. He sharpened my awareness of the class struggle. It did not seem strange to me that the people I met at Liberty Hall later on, should emphasise that the real fight would begin when the middle class tried to duck out of the Republican struggle on terms that would suit them. That was what was to happen, but Labour was not ready for it and took no part in it, except the shameful assistance official Labour gave in that carnival of reaction.



## GLIMMERINGS

Student life in St. Patrick's was pretty arid so far as politics went. I saw Tom Clarke once or twice when I bought a paper in his shop. I was not aware that he was an old Fenian; it was only afterwards that I came to know that. I saw James Connolly twice, and each time he was involved in a fracas. On one occasion it was with a group of Citizen Army men in North Great Georges Street, then a fairly respectable street. There was a crowd of women jeering and calling him *the bandy-legged militia man*, because he had been in the British Army. The next time was on a fine Sunday morning outside the Zoo, in the Phoenix Park, where he used to appear regularly. Again it was a crowd of women who took exception to him appearing on a suffragette platform. They were against votes for women, as were many women at that time. They pelted him with rotten fruit, so much so that he had to retreat inside. I recognised his face from a postcard picture that I happened to see. I did not know him, and had no inclination even to make his acquaintance. My younger brother, Frank, had more political awareness than I had at that time; he had already joined the I.R.B. (Irish Republican Brotherhood), and was very much at the centre of things in West Donegal.

I had heard of Sinn Féin, but was not attracted to it. I knew little of Arthur Griffith, but I despised his attitude in the 1913 strike. His paper, *Sinn Féin*, vigorously opposed it, and opposed the food ships from England.

In 1913 I went to teach in Inishfree, an island that is now empty. It was a good fishing centre at that time. I spent some time at Derryhenny on the mainland, and later was transferred to Aranmore. It was a big, fairly well-off island off the coast; they held on to their homes there by seasonal earnings in Scotland.

I was still teaching when 1916 came. Its ripples were scarcely felt in the Rosses. It might have passed and been forgotten had not England pushed the people together with her threat of conscription. I had, as I have said, a distaste for teaching. I therefore wrote to Liberty Hall and inquired from William O'Brien if his union, the Irish Transport & General Workers' Union, had a place for me, as an organiser. I obtained a full-time post as organiser of all the Northern counties — except Donegal — at four pounds, ten shillings per week, which was actually better than my teacher's salary. I was based mainly in Derry. In that city, as you know, the main workforce has been the women in the shirt factories. There has always been high unemployment among the men. However, I felt that Derry's place was not important. Belfast was the city that mattered.

What was my impression of Bill O'Brien? I did not like him but I respected him. We regarded him as the Lenin of the Labour

Movement. The Petrograd Revolution had occurred; we admired it and looked to someone like O'Brien to lead us that way. Tom Johnson was around also. He was a socialist, a mild, but good person. He had spent his early years in Belfast, where he was an associate of James Connolly. Later, under the Free State, he became a T.D., and was the leader of the Labour Party. Labour had no influence on the course of events then or later. They should have demanded their quota of seats, as part of the inheritance won for them by Connolly, but they neither had the willpower nor the calibre of women and men, necessary to demand and to fill these positions, which they should have sought from 1918 onwards.

De Valera had said *Labour must wait*, but the reason they did not demand their place in the Independence Movement is not because of anything he had said, but because they were thinking in terms of the trade union movement. They were afraid to identify themselves with independence in case it would affect the prospects of trade unionism in the North. Tom Cassidy, chairman of the T.U.C., was an organiser for a cross-channel union. He naturally was thinking of his members too. The tragedy was that none of them understood the extraordinary grip the Republican ideal had upon the young people. Bill O'Brien and Tom Johnston kept very close to the core of the independence movement, but they did not take their place in the leadership. The movement by-passed them. One of the reasons Dublin voted Republican rather than Labour, was because the masses in Dublin are very Republican. They resented the fact that Labour had deserted the Republic. This fear, this looking back over their shoulder, all the time, has left the Labour and Trade Union movement in Ireland feeble and inept.

#### ABSENCE OF POLITICAL THOUGHT

Another tragedy was that Connolly left no successor. When he went radical nationalism died with him. The one person who could have taken his place was Cathal O'Shannon. He was, however, on the payroll of the Transport Workers' Union, and was very much under the influence of Bill O'Brien. He was a very good person, a brilliant person. He knew more of what Connolly was about than anyone I know. Had he been in the Volunteers in 1922, instead of being attached to the trade union movement, he would have played a very significant *political* part in the Army Convention of March. We were very poorly off politically at that time; we let the Republic go by default.

Early in 1919, I left my job as a trade union organiser. I became fully committed to the Volunteers. I joined No. 2 Brigade of the First

Northern Division in East Donegal. I had been a short while in an Active Service Unit, but from early 1921 I was O.C. of the Brigade. I received that appointment from Richard Mulcahy in Dublin. At the same time I met Collins. I had already expected a split in the leadership. When I returned to Donegal I raised the question with other officers of the Brigade. Griffith, I forecast, would lead the breakaway. Mulcahy, I expected, would remain on the Republican side, while Collins might find himself on the other side. Our territory ran from Malin Head and Fanad Head in the extreme north to Lifford in the south east and Glenveagh in the south west. My younger brother, Frank, was vice-brigadier of the First Brigade, while a third brother, Joe, concentrated on making bombs and explosive devices for the units.

I narrowly escaped arrest when a destroyer came into Burtonport in May and arrested our Divisional staff. It was a split second raid, commando like, but I got away. I must say I was not the military type. I realised that our task really was to build up the conscienceness of the people; to get ready for the next political push of which we were a mere manifestation. I looked upon the army as a train that must be kept upon the right track and not let go down a siding.

I always had the conviction that Arthur Griffith would duck out of the independence movement at the first opportunity, but I believed that Bill O'Brien and company would mobilise and move forward. I was horrified therefore, when I found that they too supported the Treaty, along with all the other reactionary forces. We had set up two training camps during the Truce period. One was in Glen Swilly; another at Brocderg in the Sperrins and Glenveagh. I saved the Castle from burning at the evacuation. There were training officers sent from Dublin; Tod Andrews is one that I recall. Meanwhile I was now on the Executive of the I.R.A. I wasted a lot of time running to and from Dublin. That is how I came to be in the Four Courts in June, 1922. Otherwise I would not have been there.

When the news of the Treaty came in December, I felt that was what some of us had expected; that the middle-class was getting all they wanted, namely the transfer of patronage from Dublin Castle to an Irish Parliament. The mere control of patronage did not seem to me a sufficient reason for the struggle we had been through. I therefore signed the requisition brought to me by Sam O'Flaherty, calling the senior officers together for the General Army Convention of 26th March, 1922. That was banned by Arthur Griffith, but it was held nonetheless. However, one must remember that the main opposition to the Free State within our ranks came from very dedicated men, almost religious men, like Kilroy, Tom Maguire, Pilkington, Liam Lynch and so on. All they stood for was that they would not accept the



Treaty; they had no alternative programme. They were the stuff that martyrs are made of, but not revolutionaries, and martyrdom should be avoided. We had a pretty barren mind socially; many on the Republican side were against change. Had we won, I would agree that the end results might not have been much different from what one sees today. The city-minded Sinn Féin was darkly suspicious of the wild men on the land. They were alert for any talk about breaking down estate walls. *First of all, win the war*, they said; *Bear in mind that the eyes of the world are upon us, a people fighting for pure ideals*. Pure ideals were used as a mask and a blinkers to direct the movement away from revolution. After the Treaty, had we soaked up all the leaderless people then awaiting our bidding, we could have changed the whole social structure to accommodate them. The leaders eventually, in such a movement, would have been the urban working class; though anyone who wishes to think in terms of reality in Ireland today, must base their struggle upon a worker/small farmer movement. The paradox is that the Irish Labour Party today would support the big farmer because he gives employment, against the small farmer who must depend upon the resources within his own family.

#### THE COUNTER ATTACK

To my mind, Liam Lynch and Rory O'Connor were unsuitable for the decisions now thrust upon them. Lynch was a very good person, but he did not have a revolutionary mind. He could not descend from the high ground of the Republic to the level of politics. The talk that emanated from the second convention in June was a very clever tactic that suited Free State thinking perfectly; getting some of the I.R.A. plotting an attack upon the British, while the Free State continued to consolidate; militarily stupid, politically disastrous. As he travelled south, while the Four Courts attack was in progress, his only message to us was that he was not thinking of war, but of peace. I had hoped that this attack upon us would serve as an anvil, against which the country would rear up and smash the chain around us. They would have too, if they had been organised and led properly. The Tipperary men occupied Blessington but were then ordered back by Oscar Traynor. He was only O.C. Dublin, and was not empowered to do that. Paddy Daly, who led the attack on the Four Courts, told me that he had not the slightest hope that he could reach it, had he been opposed. Instead we made soldiers of the Free State Army by putting up a show of fight while retreating away from them. That gave them confidence, and added immensely to the numbers of youngsters, including demobbed English, who now joined them.

Paddy O'Brien was O.C. in the Four Courts, a very promising lad. It

was his misfortune that the Executive of the I.R.A. was in the same building. That undermined his authority; he could not prepare its defence properly, and when the attack came he could not undertake the break-out actions he would have liked to take. The result was that after three days, 180 of us were taken prisoner, and all but five who escaped, ended up in Mountjoy shortly afterwards.

Most of the prisoners were Dublin men, and their folk soon crowded around the goal gates demanding visits which were refused. As our top windows overlooked the roadway, crowds gathered opposite, and when a flag or a hand was pushed out through a broken pane, they cheered lustily. We reacted to that promptly by quarrying out the window frames so that we could lean our trunks well out and call across to the crowd. It was extraordinary how, amid the chorus of bellowing, one could aim words at a special person in the throng and snatch at the reply. Even while we talked, the noise of the rifle fire came up from the city where the fight was still going on.

Diarmuid O'Hegarty, Governor of the jail, and later Secretary of the Executive Council of the Free State Government, issued an ultimatum that prisoners must remove themselves from the windows or be shot. Soldiers were lined up and volleys were fired at the defiant prisoners. Most of the shots were deliberately wide. We gave in, however, and came down from the windows; in later days it was not healthy to reappear as the Stater soldiers were only too willing to take a pot shot.

We had been placed in 'D' wing of the prison. No sooner were we all together than we commenced burrowing through the brick walls from cell to cell. This made discipline impossible for the Free Staters, though it also made privacy impossible for those of us who occasionally wanted to retreat into it. Shortly after that both sides concluded a temporary and short-lived truce. We would move into 'C' wing, where the cell walls were still inviolate, and where those of us who valued a short spell of privacy could enjoy it. But we did not want absolute privacy, nor did we relish the thought of being *locked* in. We put our cell doors out of action by the simple expedient of wedging the Bible between the hinged door and the frame. That made it impossible to close it into its rebate, and only a very big job could rectify it.

Rory O'Connor, Liam Mellows, Joe McKelvey, Tom Barry and I, all members of the I.R.A. Executive, came together a good deal as a sort of camp council. Barry's only thought all the time was to escape. Perhaps he had a premonition of what could happen to him if he remained. Actually we all had the notion to escape, and had begun to dig a tunnel. But Barry could not wait, and finally made a bid for freedom in a Free State Army coat. He was within an ace of success when they copped him. So they moved him to Gormanstown Camp;



and that was their undoing, because he walked straight across the camp, on his first day there, and crawled out under a few convenient loose loops of barbed wire on the other side, the blind side, when no one happened to be looking. Barry was like that, like lightning. If he saw a chance, he took it. Who was it said the Staters had not yet learned to make barbed wire entanglements properly? More and more prisoners came trooping in as the weeks went by. The four wings of the prison were given to us, A wing, B, C and D, all radiating from the granite-flagged Circle, where the triangle of Brendan Behan's song, "The Ould Triangle" still hangs. Anyone who has been in the Joy knows the military simplicity of its layout. A warder standing in the Circle can see to the furthestmost end of all the wings.

Paudeen O'Keeffe, formerly Secretary of Sinn Féin, was now the Deputy Governor, under the recently appointed Phil Cosgrave, wayward brother of the new state's Prime Minister. A tubby, little man in a Free State captain's uniform, he was more a figure of fun for most of us than one that we could take seriously. Flashes of crude humour, alternated with curses and epithets, from him. One night, after a count, when we had presented two prisoners whom heretofore we had kept hidden, he approached the six-foot, two-inch Andy Cooney, our O.C., and shrieked: *Jasus, Cooney, which of ye had twins?*

It was his task to rouse Rory O'Connor, Liam Mellows, Dick Barrett and Joe McKelvey on the morning of the 8th December, and inform them that they were about to be executed as another batch in a long line of hostages, now being slain as reprisals up and down the State. It cannot have been a task he relished, even for one like him sold body and soul to the Free State. It was the first experience in his prison of a reprisal execution. The executions were decided upon by the Free State Cabinet on the afternoon of the 7th December, following the shooting of a Dáil member, Sean Hales, and the wounding of another, Padraic Ó Máille, as a solemn warning to those engaged in the conspiracy of assassination against the representatives of the Irish people. In *The Gates Flew Open*, my account of these times, I say in the introduction that I have been tempted to include the account by one who was present at the Cabinet Meeting, which set out what passed there from the first stunned silence that met the proposal that Dick Barrett, Joe McKelvey, Liam Mellows and Rory O'Connor be shot, through the tough resistance of certain Ministers, down to the final silence that let the proposal through. Few among those who were senior officers in the I.R.A. at the time, I added would go wrong in naming who made the proposal, but I doubted very much if anyone among them would be right, even fifth guess, in naming who raised the first voice in support of it. You now ask me who these men were?



Mulcahy proposed it, and Eoin MacNeill(1) seconded it. He was extremely bitter. The person who held out most on the thing was Kevin O'Higgins.(2)

#### EXECUTIONS

Dick Barrett was a very likeable person. So little has been written about him that I felt I should make up for it in my book. Loveable — the most loveable of men. (we had no inhibitions about our adjectives) — was what I said of him then. He had been on his way to London to attempt a rescue of Dunne and O'Sullivan, who were under sentence of death for the assassination of Sir Henry Wilson.(3) On the night of the ultimatum to the Four Courts, he turned aside and entered it. That was to be his undoing. Barrett's was a keen, searching mind with a strong conspiratorial genius. He was easily the most dangerous, to the individual members of the Free State Cabinet, of all the minds in C Wing. He had been very close to Collins, and told a few of us on two or three occasions, that it was very unlikely that he would be *left live*. He once gave an account of a talk between himself and Collins at which Collins had stated his plans in detail; he would operate a *dark hand*, and according as undesirables pushed their way forward, the dark hand would assassinate them. From Barrett I got a picture of Collins that always made him a tragedy to me. Without any guidance except his own turbulent nationalism, with the weakness for intrigue and conspiracy that secret societies breed, he confused the conquest with the mere occupation of the country. He failed to recognise that military occupation was merely to make imperial exploitation possible, and so he guaranteed to safeguard the exploiting interests, if the soldiers were withdrawn, without recognising that he was thus making himself a bailiff for the Conquest. He confused the bellowing of the group who were leaving office with imperial resentment, and he mistook the cheering of the new throng of office seekers with the tramp of the national masses returning into possession of their inheritance. When British soldiers marched out of Athlone, and Sean McKeon came riding in on a gun carriage the British had loaned him, Collins huzzaed with *The Irish Independent*:

"Ireland's Won — Athlone is Taken"

He emerged from the Tan struggle with the outlook of a 'Fenian Home Ruler' and the code of a tinker swapping donkeys at a fair. I questioned Barrett a good deal about Collins; his knowledge of him was unusual for he had been very close, sharing the same lodgings for lengthy periods, and their minds had the same deep conspiratorial instinct, but informed in Barrett's case with a keen intellect. He was immensely popular with us.

Little has been written of Joe McKelvey. He was a Belfast man of Donegal stock. He was sturdy in build, of enormous strength and reckless courage. He was an unyielding opponent, but not a dangerous enemy for he was incapable of deep hatred. He was predestined to be a martyr in a revolutionary movement that failed, for he would not dodge and he could not bend. It was around these days that *The Gadfly* was being read in C Wing. It is a tale of Italian revolution with a ghastly execution scene. This book made such a deep impression on McKelvey that he often commented on it and expressed the hope that if ever he had to face the firing party, his killing would be more efficiently carried out than in the case of the Gadfly. At the end of a talk I had with him that evening — we had heard of the shooting in Dublin that day, though for us it was just like any other day in jail — he rolled over and leaning from his bed, picked up the copy of *Gadfly* from the pile that lay beside him, *God, I hope they don't mess up any of our lads this way*, he remarked, as he glanced again at the cover. He was to get time to remember that next morning.

But there was no impending sense of doom. Why should there be? We were all 'clean'. We had been in the Joy five months and could not have taken part in policy-making outside. A tunnel was approaching us from a house in Glengariff Parade, and we were all keyed up for that. We expected a rod to pop up in the exercise yard any day. Mellows was, intellectually speaking, ready for it too; he had drafted his *Notes From Mountjoy*, and although these were only the bare bones of a social policy, they showed that the glimmerings of a successor to James Connolly was at last present in our midst. No, that evening, things proceeded as always. I played two rubbers of bridge with Barrett, Tom MacMahon and Andy Cooney. We had no cigarettes; the three of them shared short jerks upon a butt. About eight o'clock I went into a debate — *Women in Industry — Equal Pay for Equal Work*; there were about twelve present. Nothing memorable was said, I looked up and saw Barrett at the top landing. He was leaning and looking away out like a countryman gazing off upon a wet day, or in the shade of a fine summer's evening. As I passed Mellows' door, I told him a *Mutt and Jeff* joke. He chuckled as he related it to McKelvey.

They were not shot until after eight thirty in the morning. A chaplain was working upon Mellows to obtain his contrition, before giving him absolution. I always associate that sort of annoyance with the forcible feeding that killed Thomas Ashe. Shortly after that they were led out. The girls in the women's part of Mountjoy had been told to expect an execution. After that first volley, they listened in silence. They counted nine single shots.(4) McKelvey had time to remember the Gadfly. Years after, when I was out again, I said to Paudeen O'Keeffe:

*There is a story you must tell, the last hours of the four. Says he: I don't know it. I came in late, about one o'clock, went to bed in the same room as Phil Cosgrave. I was wakened up with a flashlight in my face. I was given the names of these four men. I went along and brought them out. When I returned to the room with Phil, we found two bottles of whiskey on the table. That is all I remember of the events of that morning.* Eight years after, I was on the top of a Dublin tram and saw there a military policeman whom I knew had been on duty. Had he witnessed the shooting? He had. He gave me this little detail. As Barrett walked forward from the jail door, accompanied by the other three, he struck up *The Top of Cork Road*. It was so like him for courage. He had a poor voice, but he was going to liberate the only thing left to him, and throw a *dubhshlán* in the teeth of the enemy.

After the removal of Andy Cooney to a prison camp, I was appointed O.C. Within months I was moved with a batch to Tintown No. 1, on the Curragh, where my brother, Joe, was a prisoner. There were 600 there already. Again I was made O.C. The one really memorable feature of life in that camp was that we had a rule that everyone must be out of bed by 8 a.m. and it stuck.

We had done miserably in the 1922 election and no wonder. A year later we bettered our position by eight seats. Some of us prisoners were elected to a Dail that we would not sit in. I was returned for my native Tirconail. It was really fantastic that, after a military defeat and with our best people in jail, the country responded so strongly. We went half wild with delight. They were whacked; we hadn't lost. Tiredness was cast off like an old coat and a new enthusiasm sparkled everywhere. We felt that release was now a remote thing. There was too much resistance left in the country to risk letting us loose.

I was now twenty-one months in various bits of jails; back to the Joy for some months, then on to Finner in Donegal, where I was held as some kind of a hostage. It was nothing new for an O'Donnell to be held as a hostage. I was there, I knew, because my brother, Frank, kept a flicker of Republicanism smouldering like the *griosach* on the hills of Tirconail. And if I escaped, my younger brother, Joe, would be brought a prisoner from Newbridge in my place. The period of vengeance and terrorism was on. They would strike at Joe more readily than they would strike at me. Being killed is a painful process which I would have hated to pass on to Joe. No, I would stick it out, despite the "no books" rule and the bleak military police who searched my person daily. One thing I could do, and I did. I got a note out to Frank with a list of people appended; *Shoot them if they shoot me*. My future wife, Lile, went a step further. Presenting herself one day in Dublin at the head-office of the Labour Party, she got an interview — as a Miss l'Estrange — with Tom Johnston, its secretary. Once upon a



time, he had helped us write the Democratic Programme of the First Dail, but that was four years and a bit ago. These days he had copper-fastened the Staters with his *last bob on the State* speech, that we regarded as a direct incitement to further executions. Leaning forward, and peeling off a glove as she did so, she whispered: *I called to tell you, Mr. Johnston, that you will be shot if Peadar O'Donnell is murdered in Finner.* I lived to tell the tale, but who knows?

There were hundreds of hostages being held from Drumboe to Tralee. Between hostages and executions, I have no doubt that it helped snuff out the Civil War. What will for fighting there was in Republicans; was broken by the ironclad authority of their opponents.

What resistance was left, we nearly broke ourselves, by our decision to have a mass hunger-strike. No one was ordered on to it, but then no one felt they could stay off it. It started on October 10th in Mountjoy, to which I had returned, and went on for forty one days. Forty one days is a long time to be hungry. There is an idea abroad that after ten or twelve days the hunger is dulled. I do not think that is so. I was hungry for thirty days, and even after the forty first day, when it was called off, you should have seen me let down the first egg flip.

#### FREEDOM

All the time, even on hunger strike, I was obsessed with the desire to escape. I escaped on the 16th March, 1924, from the Curragh. It was ten months after the Civil War; ten months after the "Dump Arms". *Military victory must be allowed to rest for the moment with those who have destroyed the Republic*, as De Valera said. His tactic was in effect: *Dump the arms and go home, like the youngsters did after Vinegar Hill, and let them do their damndest.* And that is exactly what the I.R.A. did. There never was an end to that struggle. It may be said I was due for release anyway, but even if I knew I could go tomorrow I would rather escape today.

I was then stationed at Harepark camp on the Curragh, *the dregs of the Republic, the hard core*, the Staters would have called us. The last few hundred of the original eleven thousand they had mopped up. Anyway, about that escape; I left my hut about three o'clock, wearing Dr. Comer's brown boots, Ned Bofin's brown leggings and a green top coat and peaked cap. I walked to the prison gates and they were flung open. The first set and then the second. I headed off in the dark to the south east. Two days later I was hiding under the rafters of Tony Woods' house at 131 Morehampton Road, when police came across the roofs, searching for Free State Army mutineers. It was a change for them to be hunted, not me.

From March 1924 until March 1934, I was on the Executive — the twelve man body — and for most of that time, the seven man Army Council of the I.R.A. I had been editor of *An tOglach*, the Army newsheet. In April, 1926, I was appointed editor of the weekly *An Phoblacht*, founded by De Valera in 1925. Its first issue contained a signed article from President De Valera, an appeal by Maud Gonne on behalf of eighty prisoners held in Irish and English jails, articles by Hannah Sheehy-Skeffington, Fr. Michael O'Flanagan and others. We were not parochial; we turned our minds to other nations, to happenings in the world of art, literary criticism and the theatre. We welcomed O'Casey's *Silver Tassie* when the Abbey rejected it, and we praised the new technique of Jack Yeats, when the art world would scarcely pay twenty pounds for his pictures. We were hunted and harried all the time; our "library" was preserved only by being kept in a secret room at Marlborough Road.

In 1926 Fianna Fail was founded by De Valera. Now others can say what they like, but I always found him a reasonable man, a man I could talk to. They took all the radical and worthwhile elements from Sinn Féin, leaving a minority of conservatives behind. My policy as editor of *An Phoblacht* thereafter was a response to this. I knew there was more radical content in Fianna Fail than there was in any other organisation.

You ask about some of the personalities of those days. Countess Markievicz was really at home in any company. She could listen to a docker talking his language while she spoke back in hers. She never blanched no matter what expressions he used. Mick Price was a man given to great shifts. When his mother died, because of Church attitudes in the past, he refused to enter the building. The next thing he was O.C. Dublin, and every company had to salute any church they passed.

Frank Ryan was a very genial character, very popular with the Dublin crowd; a great man on Armistice Day, the 11th November. David Fitzgerald and I wrote most of the documents for Saor Eire. I threw my whole weight behind it, though I realised any movement that did not have a working class vanguard could not achieve much. Saor Eire was the innocence of the countryman rather than revolutionary sense. I put forward the idea of a Republican Congress at an Army Convention held in a hotel in Glendalough in 1932. Nobody supported me.

#### ON REVOLUTION

My viewpoint when I returned to West Donegal, in late 1925, and discovered the threats made to put the bailiff in on the small farms who had withheld payment of their annuities since 1919, was that this was a

point of rallying. Here was a tax directly favourable to Britain. If you could get the people to resist this, you could drag the Free State Army into warfare against the people, and they would be bound to lose. But I could not get our Army Executive to take part, though I used *An Phoblacht* vigorously. Moss Twomey was closer to me than any of the rural men. The thing that held him back was that he was a great organiser, and the unity of the organisation was all important to him. My only constant support on these issues was from George Gilmore.

Fianna Fail did not openly support us either, until much later. Sean Lemass said to me at the bottom of Grafton Street: *Don't you see that we stand to gain from your organisation so long as we cannot be accused of starting the turmoil.* When eventually De Valera was dragged on to our platform in Ennis in 1931, I was immensely pleased. I was glad to let Fianna Fail take control of it. It was quite clear to me that, in the absence of I.R.A. support, our small minority would be crucified. But I was conscious that I was handing away a trump card.

I realised when Fianna Fail came to power in 1932 that the I.R.A. had no meaning as an armed force. They could offer so many concessions to the Republican viewpoint that it was bound to blur the issues that still divided us. But it would reinforce more than ever my early belief that a government was permitted in Dublin only so long as it remained a bailiff for the Conquest.

In the autumn of 1931, the I.R.A., under Cosgrave pressures, considered again an appeal to arms. It was clear to me after the victory of Fianna Fail in February, 1932, that any such action would have been misunderstood. We, therefore, supported Fianna Fail in 1932 and 1933, but from separate platforms. I now resolved that the structure of the I.R.A. must be changed so that we could mobilise all the forces for independence. That was our inspiration in founding Republican Congress. To your question about the split which occurred in Congress in Rathmines in September, 1934, on the Workers' Republic issue, I think now that I made a mistake. I realised that as an objective, it was a wrong slogan, but I think I should have let them have their way. Support could have been obtained from the grass roots. The backwardness of the British Trade Union movement, then and now, has a lot to do with the situation in Ireland. Somewhere out the road of the future, the English Monarchy will go in the eventual revolution of Britain. With it, will go the feudal structure of North East Ulster, and the unity of the country will be attained. It is an illusion to suppose that you can have a peaceful society under the capitalist order — just by improving social welfare — that is nonsense. Until that is realised, there can be no hope of a revolution here. If, however, any of the West European powers, France or Germany, went communist, it could pull down the whole structure here. *From each according to his ability;*



*to each according to his needs*, is the slogan. We are a long way from that. There are two factors always in a successful revolutionary situation, the subjective factor — which was good in 1916 — and the objective factor; namely the forces opposed to you, which was bad. Lenin's leadership provided a sound subjective factor, and with retreating armies and a broken front, he had a perfect objective factor as well.

Early in 1922, Republicans had the ball at their feet, the right objective situation, but the subjective aspect, namely the leadership failed. The growth of the working class factor in the world will bring about a change to the Russian and Cuban pattern. That is coming objectively.

In 1962, I wrote to Dan Breen about that. I said, *Dan, with all this talk about the Americans in Vietnam, there should be an Irish voice in the chorus. The only two people in this country, who can be called on is yourself and myself.* Very modestly we called ourselves, *The Irish Voice on Vietnam*. I went to Dan with a copy of the protest letter we were to hand in to the American Embassy. I commenced to read it. He stopped me abruptly: *What are you doing?* said he; *Sure any bloody letter you sign, I'll sign.*

#### REFERENCES

1 By an extraordinary coincidence Eoin MacNeill was present in Cross Avenue, Blackrock, on the morning of July 9th, when Kevin O'Higgins was assassinated. He scribbled the number of a suspect car in his diary. O'Higgins was brought to his home where he had time to dictate his will to MacNeill before he expired.

*Irish Times* 10-7-1927

2 Kevin O'Higgins was a nephew of Tim Healy, the acid tongued parliamentarian and first Free State Governor General. O'Higgins was an ex-Maynooth boy, showing great forensic talent. Before the Truce he had been a diehard Republican. His father, the local doctor in Stradbally, but a strong Free Stater, was assassinated in the hallway of his home in 1923. The three who shot Kevin were Billy Gannon, Archie Doyle and Tim Coughlan, all Dubliners.

3 An assassination ordered and directed by Michael Collins, before he became a Free State Cabinet Minister. The attack on the Four Courts was precipitated by the arrest of Ginger O'Connell by MacBride and O'Malley in retaliation for the arrest of Les Henderson following a raid on Ferguson's Motors in Baggot St. The British had already decided it should be attacked, but their hand was stayed by Gen. Macready. See Sheila Lawlor 1983 *Britain and Ireland 1914-1921*.

4 Account of Sheila Humphreys, Bean Uí Dhonnchadha. McKelvey's father had been in the R.I.C. stationed at Springfield Road, Belfast.

## Maire Comerford



My family hail from Rathdrum in Co. Wicklow. My father, James Comerford, was co-owner with his brother, Owen, of Comerford's Mills, upon which the present day grain stores are sited. There was no politics in our home, absolutely none. My mother was an Esmonde from Wexford. Her father was a V.C. in the British Army, an honour received from the Crimean War of 1854. When he returned to Ireland, a niche was made for him in the Royal Irish Constabulary, and shortly after that he was promoted Deputy Chief Inspector. Much of his time thereafter was spent in Belfast, which perhaps accounts for my interest in that city. The riots and pogroms which have been a constant feature of warfare against Catholics there were only then beginning. My grandfather, being a Catholic, was accused by bigoted Orange leaders of having secret Fenian sympathies. His family were members of a branch of the Esmondes, a minor tier of the Anglo Irish Catholic aristocracy of those days. I did not agree with their politics, and I was delighted when we beat them much later in Sinn Féin.

The Comerfords came originally from Ballinakill in Laois. There is a '98 monument there, the top name upon which is a Comerford. Our people moved from there, more than a hundred and fifty years ago, to Rathdrum where they built a mill upon the Avonmore. They opened another mill further up the same river at Laragh; in those days, with horse-drawn transport, mills had to be conveniently located. They were extremely successful, building a very fine residence, and finding time even to invent more advanced milling machinery, the rights of which they sold. The invention, I was told, was concerned with balancing the great stones used in the grinding process. I have put material about these inventions in the National Library.

Parnell was a contemporary to within a year or so of my father. They were personal friends. He used to drop into the mill and would express envy at how engrossed they were in their work, and how removed their

world was from the hurly burly of political affairs. Parnell had come down from Cambridge. He was a captain of the local cricket team on which my father played. He could be a difficult and dictatorial captain. That was before he entered politics. The Parnell residence at Avondale adjoins Rathdrum. It was always a pleasant walk on a Sunday, for people to stroll there from the village, up the long tree-lined avenue, hoping to catch a glimpse of Parnell.

With the quickening tempo of industrial advance that now began, my father's affairs did not prosper. The European roller grinding method came in, followed by the introduction of bleaching agents for whitening the flour. My father disapproved strongly of this process and refused to use it. Meanwhile our Rathdrum mill was burned. Insurance was rare in those days and he did not have any. This slide into recession commenced about the time that he married in the nineties of the last century. The result was that when I was born in 1893, I came into a home that had already slipped below the high tide of prosperity.

#### A SECRETARIAL CAREER

My father died when I was sixteen, leaving four children, three of them younger than I. He had been a partner only in the mill, and had few other assets. My mother had to go to law to obtain her share; the amount realised in the end being only four thousand pounds. When father was alive, she had half of that, a comfortable sum then, for her annual housekeeping. I was therefore the first of the Esmondés to be told that, when I grew up, I would have to go and earn my own living. What she had in mind was a brilliant secretarial career, with somebody important, where I would have an opportunity of meeting very influential people. It was very advanced thinking for those times.

My mother had been lady tennis champion of Ireland for a few years. She knew many people. Around the year 1911 therefore, I was packed off to London to the recently opened school of a Miss Gradwell. This lady came from Co. Meath. She was a black, bitter Protestant. For shorthand dictation, she read out to the class excerpts from the speeches of Sir Edward Carson, who was then roundly attacking the Liberal Government's policy of granting Home Rule to Ireland. Presuming that I, being a Catholic, must disagree with these, she would turn on me and in a fury ask: *What have you to say to that?* But I would have nothing to say. I was quite ignorant of politics. Father had never spoken of Parnell, and everything of that time, Home Rule, Sinn Féin, the Gaelic League, had passed me by.

Miss Gradwell's constant prodding however rankled me. I resolved to read something of Irish history. I went to the best bookshop in London and bought a whole lot of volumes. I have them still — Lecky's



History, T. D. Sullivan's "Story of Ireland", a wonderful book by Paul Dubois, and others. I stayed in a ladies' club in Eccles Place. They were an extraordinary lot there; the conversation was forever centering upon table-turning and spiritualism. One of these ladies asked me once if I would mind posing for her in the nude. Another sought to read my hand, but stopped immediately. *It is the most unlucky hand I have seen in a lifetime*, she declared. As a result, I was driven to take refuge in my room, in my books. I read them during every spare moment that I had. I had my bicycle with me. I would cycle along Park Lane and gaze at the great mansions, many of them built with the proceeds of Irish rents. I resolved to leave London, throw over the idea of becoming a secretary there, and return to Ireland. It was spontaneous combustion; I was feeling more deeply about national things; I had no one to influence me save my books.

My uncle, T. L. Esmonde, was a founder of the Wexford meat industry. He was drowned later on the mailboat *Leinster* when it was torpedoed on October 10th 1918. We lived in his house, supported by him I suppose. My mother had not much money. It was the heyday of Horace Plunkett's co-operative movement, and of the *United Irishwomen*, forerunners of the *Irish Countrywomen's Association*. I got heavily involved with both of these.

There was far less dividing Plunkett and the nationalist movement, James Connolly and the cultural revival, than one imagines. Connolly wrote much of co-operation, and Plunkett advised his followers to join the Gaelic League. My uncle was keen on Plunkett. I still have a copy of his little pamphlet *Noblesse Oblige*, which advised the landlords and the big landowners to promote co-operation. He was pleading with them to put their knowledge at the disposal of the new rural land owning community, now fast growing up. How deeply Imperial Plunkett could be, came out afterwards, when he established his league for promoting Dominion Home Rule, and later still when he supported the Free State. He was however, with Lord Midleton, Lord Monteagle, Stephen Gwynn and others, a consistent opponent of the partition of Ireland. He knew it would emasculate the Protestants of the South, leaving them a dwindling and dying community, which it has done. At that time there was one-third the number of Protestants in the South as there are in the North. In many parts of rural Ireland, in Cork, the Midlands, Dublin, as well as the Ulster counties, there were thriving communities with a full church on Sundays. Not so today.

#### SUPPORTERS OF REDMOND

Social life in rural Wexford was very limited at that time. Dancing was frowned upon by the clergy, though they were much more lenient

where céilís were concerned. The *United Irishwomen* therefore tried to brighten up the countryside in other ways, by holding craft classes, shows, céilís, prizes for baking and so on. We helped in all that.

Fr. Sweetman had started his school at Mount St. Benedict, near Gorey. He was forward-looking in religion as well as in education. My brothers were sent to it. The Great War had commenced at this time and the Germans had over-run little Belgium. We were totally obsessed by the fate of Belgium to the exclusion of everything else. We used to go out to the mountain seeking spagnum moss, as we had been told it was a good substitute for cotton wool, of which there was a shortage. Belgian refugees arrived in Wexford. I spent some time looking after them. At that time Sean Etchingham was in Courtown and, although a Republican, he was a great friend of my mother. We were apolitical, although we supported Home Rule. We read accounts in the newspapers of the plea by John Redmond that September at Woodenbridge for the Volunteers to go out and fight. I followed the war keenly in the articles of Hilaire Belloc, then a war correspondent. When, therefore, a fortnight later, Redmond announced that he was bringing Home Rule to Wexford town, I persuaded my mother and one of my aunts to squeeze into the excursion train with me, and go there. We were both on his platform. I have still a picture of myself on Redmond's platform with a big white hat on.

Down in the crowd Sean Etchingham, Sean T. O'Kelly and Greg Murphy were busily handing out anti-recruiting literature. When the crowd realised what it was, they turned sour and pushed them away. I could see this happening from the platform; I little knew they would be my friends afterwards. They had come to Wexford that day, bringing some of the Kilcoole guns with them. My brother joined the British Army, the Munster Fusiliers, at the age of seventeen. He was wounded at Suvla Bay in April, 1915, and returned on a troopship to Ireland. There must have been adverse reports about me already, possibly from a Major Richards who blew in from the North, and was a Master of Foxhounds locally, but one whom I considered might be an intelligence officer. Anyway my brother was asked about me. He was later transferred to the Inniskilling Dragoons. Somehow he was never able to get the promotion he considered himself entitled to. He survived the war and resided in England until his death.

My mother meanwhile, with her dwindling fortune, rented a house in Courtown, with the intention of having there a private school for girls. She was encouraged in this by Fr. Sweetman, who hoped that some of the sisters of his pupils might go there. She gave me the option of going off finally as a secretary, or remaining as a teacher with her. I decided I would do that. I was all set therefore for a quiet life henceforth in a backwater of County Wexford, when something happened which, not alone changed my life, but altered the course of the nation.

## DUBLIN IN EASTER WEEK

I had wanted to see Dublin again. Easter was approaching. I arranged therefore to spend the holidays with a cousin of my mother, Maud Mansfield, who lived alone in a big house in Rathgar. She was crippled with arthritis and could do only light housework. A daily maid visited her. I was invited out on Easter Monday to other cousins who lived in Blackrock. About ten o'clock on that morning, I left the house in Rathgar and travelled on the tram city-wards, intending to catch the Blackrock tram at Nassau Street. Near the top of Grafton Street I saw Volunteers and soldiers of the Citizen Army marching up. They were followed by officers on a side car. They were the party, whom I later learned, occupied Stephens Green and the College of Surgeons under Michael Mallin and Countess Markievicz. Of course I had no inkling of what was going to happen. Volunteer parades were frequent enough. It was a bright cheery day with people moving about in their springtime best.

I continued on my way. I got my tram to Blackrock, where I had lunch with the family. When I emerged to return at about three o'clock, I found people all gathered in knots.

I did not know my way about Dublin. I could return only the way that I had come. This would not bring me across the centre of the city, but it would convey me close to it. *The streets of Dublin are running with blood*, I heard some say. Everyone was being a neighbour to everyone else; some were tipsy. When they heard where I lived, they told me, *oh you can't go home that way*, and directed me through Clonskeagh. But I knew only the way the tram had brought me, so I walked back that way, right into Lower Mount Street, and along Merrion Square to Grafton Street.

Mount Street that day was quiet. The posts outlying from Bolands, that were later the scene of such bloody activity, had not been occupied. People were standing around doors on the south side of the street. A soldier was moving cautiously along the other side; they shouted to him, *you will be shot*, although I don't think there was much danger.

At Trinity railings, I could hear shooting as I moved along. At the bottom of Grafton Street, I headed up that street. There were plenty of people still about. At the corner of Wicklow Street, they were glued against the wall, peeping out, up and down the street. I came to Stephens Green. There was a barricade below the College of Surgeons. The Volunteers were inside the railings. I made my way along the North, East and the South sides of the Green, as far away from the College as possible.

I was becoming more and more curious. When I came the whole way round to the bottom of Harcourt Street, I went over and spoke to the



sentry there. He was a young fellow. He told me quite a lot about it. He told me that Countess Markievicz was inside. Now I knew a certain amount of Irish history, though I had always been taught that a successful rebellion against England was impossible. When however you saw the flag of an Irish Republic flying for the first time on the College of Surgeons, and you spoke to a young Volunteer of your own age, it began to seem quite different. He said, would I like to come in? I thought of my poor old cousin, so I said weakly, *No; but I will be back in the morning.*

We got a side car at the top of Harcourt Street and went home from there. But each morning after that, I made Mass the excuse for getting out again. I made my way once more towards the centre. At Harcourt Street I saw where Margaret Skinnider had been wounded. I bumped into an old cousin of mine in a doorway there. She was one of the Decies of Westmeath. A cultured Victorian, far above our standard of living, she knew many of the leadership, Pearse, Plunkett and Thomas MacDonagh. Crouched in the doorway, she went into enormous detail about their lives, their achievements and their literary work. They were Separatists and I had never known them. I was lapping up all this information while she wept openly for them. *Goodbye forever*, she seemed to say, to people she considered were betraying the Empire. At the same time it was my first introduction to them. It was a very funny experience. I never met her again.

I continued cautiously around the Green. I saw soldiers bring a machine-gun into the Shelbourne Hotel. There was a dead horse on the road. I went down Kildare Street, and continued on until I reached O'Connell Bridge. There was a large jittery group there. Then we all moved over, but someone came out of the G.P.O. and waved us back. Next I saw the green flag on Liberty Hall. I can still remember funny flashbacks from that day, like the large red plush three-piece suite, sitting incongruously outside a shop window, where someone had been interrupted in the act of looting it.

I was scouting thus every day, until my shoes wore out. Some days I met women carrying sacks of things, very tired looking women. I helped a few of them. While talking to them, I heard of the killings by the British Army around North King Street. That was away from where we were, but news like that travels fast. Food was becoming scarce. Maud Mansfield asked me to accompany this old neighbour to Bewleys, in the hope of obtaining some butter. She was denouncing everything that was happening as we walked along, so I just had to keep my peace. Bewleys at that time had their farm at the end of Bushy Park Road, where there is a cul de sac now, overlooking the north bank of the Dodder. I had said to her, purely to make conversation, that my mother would love to have a cow. We had no sooner entered

the dairy, than she addressed Mr. Ernest Bewley, who was there in a white coat and with a very red face: *This young lady would like to buy a cow*. He rubbed his hands briskly, as though this was an everyday request; *Please go around to the rere*, he said, *and my steward will show you the cows*. So I was conducted around, and for the next twenty minutes had to spend my time looking at cows.

I caught a train back to Gorey on the Monday or Tuesday. It was one of the first, and it brought what reports there were of the Rising. I was going along by Cooks Arcade in the main street, when I was approached by people anxious for news. *We heard you were in the thick of it*, they said; I was full of it all by this time. I told them of the killings in North King Street, laying great stress upon the defencelessness of the people there. There was a lady on the outskirts. She rushed forward: *They should all be killed, executed, shot*, she shouted. She was Lady Errington, widow of a former British Ambassador in Rome who had connived successfully against the Land League. From that moment, the people I had known, with only a handful of exceptions, ceased to speak to me. I was a political outcast and I found myself completely cut off.

From the time I returned to Gorey, my only thought was to get back somehow and join the Movement. The executions which now followed swiftly, heightened my resolve. As soon as I could, I joined the local branch of Sinn Féin, where I found people already flocking into it. One of the people I was concerned with at that time was Sean Etchingham. He had been out in Easter Week in Enniscorthy, he was later Minister for Fisheries in the Dail, and he stayed with the Republic in the Civil War, or as I prefer to call it, *the Counter Revolution*.

I had left Wexford and returned to Dublin shortly before the great election of December 1918 was won by Sinn Féin. We worked might and main for that. Roger Sweetman, our local candidate, was elected. I obtained a post meanwhile with Alice Stopford Green, the historian; it was a post that gave me time to play a minor part in the people's revolution. I did not remain long as we had too many arguments. I was in the Round Room of the Mansion House on January 21st 1919, on the day that *Ireland's Declaration of Independence* was read in Irish and English and passed unanimously by the assembled thirtyseven members.(1)

Significantly, for me afterwards, neither Eamonn De Valera nor Arthur Griffith were present. Both were in prison, although De Valera escaped from Lincoln Jail two weeks later, and Arthur Griffith was released shortly after that. I often wonder would we have been allowed adopt such a forthright Declaration of Independence, coupled with the Democratic Programme, had they been present.(2)

I had no full-time post in either Sinn Féin or Cumann na mBan but



I participated to the full henceforward in all their activities. I oscillated as a worker and a courier in the principal offices, or to and fro between the military and political leadership in Dublin and surrounding areas. In this way I came to know many of the leadership.

#### COLLINS AND THE CASTLE

Cathal Brugha stayed above ground most of the time. He was on the run, but he managed to stay at his business as a trade representative. He did not accept any salary from the Dail. His office was along the quays. He rode a Pierce bicycle, an Irish-made one. Collins rode a high Lucania. They all rode bicycles and moved fairly freely. Brugha was very kind, humble and gentle, but he was a disaster as an administrator. He was accommodating however when it came to finding a place for him to stay. Mrs. Humphreys told me that, unlike Richard Mulcahy, who, for security reasons, wanted a new place every week. But such places could not be found. He was, therefore, very difficult. He did not like other people on the run staying in the same place. Brugha however would not mind.

The British Government was unsure what to do about people who were supposed to be politicians, but who were also engaged in fighting them. They did not ban Dail Eireann until September 10th 1919. Griffith was absolutely openly around and could have been picked up any time. They had a bad description of Collins; they did not know he was as dark as he was. They thought he was fair. From the beginning of 1920, when Cope was appointed Under Secretary for Ireland, Collins was in touch directly with the Castle. There was a 'hot line' between them. Gogarty, for instance, tells of De Valera receiving a phone call from the Castle direct to Dr. Farnham in Merrion Square. In a war such arrangements sometimes exist. I am convinced that John Chartres, the Englishman who joined us at that time, and who accompanied the Treaty delegation as a secretary, was a plant by the British. His wife accompanied Sean T. O'Kelly in the Peace delegation to Paris early in 1919, which, if he was a plant, would make her position an unusually significant one. They went out of their way to promote the reputation of Michael Collins far beyond what he seemed to deserve. So while the Upper Castle Yard was having its dealings with Collins, the Lower Castle Yard was having dealings of another sort. It was after him with the Murder Gang. He was however a very cool customer with plenty of nerve. It was a problem getting safe, secure offices because we now had a staff of some hundreds. Sinn Fein bought a number of houses. One I remember was in St. Mary's Road, off Northumberland Road. Mrs. Woods said to me: *Now our only problem is to find someone who will be Michael Collins' aunt.*



Without thinking, I chirped up, *Oh my mother will do that*. They all looked at me; *If she would, it will be splendid*. She was living then in my uncle's home in Enniscorthy, where she had absolutely nothing to do. I sent her a telegram: *Come at once*. She thought something frightful had happened to me. She arrived by the next train in a state of agitation. She was quite happy when she saw I was alright. *You are to be Michael Collins' aunt for a bit*, I said simply. She was so relieved that she did not mind. The arrangement lasted only a few weeks. She had been lady captain of Greystones Golf Club and had a number of tennis cups, so perhaps she was not the best person as she was really quite well known.

As regards popular support for our objectives, my experience was that it was total. I remember going up Grafton Street on my bicycle with a load of guns wrapped in sacking on the carrier. The load began to shift sideways. I was having difficulty so I hopped off. A man driving a horse jumped from his cart and came over, leaving the horse to walk on. He fixed up my bike and sent me on my way. He must have known what I was carrying.

My first engagement for Cumann na mBan in Dublin was a flag day. I was told to go to William Street. It was a Sunday, and I should have gone to North William Street, where the church is, but I went to South William Street. It is not a very frequented place. I spent the morning however getting money from everybody. It proved to be quite easy. Then someone said: *I wonder you are not down in the city. They are all being arrested*. I went to the corner of Grafton Street and Nassau Street where there was a small crowd and none of our collectors. They had been arrested. The people rushed over with money and filled my box. A policeman appeared. From over my shoulder I saw him make for me. I started to run. It was not easy. I was in a hobble skirt. A boy with a milk dray appeared beside me. *Hold on!* he shouted. I did, and while the crowd obstructed the policeman, I got away. There had been about twenty girls arrested that day. They changed their clothing among themselves so that they were unidentifiable in court. It made a joke of the whole procedure.

This period coincided with the world-wide change following the war from abundance to slump. The price of cattle fell drastically. There was hunger among thousands of unemployed and labouring people. Thomas Johnston approached De Valera on this following his return in December 1920. Johnston's idea was that if farmers loaned the land then voluntary labour would grow the additional crops. Perhaps it was Utopian. De Valera however felt the time was not ripe for the schemes put forward by Johnston. *We do not want a class war*, he said. I was not myself in favour of seizing land in the middle of a struggle. If we had done so, where would such petty greed have ended?

The Government of Ireland Act, which partitioned Ireland, was

passed by the British Government in December, 1920. De Valera favoured contesting elections in both parts of Ireland. By doing so, he seemed to acquiesce in the Act. It was never put to the Dail. Dail meetings, anyway were only skeletons of what they had been. He simply asked Sinn Fein. He took things in his own hands. In that way it came to be decided that we contest the Partition Elections of May, 1921. That, in itself, was as good as giving a green light to Lloyd George.

I was doing secretarial work in the home of Mrs. Eamonn Ceannt, at 44 Oakley Road. Pauden O'Keeffe, Secretary of Sinn Fein, put his head in the door. We were all talking our heads off. He moved around briskly. *You, you, you*, he said to a number of us, *be at Amiens Street tomorrow, you are going North*. They were sending a hundred speakers and I was one of them.

I was sent to Derry where I met Fr. Michael O'Flanagan by arrangement at the City Hotel. From there we journeyed to Maghera. Fr. O'Flanagan was a magnificent speaker, wonderful; unlike myself who had never spoken in public before. But he rallied us and gave us every encouragement. *Fix your eye upon the person at the back of the crowd*, he would say, *and talk directly at them*. It worked and I forgot my self-consciousness. When the election came, it was a walkover in the areas we choose to contest. As far as the North was concerned Sinn Fein put up southerners oddly enough; they were already sitting TD's for southern seats, except one — John O'Mahony. There was Eoin MacNeill(3) in Derry, De Valera in Down, Collins in Armagh, Griffith and Milroy in Tyrone, and John O'Mahony in Fermanagh. I never saw any statement made about the reason for this. They appeared to have nominated themselves. On the other hand, they may have considered that they were putting themselves in the gap of danger; that they were going to hold on to the rights of the people cut off under Partition. But I do not believe it. To my mind it was De Valera's first big swindle. It ensured that no Northerners of spirit were there to speak in the Treaty debates. I said this to De Valera when I spoke to him prior to the Easter celebrations in 1966: *Did you find the Republic betrayed when you returned from America in December, 1920?* Meaning of course, that he had greatly weakened our position by his Cuban speech there of February 1920. Griffith had immediately taken this line also. He commenced a reversion to the original Sinn Fein dual Monarchy theory which all of us abhorred. Replying to me then, De Valera said significantly: *People believed their own propaganda; some people believe it still*.

Were all the sacrifices, I wondered, Barry, MacSwiney and the rest, just looked upon by the leadership as necessary propaganda towards a lesser goal? The Volunteers were not told that, and a tight rein was



being kept upon them. The revolution up to then had been a kid-glove affair.

The election in the South resulted in fifty new Sinn Féin TD's. Collins got his picked Volunteer officers and I.R.B. men to go forward. The one hundred and twenty-four TD's of the "Partition Election" diluted the seventy-three elected in 1918. They supported him and later helped to soften up the Dail on the Treaty.

My feelings during the Treaty debates were quite different from what I reasoned out afterwards. We again swallowed everything De Valera said. I was completely opposed to his Document No. 2, though I still believed in him. I was at all the debates. This day Cathal Brugha made a speech supporting Document No. 2. I listened attentively for he spoke under great strain. It is still clear in my memory. When we came out from the chamber in Earlsfort Terrace, I met him in the passage. It had taken a great effort for him to make such a speech. I was unable to congratulate him or say anything he may have expected to hear. His lips were blue; I remember now how blue they appeared as he held himself tensely.

De Valera had led them on with his Cuban speech to the brink of compromise. There is a remark of his in the debates to this effect: *If no one else had done this, I would have done it.* This accentuated the distrust between them. Especially from men like Kevin O'Higgins, because the Treaty side knew that De Valera wanted only a favourable opportunity in order to jettison the Republic.

#### COUNTER REVOLUTION

Liam Mellows as a TD attended Dail meetings from the Four Courts up to the time of its dissolution at the end of May, 1922. So too did Harry Boland, although he was not part of the occupation force in the Four Courts. So did many other Republican TD's. This ambivalent situation is rarely touched upon in the history books. The Collins/De Valera election pact was signed by them on May 20th. It was greeted with relief by all of us. Everything looked brighter after that. A committee under Mrs. Tom Clarke had been working hard to bring the two sides together. Now, with the Pact, friendly exchanges of arms going on between Free Staters and Republicans — the Free Staters being fully aware that these were destined for the North — and a conference between the rival armies which had reached the point of agreement, it seemed certain that there would be agreement. It was at this point that Griffith cut across everything with his proposal for a general election, which would also be, in effect, a vote on the new constitution. This renewed the tension as De Valera had proposed in April that no election should be held until six months had passed. But



Griffith precipitated it in May, withholding the British dictated constitution until the very morning of the election. As a result of the Pact, however, a number of members were elected unopposed. They were nearly all supporters of the Treaty; thus Sinn Féin lost out by it.

I was organising for Sinn Féin in Wexford again, in the run up to the elections. We had absolutely no money as our funds were tied up as a result of the creation of the Free State. I came back to Dublin about a week before the attack upon the Four Courts. Of course I had no inkling that things were as bad as that. I had been down to the Four Courts on a number of occasions, and I was about to set off on a mission to Donegal the morning it was attacked.

I was in Roebuck, in Mrs. Despard's house, when we heard the artillery shelling the building that Wednesday morning of June 28th. Without a thought for the danger, I mounted my bicycle and cycled in. The dawn was lighting up the old city. (Ernie O'Malley in his book *Singing Flame* has given a good account of the defence: Paddy O'Brien, with his adjutant, often with myself, he says, went around to our posts at intervals to gather information and to check on shell damage to the buildings. Our fire had to be very particular and the natural tendency for men in action to fire luxuriously in excitement to be stifled. 'The Mutineer' went slowly up and down the yards between three blocks but out of reach of direct hit by the guns on the Liffey side, concentrating fire on snipers' posts with its Vickers gun. Cumann na mBan girls carrying despatches came up to the side gate under fire as the chains had to be opened to give them entry. They brought us news of the outside; one brought ammunition given to them by Free State soldiers. Mary Comerford slept on sacks of flour. O'Connell Street had been occupied by Oscar Traynor and his men . . .).

I had the task of maintaining some sort of a link between the two fragments, headquarters at the Four Courts and the Dublin Brigade under Oscar Traynor in the hotels in O'Connell Street. As they were on the east side of the street, it was not easy.

Liam Mellows and Rory O'Connor remained simply to make a defensive stand on behalf of the Republic. (There was indecision, says O'Malley. *We don't know what the country will do*, said Liam Mellows. *The West will fight*, I said, *and the Tipperary men*. Rory nodded. His face was quiet as if he was thinking of other things. *I think we should stay here*, he said. *It's unmilitary, but we represent the Republic at present*.)

*We can defend it*, said O'Brien. *I think Headquarters Staff and the members of the Executive should leave at once for the country. It's not too late yet*. But they waited until an indefensible building holding the flower and talents of the Republican forces was attacked and then it was too late to leave it.)

At the surrender on the Friday afternoon, I wheeled out my bike, mounted it and rode away. Nobody stopped me. I cycled the short length of street, through the North Lotts, crossed O'Connell Street well down from the fighting that was still going on there, and entered by a rear door of the Hamman Hotel, (or it may have been the Granville next door). I was now in the same stronghold as Cathal Brugha, our former Minister for Defence. He had helped to hold the South Dublin Union against advancing British forces in Easter Week, and had been so severely wounded there that he was not expected to survive. Now he was here, gallantly encouraging everyone, a completely different man, a much more gentle person, passionless despite the tumult of the conflict. De Valera, Stack and Traynor were also there. As the net tightened around us, they withdrew, as did most of the other garrisons. There was no point in remaining just to make a bigger bag of prisoners for the Free Staters. By the following Wednesday there were sixteen only remaining with Brugha, of whom three were girls. I left the day before. Of the three who remained, one was Linda Kearns, and the other was Cathleen Barry, sister of Kevin Barry while the third was Mary MacSwiney. The building was shelled through and enveloped in flames. It was time for all of us to leave or surrender. Once again I quietly leaked away. I rode off through the smoke and the ruined buildings on my bicycle. I had stayed almost to the end, and I had cheated the enemy.

(Dorothy Macardle says:(4) At last, Cathal Brugha called them together. He ordered them to surrender before the blazing walls should fall . . . . The surrendered men stood in a lane behind the hotel, which was crowded with soldiers and men of the Fire Brigade; they waited anxiously asking one another, *Where is Cathal Brugha?*

Suddenly they saw him in the doorway, a small, smoke-blackened figure, a revolver in each hand raised against the levelled rifles of the troops. Enemies and friends cried out *Surrender!* but shouting *No!* Brugha darted forward, firing, and fell amid a volley of shots. Desperate wounds had been added to the fourteen scars of Easter 1916). They could have taken him prisoner. To my mind his killing was murder.

I was tired, tired, tired, and broken-hearted. I went down the country, far away from Dublin. All I wanted to do was rest. But as so often happens one becomes quickly restless again. The struggle was still on. There was fighting still in Dublin. There was much work that I could do.

#### COLLAPSE

The meeting at Rosegreen in South Tipperary had shown me that there was no unified operations plan for the whole of Ireland. No



concerted action would be taken, and the Staters would recruit and train an army in the meantime. It looked as if we would be worn down piecemeal, but men seemed to think that we could carry out much the same tactics as we had used against the British.

Raids became more frequent in Dublin, as did hold-ups on the streets. The C.I.D. with women searchers were fond of that peculiar form of raid, known as the 'sit down raid' in which they entered a house quietly, unknown even to the neighbours. They locked all the family in a room at the back; then they sat down inside for a day or two, enjoying the freedom of the house as regards food, drink and souvenirs. All callers were arrested, searched and put in with the family. (5)

I felt discouraged at times during that long autumn of 1922, as the Republican Army broke up everywhere into smaller and less effective units. There was no part of Ireland now in which a column of twenty or thirty men might shelter safely, yet there had been dozens of columns, twice and three times that size in the Tan struggle fifteen months before. Big columns now were a risk and could not be fed. Of the half dozen houses in any one neighbourhood which might have sheltered them before, only one was open to them now and it was well watched and spied upon. A column now was four men, short of ammunition, hiding in a dripping dug-out. The temptations to cease to plan operations, to give up, to go home were obvious. The Republican Army was disintegrating like snow on a sunny day. But the days were not sunny. September, October and November 1922 were not my best months. I was a courier now trying to maintain links between these disintegrating groups. Sometimes I would return to a place to find that the unit was no longer there. Ernie O'Malley tells, and it must be true, how he nearly shot me when I returned at midnight after a long absence to the headquarters house he was using at 36 Ailesbury Road. (6) He was the Assistant Chief of Staff, and as such, had to receive many callers, which was dangerous for him and a risk for the house. He was determined to shoot it out if they came, and in the end he did. If they had all been like him, the Civil War would not have been lost.

(One night late I was working in the study, when there was a loud, sharp knock at the door. I took my gun from beside my pen on the table and listened. The knock was repeated. Sheila ran downstairs quickly. *I'll open*, she said. *It must be the Staters. No, I'll go myself.* I said. I cocked the hammer of the Webley, unlocked the door, threw it open and waited to one side in the darkness of the hall. A figure walked in, brushed beside me and laughed. *I frightened you*, she said. It was Mary Comerford, with a despatch from the North. I was frightened for I had intended to fire when she laughed. (7)



## IMPRISONMENT

In January, 1923, I was involved, along with Paddy McGrath, in a plan to kidnap W. T. Cosgrave, the Prime Minister. McGrath, as you know, was executed along with Tom Harte in September, 1941, eighteen years later, still fighting the Free State. At this time they had already executed many of our volunteers, some with the formality of a courtmartial, others out of hand. The I.R.A. planned to take Cosgrave and hold him until a "fight fair" undertaking would be given. We had been promised a safe house for the purpose; we set out this night to inspect it.

Out at Loughlinstown, our car, Cupid, stopped. We could not get it going again and had to abandon it. We flagged down a taxi. It was filled already. One of the people in it was Mrs. Dick Mulcahy, or Min Ryan, as she had been. She recognised me, although she did not pretend to know me. It was a crowded taxi, and I had no idea she was inside. They said they were going somewhere else; you know, polite excuses. But at the first police post she came to, she informed about us. I had returned to Dublin to obtain another car. Paddy was arrested where I had left him. When I returned there I was arrested too. I was brought to Mountjoy, where I joined Sheila Humphreys and many other girls. Sheila was imprisoned following Ernie's capture in November. We were defiant. We went on hunger strike. They were worried then as no girl had been on hunger strike.

While I was in Mountjoy, a Free State soldier fired at me and shot me in the leg. I had been waving at other women prisoners and that was forbidden. Shortly after that, I was transferred to the North Dublin Union, a great barracks of a place, which was then being used as a prison camp. I escaped from there, because the Staters had not yet found out how to make barbed wire entanglements. They had mounds of wire against the high wall of the Union, but they also had wire stretched taut between posts which enabled one to climb over the entanglement and reach the top of the wall. A number of others followed me in the darkness. One was Kay Brady of Leeson Street, a member of a Belfast family, who later married Dr. Andy Cooney. Another was Anna Fitzsimons, who later married artist Frank Kelly, one of the men who helped rescue De Valera from Lincoln Jail. She was afterwards Anna Kelly of *The Irish Press*. She had been a Sinn Féin secretary in the headquarters in Harcourt Street, and had prepared most of the notes prior to the meeting of the First Dail. I was free for only a month. I shared a flat in Nassau Street with Mia Cranville. Going out one night, I was spotted; it may have been my slouching country walk. But they arrested me anyway, and this time they made no mistake, I was brought to Kilmainham Jail. However I refused to eat there, I would not eat, I said, until I was set at liberty. When one has done nothing against one's country, it is a reasonable

enough request. They let me go, I got carried out, after twenty-seven days. I was brought to Synge Street, to the Nursing Home of Peadar O'Donnell's sister-in-law, Josephine O'Donell.

#### AN ELECTION CAMPAIGN

The August 1923 election was announced some weeks after that. Enormous numbers of our people were in jail, about eleven thousand of them. We had no machine to fight it. The Free State was riding high and sure of winning. The organisation gave me a motor bike, and gave me the whole of Cork to organise for Sinn Féin, except Cork City. It was a herculean task. Only one of our TD's in Cork was at liberty, Daithi Ceannt. (8) He lived in the wilds of East Cork and survived only by staying out of sight. I had the greatest difficulty making contact with him. The motor bike was unable to reach Castletownbere in the far west because of the high wind. Nearly all of our thirty-six TD's that were not in prison were on the run. De Valera appeared once on a platform in Ennis. It was fired on by the Free State troops, and he was arrested. I was arrested myself in Fermoy, and brought to Cork Jail and lodged there. William Cosgrave immediately directed that I be released. They came along in the middle of the night. *You are being released*, I was told. *I have nowhere to go at this time*, I said. *You have to go*, they said. *We will bring you to any of your friends you wish*. No, I said, *I do not want that. I do not want my friends betrayed*. Without more ado, they evicted me from the jail; they brought me to the Imperial Hotel and paid there for my bed and breakfast.

The financial deposits required, a hundred pounds for each candidate, had to be collected secretly and held in a safe place or the Staters would have seized them as illegal funds. Mary Elliot brought the money to Cork and Kerry, hundreds of pounds from Dublin, where it had been lodged in a bank under a private name.

There was mass intimidation too on election day. Dozens of our people manning polling booths were arrested and lodged in some sort of Bridewell they have in Cork. I cannot quite remember where it was, but I can recall shouting down to them from street level. Our booths were completely unmanned and there was no one to watch the count. Nevertheless, despite this strange exercise in democracy by the Free State, Sinn Féin did well in the election. Our seats went up from thirty-six at the 1922 "Pact" election to forty-four in this first all Free State election of 1923. I was thrilled and felt grateful to the people.

#### BOUND FOR AMERICA

Then the great hunger-strike started in the jails in October. It commenced in Mountjoy, and quickly spread to the others. But I was

already on the high seas, bound on a special mission to try to raise funds in America. Before I come to that, however, I must tell you how I obtained my first passport. De Valera had sent word that I was to be sent to America. I was given twenty-five pounds to buy some clothes and as pocket money generally. I had not had any new clothes since our war started in 1919. I went into Switzers and bought a grand little rig of clothes. I went then in the morning to Dun Laoire and went aboard the mail boat, well before the time of departure, thinking I could lie low somewhere. But I was rooted out and told I must go up on deck and buy a ticket. It was the same morning that James MacNeill, Free State High Commissioner in London, was married to Josephine Aherne. She had been a member of Cumann na mBan executive. I, being partly on the run, was seated in a corner of the dining room with my back to everyone. Suddenly I heard this glad voice: *Oh, there is Mary Comerford. Let us go over and talk to her.* They made a great fuss of me. They made me travel with them. It was no love match, I can assure you, but I could not escape. I had to accompany them in their first-class compartment on the train to London. I tried to escape at Holyhead, but James was sent searching the train for me. It was extraordinary. Here was I, a Republican fugitive, on a secret mission to America, with thousands of our people in jail and many of them shot, sharing the private compartment of the High Commissioner bound for London. I can hardly imagine anything more incongruous. Had Ernie O'Malley or De Valera seen me then!

I was in America for nine months. I should have had a lovely time but I was homesick every day of it. I pined for Ireland and longed to get back. We visited all the usual East Coast cities, New York, Washington, Boston, Chicago, Detroit. . . . We were trying to put together a fund which would give some small capital assistance to prisoners coming home. We were not very successful. We did manage to raise a few thousand dollars, but it was only a drop in the ocean for the objective we had in mind.

I was glad when eventually I set sail again for home. I had left many of my friends on hunger-strike. I wondered how they were. Now as I looked on the dawn light stealing over the hilltops of Donegal, I remembered them again. I rushed down the gang plank. It was Merville, and customs men were waiting for us.

#### SURVIVAL

*Mark my luggage*, I said to one: *Mark my luggage*, and he did. I left the quayside thankfully and made by train for Sinn Fein headquarters in Suffolk Street, Dublin, with a load of guns, that my friendly American friends had insisted on stuffing into my cases. But they were



the last thing they wanted to see. The Civil War was over, and all the I.R.A. guns had been dumped. Sinn Féin was cleansing itself of its military reputation, trying to forget, trying to be *political*.

This was a time of terrible poverty. In the aftermath of struggle there was sickness and hunger. Republicans were boycotted for jobs. Teachers, doctors and professional people could not get back their employment. Many were forced to emigrate through economic necessity, thousands, and they went with vengeance in their hearts. They and their children are the ones who support the I.R.A. today. Others survived by taking stand-in jobs and by giving tuitions. They could barely manage. When Fianna Fáil came to power in 1932, many of them received long arrears of pay. Some might say it was the beginning of Fianna Fáil bribery, but it was an instalment of justice too.

Madge Clifford had been secretary to Austin Stack. Her husband, Dr. Comer of Rathdowney, was one of the Republicans debarred by the Free State. He managed to eke out a precarious living in the countryside, where he rode round on a bicycle. Imagine his surprise, when one day, the bank manager, in a most friendly way, told him that if he needed a car, to go ahead and buy it. Fianna Fáil were, of course, on the way back. They were not going to bring us nearer to our ideal of Connolly's republic, but they were at least about to move the scenery. They were clever too, intensely clever in the phraseology used. De Valera, in an interview in April, 1926, said: *The Irish people will support a reasonable programme based on the existing conditions . . . There is a place in Fianna Fáil for all who believe with Pádraig Pearse in one Irish nation and that free.* Fair words for everybody, but so open ended that it has since become meaningless. Could anyone imagine Pádraig Pearse policing the Border accompanied by units of the British Army, or acting as an E.E.C. Commissioner in Brussels?

Republicans like Dr. Comer, were now passing into middle age and looked forward to an easier life. The lesser fry were promised pensions, pittance of five shillings a week upwards, but enough to win many of these ex-volunteers away from radicalism. Under Fianna Fáil's two main schemes, the 1932 and 1934 Military Pensions Acts, *thousands* applied, more than 60,000. Only a small proportion eventually got their doles, but the mere fact that so many applied, suborned tens of thousands of people who otherwise would have stayed republican. Fianna Fáil knew this would happen; between medals, medals with bars, and pensions they spread the jam thinly but adroitly.<sup>(9)</sup> When Fianna Fáil left Sinn Féin in May 1926, I was placed on the executive of what was now a greatly weakened organisation, and one that now, as a result of sheer inertia, gathered speed downhill. I was unable to contribute much to it. For me now, life was unbearably

hard. I was in poor form, living alone on top of a hill in Co. Wexford. I was endeavouring to run my own poultry farm at Mount St. Benedict, and each week it was an adventure, trying to make ends meet. I had about five shillings a week to live on, and believe me it was tight. I was cut off. For years I knew little about passing events. I was unable to afford even a daily newspaper. I had a motor bike, and whenever I could scrape fifteen shillings together, I would ride from Gorey to Dublin for a week-end with some of my old friends. It gave me a tonic to see Dublin and to get away from my harsh and lonely life in the countryside. When you are down, you are down, and it is extraordinarily hard to rise up again.

The final chapter in the life of the Second Dail was a tragic one. Few of the leadership that were left saw any hope. Art O'Connor, the President, announced his resignation in January, 1928, and left to practise law, which, I need hardly say, was Free State law and not Republican law. Austin Stack had married a wealthy woman, a former Cumann na mBan member, a Mrs. Gordon and he sought to go also. He wished to practise as a solicitor. Peadar O'Donnell had criticised him bitterly for failure to support him on the Annuities issue.<sup>(10)</sup> Perhaps we should not take this too seriously as Mary MacSwiney was herself a strong critic of Peadar. In Stack's case, his wish to retire may have been a premonition of the end; he was to die soon enough anyway.<sup>(11)</sup>

Even a purist like Brian O'Higgins was forced to sell his Christmas cards under a Saorstát Eireann trade insignia. He was, I found, a bitter man. I had very little use for him. He was always ready with a graveside speech, yet he had scarcely volunteered himself. He was so opposed to De Valera that he left his wife's funeral when he arrived to attend it.

Father O'Flanagan, our Vice-President, undertook in 1934, to edit the O'Donovan Papers. He, too, had to leave the organisation. Mary MacSwiney left also about the same time. She strongly opposed the acceptance of service pensions by some members. It only goes to show that, as a modern state grows up, it becomes very difficult to avoid being enmeshed by it.

In 1926, I was sentenced to nine months imprisonment on a charge of trying to influence a jury. I was in Mountjoy again over Christmas and on into 1927. When I came out, most of the Sinn Féin Cumann in Co. Wexford had been bamboozled into joining Fianna Fáil. In preparation for the election that year, the I.R.A. tried to bring the two parties together on an agreed policy, but Fianna Fáil would not agree.<sup>(12)</sup> None of them foresaw, however, that they would take the Oath, described by Dorothy Macardle, herself in Fianna Fáil, as a *towering barrier; on this side all stand unfaltering in their resolve not to cross it.*<sup>(13)</sup> It was in one of the elections of that year, in June<sup>(14)</sup> that



I must have voted; it came up at an Ard Fheis, held at No. 16 Parnell Square. We were forbidden to vote now in Free State elections, so I was drummed out.

I joined the *Irish Press* in 1935: Anna Kelly was there as woman editor. She was a great person and a sound Republican. She wanted to get another post in the paper, so she put me in her place. But it was hard work. So little money was allowed, only £10 a week to contributors to pay for a whole page; six pages if one counts the days of the week and only ten pounds for all of that. I was working so hard then, I do not like, even now, to think about it. I got this house, which I was paying for. I put my mother in it. I had five pounds and fifteen shillings weekly to do that, as well as to help to pay off the debts I had accumulated in my bad period on Mount St. Benedict. Although I had been out of touch for nine years, I received letters from both Mick Price and Frank Ryan. These dealt with organisational matters. Frank was such an attractive person. I nearly went to Spain with him, though that would have been so silly as we had quite enough to do at home.

In 1939, I was asked to oversee what was being published in the I.R.A. *War News*. Of course, in the circumstances, I rarely saw it until it hit the streets. There was much in it that I disapproved of, but I put it down to the relative inexperience of the people doing it. There was a girl in the group. She had a green sports car. She was so careless with that car, which was well known, as there were so few Republican cars at that time. As the war progressed and as prisoners and executions accumulated again in 1941/1942, I acted on a relief committee with Mrs. Tom Clarke. She was Lord Mayor, and a Daly from Limerick. She did everything she could.

As for the present day, I would love to find common denominators in a social programme. I refuse to accept a programme which would exclude sections of the people from participation. I would make bloodless revolution easy and feasible for the general body of people, who need to be converted to it. There should be a *code for children* which would give all children a real stake in the country. A quarter of our children live in poverty. Put all our educational resources at their disposal; give them responsibility when it is thrust upon them. Give all of them a fair start in life. It would have to be a diverse training, in crafts, in farming or in clerical work, according to their talents. People who have come through life and experienced the heavy load of debt which may be incurred during what should be our best years are anxious to shield their children from such an experience. I do not see why, in an island of great potential wealth, many of our children should be born into poverty and an unending struggle.(15)



## REFERENCES

- 1 The election result gave seventy-three of the one hundred and five seats in the Thirty-two Counties to Sinn Féin. Of the seventy-three members, thirty-six were in prison, although there were as yet no hostilities. It is mainly upon the fact that this was the last all Ireland election, that Republicans base their denial of the twin Parliaments set up by Britain afterwards.
- 2 According to Darrell Figgis *Recollections of the Irish War*, the arrests had a curious sequel. The removal of the diplomatic and statesmanlike section of Sinn Féin (notably De Valera and Griffith) at a critical time, left the militant section, personified by Cathal Brugha, in complete control of the organisation. The result was that the tactical error was made, on the opening of Dail Eireann, of declaring a Republic in unequivocal terms. The declaration was found to present extreme difficulties, as, once proclaimed, the difficulty of going back on it was apparent; whereas, if the status had been left undefined, it would have been possible to work gradually towards it, untrammelled by any previous definition and affirmation.
- 3 A Co. Antrim man from Glenarm, long resident in Dublin.
- 4 *The Irish Republic*, by Dorothy Macardle.
- 5 Ernie O'Malley in the *The Singing Flame*.
- 6 The present day French Chancellery opposite the Embassy. It was built specially for Mrs. Humphreys in 1918 by Batt O'Connor for £8,000.
- 7 O'Malley in the *The Singing Flame*.
- 8 Daithi Ceannt, Second Dail TD, died in November, 1930. He had been imprisoned in the land war, in 1916 and in 1920. One brother was killed in Cork in 1916, one was executed and Daithi himself was condemned to death.
- 9 The 1932 Act was restricted to disabled persons. It permitted pensions of £30 per annum to £150 per annum, depending on the degree of disability. The 1934 Act opened the gate to almost anyone who could claim to have participated up to September, 1923, thus covering the Civil War period. The I.R.A. issued a directive to members *not* to apply for or to accept pensions, nor to sign certificates of military service for others.
- 10 *An Phoblacht*, December 24th, 1927.
- 11 Austin Stack, renowned prison leader and Deputy Chief of Staff from 1919-1922, died in May 1929. *An Phoblacht* of May 18th gives his life story and three columns of names of those who attended his funeral.
- 12 *An Phoblacht*, June 3rd, 1927.
- 13 *An Phoblacht*, May 7th, 1927.
- 14 Sinn Féin dropped to five seats, while the new party, Fianna Fail, gained forty-seven. The law was then changed forcing members to sign their name and enter Parliament. In the second election in September, this clause caused the total disappearance of Sinn Féin, who refused to go forward, while Fianna Fail increased its strength to fifty-seven members.
- 15 On the last day but one, on the roof of the Hamman, she sat on the slates with Brugha. *What will become of us?* He urged her to go. She was interested in a number of men in the Movement but never allowed herself to fall in love until the struggle was over. And of course it was never over. She gave up smoking to enable herself to maintain a stray horse. She rests Dec. 1982 at Mt. St. Benedict with Fr. J. F. Sweetman and his Republican housekeeper Aileen Keogh; as Mt. Nebo once the residence of Hunter Gowan, originator of the pitch cap torture of 1798.

## John Swift

*Trade Union Leader  
and Pacifist*



My father was a Parnellite. He was in business in Dundalk where he had a bakery in partnership with another man; the bakery was known as Swift & Cooper. At an early age I learned something about the trade in a very unorthodox way. I used to steal unfinished buns from the confectionery bakery, put some icing on them and sell them at school. I was at the Christian Brothers which was attended mainly by the children of other shopkeepers — the De La Salle in the town was for the poorer children — and they would bring in things that they had stolen from their parents. The result was a real live black market in the school. Unfortunately the foreman baker discovered my little skulduggery. He therefore gave me tasks to do in the bakery, and in that way I learned the trade. My mother did not have much interest in politics although her father and all of the family were good nationalists. In my young days there were some very exciting elections in Dundalk. I recall one in 1910, when Hazelton, a local candidate dislodged Tim Healy. They took an action for a recount, on the score that the difference was a small one, and this had been brought about by large scale impersonation for Hazelton. Healy and William O'Brien, you will recall, had broken away from Redmond's Irish Party and formed an All for Ireland League. Anyway they succeeded in toppling Hazelton and regaining the seat.

Both sides were still raking over the Parnellite embers whenever it suited them, as a means of having a dig at a person or gaining clerical support. It was common enough for priests to appear on the Healy platform and to have to listen to them denouncing Hazelton on sectarian grounds.

### MY LEGAL CAREER

I had left the Christian Brothers school and had taken up work as a

junior clerk in the office of Dr. K. C. Moynagh, the Crown Solicitor for Co. Louth. He had an enormous practice. He had a son Stephen working in the business and another son Frank who was a barrister. It was a very prestigious office with a clientele, not only in Louth, but in Armagh, Monaghan and Cavan. I was lucky to get in there. I had been accepted through the influence of my mother's first cousin. He was the head law clerk, and he largely controlled the running of the office. My wages were a half a crown a week. I had the prospect of being apprenticed eventually if I liked the work and they liked me. In that case I would lose my half crown and my people would have to pay a fee before I could proceed. I liked the work very much although it was mostly dreary litigation that the firm was engaged in. Farmers then, loved going to law over rights of way, disputed wells, and such like. My principal task was copying deeds. This was all done long hand, as the typing machine was only coming into use and was not much used in law offices. Judges would not accept a typed document particularly if it was a copy. They would have to see handwriting, and handwriting was an art at that time.

I was a pretty good writer, as was my mother's first cousin, the head clerk. We used to scroll the affidavits with an illumination on the parchment. I liked that part of it.

Most of the deeds and agreements were in dull legal language. However, I recall one case which was a relief from all that. We had this action for breach of promise. Now in my young days these cases were fairly common. If a woman was jilted she frequently went to law and recovered damages. Not much by today's standards, but at that time one hundred and fifty pounds or thereabouts went a long way to salve a wounded heart. They do not do it very much now because women have become more independent. Anyway, we were acting for this local servant girl who was suing a police constable in the town. She had kept all his letters although she was illiterate. She was not able herself to read, but evidently she got somebody else to read them for her. At any rate she knew everything that was in this pile of letters, quite a substantial pile that she brought into us.

They were very amusing. He must have been an awful fool of a man. He used to quote the poets. I was just fresh from school and I could see that when he tried to quote the poets he frequently got them wrong. The servant girl won her action. She got something like seventy pounds damages. I left the office after six months. Although I liked the law, particularly the logic, I could not get along with my mother's first cousin, and as he was in an important position in the office that made things difficult for me. In any event, I would have had to leave anyway as I shall shortly relate.

Mechanisation in the bakery trade came at an early stage to Belfast.



The result was that they were able to flood outlying towns, anywhere the railways extended to, with their bread. They sent it to Dublin where they undercut the local bakeries. We had two bakeries, a bread bakery and a confectionery bakery, on the one site in Clanbrassil Street, the main street in Dundalk. However, my father and his partner were conservative; they had a great pride in their craft and were strongly opposed on financial grounds to the introduction of machinery. The result was that they could not compete and went bankrupt in 1910.

#### DUBLIN SLUMS

The only resort at that time for a failed businessman and his family was to emigrate or to seek oblivion in Dublin. We arrived in Dublin in 1912, the year before the great lockout. Up to that time I had been ignorant of such things, but I soon learned about them. We were very poor. We had no choice but to seek accommodation in the cheapest place we could find, a tenement house in Clanbrassil Street. There were other families in the house of course; it was a three storey house, long since demolished. In circumstances like that you were bound soon to understand the role of James Larkin. Here was a man, a great natural orator, a man of enormous physique; I was soon attracted to his meetings. I used to follow him around just to listen to him. In that way I got my labour education, very effectively I must say. We were receiving food parcels in our house. These were the parcels made up by the trade unions in England and sent to Dublin to alleviate the suffering. They did not like Larkin's militancy but they assisted the strikers in many other ways. Vincent de Paul distributed food vouchers. Sometimes we would have a competition in our house to see who could get in any one week, both a parcel and a voucher.

I was already working. I went to serve my time at a small bakery, Galbraiths, in Thomas Street. It is long gone now. My father also worked there as a casual baker, putting in a stint in other bakeries whenever the opportunity offered. Because of my early schooling in the bakery in Dundalk I was classified as an improver. There is no such stage now, one is either an apprentice or a journeyman, the union having succeeded in abolishing the intermediate stage.

I had entered Galbraiths in 1913. Early in 1914, a few months after they were founded, a group of us from the bakery joined the 3rd Battalion of the Volunteers. I had actually been in O'Connell Street on the night in November when they were set up. I spent much of my life wandering through the city streets, lured along by any political excitement there might be. Anyway we joined early in 1914 in York Street. It was in a tenement house where some society, it may have

been the Foresters, had rooms. We used to drill there at night with imitation wooden rifles.

On Saturdays, we used to parade at Larkfield in Kimmage, on lands owned by Count Plunkett. It is long since built over. De Valera was one of the officers of the battalion. He was unknown at this time, but he was very conspicuous because he was so tall and foreign looking. He also was one of the few who used to come in uniform. The uniform of a private consisted of a cavalry man's breeches, puttees, a jacket and a peaked cap. All that, as far as I remember, came to thirty shillings or one pound fifty in today's money. Most of us working class youths were paying for ours at the rate of three pence per week, but there were many middle class people there who could afford to buy them outright. We paid the money into our quartermaster in York Street, and, I regret to say, I never managed to pay enough to afford my uniform. But I did manage to buy the more basic accoutrements with which every volunteer started, namely, a bandolier of real leather, which I bought for half a crown, in Fallons of Mary Street, a belt and a canvas haversack. The whole lot for five shillings. That was a big lot out of your wages in those days.

#### REDMOND SPLITS THE VOLUNTEERS

De Valera, as I have said, used to arrive at Larkfield in his uniform, complete with Sam Browne belt and highly polished boots, on a bicycle. Now, if you have ever seen a tall man in uniform on a bicycle, it will strike you as strange, almost funny, but there was nothing funny about Dev. He was very aloof, rarely speaking to us. He gave us commands of course, for field drill. We got the ordinary 'form fours' in York Street. But here we were being trained en masse as a battalion. The commands were all in Irish. On Sundays, we used to go on route marches, up by Dundrum, Ballinteer and Ticknock. We always sang on these marches, the Irish songs of '98. Davis' *Clares Dragoons*, *The West's Awake*, and such like.

I had joined the Volunteers mainly because I was interested in physical culture. The drilling appealed to me. I soon found however, that there was a growing disharmony within their ranks: it was of course the Redmondites, by far the greater number, versus the Sinn Feiners. The Redmondites, as part of their tactics to persuade the British Government to pass a Home Rule Bill (which they had done, while postponing the operation until war ended), pledged the services of the Volunteers in the first World War. John Redmond did that in the British House of Commons on the 15th-September, 1914, six weeks after war had started, when he said: *it is their duty . . . the young men of Ireland . . . and should be their honour, to take their place in the firing line in this contest*. On the 20th September he went further at Wooden-

bridge when, at a Volunteer parade, he used the occasion to recruit for England's war by saying: *the war is undertaken in defence of the highest principles of religion, morality, and right, and it would be a disgrace for ever to our country, a reproach to her manhood and a denial of the lesson of her history, if young Ireland confined their efforts to remaining at home to defend the shores of Ireland from an unlikely invasion, or should shrink from the duty of proving on the field of battle that gallantry and courage which have distinguished their race all through history.*

I need not tell you this was very strong and heady medicine. It sent thousands of young men out, including many of the Volunteers. But where in history has a war not been fought for religion, morality, or right? Lenin, as you know, in November, denounced the imperialistic character of the war and condemned the social democratic leaders of Europe for involving their countries in it. The war was also vigorously opposed in Ireland by James Connolly. (In this gospel of hatred preached by the capitalist press it sees the denial of human brotherhood. *Irish Worker*, Nov. 1914.)

This all had immediate reactions in the Volunteers. As I say, the majority were Redmondites; I was myself. I got it from my father and his politics in North Louth. They were opposed by a much smaller group, the followers of Sinn Féin. They had been established in Louth too before I left, but were regarded as eccentrics, advocating physical force, self-reliance and home industry. They had very little influence. Anyway the political arguments raged hot and heavy within our battalion of the Volunteers, whether we should support the war or stay back and wait for some sort of a fight in Ireland. Before I could make up my mind however, I met with an accident in the bakery. I got a very severe electric shock. It was given me deliberately by the foreman in the bakery. He did it as a joke, not realising its consequences. It threw me against a machine. I got injuries to my head and was rendered unconscious. I was removed by my workmates in a coma to a dispensary in Meath Street nearby. Eventually, I ended up in the South Dublin Union, in the hospital of the poorhouse, being treated for epilepsy. I was in a state of rigour, unable to move. *Epilepsy* was what they wrote down on my health benefit certificate. I was placed in an epileptic ward with other poor patients. We were in a pauper hospital where the people they had attending us were the healthy paupers. It was all a great working class experience, though highly unwelcome to myself as I slowly gained some sort of consciousness of where I was. Here was a person returning to normality in a place with barred windows like a prison, surrounded by idiots, some of them having frequent seizures, struggling in their beds, yowling at night and walking the ward. It was like a scene from Dante's *Inferno*. I was there



about a month when the sheer horror of it, caused me to flee. I could not stick it any longer.

When I emerged, the split in the Volunteers was an accomplished fact. The National Volunteers, that is the followers of Redmond, had siphoned off ninety per cent of the recruits. Most of them must have joined up because we heard little more about them. The minority group, the Irish Volunteers continued under Eoin MacNeill, Bulmer Hobson, and the Sinn Féin leadership. However, I did not resume with them as I found them narrow on the religious question. Encouraged by my father I was becoming more interested in philosophical and social matters. There was a librarian at that time in charge of the library in Kevin Street, the nearest to our home, his name was Paddy Stevenson. He afterwards became the City Librarian. He was a progressive, had strong socialist views, and managed to get a lot of radical books into the public library. He was afterwards with Connolly in the G.P.O. in Easter Week.

#### REBELLION

Anyway, I read quite a lot on philosophy, the social sciences, and so on. When I resumed work again it was at Johnston Mooneys in Ballsbridge, where I was on night work in a rough confectionery bakery. I used to walk to and fro in the small hours of the morning. It was a great time to see Dublin, in the early morning hours. I was there until the rebellion of April, 1916, when of course I had to cease work. The rebellion was quite a surprise to me. In fact on that Monday prior to going on night work, I went in the afternoon to the cinema, to the De Luxe Cinema in Camden Street. Imagine my amazement when, on emerging, I saw soldiers lying prone on the pavement directly opposite outside Gorevans firing in the direction of Jacobs, which had been occupied by the rebels. For the rest of the week, surprising as it may seem now, people moved about looking at the rebellion. They kept away from O'Connell Street, but everywhere else they seemed unaware of the danger; the general impression was one of shock mixed with strong disapproval. My own strongest feeling was one of disbelief that this could happen. I had not expected a minority to persist in their idea of an insurrection. It did not seem credible.

When the executions came there was revulsion, sympathy with the leaders, if not approval. With me it was a bit more than that. I felt very strong indignation against Britain.

Immediately after the rebellion I got a job in Bewleys. It was day work which suited me much better. They also did very high-class confectionery. They still do. Made with the best of ingredients, no substitutes. I was still an improver. I had however joined the Irish

Bakers Union in 1915, and although conditions were good in Bewleys, I tried to encourage my workmates to join also. I did not succeed in this. Instead I found myself sacked. The foreman was an Englishman, Fred Andrews, very hostile to the Union. The boss then was Ernest Bewley, father of Victor and Alfred. He was not aware of my existence, and had no part in sacking me. He ran the cafe and shop, leaving the running of the bakery to Andrews.

#### WARTIME LONDON

I reported to the union. I was put on the slate entitling me to unemployment benefit since I was regarded as victimised. This allowed me to go out and get a day's work here and another day there. It was called slate money. However work was scarce at this time.

There had been a severe winter in the early part of 1917. Dublin was covered by snow and ice for weeks. Hence there was not much for me. On the days I was not working, which was most days, I went along to Gardiner Street to sign up. There I soon found that Britain was exercising a policy of economic conscription of the workless. Unemployment was being artificially created in order to force people to emigrate seeking work. She had introduced conscription in her own country in 1915. She therefore had a lot of workplaces that needed filling. If Irishmen were not prepared to go out and fight, then some sort of war work would be found for them. Unemployment was very bad, affecting even the bakers. The union, in order to ease its unemployment problem, offered what it called, commutation grants to its young members to emigrate. In this way they hoped to leave whatever casual work was available to the older members. The regulations in the labour exchange directed that when work was offered and refused the dole was cut off from the person concerned. Agents of the government manned the exchanges. They were constantly on the look-out for whom they might send to war work in England. It so happened that I and a number of my comrades were selected in this way, and directed to report for work to a lead factory at Rotherhithe in London. A number of us qualified for the commutation grants. We went with this party numbering twenty to London, in June 1917, and were lodged in a lodging house on Bow Road. Rotherhithe is one of the most squalid places in London. Our factory was right on the dockside, old and singularly unattractive. We travelled in the early morning by tube from Bow Road to Rotherhithe. Our hours were very long, fourteen hours daily, seven days a week. We had to work on Sunday, and were of course denied time off for Mass. The work itself was heavy, lifting and shovelling all day long, for a total wage of two pounds per week. There was no union to protect us, almost nothing then existed except the craft unions.

After a few weeks, the Dublin party took stock and decided that they would protest against these conditions. One of the factors that made the situation less tolerable was the poor relations that existed between these young Dublin lads and the elderly English workers, many of whom considered that we were unfairly taking the jobs of their sons and relatives. They looked upon us unfavourably in view of the rebellion of the previous year, which they regarded as an act of treachery. There was great resentment about that.

Our only recourse in these circumstances was to announce a strike. This was completely against the terms under which we went to London in the first place. It was also contrary to the Defence of the Realm Act. We did not care. We felt driven to it. We left the factory and announced that henceforth we were on strike. All of the Dublin party took this course. After a week or so, myself and another man were summoned, and brought before a civilian tribunal set up to adjudicate on issues where people were conscripted, but who might be entitled to exemption. Likewise they had power to send reluctant workers into the trenches. We gave an account of ourselves. Notes were taken by the chairman of our complaints. We were promised these would be investigated, meanwhile we were fined £2 each, in other words a full week's wages.

#### A CONSCRIPT

We all returned to work hoping for an investigation. Things however were worse even than before, with very marked hostility from our workmates. We therefore decided we must again strike. Knowing however that they would send military police after us on this occasion, since we had forfeited military exemption by our previous misdemeanours, some of us decided we would go on the run. I sought another sort of job which I found easily. I was building small hangars for the thousands of primitive bi-planes the Allies were now turning out against the Germans. The hangar I was working on was in Blackheath, an area that is long since built over. At that time much of it was open country. I stayed in the workingmens hostels known as the *Rowton Houses*. Baron Rowton, who had some connection with the Guinness's and who inspired them into going ahead with the Iveagh Hostel in Dublin, set them up for working men. You got a clean bed for the night in a small cubicle for one shilling. In the morning you could have a good breakfast for sixpence. However they were frequently raided by the military police on the trail of soldiers returned from France who did not want to return and absented themselves. I knew this of course, so I tried as far as possible to stay out at night. I moved about a lot, rarely staying two successive nights in any one of them.



This Saturday night I was in this Rowton House in New Cross when it was raided. I was taken off as I had no exemption papers; they grabbed some actual deserters also. We were lodged in New Cross police station where we remained until Monday morning. We were then brought before a local magistrate. He remanded each of us in military custody. I found myself taken off to the Duke of Yorks Schools, Chelsea, which was the headquarters of the London Irish Rifles.

I was immediately brought before a tribunal of officers. They told me they would do me a favour, they would leave me in this Irish regiment. This amused me a little because then and later I found very few Irishmen in the regiment. However, I quickly told them that I would not soldier, nor would I wear the uniform. I was objecting as an Irish Republican to serving in the army. They had met objectors before, one of the most persistent groups being among the Society of Friends. They tried to smooth over my objections by putting up the usual arguments, were we not engaged in a fight for small nations, and so on, all the propaganda that I was well used to, and was least likely to have any effect upon me.

I persisted in my objections which were then swiftly overruled. I was sent under escort to Winchester which was the training ground for this and other English regiments. We again went through the same procedure. I continued my objections strenuously. I was therefore brought before the commanding officer who directed that I be court-martialled. Well, I thought, this is it. I was hauled back to the cells, remanded for a week. I had a cell-mate, an Englishman, and a conscientious objector. He had a uniform on him. This evidently was the result of advice they received from their organisations. Clothing was forcibly removed; if an objector refused then to don a uniform he could be left in a semi-naked condition in a cold cell. My cell-mate was not a Quaker; he was a pacifist. In fact he called himself a Tolstoyian Anarchist. It was my first acquaintance with the social teachings of Leo Tolstoy. He told me that the enforcement of law was tyranny, and that we were not obliged to submit to a law which compelled us to commit violence upon one another. We used to have long discussions. He had already done a sentence of six months. I was eventually court-martialled, the charge being that I had disobeyed a lawful military command. I had been exempted service in favour of war work, but as I had absented myself from that, I would now be liable for military service. My willingness to come to London was turned into a trap. My reply to that was that I had come only because of British misrule in Ireland. The court-martial consisted of three officers. The adjutant of the regiment acted as prosecutor. I was assigned an officer in my defence, but of course I spoke myself. The case did not last more than half-an-hour, whereupon I was told that the verdict would be



*1916 Aftermath, British Tommy in a north side Dublin Street*



*April 1917. Ireland stands united.  
Eamonn De Valera and John Dillon share a platform at Ballaghderreen, Co. Roscommon*



promulgated in due course. I was then brought back to the cell.

After about a week the promulgation took place. It is quite an elaborate ceremony. An entire company of soldiers is drawn up in the barrack square. I was marched out under an escort of four soldiers with fixed bayonets. This clearly was intended to put the fear of God into everybody. It missed its point a little when one considers that the 'lucky' ones, namely the soldiers on parade, were bound for the trenches while the culprit, myself, was unlikely ever to go there. I knew this well. War enthusiasm had long evaporated in the face of wartime shortages, bad social conditions, and the high casualties.

The commanding officer then rode out on his horse accompanied by other officers on horseback. They were confronted by the adjutant, who proceeded to read out the findings of the courtmartial. These were that I was sentenced to two years hard labour.

#### PRISON

In a few days I was brought by redeaps to Wormwood Scrubs in London. I still had my civilian clothes, but these were now taken from me, and I was given the ordinary prison garb to wear. I became very introspective particularly as I was now in solitary confinement. I was in a cell on the ground floor, a punishment cell, isolated from all the others, with very thick walls. You could hear nothing. I began to torture myself, why should I now wear prison clothes when I refused to wear military attire? I suffered quite a lot in this way, particularly as this confinement, the reasons for which were never made known to me, lasted many weeks. The only time I could emerge from the cell was for a brief minute each morning, when I was escorted along to the end of the passage to empty my slop bucket and to fill a water container. At the same time they removed my bed, chair and table, leaving me only the flags to sit upon. I had of course, no books or reading matter. I was fed three times daily through a slot in the door, about seven inches square, with a drop leaf shelf. The food was delivered on a leather plate accompanied by a rubber mug. The spoon and knife were made from this same leather material, which left them quite useless for their function. These precautions, you were told, were to prevent you from taking your life.

Apart from the conditions, and extremely bad food which was frequently dirty, I became overcome with loneliness. To counteract this I commenced to whistle. I used to walk up and down the stone floor of the cell making as much noise as I could in my heavy boots — the laces of which had been removed — whistling loudly to myself. Fortunately I had a great repertoire of opera tunes, more particularly Verdi's operas. I would walk up and down the four little paces of my

cell whistling vigorously away until, after perhaps two or three hours, I eventually lay down or sat upon the floor.

I was warned about this whistling. These were rebel tunes. They were of course 'Il Trovatore' or 'Rigoletto', very martial I must admit. He was the composer of the Risorgimento, and I was very keen on them at that time. Anyway this old warder, an old Cockney, and a very ignorant man, though in other respects kindly, warned me that my whistling could be heard outside. It was completely against the regulations, and I must stop. But I could not stop. It was a subconscious reaction to the weeks of silence. I was not even aware when I started or when I was silent. Anyway this old warder booked me. A complaint was lodged, and the deputy governor came to my cell. I was not taken out even for the few moments of freedom when one might stand in line outside the governor's office. The deputy governor in his prison uniform, entered. He had a charge sheet in his hand. Looking me up and down, and dismissing any protest of mine, he announced that henceforth, and for the next six days I would be on a diet of bread and water only, for whistling Irish rebel songs.

I endured the next six days on prison bread — about a quarter loaf daily — and water. I can tell you I had less energy for whistling although I still could not stop. After a very short time they came to me, told me I was leaving, and instructed me to change into my civilian clothes. I could not understand what was happening, but I was soon to know. An escort of red caps awaited me within the gates, and I was driven in a military van to Wandsworth, in another part of London.

There I donned the garb again, but this time I was placed in an ordinary cell close to the other prisoners. I was allowed association to the extent that I was escorted from the cell for two hours daily, never speaking of course, since that was against the regulations, and placed in a workshop where we sewed mail bags. These were the heavy canvas bags formerly used by the post office. We were there under the eye of the warders. We could however communicate surreptitiously. In that way I found out that my fellow prisoners were a mixed lot, some were conscientious objectors doing their time. You could communicate without bothering with names; you were not interested in who they were but in what they were there for. The others in the workshop were ordinary criminals; they were in there on serious crimes, otherwise they would not have been there at all. They would have been in the trenches. Most of my companions therefore were London criminals, of the worst type. They would have been no good in the army.

We had one hour of exercise each day. We were released into a large prison yard where we walked in silence around a large circle, each one a respectable distance behind the other, and always with the hands clasped behind your back. You were not permitted to have them in any

other position, all signs, whispering or nods of recognition, were strictly forbidden. Nonetheless the routine was tolerable to me, and an immense improvement on Wormwood Scrubs.

At this time they had made certain changes in the military service acts which permitted conscientious objectors to opt for non combatant service. Quite a number, particularly the pacifists, agreed to this, and were taken away. Some however would not agree to it. They felt that by taking on any sort of job which directly released another into the fighting line, they were as good as taking part themselves. They would not go. We used to talk over these things in the restricted way allowed by the regulations. Some of the objectors, notably the Quakers, were allowed visitors. Now I never had a visit from anybody, although Alfie Byrne, who was an M.P. at this time, did try to find where I was. He raised the matter in the House of Commons but they would not tell him. Alfie, you know was very active in pursuing things for people, and although, not a Republican, was just as diligent in looking after their prisoners. Anyway the Quakers and some of the Socialists got visits from friends. Some managed to smuggle in newspapers, such as the *Times*, which had plenty of solid reading. If you were lucky you might get a page of it thrust at you, any page, it did not matter, but from it you might glean a few scraps.

#### FORCED INTO UNIFORM

This was November, 1917. We got to hear of the Petrograd Revolution — the October Revolution. Some of us who knew a little of the conditions in Czarist Russia were delighted with this. Even in the prison workshop we could smile. Someone even commenced to whistle the Red Flag which at that time I did not know. Yet it was composed by a Cavan man, Jim Connell\* whose brother was a member of my union. Jim Larkin came from Newry. The parents of James Connolly came from Monaghan, and here was I in Wandsworth during the Petrograd Revolution from County Louth, all of us, if I dare say so, from the one little corner, the armpit of Ireland.

Anyway they blamed me for this whistling. My reputation evidently had followed me from Wormwood Scrubs. I was removed to a punishment cell in a military part of the jail where discipline was much more rigorous. There was no heat in the cell. It was now late November and I need hardly say, in such an old stone building it was both weepy and cold. I was held there a few days until, on this day a military officer accompanied by two Red Caps entered. They brought

\* Connell emigrated to England at an early age. He wrote the *Red Flag* in 1889 setting it at first to the air of the *Green Cockade*. It was adopted by the British Labour Party as its anthem in 1924 on the motion of George Lansbury, being fervently sung at the close of each annual conference. Connell returned to Ireland later to work on the Dublin docks. He died in February 1929 his death being noted in *An Phoblacht*.



a military uniform, shirt, puttees and boots. The officer ordered me to put these on. I refused. He gave me another chance. I refused again. He nodded to the two policemen. They grabbed me, pushed me over and gave me a severe pummeling. They pulled the prison clothes off me, and then proceeded to remove the bed, and all the furniture from the cell, leaving only the military uniform in a heap upon the floor.

It was now dark in the cell. Taking the military clothing, I spread some of it upon the floor, putting the rest of it over me, like a very ineffectual bed. Needless to say it was cold and draughty with a penetrating little wind entering under the cell door. I shivered endlessly. I had already developed bronchitis in the prison. This now became much worse. I wheezed and coughed all night. They had been observing me through the spyhole. After two days of this, the door opened again, and a military doctor with two orderlies entered. He gave me a thorough examination, then directed that I be shifted to the prison hospital.

#### OSCAR TO THE RESCUE

Hospital, as you know, is still very much a part of prison. The cells are the same, but some may be bigger. The diet is slightly better. I was there a few weeks when another military doctor came to me. When he learned I was Irish, and from Dublin, he immediately started talking about Oscar Wilde. He may have been that type of man. He was very gentle, rather effeminate. He thought I should know a lot about Wilde, but I knew nothing. He was a bad name to me. The doctor however, had read and memorised Wilde, and used to quote his poetry to me. He had been educated in Portora, Enniskillen, where Wilde had also spent some time.

He delayed my departure from the hospital, while advising me, when I would go, to avail of the non-combatant service. I had begun to think of this myself too, especially when I realised the lengths to which they might go. He confirmed this. *If you go back there, said he, they will place the same uniform on the floor. You may put it on or you may lie naked and you will, if you are lucky, end up here again. But you may well die there, and if you do no one is ever going to learn the circumstances.*

I thought long and hard about my situation. *Alright, I said, tell them I am ready to volunteer to act as a cook.* I was quite competent as a cook, and of course I was a fully trained baker. Foolishly I trusted them that having volunteered I would now be given a non-combatant job. I was led back to the cell where I donned the uniform. A sergeant major now entered, *Fine, said he, now get out for a spot of drill.* I explained that I had volunteered to cook. *Oh, said he, we cannot have*

*non-combatant soldiers. A soldier must train so that he can defend himself.* I was back to where I started, only now I was wearing their uniform. I was filled with mortification at myself, not knowing what to do. Still, I refused point blank to drill; I would not. They then arrested me again, and this time transferred me to my third prison, the military prison at Aldershot. It was a terribly rigorous place. The worst of the military offenders were there, men that would do anything rather than go back to France. People with self-inflicted wounds and disablements. There was a lot of that. As a result of this the authorities made the regime in the glasshouse as intolerable as possible so that these fear-stricken men would volunteer to get out of it.

One of the rigours of the place was the system of pack drilling, taking all your equipment, blankets, haversack, and going through a series of long and fatiguing exercises, all done at the double. They allowed no let up. Yet the drilling was the only way you could communicate with anyone else. So I went drilling. Gradually, I knew, I was slipping into their routine. I was being ensnared. At each little step I tried to justify myself. At the same time I was annoyed at myself for compromising, yet all the time solacing my conscience by repeating to myself, you cannot stand alone, you must communicate with somebody.

#### ON THE WESTERN FRONT

I suffered a lot of mental anguish that way. But I had now got company, you had to have a companion in order to drill. And with a companion you could have a harmless conspiracy. I had not much selection. The company was terrible, the worst of criminals. There was one fellow in the cell next to me. I do not know to this day if he was malingering, some of them could do it so artfully, breaking up their cells, pretending to be insane. This fellow was a Welshman. He used to make a din in the middle of the night, they would come then, rough him up, and put him in a straightjacket. In his moments, he was a very good singer. I could hear him in his cell singing Welsh songs and Irish songs, which he appeared to like. Yet, when I would speak surreptitiously to him, he would criticise me as a conscientious objector. He put up to be patriotic. He had been a regular soldier in a Welsh regiment, a volunteer. He explained his plight however, by relating how he had taken part in an execution in France. It was the execution of a young soldier, an acquaintance of his, for cowardice. The youth broke down completely, and had to be dragged and tied at the place of execution. My companion was one of the firing party. As a result of that bleak early morning experience, the culmination, I suppose, of the months he had already spent in the trenches — they had been in some of the hardest fought parts of Passchendaele — his

nerves had given way. The people in Aldershot however would not believe him. They said he was malingering.

I got into his company. I also joined two Londoners. They were criminals, ordinary house burglars, but they had been conscripted, and had no respect for military orders or discipline. Not that they had any principles about this. They just hated the army. They spent their time, when they were not drilling, planning what they would do when the war would be over. A life of crime.

I gravitated into their company. We used to try to help one another. Then this night they took the four of us out, handcuffed us together and announced that we were going to Folkstone. We climbed into a lorry, and travelled from Aldershot to Folkstone, where we were put aboard a ship, still handcuffed, left overnight in a cell, and landed the next morning at Calais. We were then marched from the quayside to the British military prison where we were placed in separate cells. I had not the least idea what might happen now, but I had not long to wait. After cooling my heels for an hour, the door opened, and an officer accompanied by two Red Caps entered. He read out my name and an army number. *You are being sent on a course of cooking*, he boomed at me, *You will be taken by train to Rouen, and you will be trained into cooking for officers.*

Imagine my surprise at my choice of non-combatant duty arriving at last. I was immediately despatched with another party; I arrived near Rouen, and I remained there for two weeks at a special school devoted solely to army cooking. I liked it very much. For one thing you got good food, the best food available. After all my privations I can assure you I did not stint myself. Mother England owed it to me.

However all good things come to an end. The fortnight's training was up, and I found myself sent to a base very near the front at Etaples. I was cooking now, cooking in the officers mess of a battalion of the Kings Own Royal Lancasters in the 55th Division. It was now the month of March, 1918, and as you know the Germans released a great offensive on the 21st of the month. I got wounded, a shrapnel wound, on the same day. I was very near the front, near Arras, and the Germans succeeded in pushing their way in upon us. I was sent down the line, from one field-post to another. It took me from the 21st, which was Holy Thursday until Easter Sunday evening to reach the hospital. The whole front was in turmoil, the Germans having broken through. Eventually I got to a hospital near Rouen. After a few weeks there, I was sent to a convalescent home at Bushy. I was there for a further month. It was there that I saw much self-inflicted illness; it was being done simply to stay away from the front. A favourite way of keeping ill was to smoke iodine. Every soldier had a little first aid pack in which there was a glass tube of iodine. They would put a little on the



top of a cigarette, and inhale it. In next to no time they had a temperature of over a hundred. They felt and looked really ill. It was most unpleasant. The chest became congested. This frequently resulted in lasting damage.

Another trick was to obtain an ordinary 303 rifle bullet, which even in a hospital, was common. They would take the cap off, releasing strings of cordite within the chamber, the brass part of the bullet. They would chew and digest this cordite, which being poisonous, induced a high temperature and an inflamed appearance. The medical staff were either too unskilled — a lot were very young, or they did not have time to investigate. How could they? They simply extended the hospitalisation of the soldier concerned. He gave a wink and a smile to his buddies, and an ever increasing number became involved. Demoralisation was widespread. One smelled it everywhere. Thousands wanted out of the war at any cost. They were homesick. They were terrorised by the slaughter they had seen in the front line. There was nothing beautiful about this war, nor indeed is there anything beautiful about any war.

#### BACK TO DUBLIN

By the time I left the hospital, it was July, 1918. The German offensive had spent itself in June, they were now in a helter-skelter retreat. The few miles of northern France that they had gained in their three month offensive at the cost of one million lives were lost in a few weeks. I joined my regiment — of course I had no choice — and I continued to cook for them on the road to Brussels, and in that city. I followed them into Germany as part of the army of occupation, to Cologne, where I remained until well into 1919. This was my first taste of foreign travel, and I had begun to like it. It was a strange time and a strange way to see Europe, but at least the cities and towns that we now visited were intact, even if the people looked gaunt and war weary. I was returned to Ireland with other Irishmen in the summer of 1919 and demobbed at the Curragh. I returned hot-foot to Dublin. It was strange to be coming there on a British Army pass but I felt thrilled to be home again. Never did I feel so glad at seeing a city. It was only two and a half years since I had left it but it seemed an age.

Work in my trade was still slack. I continued to work on the slate, do a day here and a day there, accordingly as our union was informed of the vacancies. It went on this way for a few years. Things were very bad economically, and showed no sign of improving. We had the Black and Tans here, the War of Independence was in full spate. But these events largely passed me by. The Treaty period came and went, and the Civil War then struck us. My sympathies were with Eamonn De Valera, and

what they called the Irregulars. I was not greatly touched by this struggle however; I had matured more in my political views, and had become definitely socialist. While my sympathies were with the Republicans, I did not expect a great deal from them. I regarded them as slightly to the left of the Treatyites. The difference between them was not sufficient to induce me to join them or to participate. I could look at things now in a more detached way, perhaps it was a form of frustration.

#### IN PARIS

At any rate these feelings, combined with an inability to obtain work, induced me to leave again. Another workmate and myself decided that we would try Paris. Work was plentiful there, and I had a fair amount of French from my school-going days, though it was not the best of 'spoken' French. Indeed, when we reached Paris, I had some difficulty in the first few weeks in making myself understood, though I quickly got over that. At this time they were building the Au Printemps department store on the Boulevard Haussmann near L'Opera. The French do things very elegantly. This was a superbly constructed classical building. It helped me to understand the fine points of architecture. There are two such stores belonging to the same firm. One is the Galerie Lafayette at the start of the Rue Lafayette; the other, at which I worked upon the building, was Au Printemps.

We lodged in another arondissement at Clichy not far from Montmartre. It was a rough lodging house, peopled mostly by Lascars, those are the North Africans one meets selling carpets. I remained in Paris for about six months until I began to feel homesick for Dublin again. I returned, back again to the bakery trade game. Things were somewhat better now. I succeeded in getting a permanent job with Bewleys of Westmoreland Street. Old Mr. Bewley had heard from the Quakers in London about my being with them in Wandsworth, this caused him to seek me out. Shortly after this they opened their bakery in Grafton Street, and I was appointed assistant foreman there. Ultimately I became foreman. Bewleys was now totally unionised. I continued my interest in the union, and was shortly elected on to the executive. I was a trustee of Dublin No. 1 Branch, while I was at the same time, a foreman. This was a unique situation in Dublin where one could have such jobs but rarely held both. I continued in this way until 1935 when I left Bewleys and went to work for a while with Johnston Mooney & O'Brien. In 1927 I joined the Irish Labour Party. The General Secretary of our union was Denis Cullen. Himself and Archie Heron went forward in one of the North Dublin constituencies as candidates on their behalf. As my union was affiliated, myself and

other younger members felt we should join and help Cullen in his campaign. Both he and Heron were elected, and Cullen became parliamentary whip of the party. The Labour Party as such did not do particularly well, being returned with only thirteen seats.

In 1933, having met Peadar O'Donnell, I attended some of the meetings which led up to the foundation of Republican Congress. There were a number of us at that time who were very critical of the activities of some churchmen here. We saw the Catholic Church as linked to some extent with the development of fascism in Europe. Mussolini had seized power in Italy in 1922, Salazar in Portugal in 1932, Hitler in Germany in 1933 and Horthy in Hungary. We did not feel that Republicanism, even as expressed by Republican Congress, was strong enough to counter this trend. Traditional Republicanism in this respect seems to be, that while they will condemn the Hierarchy for being pro-British and reactionary, they do not criticise and condemn the Church as a church. Some of us, who had turned towards rationalism, did not consider this worthy of our support. Accordingly, we started the Irish Secular Society in 1933. Among the founder members of the Society was Capt. Jack White, who had trained Connolly's Citizen Army in 1914-1916, Denis Johnston of Dunganon, the playwright, Mary Manning, the critic. I was President, and Owen Sheehy-Skeffington was Vice-President. We found it difficult to get a place to meet. Not many wanted us. We met therefore by stealth in the rooms in Lincoln Place of the Contemporary Club. I wish sometime someone would write up its history. It was founded by Prof. Oulton of Trinity College, in the eighties. Sheehy-Skeffington's father was a member of it, as well as some prominent people in Sinn Féin, including O'Leary Curtis. His son was secretary of our society, while I was a member of the Contemporary Club. I had been a member since the twenties; it was a kind of debating society, holding its meeting on Saturday night. The past-president was the late Dr. Roulette, a Senator who always took an independent line. It was not a drinking club. You could have a cup of tea only.

Women were excluded from the club. As one could raise and debate any subject, it was not felt to be a suitable forum for women, though they were permitted to attend every fourth Saturday. Women are not sufficiently developed to participate in fully open discussions, though this viewpoint would hardly be listened to today. All of the people in the forefront of artistic life here, writers from Yeats to Russell, painters, actors and playwrights were invited to take part.

One of our meetings received some unfavourable notice in the *Irish Press* around 1933. This was whipped up by some of the Catholic weeklies. The Contemporary Club ceased to welcome us, so we commenced to meet in each other's homes. We were few so we had



no trouble fitting in the average size sitting room. In the summer we might meet *al fresco* in the Dublin Mountains. Finally, shortly after the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War, we disbanded and sent our remaining small nest-egg of funds to the Republican Government in Madrid.

I became National Organiser of our union in 1936, and General Secretary in 1942. We commenced to build Four Province House, in 1946. I was the inspiration force there, though it grew, oddly enough, from our Disputes Committee. They had ironed out most of the non-union shops; they therefore decided to turn their energies to something beneficial. I intended that the new building should cater for the educational and social needs of our members. We bought the Baptist Church on the site for £10,000, demolished it, and commenced to build. At this time we had a choir and an orchestra. It was but a short step to create a film society and ballet classes for the children of members. I bought 8,000 educational books for the library, I had works by Marx, and the great revolutionaries, but if I had, I also had the works of Christian writers which were intended to balance them. We ran a restaurant in the library so that people had a chance of becoming acquainted with our books. But it all came to naught. A whispering campaign was started by some Catholic activists who did not like the idea of some workers educating themselves. They worked upon the executive committee, and persuaded groups who were booking dances with us to boycott the place. I knew the crunch was coming. Then one week while I was abroad at a food union meeting, a dance-band leader attached to the place invited in Greene's, the second-hand book people. They bid a few hundred pounds upon the 8,000 volumes and removed them. It was the end of heresy in Dublin. It was the end too of the ballet classes, the cinema club, the records, the choir and the orchestra. The whole cultural edifice which we had worked so hard to create within our building was wound down.

When one looks at the selfish barren world created by our modern consumer society, with the poorest of our youth exposed constantly to the mass manipulation of the media, one wonders what harm exposure to the teachings of Marx, Engels, or even James Connolly, could have done to our young people in the fifties.

*John Swift was appointed General Secretary of the National Bakers, Confectioners and Allied Workers Trade Union in 1942. From 1942 to 1945 he was Vice-President of the Dublin Trades Council. In 1945 he was its President. He was President of the Irish Congress of Trade Unions in 1946-47. In 1964 he became President of the International Foodworkers Union at Stockholm. He is President of the Ireland-USSR Friendship Society since 1964. Since 1974 he has been President of the Irish Labour History Society.*

## Tomás Ó Maoileóin

Sean Forde,  
Commdt. Gen. I.R.A.



I was born in Tyrrellspass, Co. Westmeath, in 1894. Both my father, William, and mother, Máire, were strong Parnellites and Irish nationalists, although at that time, Parnell was long laid to rest. They had seen Parnellism as a sort of parliamentary extension of the Fenian tradition in which both grew up. We heard them speak proudly of the obstructionism in the British Parliament; of the strategies operated by Biggar and Dillon, whereby the business of Parliament was held up. If this obstructionism held up Britain's war effort in the Balkans, Africa or the North West Frontier, or helped to publicise the awful conditions of the Fenian prisoners in Portland Jail in Dorset, so much the better. They supported Michael Davitt, because he stood for fair conditions for Irish tenant farmers, a policy first propounded by other Fenians like John Devoy and John O'Leary. As a small boy I stood on a platform with Davitt at The Downs when my father was chairman. His picture, "The Dead Irish Hero", hung in our home at Meedin, alongside "Emmet's Speech from the Dock". They had hoped, of course, that this militant Fenian and Parliamentary tradition would merge and be translated into an extra parliamentary and revolutionary agitation. (1) But that was not to be.

My parents, although deeply religious in most respects, abhorred ecclesiastical interference in cultural and national affairs. This inevitably caused some difficulties, especially as my mother was a schoolteacher. When I came to make my first confession, I had to go to another parish, because my mother refused to teach me the prayers in English. She had been inspired by the recently founded Gaelic League, (1893), of Douglas Hyde, Eoin MacNeill and Fr. Eugene O'Growney; possibly also by the strong economic and cultural nationalism of D. P. Moran in *The Leader*. (2) Something of the trenchant spirit of his *Battle of Two Civilisations* — which still goes on, though Gaelic Ireland may be losing it now — entered into her. The Irish language and Irish history became the cultural keystone of our

home and of the school to such an extent that it brought the Board of Education down upon her. They considered there was too much of it. The parish priest, the officially appointed Manager, did not support her. He had his own *gearán*. She taught the children their prayers in Irish, and worse still, the Catechism in use in the school was the 'Fenian' one of Archbishop John MacHale. I don't know if it was that, or the fact that she would not teach the English hymn, "Faith of Our Fathers", that turned the priest.

When I was about eight years of age — my brother, Séamus, was almost eleven — she was sacked by the Board, but that could not have happened without the connivance of that priest. She refused to leave the school, so, after she had staged a sit-in for more than a week, he sent the bailiffs and police to put her out. When they failed to do this, he joined in it himself, and there was a great *ruaille buaille* but in the end she had to go.

My mother was born, Máire Mulavin, in Castletowngeoghan, in the sixties of the last century. All her Irish was book learning or what she picked up from travelling people, the journeymen tailors, tinsmiths and cattle dealers of that time. She never turned one of them from the door. The native tongue had long died out in that part. When she died, she had a *foclóir* of more than a thousand words and *corr fhochal* gathered. In the circumstances, much of our early schooling was given at home. She taught Irish to boys and girls of the neighbourhood at night. That was a time when people would do those things and did not need payment for it.

About this time, the controversy about getting Irish as a required subject for the Matriculation in the new University was all the rage.<sup>(3)</sup> She disagreed strongly with another college for Dublin, as she felt it must drive the religious rifts deeper and force the North into the backwoods. She would have preferred to see Trinity College expanded and become a genuine non-denominational university. Such was not to be. Once again the Catholic bishops and the British Government, in unholy alliance, got what they both wanted: a rigorous divide of young loyalists in Trinity from seoinín nationalists in Earlsfort Terrace. From what they tell me now, the majority in the new Belfield are even more seoinín and culturally rootless.

My mother did all she could to frustrate this, writing to *An Craoibhín* and to Dr. O'Hickey, the courageous professor of Irish in Maynooth, whom Rome cold-shouldered later on. A saintly man in the real sense, he was a regular visitor to our house. Till the day of her death, she had his picture by her, and written upon it: *Sagart Gaelach a dúnmharaíodh ag easpaig ghallda na hÉireann*.<sup>(4)</sup>

My father was a small farmer, and a quieter man entirely. He was born in England and lived there for thirteen years before coming back



to Ireland, to his own native sod in Westmeath. We used to hear that they had to leave because his uncle had fired at the local landlord, Boyd Rochfort. *Many's the house he levelled, many's the girl he destroyed, many's the heart he broke*, my grandmother used to say. *If Old Nick hasn't him now by the throat, there isn't a God in Heaven*. That was the middle of the 19th century, the heyday of Irish landlordism and the Established Church; then they lived a life as sheltered as the aristocrats of Russia. Of course not all of them were that bad, but too many were.

#### LIAM MELLOWS

About this time my elder brother, Séamus, who was going for teaching, entered an essay at Mullingar Feis. The adjudicator, a priest, was not too satisfied with the views expressed on Tone, O'Connell and The Young Irelanders, but he gave him the prize. Liam Mellows happened to be present — he was travelling organiser for *Na Fianna* at the time — and heard the essay. The upshot was he swore him into the Irish Republican Brotherhood and he also enrolled me as a member of the Fianna. When Séamus came home, he enlisted our young Seosamh into the organisation. Liam spent many a while with us after that. He taught us how to handle guns, and to make explosives. He had great military knowledge and was well-read on all the great campaigns of history. His father had been in the English Army, but his mother was a great Irishwoman, descended straight from the patriots of Wexford. I have rarely met anyone with such an attractive personality. *The day will come*, he used to say to us, as he took our little class in history. A good man too at sports, at playing the violin or singing. One great all rounder, you could say. The constabulary were always after him seeing what contacts he was making and where he was going. But Liam would cycle ahead of them or cut across the fields and give them the slip. He took a great delight in that.

There was some land agitation going on about this time. The Brotherhood were unwilling to become deeply involved in what, too often, was mere greed by other smallholders. But we would do anything to upset the constabulary and keep them busy. It was about this time (1911) that I first fired into a barrack, the barrack at Dalystown. It kept them busy investigating for a week.

In October, 1913, inspired by the example of Carson's Volunteers, Eoin MacNeill, an Ulsterman himself, wrote in *An Claidheamh Soluis* advocating the formation of a body of Irish Volunteers. The Brotherhood immediately took up the matter with MacNeill, although they wished to remain in the background. A committee(5) was set up, of which only three were I.R.B. members, and a public meeting called

for the Rotunda Rink on November, 25th. It was a great success. Thousands were enrolled on the first evening. It quickly spread throughout the country. I was close to Mellows at the meeting, speaking later to MacDiarmada, who was well known in our house, and for whom my mother had often carried messages. Padraic Pearse I met there for the first time. I had no sense of the historic at that first meeting, since I knew of him only as a writer in Irish, and one who ran a most unusual private school at Rathfarnham.

1913 was the year also that my father died. He found it hard to scrape a living from the land, never having much, and my mother being no longer in her post. He was only forty-six, a young enough age even for those times. He never learned Irish, but he knew the prayers and many of the songs by heart.

The great lock-out was now on in Dublin. We were interested in it, mainly to see how far it might push the authorities. It was then that we heard for the first time of James Connolly and his Citizen Army. I went around to Liberty Hall. I saw the soup kitchens at work under Countess Markievicz, but no sign of General Connolly. In July the guns came at last for the Volunteers. They had been bought by Roger Casement in Germany and brought to Howth in the *Asgard* by Erskine Childers and Mary Spring-Rice. They were all converts from British Imperialism to the cause of Ireland. Two of them were to die for it. Séamus was at Howth that day, and later helped to get them safely through the fields at Donnycarney, when the military and police tried to block them at Clontarf. They were sitting ducks because there was no ammunition in the guns and few of them knew how to use the Mausers anyway. Most of the guns they rescued that day, they left with the Christian Brothers at Marino. A temporary hiding place, it was also the safest one. A week later, when the remainder of the 1,500 guns came to Kilcoole in Wicklow. Séamus, with Liam Mellows, Con Colbert, Bulmer Hobson and some more, was again present. This time there was no interference.

#### THE RISING

We knew for weeks before Easter, 1916, that it was the date of the Rising. Liam Mellows had warned us to be ready. On the Thursday, Séamus came home from Limerick, where he had a teaching post. We were to be at the Four Roads, Donore, at one o'clock on Sunday afternoon, along with the people from Tullamore, Drumraney, Ballycastle and Athlone. We were to break the rail link to the west, then we were to march to Shannon Harbour and effect a link with Liam Mellows' forces holding Ballinasloe. It sounded like '98 all over again, *Ach, ní mar a siltear, bítear.*

There were seventy Volunteers in Tyrrellspass, but only seven answered the call that morning. Of the seven, three were ourselves. Some, I suspect, joined in our parts only as a means towards grabbing land. We had only a few guns between us; two Howth rifles, two .22 rifles and some shotguns. Séamus had a .32 revolver and I had an automatic. The other Volunteers had shotguns. We expected that, if we reached Galway City, there would be a supply of arms there. We left the house early, and the seven of us travelled, walking and in a side car, to Donore. A peeler tried to follow us along the way from Ballynagore, but we gave him the brush off. Séamus and I held him up and took the valves from his bicycle. We also searched him, as we would have welcomed another gun. He told us he would have to report this interference with the law. At Donore we met up with "Major" McCormack, who told us that the Rising had been postponed. There were only two others at the meeting place. Word had come from Dublin to McCormack's of Drumraney, through Professor Liam Ó Briain, then a student. He later took part in St. Stephen's Green. Home we went by Kilbeggan, not wishing to meet the energetic peeler from Ballynagore. A reluctant motorcar owner took the guns through Kilbeggan, otherwise we would have had to pass around the town. That surely was the first car commandeered in the name of the Irish Republic.

Monday evening we came together again. Séamus had been to Drumraney meanwhile seeking information, and I had gone to Tullamore. By now we knew there was a fight going in Dublin, but no one seemed to know very much about it. We resolved to be in it somehow, that Westmeath, which never had figured much in the history books, would strike. With three more, we went down to Ballycastle to breach the railway. We tried blowing a bridge, but we were not too successful. With the aid of one of the permanent way men, we lifted some lengths of track instead. Meanwhile Séamus went off across the Shannon in a boat, seeking information and a possible tie up with Liam Mellows. About ten of us stayed put in the house at Meedin.<sup>(6)</sup> It was there that we were raided by police on Tuesday, trying to arrest us. A volley of shots out the window put an end to their attempt. It did not seem much at the time, but I was intensely proud afterwards, when I learned how few places outside Dublin had struck a blow in that week. And Meedin was one of them.

Pat Bracken from Tullamore returned with Séamus late on Wednesday night. He had been around east Galway and Offaly, but the story was the same everywhere. The countermand had done its work and the boys had stayed at home. When they heard of fighting in Dublin, they were confused as to what they should do. Militarily they could not do anything. They were disorganised, and the element of



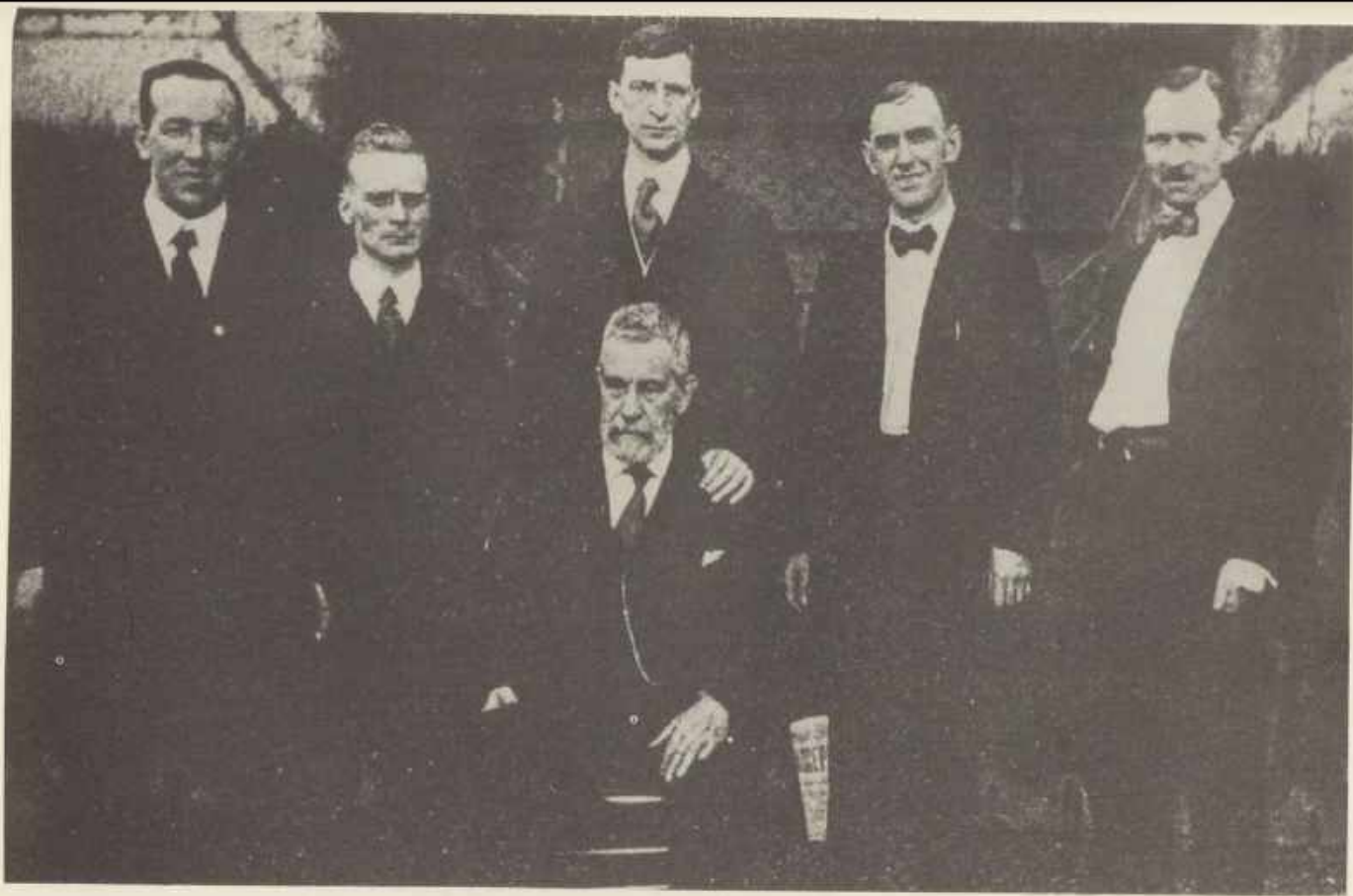
surprise was gone. To have attempted to take a post or hold a village would have been a useless sacrifice. It could achieve nothing on the Wednesday or the Thursday of Easter Week. Besides, holding strong-points would not be our method of warfare, as the succeeding years against the Tans would prove. A combination of new military tactics and political cunning was what would be needed. We saw to that later. We had the new military tactics sure enough in the twenties, before anyone else, but, *mo bhrón*, were we short on the political cunning!

Liam Mellows had come back from open arrest in England with the help of Nora Connolly and his brother Barney. With amazing coolness for a young girl under twenty, she conveyed him, the week previous, from Leek in Staffordshire, via Glasgow and Belfast, dressed as a priest. He arrived in east Galway a few days before the Rising, and gave the signal on the Tuesday. He had about seventy Volunteers, including ten Cumann na mBan. They captured the police barracks at Oranmore and attacked Athenry. Earlier they had planned an attack on the police at Clarenbridge. The local priest came out and persuaded them to withdraw, which, I suppose, in the circumstances was the only thing they could do, though I doubt if I would have agreed with him.

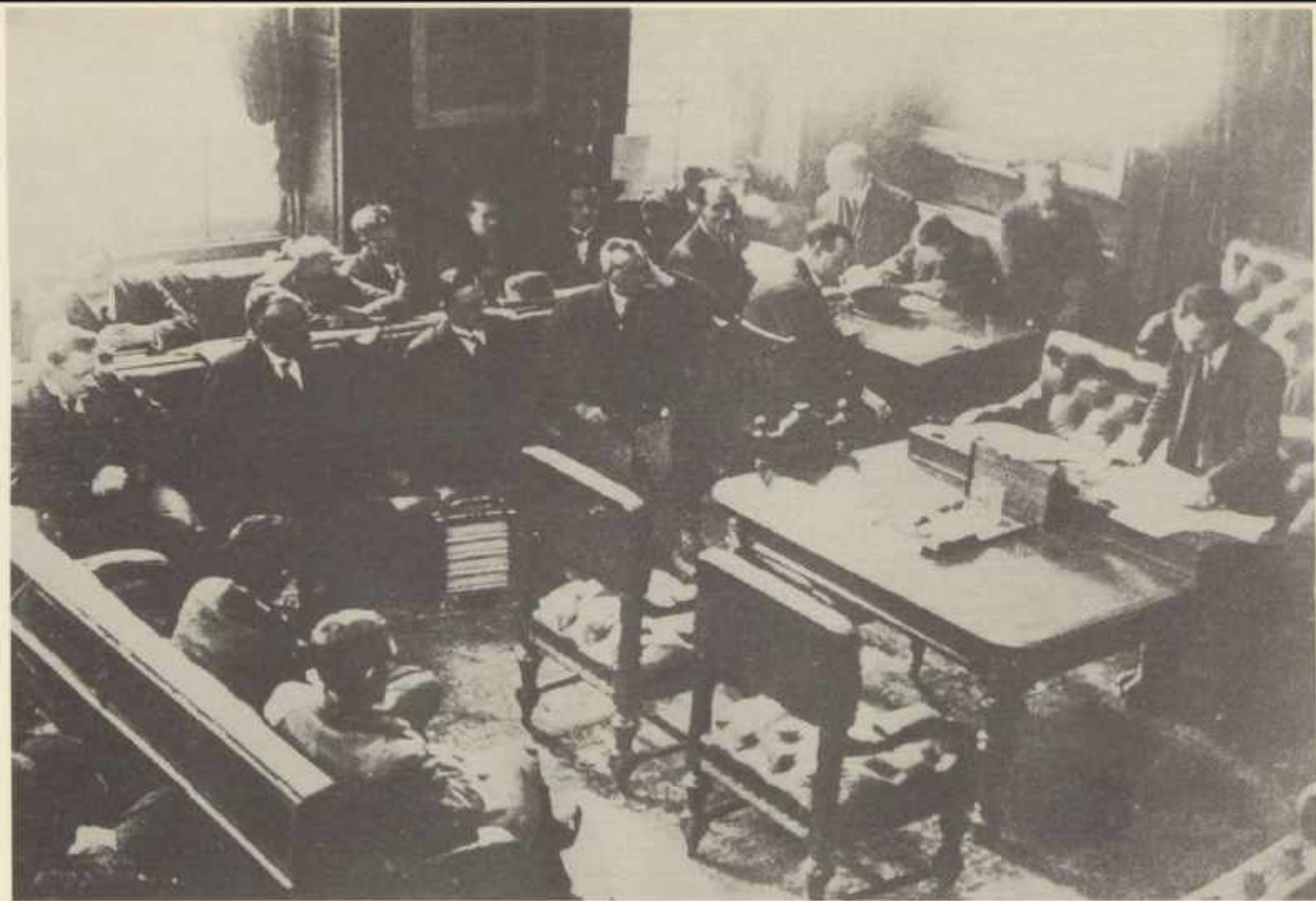
The constabulary came again to our house on Thursday evening, and again on Saturday morning. We fired a few bullets in their direction, and they cleared off again. They were not anxious to press it. There were nine of us left in the house, but, on the Monday, when news came that the fight was finished in Dublin, the six Volunteers(7) from the neighbourhood and from Tullamore cleared off. Séamus went off by train from Portarlinton, hoping to slip back unobserved to his school in Limerick — it was the Jesuit Crescent College and they sacked him nine months after when he returned from internment — but he had no luck. Outside the city, the train was stopped and he was taken off.

#### AFTERMATH

On Thursday, the British soldiers came and surrounded Meedin. My mother refused to admit them into the barricaded house, as it was one of her principles that a raiding party should not be admitted, they should be forced to break in. I was knocked down by a blow on the neck, after a small automatic, a .25 Browning, had been found on me. That was all they did find because we had time to transport the guns to safety. Joseph and myself were held for a time in the local barracks at Tyrrellspass, and were then conveyed to Mullingar. I was held a night there. Joseph, being only seventeen, was sent home. I was then brought to Kilmainham Prison, where I spent a night. The next morning I joined the others at Richmond Barracks.(8) On the way



*June 1919. De Valera arrives in the United States. His hand rests upon the old Fenian John Devoy. Both men would shortly develop a deep antipathy and, when the time came, Devoy would go Free State. From the left is Harry Boland, Liam Mellows, Patrick McCartan, Diarmuid Lynch*



*Late 1920. The now suppressed Dail in session.  
The picture may be one taken in a front room in Mountjoy Square, Dublin*



there. Séamus had been insulted and molested, but I saw none of that. I arrived there on Friday. Sean MacDiarmada was still alive and in the same room with me. He was in high spirits. *You have a great chance now, seeing they have waited so long*, some of the lads said; *they may not execute you*. He just laughed at that. He knew his fate was sealed. Sure enough, on the 12th May, he was executed along with James Connolly, for whose blood the *Independent* had been shrieking.<sup>(9)</sup> Most of the executions had already taken place, but the real import of the Rising had not yet had an opportunity to sink in.<sup>(10)</sup>

There were twenty-five to a room in Richmond, with timber floors and two blankets a man. By clubbing together, three of us could make a "bed" with two blankets under and four over, and with our shoes stuck under them for pillows. Three weeks we spent like that.

Some few days after, myself, Gearoid O'Sullivan from West Cork — he was afterwards Free State Army Adjutant General — and six more got involved in a "bucket strike". We refused to empty the buckets from the soldiers latrines. We considered that prisoners of war should not be involved in menial work of that kind. Some prisoners thought, however, that once you were arrested, you must accept reasonable orders. One of those that day was Terence MacSwiney, afterwards the Lord Mayor of Cork who defied the English for 74 days on hunger strike in Brixton. (I tell this only to show how confusing life in a jail can be and how important it is to have your own organised discipline). The recalcitrant ones were lined up against the wall and barrels of guns directed upon us. A Captain Orr was in charge. *You have ten seconds to make up your minds*, said he. *Don't waste your ten seconds*, said I, as we confronted him. It was an empty gesture on his part, because now everyone wanted to take our places. Hastily we were shoved into cells and left there for the night, but there was nothing more they could do about it, and we had to be let go in the morning. That was the first time I saw Robert Barton, cousin of Erskine Childers, still in English uniform, but soon to join us. He released us from the cells. Asquith, the Prime Minister, visited Richmond while we were there. He actually asked me if I had any complaints. *If we are prisoners of war*, I said, *why are our leaders being executed?* I did not realise it at the time, but I was in some danger myself. They held us longer because they considered courtmartialling us, but they then decided not to.

After three weeks in Richmond — by which time there were nearly two thousand prisoners in the place — we were ordered to march again. This time it was to the North Wall, and this time the attention given to us by the people was very different. Everywhere the groups clapped and shouted. Tricolour flags appeared. They waved at us. More rushed out to shake hands. We knew that the whole spirit of the nation had changed. General Maxwell had done good

work. He had won a great victory for the sixteen dead men of Easter.

O but we talked at large before  
The sixteen men were shot,  
But who can talk of give and take.  
What should be and what not  
While those dead men are loitering there  
To stir the boiling pot?

I don't want to spend too much time now on what happened in the prison camps. It has all been chronicled before. Larry Ginnell, MP visited us regularly. I had taught him some of his Irish. Mrs. Gavan Duffy came too and spoke to me in Irish. The warder objected, but we paid no heed. Some of us spent about ten weeks in the cells in Wandsworth in London, before being sent to the internment camp at Frongoch. It lies in a gloomy part of Merioneth in South Wales, backward and lonely. Camp One was part of an old grain store, and was laid out in conventional style with hutments. The grain store, where I was, was hot and suffocating that summer. The rats in it were so numerous that two Volunteers were appointed on each floor to drive them off while we slept. We were our own masters however, inside the barbed wire. Food was brought in daily by the guards. We cooked it and supervised our own cleaning and discipline. Internal control on these lines was to become the norm in Republican camps thereafter. Wherever the authorities were not willing subsequently to accord it, they had a problem on their hands. We received one letter a week, rigorously censored; any remarks they did not like were cut out with a scissors. Needless to say my mother's letters arrived looking like paper windows, with nothing in them. Later on in the jails of the twenties and thirties, the Staters did the same thing. Will people in authority never learn sense?

Mick Staines from Dublin was the O.C. in Camp One with Commandant Brennan-Whitmore under him. On the camp council were Henry Dixon, an old solicitor from Dublin who had been in the I.R.B., — they were a power there — Collins, Richard Mulcahy and five or six more were the top men in it. Mulcahy I held in high esteem as a soldier at that time. He had been the power behind Tomás Ashe at Ashbourne in the battle against the peelers there on the Friday of Easter Week, when an inspector was killed and others wounded. I remember well the speech made at one of the debates we had on what should be done when we got out: *Freedom will never come, said he, without a revolution, but I fear Irish people are too soft for that. To have a real revolution, you must have bloody-minded fierce men, who do not care a scrap for death or bloodshed. A revolution is not a job for*

*children, or for saints or scholars. In the course of revolution, any man, woman or child who is not with you is against you. Shoot them and be damned to them. Do bhain se sin geit asam*(11) as ye might say. I had already come round to the belief that revolution could be a mingling of ideas, not necessarily all blood and sacrifice, except where that was unavoidable. We could begin with revolution in our whole outlook, in our manner of living, in education. The Irish people have never had that. They have never experienced real revolution. Maybe they have had too much of what Richard Mulcahy then believed in, and which, when the Civil War came, he readily put into effect. I was reminded of this very recently when I came to read Ernie O'Malley's *Singing Flame*. He evidently considered him a very cold fish indeed; not one to be trusted.

#### LEADERSHIP

Some of us were taken in batches from Frongoch to Wormwood Scrubs in London, for interrogation. I was held there for a week, and was twice before their board. I made my first escape at that time. One night I nosed out under the wire, but having nowhere to go, I came in again. I was released from Frongoch with hundreds of others in August, only four and a half months after the Rising. All of the others, including sixty exiles in England, whom they tried to conscript into their army, were home by Christmas. It was a gesture in the direction of America, one more push to get them into the war against the Kaiser. I was no sooner back than I was placed upon the Army Council of what was now the I.R.A. That was at a Convention in December, in Barry's Hotel. It was again dominated by the I.R.B. and we were told for whom to vote. There was one from each Province and two from Dublin. Archie Heron was secretary. I distinctly remember Diarmuid O'Hegarty there, afterwards Free State Governor of Mountjoy. He was not the only I.R.B. man that ended up as a prison governor.

Apart from an odd break or two, I remained on the Army Council until April, 1938. The spirit of the people we found had changed completely. I could see now that, with the right political organisation, we could sweep the land. But would the new *Sinn Féin* be able to supplant and overcome completely the gombeenism inherent in some of the Irish people and so manifest in the tired men of Redmond's Party? Without a real revolution — a revolution of the spirit — the wheel, I knew, would turn full circle again.

I was sent to West Limerick where I met Sean Treacy. Séamus was carrying on as a travelling teacher for the Gaelic League, but in reality he was helping to reorganise the Volunteers. There was a grand collection of men; Eamonn Ó Duibhir of Ballough, Dan Breen, Ned



Reilly, Seamus Robinson, Paddy Kinnane, Jimmy Leahy, Joe McLoughney and Micksey Connell of Thurles, most of them to become well known in the fight afterwards. This was in the early part of 1917. We already had a camp going at O'Dwyers of Ballough, and we planned to ambush and disarm four R.I.C. guarding a boycotted farm. That was two years before Soloheadbeg! We lay in wait, Paddy Kinnane, Breen, Treacy and myself, but they did not come at the right time. We raided Molloy's of Thurles and carried away eight boxes of gelignite and hid them in a vault at Annfield. Finally I was arrested in Dundrum, while Countess Markievicz was down. I had some papers. *Only old love letters*, said I to the police, as I stuffed them into the day room fire. I was sentenced and lodged in Mountjoy on a two-year sentence. There were about fourteen of us there including Dick Coleman, Austin Stack and Thomas Ashe. We were all on comparatively short sentences under the Defence of the Realm Act, for speechmaking, drilling and such like. The authorities tried to impose criminal treatment upon us, refusing us association, the right to refuse work and the right to refuse prison garb. Austin Stack made the demands. They were rejected and on September 18th we broke up as much inside our cells as we could. We stuck the Bible or the wooden salt-cellar in the door jamb, pushing it closed and forcing it off its hinges. There was a fight and we were pushed back in. A dozen peelers broke into each man's cell and beat us up right and proper. Everything was whipped from us and we were left to lie upon the bare boards. Ashe, Stack, myself and some more went on hunger strike. We were forcibly fed, strapped in a surgeon's chair. You know what happened to Ashe. He died within a week; mistakenly the food was pumped down the windpipe. It entered the lungs instead of his stomach. They were not able to force my teeth open so they pushed the tube up my nose. After poor Ashe died, we were relieved of all that; we were given political treatment, but only for a while. At the first opportunity the government tried to whip it away again. We had been moved at this time to Dundalk Jail. Again criminal treatment was tried. We went on hunger strike. After eight days we were released. Sean Treacy was with us there.

I was now a H.Q. man organising in Westmeath and Offaly. Peadar Bracken was O.C., Eamonn Bulfin, brother-in-law of Sean MacBride, was Quartermaster and I was Adjutant. Two of our Battalion O.C.'s, Paddy Geraghty and Joe Byrne were afterwards executed by the Staters in Portlaoise in January, 1923.

It was easy to keep in touch from there with Mid. Tipperary and East Limerick, two areas that I had my eye on. We had built up a close friendship with Treacy, Seamus Robinson and Breen. Jimmy Leahy was best man at my brother's wedding in the autumn of 1917 at

Drumbane. In April, 1918, Lloyd George proposed conscription for Ireland. There was united opposition to it from every quarter of the nation. A pledge was taken outside the churches. Thousands joined the Volunteers. We had no arms for them and could not hope to train so many. In a short while most of them left, but the good ones stayed. At the height of the crisis, we even asked the local smiths to turn out pikes. I often wonder what became of them.

That Christmas I joined Seámus, his wife and baby at Killeeneen, near Craughwell in Galway for a reunion with her parents. We were not there long when thirty police descended from Athenry and arrested us. We were lodged in a cell. We were scarcely inside when we noticed that the brickwork around the window — which was tiny on the outside but sloped wider inside — could be dislodged if we kept at it. We had only a three inch nail and a halfpenny. But we kept at it for four days. As each brick came away we poured the dry lime mortar down the rat holes in the corners of the cell. Then we carefully placed the brick in place with just a dusting of lime in the joints. To disguise the noise that we had to make, I used to sing. I had a good voice then, and singing, even in jail, was not thought unusual. At night we would revert to intoning the rosary. They were real long drawn out Hail Marys . . . fifteen decades at a time. The day room was next door, so we had to be careful.

One day, while we were busy, Sergt. Wallace from Drumbane, came. He was killed four months later when they rescued Sean Hogan from the train at Knocklong. There were four peelers guarding Hogan and two of them were killed. He looked at us both, *The arm of the law is a long one. You escaped in Tipperary, but you will not escape here*, he said to Seámus. *You might get off with a few years, but the other fellow can go free.* That night the final rock was pushed from outside the wall. We did not know what it might fall upon, or what noise it might make. We had to take the chance. Seámus was barely able to push through, it was so small he had to be screwed through. He fell head first to the ground, but it was not far and there was grass below. I could not squeeze through myself, but it was clear that they were not going to prosecute me anyway. They were very annoyed in the morning.

I had thought they might let me go but I was wrong. They were holding me "Cat and Mouse" after my release from Dundalk. They sent me to the Joy to complete my sentence but I escaped from there. Arrangements had been made by Dick McKee, O.C. Dublin, and Peadar Clancy for a particular day; a rope ladder was cast over the wall, and while some of them held back the screws, twenty of us went over.

J.J. Walsh (12) Piaras Beasley, Paddy Fleming, Robert Barton were among the group. We ran along the Canal. Someone gave me a bicycle. I went with J. J. Walsh to Jones's Road, where I spent the

night in O'Toole's. Mick Collins and Harry Boland came in. My clothes were in a bad state. Without a word, Boland, who was a tailor, took a tape from his pocket and measured me. *I'll have you right in a couple of days.* And sure enough a fine suit arrived at O'Toole's a short time after. While I waited, I refereed a camogie match in the Park, a game I had never seen played before. Collins, meanwhile got into earnest conversation with me. There were two factions in East Limerick, he said. He wanted me to go there, to get the fight going and end the factionalising.

Seamus had got clear away. Sinn Féin had come to power in the meantime with the landslide election of 1918. D.O.R.A. had ended. The British knew they were going to have another sort of fight on their hands. He returned to his respectable teaching post in the city of Cork, where he had infiltrated the police and detective force. Collins had asked him to undertake this work; he was great with *an béal bán*, whether it was to a peeler or a prison warder he was talking. The *spiadóireacht* suited him perfectly.

#### EAST LIMERICK

From September, 1919, I was attached to the East Limerick Brigade under the name of Sean Forde. My principal task was to act as arms carrier from the Cork-Liverpool boat. The brother of the Assistant O.C. of our brigade Donal O'Hannigan, was one of the crewmen and our main arms contact. Donal brought the stuff to my brother's lodgings in Cork, and from there, the girls ferried it by train to Kilmallock, Knocklong or Emly. We were the first in Ireland (or anywhere else) with the *flying column*. A dozen men was the complement at first. They were trained full time fighters. Now the Auxies and Tans had to raid in bigger numbers for fear they would come up against us. This made them less effective. We moved from farmhouse to farmhouse but the whole column was always dispersed between three or four at any one time. Among the first warriors were Tom Howard, Dave Flannery, Pat O'Donnell, Donal Muldowney, Dave and Ned Toibin, Sean Nealon, Tom Murphy, Donnchadh O'Hannigan and Muirisin Meade. By the end of the year, there were fifty men in the column and they had all done good work. I was on Dail Loan business as well, and that way I got to know everybody. But the existence of the two factions — they could not be harnessed together — worried me. I resolved to end the trouble by making them attack the one barracks together. The local R.I.C. were the eyes and ears of Dublin Castle. As long as they remained, British power remained. East Limerick and Tipperary Three were the brigades that commenced the policy of winnowing them out. The



target chosen for our first attack was the R.I.C. barracks at Ballylanders. Sean Wall was the O.C. but I was in command that night. It happened on the 27th April, 1920; we had thirty men but rifles only for eighteen of them. There were eight armed police inside, and they let fly at us for all their worth. I went up on a neighbouring roof with Ned Toibin, and climbed on to the slated roof of the barrack. We smashed it with sledgehammers and hatchets, pouring in parafin at the same time. Fire was already coming from our fellows at the front which added considerably to the risk for the two of us on the roof. The police were firing upwards from inside, but they were not sure where the hole was as the ceiling intervened. When they heard the roar of the flames above them, accompanied by the Mills bombs we dropped in, they surrendered. It was, what I would call, a very reluctant surrender. They tried a trick or two on us first, but I was ready for them. None of them was hurt then, though some of them tried to give evidence against us afterwards. None of the raiding party was caught for it. We got clear away. We got a good stock of weapons, nine rifles and ammunition that day. The *modus operandi* at Ballylanders became the method of attack on all minor barracks thereafter. That, or the mine placed against the door, so much so that Dublin Castle decided soon afterwards to withdraw the R.I.C. from outlying areas. That was an immense boost to our morale.

A month later, on 28th May, we attacked one of the strongest posts in the country — Kilmallock. I was now Vice O.C. of the Brigade, effectively its leader. We arranged for the local companies to block strategically all approach roads at a pre-arranged time. Ned Toibin, who was a trained smithy, had the sledge again, this time it was not going to be easy. We had eighty men disposed in vantage points out of sight around the barrack. Among them were people from neighbouring brigades, Sean Treacy, Mick Sheehan, Dan Breen, Mike Brennan, Sean Carroll and many more, all anxious to see how it was done. Ned could not reach across to the roof with the hammer. We put an extension on it but that made the blows weaker. Eventually we broke into the slates by flinging weights on to them. But we had a hard task setting fire to the inside. They had lined the space with fire-proofing material. Grenades and everything were flung in but it was no use. At last we got a waterpump and a drum of parafin. We pumped the oil into the roof space and it took light. We called on the police — English Auxiliaries mostly they were — to surrender, but they would not. Firing went on all night until our ammunition was spent. There was no surrender but the building was burned to the ground. Later we learned that Sergeant O'Sullivan and five police had found refuge in a specially constructed refuge at the rear, but the rest of their comrades — some say there were eight — were suffocated or burned. O'Sullivan

got promotion, but he was killed a couple of months later in the village of Moyvane in Kerry. A generation and a half later, his son and my nephew, Ailbe, met in Malaya. That son returned to Ireland and visited Kilmallock accompanied by Seamus. Together they said a prayer at the spot where the fortress used to be. It was ten weeks before the inevitable blow fell upon the civilian population of Kilmallock. Two lorry loads of Tans entered and caused havoc, beating any man they met, and setting fire to many of the houses. On the 4th August, 1920, we had a hastily organised ambush on a patrol near Bruree. They retreated into a nearby cottage, where they held the occupants. Although one of the patrol was killed and another wounded, we were unable to press the attack further.

After that, on the invitation of the local people, we made a raid into North Cork. This was in an effort to get the local boys going. We captured thirteen police and took their guns. Meanwhile we had the bother of looking after the captured British general, Gen. Lucas. He was captured in June, 1920, by the boys under Liam Lynch in North Cork. He and three other British officers were fishing by the Blackwater. We were asked to take him over, but it was a confounded nuisance looking after him. We passed him on to the Clare Brigade. They shuttled him back to Mid. Limerick where they let him escape. After that, in July, I was involved with the Clare Brigade, in an attempt by them to take Scariff R.I.C. barracks. It was a badly organised effort; the barracks was not taken. In another action in Clare, I received a thigh wound. I was able to hobble along, but at the first opportunity, I went into the Limerick County Infirmary. I was a fortnight there, when Intelligence got a tip that the Infirmary would be raided. If the Auxiliaries found me there, I was finished. I was removed at night by stretcher to the rooms of Dr. Dan Kelly in the Mental Hospital close by. I remained in his apartments until I was able to move about again. As a precaution, however, he held a bed ready for me in the Asylum ward. Should there be a raid on his place, I could slip in among the patients there, and it would be difficult to pick me out.

Before I was quite recovered, Fr. Lyons, a young priest of the city, appeared breathless with an urgent message from Tom Crawford of Ballylanders. He had been shot in the chest by the Tans in a raid when they went to burn Crowleys. The message said, that if a bar in the high railing around the Military Hospital was cut, he could escape out a window and through the railing. But that was the previous day, because the message had been delayed. Crawford would think we had not bothered. I resolved that I must enter the Military Hospital and arrange it with him for that very night. It was quite a risk to take. I borrowed Fr. Lyons entire outfit, and taking Dr. Kelly's car, I drove



to the main gate of the New Barracks, inside which was the Military Hospital. I was admitted to the Adjutant's office. Putting the best face I could on it, I said I was Fr. O'Brien from Ballylanders. The parents of this young fellow, Crawford, were worried sick about their son. Could I reassure them by speaking to him for a few minutes? Alas, I could not. The Adjutant was extremely sorry. I said I should have called the previous day, and would he tell him that? I hoped that if he was told that, that he would understand that the bar would be cut that very night. But it was no use. Although we cut the bar in Casey's Road, at considerable risk to ourselves, the military were suspicious, and Crawford was put on a train for Dartmoor that very evening.

One of my most formidable fights was the ambush at Grange, midway between Bruff and Limerick. We had been informed that two military lorries passed regularly. We were ready to take on two, but not eight accompanied by two armoured cars, and approaching from the opposite direction to that expected. It was on the 8th November, 1920, that it happened. All the usual preparations had been made; the local battalion acted as outposts, tree fellers and so on. At 5 a.m. our thirty strong column was behind the high demense wall of The Grange. The local lads were deployed on the opposite — eastern — side of the road in such a position that their fire would not affect us. It was 11 a.m. before the enemy appeared. Two of their advance lorries drew level with our position, crashing into our barricade. We concentrated all our fire on the occupants. I managed, from my position high upon the wall — we were standing upon planks placed on tar barrels — to fling a small bag of grenades into one. They went off like one bomb and caused vicious damage. But we were in real danger. All of the other lorries had stopped out of range on a height above us, and their occupants, vastly outnumbering us, were advancing down upon us. We quickly signalled to the local lads to retreat eastwards, which they could still do. We were hemmed in a woodland, north of a small stream. The only shelter from the rifle grenades now raining down upon us were some willows. With half of our column, I crouched firing under the bank of the stream, covering a neat retreat by the other half into a thicket to the north west. As soon as they reached that point, we quickly made our way to them, while they fired upward over our heads towards the stationary line of lorries. We were then able to make our way across the road, two hundred yards on the Limerick side of the ambush position, the two knocked out lorries blocking any British advance meanwhile. I must say it was one of the best fights we had been in, because we were so hopelessly — and so unexpectedly — outnumbered. We had only one man-wounded. They must have lost eight or ten in the two foremost lorries.

We had a few scrappy actions then at Kilfinane and outside Hospital; nothing of much consequence.



On the 10th December, 1920, we laid an ambush near Knocklong. It was not successful. Twice as many Tans came as were expected. We had to retreat. The retreat would have got out of hand, only for the courage of one ex-British soldier called Johnny Riordan. He hung back, firing on anything that raised itself. Then he too started to pull back. But they got him as he crossed a hedge. One of our local lads found him for the Tans had been afraid to follow up. He managed to get him to a doctor, but it was no good. He had been fatally wounded and had lost too much blood.

Then on the 17th December, we had a real piece of luck at Glenacurrane. It is a deep sided glen, two and a half miles north of Mitchelstown on the road to Limerick and Tipperary. In some ways it was unsatisfactory however, as it was the reverse of Grange; too many of us, and too few of them. Our flying column co-operated with Commdt. Barry of Glanworth,<sup>(13)</sup> and our men extended in concealed positions for three miles overlooking the defile. We had just one complication. A retired British Army officer was giving a house party near Knocklong on that same evening. His guests commenced approaching on *our* road a short while before the expected convoy. We had no option but to direct them on to a side road, where we held them, ladies, a clergyman, children and all, at O'Brien's farmhouse 150 yards in.

Shortly after that, two lorries, a dozen men or thereabouts to each, and a Sunbeam car, came into view. This was our quarry, but not nearly as impressive as the convoy we were prepared for. Still we had to be thankful for small mercies. We already had a tree sawn through, and at the first signal, it was allowed to crash across the road. The first lorry could do nothing; frantically its driver tried to reverse. That would have been no help to him in the circumstances. However the occupants of the second lorry, seeing what had happened, leaped out and jumped the hedge, thus blocking it anyway. They were in no better position there as our men were disposed in the whins just above them. We called for a surrender though we were already firing into them. I think four were killed in that burst and most of the others wounded. Realising they were in a hopeless position, they surrendered at once.

We conveyed the wounded to a farmhouse where we did what we could for them. One was already too far gone, though he had plenty of spirit. Commdt. O'Hannigan called over a parson whom we had among our civilian prisoners. I shall always recall the short conversation that ensued. *My poor fellow, I am a Church of Ireland clergyman. Can I do anything for you? That's alright, old chappie,* answered the soldier, looking up at him; *Don't you worry. I shall be alright.*

A short while after that, I had a very narrow escape in Babe

Hassett's pub in Birdhill. I was having a drink in the bar when nineteen Tans walked in off a lorry. They piled down the three steps inside the doors. A few lads that were with me sidled out quietly, but I was caught close to the bar. My car — an old, hi-jacked one, DI 303 — was outside, facing for Limerick. Their lorry, I could see reflected in a mirror, faced towards Nenagh. One of them said to me: *Have a drink. No*, I said; *The car requires oil. I thought this lady might have some in her store*. Then I added: *It looks like rain*, as I made for the door, by way of studying the weather. Reaching it, I sprang out and into my car. The self-starter responded instantly. I sped down the road. Needless to say they were on my tail and they fired a few shots as they climbed into the tender. They turned it around. It was dusk now and I was already off the main road, at the first left hand turn. I heard them pounding on. Quickly I drove back to the pub and picked up Bill Hayes and the rest of the boys.

From now on, although the Column hit out hard, it was up against it. We had only about forty rifles, about as many short arms and some sporting guns. We were permanently short of ammunition. H.Q. had deprived us of the services of Donal O'Hannigan, our supply link with Liverpool, by insisting that these supplies must be routed through them. Collins objected to local units making purchases abroad. His view was, and maybe it was the right one, that it would cut across the purchases being made by H.Q. But it starved us. From the start to finish we never had a machine gun; though we borrowed one once for an operation in Glenbrohane. More unfavourable even than the shortage of material, is the terrain of the countryside itself. East Limerick is flat, farming country. There are no hills at all until you get to the Ballyhouras on the Cork border, or over by the Glen of Aherlow. The Tans and Auxies flooded into the area. Had it not been for the support we were getting, we could not have held them. But hold them we did, and after I was gone out of it, temporarily I may add, the Column carried out some of its biggest operations. One of these occurred on 3rd February, 1921, at Dromkeen, two miles north of Pallas, when two lorry loads of Tans and police were wiped out. It was a text-book ambush of eighty men — only forty of whom were armed — eleven of the enemy being killed, with only two escaping by taking to the fields. The Column lay in wait behind walls and hedges, spread out a quarter of a mile along the roadside, from before dawn until the early afternoon. No one in the neighbouring houses was allowed to move out or to attend animals. But that sort of discipline was standard practice whenever an ambush was laid. Thirteen rifles and five hundred rounds was the booty. Muirsin Meade, who had been a soldier in World War One did great work for us that day. He tore in and shot all around him. I must tell you about Meade before we pass

on. He was in every army, the British Army, Casement's Brigade in Germany, then the I.R.A. when he came home. In the Civil War he joined the Free State Army, but he was never much good in that. The feeling for fight deserted him when he joined them.

As happened everywhere after an ambush, the Tans came in force five days after Drumkeen and burned down the houses overlooking the site.

#### CORK AND SPIKE ISLAND

But to retrace my steps a bit; the Column was allowed to quietly disperse a few days before Christmas, 1920. Donnchadh O'Hannigan and myself decided to take the opportunity of going to Cork to meet his brother, Donal, and pick up a few revolvers, ammunition, automatics and whatever else he could leak into us past the G.H.Q. ban.

We met Donal on Christmas Eve. He had a fair share of stuff for us. We brought it to this house, but the Tans were already raiding along the street. The women of the house, along with a few neighbours they roped in, had to take the entire armoury on their persons and walk into the church in Douglas Street nearby where devotions were in progress. When the raid was over, they returned to the call house.

On Christmas morning I went with Donal to collect some Parabellum stuff from the ship that he was holding specially for me. Crossing Parnell Bridge, on our way back, we were halted by this party of Tans. I had no gun on me except the loose ammunition. That was worse. You could be hanged for having ammunition only. And things were very hot in Cork just then. The centre of the city had just been burned as a reprisal. Spies, including some prominent business people, were being shot daily by our lads. Barry had already carried out some great ambushes. I did not expect quarter if I was caught, whether they knew me as Tomás Malone or the infinitely more hated Sean Forde.

*Stick up your hands*, growled one Tan, while the other covered me with a rifle. I knew I was for it, but as he advanced, I lunged at him. Donal fled instantly in the opposite direction, while I ran to the further end of the bridge. Shot after shot rang from the rifle. I do not know how they missed as there was no one else about, I sprinted hard for they had started to come after me. As luck would have it, as I rounded into this side street, I ran into a second party, all alerted by the firing. It was Christmas Day, and there were no shops open. There was no escape from the street. I was caught.

Quickly the first party came up. One levelled his gun at my face and fired point blank. I ducked and threw myself at him. There were four guns levelled at me, so there was no hope of escape. I just wanted to avert being shot down on the footpath. I caught his gun hand, turned it



into his body and squeezed the trigger. There was no report. He had already emptied it firing after me. At that moment I felt an awful blow on the head — from a rifle butt, and I slumped on the pavement unconscious.

When I came to, I was in handcuffs in Union Quay Barracks. I was ringed by black uniformed Auxiliary officers. They had found the Parrabellum ammunition on me. Things were looking ugly as they had been drinking. I was seated on a low stool with my hands locked behind and questions were being shot from all directions. Then this R.I.C. man made a lunge at me with his boot. He caught me fair in the mouth knocking out every tooth I had. I searched with my swelling tongue for the bits of teeth as the blood oozed out. Just then, a District Inspector entered; he ordered them out. Looking hard at me, he directed a sober group to bring me to the Bridewell. I lay there upon a timber bench, thirsty and sore, yet afraid to drink from the mug of tea they brought me.

At about two o'clock in the morning, I was taken into a small day room in which a fire was lighting. There were three military officers, all masked, at a table. I grew distinctly uneasy. Again the questioning started. Again I gave the best cock and bull account of myself that I could. I thought it was safer now to declare myself as Tomás Malone, even though they might charge me with escaping from Mountjoy. However the more I could distance myself from Sean Forde the better. One of them was writing everything down. Sean Forde came into it. Did I know him? I met him twice, I said, and I described him. Fine, they said, and they kept on writing. Then suddenly one stood up. Abruptly he tore the paper in pieces. *We will begin again, and this time you will tell the truth.*

One of them then placed very deliberately a tongs in the fire. I could not see it, but I knew that it was reddening. The third fellow approached from behind, and with a firm grip, ripped down my coat, waistcoat and shirt. I felt pretty sick. I could feel the heat from the tongs close to my back. The man at the table had commenced a question and I was licking my lips to reply. At that moment the tongs was caressed along my back. I fell forward with the shock and pain. Struggling to my feet, I let them have the weight of my tongue for treating a prisoner so. They forgot the tongs and lunged at me instead. I received a rain of blows before I collapsed again. *Out with him and plug him,* one said. A sergeant and corporal entered. Supporting me under both armpits, I was guided back to the cell. I lay there more dead than alive for two hours until they disturbed me again. I was pushed briskly towards a lorry in the yard, hoisted aboard and carried off. Where? A roadside execution? No, it was not that. The lorry had stopped at one of the few addresses I knew in Cork. Inside was a Mrs.

Hynes. *Do you know this man?* they said, pushing me towards her. *Oh, no,* she replied gamely, but that did not suit me at all. *You do, Mrs. Hynes,* I called back. *Don't you remember Tomás Malone?* Given this lead from me, she verified me. *Yes, it is Tomás Malone from near Tyrrellspass.*

The crisis was over; whatever suspicions they may have had, subsided. I was now treated as a fairly unimportant political prisoner. However having ammunition was a very serious offence. Because I had resisted enough to save my own life, I was also charged with attempted murder. I was brought before a courtmartial in January and condemned to death, but that, fortunately, was commuted within hours, to penal servitude for ten years.<sup>(14)</sup> I felt sure I could escape again. But could I? They were making it harder. I was put on a destroyer and brought to Bere Island, where there were a number of Limerick men already. We had barely become acquainted with Bere when another destroyer came and brought us to Spike in the mouth of Cork Harbour. Spike was almost my undoing.

The convicted prisoners were close to a camp of Republican internees. One of these recognised me in chapel and, quite innocently, slipped a packet of cigarettes to a soldier one day: *Sean Forde is among the convicts; bring that to him.* The soldier knew nothing of Sean Forde, but his commanding officer did. He informed his Intelligence Dept., that he believed a prisoner among the convicts was the much sought after leader. Would D.I Sullivan, late of Kilmallock, and now in Listowel, be brought to identify him? He had seen him a number of times in Limerick and was certain to recognise him.

This backstairs information was leaked through a captured despatch, which fell into the hands of Liam Lynch. He realised my peril. (Of course, I, being a prisoner, knew nothing about these goings on, which was just as well). Without waiting, Liam Lynch sent two picked Volunteers, Matt Ryan and another, to Listowel. They shot Sullivan dead. Meanwhile Lynch sent me a message: *We have to get you out of there. It will be only a matter of time before they identify you.* Through the visiting chaplain, Fr. Fitzgerald, I asked the O.C. in Cobh, Sean Hyde — brother of Tim Hyde, the jockey — to have a motor boat close to the island the following morning. There was not a day to spare as I had been notified that I was being transferred into Cork that evening. That could mean only one thing. With me at that time, and informed of the plan, were Sean MacSwiney<sup>(15)</sup> and Sean Twomey. We were employed at this time making a golf course for the officers. The course was close to the shore. At one point, near the water, there was a small hollow, invisible from the barracks, in which we would sit sometimes for a smoke. Usually the armed sentry joined us there, but this day he did not. He remained with his rifle, visible

from the barracks, on the slope above us. This disconcerted us. With us was one soldier carrying a revolver, and a course supervisor. We could deal with them alright; their presence merely complicated the issue. I had been using a hammer on the axle of the lawn mower. Now I saw Sean Hyde heave to, but drifting in, *mar eadh* fishing. The situation had to be faced as it was. *Take care of those two*, I whispered, *And I will attend to the sentry*. Half creeping, half running, I made up the slope to him. He saw me alright, but he had no bullet up the breech of his rifle, and he did not know but that this might be a game. When he attempted to pull the bolt, I was already upon him, expertly swinging the hammer at his temple. I had to prevent a shot being fired, or the whole barracks would be alerted. He went down pole-axed. To make sure, I struck his head a second blow. The two below were already overpowered by MacSwiney and Twomey; they offered no resistance as they were tightly tied, with a towel each as a gag through their jaws, while I stood over them. Hands and feet were then tied tightly behind their backs with electric cable. Sean Hyde saw it all from the boat. So too did the boatman. Quickly they chugged alongside while I leaped into the boat. Still holding the captured rifle, I reached for the throttle which was on the steering wheel and pulled it open. Our course was due south, down the open harbour, for Crosshaven, two and a half miles away. Sean had a car waiting for us there. Crosshaven backed on to Barry's territory, where we reckoned we would be safe. We calculated that if we had twelve minutes clear we were right.

Such was not to be however. We had barely pulled away when some officers playing golf walked over to where we had left the soldiers. They saw our boat and understood instantly. Quickly one blew a whistle, firing his revolver in the air as a warning to the fort. The fat was in the fire without a doubt. I turned the tiller and headed due east for the beach at Ringaskiddy. It was only a half a mile away, but it did not suit our plans at all. There would be no car. Besides Ringaskiddy is at the end of a narrow peninsula that is easily cordoned off. There was also a coastguard station overlooking it, which we knew would be alerted. Scraping rocks as I sent the boat hurtling up upon the shingle, we jumped out and waded quickly for the shore. I could feel the zing of bullets coming from the fort, and heard them as they smacked upon the rocks around us. We had reached the end of a boreen now. We were running like blazes; it was every man for himself. At the top I saw the coastguards. We had stopped at a corner and they could not see us. There were ten bullets in the rifle. From behind a thorn bush, I let fly four in rapid succession. They scurried back into the station. Quickly we flaked past it. We were now in the village street. There was a youngster with a pony and trap standing beside a butcher's stall. *Come on!* I called back. Four of us piled in. We had lost the boatman. With a snap of the reins, the pony galloped away like flaming mad. He kept



going so for about two miles until we came to near Shanbally. Somewhere there he dropped and the shafts broke. We piled out, releasing the pony into a field, and hiding the trap behind the hedge. We quickly crossed a main road, and up a hill on the far side. Soldiers had already arrived on the road behind us forming a cordon. They commenced to search eastwards towards Ringaskiddy, but we were outside of the cordon, thanks to the pony.

That night I slept in a dug-out at Ballinhassig, eight miles to the west, Sean Hyde's native place. After a few days, I moved towards Mallow, meeting Liam Lynch there. I gladly exchanged my captured rifle for a Parabellum again. I commandeered a motor bicycle and joined the Column within a day. It was early April, 1921, and the Column, because of enemy pressure on our territory around Bruff and Cappamore, had retired to the west of the county. Seamus, my brother, was now Brigade Director of Intelligence, a slot which suited him. I resumed my old post as Vice O.C. of the Column. Shortly after that the ninety man strong column had to be divided between O'Hannigan and myself. It had grown too cumbersome for its purpose. About the same time, I was appointed Director of Operations for the 2nd Southern Division. The army was now being restructured into divisions.

It was about that time that I had a run in with a British intelligence officer, named Capt. Brown. He was driving a car that I had hi-jacked from D. I. McGettrick, and which they had captured back again. We passed each other near Kilmallock. Recognition was instant and mutual. We both squealed to a halt, sixty yards apart. At that range, small arms fire would not be very accurate, so I started reversing back, firing meanwhile. This was too much for Brown; he pressed his accelerator and skedaddled on towards Kilmallock.

Seamus had had to flit from the school in Cork, because of a slight indiscretion on the part of my wife, Peig. We had been married only a short time. After my capture, she called to Union Quay, inquiring about me. They followed her back to where Seamus was staying. That blew his disguise, and he had to make off quickly, which was unfortunate, for he had built up some great contacts through the school children. His wife, Brid, got a rough time when they invaded and ransacked their house. *He's lying dead this minute*, said one, hoping to put the heart crosswise in her. *If you've shot him*, she called back, *I hope he took some of ye along with him*.

I mentioned my own wife, Peig, a minute ago. We were married in St. Joseph's Church in Limerick City the previous year in the thick of it. Having no car, I hi-jacked a car belonging to District Inspector McGettrick of the R.I.C. On the way to the church, she sat with a grenade in her bag and a tommy gun across her lap. *No one is going to interfere with us this day*, she exclaimed.

## THE CONSPIRACY

After Spike Island, as I have said, I made my way back to the Column in East Limerick. Seamus was there now, along with Donncadh O'Hannigan the O.C., and Seamus Costello, Sean Stapleton, Muirisin Meade, Sean Wall and a lot more. We had lost some good men, Tom Howard, Willie Riordan, Jim Frahill and Pat Ryan were surprised near Emly at a place called Lackelly. Twelve I.R.A. were attacked by a big force of Tans. There was a bitter fight. The day was saved by the arrival of Sean Carroll, of the Mid Limerick Column, with reinforcements. On the previous day he had been heavily engaged in an attempted ambush at Shraharla, which went wrong because superior forces of the enemy arrived. The Column held its ground, but they lost two good men, Jim Horan and Tim Hennessy, and one who was captured, Pat Casey, was executed in Cork the next day. I tell this only to show how tough it was; we never had it our own way. It was very much an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth contest. Don't let anyone tell you that war can be anything else.

We lost Sean Wall on the 7th May in a flying attack the Tans made on a house where we were staying, between Annacarty and Cappawhite, in a little place called Newtown. Seamus, Liam Hayes, Liam Burke, Donncadh, John Joe O'Brien and Dave Flannery were there, all Brigade Officers. They had our house surrounded, but they must not have known who was inside. The story could have been worse, only Sean went out and drew them off. A first class soldier, he was Brigade O.C. and chairman of the Co. Council. He had been attending a meeting of the Division a week earlier, at Glenavar in North Cork, at which decisions were taken:

- (a) that all police taken in future would be shot on capture;
- (b) that fire attacks would be made on business premises in England;
- (c) that attempts would be made to shoot their Members of Parliament.

That is all in the history books.(16) I mention it here only to clear up misunderstandings and to show that the struggle was entering a rigorous phase. None of us had any intuition that there might be a truce. Early in July, Seamus was summoned to Dublin by Mick Collins. He met him in Barry's Hotel. Collins congratulated him on the ambush at Drumkeen. *It put the fear of God into them*, said he. He told Seamus to contact a certain peeler in Killfennane, whose brother was already working for us. *Meet him in the parochial house, tell him about his brother, and if he does not agree, get behind him and shoot him as he goes down the steps*. Seamus had had his doubts about the policeman; he contacted him after the commencement of the Truce, but the man refused to work with us. That same day, Collins brought him to meet Sean Ó Muirthile, secretary of the Supreme Council of the I.R.B., and later Governor of Kilmainham Jail, at the Connradh. Ó Muirthile was

keen to have Seámus back in the Brotherhood. He had slipped out of it as he agreed with Cathal Brugha's view that a secret society within the I.R.A. was undesirable. Ó Muirthile became extremely annoyed. *Brugha and yourself should be shot, and maybe some day ye will*, he shouted. Collins came between them, telling Ó Muirthile to get out. Collins gave him a message inviting Donncadh O'Hannigan of his own brigade, and Mick Sheehan of Tipperary Brigade, into the Brotherhood, a message which, I am afraid, he delivered. Subsequently some of these men — but not Sheehan — along with many more, toed the line for the Brotherhood, carried out their instructions and supported the Treaty.<sup>(17)</sup> Four days after the Treaty was signed, the Brotherhood directed that it be ratified. No wonder Mary MacSwiney wrote: *Think of the I.R.B. setting its energies to pull down the Irish Republic*. And what became of them in the end? They shrivelled away after the so-called mutiny of March, 1924. The trouble with the I.R.B. was that it was allowed to exist too long.

I had a command in Limerick City in the first months of 1922. Limerick was a crucial hinge weakened by the defection of so many officers from our brigades, some good, some poor, that I have already referred to. Clare was partly lost also, due to the defection of the Brennans. They had not been great performers in the Tan War, but immediately after the Treaty, the Mulcahyites, as O'Malley calls them<sup>(18)</sup> curried favour with them. Every commandant won over meant more votes and territory for Griffith. Ernie tells a story: *I was in McGiligans in Lr. Leeson Street in Dublin, a famous call house, with Ginger O'Connell, the Assistant Chief of Staff. He seemed pleased with life in general.*<sup>(18a)</sup> Just consider, a few days after this abominable Treaty was signed, a Treaty that split and sold the nation, and he could feel like that! But no wonder. Many of these men saw themselves already in a general's uniform. O'Malley goes on: *Beside him sat Michael Brennan, Commander of the First Western, in uniform, (of course he was! They were bewitched with the nice green uniforms, the Sam Browne belts and the leggings) curly hair, he says, handsome face, with Clare accent. He seemed to be on good terms with the Staff now. Formerly Mulcahy and Collins had been hostile to him. We are talking about the army, said Ginger. We will be allowed to have twenty thousand men.* So that was it! Control of a mercenary army would solve the nation's difficulties.

Fortunately I did not witness that scene, but I can imagine how Earnán felt. He had spent May and June of 1921 with us in East Limerick. He was again with us, in the city this time, in February and March. The Staters were steadily occupying the city, taking over the British posts as they vacated them. Rory O'Connor was not willing to risk civil war. He would not back Earnán in the ultimatum he



presented to Slattery in the Castle Barracks. Between February 23rd and March 10th the feeling between the two groups reached fever pitch. Finally, as a result of intervention by Liam Lynch with Richard Mulcahy, an agreement was reached. Republicans were left in possession of the Castle and Strand Barracks, and all of the Free Staters moved out.(19)

When I heard of the attack upon the Four Courts, we were at a Divisional meeting in Cashel. I called for an immediate organised response against the Staters in Dublin. I am convinced that, if we had acted promptly, even then, we could have defeated them. I am aware that numerically, they were superior to us and growing rapidly, but we still had threequarters of the I.R.A., I mean fighting I.R.A. behind us. Colonel J. Lawless, of the Bureau of Military History, told me many years afterwards that, had it happened, he doubted if they could have stood against us.

A month after the Civil War started, I was arrested by Jack Ayres, then a Free State officer, in a yard in Nenagh. I heard that he phoned Mulcahy. *Hold him*, the message came back, *he is the most dangerous man in Munster*. I was transferred to Maryborough Prison. Within two weeks I had an unexpected visitor, Michael Collins. He was on his way south on the trip that preceded the funeral of Arthur Griffith in Dublin. He asked me would I attend a meeting of senior officers *to try to put an end to this damned thing*. He made arrangements with the Governor of the jail that I was to be released. As he went out, he slapped one fist into a palm in characteristic fashion: *That's fine, the three Toms will fix it*.

The three Toms mentioned by him were Tom Barry, Tom Hales and myself. We were to meet in Cork with some of his officers and arrange for a cessation of hostilities. No political negotiations were entered into, nor were any political aspects alluded to by Collins, who appeared to be acting alone. He simply said, *would I go to a meeting with his officers to try to put an end to this thing*. His last words to Jack Twomey, the Governor, was to look after me.(19a) Within a few days, however, he met his death. The Governor was later sent in charge of the Curragh glasshouse after we had burned the prison.

Peadar Kearney — author of the National Anthem and uncle of Brendan Behan — was also there but as Prison Censor. The job was distasteful to him, and he later reverted to his Republican allegiance.

The burning occurred as a protest against conditions there. It occurred before the executions and had nothing to do with them. We submitted our ultimatum, based on a demand for political treatment, which was ignored. The top tier of cells, therefore, were set alight; everything in them, bedding, furniture, our personal effects. Then the next tier, and the next until ground floor was reached. Portlaoise, as you know, has four tiers of cells in its two wings. Flames and smoke

billowed everywhere. We had to run out into the exercise yard to escape from it. The Free State Army were drawn up inside, under a Capt. Mulcahy, brother of Richard, or so we were told. They ordered us to remain inside, which in the circumstances was impossible. We emerged in a throng. They fired at us, but I am sure it must have been over us, as only a few of us were wounded. Francis Stuart, the author, was with us. He recalled some time ago on television how he remembered myself as a black-headed fellow with bushy eyebrows, standing among the now prone prisoners and angrily shaking a fist at the Staters: *Shoot! Shoot away!* There was a Fr. Dick McCarthy about at that time. He was well in with everybody. He married Dan Breen and he married me. Peig, my wife, was anxious to visit me prior to the fire, and he obtained permission from someone in government. Approaching Portlaoise with her by car, he saw the pall of black smoke over the town. *There will be no visit today*, he said. *The bastard has done it again.*

Shortly after that I was moved to the Curragh. The Governor added a P.S. to my letter after arriving from Portlaoise: *Tom is alright, Peig, but be assured he will not get away this time.* I barely landed at the camp, however, when I saw an opportunity to lie in the bottom of the cart they had for removing the kitchen waste, me and another fellow from Cork. It was Paul Collins from Portroe who helped to cover us. We suffered in silence because it was a ticket to freedom for us. I joined Peig before she received my letter. That was the 13th July, 1923. I got clear away. I remained on the run for a few years until the heat died down.

The structure of the I.R.A. had remained intact throughout the Civil War and the period into 1924, following the Cease Fire, although the Army itself had shrunk in numbers. I continued as a member of its Executive.<sup>(20)</sup> The Chief of Staff was Frank Aiken. He continued so until November, 1925, when he resigned to take part in the formation of Fianna Fail, being succeeded by Dr. Andy Cooney. I knew Aiken well of course. I always considered him cute, a bit of a namby pamby. On that occasion he, with some others, put forward a "new direction" resolution to a convention at Dalkey. This inevitably would have made the Army a mere crutch for the new Fianna Fail Party, formed the following April. I did not want that. I never had any regard for De Valera. So far as I was concerned, he was never reliable. I gave no support to Fianna Fail, although when they came to power in 1932, they offered me, as I think they offered most top Republicans, any commission I wished to choose in their army.

Aiken's intentions throughout 1925 were increasingly under the microscope of men like Jim Killeen, George Plunkett, Dave Fitzgerald, Andy Cooney and the rest. They felt very uneasy about the

relationship of the Army to the shadow government under De Valera, Lemass and Rutledge. Aiken was very friendly with De Valera: he fawned upon him. It was feared therefore that he would be over-influenced by him. Peadar O'Donnell therefore put forward a counter resolution at the convention in 1925 which, in substance, removed the Army from the control of the Second Dail, (to whose control it had returned in October, 1922, after a seven month breach, following the Dail's acceptance of the Treaty). The Army, as a result of his resolution, was to act under an Independent Executive henceforth. So far as I know, that has been the position ever since then.

One of the first fruits of this new policy was the jail-break from Mountjoy,(21) organised by George Gilmore on November, 25th, when nineteen men were brought out in a daring coup. There was hardly a time after that, that I was not being threatened with imprisonment. I was to see the inside of Mountjoy on many occasions.

I did not agree to the Army promoting Saor Eire in the autumn of 1931. I objected to it. I saw it as a drift towards politics. That is why we restricted it at the Army Convention in 1932 to *educating the people in the principles of Saor Eire, without publicly organising it*. Likewise I did not support the formation of Republican Congress in March and April, 1934, for the same reasons, although I had a great *gradh*(22) for some of the people connected with it. Frank Ryan, for example, I knew him well. A great old pal of mine. His only failing was that whenever he saw a scrap, he had to get into the middle of it. Jim Killeen was one of the best, sound and reliable. He used to cycle from Dublin to Nenagh for a meeting, sometimes returning the same day. I had a high regard too for Dave Fitzgerald; he was a good soldier and a sound Republican.

I was Chief Marshall at the last great Bodinstown Commemoration of the thirties, in June, 1935, when Sean MacBride was the principal speaker. There were 30,000 present. After that, the Wolfe Tone commemorations were banned by Fianna Fail. Shortly after that, I parted with the I.R.A. myself because of the new turn of policy introduced by Sean Russell. That was the proposal for a campaign in England. There was a good deal of subterfuge from Russell supporters in an effort to make us all vote a certain way. The Convention was held in April, 1938, at Abbey Street, Dublin. Mike Fitzpatrick, who was Chief of Staff, resigned, as did the entire G.H.Q. staff. Barry, MacBride, Lehane and myself left at that time.

I must say, after a lifetime of struggle on behalf of Irish culture and freedom for the Irish people, I see no difference in the fight being waged against English domination of this country today, and the fight we fought in Westmeath in 1916, and in East Limerick in 1920 and 1921. As far as I am concerned, they are the same people at grips with the same enemy.



## REFERENCES

1 Parnell had told an Irish audience at St. Helens, Lancs. in May, 1878, that if Irish members were expelled for obstructionist tactics, they would secede and assemble in Ireland as a provisional government.

2 First published in 1900, but preceded by his articles in the *New Ireland Review* from 1898 onwards. Papers like these identified a nationalist home as much as the mixture of patriotic and religious pictures upon the walls.

3 The Irish Universities Act of 1908, set up Dublin (Earlsfort Terrace) Cork and Galway as constituent colleges of the National University. Queens, Belfast, was a separate college, thus anticipating by eleven years the coming fragmentation of the nation. *Though technically non-denominational, they were intended by the Chief Secretary, Augustine Birrell, as a gesture to Irish Catholicism.* Lyons.

4 An Irish priest murdered by the pro-British bishops of Ireland.

5 The O'Rahilly, P. Pearse, S. MacDiarmada, Eamonn Ceannt, Bulmer Hobson, W. T. Ryan, Piaras Beaslai, Colm Ó Lochlainn, Seamus O'Connor, J. A. Deakin, Joseph Campbell and Sean Fitzgibbon.

6 Among those present, according to police reports later, were: James and Michael Morgan of Tore, Dick Newman and his two brothers of Cloncullane, John Brennan and Pat Seery of Rathnagore, Pat Bracken and Carroll of Tullamore, and John Jordan of Tyrrellspass.

7 Sean Sheridan, Sean O'Kelly, Seamus Ó Muireagáin, Dick Newman, Laurence Kelly and Pat Bracken.

8 Later Keogh Bks., Bultin Rd., Inchicore. The gymnasium used then forms part of the Christian Brothers School there.

9 Daily newspapers and the media generally reflect in most given situations establishment opinion, rather than public opinion which they exist to manipulate and control. This can be seen in any war time situation. It was particularly true of U.S. attitudes in the Vietnam War, attitudes that were eventually reversed and broken down by the American public themselves. The clamour from the Irish daily press after the Insurrection was one of universal condemnation.

So ends the criminal adventure of the men who declared that they were *striking in full confidence of victory* and told their dupes that they would be *supported by gallant allies in Europe*. . . . Ireland has been saved from shame and ruin, and the whole Empire from serious danger . . . The loyal people of Ireland . . . call today with an imperious voice for the strength and firmness which have so long been strangers to the conduct of Irish affairs. *Irish Times April 28th.*

The insurrection was not an insurrection against the connection with the Empire; it was an armed assault against the will and decision of the Irish nation itself constitutionally obtained through its proper representatives. *Freemans Journal, May 5th.*

No terms of denunciation that pen could indict would be too strong to apply to those responsible for the insane and criminal rising of last week . . . We confess that we care little what is to become of the leaders who are morally responsible for this terrible mischief. *Irish Independent, May 4th.*

A few days later this paper achieved what, in Irish Nationalist eyes, was ever afterwards its crowning infamy when it published a photograph of Connolly with the caption: still lies in Dublin Castle recovering from his wounds. The editorial declared; let the worst of the ring leaders be singled out and dealt with as they deserve.

10 Equally misleading are the reactions of top trade unionists in such situations. There was no protest against the executions at the annual get-together of the Irish Trade Union Congress in Sligo in August. In the words of Desmond Greaves, Thomas Johnson launched the erroneous theory that Connolly had turned his back on the Labour Movement.

11 That startled me. It also startled Richard Mulcahy when he read it, in Séamus Ó Maoileóin's book, selected by *An Club Leabhar* in 1958. *I read your book*, said he to Ó Maoileóin. *And I don't like it. I was thinking of taking a libel action, but in the end I decided not to. However I will see that it is the last book of yours An Club Leabhar will select.* Information from a confidential source.

12 Later Free State Minister, until his resignation from politics in September, 1926. He then entered industry, establishing, among other things, the Solus bulb factory at Bray. *I accepted the Treaty with great reluctance and only because I was satisfied that it was to be this mangled concession or none at all.* Statement made after his resignation from politics in September 1926.

13 Later O.C. Eastern Division: not the renowned Tom Barry of Kilmichael.

14 Of the twenty-four men executed by the British in 1920-21, ten were hanged in Dublin, thirteen were shot in Cork and one was shot in Limerick Jail. Under the Free State it appears to have been a deliberate policy to carry out executions in provincial centres. Apart from Dublin, fourteen locations from Drumboe, in Donegal, to Wexford, were used.

15 Both Hyde and MacSwiney survived the war and the Civil War, which followed, and were on the I.R.A. Executive for some years afterwards. Twomey was the father of Sean Og O Tuama.

16 See *The Irish Republic* by Dorothy Macardle; *Ireland's Secret Service in England* by Edward Brady and others.

17 See Cronin: *The McGarrity Papers*; also *B'Fhiú an Braon Fola* by Seamus Ó Maoileóin; also Ernie O'Malley: *The Singing Flame* where he gives an account of an I.R.B. caucus held in Limerick in November 1921, for officers from Tipperary, Limerick and Clare, presided over by Ó Muirthile.

18 Chapter Three, *The Singing Flame* by Ernie O'Malley.

18a An article by Michael Farrell in the *Irish Times* of Jan. 27th 1983, records that O'Connell was arrested by O'Malley and MacBride in this house and held through the Four Courts siege. A martinet, with U.S. army experience, he was opposed to any compromise with Republicans.

19 Dorothy Macardle says something quite different: *While the pro-Treaty troops were confined to barracks, all the Republicans, who had come into the city, marched out with their arms, leaving the Mid Limerick Brigade in control.*

19a His last so far as Tomás knew, but not his last. To the Governor he said: *Get the top of that wall painted white* (to hinder escape). Collins was intent on winning the scrap. At the cabinet meeting before the Four Courts attack he was the first to enquire if the British would loan artillery, but it had already been promised to Emmet Dalton in the Vice Regal. Ernest Blythe, *Irish Times*, Jan. 1975, gave fulsome details of his request that the leaders be incarcerated "on St. Helena" but Britain demurred.

20 An Army Executive meeting held on 11/12 July, 1923, on the day he escaped lists the following: *Present*: Gen. Frank Aiken, Chief of Staff; Commdt. Gen. Liam Pilkington, O.C. 3rd Western Division; Commdt. Gen. Sean Hyde, Assistant C.S.; Commdt. Gen. Michael Carolan, D/Intelligence; Commdt. Gen. Sean Dowling, D/Organisation; Commdt. Gen. M. Cremin, D/Publicity; Commdt. Gen. P. Rutledge, Adj. General; Commdt. Gen. T. O'Sullivan, O.C. 3rd Eastern Division; Commdt. Gen. Tom Barry; Commdt. Gen. Bill Quirke, O.C. 2nd Southern Division; Brigadier T. Ruane, O.C. 2nd Brigade, 4th Western Division; Commdt. Sean MacSwiney, Q.M. Cork Brigade; Commdt. Gen. Tom Crofts, O.C. 1st Southern Division; Brigadier J. J. Rice, O.C. Kerry 2nd Brigade, (substitute for Humphrey Murphy who arrived late); Commdt. Gen. Tom Maguire, O.C. 2nd Western Division. *Absent*: Commdt. Seamus Robinson. *Substitute*: Commdt. Gen. M. Carolan for Austin Stack.

It was a fairly good roll call of the considerable number of leading Republicans, (including De Valera as President) who managed to avoid arrest by Free State forces during the Civil War. Barry had been imprisoned for a short period, but escaped from Gormanston Camp. The main business at this mid July meeting was relations between the shadow government and the army; a proposition by De Valera, when he arrived, that they contest the Free State elections the following month, (which they did successfully) and a strong directive against Volunteers emigrating, (see Connie Neenan). The Fianna was also to be encouraged, and a sum of £200 was advanced towards that. The Army Council was then elected and consisted of Aiken, Pilkington, Quirke, Rice and Rutledge.

21 See Appendix, p.393: The Mountjoy Prison Escape.

22 Regard.



## Sean MacBride



Sean MacBride was born on 26th January 1904, and baptised in May at St. Joseph's Church, Terenure.<sup>(1)</sup> His father was Major John MacBride, who had organised an Irish Brigade in 1899 which had fought on the side of the Boers in the Transvaal War of 1899 to 1902. The Brigade numbered over 250 men and suffered more than 80 casualties. In 1916 he was one of the leaders chosen for execution by the British after the insurrection. This was the occasion when it is said, he refused to be blindfolded in the prison yard of Kilmainham. *I've looked down the barrels of their rifles before*, he remarked to the priest attending him, Father Augustine, the Capuchin.

Sean's mother was Maud Gonne MacBride, a great beauty, and one of the advocates of the emancipation of the Irish tenantry. In 1889 she was one of the first to reach the forgotten Fenian prisoners of Portland Jail, where they had lain unvisited for many years. She herself was many times imprisoned. In her later life she devoted her time almost entirely to the relief of Irish Republican prisoners.

Sean MacBride was called to the Inner Bar and became a senior counsel in 1943. From 1948 to 1951, he was Minister for External Affairs (now Foreign Affairs) in Dublin. He has appeared in many leading cases in Ireland, Africa, and before international courts. In 1958 he acted as adviser to the Greek government and Archbishop Makarios in regard to Cyprus, and was instrumental in securing the release of the Archbishop from the Seychelles, as well as visiting many countries on economic surveys, and on missions connected with political prisoners.

We were sitting in the big drawing room of Roebuck House, with a pale sunlight filtering through. The leather chairs are carefully repaired. Some of the chairs and furniture seem set for a Yeatsian drama. On the walls pictures and mementoes from abroad; his framed and signed (by the principal statesmen of the time) copy of the

European Human Rights Convention 1949. High up on the wall a laughing boy of two, Sean painted by Maud Gonne, on the piano another water colour by her, of the late Lennox Robinson.

I was not in Ireland in 1916, said Sean MacBride. I was still a schoolboy in France. I was aware of the national movement, of the Volunteers, the United Irishmen, and especially of the Fenians, since they belonged to my mother's own day. She was, as you are aware, connected with the Land League from 1886, and knew the great Fenian John O'Leary. It was in those years that she visited West Donegal and witnessed the eviction of the smallholders around Gweedore. It was there she met the legendary Fr. McFadden, who had done so much to provide leadership for the people of the area.

She helped to form the National Literary Society with W. B. Yeats, Dr. Sigerson, Professor Oldham, (1a) Douglas Hyde, John O'Leary, and others, at the Rotunda in May 1892. This gave birth to the Irish literary revival, to the Gaelic League, and to the Abbey Theatre, some years later. In the following years she lectured in France, on British atrocities in Ireland. These received wide publicity and greatly upset that government. At the same time she was helping in a scheme to promote village libraries in Ireland. Seven were established. In 1897, she joined with James Connolly and Arthur Griffith in elaborate counter demonstrations against Queen Victoria's diamond jubilee and against recruitment into the British Army. It was on that occasion, after a parade by the populace down Dame Street, on the night of the Jubilee, that Connolly heaved the symbolic black coffin into the Liffey with the cry: *there goes the coffin of the British Empire*. At that time my mother did not understand the proletarianism of Connolly but she was instantly attracted by his fervour, and at the same time the sheer poverty of the man. He was living with his wife and four children in one room in the Coombe. In a message to him, she wrote; *Bravo, you have the satisfaction of knowing that you saved Dublin from the humiliation of an English jubilee without a public meeting of protest.*

These were the stirrings of the new Fenianism which gave birth to 1916. That same year she travelled on a two and a half month lecture tour of the United States, speaking everywhere on 1798, on English mis-government, and helping to raise funds. When she was leaving, Jeremiah O'Donovan Rossa came to see her off. He was the renowned patriot over whose grave Pearse made the historic speech in July 1915; *While Ireland holds these graves, Ireland unfree shall never be at peace.*

On her return to Ireland she visited West Mayo as a representative of the '98 committee. It was a poverty stricken area. She then visited Kerry where she laid the foundation stone of the '98 memorial in Tralee. She was present at the laying of the foundation stone on the

Grafton Street corner of St. Stephen's Green in August 1898(2) but refused to accompany Parliamentarians on the platform as they were *eulogising Wolfe Tone while trying to keep the people from following his teaching.*

#### THE FENIAN BACKDROP

It was into such a background I was born on 26th January 1904. As a child my mother related Irish history to me. John O'Leary was my godfather, I knew all about him and his associates, Thomas Clarke Luby, James Stephens, Charles J. Kickham, O'Donovan Rossa and John Devoy. What are now names in history were familiar names to me in my boyhood. Some of them were still alive. I knew for instance that John O'Leary and Luby, despite their names were both representatives of the finest in Irish Protestant nationalism, in Irish Republicanism, and that Charles J. Kickham, whom some people now regard as a homely dramatist, was a bitter critic of the reactionary — in national terms — Catholic Church of those days.

In 1900 my mother founded *Inghinidhe na h-Eireann*, which did an extraordinary amount of good work and was eventually absorbed into Cumann na mBan. In that year the Corporation of Dublin, for the first time ever, refused to present a "loyal address" on the arrival of Queen Victoria in Ireland. When Edward VII came in 1903, his reception was of the same kind. No one nowadays can understand the tremendous step forward in national terms that such refusals represented. The principal streets were bedecked with bunting and Union Jacks, paid for by the Unionist firms and employers: for the Corporation to insult their majesties by refusing an address was a tremendous encouragement for the national forces.

#### CASEMENT

It was natural that I should be in touch with what was going on because while we lived in France, we had a lot of Irish and Indian revolutionary leaders of one sort or another passing through or staying with us. Roger Casement used to come and stay at our house. I recall him as though it were yesterday. This was the period from 1909 onwards, when Casement was re-discovering his nationalism, the nationalism that eventually led him to the scaffold in Pentonville in August 1916. But in these sunny days (around 1912) we were not thinking of that. Instead mother and he were joined in fervent discussions as to when and how the next great war would occur, and what opportunities it would create for Ireland. They were both informed observers of the international scene, and their predictions of



the outbreak were right to within a year. For that reason they wanted Ireland to have her own independent trans-Atlantic communications, then controlled by Cunard, and the White Star Line. Casement was working on the possibility of interesting the German Hamburg-America Line — which later did call into Galway — while mother tried to involve the French Line. Later both he and my father were involved in an anti-recruiting drive against Irishmen joining the British Army. Casement viewed recruitment with abhorrence. *Ireland*, he wrote, *has no blood to give any land, to any cause, but that of Ireland.*

My memories of life growing up in France were coloured by the concern of mother about poverty in Ireland, especially among poor slum children, the need to help home industry and her continuous propaganda against army recruitment.

I came over in 1914 with mother for interview by Padraic Pearse in St. Enda's, in Rathfarnham, seeking to be admitted to the school. I recall part of their conversation in which she spoke of a visit paid to her by Casement a year before. Pearse's school in the great Palladian mansion, the Hermitage, that had once sheltered Robert Emmet, was an educational success, though few knew of the financial struggle it was to keep it going.<sup>(3)</sup> Pearse interviewed me, as one would expect a schoolmaster should, about my level of education in France where, of course, things were different, there being a great deal more Latin. He never once mentioned politics. My abiding memory of St. Enda's is not a national one at all, it is of a smell of paint; the interior was being painted, and there was an all prevailing smell of paint around. However, because of the sudden outbreak of the war, I could not attend St. Enda's.

### 1913

I was keenly aware of the great events of 1913, especially in the Dublin lockout. Mother was quite closely involved. She spent much time in Ireland trying to launch a free school meals project. This was eventually got underway and gave tens of thousands of mid-day dinners to hungry poor children. It was natural in these circumstances that she would become involved with James Larkin; though she held James Connolly in higher esteem.<sup>(4)</sup> Following upon the foundation of the Volunteers in November 1913, mother allowed *Inghinidhe na hEireann* to be absorbed into the new women's movement, Cumann na mBan, of which Padraic Pearse's mother and herself were honorary presidents. Another close friend of the family throughout that period was Helena Moloney who, through her Women Workers Union, was closely associated with the lockout. She was herself a radical thinker and a Republican, being one of the founders of *Inghinidhe na*

*hEireann*; she was associated with every aspect of the national and labour struggle right into the fifties. A life long friend of mother, she was many times in jail. She was on the executive of Saor Eire in 1930, and continued actively to work for Republican prisoners thereafter.(5)

A great friend too at that time, one who paid a lot of attention to me, was James Stephens, the author of the *Crock of Gold*, and other stories. He was full of stories about the Fenians, the legends of olden Ireland, and the story of the national struggle right into our own day.(6) He was a fascinating man, full of fun; able to sing and to act well, like many of the people at that time. In 1916 he penetrated through the streets and wrote an extremely fine account of the Insurrection. His poem *Spring 1916*, is the best that had been written on it.

At springtime of the year you came and swung,  
Green flags above the newly-greening earth;  
Scarce were the leaves unfolded, they were young,  
Nor had outgrown the wrinkles of their birth:  
Comrades they taught you of their pleasant hour,  
They had glimpsed the sun when they saw you;  
They heard your songs e'er had singing power,  
And drank your blood e'er that they drank the dew.

Then you went down, and then, and as in pain,  
The Spring affrighted fled her leafy ways,  
The clouds came to the earth in gusty rain,  
And no sun shone again for many days:  
And day by day they told that one was dead,  
And day by day the season mourned for you,  
Until that count of woe was finished,  
And Spring remembered all was yet to do.

#### WAR TIME FRANCE

When the war started in August 1914, we were in France. We were trapped there and could not return. I remember I was in a village in the Pyrenees at the time. Mother tried to get back to Ireland but, because of her long history of nationalist activity, would not be allowed through England. She was bitterly disappointed and lonely, as she watched the swift march of events from afar, but was unable to participate in them. To console herself and to do something for humanity she accepted an invitation from the mayor of Argeles to organise an emergency war hospital. Train loads of men, many of them already dead, were arriving from the front. No provision had been made for casualties on

this scale. Quickly a hotel and casino were requisitioned and mother found herself in the thick of it.

I was back in school in Paris the following autumn. It was there in May 1916 that I learned of the death of my father. I have one very clear recollection of an issue of *Le Matin*, the principal French newspaper, which arrived one morning with much of its front page a complete blank.

George Bernard Shaw had just issued a searing statement on the 10th May, condemning England's treatment of the rebels and Britain's repression in Ireland. *I remain an Irishman*, said he, *and am bound to contradict any implication that I regard as a traitor any Irishman taken in a fight for Irish Independence against the British Government, which was a fair fight in everything except the enormous odds my countrymen had to face.* The military would not allow *Le Matin* print it, so they left their page blank in protest. Such a courageous statement at that time undoubtedly put backbone into Yeats and encouraged him to write his own poems on 1916.

The war was at a crucial stage. From our school St. Louis de Gonsage, one could hear the distant boom of artillery. Every Friday we had a short ceremony in the chapel for the fathers, brothers, and relatives of the boys who had been killed during the week. I recall on one of these occasions how the Rector of our school made a most beautiful speech, pointing out that France was fighting for the cause of small nations, and told of this small nation, Ireland, in whom France always had an interest. It too was now fighting for its freedom, and the father of one of their boys had just been executed for his part in that struggle. It was such a nice way of dealing with the situation and helping the boys at the same time to learn something of Ireland and 1916.

In September 1917, mother managed at last to leave France and arrived at Southampton only to be served with a Defence of the Realm Order forbidding us proceeding to Ireland. We were all forbidden to go to Ireland although I was then only thirteen.

#### ACTIVE SERVICE

Finally in the spring of 1918, mother was able to slip away and return to Ireland. I accompanied her and joined the Fianna immediately on my return. It had been founded by Constance Gore-Booth in 1909, and due to the exertions of Liam Mellows, it had spread through the country. The organisation was now being used as an active auxiliary to and recruiting ground for the main armed movement, the IRA. At this time we were staying with Dr. Kathleen Lynn, at No. 9 Belgrave Road, Rathmines. She had been the medical officer with Countess



Markiewicz and Michael Mallin in the College of Surgeons in Stephen's Green, in 1916. She was now on the executive of Sinn Féin. I also stayed with Larry Ginnell, the rebel MP, who lived in Leinster Road, and who was now an Honorary Treasurer in the new Sinn Féin. In May, mother, along with hundreds of others was arrested in connection with, the so called German Plot, and lodged in Holloway Jail, London, along with Constance Markiewicz, Hanna Sheehy-Skeffington, and Mrs. Tom Clarke. She was not released until November when she returned to her home at 73 St. Stephen's Green.

We used to meet at that time under Barney Mellows in a little hall in Skipper's Alley, close to Adam and Eve's Church on Merchants' Quay. I was not long in the Fianna however. In 1918 I was fourteen, but I looked older, about eighteen. It was therefore easy to obtain a transfer to the Volunteers. This was of course unknown to mother because, while she quite liked my being in the Fianna, she would not have wanted one so young in the Volunteers.

I was enrolled in B Company of the 3rd Battalion about the latter end of 1918. Their area was from Westmoreland Street, along the south quays to Grand Canal Basin, and back in as far as Baggot Street. It was densely populated and included streets like Lower Mount Street, that later figured prominently in the guerilla fighting. The OC of the Company was a man called Peadar O'Mara, but the real power behind it was Mac O Caoimh. I quickly became a squad leader, then section commander, then adjutant, or lieutenant in the group. We then formed a small Active Service Unit principally from members who were unemployed. We were on permanent stand by, constantly seeking targets among the Tans and Auxiliaries in Lower Mount Street, Brunswick Street and Townsend Street. These were arteries along which their lorries travelled to and from Beggars Bush Barracks. At that time with the warren of lanes, alleyways, small cottages and tenements that backed upon this area, it was relatively easy to get away, to do a quick change or to hide. At any rate they were most unwilling to engage in follow up operations against us since they knew they would receive no co-operation from the ordinary people. I recall often climbing the parapets of the Dublin and South Eastern Railway — now CIE — and sleeping in a railway carriage. We would search cautiously for a first class carriage as they always carried warm hot water bottles. The staff never interfered with us. I had no feeling that the Republican government in any way disagreed with our activity or wished to put a damper on it. On the contrary Ginger O'Connell, who was Assistant Chief of Staff, supported us fully. He would arrive on a bicycle and make notes after an ambush. These would be published in *An t-Oglach*, as an example of the sort of urban guerilla fighting other units should engage in. Sean Milroy, TD, is the only person I can recall

who tried to put a damper on us. He had a business near Westland Row, and of course he wished us miles away, but we paid no attention to him. Sometimes I used to think that the older men in our battalion staff were less than keen, but that, I think now was because, being older, they appeared more cautious to us, when in fact they simply had more experience than any of us. There was one small incident at that time which fortunately did not become too serious. I was halted driving a car near midnight in September 1920, in Rathmines. With me was Constance Markievicz and a emissary from the French government Maurice Bourgeois. We were released after two days but she was sentenced to *two years* for having organised the Fianna in 1909. She was released after the Truce.

Early in 1921, Michael Collins sent for me. There I met Bob Price, who was Director of Organisation, and Eoin O'Duffy, whom Collins had brought down from Monaghan. Bob, whose proper name was Eamonn, was an older brother of Mick Price. They were very pleased with the ASU experience in Dublin and felt that it was time to use this experience in the more tranquil parts of the country. I was sent to organise ASU groups in Wicklow, Wexford and Carlow, a corner of the country in which there had not been much activity so far. The objective was the RIC barracks still in existence there; to force them to withdraw from the area. Some of the men from B Company accompanied me, though it was not to be publicised that we were operating in the locality. I found a lot of promise in this area. Wexford was good, while south Wicklow was splendid. I used to stay with Gus Colgan in Wicklow town. Gus was a law student and so was I. We were therefore already acquainted. Gus was the local intelligence officer; his uncle was Christy Byrne, Battalion quartermaster, afterwards a TD and an auctioneer. There was a man called Gerrard who was a Battalion commander. The last thing any of them wanted was activity in their area. It was alright if it was Cork, Tipperary or Dublin, but let ye leave Wicklow alone. I circumvented this problem by putting them out with some of my tough guys in the one operation. After that I had them: there was no going back. There was one promising lad called Pearle: he joined the Free State Army afterwards. In the weeks before the Truce I got the first ASU going and we commenced our attacks by shooting up the RIC barracks at Avoca and Rathdrum.(7)

#### GUN RUNNING

About the same time, however, I was asked to perform another role, namely to look into the possibility of obtaining arms shipments from Germany. I worked with Liam Mellows and Rory O'Connor — the OC Britain — on this. The first shipment came from Hamburg eventually, and was skippered by Charlie McGuinness.



Collins, I remember, as a dynamic personality. Brughá I did not see much of until later in the Truce. Others whom I met frequently were Commander J. J. (Ginger) O'Connell and Liam Tobin — they were able fighters and went pro-Treaty later on; I was very close to them. Tobin was Deputy Director of Intelligence and had under him Tom Cullen and Frank Thornton. Ernie O'Malley too: I spent the night of Bloody Sunday with him in the flat of Lennox Robinson, whom mother knew, in Clare Street. We arrived there later that evening, dishevelled and loaded with guns. Lennox was sitting by the fire with Tom McGreevy. They of course knew us. We could not have been less welcome. They were absolutely miserable until Tom, in a flash of inspiration, remembered an important engagement in Trinity, whereupon they both vanished. For a while I sat playing a pianola which Lennox had shown me how to play. We had the flat to ourselves for the rest of the night. (8)

*It's either them or us, and this time it's going to be them*, was Collins' reported remark to Dick McKee, OC Dublin and Peadar Clancy, the day before, as he inspected the list of names of fourteen newly arrived British agents who were marked down for execution. (9) Mulcahy and Stack, (10) I met only rarely: I had not formed any opinion of them. In the run up to the Treaty most of my friends, as you can see, were people who later supported it. At this time I led my life on three levels at least. I was still attached to B Company 3rd Battalion and used to drop in upon them whenever I could. I was leading an Active Service Unit in the south-east, and I also got the job of training men for new ASU's at a camp in Glenasmole where Paddy O'Brien was OC; you may know it there, the big house at the head of the valley, it used to be known as Cobbs Lodge. Paddy, a brother of Dinny, was killed in Enniscorthy the following year.

To your question, *did the Army and the Cabinet think they could win the struggle, that they could obtain an independent Republic?* I must say that I have no idea what the Cabinet thought and very little idea what the Army thought save what Collins thought, since he was a person I was close to. I was myself quite satisfied that we could intensify our activities very considerably at the time. I knew that from my own experience in the south-east over the last couple of months where, from almost nothing, we had begun to get things done, particularly in Wicklow. I also knew what possibilities lay in getting arms landed in the country. I had been down to see Pax Whelan and his friends around Helvick, and we had a number of shipments planned. One ship that I recall, the *Sancta Maria*, was brought in by McGuinness. You mention also the *Frieda*, and there was another *Anita*, one of the first. It was arrested before we left Bremerhaven, though we recovered very quickly from it and followed up with the *Frieda*. It came in November



1921, and was followed later, early in 1922, by the *Hannah*. We also acquired a small coaster *City of Dortmund*. It was to ply from the Continent carrying legitimate cargoes covering an underlay of arms.<sup>(11)</sup> There is, incidentally, a very interesting story about what happened the balance of these funds which had been banked in Germany. The late Peter Ennis captured a report of mine to Frank Aiken on that subject; Dublin Castle should have it in their archives.

So I felt from the experience we were gaining in purchasing arms that we were on the threshold of being able to mount a much larger campaign than we had mounted until then. I felt that, with the arrival of these guns, we could step up the fight considerably. I also considered that the morale of the organisation was good and that there was no weakness in the determination of the Volunteers to see the thing through. I was therefore very much against the Truce, when the Truce was declared. I was completely against it — violently against it. I came to Dublin following a leg injury in Wicklow; I came with the intention of resigning. I saw Collins, and for the first time I was angry. I said the Truce was a terrible mistake. I had thought De Valera responsible. *Oh, ho*, said Collins laughing, *we can use it to reorganise and to get more arms in; I want you to start working on that immediately*. It was at that time I was appointed Adjutant at the training camp, while at the same time I was sent abroad to Germany on the various arms procural missions, that I have just related. Collins did not give me the impression at that time, which other people are said to have got from him, that things were at a low ebb in the Army; I could not see that, nor could he. He told me that there was no necessity for the Truce, but that De Valera and the others were keen on it. He may have meant Mulcahy, whom at the time he did not like. I still felt that it was a mistake. I must say that Collins did not argue against that except to say that it would be a help in reorganisation and in putting ourselves on a sounder footing.

#### NEGOTIATIONS

At that time also for a while I was staff captain in the Adjutant General's office; they used to receive complaints from the public, perhaps a dozen a day, about the misdeeds of Volunteers, or persons passing themselves off as Volunteers, around the country. I had to investigate them and provide replies; it was my first legal training.

On the tenth of October I accompanied Collins as his ADC to London. There were six or more of us, and our real purpose was, that, if the talks broke down, we would be in a position to cover a retreat into a London hideaway. The Plenipotentiaries<sup>(12)</sup> as they were called, had been given clear instructions from the Cabinet:

- 1 They had full powers as defined in their credentials.
- 2 Before decisions could be reached on a main question, they must notify it to the Cabinet and await a reply.
- 3 The complete text of the Treaty to be signed must first be submitted to Dublin.
- 4 In the case of a breakdown, the final text from the Irish side was to be submitted.
- 5 The Cabinet was to be kept regularly informed on the progress of the discussions.

It can be seen, that in the subsequent signing by the five plenipotentiaries on December 6th — Barton and Duffy signing with great reluctance only after the leaders had done so — they exceeded their instructions in respect of 2 and 3, both of paramount importance.

From the time of our arrival over the next ten weeks I had a good inkling of how things were going. It made me very depressed. Some of them were drinking too much.<sup>(13)</sup> I could feel that the British influence was slowly but steadily having its effect. They were all impressed by the quality and statesmanship of Lloyd George and his wily secretary Thomas Jones.<sup>(14)</sup> I cannot imagine that they could have had any warm feelings towards Gallopher Smith (Lord Birkenhead) the prosecutor of Roger Casement, or of Winston Churchill, a person who actively disliked Ireland and whose rancour we were to feel before many months had passed. They, with their various naval and military aides, were men of consummate skill and of world experience.

The principals of the two delegations were:

<i>On the Irish Side</i>	<i>On the British Side</i>
Arthur Griffith	Lloyd George
Michael Collins	Austin Chamberlain
Robert Barton	(Lord) Birkenhead
Eamonn Duggan	Winston Churchill <sup>(14a)</sup>
George Gavan Duffy	Admiral L. Worthington Evans
	(Sir) Hamar Greenwood
	(Sir) Gordon Hewart (Attorney General)

(When it came to signing the Treaty the names were attached to the document in that order; the Sinn Féin delegation writing theirs in Irish.)

One story that I recall, it must have been fairly close to the Treaty; Collins had come back to Hans Place and he described an incident that had occurred that afternoon. Lloyd George, who was a small man, had brought him over to a map upon the wall where a red coloured British

Empire straddled the globe. Putting an arm around him he joked, *Come on Mike, why don't you come in and help us run the world!*(15) Collins laughed as he imitated Lloyd George. But I knew that it had made an impact; that he had been impressed by it.(16)

Apart from my possible function as a bodyguard, my other task in London was to bring their despatches back to Dublin on the night mail from Euston. What surprised me later, when I had time to think upon it, was that with negotiations taking place only a night's journey away from Dublin, they did not come back, at least at weekends. They relied on despatches to keep in touch. Normally I would have thought they should have packed up on Thursday or Friday and come home. They could return to London on Sunday night. It would have helped them keep in touch with reality back home. Instead they submitted to the indignity of allowing the British to pressurise them with talk of a special train at Euston and a destroyer at Holyhead.

I was back in Dublin again a few days before the Treaty was signed. I was still feeling very depressed. When therefore the terms were published I felt that this had been coming; that British influence had, if you like, infiltrated in a very clever way. It was no surprise to me. I saw Collins on the morning he came back. He knew in advance what my views would be. *I suppose you don't like this*, he said. *No*, I replied, *I think it is a sorry mistake*. It was however quite a blow for me in a personal way as most of my friends, Tom Cullen, Liam Tobin, Collins himself, Gearoid O'Sullivan, were on the Treaty side. I quickly made contact with Ernie O'Malley and Rory O'Connor, both of whom were opposed to the Treaty, and for whom I had tremendous respect and admiration. I commenced to work for them. For a short while too I acted as secretary to De Valera. Yes, I think his five page Document Number Two, which he put forward at private sessions in December 1921 as a counter to the Treaty, was a mistake. It confused the people. However, remember, I had no opportunity of making my views known. I was young. I was there to serve, and not to discuss policy matters.

#### THE SPLIT

It is true to say that most people regarded the Treaty as a new dawn for Ireland. The newspapers, the churches, and the whole old reactionary establishment put their weight behind it. The fact that British troops would soon go from parts of the country was something they had never expected to see. Partition was not regarded, even by Republicans, as of great importance. They must have been lulled by the Boundary Commission clause that led many people to believe that the North would come in anyway. The Oath however was seen as a real obstacle on a basis of principle. Matters continued thus, in a confused



way, in the first months of 1922. The central government of the Free State began quickly to emerge in January while Republicans hesitated. I was busy anyway. I had to complete the arrangements already made for importing arms; subsequently as a result of these efforts, more shipments did come in.

Did we feel, with Republicans and Free Staters each holding strong points in the run up to June 28th — the attack upon the Four Courts — that we were on a collision course? No, we did not. The pro-Treaty side was known to be divided; one section was friendly to Republicans. There was a good deal of collaborating in the transfer of arms between Collins and Rory O'Connor. This collaboration continued right up to the hour of the attack upon the Four Courts. They had been transferring arms from Beggars Bush Barracks, to Charlie Daly and Sean Lehane in Donegal. This was being done to impede the new Six County government, and as a counterblast to the Belfast anti-Catholic pogroms then in full spate and in which many hundreds of defenceless people were killed. I do not think this collaboration by Collins with us, was in any way a sham, or intended to mislead. Collins thought that way. He had organised the shooting of Sir Henry Wilson, former Chief of the Imperial General Staff, which took place on the doorstep of his home in London.(17) This was his way of avenging the bloodshed in Belfast. However, the speech of Winston Churchill in the British House of Commons on June 26th, must have had a tremendous impact upon the cabinet here.(18)

I think that people like Blythe and Cosgrave had been undermining Collins' authority within the cabinet of the Provisional Government. I think Ernest Blythe was one of the real villains of that piece. He certainly appeared that way in some of the statements he made later on.(19)

#### THE FOUR COURTS

I was in the Four Courts when the attack came. Three days later, confined by the shelling to the south east corner and the cellars, we surrendered. The building was a blackened shell. About a hundred and eighty of us marched out, prisoners, bound for Mountjoy. We were never a large enough garrison to have held such a building, nor did we expect to have to hold it.(20) On the way there five escaped, among them Ernie O'Malley, Commandant of the First Eastern Division. That at least gave me some satisfaction.(21) (The Free State policy of summary execution for possession of arms, ammunition or explosives — known as the Army Powers Resolution — came into force in October. Four young Dublin men, taken near Oriel House, in Westland Row, headquarters of the CID, were its first victims. *The*

*men who were executed this morning, said Richard Mulcahy condescendingly, were perhaps uneducated, illiterate men . . . we provided all the spiritual assistance that we could to help them in their passage to eternity.* P. Cassidy and John Gaffney of the 3rd Battalion and James Fisher and R. Twohig, were the four concerned. They were shot in Kilmainham.

Other executions quickly followed. The IRA, mad at these killings, resolved to counter the campaign by shooting deputies who had voted for the resolution. On December 7th, Sean Hales, who had been a distinguished guerilla fighter under Tom Barry in Cork, but was now a Free State officer, was shot dead in a Dublin street. Pádraig Ó Máille, another deputy, was wounded. The Free State cabinet, spurred on it is believed by Cosgrave, Blythe, Mulcahy and MacNeill, embarked upon a policy of official reprisal.<sup>(22)</sup> Sometime after midnight jailers entered the cells of Rory O'Connor, Liam Mellows, Richard Barrett and Joseph McKelvey in Mountjoy, shook them awake and ordered them to dress).

#### REPRISAL

You were there then, Sean in one of those cells? Yes, I shared the cell with Rory, Liam Mellows was next door, with Joe McKelvey, Dick Barrett was close by. Liam Mellows was OC Prisoners in C wing and shared cell 34 with Joe McKelvey. Dick Barrett was in 36 and Rory O'Connor and I were in cell 32. Liam was in a pensive mood that afternoon. Rory and I retired early to our cell where he was carving chess men from an old piece of wood. While he worked we discussed a rumour that Hales and Ó Máille had been shot that day. We had no confirmation of it. Then we settled into a game of chess, a game which he invariably won. While he waited my move he played with a sovereign and five shilling piece; it was the gold and the silver that had been used at the wedding of Kevin O'Higgins a little over a year before when Rory was best man.

We retired early to bed. Bed was a mattress and three blankets upon the floor. Quietly we conversed on the tunnel that we knew was being dug in to reach us. Then we laughingly talked about the island prison to which our captors threatened to send us. Which island would it be?

We had been asleep some time when the door quietly opened. Someone came in and went out again. I was beginning to doze when the person returned. He lit a match over Rory; the gas in the prison was always turned off at night. I recognised Burke, a Free State red cap, who later applied for the post of public flogger. What can he want, I thought, I waited quietly for about half an hour. Rory was sleeping soundly. There were more footsteps outside, and whispering. Some-

one was now entering the cell of Liam and Joe. Pauden O'Keeffe, late Secretary of Sinn Féin, and now Prison Governor, came in. He fumbled at the gas, cursing quietly. Then he lit a match, bending over Rory. *Mr. O'Connor please get up and dress.* He spoke to me similarly. The unusual politeness dumbfounded me. What can this be? Apart from myself, they seemed only interested in the top people. That would explain the politeness, I thought.

Candles had been brought, and we dressed quickly. O'Keeffe returned. No, I would not be required. I could go back to bed. But I was too puzzled to go back to bed. I wandered out on the landing, an unusual liberty. Liam was tearing up papers and looking very solemn. Joe was wrapping his books in a blanket. (23) Neither of them had a clue as to what was afoot. I returned to Rory. Laughingly he offered me the gold and silver. *Take these; they have always brought me bad luck.* But I would not. *You may need them, even if it is another prison, and not negotiations.* Alright, he said, *but take these chess men and give them to young Kelly.* Then, stepping out on the landing, he gave me a firm hand clasp.

I followed him out, shaking hands with Liam and Joe. Joe looked funny with his Santa Clause sack of old books upon his back. Dick Barrett was already ahead going down the steps.

There was silence now in the wing. I started to worry. For the first time in weeks anxiety gnawed at me. Executions had taken place, but surely they were not going to shoot them. It was now around three. One could already hear a few cars mixed with some spasmodic night shooting. That morning, a holyday of obligation, Mass was late. From where I stood I could see red caps in the Circle, the meeting point of the four wings within the prison. That was unusual. A whistle went; it was about 8.30. A wing fell in for Mass, followed by ourselves. Then we heard shots near the front of the prison. A volley; another volley; then a number of isolated shots. What was it?

As another batch of our comrades emerged past us, one called over, *they were shot.* (24) I was too dazed for it to register. There must be a mistake. Then, as we filed in, crossing above the Circle, I saw below me a squad of soldiers; there were boiler suited workmen too. They avoided looking at us. I saw that their legs and boots were stained with earth. My thoughts ran to Oscar Wilde. (25)

The warders strutted up and down,  
And watched their herd of brutes,  
Their uniforms were spick and span,  
And they wore their Sunday suits,  
But we knew the work they had been at,  
By the quicklime on their boots.



Some months after that I was transferred to the prison camp in Newbridge. I got caught trying to escape from there. I hid in a bread van, very cramped it was, but I was hauled out and sent back to Mountjoy. I never gave up the idea of escaping however. I watched and spied out every moment for a weakness in their system. The big moment came when a picked group of us got involved in a tunnel. You entered the tunnel from high up in the building, from near the top of one of the big chimneys. This one was extremely well organised by Dr. Tom Powell of Galway. Others still around who helped in this were Tony Woods, Tom Maguire and Peadar O'Donnell. We entered from the ceiling of a cell on the top floor. We got in by carefully removing portion of the brick vaulting. We moved carefully along and entered, through a hole we made in the stonework, one of the great twin chimney stacks of Mountjoy. We had a ladder made from strips of sheets, wire and blankets. This was lowered into the blackness. We went right down to below basement level, and we commenced digging from there. It was a hell of a job, one hell of an engineering job, keeping candles lit in the oxygenless atmosphere. Peroxide of hydrogen and a large home made bellows was used to produce enough oxygen to keep our candles lit. We had no need for timber as the soil under the Joy is the best of clay.

It was nerve wracking — apart from being extremely dirty — every day dropping down the rickety ladder into a black pit, and toiling up again to make an appearance in time for roll call. We had four extra prisoners that they did not know about who could stand in for us. The tunnel however, was going very well. We used yank up the earth in pillow cases and pack it in the roof space, where of course there was plenty of room for it. We used the water storage tanks for washing so that there was no traces of clay upon us. We had overalls made in the tailoring department that we could change out of before emerging. Our work however, was in vain. Some of the other lads went on hunger strike. It was the commencement of the great hunger strike of October 1923. I was against the hunger strike because of the tunnel. Few knew of the tunnel, of course. Only a select number, those working upon it, would be let in on such a secret. After a few days of hunger strike they came in to turn on the heating. Nothing would work. We had disconnected the pipework in the roof for our own purposes. They came up and discovered this elaborate workshop. They went berserk of course, particularly Dermot McManus, the pompous little needler who had succeeded O'Keeffe. He made a great uproar; brought in the hoses and batons. There was hell to pay.

They decided they would transfer the tunnelers to Kilmainham, myself among them. *And I escaped on the way.* It was the simplest thing in the world. Mick Price our OC and I, Daithi O'Donoghue and

some fourth person were placed in the lorry. I was sick of everything, sick of the months spent patiently trying to bore out of the place. All that hard work gone for nothing because of a hunger strike. I felt really disheartened. We had a big escort, armoured cars and so on. But the lorry we were in missed its way and somewhere around Berkeley Road, lost the convoy and stopped. The officer inside our lorry alighted to discuss the situation with the driver. I saw my chance. Nodding slyly to the others, I hopped out and quickly escaped. Mick Price followed and he too got away. I was not subsequently recaptured. (Eight months later, by mid 1924, almost all of the remaining Republican prisoners in Free State jails, were released: the hue and cry for Sean died down. He was soon to leave the country anyway).

#### ABROAD AGAIN

I got married to Kid Bulfin in January 1926. Tom Daly, brother of Charlie of Drumboe, was best man. I was still on the run then, so we left Ireland and arrived in Paris where I worked upon a newspaper for something under a year. The Free State authorities, still sore at my escape, tried to reach me there. Later in 1926, I returned to London and worked as a spare night sub on the *Morning Post*, a deeply Tory paper of that time. A year before this I had acted as "foreign" secretary to De Valera for a short period. Archbishop Mannix of Melbourne, who had befriended Ireland in the Tan War, and had tried to come here in August 1920, was anxious to meet De Valera. He was, of course, an old friend, having spoken on many of his platforms in the United States. I was given the task of bringing De Valera over to meet him in Rome. It was very hush hush. He had a great many talks with Mannix; very long sessions. They went on for three or four days. Mannix, I knew, was pressing him to recognise the Free State Dail. I felt this was a turning point. I felt De Valera was trying to get political control of the State from within. The breach with Sinn Féin, was no surprise to me. I was back in Ireland of course from time to time. I was here in November 1925 when George Gilmore carried out his dramatic rescue of nineteen prisoners from Mountjoy. My car, a Model T, was used. It was lost in the operation. But I was overjoyed by the coup he brought off.

I recall too Moss Twomey's accession as Chief of Staff, succeeding Andy Cooney, in 1926. I had known Moss for a long time before that, having first met him in Mallow before the start of the Civil War. What else was I doing in those years? Well, apart from trying to study law, and doing some journalism, I was travelling the country on the usual HQ business, encouraging units, addressing meetings and commemorations. I was arrested for a time in 1927, and then released. I was

speaking at a Comhairle na Poblachta meeting in December 1928, with Peadar O'Donnell, Mrs. Buckley, and Brian O'Higgins of Sinn Féin. That was a new grouping they attempted to launch that would link the political talents of the IRA and Sinn Féin. But neither group had their hearts in it.

I was arrested in January 1929, in Offaly, and held on remand for five months. The charge against me related to Comhairle na Poblachta although they tried to make it sound like something else. In August, I was in Frankfurt with Peadar at the second world congress of the League Against Imperialism. That was one of those high sounding organisations that we felt we had to support in pre-Hitler days.

In June 1930 Bernard Iago, who had been sentenced in 1922 to ten years in Maidstone returned to us, accompanied by John Foley; he also had done ten years. We had a reception for them at Roebuck.

In November we had a very large public meeting in Dublin by the League Against Imperialism. The speakers sound like a Republican *Who's Who*, Peadar O'Donnell, Alderman Tom Kelly, Helena Moloney, Sean T. O'Kelly, De Valera, Mrs. Sheehy-Skeffington, Alec Lynn, Frank Ryan, and so on. That was the time of big meetings. The following June, Cosgrave took fright and banned Bodenstown, but it was held anyhow. Shortly after that I was charged in Listowel under the "Cat and Mouse" Act, but was released by the local court. We were being constantly raided in Roebuck House. Madame Despard was living here at that time, and was as strongly Republican as my mother. We were raided eleven times within a few months in 1931; on the last occasion they brought seventeen men. They always ransacked the place, although nothing much was ever found.

I would agree that in the run up to De Valera's election success of 1932, the IRA itself, had lost direction; had lost *political* direction. The old Sinn Féin party, the Second Dail remnant, did not count. But I did try to organise Saor Eire in the late Autumn of 1931. I was its secretary and put more work into it than anyone else. I felt a little bit fed up when they all ran away from Saor Eire. That was one of the reasons I was not enthusiastic three years later when a similar venture, Republican Congress, was mooted. I did not want to get involved in another fiasco.

#### FIANNA FAIL IN POWER

I would not agree that I personally felt any sense of triumph in 1932, and again in 1933, when Fianna Fail was elected, although the IRA had backed them and was, to some degree, responsible for their success. We were glad to see Cosgrave go. We were glad to see the end of Military Tribunals, as we thought. This house itself had been raided and ransacked by the Oriel House squads and later by the CID so many



times, that we could not but view a change with relief. However, there was no feeling of elation. I remember Frank Aiken came to see me then, into this very room; *Would I go into the army with the rank of Colonel?* I was highly indignant: I told him to get out. There was a complete divergence between me and Aiken and Fianna Fail, from the start.

I had endless adventures over the years with Frank Ryan. His deafness was a terribly complicating factor, though it could create some humorous situations. Yes, I would agree, he was a real rough and tumble character and a strong militant. He got on well with everybody, could take a drink, danced and sang. He had no enemies within the movement.

Activity during our honeymoon period with Fianna Fail was very much as it had always been. More anti-imperialist rallies. A meeting to welcome home Mrs. Sheehy-Skeffington, in February 1933, from a brief prison sojourn in the North. She had a great spirit and was a profound and deeply convinced revolutionary. Then unveiling a stone at Soloheadbeg in September, speaking at Gweedore and Dublin the same month. All the time trying to pressure Fianna Fail along Republican lines, but failing, slowly failing. Anti-Blueshirt meetings were the rage then. You will find Helena Moloney, John Brennan, (Mrs. Czira) and mother prominent at some of these. Then around the country again, Castlecomer, Castlebar, Tralee and Ballina, in the 1934-1935 period, before we ended up in College Green, in May, at the inevitable prisoner protest. Bodenstown that year, with 30,000 present, was the last great Bodenstown, or so they say. It also marked the end of *An Phoblacht*, edited by Donal O'Donoghue and Terry Ward, Fianna Fail superseded it.

I was not involved in Cumann na Poblachta, the IRA political party set up in March 1936. I stayed out of it. I was on the run during much of 1935 and 1936. Prior to that I had been trying whenever I had the opportunity to attend lectures at National University and to appear at the Kings Inns Law School. The lull in the police activities during 1932 and 1933 helped. When Moss Twomey was arrested in 1936, I succeeded him as Chief of Staff. I cannot quite recall now the order of succession; I think it was myself, followed by Tom Barry, then Mick Fitzpatrick, and finally in April 1938, Sean Russell. I was out of the IRA at that time. The 1937 Constitution had been brought in meanwhile by De Valera. I felt that we could not oppose that.

#### ON THE SIDELINES

From then onwards I retired to the sidelines. I was defending counsel in a large number of cases that you know about. I supported De Valera's policy of neutrality. I thought that he handled that very

well. I felt he had been provoked a good deal into taking action against the IRA. However, the executions were unjustified. I spent a good deal of my time trying to pour oil on troubled waters on both sides. I did not meet De Valera at any time as a go between, though we did exchange letters and did meet socially on a few occasions. I was quite friendly with Sean T. O'Kelly. He helped me a lot at the time that Tomás MacCurtain was sentenced to death in 1940. He was very helpful at that period. He was trying to get a reprieve; he advised me to take any sort of delaying action I could in the courts, which I did. I planned the moves very carefully. I went seeking a conditional *habeas corpus* at 3.30 in the afternoon, the courts then rising at 4 p.m. I knew that I would be thrown out. At 3.55 Gavan Duffy refused the order. I lodged my appeal just before the office closed. MacCurtain was due to be hanged in Mountjoy the next day, so it was a very close shave. They tried to bring the Supreme Court together that evening, but they were unable because Murnaghan, not the present man but his uncle — was out, diplomatically maybe, walking with his dog. I think he guessed what was going to happen.

Straightaway they had to postpone the execution for a couple of days. After that I got it postponed upon one pretext or another, until eventually it was commuted to penal servitude for life. During all this period however, I kept in close contact with Sean T., Bill Quirke(26) and others.

I was involved again in the case of Paddy McGrath and Tom Harte. They were the first to be executed under De Valera, in September 1941. We fought that case on every available pretext for three weeks, but we could not save them. They were determined to obtain a sacrifice after what happened on Rathgar Road.(27) I continued to be involved in all the long saga of imprisonments, executions, inquests, reprieves, and so on right up to the end in 1946 — the inquest on Sean McCaughey, in Portlaoise. Censorship had ended by that time; the facts in that case could not be obscured. Yes, it was I who asked the telling question from the prison doctor and elicited the equally telling response, *if you had a dog would you treat it in that fashion?* I received some satisfaction when he said, *no*.

#### IRELAND NOW

What of Ireland at the present time? There is a decadence, nationally, which is quite worrying. This affects the Irish language too, though it has never been one of my main concerns. Nonetheless I think there is a sad retrogression in the language. That is bad; I think there is a retrogression in the national spirit also. Economically we have not improved as much as we make out we have. We are very often taken in

by multi-nationals, and other commercial interests, coming in here because of the tax structure or to get state grants. As soon as they get this money they walk out. This is one of the weaknesses of our economic policy. I am not sure whether the state companies engaged in trying to attract industry know what they are doing. *The one thing that is terribly important is afforestation.* We have built up a useful timber reserve, but we are tending to slip back on this. I think we should concentrate on afforestation. We should step it up. I am told by the experts that an increase of 15% in our present planting rate could enable us to produce all the electricity we require for the country without resort to nuclear energy. Orders for nuclear stations are now being cancelled because they have proved to be uneconomic. The economic assessments on which they were based have proved to be invalid. They are only in operation in practice for 40% to 60% of their lives, being out of action or under repair the remainder of the time. This in effect means, that you require two stations. On top of this they have a life span of only twenty five years. The cost of disposing of them at the end of this period is colossal. I have had correspondence with the ESB on this; they are still going upon old estimates of cost and life span, not realising how uneconomic they really are.

Is there a danger that we will be forced into an EEC defence pact? Well I don't agree that it is bound to go in that direction, but it is going in that direction. We are the only non NATO country in the EEC. All the other countries (apart from France which holds its own special position) are in NATO. There is therefore an inevitable tendency to use EEC for NATO purposes. NATO itself is a highly dangerous organisation, working in very close collaboration with South Africa, and, I think, also Brazil. There is a danger of the EEC being sucked into it. I always felt it should have followed the example of the Council of Europe; it has an article which excludes all military questions from its purview. I think we should have insisted upon similar clauses in the EEC.

In our case there is a danger of being sucked into NATO strategies. The West Germans have been accused of developing joint nuclear capacity with South Africa. Germany is precluded from nuclear weapons under the Brussel's Treaty. She has circumvented this by working with South Africa in that country. This is highly dangerous. On one hand it is a violation of the Brussel's Treaty, and on the other hand it violates the non proliferation treaty.

We must remember too that America is dominated by the industrial/military complex, which is colossal, as events now show. As commander in chief of NATO they had Alexander Haig, who was a Nixon appointee. So you had a man who was part and parcel of the Nixon and Watergate administration, who was promoted in charge of



NATO. He was promoted over the heads of forty seven US generals, in order to be in that position. He was running NATO, the most powerful position in the world.

*In 1974, Sean MacBride was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize, and in 1977, the International Lenin Prize for Peace. His honorary doctorates include those from St. Paul, Minnesota, Bradford, Guelph (Canada), and Trinity College, Dublin. While Minister for Foreign Affairs in Dublin, in 1948-1951, he sponsored the European Human Rights Convention, the Statute of the Council of Europe, the Convention of Economic Co-operation, and the Geneva Convention for the Protection of War Victims. He also acted for the United Nations in Namibia, Cyprus and elsewhere, as well as visiting many countries on economic surveys and on missions connected with political prisoners. He has had the post of chairman of Amnesty International, secretary of the International Commission of Jurists (Geneva), and many other international appointments.*

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Sean MacBride's Account of the IRA Convention(28) of 18/6/1922

(From the State Paper Office)

*Extract from a notebook, the property of Sean MacBride, which was seized at Newbridge Barracks, July 1923*

Newbridge Military Camp

I have decided to write this account of the events leading up to and subsequent to the attack on the Four Courts, from my own experience of them, for two main reasons:

- 1 To place in my mind the sequence of events and the impressions they made on me.
- 2 In the event, likely or unlikely, as it may be, that at the end of this conflict nobody would be left alive who would know certain events of that period, or no record left of them.

After the split I was made Assistant Director of Organisation, Ernie O'Malley was Director of Organisation. Most of my work consisted of drawing up various forms, and of compiling from them statistics of strength etc., of the different units of the Army; of organising and forming units where there were none and sending out organisers, while

Ernie was carrying out a systematic inspection of all the Divisions, organising as he was going along. It was upon our department that devolved all secretarial work of the Convention (of March 26th).

I used also to work with Liam Mellows, who was Quartermaster General, and was often despatched abroad on various missions by him. I had been away on one of these errands for about ten days and arrived back in Dublin on Sunday the 18th June 1922, after a very long and tiring journey. I had left Friederichstrasse Bahnhof, Berlin, on Friday morning for London, via Brussels and Ostend, arriving there the next evening just in time to catch the Irish Mail at Euston, by which I arrived in Dublin some time before 8 a.m.

I went straight to the Four Courts where, after getting a wash and some breakfast, I saw Liam who told me he was glad I had come back as a Convention had been summoned for that morning, and that nobody could find the papers in connection with delegates, minutes, etc. So I immediately hurried off to make all arrangements required. I then saw Ernán who had been working up to late and was getting up. While doing so he briefly told me why this Convention had been so suddenly summoned. Apparently three out of five members of the Executive who had been negotiating on behalf of the Army with the Free State HQ to try to reach an agreement, had agreed to certain proposals which, if accepted, would have given complete control of the Army to the Free State Government. That agreement provided for the appointment of the Minister for Defence, Chief of Staff, etc., to be made by the Free State Government, which of course would have meant that the Army would have been entirely under their control. The Executive rejected these proposals by 14 votes to 4. Tom Barry proposed that a Convention should be summoned to consider these proposals although he himself was strongly opposed to them. He also wanted to bring forward a motion of his own at that Convention: *in substance his motion was that an ultimatum be given to Great Britain to withdraw all her troops from Ireland within 72 hours.*

Of course all these things came on me like a bombshell, as when I left the whole Executive was quite united. But I hadn't much time for reflection as it was getting near 11.00 a.m. and I had still a lot of things to do. By the way I had brought back Hoover from Germany with me, an arms agent whom we suspected of double dealing. On arriving in Dublin he left me to go to the Shelbourne Hotel, and I made an appointment with him at 11.00 a.m. in the Four Courts, where I was going to charge him and detain him. Poor Hoover, I would have liked to be there when he walked in unsuspectingly into the Four Courts and was arrested, but I had to be in the Mansion House, so I left instructions to the OC of Four Courts for his arrest. I then went to the Mansion House where I spent about an hour inspecting the credentials of the various delegates. When at last the proceedings opened there

was at first a long discussion as to who would act as Chairman, as everybody who was proposed withdrew; at the end Joseph O'Connor was chosen (the main reason being probably that he did not withdraw).

Liam opened the Convention by reading a report on the general situation since the last meeting. As soon as this was over Tom Barry was up to propose his resolution which was first on the agenda. He didn't say much; I forget who seconded it. I think then that some delegates asked what was the reason that the motion came before the Convention. Then bit by bit it was explained by various speakers that it was the alternative to the proposals dealing with the Army unification intentions which had been accepted by Liam Lynch and which were to come subsequently before the Convention.

Of course, to my mind, it was very foolish of Barry to have put forward such a resolution at the Convention. It was neither the time nor the place for it. In fact it meant putting the onus of declaring war on Great Britain on a body of men, who had been selected by various units of the Army to select an executive which was to appoint a Chief of Staff and to direct the policy of the Army until a Republican Government was formed. I understand that Barry proposed that motion to counterbalance Liam Lynch's proposals and to avoid the repetition of such incidents. As a policy the substance of his motion was quite right, but by putting it forward at a Convention without consulting anybody, as he did, was putting those who supported that policy in a very awkward position.

Liam Mellows made a very depressing speech which showed clearly that there was a very big split in the Executive and it became more and more apparent as time went on that this split was on an absolutely fundamental decision of policy. On the one hand there was Liam Lynch, Sean Moylan and Liam Deasy, who were leading the opposition to Barry's motion and who, immediately that motion was dealt with would propose that the Republican Army be united and controlled by the Free State Army.<sup>(29)</sup> In other words this meant that they were ready to work the Treaty and thereby signify their acceptance of it.

On the other hand, there was first Tom Barry, who beyond proposing his motion made no attempt to justify it or to put forward any arguments to support it, and who, I think, hardly realised to the full extent the meaning or importance of the proposals under discussion.

Then came Rory and Liam who saw the huge mistake it had been for Barry to bring forward such a proposal to a Convention; but who, at the same time, understood that this was the best, or rather the only policy, that could be consistently followed by us. They knew too that this was the beginning of the split, (I should not say the beginning of



the split, as that split was really there from the start) which might lead to the withdrawal of part of Cork from the Republican Army.

It was far better to break off quits from those who were prepared to compromise on such a vital question, that of the control of the Army, and of the working of the Treaty. As in fact they had already done when they acquiesced in the proposals by which the control of the Army was to be given to the Provisional Government. It probably would have been even better if such a split had come before, however weakening it might have been; it was far more weakening to have the Army controlled by people, who, although sincere, did not put their heart into it and who still believed that our opponents could be trusted in negotiations. In connection with this, it must be remembered that there was hardly a promise made by those who negotiated with us on behalf of the Provisional Government which wasn't broken by them.

So it was in this frame of mind that Rory put up a short but a very fine defence of the war proposals.

The rest of the proceedings remain a blur in my memory, but I remember that nearly everybody spoke, and some made long speeches at that. Speech-making undoubtedly seems to be one of our national failings. I also remember that everybody was depressed and solemn; even Sean O'Hegarty, and Cork No. 1, were not as uproarious as at the previous Convention.

The question was put sometime about 8 p.m. Poor Peadar Breslin(30) and myself were the tellers. We found that Tom Barry's motion was passed by a couple of votes. This was challenged on the grounds that there was a Brigade there which wasn't represented at the last Convention; after a long discussion the objection was upheld and a fresh vote was taken and the motion was lost.

After this there was some more discussion on the whole situation; during this Rory asked to tell Liam Pilkington and some other members of the Executive that if the compromise proposals were brought to the Convention, he was leaving it. These proposals came and about half of the delegates got up and left, this created something of a panic amongst the remaining delegates.

Rory, Liam and Joe McKelvey, held a hurried consultation just outside the Convention Room. They decided to have a meeting of the Convention the next day in the Four Courts. This was announced to the delegates who had come out with them, and Liam told me to go and announce it to the rest of the Convention, and to get his hat which he had left behind.

I went and I got Liam's hat. Cathal Brugha was speaking. Cathal had been strongly against Barry's resolution, but was also strongly against the compromise resolution because he thought an agreement could be found, and that this wasn't the best time to declare war on England.

I waited for a pause in his speech, and then announced that a Convention would be held in the Four Courts the next morning. There was an absolute silence and I could hear my steps like shots from the top of the room to the door. A few more delegates came out.

*The atmosphere created by this split within a split had a debilitating effect on the Republican response to the Free State attack upon the Four Courts ten days later, and may have encouraged it.*

#### REFERENCES

1 The regular monthly report from the Assistant Commissioner of Police R.I.C., to the Under Secretary at Dublin Castle for May 1904 records under the entry 5th May 1904, the following:

*Names:*

Joseph MacBride, Mrs. MacBride, Mrs. H. MacBride, J. O'Leary.

*Suspect Joseph MacBride of Westport:*

Chief Commissioner, D.M.P. informs Inspector General, R.I.C., that Mr. MacBride, accompanied by his mother, arrived in Dublin on 30th ult., and returned home on 2nd inst. Most of their time was spent at Mrs. MacBride's residence, and on 1st inst., they were present at the christening of "Major" MacBride's child at the Church of the Three Patrons, Rathgar, (*They got the name of the church wrong*). Mrs. Honoria MacBride acting as sponsor. It was intended that John O'Leary should be the other sponsor but his declaration of faith was not considered satisfactory. (*This was the O'Leary of Yeats's 'Romantic Ireland's dead and gone; it's with O'Leary in the grave'*). O'Leary had forsaken Catholicity because of the Church's attitude to Fenianism.

The same police reports — still regularly compiled, traces the movements of ten other "suspects" in that month. The provincial rail stations were obviously used as kicking-off points for tailing the suspects. Other prominent persons listed that month were, the Dublin trade unionist and friend of Connolly, P. T. Daly, Dr. Mark Ryan, the London Fenian, and Michael Davitt, "now in very straitened circumstances", the report adds. It is amusing to think that in those days the policeman had to tramp after his suspect on foot.

1a Charles Oldham was Professor of Economics at U.C.D. in the first decade of this century. Founder of Contemporary Club 1885, and friend of George Russell, Yeats and O'Leary. Mild Protestant home ruler; believed Ireland should remain an appendage of England.

2 It was never erected.

3 In September 1915 Pearse wired McGarrity for £300 urgently needed to pay the rent and to save himself from the political ignominy of being declared a bankrupt.

4 Too vain, jealous, untruthful, to make a really great leader was her opinion of Larkin, Helena Moloney concurred. Samuel Levinson in his life of Connolly compares the two to the great disadvantage of Larkin: the one, cool, calm, sober; the other, fiery revolution incarnate, without logic, unpredictable.

5 To Helena Moloney went the honour of being the first woman of her generation to be jailed in Ireland's cause. She was convicted of throwing stones in Grafton Street, and fined forty shillings, or, alternatively one month's imprisonment. *You will get no money from me, Sir*, she told the magistrate defiantly. She remained only a few days in jail. To her great chagrin the money was paid in by Anna Parnell, the sister of Charles Stewart. The offence occurred a week after a vast meeting of 30,000 Dublin people held on June 22nd, 1911, the evening of the coronation of King George V. The meeting was held at

Beresford Place, and was addressed by The O'Rahilly, Major MacBride, Dr. McCartan, Laurence Ginnell, MP., the Hon. James O'Sullivan of New York, Madame Markievicz, Arthur Griffith, Cathal Brugha, Alderman Tom Kelly and James Connolly. George V was to visit Dublin on July 8th, and the city was decorated with bunting. On the 4th a small procession approached Grafton Street — then a den of upper-crust Unionism — intending to protest at the Mansion House. It was led by Constance Markievicz, with her Fianna, and Helena Moloney. Yeates, the opticians at the Nassau Street corner, then had on permanent exhibition a giant spectacles. In each lens they had a portrait of King George and Queen Mary. Helena had a handful of stones in her bag. She let fly with one of these and was arrested. Maud Gonne telegraphed congratulations from Paris. From *Constance Markievicz* by Jacqueline Van Voris.

6 Prophetically Stephens wrote in this book in May 1916: It may not be worthy of mention but the truth is Ireland is not cowed. She is excited a little. She was not with the revolution, but in a few months she will be, and her heart which was withering will be warmed by the knowledge that men have thought her worth dying for.

7 Brugha, the Dail Minister for Defence and Collins had at their call several Volunteer organisers on a roving commission to ginger up activities. The most prominent of these was Sean MacBride, a son of the executed 1916 leader, Ernie O'Malley who wrote a good book on the struggle, *On Another Man's Wound*; Sean MacMahon, later Chief of Staff of the State Army; Sean Kavanagh, later Prison Governor of Mountjoy; and Paddy Colgan from Maynooth, Co. Kildare. All of these men had hair's-breath escapes and lived truly adventurous lives. The British issued from the Castle a propaganda newspaper for the Tans. This used to say "Co. Kildare is quiet" or "no activity in Co. Mayo". On reading this Collins used to say: *Send for Ernie O'Malley, MacBride or one of the others.* Whoever was available was despatched immediately to the quiet front and soon after things began to hum there. They often shot it out with enemy parties and sometimes found it impossible to find lodgings, for anyone found harbouring them was liable to sudden death. Professor Hayes tells me that at the height of the terror, only fifteen or twenty householders in Dublin were willing to hide Mulcahy, Collins, or other wanted men, and that accounts for Mulcahy being nearly caught in Hayes' house which was raided every other week. From *The Spy in the Castle* by David Neligan.

8 The account differs from *On Another Man's Wound*, but Sean MacBride confirms it.

9 Information from Connie Neenan.

10 Richard Mulcahy and Austin Stack along with Cathal Brugha and Michael Collins were ministers and members of the Dail Cabinet, holding various portfolios.

11 See Appendix, p.411.

12 Arthur Griffith, Minister for Foreign Affairs, and Michael Collins, Minister for Finance were joint leaders. Collins was a reluctant envoy. Robert Barton, Minister for Economic Affairs was also pressed into going. George Gavan Duffy, the envoy in Rome and Eamonn Duggan, both lawyers, went also. The secretaries were Erskine Childers, Fionan Lynch, Diarmuid O'Hegarty and John Chartres. (See notes on Chartres, Collins and others in Appendix). Duggan's signature was forged as he was absent but he signed next morning.

13 Early in November Ernie O'Malley with Johnny Raleigh visited London to make some arms purchases: *I visited the Irish delegation in Hans Place, and Desmond Fitzgerald, Minister for Publicity, invited us to lunch. Champagne, wines and whiskey were unstinted, but neither of us drank. I thought of my staff in Denny Kelly's hut, running breakfast and lunch together to economise. — The Singing Flame.*



O'Malley and Raleigh, who had ignored the instruction prohibiting Volunteer units from purchasing arms outside their area, had come to London. Raleigh was a Limerick carpenter who had offered his life savings, some £400, for the purchase of war material. Every penny counted, and the two men took their meals with the delegates at Hans Place. They pretended to be on holiday. When Collins, who was staying at Cadogan Gardens called, O'Malley thought he was ill. Then he realised that he was drinking heavily. There was a sense of moody unease everywhere — from *Liam Mellows and The Irish Revolution*, by C. Desmond Greaves. Tony Woods told the author that Joe McGrath who was in London for most of the period denied that there was any extravagance. See also Appendix, p.400: The London Associates of Michael Collins.

14 Jones was well acquainted with Ireland and had been Professor of Economics in Belfast. See *Peace by Ordeal*.

14a Churchill was an accomplice in the sinking of the *Lusitania* on 7th May 1915, with a loss of 1,200 (by withdrawing naval escort) in order to lure U.S. into war (*S. Times*, 15th Aug. 1982).

15 This anecdote is told somewhat differently in Rex Taylor's *Michael Collins*.

16 Diarmuid Mac Giolla Phadraig told me two stories in similar vein. On entering No. 10, Downing Street, Collins saw a Lee Enfield rifle casually sitting close to the inner pair of doors in the hallway. As Mac Giolla Phadraig put it, a Lee Enfield is not usually left sitting in a Prime Minister's hallway; it was left there to allow Collins make a show of himself. Collins grabbed it, planted it to his shoulder and went through all the motions, to the hearty enjoyment of those present.

On another occasion during a break in conference, Collins indulged in some boasting. You had £10,000 on my head he said to Churchill; the Boers had only £250 on yours. There was no particular price on Collins' head; the highest at that time was £1,000 on the head of Dan Breen.

17 Reginald Dunne and Joseph O'Sullivan, the two Volunteers who shot Wilson, were former soldiers in the British Army; O'Sullivan having lost a leg at Ypres. They lived with their parents in London. It was the inability of O'Sullivan to run that prevented their escape. Dunne would not leave him. Both were hanged. Arthur Griffith immediately condemned it as an "anarchic" deed. De Valera was more circumspect: *I do not know who shot Sir Henry Wilson, or why they shot him, but it is characteristic of our hypocritical civilisation that it is only when the victim is in the seats of the mighty . . . we are expected to cry out and express our horror and condemnation.* General Macready, G.O.C. Ireland, was summoned to Downing Street. He had no evidence he said to connect the crime with De Valera or Rory O'Connor. Nonetheless, the Cabinet considered an immediate attack upon the Four Courts. He managed to dissuade the British from this course, making the obvious point that it would throw the pro-Treaty forces into an immediate alliance with the Republicans. The next day (23rd June), Arthur Griffith with General Emmet Dalton attended a British Military conference in the Phoenix Park. Plans were laid there for the attack upon the Four Courts five days later.

18 Hungry with anti-Irish fury, as William O'Brien, MP., described the debate, Churchill in a stirring speech spelled out the issue for Arthur Griffith: *The time has come when it is not unfair, premature, or impatient of us to make . . . a request in express terms, that this sort of thing must come to an end. If it does not come to an end . . . then it is my duty to say . . . that we shall regard the Treaty as having been formally violated . . . and that we shall resume full liberty of action in any direction that may seem proper.* The pressure was being put upon the right man. In the unlikely event of the Treaty being repudiated the political world of Griffith would have fallen apart.

19 It was unpleasant to sit at a cabinet table and to have to decide who was to be shot. Ernest Blythe in Ardee in January, 1927.

20 The difficulties of defending the Four Courts are detailed in O'Malley's *Singing Flame*.

21 The others were Paddy O'Brien O.C., who escaped with an ambulance party, Joe Griffin, Director of Intelligence, and later a prominent industrialist, Paddy Rigney and Sean Lemass.

22 For the record seventy-seven in all were executed, but many more perished in unofficial killings.

23 See Peadar O'Donnell's account.

24 Col. Hugo MacNeill, nephew of Eoin, was officer in charge. Col. Hugh Gunn from Belfast, a former friend of McKelvey, was present. The four were in line with twenty marksmen fronting them, ten standing, ten on one knee. Most fire concentrated on O'Connor, who died instantly, but whose clothing burst into flames causing hysteria among some troops. As he lay there McKelvey called, shoot me: MacNeill bent forward shot him in the chest and head.

25 The account on which this was based was published in *An Phoblacht*, December, 7th, 1929.

26 Senator Bill Quirke was a Republican leader active in the Civil War until the end. He was present at the meeting called to decide on a cease-fire in Co. Tipperary, on 20th April, 1923.

27 Two Special Branch men were killed in a raid on an I.R.A. headquarters house in August, 1941.

28 The I.R.A. in effect held three Conventions in the first half of 1922. The first (banned by Griffith but held in the Mansion House) was on March 26th, 223 delegates removed control of the Army from the Dail to their own executive of sixteen.

On April 9th, the Convention met again. Feeling was strong against the Treatyites. Cathal Brugha, foreseeing the Collins/De Valera election pact, calmed the delegates. An executive of sixteen was elected: Liam Lynch, Liam Mellows, Rory O'Connor, Joe McKelvey, Eamán O'Malley, Sean Moylan, Frank Barrett, Michael Kilroy, Liam Deasy, Peadar O'Donnell, P. J. Rutledge, Seamus Robinson, Jos. O'Connor, Sean O'Hegarty, Florence O'Donoghue and Tom Hales. The last three Corkmen resigned later and were replaced before June 28th by Tom Barry, Pax Whelan and Tom Derrig. In the meantime members of the Army Council, and the Dail were engaged in involved negotiations with the pro-Treaty party. These ended satisfactorily with the announcement on 18th May of a coalition election. See Greaves *Liam Mellows*.

The third Convention held on June 18th, verged dangerously on farce. They now had the result of the abortive Pact Election before them, the Pact broken in Cork by Collins following a demand from Churchill. For the Republicans there were 36 seats; for Griffith there were 58. The delegates squabbled openly. It must have greatly encouraged the Treatyites to attack the Four Courts and at one fell swoop isolate the dissidents.

29 The proposal was that there would be an Army Council consisting of R. Mulcahy, Eoin O'Duffy, Gearoid O'Sullivan, Liam Lynch, Sean Moylan, Rory O'Connor, Liam Mellows and Florence O'Donoghue. The C/S to be O'Duffy, Deputy C/S Lynch, Deputy Training Liam Deasy, Adj. General O'Donoghue, QM Sean MacMahon and D/Intelligence O'Sullivan.

30 Peadar Breslin of Dublin was later Quartermaster in the besieged Four Courts. He was shot dead by a soldier after an escape attempt from C Wing, Mountjoy, on the 10th October, 1922.

## Pax Ó Faoláin

*Pax Whelan  
Brigadier General I.R.A.*



My mother, Brigid Carey, was from Ring. She was a native Irish speaker. So also was my father; both were Irish speakers. He was a good fiddler and musician. There was hardly a traditional song or air that he did not have. As well as that he was a leader in the local orchestra. My brother-in-law, Maurice Fraher, was the first boarder to enter St. Enda's. My wife attended the girls' school, St. Ita's. They were both at that time in Oakley Road, in Cullenswood House(1) which is still there. Collins used that house as a H.Q. among the many he had. I was there later with Liam Tobin. A great generation of people went through those schools, the P. T. McGinleys, the Bulfins and many more.

I was born in 1893 in Dungarvan. My mother died when I was six. My father at that time was largely an invalid with arthritis. We were not well off. The struggle to live and to get enough to eat dominated us. The Irish-Ireland side of things scarcely entered it at all. I first became aware of the national position through reading *Sinn Féin*, the weekly newspaper, which came in here. That was around 1910. There was nothing very radical about the paper, but it tended to put you against the Irish Party and the whole idea of the English Parliamentary system. That showed up here when there was a bye-election in 1911, and an independent candidate went forward. He ran the Redmondite very close. It was on local issues that that contest evolved, but there always has been an element of opposition to Parliamentarism around Dungarvan. After all Daniel O'Connell came here and spoke from scaffolding around the parish church. He did not get a good reception; ever afterwards he referred to the town as *the piss-pot of Ireland*. In 1848, after the abortive rising at Ballingarry, the West Waterford men decided to come out the following year. There were strong forces then, of what in future years you would have called Fenians, at Carrick, Clonmel and Dungarvan. They attacked the town of Cappoquin in



1849. It was to be the signal for an all-out rising. There was a man by the name of Donohue killed. (As a result Cappoquin was heavily garrisoned afterwards by military. The nuns established the Mercy Convent there to keep the girls away from them.) They were very strong here. The fellows from here joined them. They had their headquarters at the old Market House. Until recent years, some of their slogans were still preserved inside on the walls.

Later we had the Fenian landing, when the American vessel purchased by John O'Mahony arrived in May — after a brief heave-to in Sligo Bay — with forty officers aboard to help in a rising that never got started. They came in off Helvick. She was commanded by a Captain Kavanagh, a brave and intrepid sailor, and carried a large cargo of rifles. Thirty of the officers remained in Ireland — two of them Augustine E. Costello and John Warren were later caught and sentenced to fifteen years penal servitude — but the rifles went back. A namesake of mine, Pat Whelan, took them off that time in his fishing boat. So we did have the tradition of local history to look back upon, and no doubt it influenced us in many ways.

Three All Ireland finals were played at the beginning of this century in Dungarvan, in what became known as Dan Fraher's field. Dan Fraher, because of his broad Irish connections, was sought out by Padraic Pearse. It was for that reason that a friendship developed between them, and that his son, Maurice, was sent as the first boarder to Pearse's school. That friendship continued after 1916. For several years after that, Mrs. Pearse and Margaret came to Dungarvan, and stayed at the home of Dan Fraher and his family. His daughter, my future wife, was there with them. They used to stay about a month, being frequently driven around the countryside in a pony and trap by Dan. When we went to Dublin for an All Ireland around the mid-twenties, Donal, myself and my other brother would stay at St. Enda's. Dan Fraher arranged a number of inter-county matches here to help them out. They were in very straitened circumstances and needed it. That field eventually passed down to my sons; they made it over to the G.A.A.

I joined the Volunteers very shortly after they were founded in November 1913. Roger Casement came to the town — or it may have been The O'Rahilly — for the purpose of starting them off. There were three companies here in a short time. We played hurling or football in the field; then parade drill would start, and we would all turn out for that. That remained the position until the split a year later on the issue of the Great War. We agreed to differ here, no hard feelings; we got holding on to the guns, ten or twelve single-shot Martinis. As there were not a lot of us here, most of them were sent to Waterford, keeping just two ourselves.

## CAT AND MOUSE

With the approach of Easter Week, the man in charge of us here, was P. C. O'Mahony. He was later a secretary of Kerry Co. Council. He was an official in the post office. As there were few of us, our instructions, in the event of mobilisation, were to join the Waterford City men. There was also some question of a link-up with South Tipperary. There was an undersea cable going out from Waterford, which was to be cut, but I don't know much about that. The countermanding order from MacNeill reached O'Mahony. We were informed that the manoeuvres were off. A note arrived from Harry Boland to Dan Fraher confirming this. He went to Dublin to the annual G.A.A. Congress on the Saturday, which is probably where he got the message from Boland. Then on Tuesday we received a message from O'Mahony: *There is a Rising in Dublin, and they are out in Cork.* That was enough for us. We had word that there was a train-load of war material destined for Cork from Waterford, passing through about midnight. We had a couple of revolvers, and, with George Lennon, I went out and blocked the line. The train was held up. However it was the ordinary goods train; there was nothing in it. We just disappeared. There was no commotion fortunately, and no one was arrested. Mellows came here shortly after that. He used to refer to it later on when we were at Helvick together on the gun-running. He gave me glasses and a prismatic compass then which I still have.

As soon as the releases took place after the Rising, re-organisation recommenced. Groups became companies, companies became battalions, and battalions became brigades. They were all subject to control from headquarters in Dublin. Every one of us was subscribing to buy a rifle. In 1917 I was arrested for taking a rifle from a soldier. I walked into his house and removed it. At that time they were allowed to take them home, but with the increasing tension in the country, that soon ended. Anyway myself and another chap were remanded to the jail in Waterford. We were conveyed back and forth from there to court appearances here. Eventually we were released as they were unable to prove anything against us.

The next thing, I was arrested for drilling and imprisoned in Belfast, Crumlin Road. The Acting Governor there happened to be a neighbour of us here and a great friend of my father. I was still there when Austin Stack was imprisoned and directed a great fight for political treatment. We wrecked the jail in the struggle that followed.

## COLLINS: BRUGHA

I was scarcely back here when I was pulled in again. I was not on the run. Everyone tried to stay off the run for as long as they could, that was up to 1920. We had started attacking police barracks here then, hoping to freeze them out. As a result of this policy, the smaller ones



were evacuated and the police retired to the bigger ones. Stradbally was attacked, Ardmore twice, Ballinamoult, Kilmanahan and others. We kept up these tactics until they withdrew from them. I knew Mick Collins well for many years. We actually slept in the same bed together in Dublin on a few occasions. That would be when we were called together on tactical meetings. A strong friendship developed. I knew equally well his staff, Joe O'Reilly, Paddy Daly, Joe Leonard, Ben Barrett, Sean Doyle, Tom Keogh, Vince Byrne, Liam Tobin, Frank Thornton and Tom Cullen, the Squad, as they were called. We used knock around together. They all stayed with Collins after the Treaty, but they must have been disappointed men as some of them became the Mutineers of 1924. I still have the pamphlet issued by Tobin at that time.

I knew also at that time, Gearoid O'Sullivan, Rory O'Connor, Diarmuid O'Hegarty, Mellows, MacMahon the Quartermaster, terribly well. Our particular friend was George Plunkett; he was here a lot. He came first in 1917 to help re-organise Sinn Féin and stayed a long time. Harry Boland, I knew very well also; he came here.

In attendance at these Dublin meetings were, apart from MacSwiney, Liam Lynch, Rory and many more. I remember one such meeting held in the offices of the Typographical Society. It must have been very early in the struggle because they were seriously discussing the chivalry of shooting at soldiers and police. Some thought we should warn them that we would fire on them, and ridiculous things like that.

Cathal Brugha I knew already as he used to come here on business. He was very hard to get on with as he was very strait-laced and not a very sociable kind of a man. He listened to every sort of complaint that was made about us, by people whose houses we entered in our constant search for weapons. His sincerity, of course, was beyond doubt. He was the elected member for Waterford. His selection for the constituency took place in a strange way. There could be only one candidate — it being the "straight" system of election — for Waterford City, and one for the county. There was the usual straining for selection here by some locals anxious to get on the bandwagon. Now at this time also we were doing top secret work trying to contact submarines off Stradbally, which is just about eight miles east of Dungarvan. I would be out there in a boat on certain nights that were told to me beforehand. We did this three nights a month all that summer, two of us in a boat, and one a look-out on the headland. It was impressed on me that it was top secret; therefore I confided it to two parties of three counting myself. Nothing ever came of this, and I doubt if anything could, since it would be highly dangerous for a submarine to try to make contact in a way like that. On this night, however, that I was making my way to Stradbally, with the two lads to go out again, I was carrying another message from Collins. *I won't open this now, I said to myself, until I get down.* With a flashlight



beneath the shade of the boat, I read it. It gave me three more dates, then it added: *I have the right man for your election. It is Cathal Brugha. He was wounded severely in 1916.*

I had never heard of Cathal Brugha. When I came into the town in the morning, I met some of our politicians. *We have a great candidate, a 1916 man*, I said. They had never heard of him either. Some of them that had supported local men for the selection were disappointed, but when they heard he was a 1916 man, that he carried a few British bullets in him, and when they had read a bit about him, they were happy enough. They all rallied around, and he was elected that December.

Harry Boland was a tailor's cutter, a fine fellow. Early on my father-in-law helped to set him up in business in Middle Abbey Street, Dublin, where he had a tailoring shop. His younger brother, Gerry, was not the same class at all. He was in this house on the day of the Howth gun-running so I was pleased to see later that he did not claim to be there.

In 1919 I was deported from here under martial law, to a place known as Wormwood Scrubs. We all went on hunger-strike in protest. Their policy at that time was to release men as they became weak. Under the 'Cat and Mouse Act' they felt they could always pick them up again. I was twenty-one days on strike before I was released. The struggle gradually commenced here in 1920, as it did everywhere else. We had about half a dozen good actions during it as well as all the general harassment of trenching roads and blowing bridges, in other words, confining them to the towns and strong points. One of the first big actions was the ambush at Piltown, late in 1920, where we captured a lorry-load of soldiers complete with twenty rifles, Mills bombs and ammunition. There was an action then at Tramore, not so good for us, but it was good enough. There was a long engagement at Durrow station which lasted nearly the whole day. We had another fight at Ballyvoyle in which Liam Lynch was nearly involved. He happened to be here making an inspection just as the fight started. We had another in March 1921 at the Burgery. It started about midnight on the nineteenth, and finished the next morning about nine o'clock. Collins was very annoyed with me over that. We captured most of the British party including the captain in charge and a policeman. We let them all go except the policeman, whom we shot. *You bloody fool*, Collins said to me afterwards in Dublin; *You should not have let them go. You are a disgrace to the movement. Don't blame me*, I said, *It was the decision of George Plunkett*, who happened to be in Dungarvan on an H.Q. inspection, and took part in the engagement. Everyone knew George was very humane. (We were hoping Charlie Daly would be on the inspection, as George was very punctilious, always insisting that every rank in the company be filled, on paper anyway, and of course we did not have the officers for all the various places).

There were several other minor engagements at Rockfield, at the Pike and other places. All the time we were concerned with the general question of law and order. You had to supply the personnel for Republican courts, maintain our own police force, deal with robbery and petty crime. We had to settle land squabbles where small tenants were trying to grab land that did not belong to them. The great thing about all this was that it was done at practically no cost. The country never had law and order at such a cheap rate before. Even at election time — and there was one in 1918, two in 1920 and one in 1921 — we had to provide the workers and the protection. There was no let-up; you never got a rest.

I got married at the end of 1920. It was at the height of things but we did not care. Michael Collins knew Cait Fraher well. He used to say to me: *Are you never going to marry that girl?* I answered him seriously: *How can I do that in the middle of a war? Sure it might go on for years.* Collins agreed gloomily that indeed it might, but cheered himself up with some more banter.

On another occasion I was at a H.Q. meeting in a house on the quays about February, 1921. All the top people were there, Mick; Liam Mellows, who was Director of Purchases; Cathal Brugha, Minister for Defence; Rory O'Connor; Sean MacMahon, Q.M.G.; Liam Lynch and some more. There was a boat due to come from Genoa with sixty tons of arms.<sup>(2)</sup> They were discussing whether to bring it in to Stradbally or to somewhere in West Cork. I strongly advocated that they come here. I pointed out to Liam Lynch that any landings around the west coast were always failures. Once you round Lands End, if you make a straight line across, you strike Waterford. You have a good chance of avoiding the naval patrols which do not enter close to the Waterford coast. Loop Head and Mine Head tend to keep the patrols well out. I was arguing so, and I found Collins was not in agreement with me. He was putting all sorts of obstacles in the way. *What about the military in Fermoy? What about the garrisons in Clonmel?* I felt he was not keen on the landing at all. Finally he knocked it on the head on the argument that we might lose the boat. I did not care whether we lost the boat as long as we got the arms. At that point, as the meeting was breaking up, Cathal Brugha called me over with some of these trifling complaints about how our fellows were behaving. Mellows was waiting at the door. *Now, said he, You see how difficult it is to persuade those people. What is the use, I answered, going to Germany for a handbag full of Parabellums when we could have a shipload.* Then Mick cut in, *I see Charlie and yourself were in a bit of an argument.* That startled me, because it was the first time I heard his name, for which we all had an instinctive reverence, spoken that way. Mick seemed to say it in a derogatory way. I did not attach much importance to it then. I



forgot about it, but it did occur to me afterwards that I was being cultivated. The rift was beginning to appear. Did he think that I might go with Cathal Brugha, rather than with himself? We left the meeting together. *Come and meet a few friends*, said he. We went to a pub in Parnell Street. It may have been Kirwans or Maurice Collins' backing on to Coles Lane, where he was to meet two warders from Mountjoy. They had a message from Arthur Griffith(3) who was at that time in jail. Collins was in conversation with them for some time, then we departed together. (The reasons for an oppressor government providing the services of a 'friendly warder' to take messages to and from a top leader — especially as in this case a moderate leader — are obvious enough in the circumstances. No one knows to what extent these jail messages from Griffith may have enabled the Under Secretary, Cope, in Dublin Castle, to gauge the temperature among the Sinn Féin leadership in the run up to the Truce.)

#### ANITA AHoy

We had planned to land arms here early in the summer of 1921, before the Truce, by the *Anita*. Arrangements for the shipment were made in Bremerhaven by Bob Briscoe and Sean MacBride. The *Anita* was purchased there by one of them. The instructions about meeting the vessel were brought here to me by MacBride. I remember them well; they were typewritten. I was to have two boats off Helvick Head. One was to carry the ordinary fishing light, and a lower light, in order to be identified. The password was, *Anita Ahoy!* The answering call was *O'Donnell Abu!*

We were waiting to go out when we got a message that it would not be coming. It had been seized in Bremerhaven by the Allied Reparations Commission. The manifest stated sporting rifles. Instead they had a cargo of guns. It was probably the result of British Intelligence, with which this country always had to contend. Anyway the ship and its cargo were seized, and they had to start all over again.

Charlie McGuinness, from Derry, was in charge of the boat. You know he was an experienced ship's officer with the North German Lloyd, and later quite a bit of an explorer. He has written down an account of his voyages in his autobiography *Nomad*, but it doesn't tell the quarter. Anyway, McGuinness, with some of his German seafaring friends tried to fish out another boat. This was not easy. Finally they had to be satisfied with a river tug, which was not at all suitable for the seas round here. They also had the usual difficulty over money. It was only because of the extremely low exchange value of the German mark that they were able to do business at all. Eventually it was loaded up, and they got going again. But that took us beyond the 11th July, the



day of the Truce, and although there was now a respite, it did not stop the watching by the Admiralty. As a result, our negotiators over there were questioned by Lloyd George and Churchill about it. (4)

The *Frieda* arrived here off Helvick on November 11th, 1921. There was a fog at Helvick, so she moved down and up the Suir to Cheekpoint. I had been out in the boat off Helvick. (5) We came ashore then and moved our lorries down to Cheekpoint, where we unloaded most of the cargo. It consisted principally of Peter the Painters, Parabellums, rifles, all new, of course and ammunition. There was a bit of a repair to be done which we got done on the spot. We then moved it next morning to Boat Strand between here and Tramore. In the meantime, McGuinness, who was in touch with Mellows, had the idea of selling her. He went to Cork where he rooted out a Captain Collins who was engaged in coaling and general harbour working between Spike Island and Cobh. McGuinness and Collins came back to inspect the boat and Collins paid for it. There was a bit of a hullabaloo because they were both missing for a few days, and his wife wondered where he had got to. That was not surprising, because McGuinness was a hard man for the drink, and once he came ashore, he usually buried himself in some tavern. The *Frieda* deal worked so well that MacBride and McGuinness immediately decided they would go back again, buy another boat and bring it over too, which they did with the *Hannah*.

It was a lovely schooner with an auxiliary motor. They loaded her up with thirty barrels of cement as ballast, as the arms cargo would not be enough to give it stability. All went well and we brought her in to Ballynagaul, on 2nd April, 1922. That is the date in the lifeboat log, because they had gone out to meet her, although she did not require assistance. I still have the Customs receipt here, as the owner. It is made out for the 4th April, because we did not notify them until the arms were out of it, and we had nothing to declare but the cement. Her cargo consisted of boxes and boxes of ammunition, rifles and Parabellums. The rifles were very good because, although under the Peace Treaty arrangements with Germany, they were only supposed to manufacture sporting weapons, we found that these Mausers could pierce the steel shutters of the barracks. Dick Barrett supervised the unloading into two lorries. There was about six tons of arms in the cargo. Dick was hard put to mind the unloading as some of the lads were pocketing weapons for themselves. In the end, they were all sent off to Sean Gaynor, O.C. of Tipperary No. 1 Brigade. They were received there by Dan Gleeson and others, and they transferred them in vans northwards. I cannot say if they stayed on this side of the Border, but it seems likely they went on over. Which only goes to show how none of us expected a conflict; we imported guns and we sent them to the North. Had we been preparing for a civil war we would have held them here. Not a gun remained with us here in the Second Southern.

While our future enemy was being armed to the teeth by the British, we were divesting ourselves of hard-needed weapons. I cannot say what later became of the vessel, officially my property; it was seized by the Free State.

#### CHARLIE MCGUINNESS

But to return for a moment to McGuinness. He first came to our notice when he escaped early on from the British in Derry. They were holding him in the military barracks at Ebrington. He got clear away. He returned then and rescued Frank Carty of Sligo from the same jail. His father was a sea captain and he himself was an officer in the North German Lloyd and he spoke German fluently. We had been trying to get someone like that. We had tried one chap here, sending him across. He went as far as Danzig and returned with a few Parabellums. That was as much as G.H.Q. could get until they met McGuinness. When he came here with the *Frieda*, he had already changed its name to the *Peter*, because there were so many Peter the Painters on board.

When the Civil War broke out, I lost trace of him. He was abroad again. Sometime in 1925, I received a letter from Charlie in New York saying that he was settled down as a quiet married man. Would I send him a photograph of Ballynagaul, Cheekpoint and Dunabratton. He must have been writing his book at the time; I sent him the photographs. The next thing, a couple of months after, I had another letter: *I am preparing an expedition going to the South Pole with Captain Byrd.* (That was the expedition that reached Antarctica in 1928. It sailed in two ships, the 500 ton *City of New York* and the 800 ton *Eleanor Bolling*.) *I am going to the South Pole*, the letter said. *I am second in command. I would be delighted if you and some of the lads from Ballynagaul would come.* I asked a couple of our lads around here, whom McGuinness knew, would they go, but they would not. They were all upset after the Civil War; we were all trying to drag ourselves out of debt and back into civilian life again.

Some time after that, I was in the former Savoy Restaurant in Dublin having a cup of tea. Bob Briscoe and Sean MacBride were at another table. They hailed me. I crossed over to them. After some chat, I mentioned Charlie. *Any news of him?* I said. *Oh*, said MacBride; *He is Harbour Master now in Leningrad.* (6) *And what of the wife and children?* said I. *Oh you know McGuinness: never behind the door where women are concerned*, said MacBride. *He probably now has a Russian wife. Along with that he got a very high decoration recently, the Order of Lenin or some such thing!*

He came here again out of the blue, during World War II. He captained an Irish boat, along with a local from here, Tom Donoghue, dodging the U-boats and bringing in supplies. In March, 1942, he was

concerned in the plan to sail Gunther Schuetz(7) out of Bray, and hopefully to bring back Frank Ryan. It was not a very sound idea, but Sean McCool was Chief of Staff at the time; one can see he would have liked to bring Ryan home. McGuinness and his three-man crew of local men were arrested before the Dingle fishing smack could set sail. It appears it was leaked out through the purchase of the boat, or as a result of the arrest of a courier — the dining-car attendant — on the Belfast/Dublin train. As a result of this involvement, he received a long sentence from the Special Court which was served in Mountjoy, but was released shortly after the war ended.

After that he operated a coasting schooner around here, though I never ran into him again. Then on a journey from Wexford to Dublin, in a sou'easter gale, the boat and crew, including McGuinness, were lost. Of course there are those who say he will turn up yet.

#### CIVIL WAR

I met Collins only once after the Treaty. I was spending a lot of time in Dublin now where there was a considerable amount of argument going on among ourselves on the Republican side. This argument centred upon the negotiations being carried on between Dick Mulcahy, O'Duffy, Gearoid O'Sullivan and Sean MacMahon on the Free State side with our men, Liam Lynch, Rory O'Connor, Eamán O'Malley and Sean Moylan, about control of the two armies, to see if they could be merged in a single unit. There was also the private issue of membership of our Army Executive, which had declared itself independent of the Dail. After the Army Convention in April, 1922, I was placed upon the sixteen-man Executive.(8) As a result of that, I was spending a long time in Dublin where I did not want to be.

I met Collins shortly after May 20th when a Pact between our two forces had been announced. He was as friendly as ever, although he knew I was on the other side. *You have a right pack of blackguards in Dungarvan. They wanted to run me and my lorry over the quay.* He was referring to a bit of election boisterousness of a few days previous, when some Republican lads tried to drive the lorry on which he was speaking over the pier. He told me that he was setting up the Civic Guards. Would I give him a hand? I could have a high place in it. *No*, I said, in a friendly way, *I must try to fix up this rift first. Whichever side get the most arms is the side that will emerge top dog; but I don't want it to come to that.*

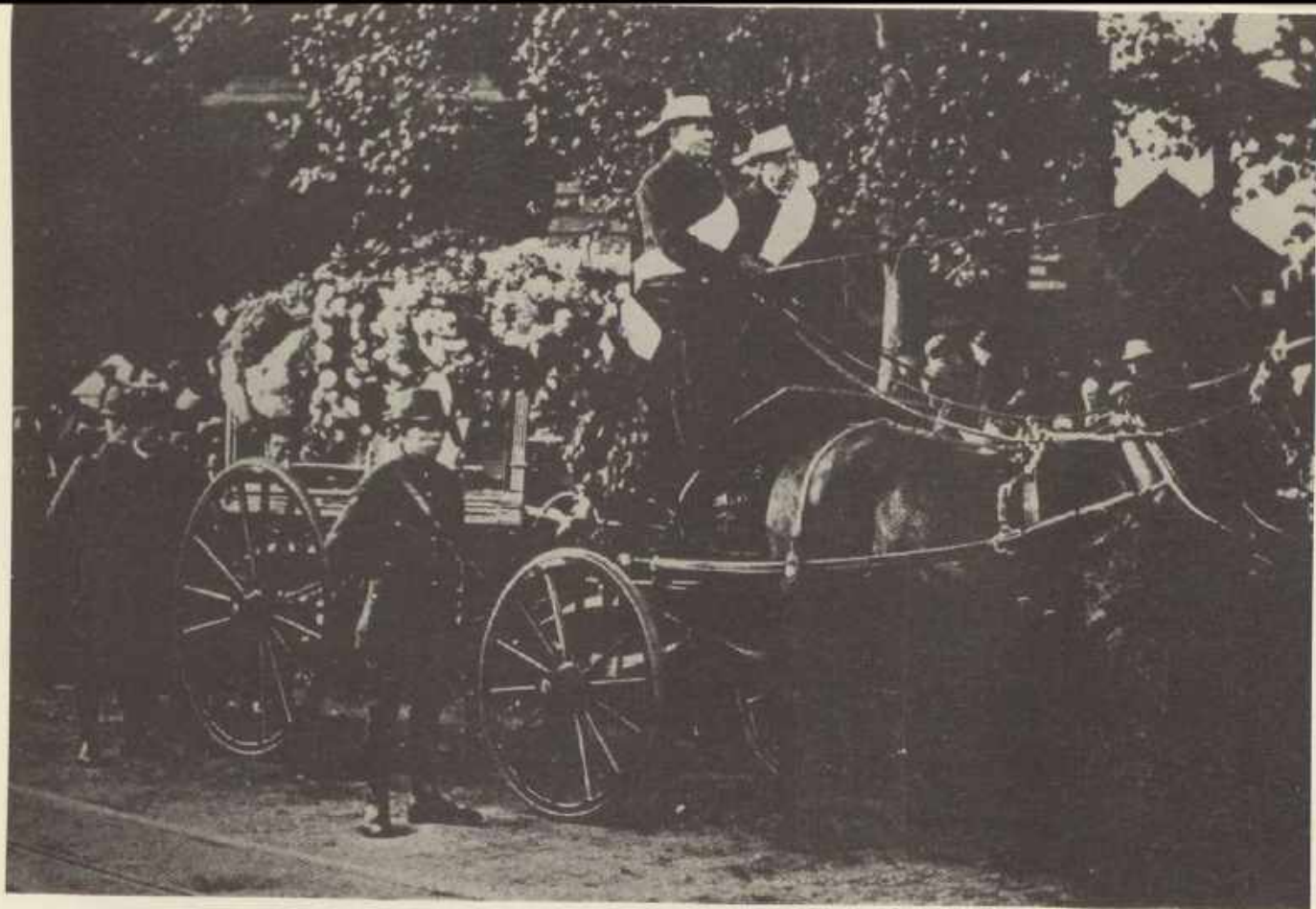
Naturally the whole idea of the Treaty was a complete shock to me. I could not reconcile it with the men I knew who were now on the other side. We found it hard to understand how a great Irish Irelander like Richard Mulcahy could accept a treaty that gave away six of our



counties and that allowed the exercise of only limited sovereignty over the other twenty-six. I knew him well in those years. He came here to learn Irish in Ring College. Many an evening he came here. We would then cycle back the road together, and we would talk about everything. He was very extreme in his support of things Irish. He was later Chief of Staff, and sat in at many of the meetings I attended in Dublin. He talked Irish, wore Irish-made suits and boots, and bought only Irish whenever he could. All his letters carried halfpenny stamps only — postage that time was a penny and a halfpenny. *If you buy only halfpenny stamps*, he said, *the British post office has less profit*. Naturally I wore as much Irish as I could, but I never inquired where my shirt came from, as long as it was decent. Then there was Collins. Men were carried away by the slogan: *What's good enough for Mick Collins, is good enough for me*. But it was not the time for sloganising, when the future of a whole nation was at stake.

After the Civil War broke out, and the pattern of the struggle on our side defined itself as one of guerilla warfare, I did what I could to maintain the organisation around here. We had three good columns of around fifteen men each, which maintained their position right up to the cease-fire. There was Jack O'Mara's column around the Nire Valley, a very good crowd. There was Tom Keating's column on the east side of the Comeraghs. He was killed a few days after Liam Lynch. Finally there was Paddy Curran's column. They rescued one of their wounded volunteers from an armed guard in the hospital. It might not have gone well for him as he had been in the Free State Army and left it. They took him out over a very high wall.

Their morale was good up to the end, but the trouble was that the people were afraid or had been turned against them. They had no clothes, they had nothing, they were outcasts. Clerical and Church pressure was raised against them. That influenced the womenfolk, except our own loyal followers. We had the situation here even where the remains of the father of the local commandant, Mike Mansfield, were refused admittance into the chapel. Men lost the will to resist in the face of this. There was the case of Mrs. Holyroyd-Smith, who resided that time in Ballinatrav House, which is a very nicely placed estate in the estuary of the Blackwater. We had done a turn for her in the period before the Civil War in connection with a robbery that took place at her house. She expressed gratitude for this. *If I can do anything for you*, she said, *please let me know*. The Civil War was on some months now, and the jails were crowded. Two Volunteers, Mike Fitzgerald and Pat O'Reilly were arrested about October in Clashmore. They were taken to Waterford where there were some hundreds already, some of whom, like these lads, had been caught with arms. We were told that their lives could be in danger. We went to



*Late October 1920. The hearse bearing Terence MacSwiney leaves Southwark Cathedral*



*General Tom Barry*



her; she was in the horsey set and we knew she was friendly with W. T. Cosgrave. She travelled to Dublin and met Cosgrave. He told her he could do nothing as the British Government was insisting on their execution. They had taken part in an ambush in Youghal in 1921, when the road was mined and a lorry containing mainly band-boys was blown up. The British Government made much of this "atrocities" at the time, laying out the coffins, photographing them, and even having postcards made. But who was to know they were only band-boys that were in the lorry? Anyway Fitzgerald and O'Reilly were shot by the Staters in Waterford on January 25th, mainly for something that had happened a year and a half earlier when they were all together. (8a)

I am of the opinion that there may have been pressure also from the British Government to execute Tim Sullivan, Charlie Daly, John Larkin and Dan Enright at Drumboe in Donegal. They had been waging war in the Six Counties, now considered a part of the United Kingdom and that could not be condoned. They were caught on the Free State side and executed. They were among the last — though not the last — to be executed.

I was arrested myself close to here early in December and conveyed to Mountjoy. I arrived there a few days before the 8th of December. The atmosphere then was a more sombre one than in the early days of the Civil War. The Free Staters had been executing people since mid November. They intended winning the struggle. There was going to be no pussy-footing, though I must say we did not expect the reprisals they embarked upon. Sure Hitler must have learned something from them. You ask me how did they come to pick out McKelvey, Barrett, O'Connor and Mellows for execution that December? I don't know. Years afterwards I asked Pauden O'Keeffe the Governor the same question; *Why did they pick those four? They were the leading people in the jail*, he said. *And in case of further reprisals there was yourself and Peadar O'Donnell and Ernie O'Malley.* (9)

I was in Mountjoy for the next ten months with hundreds of other Republicans, long after the war had finished, long after the cease-fire. There was no sign of a let-up. All the pressures, clerical and lay, were still upon us. So a number decided that they would go on hunger-strike. I know the Army outside were very much against it, but these prisoners decided they would. I was six weeks on it, even though I objected strongly to it. Still, once they started, you felt that if you did not join in, you were letting them down. So I joined in. That was Ernie O'Malley's reason too. I started in Mountjoy, and after some time, was transferred to the Curragh. There were only fifteen or twenty of us, because they had split us up between all their jails. Our group included Jim Hurley, Ray Kennedy, Mick Wylie, Jimmy Kirwan and a few more. After six weeks a Free State officer told us we were to give

up the strike, our organisation had sent in word. We paid no attention to this. I thought it was the usual prison dodge. Then in the middle of the night, they sent in Tom Derrig(10) and D. L. Robinson(11) to tell us it was "official".

*Alright, I said, but leave me here now, as I am the most experienced hunger-striker here, I can help these other lads in their recovery.* I had been on hunger-strike in Wormwood Scrubs and other places. I knew some fellows make mistakes when they come off, and get seriously ill. But they would not leave me. They brought me to the Curragh isolation hospital where I was with another small group which included Sean MacSwiney and four or five more. I was there until I was released about April, 1924.

#### DEATH OF LIAM LYNCH

I want to tell you something now about the death of Liam Lynch, Chief of Staff of the I.R.A. Some of his last days and nights were spent in a place called *Katmandu*. It was an ordinary long cow-house, with a galvanised end on it, on Whelan's farm near Mullinahone. It was destined to be the last Republican headquarters of the Civil War. Inside you could move a bale of hay and lift up a galvanised sheet of a false gable and you found yourself in a limited space, the last six feet of the cow-house. It could hold six men on bunks inside. It was constructed by Jim Bryan, who worked afterwards as a carpenter in the creamery at Mullinahone.

When Florence O'Donoghue was writing *No Other Law*, he sought my help to trace the last two weeks of Liam Lynch's life before he met his death at Newcastle on the slope of Knockmealdown Mountain on April 10th, 1923. I had heard in Mooncoin that he had stayed in Murphy's of Mooncoin. Yes indeed he had. Martin McGrath of New Ross and two other men accompanied him, one of whom evidently was Tod Andrews. But this turned out to be a false trail, as these visits had been made in January. What transpired was this. Lynch left headquarters in Dublin in mid February and came south. It was decided, despite the obvious dangers, to call the sixteen commandants together for March 24th in the Nire Valley, west of the Comeraghs in Waterford.(12) The meeting started in Bleantis, west of the Nire, at Cullinan's. Mick Mansfield, John Boyle and others took the parties to shelter in various cottages in the valley. It was raining like hell. De Valera had the outline of the sort of terms on which peace could be made with the Treatyite forces. It was then that the framework of the Fianna Fail party germinated; the suggestion being made by De Valera that Republicans should work the Treaty politically.

Lynch would not accept this proposal on any account. He was more determined now at the end of the war than at the beginning. He was not convinced of military defeat. Frank Aiken, his Deputy Chief of

Staff, however, sided with De Valera. In the absence of any conditions, Stack favoured stopping the war, but not surrendering. The peace resolution was defeated by six votes to five. Meanwhile the meeting was adjourned until April 10th, when it was hoped that Sean Hyde of Cork, who now commanded the West, and P. J. Rutledge could be present. Lynch and some of the party then departed north over the mountain for *Katmandu*. Disasters were however overtaking them on all sides. Derrig and Moss Twomey were arrested separately in Dublin, and Derrig got a terrible hiding out of it. Stack was captured on his way to the meeting at a place called Dyrick, while Liam Lynch was mortally wounded that morning. (13) The news had got out that Republican leaders were meeting in the Tipperary-Waterford area, and the Free State Army was concentrated there in force.

Now we return to my investigations of a few years back after Florrie O'Donoghue's request. I met Mickey Cleary here in this town. He told me to go to Mullinahone and meet Tom Bryan; that was the first I had heard of him. Straight away I travelled to Mullinahone. Yes, he told me, *I had prepared the compartment in the cow-shed some months before*. He remembered them leaving it that morning, Lynch, Bill Quirke, Sean Hayes and Sean Hyde. He had to fix the heel of Lynch's boot which was giving him trouble. They had been there about five days resting. They had no rifles, although they had short arms. Lynch had some books and papers. To keep them together, he produced a leather strap and he then saw them off. They went down below here and crossed the river. That would be about three days before he was killed. They called to Kirwans of Graigavallagh. They then went over the gap into the Nire and called at Parry Wards, after which they went down the valley, crossed the main road, and went into Newcastle. He stayed there in Liam Houlihans, on the side of the hill, within half a mile of where he was shot the next morning. He was cut down as he tried to flee across the open hillside.

At this time I was in Mountjoy. I was not present at those meetings. I heard of what transpired and events leading up to them afterwards.

#### HOME AGAIN

Life was a struggle when I came home. You were trying to get a job, to pay a load of old debts, to get going again. Yet everybody was boycotting you. At least the people who could give you work — and I am a plumber as you know — were boycotting you. Many of the lads that had done the fighting were getting out. They were being frozen out, were being forced to go. It was suggested to me by a clergyman that I should emigrate. No, I said, *I will stay here and see this thing out*. I had a young wife and a small family, but I was going to stick it. The few people I could get work from here were the Protestants; they did not mind my politics. The Catholic middle-class for the most part,



avoided me. I think my existence was a reminder of defeat. After ten years my wife died, so I had to try to bring up the small family as well.

And though we part in sorrow,  
Still Sean Ó Duibhir a chara,  
Our prayer is: God save Ireland  
And pour blessings on her name.  
May her sons be true when needed,  
May they never feel as we did,  
For Sean Ó Duibhir a gleanna,  
We're worsted in the game.

Still there was much to be done, politically, I mean. The mere fact of defeat made it more necessary than ever that we stand together. I resumed my contacts with Moss Twomey, with the remnants, with the old guard. One of the stories I have to tell concerns some funds we had here. The former quartermaster had joined the Free State. He knew there was some money in the bank — lodged in my name — belonging to the Brigade. He told his new masters and they froze it. In 1932, Sean MacBride arrived here to tell me that the order under which it was held had expired. He set to work, although he was only a law student at the time. Along with Michael Comyn, S.C., we took an action in the High Court against the Government, De Valera's government, for recovery of the funds. We won. We recovered nearly £20,000. I handed it straight over to the Movement, and that, I hope, put it over a very difficult phase, when there was not much money about. You had the great depression in America at that time; all our fellows were on the rocks. For that reason, as I say, it was particularly welcome to the Movement. We were poor then ourselves; I had not a bob, but I paid my own way up and down from Dublin for the court hearing. I would not take a cent from them. *Alright*, said Moss, *we'll give you a receipt so*. There and then Moss had one typed out, while Sean MacBride sent me a letter of thanks.

Looking back now, who are the other personalities that stand out in my memory? One that I thought was outstanding was Paddy McGrath of Dublin, who was executed in September, 1941. I first got to know him on the tunnel in Mountjoy in the autumn of 1923. We were great friends. He was a most ingenious fellow, extremely clever with his hand. He had only one, but it was extraordinary what he could do with it. He showed that at that time by his ability to open locks and remove covers, which enabled us to enter the roof-space in Mountjoy. (14) He was extremely plucky and courageous.

Sean Russell I knew well too. If the truth must be told, I would have to compare him with Cathal Brugha, very sincere, but not so easy to get on with. You would not open up to him readily, nor he to you. Tom Barry, in everybody's mind he presented the popular picture of an

I.R.A. man. He was a great soldier in every way, but then again, he had the advantage of experience, which none of us had, and which we were only gaining in action. He could take a dozen lads and make soldiers of them. He was a tradesman, and that was his trade. As well as that he had a damned good head. In recent times, with some people falling over backwards to be pro-British, Tom came out with some sound pronouncements, and notice was taken of them because of who said them.

Of course there were a number of other Tom Barrys, who were rather overshadowed by him. There was the O.C. of the Eastern Division, from Glanworth. I remember going down to meet him with Maire Comerford, a sound man he was too.

I want to pay a special tribute to George Plant, who was executed in March, 1942, in Portlaoise, and a man for whom I had a very high respect. He was a sound judge of character. I recall the time when I sent a certain man to him, a man whom I thought reliable. Later George said to me: *Who is he? Well, don't trust him.* He was right, too, although this chap was a stranger to him, yet well known to me. He was executed for the alleged shooting of an informer, who, of course, in view of the murky Stephen Hayes/de Lacey affair, may not have been an informer. But the authorities of that time, De Valera and Gerald Boland, were determined to get Plant. When the case against him collapsed because the two men, Davern and Walsh, with him, withdrew their statements, he was put on trial again before the Special Military Court. That court of Army officers, could only bring in one sentence, namely acquittal or death. To make assurance doubly sure, they issued an Emergency Powers Order (Order 139) which allowed them to *read* statements by others, statements allegedly made to the police.<sup>(15)</sup>

No one would believe, to read the Plant story now, that it could happen. Nor would anyone believe the story of the churchmen here who refused to admit the remains of an old man because his son was still fighting in the Civil War with the I.R.A. But of course that happened, and I am sure it is not only in Waterford that it happened.

#### REFERENCES

- 1 It is now part of the Irish-speaking Scoil Brighde, founded and originally established in Earlsfort Terrace by Miss Gavan Duffy.
- 2 See Chap. 12 *Liam Mellows and The Irish Revolution*, by Desmond Greaves.
- 3 He was arrested in November, 1920, and released to take part in the Treaty negotiations in July, 1921.

4 Griffith's reply to all such complaints was similar to that he made on October 21st, my conception is that the Truce does not mean that your military forces should prepare during the period of the Truce for the end of it and that we should not, *Peace by Ordeal*.

5 Gun running by McGuinness is covered in detail in Chap. 13 of *Liam Mellows and The Irish Revolution* by Desmond Greaves. (See also Appendix, p.411). His autobiography *Nomad: Sailor of Fortune* does not do justice to an extraordinary man. J. Anthony Gaughan in the *Irish Times* of 8th April, 1980, records that Frank Fitzgerald, brother of Desmond and uncle of Garret, was asked by a Free State Committee of Accounts in 1925 to explain the whereabouts of sums totalling £20,000 entrusted to him for gun purchases in the pre-Treaty and post-Treaty period. The Auditor General stated that a considerable sum had not been accounted for.

6 Most unlikely, although he did obtain some appointment from the Soviet.

7 *The I.R.A.* by Tim Pat Coogan: *Spies in Ireland* by Enno Stephan. *The Secret Army* by J. Bowyer Bell Schuetz had spent a while in Mountjoy before escaping where he was known as Hans Marschner.

8 Liam Lynch, C.S.; Joe McKelvey, Deputy; Florence O'Donoghue, A.G.; Earnán O'Malley, Director of Organisation; Joseph Griffin, Director of Intelligence; Liam Mellows, Q.M.; Rory O'Connor, Director of Engineering; Seamus O'Donovan, Director of Chemicals; Sean Russell, Director of Munitions; Sean Moylan; Frank Barrett; Michael Kilroy; Liam Deasy; Peadar O'Donnell; P. J. Rutledge; Seamus Robinson; Joseph O'Connor; Tom Barry; Pax Whelan and Tom Derrig.

8a On 31st May 1921, the band of the Hampshire's was having a company marching to the camp outside Youghal. An I.R.A. mine killed two corporals, two bandmen and two bandboys. It was the bandboys that the English newspapers photographed.

9 Tom Barry would have been added only he had already escaped.

10 Adjutant General I.R.A. at time of his arrest in March, 1923, and later Fianna Fáil Minister for Education in the thirties and forties. He was blinded in one eye by a shot fired across his face when trying to escape in Fenian Street, Dublin, from Free State G. men bringing him into Oriel House in March 1923.

11 David Robinson, friend of Robert Barton, and British officer in World War One.

12 Present at the four-day conference were: De Valera; Liam Lynch; Bill Quirke; Tom Derrig; Austin Stack; Sean Dowling; Frank Aiken; Tom Barry; Humphrey Murphy; Sean MacSwiney; Tom Crofts. There are photographs and much interesting detail in *The Comeraghs, Refuge of Rebels*, by Seán and Síle Murphy, printed by Kennedy Print of Clonmel.

13 On the day following the date arranged for this second and possibly, final meeting, six more Volunteers were executed in Tuam.

14 The tunnel is described in the account of Sean MacBride.

15 These statements were admissible whether the persons said to have made them were alive or dead. Nor was the court bound by the rules of evidence, or seemingly by any other rules.



## Eithne Coyle

(Mrs. Eithne O'Donnell),  
*President Cumann na mBan*



Eithne Ní Cumhaill was born in 1897 at Killult near Falcarragh, Co. Donegal. My father was Charles; he died at the age of thirty six, leaving my mother Mary, with seven of us to rear as best she could. Only one of us, my sister, emigrated, which I suppose is unusual for such a relatively large family. My mother, whose maiden name was McHugh, was a good manager; she built up our small farm, and added more land to it. In that way we were all kept busy.

I was the youngest in the family, and because I grew up at the time the Movement came to full flower, it may explain how I came to be connected with it, although I was not the only one in our family who was so identified. My brother Donal who was a Commandant in the First Northern Division, was also in it. He spent some time in Mountjoy, before the Truce, and was involved in a big prison fight there, when he got badly beaten up and had his nose broken. Charlie Daly, from Kerry, was one of his closest friends. He was eventually tracked down by the Free State and imprisoned in the Curragh, where they held him until mid 1924.

My mother was a great old Republican; she encouraged us in every way; she taught us our history, all the time preaching freedom and independence from England. When Donal and myself were arrested by the Staters she felt terribly alone. They used to raid her week after week, but she had a great dog; it used to look after her like a Christian.

### THE FLAMING SWORD

The news of the Easter Week Insurrection came to us in Donegal like a flash of light; a flash that was short lived, but it drove us into the organisations, that up to that time, scarcely existed in our part. The Volunteers were organised for the first time. The threat of Conscription came, and I remember well we all wrote our names down

against it in the porch of our church. That would be April 1918, when we signed the pledge. Leslie Price — Bean de Barra — came to our part some time after that to organise the first Cumann na mBan in that area. In later years I knew her and her three brothers Eamonn, Charlie and Michael Price extremely well.

I came to look for a job in Dublin early in 1920. It was then that I became actively involved in things; having a flat in Cullenswood House, in Oakley Road — Pearse's old place — it would be impossible not to become involved. I lived there with my sister, Mrs. Pearse and Margaret. They were poorly off at that time. Our circle included Florrie McCarthy, Sheila Humphreys, Maire Comerford, Fiona Plunkett and Phyllis Ryan, later Mrs. Sean T. O'Kelly. Our headquarters at that time was in Dawson Street. The White Cross had an office next to us, which was very handy, because they were always in and out to us. Mrs. Eamonn Ceannt and Dan Breen's sister-in-law, Miss Malone were in charge of it. Our main work was to act as couriers and to carry arms, going all over the place on our bicycles. This we could easily do; the fashions were long at that time and police checks were not very frequent upon girls.

I was eventually arrested by the Tans at a place called Ballagh, in Co. Roscommon, where I had a little house to myself. They came first and they raided, and I said, *thanks be to God, they're evidently not going to arrest me*. I was not as careful as I should have been; I should have made off there and then, because they came again the next morning at 4 a.m., and this time they held me. I was brought into a barracks in Roscommon. I shall never forget how cold it was. It was the first of January, 1921, and their method of cleaning out the cell was to take buckets of freezing water in and swill them around the floor. It was then swept out with a yard-brush. Was I glad when eventually I was sent on to Mountjoy where I was charged before a field-general courtmartial. It was presided over by three military officers. They sentenced me to one year's imprisonment for activities prejudicial to the Defence of the Realm. They had got no arms nor documents upon me; I took very good care of that, but they knew I had been working with the Volunteers. I had been in Roscommon ostensibly organising for the Gaelic League, and as all the Volunteers were interested in the language it was a good cover. I had been there for six months, seconded from Dublin. Our O.C. was Pat Madden. They were a good Republican family, and all of them remained anti-Treaty afterwards. There was a small unit of Cumann na mBan there, and of course I was in it, as was Pat's sister. He often came by my cottage, and would leave in a gun or two if he was going someplace where he felt he ought not bring them. I suppose I was under the microscope of the R.I.C., being a stranger and hooking around everywhere on my bicycle. I used carry

despatches into Roscommon town or north to Athleague. I had plenty of narrow shaves. Travelling at night you had to have a lamp. In that way they could nab you easily as they might be on foot patrol. But if you heard the lorry you could stop and throw the bicycle over the ditch. They charged me with possession of innocent Cumann na mBan documents and with having a plan of a barracks. But that was not got on me; it was found in someone else's possession.

It was fairly tough that time in the 'Joy, with only four hours of exercise, and a lock up at half past four. We had no light in our cell in the short evenings, and when summer came, it was the most glorious summer, it was such a shame to have to go inside. There were about twenty-five of us there then, including Eileen McGrane — she had been doing work for Collins — and some girls from the south of Ireland. The food was very bad; a tiny piece of meat twice a week, and for the rest of the time a thin soup. They came to your door accompanied by one of the ordinary female prisoners carrying these rusty two-tier tin cans that never seemed quite clean, with the small one sitting on top, in which was your tea, soup, cocoa or whatever was being served. A sour bap and a piece of margarine was placed in the upper one. You took it from the door, placed it upon a little table, and sat before it perched upon a timber stool. If you were lucky you got a few of your own books in; otherwise you had nothing to read but the Bible, there being one of those and a tract or two in every cell.

The prison system — and the one that still prevails — exemplifies perfectly the doubtful virtues of English puritanism. There was a division between us and the ordinary prisoners; they were in another wing. We saw them only when they came accompanied by a female warder to serve us, or in chapel on Sunday, but even there we were separated from them. At first there was no proper light in the cell; it was a gaslight placed upon the outside with a small glass panel admitting some light. We made a protest, and after some argument, the light was brought into our cells.

The numbers in jail built up to around 40 women and girls, some of them as young as fifteen. Although the Truce was now on for four months we had not been released. Only the most important people, TD's and others like Griffith and Barton, who might take part in the talks, were released, and of course people under sentence of death, like Sean McKeon, had these sentences deferred.<sup>(1)</sup> We were fed up anyway, and although I had only a few months to go, I never ceased looking for a means to escape. It presented itself eventually when one of the wardresses with whom I was friendly, a girl called Dillon from the West, agreed to take out a message to the Volunteers. With her assistance false keys for the cell doors were made. It was arranged that a rope-ladder would come over the wall at 9 p.m. on the Halloween



night. Extra drink was left out for the soldiers that night. At a few minutes before the time a number of us crept from our cells and out into the yard. Precisely at nine o'clock the ladder came sailing over. I held it while the other three — Mary Burke, Linda Kearns and May Keogh, she was Father Sweetman's housekeeper — climbed it. Linda was on a ten-year sentence and had had a rough time in Walton Jail in Liverpool, so we sent her first. At the top they did not wait for the ladder to be drawn up and sent down the outside. We only had minutes before the military would appear. To save time each of them dropped from the twenty-two foot wall, hanging on their fingers as far down as they could go. When my turn came to climb up — having no one to hold the ladder back — my knuckles took a rasping against the rough wall, but I persevered, and dropped down upon the soil of somebody's garden. Cars awaited us on the North Circular Road. I was put in that of Dr. McLaverty, and the other three got into the car of Dr. St. John Gogarty.

I lay low for a week, after which I was sheltered at Madame MacBride's house at 73 St. Stephen's Green. Countess Markievicz, who had been in jail also, called in one day and gave me five pounds, which of course I repaid later. But I shall always remember her generosity.

#### DISCORD

We did not know what to think about the Truce. We were sure we had not won anyway. All our eyes were glued upon the Plenipotentiaries in London. I went home to Donegal about the end of November. I remember going for the newspaper this day and reading the Treaty proposals in it, *throw your hat at that*, said my mother, *it is no settlement*.

As things developed in 1922, we could see that the Free State was toeing the line for Britain. Nearly all of the girls stayed Republican, but the men seemed to waver. I was still in Donegal when we heard about the attack upon the Four Courts. It was a terrible shock. I had a fit of weeping. Why should it have to end this way when we thought we would clear the British out? I hurried back to Dublin and made contact again with my friends.

One of my first tasks was to bring a despatch from Dublin to Liam Pilkington in Sligo. He had been Commandant of the 3rd Western Division in the Tan struggle. I went down by train, and brought my bicycle with me. Do you think I could find Pilkington? I had no clue and no address, and I was afraid to ask anybody. This day I went into a small country pub and general store. I sat down to sip a glass of lemonade. *I'll sit here for a while*, I thought, *and work out what I should*

do. While I rested there, a man at the counter asked the shopkeeper in a low voice, *Have you seen Billy?* My heart leaped: could this be Billy Pilkington? I waited until he had departed, and then, approaching the counter cautiously, I spoke to the shopkeeper — showing him my Cumann na mBan brooch at the same time — *By any chance were you talking about Billy Pilkington?*

He directed me where to find him and I delivered my message safely. But that was the sort of G.H.Q. organisation we had then; we would send a woman from Dublin to Sligo, where I had never been before, and with no hint or clue of where I might bring my message. I received an answer to bring back, so, mounting my bicycle, I cycled homewards. It was the end of another lovely summer. I remember stopping at a river on the way, and I thought, what a beautiful spot. How lovely it would be if Ireland were free and I could laze here forever.

When apples still grow in November,  
When blossoms still grow on each tree,  
When leaves are still green in December,  
It's then that our land will be free,  
I wandered the hills and valleys,  
And still through my sorrow I see,  
A land that has never known freedom,  
And only her rivers run free.

I drink to the death of her manhood,  
Those men who would rather have died,  
Than to live in the cold chains of bondage,  
To bring back their rights where denied,  
Where are you now when we need you?  
What burns where the flames used to be?  
Have you gone like the snows of last winter?  
And only her rivers run free.

But I could not linger; I had to hurry on. I cannot remember where I stopped along the road home; it cannot have been anywhere grand because money was too scarce for that.

I was arrested in Cullenswood House late in November, 1922. The first girl arrested by the Staters was a very nice girl, Honor Murphy; she lived in Wellington Road, in the house from which Frank Gallagher produced the *Bulletin*. After it was raided the Humphreys house in Ailesbury Road and the O'Rahilly house in Herbert Park, were raided. That netted Mrs. Humphreys, Sheila and Mary MacSwiney. I was caught some time after that.

While we were in the 'Joy I heard some of the volleys, on the other side of the wall, that were killing my friends. The bottom was falling out of my world, I had lost all desire to escape; for days I went around unable to speak to anyone. We had not thought it was our boys; we thought it must be an arms practice, but then a wardress from the west of Ireland broke it to me.

Margaret Skinnider was one of those in with me; she had been out in 1916 in St. Stephen's Green with the Citizen Army, and had been wounded then.<sup>(2)</sup> In January, 1923, all of us were moved to the North Dublin Union, a vast barracks of a place and very cold. I was released eventually, nearly a year later, in December, in time just to make my way home to Donegal for Christmas. Was my mother glad and relieved to see me again: so many awful things had happened in the meantime.

My sister now had a house in Clareville Road, in Rathmines. I returned to her. She had a job, and kept a few boarders; I had none, nor could I find any, so we both lived frugally. We did not starve, but neither could we throw a party. If you wanted to travel anywhere you walked or cycled; you made clothes last longer, and when they were worn out, you remade them again. When the Sweep started in 1930, I wrote to Joe McGrath and told him I had no job. He invited me to come in. Like a lot of other Republicans, I got my first steady job there. He was a rough customer, but good at the back of it all

#### CUMANN NA MBAN

Meanwhile, after I was released, I returned to Cumann na mBan. I remember one night shortly after, we were in the Mansion House at a Cosgrave meeting. I had this bundle of leaflets, so I went upstairs, moved along until I was over the platform, whereupon I sent the whole lot cascading down. I was arrested and spent a night in the Bridewell. Altogether I was in jail three times in the late twenties on various charges of not being a lady, although I never claimed to be one, and it is too late to start now. As an example of that, our office in Dawson Street, was sealed by the police. I said to Sheila Humphreys; *we have got to get our stuff out of there. This is going on much too long. But what will you do? You just wait*, I said, I threw my shoulder against it, and it flew open. It was about that time that we made our rounds of the Grafton Street shopkeepers who were flying Union Jacks in the celebration of the Tailtean Games, in August, 1928. We saw no reason why they should fly the English flag. Still we were nice and civil when we called. We would try persuasion. I can recall this lassie, somewhere near the Chatham Street corner; nothing would persuade her. *I will not take it down*, she said. *Alright then, on your own head be it*. Next morning, early, I was down there, and I smashed her window with a big



stone. The Union Jack quickly disappeared. On another occasion a great big Union Jack was flying over this shop in Dawson Street. I could only enter by ringing the hall-door bell. I was admitted easily enough as they thought I had some business upstairs. Going to the first floor, I opened a window and quickly released the rope. It fell to the pavement, and who should it fall beside but Hannah Sheehy-Skeffington, who was staring up at it. Was I glad to see her. She rolled it up and took it with her. We made a bonfire of it and others, at a public meeting in O'Connell Street later addressed by Mrs. Despard, (3a) Maud Gonne, Bob Briscoe and others. However we lost three girls who were arrested and sentenced.

Another of our Cumann na mBan activities at that time 1926-1929, was calling upon jurors who might be sitting upon political cases. Our practice was to write to each of them making the best case we could for finding the person not guilty. (3) Of course the government of W. T. Cosgrave said this was intimidation. They shifted away from the normal administration of justice by introducing a *Juries Protection Bill* in May, 1929.

Fitzgerald-Kenney was the Minister for Justice; of him Col. Maurice Moore said in the Senate; *as far as I can see, the Minister is out for a scrap. He is going in the right direction to produce murder and outrage.*

It was a very iniquitous bill. It provided for the total anonymity of jurors. Nine out of twelve could convict. To make its passage easier, bogus threatening letters were sent to businessmen in Dublin. Issues of *An Phoblacht* were seized; Madame MacBride was arrested for criticising it and held for six months. Meanwhile Sean was held five months before being acquitted. (4)

A while before this in October 1924 I was sent into the Six Counties electioneering for Sinn Féin, although I was never a member. We had very few speakers so we had to spread the talent we had as thinly as possible. Very foolishly I sent Mary MacSwiney to Cookstown. Imagine how upset I was when she arrived in McAleer's hotel in Dungannon, hours later, crushed and battered by an Orange mob. I felt so sorry that we had not a few male speakers to spare, but we had not.

It is perhaps a pity that Fianna Fáil did not come to power in 1927, because their spirit was not quite dead then, though I had no respect for De Valera when he took the Oath in order to enter Leinster House. They could still have worked away from the Treaty and towards a Republic when they came to power in 1932. But they chose not to.

I knew Frank Ryan very well. He was a sincere nice lad; ready to face anything. I was delighted when his remains were brought home from Dresden. He stayed with my sister in Clareville Road for more than a year. Shortly after coming there, sitting at tea one evening, he passed me the sugar, which I refused; *I never knew what made you so*

*sour looking Eithne, now I know.* He was always ready with harmless slapdash humour like that. One of his frequent visitors was Geoffrey Coulter. He was assistant editor of *An Phoblacht* in 1928-1929, a very shy sensitive character.

I remember I was at an I.R.A. Convention in Walshes of Templeogue in February, 1931. Cathleen McLoughlin, Moss's future wife came over to me and presented me with a big bar of chocolate. Sean Russell was present; so was Donal O'Donoghue. Donal was always so gloomy. I would classify him as a moderate, I suppose, unlike Price or Frank Ryan who were ready for anything. Donal was chairman of the Boycott campaign later, and editor of *An Phoblacht*. The big item on the agenda then was the steadily increasing coercion from W. T. Cosgrave, piloted by his police chiefs Neligan and Eoin O'Duffy, and what we could do to avoid it. The framework for Saor Eire was also discussed, but I cannot recall much of that now.

I was not involved in Saor Eire. My husband Bernard O'Donnell from Moville was in it, up to his eyes; I thought that one out of the house was enough. I say, one out of the house, because we were running around together. He had been in the First Northern in the Tan struggle, remained anti-Treaty and was imprisoned, and continued attached to the Dublin Brigade I.R.A. until the mid thirties. The mid thirties was the big divide in all our lives, because, those of us who had been in the struggle, were approaching forty at that time. We had not much time left that we could effectively give to the Movement.

Anyway, to return to Saor Eire. O'Duffy was then sent by Cosgrave on a tour of the bishops. They obligingly issued a rabble-rousing pastoral condemning it. But of course it is not the first time they did that.

I was involved in the Bass Boycott of 1932. We were out every night putting up posters and painting with a stencil upon walls and pavements. I was arrested once in O'Connell Street with a friend of mine from Donegal. They brought us along to the Bridewell and held us there for a month. It is a filthy place as you know.

Helena Moloney was a great lady, very much concerned for the working women, and a sound Republican. We were never stuck for a speaker while she was about. Likewise too Hannah Sheehy-Skeffington. She was a great character and full of humour. Give her two minutes and she would come and speak anywhere for you. When she was released from Armagh Jail in February, 1933, Moss Twomey asked me to go and meet her at Dundalk.<sup>(5)</sup> Seeing me there she rushed from the train and threw her arms around me. I was the first woman she could talk to for weeks and she was thrilled to find me there. We travelled on to a welcome in Drogheda, and then to a vast meeting at College Green. Peadar O'Donnell, Mick Price, Madame

MacBride, Sean MacBride and Mick Fitzgerald spoke. On the platform were Mrs. Despard and Mrs. Tom Kettle.

The I.R.A. was very strong in the early years of De Valera, from 1932 onwards. Everything was done in the open, parades, commemorations and ceilis. Cumann na mBan would hold their own, and the I.R.A. would turn up at them.

When Republican Congress was formed in April, 1934, I attended their first Congress at Athlone. I felt however that they had got off to a wrong start, so I drew back and put all my energies into Cumann na mBan.<sup>(6)</sup> They faded away but there was no bitterness between us. I got married in 1935; although the Movement was fragmenting now and the personnel was changing I remained on for a few years still. But eventually it was time to go.

#### REFERENCES

1 In September, 1921, according to Michael Collins, there were 3,200 men imprisoned in the south of Ireland, also forty girls, and some hundreds more in the north.

2 With Fred Ryan and others she attempted to storm and set fire to a house behind the Russell Hotel in which it was thought an English sniper was concealed. Ryan was killed, and Margaret received three bullet wounds.

3 We used deliver these personally at the houses, big posh houses up long dark avenues they all seemed to be. We took to our heels as soon as we dropped it in the box.

3a Charlotte Despard (1844-1939) died lonely and penniless in Whitehead, Co. Antrim. She was a sister of Lord French who presided over the Black and Tans. Maud Gonne gave the oration in Glasnevin. See *An Unhusbanded Life*, by Linklater, Hutchinson 1980.

4 Others held at that time included Tod Andrews who had been on the reserve of the I.R.A. since 1924.

5 She had entered the North as a gesture of defiance although there was an Exclusion Order against her, and had been sentenced to one month's imprisonment. At this time she was assistant editor of *An Phoblacht*.

6 The following is an extract from an address given by Eithne Coyle to Cumann na mBan in 1935. Its uncompromising political direction speaks for itself:

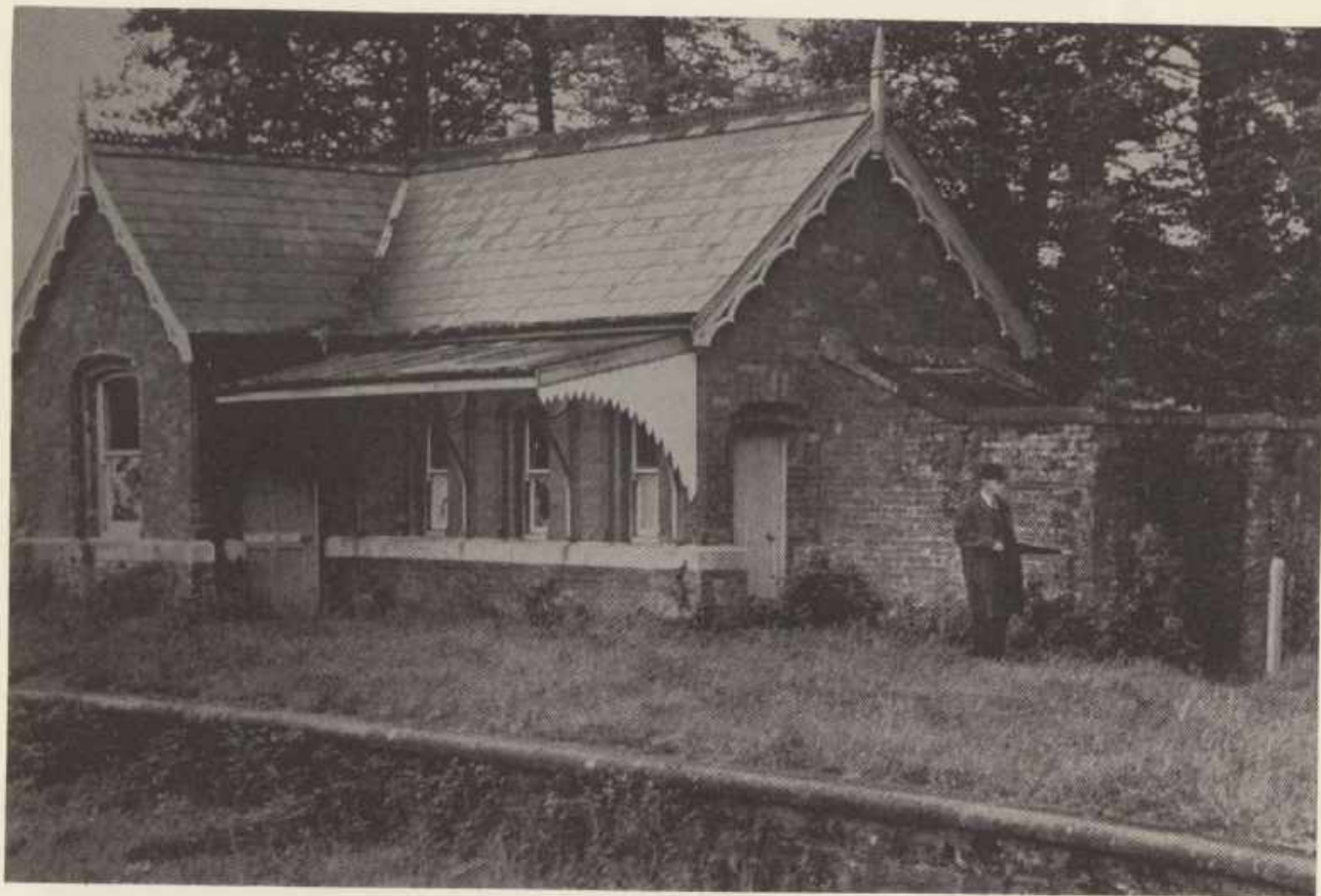
Many of our people foolishly thought that the Proclamation of Easter Week would soon be put into effect (by the new government of Fianna Fail). To the eternal disgrace of a so-called national government that Coercion Act — the clauses of which are base and wicked enough to have been conceived by the very demons of hell — is today enacted against members of the Irish Republican Army, Cumann na mBan, Congress Groups and other kindred organisations in this country. I say here today, that the Coercion Act, let it be used against O'Duffy's fascists or against Irish Republicans, is a



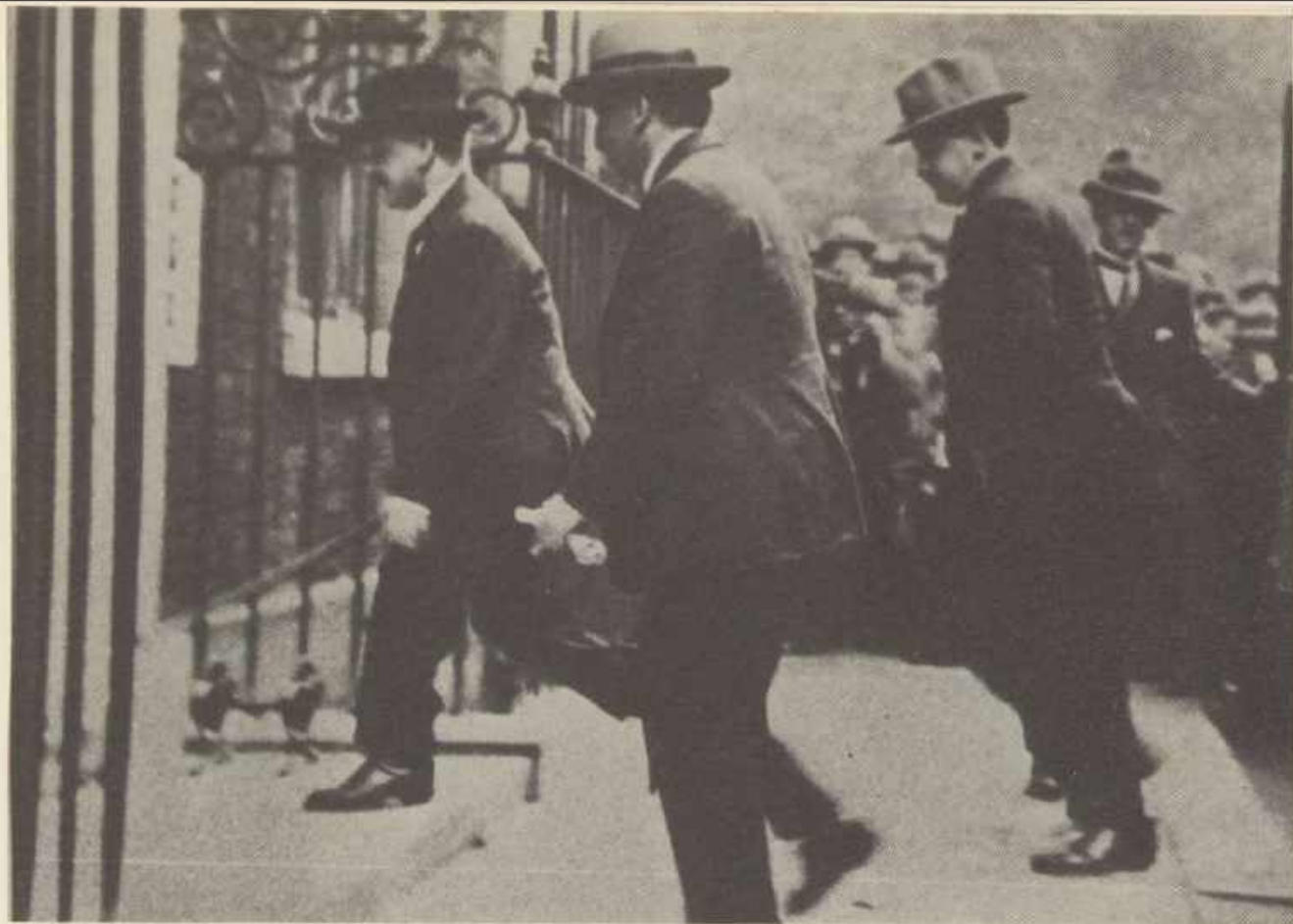
disgrace to our national honour; to the depraved Irishmen who were responsible for framing it, and to the members of the present Government who have been using it, chiefly against Irish patriots.

We members of Cumann na mBan, assembled in Convention here today, offer no apology to the rulers North or South of this partitioned land in asserting our rights as freeborn Irishwomen to repudiate that Treaty and the Imperial Parliament of partitioned Ulster, and it is sheer hypocrisy of De Valera or Craigavon to talk of unity or prosperity, inside or outside the Empire until that infamous Treaty and the Charter of Partition are torn to shreds and a free Ireland is set up — an Ireland where, according to the Proclamation of Easter Week 1916, there will be equal rights and equal opportunities for all the people, irrespective of creed or class — an Ireland where the exploitation of Irish workers by imported or native capitalists will be ruthlessly exterminated; an Ireland where those who have always borne the brunt of the struggle for freedom will raise the flag of the Workers' Republic, and put an end for all time to that state of chaos and social disorder which is holding our people in unnatural bondage.

....  
The Blueshirt organisation in Ireland is just as great a menace to the Republican Movement and to the Irish workers as the Blackshirts of Italy, or the Brownshirts of Germany are in their respective countries at the present time,



*General view of Upton Station.  
Commdt T. Kelleher points to the exit through which the mortally wounded Pat O'Sullivan, Battalion Engineer,  
crawled, still firing at the enemy*

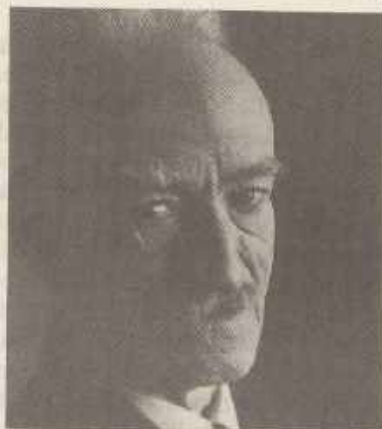


*October 1921. Griffith, Art O'Brien, Collins and others of the Irish delegation arrive at 10 Downing Street*



## Neil Gillespie

*Volunteer,  
2nd Northern Division, IRA*



My father's name was Dan, or Daniel if you prefer. My mother's name was Catherine McMenamin. She was born in Derry, in Waterside. My father came from Shroove, up at Inishowen Head, one of the most northerly parts of Ireland. My father was a pilot on the Foyle River; it was a sort of a semi-official job; one that was regarded as quite good at that time. He had no interest in politics; he did not even know what Home Rule was.

I was born in January 1899, in the village of Shroove. We moved to Derry city in 1914. My father had been transferred to the port which was then developing a big trans Atlantic and cross channel trade. The first thing that inspired me was my reading. I can remember how fascinated I was when I read T.D. Sullivan's *Story of Ireland*. Others that I remember now were William Bulfin's *Rambles in Eireann*, portions of *Jail Journal*, *Speeches from the Dock* and *Knocknagow*. They gave me an insight into the Fenian Movement. I can recall reading too about the Famine, the breaking of the van in Manchester, and the story of the *Erin's Hope* and the *Catalpa*. I read too about the heroes of an earlier age, Jimmy Hope, Henry Joy and Wolfe Tone. I cannot now understand how those books came into my hands because I did not buy them; they were already in the home, all of which makes it hard to understand when I think of how unpolitical my father was.

That was the way we came to live here in Elmwood Terrace, on the Lone Moor Road, which fringed the Bogside. There were eight altogether in our family, six boys and my parents. I had been at the National School in Shroove; when I came to Derry I was sent to the Christian Brothers. Shortly after that the Volunteers were founded in Dublin. Young and all as I was I soon joined them when they reached Derry. However, I must have found myself in Redmond's Volunteers because I remember leaving them and joining the Irish Volunteers which turned out to be the only one worth joining.

The only man I can remember coming to address us from Dublin was a man called Herbert Moore Pim. He was an officer in the Volunteers against whom an expulsion order was made prior to 1916. He addressed us in the old Bogside, setting out what our aims and objectives were. There were about twentyfive of us present in the Shamrock Hall, situated right beside the slaughter house.

I cannot remember receiving any notice about "manoeuvres" for Easter Sunday 1916. My senior officers may have got a notice like that, but we knew nothing of it, and of course Derry played no part in the Rising. Several men were interned afterwards. Funny enough I felt when I read about it that they had acted too quickly in view of all the confusion. I thought it would have been better to have waited a wee while longer. John Fox, Willie and Paddy Hegarty, Eamonn McDermott, Paddy Shiels, Eddie Duffy, and a few more were lifted from here. Eamonn worked in a coal office and was the father of Dr. Donal McDermott. Paddy Shiels and Paddy Hegarty were very active afterwards.

We had become the Irish Republican Army now, but I must admit it brought no great rush to the colours as far as Derry was concerned. Conscription in April 1918 brought many in but they did not stop in.

There was very little activity subsequently in Derry, unlike what it is today. The city was never really nationally minded. Even in 1920 I can remember a British Army football team, the Dorsetshires, played a local team, the Ashfields. That would be inconceivable today. The only activity I can remember was a Sergt. Higgins who was shot dead coming out of St. Eugene's Cathedral later on, in 1921, I think; I had no part in that. An active service unit was then organised; as far as I know it was intended for action in Donegal. The famous Charlie McGuinness was in charge, Dominic Doherty was a member; so also was John Kennedy, nick-named Lip, Tommy McGlinchy, Pat Moore and others. George and Alice McCallion were very active too, but they were not in that unit. The unit never got doing very much, however, as most of them were rounded up in Donegal and conveyed back here in a British warship called the *Wasp*. They were put into Ebrington Military Barracks, and Charlie McGuinness escaped from there. It was quite a feat for him to do so. He was a trained seaman, his father being skipper of the *Carriglea*. The sea was in his blood, and of course he was destined to commence now those successful gun-running exploits about which you have heard from others.(1)

However, as I said, things were very quiet here. There were very few attacks on the police, no attacks at all on soldiers within the city, no buildings blown up, no ambushes, nothing like that. Derry in 1920, was very much a contented or loyal — whatever way you like to put it — naval base. The sort of things we read about in the South, even in Co.

Tyrone, were inconceivable to our way of thinking. The man in charge here was Charlie McWhinney. He later married Linda Kearns in Dublin; she was a very famous girl in her own right. He was a teacher in the Technical College in the Strand Road. He had to get out and head for Dublin after the Treaty.

I had no doubt when the Truce was announced that we had not won. None at all. You see partition was already built into the Government of Ireland Act of 1920, and I knew no matter what way negotiations went, the British were going to try to achieve that. Even afterwards when the Boundary Commission(2) met in 1924/25, they engaged in the psychological warfare of pretending to take back Donegal. People were so relieved that Donegal was not lost that they all accepted the status quo. While the Loyalists formed a majority in the nine counties of Ulster, it was too slim for them to grab that. By slicing off three counties however, they left a substantial majority in the other six, substantial enough to ensure that it remained a happy hunting ground for them and their planter descendants, *secula seculorum*.

#### INTERNEED

I was utterly and absolutely opposed to all of this, to the Treaty, to the Free State, and later on to the charade known as Stormont. We were under arms at that time at a place called Skeog, near Burt, when we were attacked by Free State forces, shortly after their occupation of the Four Courts. We were in Hatericks farm house. I was occupying an outpost when we were attacked by forces from Buncrana. We had controlled much of Donegal before that, but now the Staters rolled over us and occupied the country. Our old tactics were no match for them.

Seven of us escaped from Hatericks, the rest being captured. About a week afterwards, I and a few more were again surrounded in a house near Muff. There were a few shots fired; some of the lads got out but I was caught along with my pride and joy, a nice new Mauser rifle. One of the Staters was killed. I was brought to Buncrana and placed in the old Lough Swilly Hotel for one night. I was then taken to the police barracks and placed in a cell where I remained for the best part of five weeks. Along with fifty or more others, swept in from all parts of Donegal, I was then placed aboard a vessel, the *Lady Wicklow*, and conveyed to Dublin. We lay seven days in the *Lady Wicklow*, most of it anchored in Dublin Bay, and during that time we did not get a bite to eat.

We were conveyed then from Dublin to Newbridge Camp, where we occupied the former stone built barracks of the British Army. I had been picked up early in the Civil War; I had escaped the real onslaught,



the executions and all that went with them. All that we had to do in Newbridge was to put in time. There were hundreds there doing the same thing. Sean MacBride was there for a while in the Spring of 1923. He was transferred back to Mountjoy when caught trying to escape. Seamus MacGrianna, the renowned Irish writer ("Maire") along with his brothers Hiudai, Donal and Seosamh were there. All four spent their time walking around the compound together. They did not mix a great deal with the other prisoners. What puzzled me afterwards when I came to reading the writings of Seamus he seemed only to want to quote from the English classics as though he was ashamed of being an Irish speaker. We had a few classes with him but he left us. *You will never learn Irish, he said, because you will never have the right blas.* (3) Escape was constantly being talked about and quite a few tunnels were dug. I remember a man being brought back with his hands up and a bullet in his chest. He had been caught emerging from one.

Late in October 1923 word came through from Mountjoy about the great hunger strike which had commenced there. We joined it also. I was on it for twenty one days, and the only thing I can recall from it was the feeling I had constantly of sheer, mad ravenous hunger. Even when asleep, which you could do only fitfully, you would dream of food, creamed potatoes, chicken, bacon and cabbage, the sort of thing some of us had not seen for years. On November 23rd, envoys arrived from the Movement and called off the strike. I was very glad. Commdt. Denis Barry had already died in our camp. There were other deaths too. By Christmas however, I, like most of the others was out again, released, a free man. I could return to Derry and try to resume my life again.

The only opening available to me, and one that appealed to me anyway, was a seaman. I joined a boat here, crossed the Atlantic, and for the next couple of years went up and down the American coast between the States, the West Indies, Brazil, Uruguay, and the Argentine. I got to know all of the great seaports of these countries. Some of my mates settled down in Philadelphia, New York, and Detroit. However, I could not get used to the idea of living anywhere else except in Ireland, in Derry as a matter of fact. So about 1928, I came home.

#### HOME AGAIN

My father was still working, and the home was there on the Lone Moor Road, I was lucky therefore as there was not much work to be had. I commenced knocking at doors, selling insurance; a penny and twopence a week the policies were then. I sold tea as well. I was an agent only, I had no stocks. I travelled around on a bicycle, sometimes

going as far as Limavady. Donegal was cut off, so to speak; we could do no business on that side.

I took up with the Movement again. Sean Adams was the big noise here at that time. Terry Ward also, before he went to Dublin; Mickey Shields and a few more. Paddy McLogan was our main HQ contact. Mick Price came here two or three times. Maud Gonne came too, to a number of Manchester Martyrs concerts that we held regularly in the Foresters Hall. She was unflagging in her support of anything like that.

I attended staff meetings in Dublin fairly regularly. I cannot now remember what they were concerned with. There was very little happening and no real policy making. There were very few in jail here at that time. The vast majority of Republicans here supported De Valera when he came to power in 1932, not that it mattered much since they could not be included in his electorate. As usual however, I was against him; I could not see that his policies would make the slightest difference to us. If we were to make a change we would have to do it ourselves.

Our unit had almost no armament. I had a Martini rifle; there were a few Thompsons and shorts, but hardly any ammunition, and no prospect at that time of getting any. Paddy Toland was our quartermaster, but that merely meant that he fixed us with dumps. Occasionally we went into Donegal, to Hollywell Hill and to Grianan to fire off a few rounds. At least it helped to sustain interest.

The various Chiefs of Staff never visited Derry, so far as I know; therefore I never had much opportunity of knowing any of them. I did however, meet Sean Russell a few times in Dublin. I can remember on one occasion he told me to pick up in Sligo town a Thompson sub machine gun and a Webley which he was sending to us. I brought them from Sligo to Derry by car. He did not however, discuss with me his plans for a campaign in England. I was entrusted with the task then of bringing gelignite from Dublin to Carrigans and transferring it via a shipping contact I had, to England. Of course in many ways I was far too prominent, far too well known to be doing that. I remember on one occasion passing close to two policemen in the Diamond when I overheard one say to the other; *that's Neil Gillespie*. Another time, when I was carrying a load of gelignite on the carrier of my bike, I met these two policemen pedalling towards me. It was getting dark at the time, so I just lowered my head a piece and kept on. One day coming out of the house I had a load of detonators inside the sweat band of my hat, when I was overtaken by this policeman who knew me. He was coming off customs duty and he insisted on keeping pace with me on the bike talking to me all the time. I thought I would never get away from him. On another occasion when I was carrying a parcel of this gelignite there was a small explosion in the same street. I thought I would be nabbed, but fortunately no one seemed to notice me.

There was a mini round up in Belfast prior to Christmas 1938, which showed, as far as I was concerned, that the Stormont government had some intimation that something was afoot. They made no move in Derry however. Then in January 1939, the Army Council presented their ultimatum to Lord Halifax, the British Foreign Secretary, which he, sound man and High Church that he was — he wrote a book of ghost stories you know — insisted on ignoring. Of course the bombs went off, in London, in Manchester, in Liverpool and other places. The outbreak of the European War in September put an end, very largely, to the few squibs we had. The rest of the action clearly was going to be here, but we were ill prepared for it.

I was picked up on May 23rd 1940. I had been arrested earlier and charged on the first of April with incitement, or something like that. *Nil meus agam ar an gcúirt seo*, (4) I said to the magistrate. *I see no reason for amusement*, he replied sourly. *Perhaps that is why they are trying me on All Fools Day*, I answered. I was acquitted then, but of course I knew it would be only a matter of time till they got me on something else. Well, as you know, there is no answer to internment. If they don't like you they can always intern you.

I was lodged first in the old jail for about three months. We were brought then to the prison ship *Al Rawdah*, on Strangford Lough. It was no cruise liner I can tell you. We were there for about eighteen months; then we were transferred to Crumlin Road Prison, Belfast, where I remained with hundreds more until August 1945, that is, four months after the war ended in Europe. We were released then. I was married of course in 1931, and had a growing family, but that would make no difference to the authorities here.

#### REFERENCES

1 For more about McGuinness see references under Pax Ó Faoláin and Sean MacBride.

2 Set up under Article 12 of the Treaty. Its members consisted of Judge Feetham, of South Africa, J. R. Fisher, a Belfast Unionist, and Eoin MacNeill.

3 Speech, accent.

4 I have no respect for this court.



## Mrs. Patsy O'Hagan

*of Newry and Dundalk.*

*Cumann na mBan*



*Margaret Francis Russell Boyd was born in 1899 in Newry. Her parents were business people and like most business people they lived above their shop in the main street (on the site of the present Woolworths) of that town.*

My family's name was Boyd. My great grandfather was Presbyterian. They carried on — and still do — a successful hardware business in another premises in the same street. The children of my great grandfather used to walk with him to church on Sundays. They were Catholic. Close by their ways would part. He would go towards his church and they would proceed into theirs. The religious divide was not as marked then as it has since become.

My father Andrew Boyd inherited the hardware business. He met Agnes Grimshaw, a pram manufacturer of Liverpool, sometime in the late eighties. Despite the English sounding name, she was in fact Irish. Her mother and father were from outside Newry. They had emigrated to Liverpool where they set up in pram manufacturing and in time became quite wealthy. My mother remained involved in the business and retained her connections with Liverpool. There were six children in our family, three boys, two of them died young, and three girls. My eldest sister Mary Morrow, is eighty eight, still very much alive and head of Cumann na mBan in Killyleigh, near Downpatrick.

My father died when we were young. I only barely remember him. My mother took over the business and ran it successfully. We all enjoyed a very comfortable childhood. We were all reared well and sent to the best schools. We spent part of our holidays in Omeath, where we had a weekend home. There was a rail connection at that time around the peninsula; ten minutes brought you from our house in Newry to a small village that was still part of the Gaeltacht. We attended the college there to learn Irish. Eoin MacNeill was one of our teachers along with Peadar O Dubhtha and others.

My mother exercised a commanding influence upon us in every way. Behind the scenes she was a strong nationalist and undoubtedly this was to influence us. John Mitchel's grave in our town was a great place of pilgrimage. My mother had a great regard for him. They never met of course but their life-spans, he as an old man, and she as a little girl, actually overlapped. She attached great importance to her romantic reconstruction of her 'I remember John Mitchel' memory.

Mary joined Cumann na mBan as soon as it arrived in Newry. That must have been around 1914. I joined as soon as I left school in 1917. Later, as you know Cumann na mBan stood strongly against the Treaty rejecting it by 419 votes to 63.<sup>(1)</sup> That is a measure of how we felt about it.

Andrew, my brother, was present in the Rotunda on the night in November 1913 when the Irish Volunteers were founded. Until recently I still had a photo of him in his uniform. I lived with my uncle then in Rathfriland, which is strongly loyalist country. I had gone to him when I was five. From the year 1911 until the summer of 1916 I was a boarder in the Loreto Convent, St. Stephen's Green. Ria Mooney, later the actress and a producer in the Abbey, was there then as a day pupil; we were very close friends. We lived upstairs next to Vincent's Hospital, in the big Georgian houses. I must have been on holidays when the Easter Rising broke out there as I do not recall anything like that happening while we were there; and of course the Green was a scene of great activity.

I left the Loreto in June 1916, and returned to John Mitchel Place, Newry, as my uncle in Rathfriland had since died. Meanwhile Andrew had been to Dublin to serve his time in a big hardware emporium there. When he returned to Newry my mother handed the shop over to him. It is still thriving as Russell Boyds, from Lord Russell of Killowen, with whom we had kinship. A year or so later, it must have been 1917, I can remember Countess Markievicz and Maud Gonne coming to stay with us. They had come to establish a *sluagh*<sup>(2)</sup> of Fianna in Newry, and of course they enrolled hundreds. Later Maud Gonne was to stay with us many times. She was a marvellous person; sure they all were then.

#### CALLING HOUSE

Young and all as I was, I played my part in the great election of December 1918 which returned Sinn Féin with a seventy-five per cent vote of support and set the seal upon the future Irish Republic. I was with Fr. Michael O'Flanagan, in Monaghan, for much of that campaign. He travelled everywhere to meetings in the most out-of-the-way places, wherever they were called, managing sometimes to attend two on the one night. He was a great friend of my mother, an absolutely

marvellous person. Later when I was interned in 1941, he came to see me in Mountjoy. He was greatly upset by that experience.

We were all aware of the clever, skilful party that we were up against, but we did not care. We did not think much of them. Our gospel was a simple one; free Ireland from the English. Get control of our own resources. Of course we never expected it would turn out as it has. The people were wildly enthusiastic. There was no stopping them. They would have voted for us no matter what we told them.

I was in the public gallery on January 19th when the first Dail met and re-affirmed the Republic. The provisional constitution of the Dail was read and passed unanimously; the Declaration of Independence was read and adopted; three delegates were appointed to the forthcoming Peace Conference(3) and the Democratic Programme was read and adopted.

I had gone there with a Dundalk girl, from Park Street, a Miss Hamill, later Clarke. We were staying at the home of Dr. Con Murphy, TD., in Garville Avenue, Rathgar, where our family always stayed when we visited Dublin. We stayed there a few days. He had two daughters, Kathleen and Connie, both in Cumann na mBan. Erskine Childers called while I was there; he had some publicity business with Dr. Murphy. Sean Lemass also came. Everyone seemed delighted the way things were going. I met Childers on the steps going down to the kitchen. He gave me the text of a statement to bring to the *Irish Independent*. I knew my way around well and I caught the tram at the end of the avenue. I hurried back excited and they were still there. Years later Sean Lemass called at my husband's house in Dundalk; he owned a garage business in Park Street then. Lemass and he departed for a day touring Carlingford and Omagh. We were still in ecstasies when we returned to Dundalk.

Travel between our home in Newry and Rathgar now became more frequent. I was acting as a courier, a behind-the-scenes girl. Many of the important people stayed with us in Newry, and later after 1919 when I married Owen O'Hagan, at my home in Seatown Place, Dundalk. Noel Lemass and Harry Boland stayed with us prior to the Partition Election of May 1921; so also did Joe McKelvey, Sean MacBride and hundreds more. I met Cathal Brugha too, many times, but nearly always in Dublin. What did I think of him? Well, what could I think, except that he was wonderful, a true Irishman. We loved him.

There was now military, Tans and Auxiliaries in Newry. Later, when I went to Dundalk, they were there too. My husband agreed completely with my activities, for the boys. He accommodated them for transport and helped them in every way. There was not much activity however in Dundalk. Newry was the real hot spot. The Black and Tans and Auxiliaries patrolled the streets; there were



hit and run attacks upon them, very much as you have at present.

The Treaty was a tragedy when it came. We all knew that. We knew in the North that we had been left out. It only made us more determined not to lie down under it. What else could we do? I continued in my role of keeping an open house, providing meals and finding accommodation when we were already full. I sat upon the platform at elections — I remember well the Pact Elections of May 1922 — although I never spoke. I knew my limitations and public speechmaking was one of them.

We came to Rathgar again a few days after the attack upon the Four Courts. We travelled by car this time. There was a lot of sporadic shooting. The Murphy's were broken hearted. It was such a big change from that day in January 1919 when I first ran into Cathal Brugha upon the kitchen steps. Everything seemed bright and rosy then; now Irishmen were at each other's throats.

#### AFTERMATH

Moss Twomey often stayed with us in the after years, in the twenties and in the thirties. I had a great regard for Moss. When Owen died in the early sixties, Moss was the one person I was glad to see at the funeral.

Peadar O'Donnell too; yes, I liked Peadar. I did not pay great attention to some of his theories but I loved his droll humour; he was so offhand and gay. I really enjoyed him. Jim Killeen and Mick Kelly; I always link them. They stayed too. I remember welcoming them when they finished a big jail sentence in Belfast in 1941.

Sean Russell; yes, I knew him well. My husband left him to the boat the last time he left Ireland. Frank Ryan too; he came a few times. George Gilmore; he was very straight, Charlie and Harry also. Of course many of these people simply came to meetings, and they departed again as swiftly. Sometimes you would get a chance to strike up an acquaintance; more often you saw them briefly while serving a meal and the chance of making any real acquaintanceship was lost.

We were raided often of course. First by the military and Tans. Later by the Free Staters, the Oriel House gang, the Broy Harriers, the Special Branch, every sort of policeman, uniformed and subversive, that you could think of. Nothing of value was ever found by them, and I cannot remember that anyone was ever arrested. I was never arrested even myself in the period that I am speaking of. It was left to Frank Aiken and Gerald Boland to intern me one evening in 1941. It was the way that they did it that made me despise them. I was in the house with two children when they arrived. *We want you for a few moments at the barracks*, they said. I did not disbelieve them, though perhaps that was

foolish on my part. I left the children there and stepped into the car. It never stopped until we passed through the double gateway of Mountjoy. My mother was alive then. She came to Dublin and said everything across the table to De Valera. He knew her of course, because he had stayed in her house in Newry.

Meanwhile I was in with about twenty other girls and women. My own daughter was there. So also was Fiona Plunkett; she was a sweet person, vivacious and lively, and very artistic. Maeve Phelan was there; Noneen Brugha, a wonderful person; I was very fond of her. Cathleen and Mary Mulready from Mullingar were there, two of the Staunton girls, Mary and Maeve.

The girls had to fight before I came for proper political treatment. We were interned. We had not been convicted of anything, so in the end they had to acknowledge it. Sean Kavanagh was the Governor, and not the worst, I must say. He could have been real tough. I remember him coming to my cell one morning to tell me of the execution of a great friend of mine Ritchie Goss. Ritchie had stayed so often with us.

Finally in 1943, I was released. *Pack up*, said Kavanagh, bustling into my cell, *you are going. I cannot see the last of you soon enough.* The city was scarcely awake when I was outside on the pavement, a free woman again.

#### REFERENCES

1. At the Convention in Dublin on February 5th, 1922.
2. Company.
3. Eamonn De Valera, Arthur Griffith and Count Plunkett. De Valera and Griffith were not present; they were in jail; the former in Lincoln, from which he escaped on February 3rd, and the latter in Gloucester from which he was released in March. Only twenty-four members were present, most of the others being imprisoned. It is said that had De Valera and Griffith been present the affirmation of a Republic might not have been so definite; the two elder statesmen might have shirked the constraints of what De Valera was later to refer to as a straitjacket. P. S. O'Hegarty in his *History of Ireland Under the Union* supports this view.

## James McElduff

*Captain  
2nd Northern Division,  
First Brigade*



My father's name was Brian McElduff, from this area, Cleggan. It is the old historic heart of Ulster into which the Gael retreated after 1608, and from which they continued to raid the planter people of the lowlands. It is the country of Dean Bryan McGurk(1) and of Sean Bearnagh, the rapparee of Altmore, and in more recent times of Joseph McGarrity and Christy Meenagh. In a long poem McGarrity in exile recalled the local characters:

Oh where is Mickey McElduff,  
Who used to make St. Brigid's crosses,  
Or Gaster Roe so stout and rough,  
Who bought and sold the saddle horses,  
Brave Fenian Christy Meenagh,  
With many younger men,  
Made many a Peeler quake with fear,  
In highway and in glen.

My mother's name was Mary Slaine, a real Tyrone name. She was a quiet hardworking woman, like many of the country people around these parts. I was born in 1898 and learned all my history from my father. He used tell us of the famine, the black '47; that was the year that Carrickmore Church was built. The labourers on it had only a gruel of milk and porridge to work on. They hand lifted the stones on to a timber scaffold and they worked all day for a shilling.

I was seventeen when the Easter Week rising occurred. It was a tremendous shock to me because I had never expected anything like that to happen. I thought any chance of fighting the English was over and done with long ago. I was not involved in anything myself although there were people around here who were. They had been told to gather in Carrickmore, when word arrived on Easter Sunday that it was all off. Those that had come in from outside went home again.



They did not meet Nora Connolly although she arrived at the McCartan homestead not far from here. The executions passed over, but we knew that it was not the end of it. People like Jimmy Grugan of Trumogue, Jimmy McElduff of Aghagogan, Pat Gallagher of Sixmilecross, Hugh Rogers, Hugh McCrory of Dunmoyle had been lifted from around here and interned. We all joined Sinn Féin and waited for something to happen. I was in the Sinn Féin cumann at Altdrumman. An organiser came from Dublin in 1917; he explained the aims and objectives of the movement to us and invited us to join the Volunteers. Fifteen or twenty of us had been selected by him. *Don't blame me, he said, but in the coming fight for a free Ireland you may have to yield up your very life. Anyone that does not wish to fulfill these obligations, let him say so, there is the door. He can leave now, but anyone that stays in I will make a soldier of him.*

#### ACTION

We had no arms at all. After a while we got one Lee Enfield rifle. We went on from there, raiding houses, mostly the loyalists and unionists around here for guns, and that way we got a few more. They were a quare mixture.

Frank Curran, he is dead now in America, was the OC of our company. I was Adjutant. Our first action, it might have been late in 1919, was an attack on Mountfield police barracks. It was already abandoned by the RIC, so it was a good target to start off with. We did not burn it. We went in and we broke it up. We left it that it could not be repaired again. There was a German living next door to it. He used to be a butler with Sir Lionel McMahon. He had a motor car, which was a scarce commodity at that time, but, more important, he was friendly to us. The only trouble we had at Mountfield was from one of our own men, a man from Sixmilecross called McGirr, who arrived wild drunk, and was a nuisance to everyone. The German drove him to a safe place where he held him until he sobered up. We had strong views about drinking in the Volunteers; poteen making was frowned upon, and stills were frequently broken up.

The police returned to Mountfield however, taking over a house called McEnannas. The name of the sergeant was Murphy, a Longford man; he was friendly to us but we did not know that. So we attacked it again with every weapon we had, but we failed to take it, and had to call off the action. The next day Murphy overheard in the barracks, a company of B men(2) say among themselves, *we are going to do a Dromore at the McElduff's*, meaning a killing such as had occurred at Dromore a short time before. *You will do no such thing*, said he, *I will arrest those men.*

I was arrested mowing corn in the field there, by Sergt. Murphy and his men. At the same time Frank Curran, another lad called McGovern, and a chap called Conway were taken. Conway's people were Hibernian; he himself was not in the Movement. They mistook him for another Conway who was very active. We were brought to Ebrington Barracks in Derry and left there. Lying on the bare boards of the cell I thought to myself, if I get out of here no one is ever going to put me in again. To my surprise we were released after three days with no charge being laid against us.

We returned and got active again. Eoin O'Duffy came to this area accompanied by Charlie Daly. They were both here to help organise the 2nd Northern Division. O'Duffy did not stay long; he was a stickler for discipline. Shortly after that a policeman was shot dead, a fellow called McDonough, near Greencastle. I was not on the job myself but I thought it the best of my play to get out. I was on the run from then on, from the middle of 1920 until the Truce in July 1921. Dan Breen came up then for a while to Doraville Lodge, which we had christened Sperrin Camp during the Truce period. He would strip a bit of bark from a tree, walk back twenty five yards, turn around and aim. He hit it dead on every time. Ernie O'Malley was here too, although I never met him; but I read his two books. Meanwhile we were trying hard to improve the standard of training. I travelled all around here, Dunnamore, Glenbiggan, The Six Towns, Rathderg, Annagh Cross, and over into Co. Derry. Charlie Daly remained on all the time; he was a hard organiser, a man determined to get results. I was with him and Frank Ward from Brackey, in our first ambush here in Tyrone. God rest Frank, he was killed, still fighting for the Republic, a year and a half later at Dunnamore on 15th April. (I don't know how I escaped, because everywhere Frank was, I was). He was my comrade. I don't know how I missed it that night.

There was another ambush planned for the Ballygawley road at a place called Filbane. We travelled the night before and we stayed in this barn belonging to a man called Farrell. *Kneel down there on the butts of your rifles*, said Charlie Daly, *for some of us might not come back*. He was a very clean fighter. When darkness fell we got into the ambush position and waited. Charlie sent me towards the bridge from where they were expected to come. If it is civilians who come first, said he, fire two shots; if it is police, fire one shot. With that they arrived. I fired a single shot. Charlie stepped out and called on the vehicle to halt. We could have opened up on them from our position without warning but Charlie preferred to give them a chance to surrender. They ignored him however, and drove through, though some were hit. One car however was put out of action and the policeman in it fell out upon the roadway. Charlie went over to him, pulled a cushion from the

car, and placed it under his head. *Are you a Catholic*, he said, as he bent down and commenced to recite an Act of Contrition. *I am, sir, I am*, murmured the injured peeler. The policeman recovered and later we learned that he was a Protestant. Perhaps he thought it was the best of his play, having fallen into our hands, to have a sudden conversion.

#### DOON'S CREAMERY

I want to tell you now about the burning of Doon's Creamery, near Cookstown, on the morning of the Truce, July 11th 1921. The Tans were burning creameries in the south belonging to the people. As a reprisal it was decided that we in Ulster should burn some of theirs. We had to go through a very hostile district to do the job. We had to get in quick and we had to get out quick. We commandeered this old lorry belonging to McCullagh of Greencastle the night before. We needed another vehicle so we took the car of an old fella called Quinn who used to drive the priest to Creggan chapel. Quinn had been cessed five pounds by the IRA as a tax which he had refused to pay. We therefore had no compunction about commandeering his car. The Dunnamore unit approached the driver; *give us the key*, said one, as they climbed in. They took it over to Creggan, and as there were still a few days to go they built it into a stack of turf and left it there until the day of the raid. Moving off early they intercepted a policeman on a motor cycle heading for Omagh with despatches. Taking him prisoner, they put him in the back of the car and drove to Dunnamore. I remember Charlie Daly was in charge. He was in the front car with a heavy gun, the lanyard of which was around his arm. I was in the next car with a fellow called Lynn, an awful wild man. He went to America after. We arrived at the creamery. There was an RIC barracks nearby but we knew about that. It was already 10.30 in the morning; there was now only an hour and a half to go before the Truce. At that minute a Tan came out and walked across towards us. *Christ*, said I, *would you look at the old peeler*. I blazed at him and he stuck up his two arms. Dunnamore unit was with us. McKenna from that group went down to a scutch mill, loaded up the old straw — it is easily ignited — into one of the cars and brought it back. Frank Curran went up to the manager, a B man. *Put them up*, said he, roughly. The manager retreated into a side office. Curran fired immediately into the door. He went in then and found him crouched behind an oil tank. *Come out*, said he, *we are going to burn the place, and we don't want you to go up with it*. There was a double barrell shot gun there which Frank took with him.

We unharnessed the carts that were lined up at the creamery and pushed them out on the road to form a barricade while we went about our business. The old flax and everything that was combustible was



placed inside with an incendiary in the middle of it. I was standing in the road as the charge was let go. The wallplate of the roof rose up a foot and then settled down again. Then the flames took hold. It was all over in an hour. When we got back to Dunnamore we called into old John McCracken. He had been out shaking holy water on us before we left that morning. He was shot dead a year afterwards on his own doorstep by B Specials that came to get his son.

#### POMEROY BARRACKS

I will tell you now about Pomeroy Barracks, which we captured in the springtime of 1922. There was no fight there; the barracks was handed over to us. We took the barracks without a shot, and we got seventyfive rifles. The barracks then was in the middle of the street, as you know, and it was manned mostly by A Specials, loyalists from Belfast, although the sergeant in charge was a Catholic. Anyway among the ordinary police was a man from the South called Staunton. He took a drop of drink and for this some of the A Specials laid into him. They beat him and kicked him. He decided he would have his own back on them. He came this day to Frank Donnelly. *You are in the IRA, he said to Frank. Frank denied it of course. Oh, I know you are and I am going to help you. I have a brother on the run in Longford myself.* With that he pulled up the legs of his trousers, showing Frank his blackened shins. *If I had been sober I could have beat the lot of them.* Frank took him into his confidence then. *What are you going to do for us? Give you the barracks. I am not in a position to accept an offer like that,* said Frank, *without consulting a higher authority. Could you meet us someplace?* Arrangements were made and he was met and brought by a guide to a house called Grugans near Carrickmore. We went upstairs and held a meeting. He was the best organiser of the job himself. *You'll need a lorry to remove the stuff,* said he, *there are seventyfive rifles and plenty of ammunition. How many police are in it?* said one; *there are fourteen. How come you have seventyfive rifles and only fourteen police?* *We had a row with the B Men and we took the rifles off them; the arms are stored in the barracks, and they are all downstairs.*

*Come at one o'clock on Sunday morning. Knock at the door and I will let you in. There is one thing you will want to watch. There is another man stays up along with me. I am the senior in charge. Sometimes when the Sergeant goes to bed, he will lie on the couch and sleep. But, I will say this much for him; although he is an Orangeman, he will fight.*

Twelve hand picked men were selected to take the barracks itself, with Major Tom Morris in charge. The local men helped by trenching

or breaching all the roads leading into the village, except the Carrickmore road. Down that road we drove a ton Ford lorry, with solid tyre wheels 'borrowed' from McCullagh of Greencastle. It stopped on the northern outskirts of the village. We had made careful preparations in Christie Meenagh's beforehand to the extent that we had short lengths of rope out and ready for tying the hands of the captives we expected to make.

The job I was detailed to do was to hold up one room in which there were twelve police, me and a fellow called Paddy McAleer, from this neighbourhood. We alighted from the lorry and assembled in the chapel grounds on the Saturday night. Taking off our boots we moved down the street hugging the houses. Men from the Pomeroy company were in the entries. *Alright, go ahead*, they whispered as we passed them. Knocking at the door of the barracks we were admitted by Staunton. I led first up the stairs, a torch in one hand and a gun in the other.

We had a rough map of the place telling us which room to go into. The first door on the right was supposed to be the main room, I opened it, and as I entered, I hit my shin on a toilet seat. *We are in a WC*, I whispered to McAleer. We emerged and gripped the handle of the next door. Throwing it open, we leaped inside. *Don't move*, said McAleer, *the first that does is dead*. I saw a rifle on a shelf. I reached up and took that. As I lifted it down this fellow sprang up out of bed and went for his gun. Rory Graham sprang forward — Rory was a Presbyterian minister's son from Belfast — and he hit him on the head with his Parabellum. The rest remained in bed; they were captives and they knew it.

This one then said to me, *give me a cigarette. Reach into that tunic hanging up and you will get them*. I went to give him one of my own. Woodbines, but he refused it. Reaching into his pocket carefully I gave him one of his and struck a match. In the light he took in my features intently. Rory Graham came up behind me; *You'll know that man the next time you see him*, he said to the policeman sarcastically. While the rifles and ammunition were being stripped from the barracks, the sergeant was permitted to go downstairs and sit by the lighted range with a Volunteer. Frank Ward opposite him. Ward had a Thompson across his knees. *We could have a cup of tea*, the sergeant confided to Ward, *there is some there on the back of the range for the guard*. That was alright; we had all the stuff out and into the lorry when Major Morris said to me; *Are all the men accounted for? Where is Ward*, said Paddy Keenan. We found him then, safe and sound, having a cup of tea and chatting with the sergeant. We all mounted the lorry then and moved up the street, making again for the Carrickmore road. We took the rifles to a secure hiding place in Athscrubbagh, where we dropped

most of the men. It was a perfectly timed job, everything went like clockwork. We had the lorry back again safely in McCullaghs of Greencastle before dawn.

Talking of Rory Graham, reminds me of the night we called into old Mrs. Mulgrew at Sulchin. We had never been in the house before but the old lady thought she knew us. We had been walking in the dark with a guide for Dunnamore when the rain overtook us. *Boys, said he, you can't go any further, but this is a safe house here.* Old Mrs. Mulgrew was saying her Rosary in a corner when we arrived in. *God bless you, poor boys,* she said as she rose; *I am praying for you since last time you were here. Only somebody is praying for us,* said Rory, *I don't know where we would end up.* The son was there; *you can sleep in that out shut bed,* a bed built into a recess with curtains upon it. (Some of the old people used to call it a *cúlteach*). Rory got in first after we had a drop of tea. *Reach out your hand Jimmy,* said he, *and see if Lizzie is beside you on the chair.* Lizzie was his *Parabellum*. *If we are cornered,* said he, *we will get away if we can. If we can't get away, sell it as dear as possible.* With that a shower of holy water descended upon us, and we heard Mrs. Mulgrew recite a prayer for us as she retired.

After that we planned an ambush near Carrickmore, but for reasons that I will now relate, it never came to anything. We were well armed; we had plenty of stuff. We were in Slaines of Granagh, and were heading down to a place called Lignashannon, to meet another group of the lads that were there. Joe O'Rourke from Stewartsown, and a fellow called McGurk, and an ex-airman and a few more. The next moment we heard violent shooting. We did not know what was up. Volley after volley. We soon learned that six Volunteers had been surprised training in a field, when a couple of Crossley tenders tried to surround them. Both parties opened up on each other. There was a running fight across the heather and bog. A lad called Hagan was wounded. He was carried on and left in a farmhouse where he was hidden under some straw. A follow-up party of police arrived and searched the house. They found Hagan. He turned King's evidence afterwards and gave away everything he knew about the houses we were using. Needless to say they helped him to clear off abroad or we might have had something to say to him.

#### ON THE RUN

I had a very narrow escape after that. I was stopping in this house, McAleers, in Athscrubagh, accompanied by Battalion Commander Sean Corr. Hugh O'Rourke was there too and a fellow called Barney McCreech, quartermaster of the battalion. I had some feeling about the house and the people. *I'll not stop here tonight,* I said to Corr. *Where are you going Jimmy? I am going over to Former, there is an aunt*



*of my mother's lives there. I'll be alright. (It was just as well for the house we left was raided an hour after and O'Rourke and McCreech were arrested). Right, said Sean, I know another house over there too, called Slaines; we'll both go over.*

I remember I had a document in my pocket, bad luck to it. It was the diagram for a mine that Frank Aiken used on the Aghadavoy Viaduct; he used it to blow up a train on it. It was such a successful mine they sent blueprints of it around to the different units. It was an awkward contraption to make however; it was made from concrete, so we did not use it. I slept in one bed, the old aunt in another. There was a boy called McCullagh married into the family in another room. At four o'clock in the morning he came to me. *They have the house surrounded.* I threw the trousers on the floor. They had the document in it, so they might walk over it. They came to the room with fixed bayonets. *Get up,* they said. I raised a bit of a row about disturbing peaceful people. Looking about them, one of them produced a form; *will you sign this document that there was no harm done in the house.* I was greatly relieved; *I would,* said I, *but I am not the proprietor.* McCullagh signed and they departed. It was a close shave for me. But I had a closer one. It was still 1922 and they were driving after us hard. I was with this chap Joe McKenna in McAleers of Athscrubbagh. He was from a place called Killucan, near Cookstown. We were thinking of making dugouts. *My father has a mountain,* said he; *I think it would be a suitable place. We will go down and see it.*

We went down on a Saturday. I borrowed a pick from his brother but we could not find anywhere that was right. Curfew came on then, and we went into the house. Dan, his brother was an intelligence officer; *if you are thinking of going back to Athscrubbagh tonight,* said he, *look out, the police are flying around Camlough all day. They lie about there and will make a raid on Dunnamore after dark.* People were coming in on their ceili as we rose to go. *Where did you leave the pick,* said Johnny, his father; *I left it over the bog,* said I, *but I'll throw it into the lime kiln where you'll get it in the morning.*

We buckled on our equipment and left by the back door. There was a road to the left and a path leading upwards to the right. *Which way now,* said I, to Paddy. *One is as near as the other,* said he. *Oh, in that case,* said I, *we will go up the path.* It was as well we did. We went up and over a stile and into a wee field in which there were cocks of hay. *Close that gate, Jimmy,* said he. I looked back. We were not a hundred yards from the house, when the door opened and I could see the light shining on a big force of police entering. We had got out only in the nick of time.

We headed on anyway by this loanen(3) for a place called Cock o' the North, when I saw a heap in the darkness ahead. *There is a dark*

*clump in that laneway, I whispered to Paddy. It is the cattle, he said, they lie there for coolness. I am not going on, said I, get over the ditch here and wait. As we did so, the clump moved forward, and passed our hiding place. It was more police.*

*The less moving we do this night, said Paddy, the better. Come on across the bog and up on the hill and we'll get a lie down. We went to another cousin of his. They were just after saying the Rosary. You can stay here, said one of the girls. Oh, indeed we will not, said Paddy, give us a cup of tea, and we will stop outside. That night they raided all around Cookstown searching for us, but find us they could not. But the B Specials and police were everywhere, watching every country house, noting down everything. They were keeping us on the run.*

#### THE FREE STATE

The Treaty had been signed five months before in London and we knew we had been left out. Our Brigade went anti-Free State of course. But with the pressures now on us from all sides it was hard to keep going. A good number, myself included, went over into Donegal. There I reported to Charlie Daly and Sean Lehane at McGarry's Hotel, Letterkenny. I was sent from there to a place called Rockhill to do some training. There was another camp in Glenveagh Castle. I often met Peadar O'Donnell and his younger brother Frank there. (Earlier in the Truce period, we had a training camp here, at a place called Brocderg, where Father McKenna gave us the Parochial Hall. Frank O'Neill's father was there, and I was in charge. We had two great companies, Altdrumman and Dunnamore). We took over the Masonic Hall in Raphoe. Sean Lehane planned a series of attacks with mines along the border. I can remember filling them with the war flour. Sean Lehane came in then, *are you fit for the border*, he said; *I am fit*, said I. We loaded the mines on this truck. *Stay at Clady*, he said, *we are attacking Bishmount and will try to push on as far as Castlederg*. Me and a chap called Ted Devlin went down to Clady, but something went amiss because the column was nearly surrounded by military men from Derry, and we had to retreat again.

At that time the Republicans held Finner near Ballyshannon, Summerhill Camp, Sligo and Boyle. I travelled to those places. I remember, looking for low tension detonators, detonators that would be instantaneous. Captain O'Doherty was in Finner. The Staters attacked them there later in the Civil War and Jim Connolly, the singer of Kinlough, was mortally wounded with three other Republicans. Speaking hoarsely to a companion as he lay upon the floor, he said: *a good soldier dies with his feet to the enemy, turn mine round.*(4)

As we headed on to Raphoe, we were met by a young lady whom we

did not know but who sought a lift from us. Our car broke down near Ballybofey; we walked into the town which we found to be in the hands of the Staters. They arrested the three of us. You can stay in the cell, they said to us, but this lady can stay outside. *Wherever the boys go, I go along too*; who was she but Eithne Coyle.

We were not held for long, however. Lehané heard about us in Raphoe; he sent a warning down to the Free State captain, and we were released. The Civil War had not yet started. I heard that Frank Curran had taken a commission with the Free State in Lifford. We had been great friends; I felt there must be something wrong. Taking a bicycle I went down to see him to have it out. When I returned, imagine my surprise; I was held by our lads for desertion! They thought I had gone to join the Staters. The next day Curran came to me. *You may as well come into the (Free State) Army*, Curran said. So I went with him to Harepark, on the Curragh, where I commenced training. That is how mixed up things were. In the midst of things I took some time off to get married. I had met a girl on holidays from Coatbridge; Boyle was her name. I crossed over and married her there. I stopped there for a while. When I returned it was a case of join the Free State Army or get out of Ireland altogether. I could not go back to the North, and if I stayed on in the South I was liable to be interned. The Civil War was over when I joined. *There are as many Republicans here as there are anywhere*, I was told when I entered the Officers Training Corps., in November 1923. Dalton and Tobin were getting ready for a mutiny that never came off.

I did not like the atmosphere however, so I left after a year, and took a job for a while labouring on the Great Southern Railway in Kildare. That is one of the political sins of my life, that I ever had anything to do with the Free State Army. I have spent the rest of my days making up for it.

#### BACK HOME

Things had settled down in the North by this time, so, around 1927, I decided to bring my wife back to Cleggan. I got a job with the County Council, labouring upon the roads, at two pounds seven and sixpence a fortnight. I was glad to get it because there was nothing else. I hung on here; we had no land and only this wee house, but we reared a large family, five boys and four girls, in it. Then sometime in the thirties, some of the lads that knew my ideas came to me and said, *will you give us a bit of training?* In next to no time I found myself appointed Battalion Training Officer. J. B. O'Hagan could tell you all about that. Twenty years had passed, and now we were back where it had all started.



## REFERENCES

1 Born in Aghanagregan, Termonagurk, in 1622, Bryan McGurk was ordained a priest in 1660, according to Rev. L. P. Murray, in *Historical Studies*. In 1673 he was appointed Vicar General of Raphoe, where he lived in great poverty. From 1678 onwards he was Dean of Armagh. This was the year in which commenced the persecutions resulting from the bogus Popish Plot, culminating eventually in the execution at Tyburn of the Primate Oliver Plunkett. Under constant harassment by the government, McGurk governed the diocese in the absence of a Primate. Many times imprisoned he was eventually arrested by Walter Dawson, old and bedridden in 1712, and brought to Armagh Jail, where he died shortly afterwards. Dawson received a reward of £50.

2 B Specials — auxiliary police recruited from the Protestant community.

3 Loanan — boreen or small by-road

4 Finner Camp is an open collection of hutments. Capt. Jim Connolly was killed there after a surprise attack by Free State troops under Commdt. Joe Sweeney, on 30th June (see p. 344). Connolly's father was shot dead at his home by Tans eighteen months previously. Commdt Patrick O'Doherty, known as "The Hun", throughout the 3rd Western Brigade and Division, had taken over Finner from British forces in April. He successfully withdrew covered by Lieut. Tom Melly, with fifty of his men in the face of the Free State armoured assault, reorganising on the south bank of the Bundrowes River bordering Leitrim and Donegal. Following a renewed onslaught on his position in September he adopted harassing tactics until the end of hostilities, escaping imprisonment, eventually emigrating in 1927 to New York. He there joined a banking organisation, moving later to Portland, Oregon, where he married. He died there in 1961. Bryan O'Doherty, his father, from Bundoran, and sons Bernard and Joseph, active in the fight against the British, were imprisoned in Derry, and later by the Free State at Harepark until 1924. Sister Lena, a young teacher, also was arrested, and was 21 days on hunger strike in Kilmainham with Mary MacSwiney and others. Lena, and all of the family thereafter suffered under the Free State, being barred from jobs. *Information from Commdt. J. P. O'Doherty, now living in Athy.*

## Nora Connolly O'Brien

*Second child of  
James Connolly*



I am planning to do a book upon my mother, she contributed so much behind the scenes during the lifetime of my father. Her name was Lillie Reynolds, a Protestant by birth and upbringing. She came from the village of Carnew in Wicklow, where at that time there were many of that name. Her father died at an early age, after which the family came to live in Dublin. Her mother reared four children, two boys, and two twin daughters, Margaret and Lillie, my mother, in Rathmines. Margaret went to Scotland in the eighties of the last century, where she married, but unfortunately died upon the birth of their first child.

Lillie sought a job at an early age through the Girls' Friendly Society, and through them was placed with the Wilsons, a well-off family in Merrion Square. They had a French governess who thought highly of her: she had Lillie promoted from housemaid to teaching the rudiments of education to the younger children, while the governess devoted her time to preparing the older ones for public schools like Wesley and St. Andrew's, then situated in that neighbourhood. Social conditions at that level in the Dublin of those days were quite different from what they are today. Any one of the families in the big Georgian houses — they were mostly professional families — employed a retinue of servants, six, seven or eight was not unusual. The wages were small, but if you were lucky and were taken on by them, you lived in, and had a chance of bettering yourself.

My mother never told me how she came to meet my father, but according to all the accounts they met on a summer evening near a tram-stop on Merrion Square, when they were both off on a trip to Kingstown. The tram failed to stop for them; they entered into conversation and the friendship ripened quickly thereafter.

At that time my father was in the British Army. He had been born in Edinburgh of poor Irish parents, and had enlisted there, after trying his hand at a series of dead-end jobs, in 1882. By 1889, some months

after meeting my mother, he had almost completed his seven-year period of enlistment. I suppose the fact that Lillie's mother died meanwhile hastened their decision to get married. They had already planned to leave Dublin; he to return to Aldershot to be demobbed (though in fact he never went through that formality) and she to a post in London. He decided he must have a photograph of her before this temporary parting took place and she had one specially taken and given to him. That photograph he kept with him always; it was among the personal effects which we had returned to us after Easter Week, 1916.

My mother married my father in Perth in April, 1890, and went to live near the Grassmarket, the Irish quarter of Edinburgh. He was employed working for a firm that had contracts from the Cleansing Department of the Corporation. It was not as good as if he had been working directly for the Corporation. Nonetheless my mother used to refer to these early years as the happiest years of her life.

I was born in Edinburgh in 1893, a few years after Mona, the eldest of what eventually became a family of seven. Mona, myself, Aileen, Ina, Maire, Ruaidhre (Roderic) and Fiona, the youngest who was born in New York in 1907. (1) I can remember nothing of Edinburgh. I was barely three when we left it and came to Dublin in May 1896. We were very poorly off at that time. In his short stay previously, my father had got to love Dublin; he rapidly responded therefore when he received an invitation from the Dublin Socialist Club to go there as their paid organiser, a job which was far from steady and left our home permanently upon a knife-edge as to where the next crust might come from.

My first memory of Dublin is therefore of a tenement room and great poverty in Queen Street, a street of decayed Georgian houses near Arran Quay. That is where I recount the story of how daddy staggered in after spending a day wheeling barrows of clay upon a building-site somewhere. He was unused to it and was quite unable to do the work, but he had to take the first job that came as his meagre political funds had run out. We were then near the starvation limit and there were no social services to help us. Mother could light the fire only at night time, and we were reduced to two slices of buttered bread each for breakfast. *Two pieces of bread are enough for little girls*, she used to say cheerfully. That is the picture I preserved in later years of things as they were then. When I came to write the book in 1934, I gave it to my mother to read. She looked at it and then put it down. I waited for her to say something, but she said nothing. Glancing quickly over, I saw tears were running down her cheeks. *Nora*, she said, *parents never realise how much little children can understand and the pictures they carry in their memories for years later. You never heard your father or*



*me talk about that bad time. You were only three then, yet that is a perfect picture. When I write the book that I want to write about my mother, I will tell of the poverty in parts of Dublin at that time. I will try to tell of how we fared in that single room; the bare boards which mother used to scrub upon the floor; the strip of lino between the two beds; the trundle bed in which I slept and which was pushed underneath by day; the water carried in a bucket from the yard; the fireplace on which much of our cooking was done with the aid of a gas-ring; all the ingenuity she put into making a single room look like a cheerful home.*

#### SCHOOLDAYS

*Just think, said my mother to daddy; these will be the first frocks they ever had from material specially bought for them.* Things had improved a little bit for us. We were living, I think, in a little house near Portobello Harbour. The frocks were in navy-blue serge with velvet epaulets and lace trimming. The dresses, both similar, were a special treat for us. Previously they had been made from old ones of my mother's that she had cut up. I remember how proud we were swanking around Camden Street afterwards. Life was like that with us all the time, hard and severe, with little relief. From the point of view of comfort the seven years(2) we spent in America were easily the best. We seemed to have everything there, but father had always said, *Ireland is so twined up in my very existence that I would not abandon it even if I could.* Mother never complained. She felt that he could do no wrong. They were a very loving couple right up to the last day of his life. She never saw anything wrong about what he decided to do. She never complained. They never said things could be better. But she was glad to get out of the tenement houses, especially when he brought us over to the States to live and we had a lovely house there, with separate bedrooms, a bathroom, kitchen, a cellar and a garden at the back.

No matter how difficult things were or how crowded our home, my mother always helped and encouraged us. When we started in school, I was only three and Mona was going on five, yet we were able to read and write and do addition and subtraction. She had got the experience of teaching from having taught the young Wilson children; she coached us. The teacher could not believe it. Hunting among the books on her desk, she placed one in front of Mona asking her to read it. I can remember how the teacher's eyebrows arched as Mona glided over the big words; then she turned to me. She found that I also could read. *You are too good to go into the Infants' Class, she said, And yet too young to enter First, What shall I do?* Finally she placed us in the First Class. Within a year we were out of that and moving on to Second.

After Queen Street, we moved to the south side and in quick succession had three addresses close to the Grand Canal, Charlemont Street, Pimlico and finally a small cottage, that we did not have to share with anyone, in Weaver Square.

The next school I remember, as a result of these moves, was the convent in Weaver Square. We went there while we lived in another tenement at Pimlico. Mama's two brothers, George and Johnnie, lived then on Charlemont Mall, not far away from any of these places. We used often walk through Marrowbone Lane, up through Dolphin's Barn and along the canal. That was countryside in those days. I was eight then. Mona had made her First Communion, but I was not thought to be old enough. At school, the teacher called me the *Common Noun*; I was good at grammar, could pick out the common noun, adjectives, the tense of verbs and could quickly parse a sentence.

#### FESTIVITY IN A SLUM

How did we enjoy life in these circumstances? We adored our father and he used to bring us everywhere he could. When we were a little older, he brought me to many of his public meetings, even upon a tour of Scotland, Glasgow, Leith, Falkirk and Edinburgh. It was the simple things in life that meant so much to us, like the visit to 67 Middle Abbey Street, where daddy printed the *Workers' Republic* upon a small hand press.

Mother was even more resourceful. At Eastertime she would rush to us in the morning: *Get up quickly*, she would say, *and come to the window to see the sun dancing. It is Easter, the season of joy and resurrection. The sun always goes dancing today.* Whatever sparkle there was in the sun that day, we would believe that it really was dancing. I remember in Queen Street, in the single tenement room where we lived, she would draw back the curtain of the tall window, allowing the early morning sun to flow in. As it lit the tea pouring from the pot, we could fancy that we saw it dancing in the flowing liquid. Then she placed an egg for each of us in a plate upon the table, a blue one, a green one, a yellow one and a pink one, all dyed or coloured by some simple recipe she had. Then crisp toast from the embers of the open fire, with some marmalade spread sparingly upon it. That was our Easter egg — there were no chocolate eggs then — and that was the big festivity of the day.

I remember another time. It was Christmas Eve 1902. Mama came in from the shop carrying the few Christmas things. She had several sheets of coloured paper which she then cut into short lengths. With flour made into paste in a delph jam jar, we all got to work sticking

coloured streamers together. These were suspended from the remains of a chandelier that had hung in the centre, reaching into the four corners of the room. From the chandelier itself she hung a Chinese lantern, one of the inexpensive paper lanterns that one used to get. The streamers, the paper lantern and a red candle glowing in the window, made the ordinary room into something colourful and grand.

Pork was cheap in those days. She would get half a leg for our Christmas dinner. The bone would be taken out and she would stuff it so that we would have stuffing like everybody else. A plum pudding was prepared earlier in the day. Then she would call each of us to stir it and to make a wish which we kept very secretive about, except that I confided mine to Mona. *I wished Daddy would arrive home. I did too*, said Mona. *Then that makes three of us*, I said, *because I am sure Mama did also*.

Stockings were then hung upon the mantelpiece and the next morning, daddy still not having arrived, we hastened off fasting to Holy Communion. Mama never came with us then. It was only years later that we learned why; she was Protestant and we were Catholic. When we came back, she gave each of us a little glass of wine, port wine, which she had received in a small gift hamper from the grocer. That was the practice in those days. The grocer had been receiving regular money orders from her, which daddy sent from the States. With the bottle of port wine, came also tea, sugar, barmbrack, biscuits and dates.

When eventually daddy did come home a few days later, he made it all up to us. He brought a book about China for Mona, a history of America for me, Indian moccasins for Aideen, a ball for Ina and a doll for Maire. We felt it was a second Christmas.

Wherever we were, daddy could write with us playing all around him. I don't know how he did it, or how he preserved his precious library through thick and thin. We could play or argue, he never seemed to notice. Only when Mama tapped him upon the shoulder would he awake to reality.

#### TRAVELLING WITH DADDY

Daddy was going to Scotland and I was thrilled to hear that I would be going with him. I was then only eight. Mama bought me a lovely cashmere coat with appliqué lace and a pair of shoes with little diamonds embossed upon the toes. All my shoes up to then had been bought secondhand in Patrick Street market, a traditional market which lined all the side streets there before the Iveagh Buildings and the park were created. I have no doubt that the coat was well beyond her means but she evidently made the effort to have me turn out



respectable before daddy's people. It was April, 1902. The crossing from Dublin to Glasgow was windy and wet. Inevitably I became very seasick though I managed to preserve my precious coat, frock and shoes. In the morning we arrived in Glasgow and travelled by train to Edinburgh. We went up this street, and knocking upon a door, daddy lifted me to kiss a tall man with a red beard. *Do you always kiss strangers?* he said, smiling. It was my grandfather. I stayed with him for some days, after which I went to my Aunt Margaret, with whom I remained until daddy's return.(3)

Daddy ran twice in municipal elections for the Wood Quay Ward, the second time in 1903, after his return from his first visit to America. (The fragmentary organisation of the Irish Socialist Republican Party and of a paper — *Workers' Republic* — that appeared infrequently were insufficient against the massed ranks of the Irish Party's United Irish League, the Church and the publicans of the area. He received only a few hundred votes, well down on his previous effort). *There is no end to the lies and terrible things they said about me*, he told Mama. *They said I sent the children to a Convent school as a blind.*

#### AMERICA

(There was another more serious reason for his disappointment. The funds he had collected on his twelve-week tour of the States, and which he had mailed regularly to the I.S.R.P. offices had been dissipated in making good the deficiencies of the drinking club attached to the I.S.R.P. rooms, an attachment heartily disliked by Connolly. These funds had been collected from well-wishers to support the *Workers' Republic* and to place it upon a proper footing, and of course they expected to have the paper mailed to them. The paper had had an irregular life — it was supposed to be a monthly — since 1898 when it was founded. Connolly was the editor and main contributor. He printed it, folded it and to a great extent sold it himself. In this he was assisted by Tom Lyng, his brother Murtagh, the three O'Briens, Tom, Dan and William, John Carolan and Jack Mulray, all of them little more than boys. They formed the backbone of the party, such as it was, with its two branches, one in Cork under Con O'Lehane, and one in Belfast run by Alice Milligan's brother, Ernest.

Although Connolly had not exactly fallen in love with America during his visit, the patent fact that in six years he had made almost no progress in Dublin, combined with the gruelling poverty of their existence, must have been a strong motivation for his departure. He sailed in September, 1903, leaving his family to travel a year later. Tragedy struck them a few days before leaving Dublin. Mona, the

eldest child was badly burned in an unhappy accident and died painfully a day later. Her father of course knew nothing of this until the little group appeared on Ellis Island.

Meanwhile he had obtained a job as a collector of insurance premiums. During the six years of the family's residence in the United States, despite many ups and downs, their standard of living was incomparably better than anything they had experienced in Ireland even after their eventual return. But he continued to be lonely after Ireland, not in a sentimental way, but for what he considered to be his life's objective there, the advancement of socialism. In July, 1910, after receiving an invitation to return to work with the Socialist Party of Ireland, he once more came home to an economic future almost as unpredictable as the one he had left. Eight months later his family followed.)

We lived very comfortably in the States. We had amenities there far beyond the dreams of a Dublin worker. We stayed first in Troy, an industrial suburb of New York, then New York, then Newark, N.J. I saw the apartment house we lived in in New York only a few years ago when I was there. It looks still as respectable and as well maintained as it did then. In Troy and Newark we had a house, and of course we much preferred that.

I was barely fourteen when I decided to look for work. I saw how strained things were at home; I knew that if I could get a job I could contribute. Mama was really magical the way she could put up meals. There was a monotony about them, I suppose, if you look upon them from the point of view of grown-ups, but we enjoyed them. We always ate together. We had breakfast together. Lunch consisted of sandwiches eaten in school; then in the evening time we waited until daddy came in to have our dinner. Every Friday she made a great potful of potato soup. It was thickly flavoured and gorgeous. I have never had anything like it since. After that we had a steamed pudding with marmalade sauce, or we had sultana pudding, or a pudding of chopped peel. She used to use apples and macaroni together. They made a lovely dish. (Earlier when she was in Dublin, hearing that the water was deficient in lime, she rigged up a large cask filled with lime, through which she circulated water; every morning we each drank a glass of lime water from it.)

While I was in New York, I accompanied daddy to almost all his meetings. I felt it was so important to know what was being discussed, to hear the different viewpoints put forward by the other socialists. He would patiently explain the finer points to me. He was training my mind, seeing that I would not turn out a vegetable. Every now and then, he would bring home a book. *I think you will like that, Nora.* Because he said "I think you will like that", I read it. I read it carefully

because I knew he would ask me questions about it. He always returned to it. *Did you read that book?* And I would say I did, but that I could not follow one particular aspect. He would sit down: *Let us pick it up and read out what you could not understand.* He did that all the time. Whenever he was at home for the evening, he would read stories to the lot of us as soon as we had our homework done. He might be sitting at the same table writing an article for the *Weekly People*, *The Socialist*, *The Industrial Bulletin*, organ of the Industrial Workers of the World, and others, as well as letters to the papers of what are now called ethnic groups, the Italians, Germans and others, as well as a big number of pamphlets. He could break off at any time to talk and discuss matters with us and just as quickly resume. I have a great concentration myself, but I have never seen concentration to equal his. *Have you got your homework done?* he would say. *Alright now, I will read you a story.* And then he might read for us *The Reds of the Midi*, an entrancing story of the French Revolution. Bedtime might come and it would not be finished. We would be on tenter-hooks to hear the rest of it the next night. I do not remember any more of these stories except that they were historical and all had a social background.

#### SOCIALIST POLITICS IN AMERICA

He had helped to form the Irish Socialist Federation, the organ of which was *The Harp*, in the home of Elizabeth Gurley Flynn's parents in the Bronx. *The Harp* was printed by J. E. C. Donnelly, who came from Donegal, and it laid great stress upon Irish affairs, that is affairs back home in Ireland. Certain socialists there took exception to such "nationalism", but daddy held that if one cut oneself adrift from one's own national affairs, if one actively opposed their culture and religion, then one was destroying the bridges on which one might bring socialism to them. *The Irish people are, in the main, amenable to the international Roman Catholic Church; why then do they not welcome the politics of international socialism?* he would ask.

I went to many of these meetings as a tail to my father; one night I persuaded one of my friends to come along too, but I am afraid after one outing she thought us too dull and never came again.

In 1908, he finally broke with the U.S. socialist leader Daniel DeLeon, who had proved a virtual dictator. While in some ways a great pioneer, he was also one of those political prima donnas; you either had to accept completely his political direction or he set out to isolate you. Daddy finally saw how barren this policy was. He then switched the support of his newly founded Irish Socialist Federation and *The Harp* to the trade union known as the Industrial Workers of the World. They were influenced more by a syndicalist approach —



that is trade unionism devoid of politics — than the conventional Marxist approach. (The hope of the leaders, according to Levenson, 'Big Bill' Haywood, Joseph J. Ettor, Arturo Giovannitti, Vincent St. John, Elizabeth Gurley Flynn and others, was to organise and unite the proletariat into industry-wide unions — not craft unions — thereby displacing the class-oriented craft unions already existing. Eventually all workers, by downing tools, would bring the capitalists to their knees.)

The Industrial Workers of the World encouraged the creation in each country of similar unions in the hope that they could all come together and form a great voluntary federation. It never came to that of course. My father worked out carefully how branches should be formed and how they should maintain contact with each member.

In 1910 he was invited to return to Ireland on a short speaking tour. There seemed also a likelihood of bringing the parties to life again. When therefore he left New York for Ireland in July 1910, we knew only that it was for a speaking tour in Ireland, England and Scotland. There were no arrangements made for the family to return. Mama was a little shocked therefore by the decision to return to Ireland. It was in November it came: *This is the fatal letter. I want you to come back to Ireland . . .* Fatal it was in more ways than one, but at the time I was both delighted and excited when I heard that we would be going back. It was the end of November, 1910, that we sailed second class — which was a step up for us — for Derry. Daddy took us on a tour of Derry Walls, telling us the story of the siege and of how the Pope then supported William. In the afternoon we took our seats in the Great Northern train for Dublin. Three and a half hours later, as darkness drew in, we alighted at Amiens Street, and hoisted ourselves aboard one of the cabs standing there.

#### IN IRELAND: BELFAST

It was to a house on South Lotts Road, Ringsend, that we came. The cab stopped at the house. Across the lower half of the bay window an American flag was hung. Behind it in the shadows, danced the rosy lights of a fire. Women members of the Irish Socialist Republican Party had prepared the house, lit the fire and made ready a lovely tea. It was approaching Christmas and Mama's heart was raised at the warmth of the welcome. It had made home-coming worthwhile. However it was not long until the reality of Irish conditions hit us. I was unable to get a suitable job in Dublin so I went to Belfast, where I got a job in a factory making blouses.

The funds that had been collected to support daddy's lecture tour ran out quickly so he also had to take a job. He was appointed

organising secretary of the Irish Transport and General Workers' Union at their offices at Corporation Street, Belfast. The office was located near the docks area, and was a dingy enough little place. A Dublin based union like the I.T.G.W.U. did not have many members in Belfast and most of those it had were among the lowly paid Catholics. The shipyards and the big engineering works were dominated by cross channel craft unions who were not concerned with creating a genuine non-sectarian socialist society. The conditions of work of the unskilled and unorganised dockers at that time was absolutely miserable. I can remember years later, accompanied by Peter Reilly, being met by this fine tall man in the same locality. *This is a daughter of James Connolly*, said Peter. He reached out for my hand and held it tightly for a while. I looked up at him. The tears were running down his cheeks. *We can never forget your dad*, he said. *He came here and found us on our knees. He helped us to our feet again, while at the same time he taught each of us that it was our right to have a job*. He continued to hold my hand. Through me, he seemed to feel that he was in some way still linked to James Connolly.

When we arrived in Belfast in 1911, we got a house near the top of the Falls Road. Girls of fourteen rushed then to find jobs on leaving school. My mother accompanied daddy to our new home in Glenalina Terrace. It was her first time in the North, but because she did not go out very much, she was almost unaware of the deep divide in the community. Of course nowadays no one at all goes from the south to live in Belfast. So you could say the gulf has widened even more than it was then.

### 1913

I must tell you now about the time in 1913, when daddy went on hunger-strike. By this time we were all back living in Dublin and we were in the throes of the great lock-out. It had begun with the walk-out of the tram men during Horse Show Week in August. It spread because William Martin Murphy, who controlled the Dublin United Tramways Company, the *Irish Independent* and other great enterprises, persuaded the major employers in Dublin to insist on a pledge from their work people that they would not join the Union headed by James Larkin, namely the Irish Transport and General Workers' Union, whose headquarters were at Liberty Hall. (Connolly was arrested following a lively meeting in Beresford Place addressed by Larkin, himself and others. They were encouraging their listeners to be present at a banned demonstration in O'Connell Street the following Sunday, 31st August. This was the occasion when Larkin appeared briefly upon the balcony of the Imperial Hotel — sited where

Clerys is now — wearing a beard and dressed in a frock-coat provided by Count Markievicz. He went there, passing through a police cordon, accompanied by Nellie Gifford, dressed as the niece of what appeared to be a distinguished old gentleman. He had been made up by Helena Moloney, who was, like Madame, a master of theatricals. Lower O'Connell Street that Sunday morning was encircled by large squads of police. They charged savagely when Larkin appeared undisguised upon the balcony. As Count Markievicz described the scene: *It equalled the bloody events in St. Petersburg as scores of well-fed policemen pursued a handful of men, women and children running for their lives. Over four hundred civilians were treated in hospitals following the charge and those of the night before. Two of those batoned on the Saturday night died.*)

On that Saturday daddy had been brought especially before Mr. Justice Swift. *I do not recognise the proclamation banning the meeting (for the next day) because I do not recognise the English Government in Ireland.* He refused to give bail or to be of good behaviour and was sentenced to three months imprisonment. Within a few days he went on hunger-strike in Mountjoy.<sup>(4)</sup> When my mother found he was on hunger-strike she was very much upset. She came to Dublin from Belfast, while I was left in charge of our home there. She made her way — not on a scab-driven tram I can tell you — to Madame Markievicz at Surrey House, Leinster Road. She was advised that only the Viceroy could order the release of my father. *I'll take you there if you can walk it, a mháthair.* said Eamonn Martin, who was present. He was one of Madame's Fianna boys, having joined the organisation at its foundation in 1909. *I can walk as far as I have to go.* she answered him. Travelling on foot from Leinster Road, along the Grand Canal to Phoenix Park, to the present Arus an Uachtarain, it commenced to rain and rain heavily. They were dripping wet when they reached the gates. They were admitted into an ante-chamber and after a short time the Viceroy himself, Lord Aberdeen, entered. *I am Lillie Connolly, the wife of James Connolly who is on hunger-strike in Mountjoy: it is within your power to order his release.* My mother, I must explain, never told me this story, but Eamonn Martin, who was present for all of it, confided it to me later. The Viceroy appeared quite sympathetic but before he could make a response, Lady Aberdeen appeared. She had always taken an interest in the health and social conditions of the Dublin working people, being particularly concerned about T.B. and infant mortality rates. When she saw my mother, she rushed towards her: *Oh my dear, take off your coat and place it beside the fire. Now what is it you want? I want my husband released. You must do that for her.* said Lady Aberdeen, turning to the Viceroy. *I have already decided to direct his release,* said he. A carriage was summoned while



Lady Aberdeen continued to chat to my mother, now greatly awed by what she had done. Meanwhile presumably, the Viceroy had spoken to the Castle and the prison authorities. As my mother thanked him profusely, he bade farewell. *Your husband is in no danger*, he said. (He had been seven days on hunger-strike at this time.) The coach then drove the short distance to North Circular Road and was quickly admitted into the prison. A missive was passed to the governor whereupon, after a short delay, my father appeared. When however he saw the coach he refused to get into it. However Mama was insistent. *You could get pneumonia*. And so James Connolly was driven from Mountjoy Prison to the home of Madame Markievicz in the Viceregal coach; it was surely one of the oddest processions ever.

We had had no experience of the effect of hunger-strike at that time. While seven days may seem nothing now, at that time some strange stories were told of the effect it could have upon the brain and parts of the body after only a few days. It had none of these effects upon daddy of course. He was hardly settled in jail a day when he was sending out messages for the Labour newspapers and for Irish text books. He had a good working knowledge of Irish in the written form but had no opportunity to learn to speak it. He had hoped to make up for this in prison, but of course he was not there long enough for that. He had a good speaking knowledge of Italian and had used this to great advantage during his crusading days in New York.

He had been released under the recently enacted "Cat and Mouse Act" which enabled the authorities to imprison persons again when they were restored to health. He remained in bed in the small room, used as a dressing room by Count Markievicz, for two days after which he returned to Belfast. He had wired Nelly Gordon to arrange a suitable non-sectarian demonstration as a gesture of labour solidarity. When I arrived therefore in Great Victoria Street, where the station then was, from our home at Glenalina Terrace, I found a great throng. There were hundreds about, though to me they seemed like thousands. I had to fight my way in. Finally a man led the way for me. *We are all here*, he said, *to welcome General Connolly*. That was the first time I had heard him referred to in that way. It may have arisen from the now widely proclaimed desire to "arm the workers", though that had not yet been responded to.<sup>(5)</sup> He was placed upon an outside car, and the throng departed for the Union rooms at Corporation Street, where a speech was called for. However daddy felt unable to make a proper address. He therefore thanked them all for the solidarity they were showing, and took his leave. It was not the sort of demonstration one could mount nowadays in Belfast. But his job was to try to reach all of the workers even though at times it proved

difficult. He always spoke strongly against the Orange lodges for splitting the workers and keeping them in a bad position. *Why do you not address yourself also to the Hibs?* said one. *When I am in Dublin I do that,* (6) he told them. *Their viewpoint is in power there, but it is the Orange Order that rules the roost here, which is why I must constantly attack it.* He knew well that bigotry was rampant in Belfast. I had seen the Islandmen chase Papish youths through the streets. None of us had any illusions about it.

#### REMEMBER BACHELORS WALK

We saw the new Volunteer army as an ally, a force that would aid the Citizen Army. They were founded on November 25th, 1913, at the Rotunda, a fortnight after us. They grew quickly because they were intended to be a nationwide force, while our main concern was to resist police and military brutality in Dublin. Daddy was away, so I went there accompanied by Eamonn Martin. Four thousand enrolled the first night. The Ulster Volunteers had been founded in the North by Carson, with the declared purpose of obstructing Home Rule, which we all believed to be a certainty. They were supported by the English Tories playing "the Orange card" and by the British military establishment. We did not expect the Volunteers or the Citizen Army to have the same favouritism extended when it came to arming them: (7) nor was it long until our suspicions were confirmed.

I shall tell you now about what happened after Bachelors Walk on that Sunday 26th July (1914) when the soldiers fired at the people, killing four and wounding many more. It was the aftermath of the landing of the guns at Howth. Twenty of the guns were brought by Joe Robinson to the cottage on Three Rock where Aghna and myself were waiting with Madame. We were worried that this might have been observed by a retired police sergeant who lived nearby. Later that evening, we conveyed them to a safer hiding place in the city. We went there by taxi with us girls sitting on top of them.

Two days later came the funerals, the service being held in the evening to allow as many workers as possible to be present. Remember this was only five months after we had been "beaten" in the great strike; we wanted to show them how beaten we really were. All the previous day we had been working with Fianna boys and the Cumann na mBan girls, making wreaths in Surrey House in Leinster Road, Madame's home. Simple wreaths were made into elegant bouquets from evergreens and ribbon, encircling flowers collected from local shops and gardens by the boys. We carried them by cab to the Pro Cathedral, off O'Connell Street, where the coffins had waited overnight. I have never seen Dublin so deeply stirred as it was on

the day those funerals wended their way up Parnell Square to Glasnevin Cemetery. The youngsters and people from the teeming tenements lined the streets while thousands marched behind. There was not a soldier to be seen. The authorities had withdrawn them to their barracks. *Surely now, I thought, the world will know that she holds us by force and that she would rather destroy and kill us than allow us to go free.* But the world did not have time to show its care. We were on the edge of far greater carnage than anyone could have dreamed about.

#### CON AND EVA GORE-BOOTH

The Ard Fheis of the Fianna was always held in the week following July 12th; since that was a holiday in the North, it suited the youngsters to go to Dublin for it. They spent that week, a real rebelly horde they were, camped out around her cottage on the slopes of the Three Rock. Madame herself was respected and loved by us.

Her sister Eva, tired of being the squire's daughter, had earlier gone to Manchester where she took part in the Suffragette movement, and was instrumental in campaigning to improve the conditions of the barmaids and textile workers. She supported us by speaking in Dublin during the 1913 strike, which at the time was a very courageous thing to do.

#### AMERICAN JOURNEY

I was nineteen and the war was on four months, when my father asked me to take a message to America. *Commit it to memory*, he told me. He crossed with me to Liverpool, where we caught the boat to New York. On the dockside waiting for me was John Brennan (Sidney Gifford) and Jim Larkin. He was expecting my father and was visibly disappointed to find me instead.

I do not tell this story however, as I promised the leaders that I never would divulge it. When anybody asks *what did you do?* I never say, even though all those connected with it are now dead. I transacted my mission alright and returned again many weeks later on the *Lusitania* to Queenstown. How happy I was to be back; I counted every clippety clop of the train home to Dublin. Daddy was overjoyed as he escorted me into Liberty Hall where I sat down in front of Madame, Sean MacDiarmada and Tom Clarke. It was my first time to meet what was to be the Military Council of the Rising.

I had met Roger Casement in New York and I had received letters from him for posting in Ireland. The next day I returned to Belfast where Mama still resided.



## THE WORKERS REPUBLIC

Daddy had been publishing the *Irish Worker* as the voice of our union from 1911. Then in December 1914, with the new powers conferred by the wartime situation, the Castle authorities suppressed it along with *Sinn Féin* and *Irish Freedom*.

*Ireland distinct from her people is nothing to me*, he had written in the paper they suppressed. I was intrigued to know what note he would strike in the new paper. I felt certain he would soon bring it out. It was only a matter of time until he found a press and a place to print it. In the circumstances that prevailed he could not expect a private printer to do it. Mahons had been raided by the police and his type thrown about. That was sufficient warning.

Ever resourceful he crossed then to Glasgow where he arranged with friends in the Socialist Labour Party to continue it. That arrangement could not remain a secret for long, and a few weeks later in February the police seized the entire issue as it arrived in Belfast. There was nothing left but to beg, borrow or steal a press and print it in the basement of Liberty Hall. Thus on May 29th, 1915, the day before we celebrated Labour Day in the Phoenix Park, the new paper *The Workers' Republic* appeared. It was to be vastly better, more fiery and more courageous than its predecessor. It was printed on an old machine he bought in Abbey Street and installed in the kitchen of Liberty Hall where he placed an armed bodyguard to protect the printer operating it. On the masthead he boldly printed in English and Irish that challenging statement of principle from Desmoulins: *The great only appear great because we are on our knees: let us arise*.

## THE CITIZEN ARMY IN 1916

Only 118 men took part in the Rising (out of a total complement on paper of around three hundred); but before the day, my father had said to them: *Soon we will be going out and fighting for freedom. If there is anyone among you who feels he cannot take part let him step out now. I will have no hard feelings*. Some did so then, and he allowed them to remain rather than that they would feel he had lost confidence in them. Some more withdrew in the week prior to Easter Week, but their number was less than ten. *In the event of victory*, he told them a week before the Rising, *hold on to your rifles, as those with whom we are fighting may stop before our goal is reached*.

They had a factory going in the basement of Liberty Hall where they filled grenade cases brought from a foundry located somewhere else. I cannot say where they tried out these things. They had route marches every Sunday into the countryside so there must have been plenty of opportunities. Michael Mallin was deputy commander under my

father. It was his task to lead most of the marches. There were always a few R.I.C. men — or Dublin Metropolitan Police they may have been — tagging along behind. It was always Mallin's ambition to walk so far that they would tire out the tail that followed them but I cannot say if he ever succeeded. I doubt very much if he did. The I.C.A. men were not as well-fed or as well looked after as policemen. Two years before 1916 he was already determined that there would be a military struggle in Ireland should war come to Europe. Of course, like Lenin, he hoped that the socialists in Germany and other countries would refuse to fight. He was very disappointed therefore when they all fell in like sheep to receive their call-up orders to go out and fight against the workers of other countries. If we do not guard our neutrality that could happen again.

#### LIAM MELLOWS

Liam Mellows, one of the best organisers the Volunteers ever had, was deported to England in the week preceding Holy Week. He had been appointed to lead the Rising in Galway. The Military Council decided therefore that he must be spirited back. I was home again in Belfast after bidding a fond farewell to daddy when Barney Mellows came. *The idea is to visit Liam wherever he is, and I am to change clothes with him and remain in his place. Liam is to walk out with you as the visitor; then it is up to you to go hell for leather back to Ireland.*

Liam was being deported that very day, but we did not know to what place. Helena Moloney brought disappointing news. *There is no word where he has gone, but you must start tonight, she said to us, and reach Birmingham, as a starting point as soon as possible. You will be met there and given the correct information as soon as we hear it.*

We departed from Dublin for Glasgow that night. We went on the boat carrying the English repertory people who usually travelled on Saturday night. We were dressed up to pass as actors as far as possible. We were not terribly close in appearance but the idea was that Barney and myself might pass as brother and sister. Helena Moloney had us done up; I had a theatrical hair-do and a hat to go with it. We crossed that night on the boat to Glasgow and made our way through Edinburgh to Birmingham. We still had no clue where he was. After six days impatient waiting in the friendly house there, word came at last from Liam. He had arrived in Leek where he had far-out married relatives. It was now Sunday, a bare week before the date I knew had been fixed for the Rising, and I had a thousand important other jobs to do before that. But it was the end of a nail-biting exercise. With very good luck, we might have Liam in Dublin again within forty-eight hours. A car was hired and we drove to Leek in a few hours. I entered the house with Barney. I gave Liam the message. He must leave with

me at once as he had been appointed to lead the Rising in the West. *That leaves me in a difficulty*, he said, *when people find I am gone. Lots of people think I am like you*, said Barney. *Let us exchange clothes and I will remain here. No one outside will know the difference for days.*

After a few moments we left the house, leaving Barney behind as a dummy for Liam. We returned by train to Glasgow. That night in the friendly house, a priest came in with a complete clerical outfit for Liam. When he had put them on, he looked the real thing. We departed for the station where we caught the train for Greenock. That is where the boat leaves for Belfast. This was our real testing time. Would we both get through unscathed?

We shared the compartment with a number of northern dealers and drovers. Liam and myself were not seated together. He sat, with his face in a breviary in a far corner. The dealers ignored us to the extent that, after a while, their voices rose in argument and disgust at what they considered had been poor prices. Some strong words were exchanged. One leaped up, *I'll be hanged*, said he, though this is not exactly what he said, *if I bring any more bloody cattle to this country.* Then glancing over he became aware of the "priest". *Ah, beg your pardon, Father*, said he, touching his cap. *That is alright, my son*, answered Liam. The remainder of the journey until we reached the boat was quite subdued. We ascended the gangway accompanied by them, which suited us nicely.

We arrived in Belfast about 6 a.m. Most people were staying on for a while. However I said to Liam: *Let us go now. The police are due to be relieved in another hour. If we remain we might meet some that would be too alert for our good. So let us go. As you don't know Belfast I shall direct you now. But I shall be closely on your heels anyway should anything go wrong.*

On our way to Castle Street, we did meet several police. Each of them saluted Liam as he passed. *If they only knew!* I thought, as I grinned inwardly. We arrived safely at Glenalina Terrace and I sighed with relief as I closed the door.

The person in authority in Belfast at that time was Denis McCullough. I went to him: *Liam Mellows is here now with me; it is up to you to get him safely to Dublin. That is excellent*, said McCullough, *Dr. McNabb and myself are driving to Dublin tonight. Liam can come with us. Have him at Andersonstown this evening at seven o'clock.* I went back to our house and wrote a postcard addressed to my father at Liberty Hall: *Everything grand. We're back home. Peter.* (my nom de plume at that time). I knew he would understand, and being a postcard, it would not be subject to censorship.



## COUNTERMAND

I was in charge of the couriers sent to the North on Monday morning, with Pearse's final message to ignore MacNeill's order of the day before and carry on as planned. We had returned from Co. Tyrone on Saturday at midnight, having spent the day there watching the men arrive from Belfast for the "manoeuvres". Now we were hastening back, part of a band of couriers sent to all parts of Ireland, trying to avert disaster, to countermand the countermand. As we departed from Liberty Hall to catch the 10 o'clock train, MacDonagh was joking: *There you go tripping, while we are going out in two hours to risk our lives.*

I felt really sad to be going a hundred miles from them and not knowing if I would ever see one of them again. Pearse however was all business. He showed us the Proclamation in order that we could learn the important parts of it and repeat it as our password to those whom we must try to persuade to come out. I sent Aghna to the home of Dr. Pat McCartan, near Carrickmore in Tyrone. McCartan and Denis McCullough(8) were the principal I.R.B. men in the North. I was bitterly disappointed with what transpired. They both felt that with the loss of the arms ship there was no hope of a successful fight. McCullough seemed to have lost all courage. Fr. Kelly, who was at the meeting, was urging him to support Pearse, but it was no use.

I sent the other girl, Éilis Corr, to Belfast, telling her to tell the men there what Pearse had planned. If they would come to Dublin, she was to accompany them, but if they did not, she was to remain in Belfast. Originally they hoped to get a northern contingent down by train to Athlone. My father had a promise from a sergeant-major of artillery there, that he would bring out the big guns in their support. A successful uprising in Athlone would have brought out the entire West of Ireland on our side.

In retrospect of course, things might not have worked out so dramatically as all that. None of us were thinking then in terms of guerilla warfare. The decision to seize Dublin and the towns was the right one and a brilliant step at the time, but the way the fight developed afterwards was really the only way we could have succeeded. It was marvellous. It was the only method that could win success, the first and only success we have had against the British.

The Tuesday and Wednesday were gobbled up waiting for messages, or in trying to make contact with those we had to see. The precious hours and days were ebbing away. I spent all of Thursday in argument with Pat McCartan in Carrickmore. The police had already raided the homestead, and he was there only with his mother and sister. *The element of surprise is gone*, he declared. *A mobilisation now could not succeed.*

I stayed there that night. Next morning, Friday, I walked the mountain boreen to Clogher where Aghna was. Half way there, I met her cycling along, carrying her suitcase strapped behind. We went to the little station at Ballygawley, where we stayed with Mrs. Walsh, before catching a train the next morning, (Saturday) at five minutes to six, that eventually brought us to Dundalk. I have told all of this in my book(9) but I suppose you would like to hear it again. We had heard about fighting near Ardce and we did not therefore expect to get beyond Dundalk. But we were both determined somehow to get back to Dublin.

All that day we walked the road from Dundalk to near Drogheda. When nightfall came we went into a field and sat down in the shelter of a clump of furze. We did not sleep; we just shivered the whole night through.

At Drogheda station we tried again, but no luck; only military could travel. It was Sunday now and already we could hear the boom of the artillery in Dublin. At least that proved that there was fighting there. Ireland had not completely failed.

As we hastened onwards, my mind grew frantic; somehow we must reach the city. Throwing discretion to the wind, I flagged down this big car. It stopped. *Could it be military?* I thought. But it was not; it was an Englishman and he brought us to near Clontarf where we alighted. The city now was deathly quiet. *The boys are beaten*, we were told when we stumbled into the home of Kathleen and Margaret Ryan. *They have all surrendered and are prisoners. Your father is wounded and is in Dublin Castle.* We did not dare that evening to cross the city with military patrols.

Next day we set out to reach Mama in the cottage on the Three Rock. Our way led right through O'Connell Street; on all sides were the gutted buildings. The walls of the Post Office however were still standing. *Well anyway*, I thought, *they will yet form a rallying place for those who come after.* We walked on through Rathmines, up to Ticknock and to the cottage. Mama was there.

#### SEAN CONNOLLY

Sean Connolly, an actor in the Abbey Theatre, had been active in the Irish Citizen Army since its foundation. He spent most of his free time in Liberty Hall. Spirited and bold, he was active in all the route marches and manoeuvres. A favourite saying of his on these occasions, when leading a formation, was: *One more charge boys, and the Castle is ours.* By coincidence or otherwise, it fell to him to actually lead the group that Easter Monday, that was detailed to attack the Castle. What a coup it would have been had they succeeded in occupying a

fortress that had always rivetted the attention of Irish patriots. But the force of twenty I.C.A. men that were available was hopelessly unfitted for such a task. All the same, they penetrated the Upper Yard and shot a sentry in the guard room. What they did not know was that, had they fifty more men, they could have gone on and captured the whole apparatus of government. Instead, soldiers from the barracks at the rear in Great Ship Street, appeared, and Sean led a skilful retreat into the City Hall and the nearby Evening Mail office, which they proceeded to garrison. It was while hoisting the tricolour on the roof of the City Hall that he was cut down by a bullet. He was one of our first casualties in the Rising, although I always thought what a splendid way for him to die. (10)

But though my body moulders boys,  
My spirit shall be free,  
And every comrade's honour boys,  
Will yet be dear to me.  
For in the thick and bloody fight,  
Let not your courage lag,  
For I'll be there and hovering near  
Around the dear old flag.

#### THE PARTING

I used to think of it afterwards, how simple and innocent we were to imagine that they would be treated as prisoners of war, that they would not be shot. *They will not shoot him*, I said to Mama.

Then we found out where he was; confined to a room in Dublin Castle. But we were not allowed to go there. Still we lived in hope. Then came the first executions four days after the Rising ended. I felt shattered. We were staying with the parents of William O'Brien. Both he and Roddy had been arrested. *What shall I say now to Mama?* But the regular litany of deaths could not be withheld after the first three, Pearse, MacDonagh and Clarke, had gone. On different days after that they went, sometimes singly, sometimes four. Although wounded, we knew now that daddy had no chance. Sean MacDiarmada, whom we thought of also in our prayers, would not be forgotten by them. Nor was he. On the Sunday an official note came: *If Mrs. Connolly will call at Dublin Castle on Monday or Tuesday after eleven o'clock, she can see her husband.*

*Daddy, mine*, I called to him, as I stumbled into the room. A cage held the bed clothes over the wounded leg. *I have been courtmartialled today*, he whispered. I stared blankly, stung by the reality of it. *The Cause is safe now*, he said, as Mama came to the bed. There was one



more day left, and we got in to see him once more; through darkened streets in a military ambulance, then into the Castle, up those stairs again. *I suppose Lillie*, he said to Mama, *you know what this means? Your beautiful life*, was all she could sob. *Hasn't it been a full life, Lillie, and isn't this a good end?* Beckoning me, I put my hand under the bed clothes. He slipped a paper into my hand; *It is my last statement*, he whispered. *Smuggle it out. Time is up*, said an officer. Mama had collapsed. A nurse was leading her out.

I moved slowly down alongside the bed, keeping my eyes upon my father all the time. I was looking upon the face of the one I loved most but would never see again. When I got to about half way, he suddenly called: *Nora, come here*. I rushed back to him. Hope surged within me and died as quickly. He put his arms around me once more and drew me gently down to his head. He was not able to lift more than one shoulder off the pillows. Then whispering in my ear: *Don't be too disappointed, Nora*, he said. *I am proud of you. We will rise again.*

#### CATHAL O'SHANNON

Cathal O'Shannon was arrested on his way from Belfast at the start of Easter Week to take part in the Rising. He had been disappointed at the complete failure of the call out in the North. Accompanying him to Dublin was an exile from Scotland called Breatnach, a Donegal man originally, who had come over to take part in it. Both of them were arrested on their way to Dublin, and as a result they were not able to take part in the Rising.

O'Shannon was from Co. Derry originally. He had been an organiser in the Irish Transport Union in Belfast and knew the North intimately. It was a great blow to him when the mobilisation he had arranged for Coalisland for Easter Sunday failed. He had been father's first contact with the I.R.B. when the War broke out in August 1914. At that time, they were in Belfast. After 1916, he continued as an organiser, then as editor of the Union paper, *Watchword of Labour*. Politically the Treaty sent him off the rails, because the Labour Party supported that settlement. He found himself in the same straitjacket. Free Staterism can be a much worse straitjacket than Republicanism. Since the Labour Party accepted it, they could then only oppose the Free State on matters of economic policy. This in time proved the futility of their position.

#### ARCHIE HERON

My sister, Aghna, or Ina as many pronounce it, married Archie Heron, a Protestant radical from Portadown. Although appointed

eventually to a post here in the Department of Industry and Commerce, he never lost his radicalism. Along with Dáithí de Bhuidhe — David Boyd, another Protestant radical from Belfast — they tried to reach Dublin to take part in the Rising and were mad that they could not make it. Archie came into the Movement through joining the Freedom Club in Belfast. From that they passed into the I.R.B.

In later years Dáithí de Bhuidhe took up journalism and ended up as editor of the Waterford News. His stance in after years — he died sometime in the fifties — was a completely neutral one.

#### ERNEST BLYTHE

Ernest Blythe was a great disappointment to me because he came into the Movement through the Freedom Club also. He was a journalist, but he gave up his job and went to Kerry and took work there as a farm labourer in order to learn Irish. I thought that was a wonderfully sincere gesture. Anytime he was in Belfast, he came to our house at Glenalina Terrace and stayed as long as he could. He gave an address to the Fianna at Mac Arts Fort on Cave Hill during the Wolfe Tone Anniversary in June 1915: *Pledge yourselves to fight for the independence of Ireland and never desist until she is free*, he told the boys. But he did not follow that himself. He managed to avoid any involvement in the Rising, and later on he supported the Treaty. Throughout that period and in the years afterwards, he made some bitter and rancorous statements about the Republicans who opposed it.

I was very fond of him and mother was too. After the Treaty, he never came to see us again. I suppose he understood that he would not be welcome. I never saw him then for decades until one evening that Seamus and I went early into the old Abbey Theatre, where we got two seats a few rows back from the front. Blythe was then, and he had been for years, a director of the place and always attended the performances, sitting in the very front row. During an interval, he happened to look back, recognising us. *Oh hello*, he greeted us, *are you here?* Of course we had to recognise him. With the people all around we could not do otherwise. However that is the only time since 1922 that I had spoken to him.

#### SEAN LESTER

Sean Lester was another one of the Protestant crowd that came into the Movement in the North. He worked as a journalist there, before coming to Dublin where he was employed in the old *Evening Mail*. In the late twenties, he was appointed League of Nations' Commissioner

in Danzig where he had a hard time standing up to the Nazis, who were trying to take over that city. However they met their match when they met Lester. Whenever he came home on holidays, which he did nearly every summer, he called upon us before spending a fortnight in Carna. He enjoyed bringing his family there.

Padraig Ryan, whom you ask about, was a Dubliner, brought up in Clonliffe Road. He was an officer in the Fianna. Later he went to Belfast, where he worked with McAleavey's as an accountant.

#### A PROPAGANDIST IN THE U.S.A.

When my father last spoke to Mama and myself on the eve of his execution, he implored her to return to the United States with us. As we were all girls, except Roddy, he could not see any chance of us getting employment in post 1916 Ireland. After his execution therefore, we made application to the British authorities here for permission to leave Ireland and go to America, but this was refused.

I waited for a while then, trying to get a job here. We were in dire straits. Were it not for the family of William O'Brien, with whom we stayed and by whose generosity we lived, I do not know what we would have done. There were seven of us living in the O'Brien household, so we were terribly aware of the burden we were to them. Yet we had no money whatsoever, and no means of getting any. Daddy never had any money to spare; the last few pounds he had in his wallet were taken from him after his arrest.

I went back to Belfast then and I tried to get my old job back in the factory where I had worked as a machinist, but they had no place for me. The war was on and they were quite hard hit for work. I said then to Mama: *The only thing is for me to go alone to the States. It will cause less notice and will be much cheaper.* I would have to borrow the fare, of course, but, with luck, a few weeks work there and I could pay it back. And five dollars a week coming home steadily would work wonders on the family food bill.

So I went to Margaret Skinnider. She had been badly wounded and she was now at home. I arranged to give her address, to state that I was born in Edinburgh — which was true — but I gave my middle name of Margaret Connolly, and that way I got my passport without any further bother. I had an Aunt Alice Rafferty in New York; I gave her name as my destination. So with a single ticket and fifteen dollars in my pocket, I set sail.

Arriving near New York, that August, I sent a cable to "John Brennan" one of the Gifford girls,<sup>(11)</sup> and a sister-in-law of Thomas MacDonagh and Joseph Plunkett. She met me at the quayside, and



almost immediately I found myself whirled off as a propagandist. I was the first out from the Volunteer side after the Rising. No one would believe that I had come merely to get a job, and I was not going to be given time to look for one. Immediately I was put on in Faneuil Hall, the Cradle of Liberty, as they call it. That was the first place I spoke, and it was also the first place in the States where my father had spoken. I never thought I was cut out to be a public speaker, but these Irish Americans and their friends wanted only to hear the story told in my own words and they did not mind how often I hesitated. They hung upon every syllable. I spoke to them for hours, and when I had finished, I found an overflow of five thousand people outside, so I had to address them too.

The Boston people then whisked me away to that city where I had another overflow meeting. Next morning, the Rising, with pictures was blazed across their front pages while the European War was relegated to the inside. For the next couple of months, I travelled up and down the eastern states; I was about to head for the mid west when I was stricken down with appendicitis and the doctor ordered me to stay off speaking for six months. At the suggestion therefore, of a Harvard Professor and another acquaintance, the editor of the *Review of Reviews*, I retired to Boston to do a University course in the winter and the spring of 1917.

At the end of the six months, I started speaking again, in Boston, Buffalo, Newport, Maryland, Philadelphia and many more cities. Some of these were held before crowds of twenty thousand people, without amplification. While I was staying with Patrick and Mollie Collins in New York, John Butler Yeats came along one day. Viewing the pair of purple stockings which I was wearing — coloured stockings were then all the rage — he exclaimed: *Oh, passionate legs!* And then he added seriously, *I bow to the maiden who has obtained millions of pounds publicity for the Irish cause, without extending anything but her voice.*

As a result of this publicity, a committee of eminent people was then put together as a delegation to the Foreign Affairs Committee to press upon them the case for recognising the Republic. This was a bit far-fetched, because, although we were well received and treated courteously, our Rising after all had failed, and our Republic was not in being.

Meanwhile America itself had entered the War. Feeling that I could not work now as effectively as I would like, and also a little homesick, I applied to the British for a visa to return home. The official was quite courteous: *What will you do if we do not give you permission? I have been asked to go on a nationwide tour*, I said. *If you permit me to go, I will not speak here again, but if I am not let go, then I shall speak*

*everywhere I can. I think it is my duty in those circumstances, he said, to send you home.*

#### A STOWAWAY TO IRELAND

I packed quickly, took leave of my friends in New York and sailed for Liverpool in the summer of 1917. Arriving at that port, imagine my disappointment and annoyance to be served by a Home Office official with an order excluding me from going back to Ireland. Indignantly I wrote, without avail, to London; all I got from them was a reply merely restating the position. A further letter conveyed the view of the Castle authorities that *it would be inimical to the peace of this Realm to allow Nora Connolly reside in Ireland*. Meanwhile I had met Mrs. Sheehy-Skeffington, who was excluded likewise. I was able to tell her about "Mr. Murphy", our man in Liverpool, who arranged to stowaway those of us who were not allowed travel. She then returned that way to Ireland, aided by Mr. Murphy, although she was arrested and sent to Holloway, but allowed return to Ireland afterwards.

My mind was now made up. I must stowaway too. I took a train down to Mr. Murphy in Birkenhead. *Could he find a place for me?* Indeed he could. At nine o'clock he would have two sailors coming in. He was sure they could take me on their boat. They arrived shortly after and looked at me. *Dress up as a boy and we will take you*, they said.

Fortunately there was a youth's suit in the house. The *good suit* of a Waterford boy called Hicks, who returned to Ireland the same subterranean way, was in Mr. Murphy's house. He would lend it to me, and if I got across successfully, I could send it to young Hicks. Everything fitted perfectly, except that the trousers were too wide for my waist. Taking my scarf, I wound it around like a *crios*, and with that I held up my trousers. Taking the cap then, I put my hair up inside, carefully pressing down the cap, while at the same time I gave it a stylish tilt forward. Looking at me, the older sailor, Mr. Kavanagh, smiled; *well it is a cocky young fellow we have with us tonight*.

We all waited a while. Then, not wishing to remain too long in Murphy's house, we moved out and into a pub until it would be time to catch the last train down. A bottle of lemonade was bought for *the lad* while the men sipped a pint. Then reaching for their caps we made to go. Arriving on the docks, by the last train as we thought, we were upset to find that most of the blue blackout lights were still fully on. Disconcerted though we were, we made our way along, only to notice ahead a policeman with a light carefully scrutinising all who passed in.

*That has torn it, said Mr. Kavanagh; We will surely be caught. No, said I; you walk on. I shall follow some distance behind, as though I am not really with you. If I am caught, it will not affect you.*

But our fears were groundless. The policeman called a cheery 'Good-night' to the pair of sailors and then to me. Coming up to the boat, however, we found that it was already pulling away with only the stern end adjacent to the dock side. One by one, we all had to take a running jump, but we made it, though I had to cling to the outside rail. We went below then. I was shoved into Mr. Kavanagh's bunk. It was just as well. The ship had hove-to again and detectives had come on board. It was a routine search, but nerve-wracking all the same. Kavanagh climbed into the bunk beside me, throwing a couple of blankets awkward fashion across him so that I was hidden. Once again, however, all was well. The captain, quite ignorant of my presence, swore blind that there were no stowaways aboard, and the two policemen departed.

We were not out of the wood yet however. A message was transmitted directing that no boats leave the Mersey as German submarines were in the vicinity. There was nothing to do but lie there quietly and wait. Eventually after more than twenty-four hours of a cramped and tedious lie-down, the engines throbbed and we were on our way to Dublin. Thirty-five hours after I entered the fo'c'sle, I was able to leave it again. Waiting until everyone else had left, and dodging the watch as he did his round of the boat, I alighted in front of my beloved Custom House.

I accompanied Tom, the younger sailor, to his home. *This is a daughter of James Connolly*, he said simply to his wife. She stared at me, unbelieving, and then rushing forward, hugged me. *Change your clothes now*, she said; *and we will get that suit down to young Hicks. Tom will walk you home.* We had not far to go. Mama was living now in St. Patrick's Road, Drumcondra. Mama went white when she opened the door in answer to my knock. She could not believe it was me.

I was there a week when the policeman's widow, who lived next door, called to Mama: *Smith, the detective, has been here*, she said. *He showed me a photograph of your daughter. I said, of course, that I had not seen anyone like that about.* It was clear that the Castle had not forgotten me. I decided to go on the run.

I went for some weeks to Mrs. Wilson — she was one of the Gifford's — until her husband was taken ill with the great 'flu of that year. I went then to Flemings on Drumcondra Road, where I stayed above the pub for a few months. Feeling now that the chase had slackened, and that the authorities had more urgent worries brewing, I returned home again. All was quiet; there had been no further inquiries. I decided to walk through the city which I had not seen since shortly after the



Rising. O'Connell Street had been cleared of its rubble, though a faint smell of burning still pervaded the air. What really saddened me was to see all those Union Jacks flying proudly from every mast and business premises up Westmoreland Street and into St. Stephen's Green. *Have we accomplished nothing?* I thought. Then turning, I crossed by old Butt Bridge and past the still empty shell of Liberty Hall. Men were working outside, but I felt too shy to speak to them. How lonely now it seemed without Daddy.

#### INTO THE STRUGGLE

In the campaign for the election, held in December, I was speaking for a number of the candidates. I never expected that we would do so well, that we would walk away with three-quarters of the seats, but we did. We finished Redmond and everything he stood for, and whatever the future may hold for Ireland, Republicanism will always hold sway here. The victory was a spur to us. We now had a goal to work for. The Volunteers were being re-organised, and soon the flying columns began to emerge. There was much secretarial work, travel and courier work to be done. Much of this fell to me. But I did not mind. I knew now that we could not be stopped.

The Labour Party were a great disappointment. You could say that they just sat it out in their corner and did not take part. Three months after the Rising, in Sligo at the Annual Congress of the Party and the I.T.G.W.U., they still could not summon up enough courage to protest at the execution of two of their members, my father and Michael Mallin. *This is not the place to enter into a discussion as to the right or wrong, the wisdom or folly of the revolt*, said Tom Johnson.

They did not take part in the 1918 election because they could see that Sinn Féin was going to sweep the field. All during the years of struggle, they concentrated on building up the bureaucracy of the I.T.G.W.U. That seemed to be all that mattered. To Tom Johnson, who, like many other Labour people, supported the Treaty, I said: *You are leaving us now with England, still at our throats to be fought; it is they who hold our soil, not some shadowy capitalists.*

William O'Brien took no part in the struggle worth speaking of. From now on, he applied himself to become solely a full-time trade union official.

Cathal O'Shannon also took no part. He had been in at an early stage; he tried to reach Coalisland, and then he tried to walk to Dublin in Easter Week. Having failed in that, he settled down as an editor of the Union Journal.

When the 'Pact Election' was announded after the Treaty in May, 1922, the Labour Party contested it, but from a purely pro-Treaty standpoint. With the national forces irrevocably split, they saw it as their chance to come in and grab a few seats.

I was amazed and astonished when the Truce was announced. *I am sorry about this*, I said to Liam Mellows. *We cannot hope to match the British around the conference table. It is easy*, I said, *to order men to stop fighting. It may be very hard if you want them to resume. The British have their professional army, which they can switch on and off at will. We are not like that.*

My heart had been in the struggle. It was a national re-awakening. My father would have been overjoyed had he foreseen it. He thought that, when they had failed, we were destined for another sixty years of despondency like the Fenians after '67. That was why he advised Mama to emigrate.

The Treaty ended our unity. What Ireland had never done before, she now agreed voluntarily to do, namely to recognise the King of England as head of our country. Throughout the negotiations, Erskine Childers, although present, was forced into silence. He told me so. He could make no contribution. Griffith had an absolute contempt for him.

The Treaty was signed, and in the event it was accepted by the people. Having been told to stop fighting, they could not be easily made resume. Therefore we had no answer, no military answer that is, to England's threats. Being a good listener I went to all the debates in Earlsfort Terrace. I invariably sat beside Darrel Figgis who had been busy on arms purchases abroad. Liam Mellows, who was Director of Purchases, used often join us. Then his turn came to speak. He went to the rostrum with that determined look that he reserved only for the most solemn occasions. He made a marvellous speech: *To my mind the Republic does exist. It is a living, tangible thing, something for which men gave their lives, for which men were hanged, for which men are in jail. . . . Has Ireland been fighting for nothing, but to become like the richer countries of the world? If so, that was not the ideal that inspired men in this cause in every age, and it is not the ideal which inspires us today. We do not seek to make this country a materially great country at the expense of its honour in any way. We would rather it were poor and indigent. We would rather have the people of Ireland eking out a poor existence on the soil, as long as they possessed their souls, their minds and their honour. This fight has been for something more than the fleshpots of Empire.*

It was so telling and logical, that I thought that surely now no one could vote for it. But I was wrong. The Brotherhood(12) had got at them and it was passed by seven votes.

After that, we began to slip rapidly into civil war. The Four Courts was occupied in April, and I was often in and out of them. Liam and I continued to be close friends. He seemed to think that I could give him a fresh slant on events. One day he brought forth a tricolour flag. It had rested upon the coffin of one of our heroes. *Keep that, Nora*, he said. *You may yet need to place it on the grave of another Republican.*

Seamus and I had been married some months when the outbreak occurred on June 28th, 1922. We had slept that night at Margaret Skinnider's and were awakened by the boom of artillery. Quickly we hurried from Fairview to Barry's Hotel, which was a Republican headquarters. There was confusion everywhere. I was sent in charge of medicines to Tara Hall, which was in Talbot Street, while Seamus was directed to go to a post in the Gresham. I sent squads scouring the chemist shops for the medicines we needed. We did not always get co-operation. A change that was plain to see had come over the business community. Aghna, however, had done a course as a midwife and she was now helping us. She went with the squads because she could identify upon the shelves just what was needed and they could not fool her. Everything was in large glass jars at that time. She would point at one; *take that*. We got well stocked up with supplies. We had a first-aid post at Tara Hall, though we did not have many to heal there. One night, however, Free State soldiers came with one of their men for treatment, and of course he was treated.

One day I went to the Gresham, which was now being bombarded. I entered by a door and followed through holes in walls, until I came to a room where they hoped to have a first-aid post. But we had not the time or the personnel to set it up. I returned to Tara Hall. We had no beds there; we simply lay at night upon the stage with coats thrown over us.

We were there scarcely a week, when all the posts on the east side of O'Connell Street were over-run and we had to evacuate. I did not know where Seamus was. We had parted at Barry's a week before. For all I knew, he could be wounded or dead.

I left then, on the run now, to take up a post with our shadow headquarters. Austin Stack was in charge of finance. Margaret Skinnider had gone as his secretary but was arrested shortly afterwards. I stepped into the gap. Seamus, meanwhile, had turned up safely. We found a flat upon the top floor of Craobh na gCuig Cuigí, on the corner of Hume Street and Ely Place. (13) I was there only a few weeks when we were raided. I had just completed copying records for Stack, and had got them safely to him, when the Intelligence Squad from Oriel House arrived. They searched our place high up and low down, but although we had some very important documents, including a money draft for £5,000 which I would have hated them to find, they



came upon nothing except a ninepenny receipt for one of our fund raisers. That was the sole evidence they had against me.

*You had better get ready and come with us.* We were brought to Portobello Barracks, which had a sinister reputation. We were held there a day, but at the end of it they came in and said to me: *You will go to Mountjoy.* It showed me what the new state thought of the children of 1916. *And you,* they turned to Seamus, *how would you like to go there too? Oh, be God, I would.* They called a taxi and we both went together to the Joy, parting at the gate, he into one prison and I into another. It was November, 1922, and we were to spend our first anniversary in jail.

#### AFTERMATH

In August, 1923, Alex Lynn (14) brought a case of *Habeus Corpus* on my behalf, on the grounds that my arrest was unconstitutional. (It was held in Dublin Castle as the Four Courts was in ruins). There was a battery of legal talent arraigned against him, but he brought it off. Judgement was given in our favour. Immediately the state lawyer rose and sought time for an appeal. *No, the prisoner will be released now,* said the judge. *We recall what happened in another case,* which we took to mean the execution of Erskine Childers nine months before, and which had taken place while an appeal on grounds of habeus corpus was being served. As we walked down Parliament Street, away from the Castle, the first editions of *The Evening Mail* appeared. The newsboys were running, holding the poster in front of them: *Nora Connolly Free.*

I could afford to rest now, and look back at the Civil War. We had fought it poorly. Our hearts were not in it; Republicans had not wished for it. When it was thrust upon them, they found that they had not the spirit for it. They could not fight their own people. The first fiery resistance became a long sad retreat, with the executions strung out like milestones along the way. We felt beaten and deflated.

In October, Seamus, along with hundreds more, went on hunger-strike for release. One day in November, when I was expecting no one, a knock came. I opened the door and there was my beloved husband. He had been let free. We were fortunate too, because we got the top flat rightaway in Mama's house in Belgrave Square, to which she had moved. You could rent a house in Dublin that time for a pound a week. Straightaway, Seamus got a job with Moylett as a commercial traveller, distributing sweets and confectionery lines. In that way we avoided the grim aftermath that confronted most of the Republicans when they came out.

Hoping to advance the cause some way, we turned now to the Irish

Labour Party. It had been founded by Daddy in 1912, so we thought that it was the proper place for us to go. We tried to put life into it, but we found it, even then, an uphill battle. Small wonder that I threw all my weight behind Republican Congress when it was formed. With Mick Price, I went everywhere organising it. We got plenty of good young people. We had also Charlie Donnelly and Kit Conway over from the I.R.A., both of whom were killed in Spain afterwards. Cora Hughes, a daughter of Tomas MacDonagh, and of course, all the other names you know. We tried to reconstitute the Citizen Army from dissident I.R.A. men, and we had companies of it in Belfast, Dublin, Waterford and other places. But alas, it faded. I had such great hopes for Republican Congress, only to have it spoiled in the effort to create a bogus *united front*. The tradition of my life has been Republican; I am a Republican and will always be a Republican. I could not tolerate the idea of a *united front* which would not be Republican. We had there the makings of a Republican Workers' Party but we wasted it.

So with Congress flat, with Frank Ryan gone to Spain and my great friend Mick Price retired, I found myself on the sidelines once more. With Seamus, I was running then a small branch of the Labour Party here in Drimnagh, where we lived. Politically it was not an entrancing prospect, trying to create a revolution through the Irish Labour Party. Then in 1939 they submitted, under pressure, to the removal from their constitution of the objective of a Workers' Republic. The Irish National Teachers' Organisation, then a right-wing body, proposed that the Party drop what had been my father's burning objective all his life. Anyone can call themselves a Socialist Republic, but with a Workers' Republic you really nail your colours to the mast. We were now however, in the aftermath of Christian Frontism, of the popular reaction to the struggle in Spain. Our objective of a Workers' Republic was therefore to be the first victim immolated on the altar of expediency. (15)

I was not a delegate; I attended the conference with Seamus who was a delegate. To the meeting and to William Norton, its leader, he declared: *Do this and you will forever remain as a small rump in the Dail, undistinguishable from the other two reactionary parties. You have killed the idealists in your party. There is no future in it for them.*

We retired completely from it, and I have never since that time touched the politics of so called Irish Labour.

#### REFERENCES

- 1 Mona, (Nona); Edie; Aghna; Moira and Roddy in her autobiography *Portrait of a Rebel Father*.

2 September 1903 until July 1910. He spent three months there from September 1902 on a lecture tour sponsored by Daniel De Leon and the Socialist Labour Party.

3 Connolly addressed the May Day meeting in Edinburgh, after which he was in Aberdeen, Falkirk and Salford. He returned to Dublin after a fortnight, bringing Nora home with him. In June he returned to Scotland; he then went on a tour of England, which included Oxford and London. At Oxford, Levenson says, *a combination of aristocratic students and plebeian scoffers gathered round the platform and began to sing and shout. They threw stones at Connolly and threatened to tear down the red flag, forcing Connolly to abandon the meeting after an hour.*

4 Two months later, at the end of October, James Byrne, secretary of Dun Laoghaire Trade Council, died on hunger-strike. At the start, it was not solely a Republican form of protest.

5 It was in November — the same month that the Irish Volunteers were founded in the Rotunda — that a committee met under Captain Jack White at 40 Trinity College, which gave birth to the I.C.A. See Desmond Greaves *James Connolly*.

6 Throughout the years, Connolly courageously attacked right-wing and Catholic ultras while in Dublin. His polemics against the Jesuit Father Kane of Gardiner Street which grew into *Labour, Nationality and Religion* are typical of that.

7 In September 1913, a "Provisional Government of Ulster" — at that time still conceived as nine counties — was established under Sir Edward Carson, later a member of the British War Cabinet. In August Carson had lunched with the Kaiser at Hamburg. In April 1914, 35,000 German Mausers and 2,500,000 rounds of ammunition were landed at Bangor, Donaghadee and Larne from Germany and distributed openly. This was less than four months before the outbreak of World War One. In comparison the 900 rifles landed at Howth in July seemed puny.

8 On that Sunday and Monday, McCullough was in Belfast.

9 *Portrait of a Rebel Father.*

10 A report in the *Weekly Irish Times* of the following week, describes what happened.

*The attempt to enter Dublin Castle was one of the most exciting incidents of the uprising. About ten minutes past twelve noon, on Monday, a small party of Volunteers, with two young women in the rear, marched up Cork Hill towards the gates of the Upper Castle Yard. They were fully equipped, as if for a long adventure. They reached the Castle entrance, which was open, and guarded only by a policeman and a sentry. When the policeman saw they were going to enter the Castle Yard, he moved quickly in front of them and raised his hand as a sign they could not come in. But the Volunteers were determined, and did not turn back. They remained where they were for a few brief seconds, facing the constable. Then occurred the deed that revealed the daring object of the Volunteers. One of their number, standing out in front of the policeman, levelled his rifle at him, and before the unhappy man could draw his revolver, fired at him point blank. The constable stood a second or two, to fall prone and lie motionless on the ground. At the same time, other shots were fired by the attackers at the sentry inside the railings and at the guardroom to the right. Out from the path sprang a soldier with his rifle at the ready and bayonet fixed. He did not come to close quarters with the rebels. The iron gates were quickly closed and the Volunteers' attempt to seize the Castle failed at this point. That they intended to do as much harm as possible was apparent, for one of them carried a tin cannister, evidently made up*



as a bomb, and he threw it across the railings at the guardroom. His aim was good, the bomb had. It broke the window, but did not explode.

Scattering at the Castle entrance, the Volunteers — of whom there were not more than twelve at the outset — ran down Cork Hill. Four or five of them went into the office of the *Daily Express* (Evening Mail) at the corner of Parliament Street and Cork Hill. They ordered the members of the newspaper staff to leave. In a few minutes the Volunteers were in possession of the building. Their object in seizing it was to command Dublin Castle, and wage war upon it. For the same purpose a few others of the party ran up the steps of the City Hall and climbed the iron gates which were shut on account of the holiday. The shop of Messrs Henry & James also was entered by a man, who, having broken the window, climbed in and went up through the house to the roof.

11 Sydney, later Mrs. Czira.

12 The Irish Republican Brotherhood, which on the 10th December, 1921, threw their considerable secret influence into the scales in favour of acceptance. Darrell Figgis (mentioned a few lines above on page 210 and on page 55) was an unusual participant in the revolution. An Anglo Irish man of letters with a prolific and varied output, he was not free of rumour. He went pro-Treaty, drew up the Free State Constitution and was T.D. for Co. Dublin. His wife shot herself in 1923, and he himself committed suicide in 1925.

13 In the pre 1916 period, Craobh na gCuig Cuigí was much enlivened by the presence of a member, Michael Rahilly, The O'Rahilly. See the biography of Marcus Bourke.

14 Alex Lynn, originally from Belfast, barrister and Republican of integrity. For twenty years he addressed meetings and spoke out for political rights. Prior to 1909 a founder member with Wm. O'Brien of the Socialist Party of Ireland. He appeared in the twenties and thirties with Albert Wood in many Habeas Corpus applications. He retired in the forties to Giles Quay, Co. Louth.

15 See Appendix, p. 413.

## Tom Kelleher

*Commdt. General, IRA  
1st Southern Division,*



My father John Kelleher — I suppose I should start with my dad — he came from a rather historic place, Kilmichael, right in the centre of it. They were a farming community, very good nationally, followers of Parnell. My mother was Mary McCarthy, from Knockavilla, Inishannon. She shifted from there to Crowhill. I was born in 1895. Somebody said to me one time where did you get your patriotism from? I definitely got it from my mother, I said. She claimed relationship with Philip Allen, one of the Manchester Martyrs, who lived in Bandon. Tom Barry always called her Mary McCarthy. She sprinkled him with holy water one day and gave him a bottle of milk, when he was heading from the British.

I was not reared in Kilmichael however, but at Knockavilla, adjacent to Upton. I was not really aware of the events that seemed to move the other people you have been talking to, like founding the Volunteers, 1916, or anything like that. I was not in anything until I met Robert (Bob) Walsh. He took me on. He was the local organiser of the IRA. That was the time of the big election of December 1918. He gave me a couple of weeks to consider in case I changed my mind. But it is stronger, I got in my mind about it. He told me the fight would begin in a short time, and we are looking for volunteers. *That is really what we want*, I said. Because we were let down on the last occasion. I maintain the fight should have been got going down here in Cork as well as in Dublin. Why should Dublin have it? We were all one brigade at the time. We were very enthusiastic about procuring any bit of a gun we could come at, and training. Training, training, all the time. If it had not been for the training — anyway you know what Barry thinks about that — we never would have succeeded. Eventually I could strip and assemble a Peter the Painter, and I blindfolded. We were well up. We had plenty of ammunition and we trained at shooting all the time, shoot to kill.

I remember on one occasion everything we saw was to be fired on. We went to Inishannon, and there was a policeman, an RIC man, standing at the door of the barracks. Harris, a great runner, was with us. The policeman was facing south watching the road and the river. His left arm was towards us. It was only the breadth of the arm, a hard target at a couple of hundred yards. *Hold on boys*, I said. He might turn round and face for Bandon, or he might turn this way and face the chest towards us. Then I could have a go. Eventually he faced for Bandon. I shot him through the arm and I grazed his heart. He had his hand down by his side at the time but more to his back. So one night they were in the pub after, the RIC men I mean, and they were discussing this. One of them said, *oh, sure they are only a lot of young fellows those IRA*. And the wounded man was there. And he said, *what are you talking about? Sure my heart was grazed, and the bullet went right through my arm at that distance from the top of the rock. They must be very well trained. They very nearly got my heart*. That was one incident from the struggle in 1920 — there was hardly a shot fired in 1919 — we had been ordered out in squads this day to find targets in every part of the country, and we did.

*Fan go foill* now. I fired the first shot in West Cork at Newcestown. I have that there in the *capéis*, but I must tell you about it. What really happened, an ambush was planned after Canon Magner was shot dead, on the roadside by Auxiliaries from Macroom, on December 15th, 1920 near Dunmanway along with a young chap called Tim Crowley. We went along to Farranloubas adjacent to Dunmanway. That was the first time I met Jim Hurley. He was a tall strapping young fellow, a great hurler. We were waiting for a cycling corps of British and three lorries, and they failed to turn up. I don't know whether they knew we were there or what. So we headed for Newcestown in seven or eight side cars. How we got hold of them all I don't know. We would be younger than the average IRA man, some of whom went to the local pub for a few drinks. But we stayed put. We were at the ready. Eventually the racket started. Major Percival himself came along accompanied by his troops in two lorries. They were approaching slowly. Sean Hales, who was in charge of us, rushed out, with only two sections of men, and told us to get in position. *Hell's fire*, said he, that was a favourite expression of his. *Hell's fire, down on one knee*. We were on the road going towards Fr. Bernard's house. There was a Walsh there, an ex-British Army fellow. The next order was, take cover on the right hand side of the road. Well now, the right hand side was definitely the wrong side to take cover because you were underneath the road, but if you went on the other side you would be right up over them because the fence there was very high. It was a big embankment there. But anyway he had to be pleased. There were stacks of barley there. We lay there like bundles. Next minute Con



Lehane, who was a blacksmith in Bandon, asked Sean Hales, *will we fire on the lorry? Hell's fire, why wouldn't we fire on it.* A fellow by the name of Con Flynn of Ballinadee and I went down nearer to where the lorries were expected.

We got within seventy yards of them and we peeped out through the hedge. It was lower here than where we were inside above, and it was more suitable. What was passing in front of us but a common little cart, two men with their legs hanging down in front and they going along slowly and the bloody big lorry right after them. The first thing that struck me was that the pair of you are in a very precarious position at the moment. The lorry could not pass, and you would walk as fast as it. I got ready. When the lorry was right opposite the main bunch back the way, I flaked into the middle of it. That put the thing going. I got firing two shots before the second lorry was right up in front of us. So I emptied the rest of my gun into it. There was some of them wounded. You could not see them, it being pitch dark, but I could hear them tearing outside the fence as they tried to alight. What happened then, but that our own fellows started firing from behind stacks, they had retired to them — it was our first real fight — and I was caught between them. I ran for the first stack. Who was behind it only Sean Hales and he firing an odd shot out at the road. *Why do we not get out on the road and finish them,* said I, *Oh, fire away Tom,* said he, *take steady aim. We might walk into a trap if we went out on the road.* And I could not see the sight on the rifle, never mind take steady aim. So we continued to retreat towards the fence at the bottom of the field, each of them firing the odd shot. *Oh, here goes,* says I, *one fool makes many. I'll fire a shot too,* says I to Con Flynn, *Oh, in the name of God,* says Jackie Neill, *don't fire any more, you nearly knocked my head off.*

We were not doing it right of course, but we had killed and wounded a few of them, though we did not know it. There was a Captain Richardson, a great friend of Major Percival. His cap was found inside the hedge the next day, and half his brains inside it. There was not a wounded man amongst us, except Jackie Neill; he got a bullet through the sleeve of his coat. That was all. John Lordan was with us too; one of the best men in Ireland. He was lost after. Anyway we continued over towards a light we could see, and when we came fornenst it, it went out. *Oh,* says I, *the son of a gun is gone to bed.* I chanced my arm by knocking at the door. He came down quick again. *Oh come in lads,* he said; he seemed to be backing us up. I said there was a scrimmage up on the road and we ran into it. I didn't let on. *Oh,* he said, *the British are gone; the British are gone. By the way lads, will you have a cup of tea?* We were delighted with that so I got out the frying pan, and he gave us a great feed of spuds and bacon.

It was dangerous to hang around, but the devil take us. It was Sunday the next day and I said to Con Flynn, *we'll go to nine o'clock*

Mass, and we did; in the same place. Fr. Bernard was an old man and he gave a big long sermon and we listened attentively. We came out then. There was a crowd up at the cross so we avoided them. We went off and picked up our rifles again.

We went to where the ambush was and what was there only biscuits, biscuits, biscuits, scattered all over the road. An old man came along. *By the way lads this is a dangerous place to be. Repeat what you have said,* says I. *This is a dangerous place to be, they could come out from Bandon anytime. I should think it was a more dangerous place last night,* says I, and we all started laughing. *By the way,* says I, *we want to catch up with the attacking party. Have you any idea where they are? Come up here and I'll show you,* and he pointed north to Greenhill. That was where our lads were located.

Anyway to cut a long story short, Tom Barry arrived late in the night and he arranged that we would get into position in the morning, over the same ambush, in case they came back. We waited for them. They failed to turn up, so we struck for our place at Crowhill later in the day.

I remember well Mick O'Neill was digging potatoes with me, to make the dinner of course — poor Mick was shot after near Bandon by a Protestant man — and we had helpings of spuds, bacon and buttermilk. It was easier to keep going in those days with nearly every house *flaithiúlach agus ar son na saoirse*.

Tureen was after that, but I was not there. We had a training school at Ballymurphy. I slipped and injured my leg and was not able to go. But Tureen was a great fight. A lorry load of the Essex from Bandon was nearly wiped out, and what were not killed had to surrender.

#### CROSSBARRY

Crossbarry on the 19th March 1921, was a great fight. One second now. I want to mention one man, Commdt. Charlie Hurley shot dead a few hours before the fight, at Ballymurphy, only a few miles away, and yet his name is not on the monument. I was very disgruntled his name was not put on top of the monument. The column could have been wiped out only they heard them coming from the north, from Ballymurphy.

It all happened by accident. There was a convoy of 300 British military moving from Kinsale to Bandon. We were lying in wait for them at Shipool near Inishannon, but they got to hear of it and decided to round us up instead. We knew nothing about that. We moved off into the townland of Skough and then northwards to Crossbarry. We were particularly careful now because we were out of contact with the enemy. I was instructed to move my section ahead of the main column through the fields and at 1.00 a.m. on the 19th we arrived at Crossbarry.



We had no inkling that it was to be the morning of the biggest fight in the war. I'll start by giving you the names of all that led the action there. There was Tom Barry, the Brigade Commander, Liam Deasy, the Adjutant, Tadhg Sullivan, the Quartermaster, Dr. Con Lucey was Medical Officer. He was assisted by Eugene Callanan, then a student. There was seven sections, each of fourteen men inclusive, commanded by the following: Sean Hales, Ballinadee, a farmer, John Lordan, Newcestown, a farmer, one of the best men in Ireland, Mick Crowley, Kilbritten, an engineer, Denis Lordan, Ballinhassig, myself on no. 5, Peter Kearney, Dunmanway, and Christy O'Connell, Castletownbere. Florence Begley, who played *The Men of the West* on the pipes inside Harold's farmyard, completed the complement of 104 men.

Mick Crowley and I had no sleep. We were out looking for scouts, but a good job we were. We heard the lorries leaving Bandon at 2 a.m. They were coming and stopping, coming and stopping. Tom Barry was in bed, fully clothed and on the alert. I know he said he didn't go but that is where he was. I said, *you'd better get up and get up quickly. They are coming along very near. Great God they're not*, says he. *Is it the way you want to get into the bed yourself?* No, I said, *we have a fight first. They are coming along, coming and stopping.* He got ready quick and we made down the road. We were after coming from Brinny Cross, halfway between Crossbarry and Bandon. We were locating our scouts, all local men, strung out in all directions. That was our mission, Mick Crowley and I. The lorries were still advancing so we had to hop back lively. They were travelling slowly however, because they were raiding as well. We could hear them distinctly coming in to Kilpatrick. The night was very calm. A strange thing happened then. They arrested a man there by the name of White. He was a prisoner, I would say, in the second lorry. There were 24 lorries in the sweep. I had a scout counting them. You had nine, seven, five and three. Of the first convoy, the nine, only three got into the fight. A soldier in the fourth lorry spotted a man with a rifle at a window, and the rest stopped. Tom Barry used always criticise that man, but I clap him on the back because if the nine lorries got in, the occupants of the nine lorries would make a fight and we had only three sections there to face them. We had Sean Hales, John Lordan and Mick Crowley. Three times fourteen would be 42; begod 42 men could never fight nine lorries. That was my opinion; Barry was of a different opinion, but I had mine.

The man, White, who was captured in Kilpatrick, jumped out of the lorry as soon as it entered the ambush, got inside a gate, and there, a rifle was put into his hand rightaway. He stayed with us after. Con McCarthy, a butcher of Bandon, a great fighter was also with me. We were away covering the back. Con was very anxious to know how things were going, and he forced me hard to have a look. I knew it was



wrong to go down any road because I had the responsibility of my section. Anyway we rushed down very quickly and we asked Mick Crowley who was in charge of No. 3 Section.

We saw the driver of a lorry with his two hands on the wheel, and the poor man, a British fellow, was dead. I put up the rifle to fire at him because I thought he was alive.

We had however dealt with the column trying to encircle us from the west. There was still about 600 men in the lorries approaching from Cork, from the northeast. That is the group that came upon and killed Charlie Hurley a few hours before. There was a third facing us to the south along the Cork/Bandon railway line — not there now. They were all under the command of Major Percival who, as General Percival, surrendered Singapore to the Japanese without firing a shot in 1942. He divided his men at O'Brien's Cross, a mile to the north, and he lined the east and he lined the south, consequently making it half a square. Barry had said to me, *you will have the hardest fight this day*, and he was right.

We were attacked from the north. I was just after sending two scouts towards Driscoll's house which would be in line with O'Brien's Cross. They were just north of Driscoll's house, in a boreen, when they heard them coming on at the double. They ran back and they took refuge in a shed where they pretended to turn potatoes, the bloody rascals. They had a right to send word back to *mise*, but they did not. By some good luck at that moment I saw them myself. They were in a remarkable formation. They were in bunches together, twenty five yards apart, lovely targets for us. They opened up volley fire. The field we were in was ploughed, and Jim Beasley, who was a very *sleachtach* farmer, was after digging the furrow, so that it made cover for us. We slipped into it. Prior to that I had been at the northern end with my men behind me. Connie O'Leary was in the far half of the field facing east; he was in charge of the other half section. I fell back to my section, because if they took fright I would be without a command. Fire had been opened on us, as I say. Bob Hales was in front of me and this fellow who was shot in the ankle was just behind my back. In other words, and you can take it this way, they were running away from the firing. I got them over the fence and I said: *look here I have orders to shoot the first man that runs*. And then I said, *we have two men in the castle — t'was a heap of stones, no more — and we have got to help them*. The two, Den Mehigan and Con Lehane, had been placed there specially to attract the enemy around it. They were exposed before but we had cover now going back helping out the two in the castle because there was a fence on our right. When we got up across from the castle, we were in a grand position without the British knowing it. Our two men in the castle, once they had the enemy in line, opened up and shot two officers.

Grand job. They surrounded the castle, and to look at them, they were like bees in a hive. You could not miss them. I was reinforced then by Spud Murphy. I said to my squad: *Get ready now, I am going to dish out the orders. Section! Ready! Volley fire!* I repeated that order, and then I said rapid fire. *Spud, I said, I'm going flanking.* I wanted to get out in the direction of the cottage before Percival could complete his encirclement. We had a bit of a difference. *You are in charge,* said Spud, *and you should stay. You are quite right,* I said, *I am in charge. I agree with you. But when I am in charge you must do as you are told, and you will stay here.* He was no good for anything else being already wounded in one hand. *And you can't use a rifle with one hand.*

I took two men up over a fence to the right where there was a big long fence about 300 yards long. Jim Beasley had it all cut and drawn away, as I say a very *sleachtach* farmer. Up we went and I decided we would stay here. What did the British do? They came at the northern side of the fence. And if they came over the fence they could enfilade Spud and his men. Do you know what was beating them? They were going according to plan. That is my guess. Every movement was according to plan. If they had not gone according to plan but had moved over the fence we would have been destroyed. Anyway I had my two men. And I am sorry to say that they were not two good men. The man on the left I don't think he fired a shot. I had ten in my magazine and one up the breech, that was eleven. I fired eleven and eleven fell. I reloaded with five and five fell. I reloaded again and five more fell. That was twenty one. That is gospel truth. Of course some had thrown themselves down, and some were only wounded. I looked left for my own man on the left. He was gone, and I have not seen him since, and that is 59 years ago.

The man on my right had his rifle pointed away at the horizon, and he pulling away, wasting ammunition. I stood back and I gave him a toe up the tail. *Can't you fire?* I said, and he did. That fellow did very good after. The next thing I got a tap on my left shoulder. *Who is it,* I thought; *Is it a British officer about to kill me?* I wheeled around and who was there but Barry. *I thought you were wiped out,* said he, *I am not wiped out. When are we going for their guns?*

They were all lying down there. Now you could not prove they were dead. Maybe they were not. But they were not able to get up. If they were able to get up they'd have got up, and hopped it. They were laid out there the twenty one of them. *No, no,* said Tom. *We are not going for their guns. We have more guns than we can carry including a machine gun. Splendid,* says I; I was mad for guns. *Let us take the lot.* *No,* he said, *we haven't time.* And I didn't realise time at all, but he did. He had a weather eye cocked for the inevitable reaction from the British.



That was a great thing about Tom Barry. He was more experienced than we were. He knew the time to pull out. We'd fight away like billes, but that wouldn't win the fight in the finish. *Where is your section*, says he. *I'll get them*, but he wouldn't let me move an inch. He sent a man on my left down a field and a half to get them. And the 21 dead men were lying there all the time. And we left them there too, rifles and all.

It was a wonderful treat to see our two men emerge from the castle after being surrounded for an hour by hundreds of British. We moved on to my place in Crowhill, and we had a running cup of tea there. We had a bit of an incident at a place called Wilson's, on the side of the main road. We were carrying Dan Corcoran on a door. He was shot across the posterior and out the other side. A passerby asked him how he was. Now this is something that maybe you wouldn't want to print. *I have three now instead of one*, says he, *in my backside*.

The pluckiest man I remember in that fight was Dick Spencer of Castletownbere. It happened where the cross is now. Corcoran lay wounded. Dick Spencer came along and Jim Lordan with him. Jim said to Spencer we must leave him there, the British are only fifty yards away. But Dick threw him up on his shoulder and carried him the 400 yards up to the cottage. We were all relieved. It was late in the day and we had not expected to see him again. Spencer was a lovely violinist; not at all what you would expect. He could bring tears to your eyes.

#### WITHDRAWAL

*In a more detailed account on another occasion Tom told me of the hazards of withdrawal in a countryside heavily occupied by the enemy.*

*Where is your section*, said Barry. I told him that *it was a field and a half away and that it was still firing at the castle*. There was by now only intermittent firing from the area of the castle, and one of the men was sent down to bring up my section. The column commander next asked me where Raheen was. I pointed it out to him and after some thought he agreed with me. It is interesting to note that an hour and a half later, an auxiliary officer entered Cronin's public house at Upton and producing a map, asked Mrs. Cronin to tell him where Raheen was. Both men, working completely independently of one another were looking for the same thing, the highest point in the area, Raheen, 609 feet above sea level. The British were homing in upon us.

The column commander and myself moved closer to the cottage and here the column re-grouped. We were on the Skeheenahaine road on the western side of the square in which we had been almost encircled. The northeast, east, and south were still occupied by the enemy. The



fact that these forces had been beaten certainly does not mean that they had been annihilated. It is my opinion that we could not have withdrawn northeast, or south without suffering heavy casualties.

While we were at the cottage, Dick Spencer arrived, bringing the wounded Dan Corcoran on his back. Soon after, Spud came with my section and the reinforcements, and he was followed by the two men in the castle. With a few other members of the main column, and carrying the wounded Dan Corcoran, led by Barry, we set off through Ballyhandle and Russell Hill and into Crowhill, my home. John Lordan and myself acted as a flanking party.

Meanwhile Liam Deasy took command of the main party and Spud took charge of my section. While the main body went on straight for Crosspound and Raheen, we went along a narrow *bóithrín* which offered very good cover and which led to Russell Hill. This *bóithrín* led to the main road from Bandon to Crosspound. We had no sooner crossed it when we heard the sound of approaching lorries. Taking cover we saw three lorries of Auxiliaries heading for Crosspound and Raheen.

Having attended to Dan Corcoran, we continued to my home at Crowhill, where we linked up with the main body. Here we had a 'running' cup of tea. My people and our neighbours, the Drews, had suspected that we might call; accordingly, they had baked plenty of bread and made preparations against a visit. Here, Tom Barry took charge again, and Sean Hales's section formed the advance guard. Being a local, with an intimate knowledge of the area, I got the job of directing the advance guard and column.

Incidentally, it is interesting to note that the column commander ensured that the rearguard would not get lost by placing Jim Doyle, of Kilmore, who knew the locality very well, with the rearguard. This is a good example of the way in which the column commander used the local knowledge of the column members to maximum advantage.

Tom had thought of going straight north at the foot of Raheen. I vetoed this as the country north of Raheen was wide open. *How will we go then*, he said. *A few hundred yards beyond my house, there is a tunnel which will bring us into the next townland.* He looked a trifle sceptical. A little further on I showed it to him. It was actually a narrow *bóithrín*, just the width of a horse and butt, both the ditches were 6ft. high with the tops of the fences surmounted by thick furze bushes. The narrowness of the *bóithrín*, the height of the fences and surmounting furze bushes, which tended to grow outwards and intertwine, gave us a perfectly camouflaged road. This route brought us in view of Rearour almost a mile away.

Three members of the rearguard, Pete Kearney, Mick Crowley, and Jim Doyle, had to race at the Crowhill side for the *bóithrín*, in order to

forestall an attempt by Crown Forces to follow us up the *bóithrín*. The main body of the column had just left our house, which was about four and a half miles from Crossbarry, when the rearguard came to grips with a group of Auxiliaries. About four Auxiliaries were wounded. My people saw the casualties being removed. It showed them that we still had plenty of sting. These casualties slowed down the pursuit, the Auxiliaries followed us at what could be called a prudent distance, through Jack Murphy's *bóithrín* and through the townland of Crowhill on up to the bridge at Rearour.

The *bóithrín* was ideal for our purpose, straight stretches of maybe a hundred yards alternated with successions of sharp bends. We followed the *bóithrín* into O'Connor's farmyard, past Murphy's house. From here to the bridge at the foot of Rearour a passageway, with a fence on the right and an open field on the left, led on. I was now with the advance guard. Glancing to the left I saw three lorries at Tough Bridge. We took cover immediately, and watched them until the main body arrived. When the column commander arrived he told us to *go ahead. We will deal with these fellows*. We headed on for the bridge at the foot of Rearour, followed by the column. The lorries headed on for Ballinacurra on the way to Bandon. To this day, I do not know if the men in the lorries saw us; they may have and decided that we should be ignored. Meanwhile, we in the advance guard, halted under cover just short of this bridge, which, about thirty yards long, bridged a valley and a small river. The sides of the bridge were composed of open pipes and solid blocks of masonry, alternating with each other. I remember saying to Sean Hales that the bridge, being exposed, could be dangerous. Sean crossed first, and about half the advance guard had followed him in extended order, when the enemy, who had followed us through Jack Murphy's *bóithrín*, opened heavy but erratic fire on the bridge.

The rest of them crossed one by one. I followed by throwing myself beside each block of masonry in turn. As I threw myself into cover on the far side, Sean rushed back down the road. *Are you badly wounded Tom?* he said. He was surprised to see that I was unhurt, as, from the amount of dust the enemy bullets were knocking off the bridge, he thought I had no chance of escaping uninjured. After crossing, I looked back to see if the main body was in sight; it was not, but two goats which had been in the centre of the bridge when we came on the scene, were lying at one end of the bridge, dead, on their backs, each set of four feet propped against the other. In a day of odd sights, it struck me at the time as being one of the oddest things I had ever seen.

I suggested that Sean should go up the road with his section. If the enemy appeared, he could fire one single shot and take cover in the glen on his left. I would bring the main body up that way. Sean took the



advance guard up north through Rearour under cover. Almost immediately, the main body appeared in column of route, Barry at its head. I had, of course, moved away from the bridge, and the enemy, who had it under fire, could not see me or the column. I halted them, having told Barry that the bridge was covered, said, *look at the goats*. I told him what happened and suggested that he ford the river on his left and go up the glen. The glen, which was lower than the bridge, had plenty of cover. I remember saying, *when you get to Kelleher's farmyard, there is an avenue that joins the road on farther up — we can meet there*.

We rejoined and carried on straight over Rearour, which is a townland with a sharp hill going towards the north and a fall to the far side facing towards the north. At the bottom of this hill and at the end of the townland, there is a crossroads called Athar na mBroig Cross. Here a council of war was held. From here one road leads to Templemartin on our left, the road we were on was heading towards Cloughduv and Crookstown. A few yards further on a road led for Aherla and Kilcrea.

The column commander was keen to get on the high ground south of Crookstown. He was inclined to travel along the road to Templemartin. When asked for my opinion, I was sceptical about this suggestion. *Your reasons*, he said. I explained that a mile and a half further on lay the main Macroom-Bandon road. I felt that the enemy would be along this road, and that they might travel the same road as us. I suggested that by taking the Cloughduv road, another 300 yards further on, would give us a great chance of safety. At the end of this 300 yards, there was a narrow road leading up to the right for Kilbonane, on one side of which lay the Cork-Kilcrea-Farnanes valley. I may add that Kilbonane is fairly high.

We had just turned up the road for Kilbonane when I discovered that one of the wounded men had been taken to a farmhouse which was on the road we had decided to shun. He had just been brought back to the column when I saw two lorries of Auxiliaries trailed at a distance by a third moving on the Templemartin road towards Athar na mBroig Cross, recently occupied by us. We kept moving, and I was told later by local people, that the third lorry was followed by another four, and that the seven eventually halted close to Tough Bridge, a little north of Ballinacurra. These Auxiliaries were the toughest fighters Britain had in Ireland. They were all ex-officers; many of whom reached commission rank during active service in the First World War. They were a highly trained, intelligent and skilful force. At a time when a British private soldier was paid less than two shillings per day, Auxiliaries were being paid one pound per day, which by 1921 standards, was an incredibly high wage.



We reached Kilbonane at about 5 p.m. We went up almost to the cemetery and mounted the short hill which entered the Aherla-Crookstown road. This was the only road in Kilbonane. While we went to the farmhouse on top of Kilbonane, arrangements were made to get provisions from Aherla to supplement what the people had, and we had another 'running' meal here. We waited for an hour or two for our great ally darkness, to come to our aid. Then, with full military precautions we headed for Foley's Cross, on the Ballinacurra-Crookstown road.

On the left of the cross there was a pub called Sheehy's. We approached the cross warily. On the column commander's orders, men from the Quarry Cross Company, who knew the area, were sent ahead to scout. Maurice Donovan, the local company captain, reported that English accents could be heard coming from Sheehy's pub and from the roadway on our left. The column commander and myself moved closer and we could hear the English accents clearly. Maintaining strict silence, the entire column slipped through.

Heading on for O'Sullivan's, Gurraneigh, in the parish of Kilmichael, we felt that we had slipped through the enemy lines. At O'Sullivan's we got a marvelous reception, and a strong party from Cork No. 1 Brigade was there to meet us. This party provided a curtain of sentries which guaranteed us safety while we were in adjacent houses.

#### SIEGE OF ROSSCARBERY

Nine days after that we laid siege to Rosscarbery Barracks. It was the last strong point remaining in that part of West Cork. It was a strong isolated building and the fight went on for half the night. We had prepared a mine beforehand. It was about 400lbs in weight and four of us had to carry it, through the gate of the barracks, past barbed wire and up a short avenue and leave it against the door without being discovered or seen by those within. The careful placing of the mine with its spluttering flame on a 'slow fuse' was the key to a successful barracks attack.

A mile from the town we took off our boots and approached it in the darkness in our stocking feet. Three sections of the column were involved. Barry always asked for volunteers to lift the mine. On this occasion he gave a short lively speech and said: *I am not asking for volunteers. I don't know but I have come to the conclusion that it not fair to an individual that he should say to himself, yerra, I'll get killed, but I'll volunteer and I'll do it. That is hardly fair. Instead, said Barry, I'll name them. I think fellows would be more pleased when their names are called out rather than to volunteer.*

The first name he called out was Vice Commdt. Timothy O'Donoghue. He was a fellow about 6ft. 2ins. Apart from his guts he was not suitable because he was too tall. The next he called was Lieut. Kelleher; Pete Kearney from Dunmanway, was number three, and Christy O'Connell from Castletownbere, number four. *Let you get it on your shoulders and be practising*, said Barry, *while I detail their jobs to the others*. When he came back it was *mise* he addressed. *How are you going on Tom. We are not going at all*, said I. *Dismiss the tall fellow, and get some other man of our height. I'll chance it myself*, he said. *I don't think you'll do*. He jumped and leaped at me. *Do you mean to convey that I haven't the guts to do it? No, no*, said I, *but I have the impression that you never did much manual work. I would not have a hope*, said I, *of taking it on my right shoulder. Any load I ever took I always took on my left shoulder. I'll manage it fine with one other man of my own height. The big fella was on the far side of it a while ago and he was driving the edge of it down into me*.

Yerra, it was about 400lbs. It was terrible heavy. I'll tell you the substance of it now. You had 100lbs of gun cotton — 60lbs of gun cotton and 40lbs of tonite packed with sand. Now sand is very heavy. The timber in the box was wet heavy timber — it had to be — and the edges would cut the shoulder of you. *I'll chance it anyway*, says I. A very good one now; it was perched on a platform for holding milk. Barry insisted on trying it. They slipped it on to him. He gave one step. *In the name of God take it off*, he cried. *I'll do anything, but I am not carrying that*. So then we fixed on Jack Corkery from Bandon. He was about my height. The fuses were lit. As far as I can remember they were timed for seven minutes. They were lit outside and we walked in. It was very difficult for us to edge in with it because there was very little room between the barbed wire. If the wire got stuck in your clothes you would be in trouble. Anyway we succeeded. Tom Barry was right after us. We put it gently up against the door because we were told it was a sensitive mine. If we left it down quickly it might explode. Tom got a little flag underneath it to tilt it up against the door. I put my right hand against the frame of the door, and whatever look I gave upwards, I saw the dark porthole of the barracks coming out over our heads. Someone could be there looking down at us, I thought. Tom Barry had said, *please do not attempt to rush out together. Come out one after another*. I was last to leave. Jack had stayed, then he hopped it. I followed, but as I turned out of the gate a small gun fell out of my pocket. I pawed around in the dark looking for the gun. Yerra, said I, *my life is more important than the cursed old gun*. Of course I still had my rifle in my right hand.

We rushed up to where Barry stood. *What kept you so long*, said he. *You told us to come out in single file. Oh, I never meant you to stay that*



*long.* We were waiting, waiting, waiting. Seven minutes is a good bit you know. All of a sudden my rifle fell from me and my two hands touched the ground with the shock of the explosion. Listen to me; it shifted windows and everything, and they stood in mid-air for seconds before collapsing to the ground. I never saw anything like it in my life. The people across the street could not come down, staircases had been ripped out by the explosion.

We headed down to break in. But you could not see a way with the dust and falling rubble. At first the police offered surrender, but then, one fellow said, *we'll fight it to a finish.* Look out, I cried, *they are going to fight.* The next second a bomb was tossed from a window. It fell near us. Now when a bomb hits the ground like that it will hop up in a way you cannot predict. It will not roll off. We had to withdraw while they threw out more bombs.

We had our paraffin and petrol bombs ready however. We quickly collected these and commenced firing them in. *You get back to the back,* said Tom. Bob Hales was there beside an open gap. I wondered was he attentive enough should they try an escape. I sent Bob to face the blank space of a window. *Have a go,* I said, *at any fellow who tries jumping out.* None came out by the open gap, now covered by me, but three escaped from the window. They sneaked away behind a toilet which we burned down in the finish.

While I was around the back, I missed the fun at the front. The petrol cans thrown in had not taken fire. Barry caught hold of a sack, folded it, stuck a bayonet through it. Then setting it alight he pitched it in. There was a roar of flames, and for minutes we could see the devastating effect of heavy blast charges. The entire building was now a seething mass of flame. Three policemen had perished in the original explosion, though some, as I have said, escaped. We lost no men, nor had any been wounded. We waited no longer than was necessary, then we moved off. We picked up our boots where we had left them. It was still March and there was plenty of snow about. But we warmed up rapidly and sang marching songs as we moved away.

A few days after this the column moved over to Glendaw, west of Dunmanway, where they prepared a big ambush, but the British failed to turn up. That was a lovely position, said Tom, as he thought back to when the time the whole column had lain in wait overlooking the road, for a large force of the enemy. I think they found out we were waiting for them there.(1)

On 10th July we were attacking Inishannon Barracks. We had attacked it a number of times, but none of these lasted long enough to take it, because of the proximity of the big military establishment at Bandon. (In the last year Tom was talking to an Irishman returned from Australia. It was Jack Ryan, from Ballinspittle. He had been a



company captain in the attack on Inishannon. *The last place we met Tom, said he, was at Inishannon. I'll tell you the date and all,* cried Tom. *It was the 10th July, the date before our ill fated Truce with the English.* We were firing across at the old barracks. But you would need a very strong force because both roads leading to it would need to be blocked and guarded. (2)

We could not believe the news of a truce at first. No, we did not think the fight was won. Far from it. Later when the Treaty came and we inquired about the North we were not too pleased. We still hoped however, that the North would come in and that it would be one government for the whole lot.

#### BREAK THE CONNECTION

We were not too pleased when they had a part of our country in subjection. A bad job; we could see it would be another fight. Barry and the other leaders felt that the Free State element in Dublin should be disarmed, but they failed to move decisively until it was too late. I'll be very honest; our personnel were not up to the mark at all. In Limerick we had plenty of good fighters. The Staters were not numerous. Yet attacks were not pressed when they could have been. At Bruff we were throwing rifle grenades on top of the barracks. We now had it on target. They would have surrendered in a short time. At that moment a messenger came with a note, you are urgently required, it said. We called off our attack. I thought something big was on. What was it. We were being disbanded into small and ineffective groups. I could not see the sense of it. It is my *personal* opinion that Liam Lynch and Liam Deasy were simply not up to it, but neither was our headquarters' staff in Dublin. We were allowed to fragment in the countryside when we should have throttled the Staters in the early months of 1922.

Limerick City itself was occupied on the 23rd February by Free State troops while the local brigade of the IRA, the West Cork column under Barry, units of Kerry and East Limerick columns were also in occupation. For three weeks there was tense confrontation, but then on the 10th March the Republicans agreed to move out leaving only a token force there. Tom, with part of the column, twenty miles south, around Bruff, felt this keenly. Limerick was a key place to have lost.

On April 9th the adjourned Army Convention which Richard Mulcahy had attempted to prevent being held in March, was held. Nearly half of the delegates sought strong and forceful action against the Treatyite government. They were diverted by propositions from Cathal Brugha. These withdrew the IRA's allegiance from the government. It is not necessarily a good thing to have an army

separated from a government. It makes the army into a para military thing. Anyway they elected an unwieldy executive,<sup>(3)</sup> and took no action to snuff out the Staters. They went on talking to Richard Mulcahy and Collins, both of whom were conniving with the English and receiving big stores of armaments, to make this country into a colony again.

Then on June 18th, only ten days before the attack on the Four Courts, there was a Convention of the IRA held at the Mansion House, Dublin. The new constitution of the Free State had been published and elections held only two days before. The new constitution placed the British King and Government firmly in charge of Ireland. Many at the convention, including Tom Barry, wanted all further talks with the Free State broken off. They proposed that the IRA should attack the remaining British Army installations and move against the North. It was not the time nor the place to discuss such plans, I said to Tom. Nor did I think they would have worked. His head nodded in agreement. Before speaking of his own involvement in the Civil War, Tom hearkened back to his Bruff period of February/March when, with sections of the West Cork column, he was given the impossible task — from a manpower point of view — of preventing the seizure of that part of the country.

First of all, he says, I was told by Deasy or Lynch to attack Bruff. The first thing I did was to *find out something about it*. His recollection on this — and he has never been back there — is remarkable. We went in, he continued, and we met some of the local Republicans. They sent out a big column every night, he heard, and they return each morning at daybreak. Well at that rate we can take it without firing a shot. I had three deserters, complete with uniforms, and they were prepared to fight with us. I was like a deserter too, because I had a Free State uniform but no allegiance.

In Bruff the barracks was facing one way towards the bridge, and under that bridge was any amount of deep water. The four in uniform and twentytwo men of the column, led by a scout, advanced into Bruff. A sentry outside the barracks had the presence of mind to rush inside and slam the door. I could have shot him in the back without any difficulty, but I did not. His friends are inside and if I shoot this fellow in the back they will fire out and we stand a bad chance. There was a porthole on the left. I stuck in my Thompson and sprayed the yard with bullets. When I looked around there was no one beside me only a young fellow of about seventeen. *Come here*, I whispered; *we will get away by passing underneath the windows*.

Meanwhile the column had moved up to the right. There was one fellow there, Donoghue from West Cork, who had been in the British Army and who knew all about rifle grenades. He had a rifle, its cup and



a grenade on top of it. He had two or three bags of bombs. *We'll take this in a short time.* I moved up beside him. *You are too near,* says he. *Why, why,* says I. *Ah, some of the cartridges are not reliable; and when they are not reliable they can splinter in all directions.* We got the range, and the grenades were already exploding inside the building when the word came. I told you already a while back, you are wanted urgently in another place. So the attack was stopped and we moved away. It was typical of the stop-go tactics of the Republican Army on the run-up to the Civil War. But there was no stop-go on the Free State side, they were all go, man.

#### SURRENDER

Tom was captured in West Cork in September by General Tom Ennis, at a place called Tuagh. But, *fan go fóill*, I must tell you of a small incident which was the cause of saving my life. We captured the Adjutant General of the Free State Army named Liam Hayes in Caherconlish. He was inside a big house and Pete Kearney, Flyer Nyhan and *mise* rushed the back door. I was in first and shouted: *surrender, we occupy the ground floor.* We marched them out and while I was lining them up, a fellow came along, saluted and said, I am an officer, too, sir. If he had kept his mouth shut I would have released him. We shifted them into Tipperary town. As soon as we arrived there, I spoke to Hayes: *I suppose,* I said, *you could do with some refreshments.* He gave me a suspicious look. I said, laughing, *refreshments in the nature of strong liquors.* God, says he, *that would be wonderful.* *Name any number of bottles you want,* says I, *and I will get them.* *I am not buying them for you but I'll oblige by getting them.* They gave me a £10 note which I gave to a Volunteer and then turning to them I said, *what brands do you want?* They thought that very good. I'll never forget it if I live to be as old as Methuselah, and he lived 969 years. They had a bottle of Dew, two bottles of Powers and three of Export. *Tell the publican,* I said to the Volunteer, *to write the price against each.* So he did, and there was change of the £10 note. Hayes said to me, *hang on to the change.* *Oh, I don't want your money; all I want is yourself and your gun, and I have that.*

But to return to that late August day in Tuagh. We were fighting four hours withstanding them and eventually Tom Ennis turned up with reinforcements. And it was he who captured us. There were three of us there. Our ammunition was nearly gone. Stephen O'Neill was in the kitchen and I was on one knee in a door going down to a small room. The road was up higher than the house. I was wearing a hat and two bullets passed through the brim of it. That was tight wasn't it? I had to lie flat on the ground with my legs underneath a bed. Someone outside fired in a bomb which landed in the bed. Dan Holland was



under the window. The bomb exploded. Jesus, there was wires and feathers flying all over the place. I went over with a short gun which I gave to Dan. *Put your hand out of the window and fire down at the ground, you might get him.* He did a couple of times and wounded the attacker crouched there. *Barricade the window now,* says I, and we did, with a mattress, and there were no more bombs coming in the window.

We had to surrender in the finish. Ennis took us to Bandon, to a hotel across from a pub. We went upstairs, where we had plenty of everything treated very well. The morning came and Tom Ennis said to me: *You'll be going back to Union Quay<sup>(4)</sup> soon, but we'll have a drink on the way in. Where will we stop, between Bandon and Cork city? Oh,* said I, *the Half Way.* *They don't like you there,* said he. The reason was that one night we were above it on the railway. There were Free State soldiers in the pub. I said, *I'll wake up these fellows, I'll fire a few shots into them.* One shot hit a bottle of Paddy. It put whiskey and glass flying. It was a good reason for not liking me.

*We'll stop there anyway,* said he. Just before reaching Inishannon village he pulled up his convoy. He had a couple of lorries and put out his hand. *Shake, I'm Tom and you're Tom, and the best markmanship I ever heard of was right across from here over to the bye-road, We had a lorry a few weeks back, and it was travelling about 45 miles an hour. It was a normal lorry. Some fellow fired from the bye-road with a Thompson, killing one and wounding six more. It was the best markmanship I ever experienced with a gun. I don't know what you are talking about,* said I. But he was dead right, it was myself alright.

I spent time after that in Cork Jail and then in Tintown No. 2. There were great footballers there. Our team won the 2nd Senior League of the camp. Matty Murphy, Jim Hurley, Flood of Fermoy and more were in that team. It was a great team entirely.

I came out in December 1923. I remember I was at Booley Hill, north of Upton, when Moss Twomey, Mick Price, Dave Fitzgerald and a few more came around reorganising. *By God,* says I, *we'll not stop now. We will go on until the country is free, and we will get in the Six Counties eventually.* I always said, *break the connection,* and when England goes it will resolve itself out after. I am under the impression that if England leaves, the people there who oppose us now, will make no fight. I satisfied myself on that during the days I spent at Máire Drumm's funeral four years ago. They all told me that. There is a great fighting spirit there.

I thought it bad when De Valera broke off in 1926. I thought Fianna Fail would turn out better than what they did. I could never see myself in a tie-up with a political party as long as Partition lasted.

Of the IRA leadership of that period, I always enjoyed Peadar

O'Donnell. He took me half way on the road between Dublin and Belfast, talking all night. I met all the Gilmores, George, Harry and Charlie, real good fellows. I thought Ryan a good soldier; what a pity he went off to Spain. I was very fond of Jim Killeen, and MacBride; we were great friends.

(Tom was not a supporter of Sean Russell's English campaign in 1939.) I would not promote that, says he; still on the other hand it is no harm to get the English crowd into difficulties now and again.

#### REFERENCES

- 1 See Appendix, p. 415: The Fight at Upton Station.
- 2 See Appendix, p. 421.
- 3 The members of the IRA's governing Executive: Liam Lynch, Liam Mellows, Rory O'Connor, Joseph McKelvey, Ernie O'Malley, Sean Moylan, Frank Barrett, Michael Kilroy, Liam Deasy, Peadar O'Donnell, P. J. Rutledge, Seamus Robinson, Joseph O'Connor, Tom Barry, Pax Whelan and Tom Derrig.
- 4 Union Quay Barracks, Cork city.

#### KEY:

*mise* = myself

*flaitiúlach agus ar san na saoirse* = generous hearted and on the side of independence

*sleachtiach* = tidy

*bóithrin* = a laneway

*fan go fóill* = wait a while

## Connie Neenan

*of Cork*



A greater friendship cannot be  
Than that my friend bestows on me —  
Friendship so wide I cannot measure  
Kindness so vast — there is no treasure  
Can equal his or weigh it down,  
'Tis greater than a kingdom's crown,  
So lavishly on me bestowed  
While halting on the upward road.

My aims appear a fantasy,  
To all except my friend and me,  
I plead to the Omnipotent  
That ere my empty life be spent —  
That ere my last close-written page  
Be filled, and cruel deadly age  
Weigh hard on me and snap my breath  
And pass me to the victor, Death,  
I yet may help and comfort lend  
To my long-tested, well-loved friend.

*Joseph McGarrity to Connie Neenan*

*Am I on safe ground talking to you at all? The big man towered over me, looking down. I am asking you, because I would not talk otherwise? I am?* Behind his back the walls were lined with books. The titles I could see clearly. Books of Irish and international interest. Sometimes two or three copies together. An omnivorous reader, or one at the very least who kept in touch. That was it, he keeps in touch. The local hurling club, callers, a Christian Brother — off to Rome. Hastily looking in the door. Goodbye. The house is called Fatima,



and there was a large car on the drive. About us signs of comfort, nay, affluence. Well done, I thought. Another citizen of the Republic who had swam successfully against the tide.

I once heard that my father spent six months in Cork Jail for national activities, but proof of that I cannot give: they were national anyhow, and they were pro labour. In the Dublin strike of 1913, I remember I was earning two shillings a week at the time. It was a fabulous amount; even the banks were after me. I subscribed sixpence a week of that to the strike relief fund. I recall now, speaking at a dinner here four years ago, where I related how Canon Sheehan prophesied 1916 in his *Graves of Kilmorna*, and the 1913 strike in his *Miriam Lucas*.

We had a good national background. My mother was wonderful. She was outstanding. My mother was so good that in the Tan War — we had an aunt living in Blackpool on the other side of Cork city; her husband had died, so it was a safe place for putting things. My mother would take a rifle under her shawl and cross the whole city, which was quite a job. She was a tall woman, not as tall as I am, but very near it. She was outstanding; a fighting type.

When 1916 came it had a great impact. It hit us; of course we were sympathetic before that. But to quote the late Seamus Murphy quoting Yeats: "A Terrible Beauty was born".

We had no sympathy with John Bull in the run-up to the Rising. There was harassment here of Volunteers by the R.I.C. They were the agents of Britain here and some of them were quite nasty.

We were strong in Cork when the conscription threat came in April 1918. We were one of the best organised. We did not welcome any influx of conscription heroes. We knew they would not last. They would drop out. We had foreseen that. We had fine leaders, MacCurtain, (1) Terry MacSwiney, Sean O'Hegarty, and many more. They were in Cork One. In the west you had Barry's outfit, and in North Cork Liam Lynch and Mick Fitzgerald who died on hunger-strike. I was on that hunger-strike with Mick. Terry too was on the same strike. I will tell you how that happened. There was a meeting of the Brigade Staff in the City Hall. We got a tip-off about a raid but too late. The messenger did not arrive in time. They were all arrested. I was not there. I was in Cork Jail. The man in charge of us there was Maurice Crowe from Tipperary; he had already been on a number of hunger-strikes. Tom Shea was a warder there, another called Fitzpatrick. They were absolutely outstanding. They were better to us than any I.R.A. man. Tom Shea came to me this morning with the bad news. Terry, Liam Lynch, "Sandow" Donovan, (2) Michael Leahy, Joe O'Connor and some more had been brought in. I said to Tom;

*Wait a while. I'll get out of bed and I'll walk in the exercise yard. I knew they would watch me from the tower. Tell Terry to come over and shake hands with me; the others to ignore me. I knew they had given false names. That will confuse the authorities. It worked. Unfortunately, Terry was moved however, and moved in forty-eight hours. Now on the whole question of a strike I was dead set against it. So were four other people. My argument was simple. You are trying to get out under subterfuge but they won't fall for that. They will let you die. And three of them did eventually die.*

But to return to Terry. He was moved. The next thing I knew, Maurice Crowe, our O.C. came to see me. *We have been ordered to stop the strike, said he, or we will be deported tonight. Who said that? Two British Army officers. Where are they, said I. Outside the door. Send them in. What is this, said I to them. We have instructions from our commanding officer, said one, to arrange for your deportation if you do not cease this strike. I presume, said I, your commanding officer is General Strickland. They did not answer. Right, said I, tell your commanding officer he is not my commanding officer. To hell with him. It is not the first time you have deported Irishmen, and it may not be the last.*

That was about 4.30 in the afternoon. About 7.30 I could hear cell doors banging and a great deal of movement. I wondered what it was. Next morning Tom Shea, the warder, came to me. *That worked grand. They released "Sandow", Michael, and a whole flock last night. There was a lot of young fellows from Duagh in North Kerry. They were on hunger strike and were liable to deportation too. I said to Maurice: if these lads are threatened send for the doctor. He was Dr. Harney. Simply say to him, I will hold you responsible for their deaths. That is a responsibility he will never take.*

The following night I was taken out with Maurice Crowe and a fellow named Crocker from Ballylanders. The chief warder arrived, a very decent fellow. He offered me brandy. I said *no, I am on strike*. We were moved immediately on stretchers to hospital and put under observation for twenty four hours. The following night, again on stretchers, twenty eight of us were moved aboard the steam packet and deported. I can still remember the next morning walking up the hill from Winchester station, under close guard, to the prison. I was barely able to move. I felt completely beaten. We had been ten days on hunger strike at this time. Along came the English doctor stepping it out nicely; *I hope you had a pleasant trip*, said he, in jolly tones. I surveyed him sourly; *if I ever get away from here, I whispered, I shall kill you, you inhuman animal*. He moved quickly away from me. I was angry, but I was too fatigued for it to make any difference. I felt beaten to the ropes. We lingered that way for weeks. Then an Irish attorney



from London, by name, McDonald, was sent to us with a message from Collins. *Come off*, it simply said. *You have done fine, but there will be no more hunger strikes*. I don't know if he had heard of my earlier opposition to this one. I did not know for weeks after that, that Terry was dead. They kept it from us.

#### WORMWOOD SCRUBS

We were brought back to Cork and tried on various charges, and again deported. This time we were sent to Wormwood Scrubs. Later I was sent to Birmingham. We were all separated. Ten of us had been together, but four were transferred into the convicts. They were very strict with us, being careful to keep us apart. I remember one morning walking in silence around the circle when a warder pulled me out. *What is this for*, said I. *You are walking in front of a Paddy*, said he. I looked carefully at this chap. I did not know him, but I went after him the first chance I got. *Drop your hands behind your back*, I said, in undertones, *and answer my questions. Have a look at me first. Drop your hand if you don't understand, lift them if you do. Are you a Republican person? Where do you come from? I am from Cork*, and I gave my name. His name was Hugh Keaveney and he had a companion called Lagan. They were there for two months and we did not know it.

I had been a tailor by trade. I wore scapulars. I had messages sewn inside them, and though they used to strip us they would never examine these. When your back is against the wall you can think, you think of all sorts of subterfuges. I remember in Scrubs there was a great lad, Eamonn Burke from Mitchelstown. We were all lined up this day by the staff. They were quizzing us for our right names. There was a chap from Limerick, Frank Glasgow. Afterwards he was Mayor of Limerick. He gave his name in Irish. *Just a moment*, said the warder, *say that again*. Glasgow repeated it. I added to the confusion by throwing my voice, like a ventriloquist. *Just a moment*, said the Governor, addressing me. *Are you trying to intimidate him. There is no one trying to intimidate anyone here*, I said, *except you. If you don't know his name why is he in here?* Our fellows laughed. At that moment it was the very thing we needed, something psychological. While I was there I was co-opted on to a vacancy on the Corporation. I had always opposed volunteers serving as politicians, but this was different; I was in jail and I could not oppose it.

#### LONDON

I was due for release in February, 1921. The morning I was due to go I saw two individuals near the gate, on the inside. I asked a warder:



*who are they? They are two 'tees*, said he. I moved out. I could see I was being followed. I stayed well back from the tram stop. When the bell rang I made a rush for it and got away from them. I arrived at the Queen's Hotel where a completely new rig-out awaited me. I put the old clothes in a bag and passed out again. No one could have recognised me. I went to London that night and I was in touch with Sam Maguire, O.C. Britain, the next day. Frank Thornton, from G.H.Q. was there with him. I was given some work to do, and remained there for three weeks, keeping a low profile, of course. Collins must have had a marvellous organisation for he knew when each of us was due for release, and he always had a job waiting for us. The only trouble on release was the ridiculous travel voucher. It practically ensured that you would be arrested before getting to your destination. *Buy them a ticket*, I told them in H.Q. Subsequently, that is what they did.

#### CORK 1920-21

Sam Maguire was one of the most resourceful men I have ever met. He had a marvellous intelligence group. He got me up to Liverpool with Tadg Sullivan, a Kerry chap originally, but attached now to the Cork Brigade. We were in Liverpool for about five days, keeping well out of sight. We came back then as two stowaways in a coal boat. Tadg was so sick I thought he would die. We were two days at sea. I was alright but the smell of the coal and the oil, and the rocking about of the old tramp in the February gales was too much for him. Poor chap, he was killed five weeks later in Douglas Street. I had given orders on a Saturday that our active service men were to stay clear of Douglas Street. For some reason the following Monday he had to pass that way. He saw he was being followed. He ran from them, through a house called Hennessy's, but they trapped him in the yard. They just plugged him there. Tans it was. That was how life was then. Cheap.

The sad thing was, that although we had good intelligence contacts, we did not know until it was nearly too late, that there was an anti-Sinn Féin murder gang in existence. Information on our lads was passed along from certain business people and loyalists living a low profile existence. It was not until September 1920 — months before Tadg's death of course — that we laid a trap and caught this clerk in the main post office. He was the main channel through which the notes were passed. He confessed everything. We now had twelve names, some of them very prominent people. One by one they were shot dead, except one fellow who made off to London, but he, we were told, committed suicide on the train. That made a terrific impact. There were other forces against us too. Bishop Cohalan, the local man here, issued a

rescript against us. People walked out of the churches when it was read, but many of the local priests did not read it. *I have a communication here from the Bishop*, said our local curate, *and if anyone wants to read it let him come round to the sacristy afterwards*. The Capuchins were good, the Franciscans too.

The centre of Cork was burned out by the Tans in December 1920. Some people think that was the only burning they did. But of course not. They burned and burned; farmhouses, creameries, business premises, homes, anything they could get their hands on in every part of the country; out in rural parts where there had been ambushes, throughout West Cork, in East Limerick, in Tipperary, in Trim, Balbriggan, Cahirciveen, everywhere. The torch became an open manifestation of British power. They were at it in Cork City too. I was in charge and I went to Sean O'Hegarty, (3) Brigade O.C. He was a great disciplinarian. Outstanding. You could do a Kilmichael or a Crossbarry, and he would not say thank you. *This has got to stop*, I said to him. *Tell the loyalist population, tell General Strickland, that where they burn in future, we will burn twelve of theirs*. We served this notice on the Fifth Column about the middle of May, and there was never a burning after that. It worked because it was a very practical approach to it.

Things were getting extremely tough for us in the run-up to the Truce. I know what Collins has said about that but I do not agree. Had we more equipment we could have done more. I remember about the end of May or the beginning of June we had these twelve big bombs. We attacked three barracks with these bombs. We were hunted and chased; we were short of equipment, but still you carried on. I recall O'Hegarty sending an urgent message for me. He had come all the way from Ballingearry in West Cork, sixty miles, to a place called Loughnah in East Cork. I could not go that night. It was impossible. I went the following day and met him. While we were there, there was a raid on. We had to take to the fields. I had to come back that night to Cork. I took a pony and trap, and I had two girls as a cover. Getting into Riverstown, I fortunately went into the nearest pub. They told me there was a dragnet out over the whole area. I stayed there a couple of hours. Then I made back but was held up by the Tans crossing Parnell Bridge. There was a red headed policeman there too, by the name of Carroll, a high jumper. He came over and placed a hand on my shoulder. *I know this gentleman very well*, said he, *he is a friend of mine*. That was a narrow shave because, had they recognised me, they would have cut me to pieces.

#### UNDER PRESSURE

We were under pressure, but we had wonderful intelligence. We had

staff in every hotel. You could not enter Cork that time without us knowing all the details about you. The going was tough, but you were still there. As I say, had we more equipment we could have done more.

When the Truce came, we felt we had created a situation which would allow for successful negotiation, no more than that. None of us thought we had won. Before we come to that though, I must tell you a story about a very unfortunate thing. The night before the Truce, on July 10th, I was living not far from here; with me was a staff officer, Bob Aherne. Around midnight my mother called me to inform me that there were four young British soldiers who had just been taken prisoner by our fellows. I felt alarmed. There they were I suppose, out for the first time in months with their guard down. One of them had gone into a shop to buy sweets. With my brother-in-law and a few more, I went out and searched the fields from here to Togher. Around two in the morning we met some of our lads. *The news is bad*, they said; I was astounded. But surely no one would shoot anyone at a time like this? I crept into a house, exhausted and filled with remorse, the chap with me a bundle of nerves. We could not sleep. We just hung out there until twelve o'clock the next day. The Truce had come.

#### PEACE

Straightaway there was an atmosphere of ease, of euphoria almost. You were a different man from thereon. Then we started training. We set up proper training camps. The people were very pleased but we were very cautious. Many of us expected the negotiations to break down in the first few weeks, but as the months dragged on our fears subsided. We lowered our guard alright. Of course all the pressures were upon us. First, the people that wanted to entertain you, be seen with you, buy you a drink, though few of us drank. You were dealing with a fickle public, many of them controlled by the bishops and priests. And their watchword was, never again. I remember walking along the morning after the Treaty was signed. There were these two ladies. *Oh*, they said, *it's great; peace at last. Fine*, said I, *so long as it is not pieces*.

You get sceptical about peace gestures. When you recall that it was Lloyd George, Churchill and Galloper Smith who sent the Black and Tans to Ireland, you can't help being cynical that they should suddenly want to confer peace upon us. I remember years afterwards in the U.S. Gogarty told me the story of Augustus John, the famous painter,<sup>(4)</sup> who was employed to give lessons to Churchill. You know of course, that he became quite a painter in his own right. John was approached by A. E., by Yeats, and some more to use his influence with Churchill about the excesses of the Black and Tans in Ireland. This he did,



choosing the moment carefully, at lunch one day, *I never saw such hate in any man's face*; said John. *He just turned livid. If I had my way*, said he, *I would wipe out the whole God damned race*.

The thing that damned the Treaty was Griffith's promise to Lloyd George, made in a memorandum which he was foolish enough to allow Tom Jones, Lloyd George's secretary, prepare, agreeing to Partition, provided that the Treaty allowed for a Boundary Commission.<sup>(5)</sup> He agreed personally to that at Park Lane on the 13th November, three weeks before the Treaty was signed. It was dynamite; he kept that promise from the Cabinet back in Dublin. There could be no excuse for that. The only honourable excuse open to such a defector was to resign. Instead he split the delegation. They even returned after their last weekend in Dublin on the 3rd and 4th of December, in two separate boats. Don't tell me the British were not informed of that. As Cathal Brugha was to say afterwards, *they knew their men*.

John D. Ryan, later a wealthy man in the U.S., was on the run in the earlier years. He went to Germany. Moss Twomey knew him well, and Sean MacBride. From London in November 1921, he sent a coded cable to Joe McGarrity: *Things are not going well*. Later on, about the 1st of December, he sent Joe another cable in the same vein. The sad thing was that when the first news reports came to Clan na Gael they were split in two. I was not there then, but I heard it all afterwards. Joe and Harry Boland supported the Treaty at first; when Judge Cohalan and Devoy saw this they were against it. Later they reversed their positions. I say they were insane. Two uncompromising individuals only should have been sent. You had the example of Joe McGrath and Harry Boland who were sent to deliver the Cabinet's reply to Lloyd George at Gairloch the previous September. It was couched in uncompromising terms. Lloyd George was having a salmon for supper. You know the sort he was; he lived well. He spoke to them only of the salmon and ignored the communication. He suggested they take it away and he would regard it as not having been delivered. *We had instructions to deliver it to you*, said McGrath; *now it is in your hands and we are not taking it back*. De Valera published the letter the next day; so there could be no denying it.

#### DIVISION

We here in Cork, in the I.R.A. that is, were anti-Treaty from the start. In the days before December we were saints and heroes, now we were burglars and bank robbers. We could see it was incomplete and that it would cause endless trouble for generations afterwards — and the North today is proof of that, but the job was to convince people. And our word taken against the Bishop of Cork — a man that had

excommunicated us when we were fighting the Tans — did not fit in either. The ecclesiastical powers were against us, and they were very vocal. The papers were against us as they had always been. They just wanted the status quo back in any shape or form. They were sure of it under a Free State; they could not be sure of it under a Republic.

I remember attending a meeting of the First Southern Division in Mallow. It may have been early in June, and it must have been after the Collins-De Valera Pact.<sup>(6)</sup> I did not like this discussion. Its purpose seemed to be the appointment of a common Chief of Staff over the two factions of the Army. The Free State crowd wanted Eoin O'Duffy who I always regarded as a phoney. He never did anything except write despatches. If they held up a postman in his part of the country they would make an ambush out of it. I interrupted: *Are we merely to fight for the post of Chief of Staff or for the Republic?*<sup>(7)</sup>

The following Saturday night, we all met again in the Clarence Hotel, to hear the report on these proposed joint Army appointments. It was the 17th June, eleven days before the Free State attacked the Four Courts. Everyone felt a little more militant. The next day, in the Mansion House, there was a vote on declaring war upon British forces in the North. I remember Barry and Sean O'Hegarty had the same sentiments. Don't talk, but act. The war party won, by a narrow majority. They were opposed by Cathal Brugha and Liam Lynch. There was an immediate demand for a recount. This time the war party lost. They immediately left. Rory O'Connor, Joe McKelvey, Liam Mellows, Peadar O'Donnell, twelve members of the sixteen man Executive walked out. They were joined that night in the Four Courts by Ernie O'Malley. The Free Staters immediately sought to turn the split to their advantage. They had received full reports of the discussions. Moylan, Lynch, Tom Kelleher, myself and the rest had remained. *Let ye fight in the North*, said Moylan facetiously, *and when ye get bate back to Cork we'll take them on*. Collins, Ginger O'Connell, Gearoid O'Sullivan, Mulcahy even, decided the southern divisions would not fight. The Four Courts would be a push over.

#### REGGIE DUNNE

I will deal now with a traumatic event that occurred in the few remaining days, the shooting of Sir Henry Wilson.<sup>(8)</sup> I knew both Reggie Dunne, and Joseph O'Sullivan well; I had met them with Sam Maguire. Sometime in May, I had bumped into him one night in Mooney's when I called in for cigarettes. He emerged with me; he was with Frank Thornton, one of Collins' men, *the job on Wilson is on*, said he. I was not to breathe a word. I could not. It was a profound secret. And I did not breathe it. Sean O'Hegarty had sent me and Mick



Murphy over to London, to track down and shoot a famous spy we had here. We did not succeed for the simple reason that when we got there we found he was doing seven years in jail. It was the safest place for him, at the time.

We had a lot of ammunition in London at the time. I went to the trouble of getting it carefully packed and crated as machine parts and sent them by steampacket. When it arrived in Cork, of course, it was taken care of. Sam was against the Treaty. *Did ye steal those two machine guns last February*, he inquired. Well we did, but I could not tell him just then, so I laughed. *I am sure whoever has them will put them to good use*, said I. They went to North Cork, and were used in the Clonbanin ambush subsequently.

Before we pass on, I would like here to set the record straight on a bogus letter, a cringing letter said to have been written by Reggie Dunne. When I read this, I said, that is not Reggie Dunne. It could not be. I knew there could be no such letter. I confirmed that with Florence O'Donoghue and Joe McGrath, both of whom held letters and documents from Dunne. Joe McGrath produced Reggie's last letter to me. It is a fine one: I have had many copies made. *You may find us guilty*, it said, *but we will go to the scaffold justified by the verdict of our conscience*.

#### THE CIVIL WAR

But to return to the Clarence Hotel, the Convention in the Mansion House, and the Four Courts; we had travelled up by road, and we returned by road. We brought our divisional armoured car. We stayed two nights at the Clarence, so we had returned nine days before the assault. Liam Lynch and Liam Deasy were in the Clarence but I doubt if they were still there when the shelling started. Now I would like to say something on that, in view of the many reflections made against Lynch. This was that at the commencement of the assault, he gave his word to the Free State crowd at Kingsbridge that he would not fight. Moss Twomey denies that, and no one knew Lynch better at that time than Moss. I knew Lynch well myself and I would agree with Moss.<sup>(9)</sup>

When our brigade in Cork heard of the attack on the Four Courts we met straightaway. We decided to reinforce Limerick. My party was stopped at Buttevant but we reached Broadford in Limerick the first night. We were caught there between two Free State posts. With me were a number that I recall, Corney Sullivan and a lad called Spillane. Next thing the shooting started and Spillane fell. We all lay prone. I could see his rifle had dropped away from him. He died in five minutes. That was the start of it for us. We went from there to Rathkeale where we met Liam Lynch. We moved on to Adare; we captured a post there.



Then we arrived in Limerick. We lost a couple of great lads there. One fellow that I recall now, Paddy Naughton, he was very good in the Tan War.

We were crossing Georges Street separately when he was hit. He fell. I helped him up and pushed him through a door. *Paddy*, I said, *you are all right. We will take care of you.* But he turned his eyes up to me. *Connie, will you look after my rifle?* *Nonsense, Paddy*, I replied, *that's a superficial wound.* But I saw then that his consciousness was going from him. Dear Christ, but he was a terrific man at a time when we needed men.

#### RETREAT

Who ordered us to leave Limerick? Well, it is hard to say. Tom Kelleher says our position was a strong one and Limerick was of crucial importance to us. He blames Deasy and Lynch — I am not sure. The direction must have come from Divisional Staff, from Liam Lynch and Deasy. The people in charge on the spot were Donovan, Mick Murphy, and myself. The Staters that were there were far better organised and in greater numbers. They had seized posts and we had seized posts. We had occupied as far as William Street, but firing had not commenced at this stage. They had however, taken some prisoners at Ballyneety four miles outside. I was deputised to go with a local volunteer and meet their Commandant, Tommy Murphy to seek the release of these prisoners. They said they would, but meanwhile Eoin O'Duffy, their Chief of Staff had arrived, and put up in the William Street Barracks with Murphy. When I returned to Limerick I found that firing had started. They had started it. (10) I was a lucky man that I had not been taken prisoner. They enfiladed fire at us from the buildings and from across the river. We were in a tight situation. In the end we had no chance against them. Retreat became inevitable. My strongest complaint is that we were ordered out at an early hour of the evening while it was still daylight. That made it all the harder. The retreat when it came, resembled a stampede. We were the last to leave the new barracks, it was a scene of chaos; everyone was gone. We were so hungry that I went out and stole a loaf of bread. But then, we Republicans as you can see from Ernie O'Malley, were hopeless at looking after the commissariat. You would think that we had never heard of Napoleon's dictum — an army marches on its stomach. And so we fell back through Patrickswell, Adare, finally ending up in Buttevant about four o'clock in the morning. We felt hopelessly disillusioned and disheartened.

The whole flaming struggle seemed to be leading nowhere. They captured our men; held them and later shot some of them. We

captured their men, sometimes twice over, and had to let them go. We had nowhere to put them, no arrangements. No one now had the heart to fight.

Liam Lynch meanwhile had moved a week before this, with his Director of Operations, Sean Moylan, to a new H.Q. at Clonmel. From there it had been intended to occupy Thurles. I had gone to play a match there a few weeks before, purely for the purpose of inspecting Free State strongpoints. We never took Thurles; the men we had in the town retreated from it. Meanwhile H.Q. moved again, this time further south, to Fermoy. That was about the third or fourth week of July. He evacuated Fermoy on August 11th — our last town; the previous day Cork City had been entered after troops had arrived by sea to Passage West. I was in Douglas then, with Corney Sullivan and Mick Murphy, when their armoured car came on top of us. Corney and I jumped over the ditch. Mick ran the wrong way. They opened up on him but he escaped. After that the retreat into the countryside meant that our columns just melted away. There were no longer houses open to them.

#### COLLINS

I referred already to Frank Thornton, one of the hard men of Collins' squad in Dublin. Some say about this time (early August) Collins wished to get the two sides together. I cannot say if there is any basis for that. (11) Thornton however, was sent down to the south — he told me this himself — for the purpose of peace; he hoped to meet Dinny Lacy, Dan Breen, and Bill Quirke. However, he was caught in an ambush, in which some of his party were killed, and he himself was badly wounded. Whatever importance one attaches to this story, the fact remains that when Collins himself came to Cork he did not contact our people nor, so far as I know, did he try. (12)

Gogarty was the surgeon who performed the autopsy on Collins. Years afterwards in New York, he described it to me. *You see that finger nail; it was about that size. It was a one in a million chance of being fatal.* Of course I knew Gogarty intimately. He talked candidly to me. I knew that he had been anti-Republican, that he had been violently opposed to De Valera, but the atmosphere in America was different. People sought me out. They were happy to meet me because I dealt in facts. I knew he was a great admirer of Collins, more so of Griffith. Griffith and he were pals. In my opinion, for what it is worth, we would never have had an execution had Collins lived. Emmet Dalton is a case in point. I knew Emmet and Charlie, all of that Dublin crowd very well. In his resignation statement when he returned to Cork after Collins' death, he said, *I cannot stand for the execution of*

*any Irishman.* There you have the authentic Collins type speaking out through Dalton. But who succeeded him? People who hated us and murdered indiscriminately.

#### SURVIVAL

I met Jock MacPeake in November after he came over to us with his armoured car; the car that was accompanying Collins, at Beal na Blath. I took him from Ballingearry into Kerry to a place called Gortluchra. He had joined the lads in West Cork, and he ended up in Garvin's of Crookstown with Jimmy Lordan. The armoured car went on the blink, so we hid it as we were not engaged in the sort of operations where it would be of use. He wanted to get away from West Cork. We had to walk; walking for miles we were. Near Gortluchra we were crossing a river on the trunk of a tree, the bridge having been blown, when the poor devil let his rifle fall. We could not get down in the dark to look for it, so we left it there. We stopped that night with people called Quill, and they picked up the rifle the next day. He stayed there for a while and eventually returned to Glasgow. He was arrested there, turned over to the Staters and spent five years in pretty grim conditions in Maryborough on a charge of larceny, ending up in London under a different name. (13)

Between Kerry and Cork I survived somehow in the subsequent months. A cold November merged into a freezing December, and then a new year dawned. It was 1923. But there was not much dawn in it for our lads. The first executions occurred in Kilmainham in November. Four young Dublin chaps taken in arms, and killed solely to pave the way for the execution of the man both the English and the Staters hated most, Erskine Childers.

No need to tell you what Churchill said after his capture. (14) Childers was a writer only, but he understood the English ruling class; he had tried to steer Collins and Griffith away from the worst clauses in the Treaty and they all hated him — Staters and English — for that. I had known him in the good days, and we were together again in the hills around Ballingearry before his last fatal trip to Bob Barton's place in Laragh. I don't think it mattered where he was caught or how he was caught; they would have executed him anyway. (15)

The executions ran on during December, there were thirteen then, thirtyfour in January, a few in February, more in March, April, and May. Some lads were shot for only clipping telegraph wires. And you had too, the unofficial killings by the state forces in every part of Ireland, but worst of all in Kerry. I oscillated between there and West Cork, sometimes creeping back into the city. We could no longer make a response. We were up against it now. It was a matter of just keeping



alive. There were fiftyfive thousand Stater troops in uniform, and they reached into every hill and valley. One third of the people were still on our side but they dare not show it. Nowhere now was safe.

On the 10th April, 1923 Liam Lynch, the Chief of Staff, was killed by rifle fire on the slopes of the Knockmealdowns. Frank Aiken took over there, and on the 24th May he issued the order to us to "dump arms". There was no surrender because the Free Staters would not offer us terms. Sometimes, I think things could have been different if they had been more magnanimous even at that time. But it was not in them to be. Some of them I know, were sorry to see the war ended. The soldiers had been making a living out of it and were anxious to keep it going.

#### THE ROAD BACK

I managed to keep out of their way after that until the middle of 1924. Then they raided my mother's house and found me. I was brought by a fellow called Culhane before their intelligence department. They were filled with a lot of bloody ego. The walls of the room were plastered with photographs of our lads. I sat down. I produced a cigarette. They commenced asking questions. I pretended not to hear. *Did you hear what I said*, rapped one officer. I knew damn well what he was driving at. But I said, *why bring me here to ask these questions? Why inflict expense upon the people by guarding me here when you could have come to my house and asked the same questions? I am damned if I would answer questions for you. You executed seventy-seven and more of our lads, and you expect me to co-operate with you. You can go to hell.*

However, they did confirm for me a small incident that occurred in the summer of 1923 in Castleisland. They had arrested a First Southern Officer, Tom Crofts, in Castleisland and two others with him. Crofts had received a despatch, which they had intercepted and let go on. That was a trick of the British. Like waiting in a house after they had raided it. But I turned up unexpectedly with Sean French and Connie Connell. It was the anniversary of the death of one of the Kerry leaders. We were hungry. *Listen*, I said, *I'm starved.* We crossed the road, and went upstairs into Sam Knights. A moment later, looking down, I saw the Free State Army below. They caught three of our fellows. We had escaped because we were hungry. *But why did you not arrest us that day*, I said. *We did not arrest you because you were not supposed to be there.* This confirmed my suspicions that the despatch had been intercepted.

We were there that day on political work. Remember, I was still a member of Cork Corporation even though I could not attend. There

was a by-election in Limerick in May; Sean French had come to speak, but I had to keep out of sight. That was the first time I met Sean Lemass. He had been in the Four Courts, then in the Joy, and he was shortly to be elected as a Sinn Féin T.D. for South Dublin. We could see the tide was turning. Countess Markievicz came into the campaign rooms. I can still see her clearly. A striking beauty. All that Yeats had said of her, even if a little faded now:

The light of evening, Lissadell,  
Great windows open to the south,  
Two girls in silk kimonos, both  
Beautiful, one a gazelle . . .

Dear shadows, now you know it all,  
All the folly of a fight  
With a common wrong or right.  
The innocent and the beautiful  
Have no enemy but time . . .

No enemy but time. Four years later she was dead. She said something that night that I remembered long afterwards; *If you want to get the vote of the working man you have to associate with him in his own public houses.* We were all sent out, and most of us were abstainers, but signs on it, we got the vote, even if we did not win the seat. We went up from thirteen thousand the previous year to twenty three thousand.

#### EMIGRATION

Like thousands of other Republicans I emigrated eventually. That was against my wishes but I had to go. (16) It happened this way. I was still on the Corporation. Henry Ford was here in Cork, and around this time they wanted to extend by purchasing the adjacent park. I objected strongly because it threatened to remove the very area in which we hoped to enlarge the ship anchorages. We were lacerated. Employees of Ford came in and packed the gallery. The newspapers said we were trying to drive Ford out. I needed a job. I went to Ford, and I spoke to Grace, their managing director, whom I knew. *How can I employ you after what you did? I only did what you would have done,* I replied, *under the same circumstances.* He proved very friendly. I knew that if I got in they could not stop the others. There was a black mark against Republicans everywhere, but I knew that if we got into Henry Ford that would be broken. I got a job as a clerk down in the works; more of our fellows got in then. The campaign of economic tyranny that was being waged against us was broken.

Early in 1926 it was plain that De Valera wished to change the abstentionist policy of Sinn Féin. We had a strong cumann in Cork then, the Terence MacSwiney Cumann. I opposed the change although the majority of the cumann favoured it; yet they appointed me unanimously to represent them at the Sinn Féin Ard Fheis on March 10th in Dublin. *How can I represent you?* I said, *I do not have your views. If you wish to be democratic you should appoint somebody else.*

I left then for the United States. My elder brother Dan had been there for a number of years. My father was dead. Dan was now seriously ill — he was the pet of the family. My mother thought that if I went over to him he might improve. They actually forced me to go, but Dan died anyway. I got a job with an oil company where I worked for some time. I worked out a formula whereby one could measure the amount by which the oil and gas fluctuated with heat and cold. The two bosses called me in. *Oh, I said, any kid in Ireland could tell you how it is done. Right, they said, tell us. I will, said I, for an extra five dollars a week.*

At this time, in the late twenties, I was acting as U.S. representative of the I.R.A. Army Council with Clan na Gael. I felt the I.R.A. should send their messages direct and not through me, an intermediary, who might misrepresent their views. Both parties agreed with me on this. Moss Twomey came out; he was followed later by Mick Price. I regarded Mick as a great character. Yerra, a powerful fellow, I drove him around the East. I had the habit of calling every jay walker a bastard. *Terrible lot of illegitimate people in this country, are there not?* said Mick, after one bad evening. We met some Kerry lads at Holio, Massachusetts. They wanted us to meet this priest which we did reluctantly. He commenced lecturing us. *What university did you go to?* said he, as we took our leave. *Turnip university, said I, half under the ground, half on top.*

#### JOE MCGARRITY

I was associated from the start with Joe McGarrity. He had a restaurant in Forty-first Street. We dropped in one night. I found Joe gracious but distant. A few nights later, Joe sent for me. He apologised. He had not known who I was. The I.R.A. at that time were represented by Con Leary. Through him I cemented an enduring friendship with Joe. He was an outstanding character with a deep reverence for De Valera. Dev stayed with him at Springfield Avenue, Philadelphia. His only son alive is Eamonn De Valera McGarrity. In 1920 when Dev was setting out to return to Southampton on the *Celtic* he signed everything over to his successor, Joe McGarrity. From the first time he met him when he arrived as a stowaway in May 1919 he venerated him. (17)



Dev had arrived with Barney Dalton and Jimmy Humphreys. Joe met them with Harry Boland at 11th Avenue. Dev was standing there with a cap, a black scarf and an old coat. *This must be one hell of a great guy*, said Joe, *to undertake this job*. They all departed for Philadelphia; Pat McCartan, Harry Boland, Liam Mellows, Joe and the rest of the party. Unfortunately, they were all idealists; not practical men, and they did not therefore achieve the results they hoped to achieve. Dev's Cuban interview in February 1920, debased the Irish claim to a domestic issue. 5.8 million dollars were collected in the Bond drive but many of the expenses fell upon Joe. He spent fortunes in the Irish cause. He founded and kept going the *Irish Press* in Philadelphia, and significantly, that was the name used in 1930 for Dev's own paper here.

Before we pass on, shall I tell you of Major Kinkead, introduced to Dev in May as *the man who said no to the President*. A very powerful Irish delegation consisting of Judge Goff, Bishop Muldoon, Judge Cohalan, and some more sought to interview President Wilson on the issue of Ireland before the President sailed for Versailles. Eventually, he was persuaded to meet them at the Metropolitan Opera House, New York, on March 4th 1919. He refused to meet any delegation containing Cohalan, an old political enemy. Smartly, the Judge retired, saying, *the cause is bigger than any one man*.

Frank P. Walsh then commenced to present the case. Wilson interrupted him: *It was never my understanding*, said he, *that I was to bring up Ireland's case at Versailles*. He then turned to Major Kinkead, *isn't that so? It is not so*, replied Kinkead, *the reason we are here is to request you to bring up this question*. That finished his career with Wilson. He was not upset, however. He roped in Edward Doheny, the oil king, behind the Bond drive. *I cannot afford to be seen on a losing side*, said Doheny. *This time you are on the winning side*, said Kinkead, who was accompanied by Jim Derwin of Texas Oil. He brought in Ed Hynes too, of Chicago, another powerful figure. His connections were invaluable.

Pat McCartan and Joe remained friends over the years; McCartan sided with the Treaty, though he later reconciled himself to the Republican position. He could be a good friend when a friend was needed. I remember Joe sent for me around 1932. Things were really bad with him. He had lost his seat in the Stock Exchange. I found him stretched out on a bench in North Philadelphia railway station. He, who had friends at every level, had not one to fall back on now. I knew Sean T. O'Kelly had arrived from the new Fianna Fail government in New York. That was September, 1933. One of his objectives was to get the I.R.A. to throw their weight behind the new government. I had breakfast with him. He took up Joe's case with a very prominent Irish American lawyer, Martin Conboy, but Conboy failed him. Tom

O'Neill, a really sharp attorney whom we had and a brother-in-law of Major Kinkead then took up the case. In next to no time he had him exonerated, and obtained a big claim for damages.

#### THE THIRTIES

Some of the Clan people now had the idea that Dev should appoint the best of the I.R.A. officers over the Free State Army. Aiken seems to have had the same notion. I knew this would not be acceptable. It was rather like the old pre Civil War situation all over again. Mick Price blew up when Tom McGill and myself put this forward at an Army Council meeting in Dublin. He had a very shrill voice. *Like Bishop Moriarty, he shouted, hell is not hot enough or eternity long enough for the Free State Army.* (18)

To my mind Mick Price, Peadar O'Donnell, George Gilmore and the rest were mistaken in 1934, when they set up Congress. Peadar had a brilliant new idea every week — he was famous for that, a Plan of Campaign, that would impress everybody. The next day, he would have forgotten it. He would replace it with something else. Price and he parted at the end of that year. I was in close touch with Joe McGrath still. I landed a job for Mick which he filled capably and well, and which kept him in comfort until his death in the forties. It was the least one could do for the man who had been O.C. in Mountjoy during the toughest part of the struggle in 1923. I was closely in touch all that time. I was back in 1932, 1936, 1937, 1938 and 1939. Early on I could see that De Valera would go off the rails, but it was not until 1934 that I convinced Joe McGarrity of this. Joe was slow to convince because, as I have said earlier, he had a high regard for De Valera.

#### RYAN AND RUSSELL

I knew Frank Ryan well at that time also. Frank came from the Army Council to the States in April 1930 and remained for ten weeks. He spoke very well but he was extremely deaf. I remember an amusing incident when he visited Boston. Two newspaper men came to interview him from the *Boston American*. I was there as his aide under an assumed name. They suggested a photograph. It was one hell of a job getting out of that one. If my friends there saw me appear under an assumed name they would wonder naturally. Tom Daly from Kerry, a brother of Charlie who was executed in Drumbone in 1923 was there. I pushed him forward. *You get into it, Tom*, said I. I need not have worried; the newspaper office got the pictures mixed up, and two obviously Italian gentlemen appeared over the captions of Frank and Tom. We had a good laugh over it.



Sean Russell arrived in the States in April 1939. I could see, as the summer progressed, that there was a war coming. I was over on this side myself and I had a hell of a job getting back; a boat to Glasgow, then one to Montreal, and so down to New York. I said to Russell: *Get out of here right now or you will be stuck. If you are stuck I can still show you six ways of getting out.* He did not want to go. *Alright, I will send you to a friend of mine in California, and you can stay there for as long as you wish.* He was not happy with that either. I then asked Mick Quill who had helped us in a lot of ways. Mick went to the Maritime Commission. Joe Curran was the head man, and Blackie Myers, a well known communist, was his second in charge. They met Russell, Blackie offered to arrange for him to go as a stowaway. Russell was not very keen to go this way. Blackie turned to me; of course you know how hard boiled these seamen can be; *is he a revolutionary?* Well, I replied, *he is what you could call an intellectual revolutionary.*

The Clan na Gael wanted to know what happened to Russell. I hedged as I did not want the matter publicised. But the F.B.I. came along very polite, but very efficient. Many of them are attorneys. They had long lists of numbered questions and they put these to me for four hours. I avoided giving anything away.

What did I think of Russell? A good type, but up in the air. His idea of an English campaign was just a revival of the old Fenian idea of Luke Dillon. So far as I know when Russell came here in April 1939, it was not on invitation from Joe McGarrity, though some people let on that it was. Joe met Russell only once in this period. Joe had been in Germany some time before that with his daughters, but returned from there feeling very fed up. I don't think he liked the situation. We heard no more from Russell until some time in the autumn of 1941 when Gerald O'Reilly received a letter from Frank Ryan in Germany. He showed it to me. There was one simple message. *John has passed away.*

I knew this must mean Russell. I went to St. John Gaffney, former U.S. Consul General in Munich. He wrote a great book against British propaganda called *Breaking the Silence. You will have to get confirmation of this for us,* I said. *Fine, I will call to the German Consul General here; will you come with me?* *Not on your life,* said I. *You can have business which you could explain to the F.B.I. They would never believe me.* Jim McGranery, the Attorney General, told me that he had received a report from one agent that I should be locked up. Three months before America entered the war I was not going to be photographed entering the German Consulate. St. John Gaffney, very obligingly, addressed the query and in due course received back a confirmation of death. It gave no details.

Meanwhile Gerald O'Reilly, was pulled in by the F.B.I. They had received some information about the exchange of notes. However,



they chose not to treat the matter too seriously. It was only some years after the end of the war that I heard the full story from Clissman about the deaths of Russell and Ryan. You know all about that. It was a sad and lonely end.

The Hayes Confession? Yes, it came here. Thousands of copies were printed. I had to get around like lightning to stop the damned thing. They had all these gory details. What would our people think of the I.R.A. if that got about? Plenty of circumstantial evidence, yes, but not a shred of real proof against anybody.

#### MOODS AND MEMORIES

Joe meanwhile, had died. Fortunately, I was in with him every day for five weeks before he passed away in August 1940. A disappointed, harassed man. Almost the last task he delegated to me was to have his *Celtic Moods and Memories* published. Over the years, as you know, he jotted down simple poems about places and people back home in Ireland. *Missing from Termonmagurk*, one such, lists the people he used to know there, in his native townland, adjacent to Carrickmore. There were hundreds more, all of them with great appeal to anyone with a knowledge of that country.

He was very fed up with the Irish edition when he saw it. Larry De Lacy handled it. When he was dying he said to me: *they made a mess of my book in Ireland. Alright Joe, said I, I'll take care of it.* I got it republished by Devin Adair. I have a copy here. I think we had a print order of fifteen hundred copies. They were all bought up. It is a collector's item now. I myself bought dozens and supplied them as mementoes to Joe's friends. They were greatly appreciated.

At the start of World War Two, the mass of the people in the States were jingo. The Irish, because they were neutral, were not popular by any means. The Jews hated us. I recall Gogarty being invited, as happened frequently, to one of these jingo groups, a gathering of society ladies; a cocktail party. The discussion came up about Frank McDermott, a man who hated Ireland and who wanted to hand back the bases. *What do you think, Mr. Gogarty?* asked his hostess. *A fine man, is he not? Is it that fellow,* said Gogarty, who had a habit of speaking very fast. *Is it him, is it? D'ye know he has a one third interest in a widow!*

What more devastating thing could be said. Liam O'Flaherty was there too. Very pro Irish. It is an amazing thing when you leave here, this island of saints, how national you become. I had been asked some time before, what kind of speaker is Liam O'Flaherty. *Oh, I said, he is wonderful. A man with a beautiful singing voice.* So I spoke to O'Flaherty. *Tell me, Connie, what kind of a crowd are they?* They were

judges and politicians, but I did not labour that point with Liam because I was keen to get him there. *Oh, they are a fine body, pretty national, in their own way*, I said. Of course I was sceptical about that, and I had good reason. O'Flaherty sensed this when he came. He could feel the hostile atmosphere. To one of the first questions he replied in that fine ringing voice of his. *Why are we neutral? I will tell you that. We are neutral because we are battlewise*. What a beautiful expression; it sums up our story better than a book. *And I tell you*, shot out Liam, *if they come, there will be no Wailing Wall*.

Frank Aiken came here in 1942 to purchase arms. Roosevelt refused to meet him. Bill Cunningham of the *Boston Herald Post* lampooned him with a locked up White House and a big notice on the door GONE FISHING. Roosevelt, irritated, agreed to meet Aiken accompanied by Robert Brennan, the ambassador. Reclining on a couch (he had polio) the President received them in his study. He opened up on them in a rapid fire of criticism, berating them for having spy nests, the Japanese Consulate and the German Embassy, in Dublin. Gently, Aiken pointed out, that up to a few months ago, there had been any number of such offices in the U.S. They were interrupted by the entry of General Watson with some urgent affairs of state, but they remained there; they stuck their ground. Roosevelt became more impatient while he spoke of the victims of German aggression. *We are not afraid of their aggression*, said Aiken. *The only aggression we are afraid of is British aggression*. I am afraid it brought a rapid end to the interview. (19)

#### REFERENCES

- 1 Lord Mayor MacCurtain was murdered in his home on 19th March, 1920 by plain clothes assassins, later identified as members of the British Forces. Detective Inspector Swanzy, one of those charged by the coroners jury, was transferred to Lisburn, Co. Antrim, where five months later, an execution party from Cork No. 1 Brigade shot him. Connie Neenan relates how in recent years he brought one of the executives of American Airlines who had expressed an interest in the case into Lisburn, a noted stronghold of Ulster loyalism.
- 2 On June 17th 1920 in Listowel, Divisional Commissioner Smyth of the R.I.C. at a private meeting told a group of the Force that in future they would be given a free hand to shoot suspects. The I.R.A. decided to kill Smyth. A month later "Sandow" accompanied by two others entered the County Club, Cork, and confronted Smyth. *My orders are to kill you*, he said, as he drew a pistol, and fired repeatedly into Smyth before withdrawing. "Sandow" masterminded the capture of garrison arms from Forts Camden and Carlisle when the British were departing in February 1922.
- 3 When the Civil War came, Sean O'Hegarty, although always sympathetic to the Republican cause, stayed aloof.

4 Augustus John had a long association with Ireland, and with the Irish litteratti. In the early part of the century he had spent many holidays at Lady Gregory's home at Coole.

5 If Ulster did not see her way to accept immediately the principle of a Parliament of All Ireland . . . it would be necessary to revise the boundary of Northern Ireland. This might be done by a Boundary Commission . . . *Peace by Ordeal*. Government papers of January 1st 1981 show they never intended to leave.

6 May 20th 1922. Its intention was to avert dissension by presenting a common panel of candidates at the forthcoming election upon the Treaty. British objections were expressed to both Griffith and Collins, and the Pact was set aside by them.

7 There had been a groundswell in early June to accept a Pro Treaty Minister for Defence and Chief of Staff, with some lesser appointments in the Army going to the Republicans. This diminished greatly the standing of Liam Lynch, who recommended it, among his own followers and contributed to the confusion prior to and immediately after the attack upon the Four Courts. Lynch was then Chief of Staff of the Republican side and many, notably Barry and O'Malley, felt that he had not got his heart in the struggle.

8 Connie Neenan, Sean MacBride (see his account) and the writer Desmond Greaves are all firm in their belief that it was on orders from Collins that Sir Henry Wilson, former Chief of the Imperial Staff, and at this time military advisor to the Six County government, was shot dead at 2.30 p.m. on 22nd June on the steps of his home in Belgravia. His assailants, according to Greaves, were two London Irish Volunteers of pro Treaty sympathies. Their names were Reginald Dunne and Joseph O'Sullivan. Both were World War One veterans in which O'Sullivan lost a leg. Proper arrangements for their escape had not been made. Dunne remained with his companion. Both were arrested. They were tried before a bitterly partisan judge and hanged on August 16th, on the same day that Collins marched behind Griffith's bier to Glasnevin. It is unlikely that Griffith suspected the strange conspiracy in which this complex man was engaged. Yet it was for that very reason that Churchill and Lloyd George ordered the attack upon the Four Courts six days later.

It was not a delayed action order that Collins had failed to cancel. It was part of the muddled anti Six County plotting in which he was engaged with the Republicans, in the preceding months. On 31st May, writes Greaves in his *Liam Mellows*, while Collins and Griffith sat in the gallery of the Commons, Wilson forced an undertaking from Churchill to retain troops in Dublin. Rex Taylor in *Assassination* records that the order went from Collins on the 8th June though, according to Neenan, it went in May. There is corroboration of this in a note to the author from a certain Mr. J. of Dublin, whose mother, from Castlecomer, was a courier in the Collins entourage. She informed her son that she personally travelled to London with the order, and was met at Euston by Liam Tobin, and Thornton, both reliable Collins men. In 1952 Joe Dolan of the squad confirmed it was on Collins's orders. On the day of the killing according to Gen. Joe Sweeney in *Curious Journey* (1982), Collins admitted, yes, it is an official job. See also *Sunday Tribune*, M. Maguire, 27th June 1982.

9 There is a considerable weight of evidence however against Lynch's conduct of the war as Chief of Staff. As already mentioned Barry and O'Malley show considerable coolness. Noticeable in this excerpt is Connie's own lack of enthusiasm. Even Tom Kelleher says: *I blame Liam Lynch for retreating from Limerick*. O'Malley makes many references to the general inept response of the C.S. *During the first month no definite operation orders had been issued and in many instances Republicans awaited attack*. Slowly the resistance retrogressed back from some semi open fighting to disintegrated guerilla war in which smaller and smaller columns and groups took part.

10 After some patchy action Lynch negotiated a truce with the National Army. No doubt it came as a shock to Lynch when Collins blew the truce to bits and ordered the Republicans out of the town. Rex Taylor in *Michael Collins*.



11 The evidence is strong that Collins was interested only in winning the struggle and speaking then from a position of strength. Three days before, Harry Boland, one of the most indefatigable workers in the cause of freedom, was shot by Free State soldiers in Skerries. Collins sent him a personal note couched in uncompromising terms, *you are walking under false colours. If no words of mine will change your attitude, then you are beyond all hope.*

12 Collins left Dublin on August 11th, on an official tour of military posts in the south. He visited Limerick but returned hastily to attend the funeral of Arthur Griffith, the President, on the 16th August. Some days later, he resumed his inspection, and on Sunday the 20th was in Mallow. They arrived in Cork that night. It was evident that night and the next day that the Republicans were, at least, aware of the presence of General Collins and there was in fact a meeting attended by Deasy, Sean Lehane, Gibbs Ross and De Valera taking place near Beal na Blath itself. On the 21st, posts around Macroom were inspected. Tuesday the 22nd, the fatal day began at 6 a.m. The convoy consisted of a motor cycle scout, a Crossley with twelve men, an open touring car carrying Collins, Major General Emmet Dalton, and two drivers, with a Rolls Royce Whippet armoured car (Slievenamon) on the tail. They travelled west to Skibbereen, then turned north east towards Bandon, which is only twenty miles from Cork. Here they turned south to Clonakilty, his native town, where they found entry blocked by felled trees. The significance of this welcome appears to have been lost upon the General. They had breakfast there. Travelling northwards again, he visited his old homestead, then turned south-west and called for the second time that day to Skibbereen. They then approached Clonakilty again, and were informed that there had been firing nearby. The convoy then proceeded northwards towards Crookstown intending to enter Cork evidently by the Macroom Road. The ambush occurred about 8 p.m. in failing light at a lonely part of the winding road. A large column of Republicans were said to have awaited the party, but as they were delayed, all were withdrawn except one section of five men. On hearing the first shot Collins, although urged to drive on by Dalton, halted the convoy and insisted on giving battle. There was then considerable firing interspersed with some lulls for thirty minutes. Then, according to Emmet Dalton who accompanied him, Collins advanced up the centre of the road, calling back, *Come on boys*, and reloading his rifle at the same time. At that moment he fell fatally wounded. The bullet had entered behind one of his ears, portions of it splintering through his forehead.

Over the years, his death has been attributed to a ricochet bullet — from whom it is not clear; even to members of his own party. "Anxious to get rid of him" Dalton, one of his English drivers, Private Corry, or others of the hastily recruited mercenaries in the new army, being implicated. These stories were given further credence four months later in November when the Scottish driver of the armoured car, John MacPeake, deserted with the vehicle to the Republican side. Had he wished however, he could not have done it as his gun had ceased firing for some time. Dalton casts opprobrium upon him, however by this remark: the armoured car 'jammed' after a short time. The machine gunner MacPeake, not long after this occurrence deserted to the Irregulars. Aodhagán O Rahilly in the *Irish Times* of 22nd September 1981 confirms much of the above. Collins was a heavy drinker, and this was well known in Republican circles. Only two of the ambush party were still on site, he says. See O Rahilly again in the *Irish Times* of 26th September 1984.

The *Cork Examiner* of November 5th 1985 gives prominence to a claim by an unnamed volunteer from East Kerry to the deed but it seems an unlikely coincidence.

All the evidence however, points strongly to the ambush party having been responsible. There was nothing squeamish for Collins being there in his new found task of suppressing the Republic; there should be nothing squeamish in the remembrance of the ambush, for those who sought that evening at Beal na Blath to defend it.

13 John MacPeake was released from Maryborough (Portlaoise) Prison on the 4th August 1928 and given a travel voucher to Dublin. Most of his time was spent in solitary confinement. Both his parents died while he was there. A small fund was raised by Dublin Republicans, and sixty pounds was presented to him.

14 *I have seen with satisfaction that the mischief making murderous renegade, Erskine Childers, has been captured. No man has done more harm . . . upon the common people of Ireland than this strange being actuated by a deadly and malignant hatred for the land of his birth, at Dundee on November 12th, 1922.*

15 After military courtmartial in Beggars Bush Barracks on November 24th.

16 The I.R.A. Executive in July 1923 decided that the Volunteers should be permitted to leave only if it was to work for the cause, to recover after illness, to learn a trade or profession in order to return. It was reaffirmed in January 1924 after some opposition from Kerry.

17 Sean Cronin has this to say of that mission: *His mission lasted eighteen months. He addressed many meetings, raised a lot of money but failed to win recognition for the Republic. Part of the trouble may have been the confusion in his own mind about the position; he was essentially a conservative, not a revolutionary. In an interview with an American journalist a month after the founding meeting of the First Dail, he ignored the Republic of which he was supposed to be the head and harped on 'self determination'. His Cuban interview with the Westminster Gazette a year later was an almost fatal blow to the Republican position; he rebuffed an offer of recognition by the Soviet Government, fearing no doubt, it would harm his efforts in Washington. At any rate, as far as recognition of the Republic was concerned his mission to America was a failure.*

The text of his statement to the Westminster Gazette was as follows: *The United States by the Munroe Doctrine made provision for its security without depriving the Latin Republics of the south of their independence and their life. The United States safeguarded itself from the possible use of the island of Cuba as a base for an attack by a foreign power by stipulating 'that the government of Cuba shall never enter into any treaty or other compact with any foreign Power, or Powers, which will impair the independence of Cuba, nor in any manner authorise or permit any foreign Power or Powers to obtain, by colonisation or for military or naval purposes or otherwise, lodgement in or control over any portion of the island'.*

*Why doesn't Britain make a stipulation like this to safeguard herself against foreign attack, as the United States did with Cuba? Why doesn't Britain declare a Munroe Doctrine for the two neighbouring islands? The people of Ireland so far from objecting would co-operate with their whole soul.*

Dr. Pat McCartan, Liam Mellows, Harry Boland, and James O'Mara, all members of Dail Eireann accompanying De Valera were not consulted. *The statement came to us like a thunderbolt*, McCartan said. *De Valera opens the door, wrote The Globe: this statement is a withdrawal by the official head of the Irish Republic of the demand that Ireland be set free to decide her own international relations.* There is an account of McCartan's life in an obituary notice of March 1963.

18 Bishop David Moriarty, of Kerry, on the Fenians, March 1867.

19 It has long since emerged that the U.S. State Department will not sanction arms sales to Ireland without the consent of Britain. Gerald O'Reilly, mentioned by Connie, page 253, is long an active Republican. He assisted the rescue from Mountjoy in October, 1925 of Jim Killeen, Dave Fitzgerald and Michael Clerkin. He returned to Ireland in recent years.

## Dan Gleeson

*of Ballymackey, Nenagh.  
Volunteer Toomevara Coy IRA,  
accompanied by his friends,  
Jack Molony, Ned Shea and  
Liam Carroll of the IRA.*



I come from a Fenian tradition, especially upon my mother's side. Burke was her maiden name. She was from near Templeberry. Her mother was a Kenny; all of them were involved some way in the land struggle. One of that family, Martin, was a great patriot in his own way; he wrote simple local poems, some of which I have here in a booklet. The parish priest of Templeberry was one of the three Johns of the Young Ireland movement; he was Fr. John Kenyon, then there was John Martin and John Mitchel. I myself knew well the late Jeremiah Burke; now he did not go back the whole way to the Fenians, but he was a member of the Brotherhood. When he died in the fifties, we spoke of him as a survivor of the Fenian period and we gave him a firing party.

My father was a small farmer and blacksmith. I do not think he ever played an active part in the Fenians; he was only a boy then, having been born in 1855, but he could recall some of the mobilisations they had in this neighbourhood. We have beside us here the Devil's Bit, or Bearnán Mountain, as it is called, where a lot of them assembled with pikes and pitch forks, though it never came to anything. Sometime then my father was given the task of guiding one of the American officers who came over on the "Erin's Hope" and disembarked near Dungarvan. He merely had to bring him to a certain house, but he used to talk about it for years afterwards.

In later years he was involved locally in William O'Brien's United Irish League, to the extent that he used follow keenly in the *Cork Weekly Examiner* all the debates in the House of Parliament. The local baker from Cloughjordan used to bring the bread to us weekly. I can remember him rushing in this day: *oh William*, he shouted, *Home Rule is on the Statute Book*. Well, it was, but it was not going to make much difference to us.

There was a woeful military presence here at that time by the



British. Though they never expected any trouble, they had garrisons then in all the principal towns, in Nenagh, Templemore, Birr, Clonmel, Fethard and dozens of other places.

My first military experience was after the Volunteers were founded in 1913. They had local committees everywhere. I was too young to join them, but I used to follow them around from place to place especially in the long evenings of 1914. Everybody was in them. I got a great thrill watching them. They would have a route march on the Sunday and we would all follow on. Their main inspiration was to fight Carson's Army. There was a wonderful revival at that time in the hurling around Toomevara. A local poet, Danny Keogh, composed the lines about the famous "greyhounds" and Wedger Maher:

I wish to God Ned Carson could get a look at you;  
He'd stow away his foreign guns,  
Go home to eating currant buns,  
If he heard Toomevara give the war cry of Abu.

We knew of the great Dublin strike of 1913, when it came off, though we could not pretend to understand the conditions in the city slums. A cousin had a shop in Nenagh and I can remember the youngsters dancing upon the pavement and singing a sort of ditty:

Yes, we'll join; Yes, we'll join;  
We'll join Jim Larkin's union.

As soon as the war started however, Redmond caved in and called for support for England. They held meetings around the country to drum up support for themselves. My father attended a convention of the United Irish Party in Thurles. As soon as one of these resolutions was put forward and passed he and two others left the meeting. That was him finished with it.

The movement throughout the country fell apart. It had lost its inspiration for young people. Some of those who were loudest in calling to 'resist Carson' appeared on recruiting platforms afterwards. There was no chance however of their insidious propaganda having the slightest effect upon us. As far as our family was concerned, it was one of complete resentment and resistance to the idea of going to fight for England. There were six girls and six boys in our family, and none of them felt in the least bit inclined. My elder brother, Patrick, who was the most politicised of any of us, and was afterwards shot by the Staters in 1923, had the best knowledge of what was afoot. Lord Wimbourne had issued a circular to everyone of military age, inviting them to join; we used to sing afterwards how we had kept out of England's war.

Maybe it was a "Johnny I Hardly Knew Ye" song, but we knew alright the road we wanted to go, and it did not lead in the direction of Flanders.

My recollections of 1916 were limited to what I could read in the *Nenagh News* or the *Nenagh Guardian*. There was a brief report of a rebellion in Dublin. Soon, however, the magic began to work. Practically everyone connected with hurling and the Gaelic League became involved. I remember well one evening, we were hurling there by the church, when Wedger Maher and James Devany — he was killed afterwards in the Tan War in Kilruane — came along. We went into this old house; it is still there. Wedger produced this document, and six of us joined the Volunteers on the spot. That was October, 1917, after the Rising. We formed our own section, part of the Toomevara company, with Wedger Maher as captain, and from there on the activities built up.

Our first big outing was the following St. Stephen's Day. We assembled in Toomevara and marched to Moneygall. At that time, I know, they had not organised in Moneygall; we were going there to shake them up. We had some military equipment, caps, bandoliers and bayonets, collected from ex-members of Redmond's Volunteers who no longer needed them. We were not yet known as the I.R.A.; we came to be known by that name after 1919.

There were two sections of the Toomevara company at this end of the parish. Another brother of mine was section leader in one, while another Gleeson, Jack, was leader of the other. Paddy Ryan, another great hurler, was second lieutenant. Soon we were two companies around Toomevara, with Cloughjordan another and Moneygall another. Between them they formed a properly structured battalion of more than three hundred men. In time we became the second battalion of the North Tipperary Brigade, which eventually had seven battalions.

Meanwhile Sinn Féin Cumann were being formed apace, although I was never a member of it. In circumstances like this, however, something must happen to cause greater momentum or a movement will ebb, and England now made the mistake of increasing the momentum to feverpitch. Early in 1918, she threatened to impose conscription. It was the greatest boost we could have got. They all flocked in. I remember the massive demonstrations; I remember one in Nenagh, everyone wearing badges, *Death Before Conscription*. Priests, professional men and everybody were on the platforms. There was a Fr. Gaynor, he would be an uncle of the wife of Seamus Costello, and I remember him declaring — *The right place for the bullet from an Irish rifle is in the heart of an Englishman*. Needless to say that went down well.

From now on we were perfecting a proper military machine through training classes, raiding for arms, intelligence and arranging dumps, supplies and transport. We were gradually moving from a phase of uneasy peace to one of hostilities. Then on January 19th, 1919, came Soloheadbeg, and you know the line — *At Soloheadbeg the war began.*

That is how we saw it anyway, and as it was right here in our own end of the country, it had more meaning for us than for anybody. Numbers of our company had been sent to Wormwood Scrubs already. There was a strong police and military presence, and some meetings had been banned. But now we were moving to something else. The many meetings and parades were building up to something else.

#### THE SHOOTING OF D. I. HUNT

On 23rd June, 1919, District Inspector Hunt was shot dead in broad daylight in the Market Square in Thurles by a Volunteer named Jim Stapleton, accompanied by some others. Stapleton was not a great shot but he crept up close to him, said Liam Carroll, and he went on to quote:

It was racing day in Thurles town,  
A time of great excitement;  
Inspector Hunt came walking round,  
In search of *enlightenment*.

Everyone enjoyed the run,  
From merchant to cattle dealer,  
But in the middle of the fun,  
Pop goes a Peeler.

Jack Moloney chipped in here with another version:

At the races of Thurles, Mike Hunt he was there,  
The police and soldiers drawn up in the ere,  
When a bullet came whizzing quite close to my head,  
And the next thing I heard Mike Hunt was shot dead.

Jim Stapleton had earlier on put paid to the account of another R.I.C. man, Wilson, in Templemore. They were both garrison towns. To succeed therefore in shooting a top policeman in each of them was quite a feat, especially as he made good his escape in each case.

On one side then you had the condemnations that immediately followed these early actions. It was very vociferous and loud, and



hard to withstand. Inevitably, however, it was also building up the morale of the men who were determined to see the thing through no matter what condemnations were rained down upon us.

Then suddenly two policemen were shot dead at Lorrha, right here in our end of the county. Needless to say there were condemnations everywhere, but the thing was gathering momentum.<sup>(1)</sup> Police barracks were attacked in other places, so here in North Tipperary we took a decision that something like this should be done too. The first operation of any account was an attack on a police barracks at Borrisokane. Not all of us could join in the actual attack. The way it was then a huge area around would be sealed off by blocking the roads, and many would be engaged in that. The only fatal casualty — there were a couple wounded — was the uncle of the present Minister Michael O'Kennedy. He was on the roof at the time, trying to break it and pour in the oil, when he was hit. It was our baptism of fire. Jack Maloney's brother, Paddy, was at Borrisokane in his khaki uniform, while Jack manned a group on the Nenagh-Borrisokane road. There was no hope of getting them out from the roof as they had their upstairs floor sandbagged. Paddy entered next door. From there he could reach the chimney. *Let me, he said, drop a few grenades straight down into their fireplace. That will root them out.* However, the O.C. would not agree to this. Constable McKenzie was killed; one of our lads, Jimmy O'Meara, of Toomevara was wounded. Jack Maloney subsequently joined the flying column under Sean Collison; there was Austin MacCurtain too, but Sean Glennon was our hero. So cool in any situation; he was an ex-Irish Guards man. Only for him they would not have got out of the Modrenny ambush, but we will come to that later.

Some were at Borrisokane who had rifles, and some were hoping, if we captured the barracks, to acquire them. It lasted a few hours and we were getting anxious. As I say, we had the roads blocked, but Nenagh and Birr were not far away. There were big military garrisons there and we had to pay attention to that. Then something happened in the Terryglass direction; lights were seen approaching. It was a false alarm, but the operation was called off. Anyway it was well worthwhile even though it glamourised a lot of lads. *You know he was at Borrisokane*, became a saying about certain people, and if you were out five miles away, blocking a road, you got no mention.

Things went on building up from that. There were the usual attacks on policemen, seizure of mails, blowing bridges. We had a flying column now. I was not in it, but we had the task of mounting security and finding safe billets for them. Still I must say the spirit that time was so good that the chances of betrayal were very remote. Needless to say if anyone did do that the punishment would be severe.

## JAMES AND TOM DEVANY

James Devany of Toomevara, whom I have mentioned earlier, was in the column. Between here and Nenagh there was a country pub which was being rebuilt. They had a bar out in a shed in the yard pro tem. Four of them went in to have a drink, or more likely to find a quiet place for conversation. At this time, the Tans were on the go and they had a platoon in Cloughjordan. They brought supplies by Crossley tender from Nenagh. The tender was seen approaching so they all ran out. There was a shooting affray. The Tans did not even pull up. They thought they were being ambushed, so they poured a fusillade into the yard and into the shed. It was one of those that accounted for Devany. James was badly wounded and died shortly afterwards. The other three got away.

I happened to be at the market that day in Cloughjordan when the lorry came in at great speed. Instantly the rumours ran around that there had been an ambush at Kyle, a good spot for one, but it was not that. James's brother, Thomas, was killed shortly after by the Tans. He was a member of my company, one of our officers, and one of the finest men I have ever met. He had a great sense of military style, combined with innate flair and ability, which it was surprising to find in one that grew up upon a small farm in the countryside. The lads had picked up this stranger in Toomevara who had arrived in, and whom they were suspicious of. He was brought to a house nearby<sup>(2)</sup> and tried, but acquitted. Only Paddy Whelan was against letting him go. He was an enemy spy, however, and he led the military back to Devany's. They lay in wait and shot Thomas as he came in from the fields. That was only a few weeks after the death of his brother. It was a harsh double tragedy for his parents.

There was an order sent down a while before that to have a go at the R.I.C. in Toomevara. This may have been October, 1920, because the devotions were on at the time and people were being asked to pray for peace. Anyway one night at the far end of the village, they walked into an ambush set for them and two R.I.C. men were shot dead. There was another ambush planned, the Middle Walk ambush, beside the Nenagh to Cloughjordan railway but it never took place. The road was trenched and all preparations were made. The only person allowed through was a priest serving a parish close to Nenagh. It is thought that he informed the military. They did not come at the appointed time. Instead they came out the Birr road and came over Ballygiven hill, but our lads got wind of their approach and were gone.

## MODRENNY

I come back now to the Modrenny ambush. It was very skilfully



carried out. By this time the training had reached a high pitch of efficiency. It was planned on the Cloughjordan-Borrisokane road at the point where it is intersected by the Nenagh-Birr road known as the Blackbush corner. First you must understand a little more of the geography. Below here is the Nenagh-Cloughjordan road. Then there is another to the north west that we will call the Birr road. There are small hills in between. It is almost parallel with the first one. The Tans and military were coming from Borrisokane. The first portion was a cycling column, about a dozen men, followed by two lorries. They came under the fire of a unit armed with shotguns, an auxiliary unit chosen for that purpose. At such close quarters they wiped them out. That meant twelve lovely rifles for us and some ammunition.

The main battle however took place with the lorries. All the lads engaging them had rifles; they formed the main body of the column. From where I was, I was not in it, I could hear all the shots and I must say they thrilled me to the core. It was a completely successful ambush. As far as I can remember then, Sean Gaynor was O.C. of the Brigade and Sean Collison was O.C. of the Column. I liked him well and I admired the family even though he took the Free State side after. He and a companion called Austin MacCurtain were killed in an engagement with Republicans in Laois later on. Sean Glennon was another good man in the Column. He had been in the Irish Guards. He played a big part with us because he had such wide experience. He helped greatly to build the military capacity. He was one of those men who insisted, *no drink, no smokes, no nothing*. He was an out and out disciplinarian. One other experience that I should mention was a decision we made to defend our creamery at Toomevara. It was Tan policy to burn these as reprisals. The creamery in Nenagh had already been burned together with six business premises. We expected this time that they might try to burn ours, so we met in a place called The Sandpits. Wedger was O.C. Now he was great at giving encouragement, but as a military man he had not a clue. First of all we were being asked to proceed from where we were billeted, across an open field, into the jaws of what could have been a trap. We would have been like sitting ducks inside the creamery building. It was not a thing that Sean Collison would have done. A lot of the lads had no weapons. There were a few rifles, some shotguns and short arms. Then the order was given: *Everyone with a weapon stand up*. I had none, but just at that moment someone pushed one into my hand. However, although lorries of Tans passed close to us that day, the creamery was not attacked and we were able to withdraw from what might have become a precarious situation.

I can say that in the winter and spring of 1920-21, there was hardly a night that we were not out, blocking roads or lying in wait somewhere.



In many ways the Column had it easier than we had. They were full-time at it and could rest. We had to do our work next day. I must say this for all the fellows I came in contact with, they did not know what fear was. They never considered what they were up against, the kind of enemy and its equipment. Against this they pitched only simplicity and faith. They all believed it was victory or nothing else, that we were winning and going to win. There was no despondency when someone was killed; it was a sacrifice of course, but it instilled more determination and energy to go on with the struggle and to win.

#### A PAUSE BUT NOT A VICTORY

When the Truce came I had no doubt about it. It was a pause, but not a victory. Unfortunately the great bulk of the lads thought they had won, and were lulled into this by the accolades poured upon people like Collins as *the man who had won the war*. (3) In the circumstances, the fact that it was the contribution of the whole people and not the effort of any single person or personalities was overlooked. Personalities became overvalued while the unity within the movement declined. Meanwhile the Truce was availed of in many ways. Lads on the run could come home again. Some were released from prison. There were celebrations and a general air of relaxation. I have to hand it to the English that they understand so well the psychology of this kind of thing. They knew what would happen. Once the lads came home, frequently as conquering heroes, they would have no wish to go out again. That is the great danger when a volunteer army stands down. There was even the humorous side, when fellows that had never been out tried to appear like men of the column; they would get an old trench coat and strap on leggings and boots. That part of it was harmless and sure no one would know the difference.

I would say that the vast majority of our company were against the Treaty when the terms were announced. It had a dampening effect however, all the old enthusiasm seemed to fade, to drain away from us. We had all thought for sure we would be together again rather than accept this, and here we were wasting our time and bickering among ourselves by debating it.

I remember in February, 1922, I attended an anniversary Mass for Thomas Devany. Afterwards there was a discussion with some of the Brigade officers present. Five or six of us were told to be ready the following Monday. We would be collected and brought to a certain place. More were taken from Nenagh and others from Roscrea. We were brought to Maryborough, where we were installed in the military barracks which had just been handed over to Padraig MacLogan. We still considered ourselves one army, the Republican Army. There was

no discord among us at that time. Besides which full-time soldiering had a certain fascination for me. I enjoyed being out on parade in the dark of the morning. Sean Glennon was O.C. of the barracks, and we fulfilled all the functions of a garrison. The evacuation was not complete. The Tans were still in the police barracks, but it was only a matter of time before that was handed over also.

#### TENSION

Then, when Birr barracks was taken over, Sean Glennon went there, and another great favourite of mine, Commandant Joe Mangan, killed afterwards on active service, was put in charge. I was so close to Joe, that I could nearly say I was second in command. We were there anyway for some weeks training away when the whispering began. *Things are not going well*, they said. Small disputes and rumours were inflated. Then on a Friday close to Easter, fifteen of us were brought by lorry to Nenagh. From there it was arranged that we would travel by train to Limerick. We marched down to William Street barracks, which had been occupied by the Auxiliaries, but which they had now evacuated. I must say they left it in stinking condition. That weekend the first real military split occurred in Limerick. Thirty of us occupied King John's Castle, still a barracks, while we listened to the rumours of what was happening outside. The Cork Brigade, under Barry, had arrived and was occupying hotels on behalf of the Republicans. We represented the 3rd Southern, the O.C. of which was Sean Gaynor, comprising five brigades from North Tipperary, Offaly 1 and 2, Laois 1 and 2. (Second Southern covered mid-Tipperary and that area. First Southern was primarily Cork.)

We were there exactly a week when we were brought together and paraded in a room. This officer, a fine cut of a man, came in. It was none other than Commandant Mick Brennan of Clare. He was Free State Chief of Staff later. He addressed us and this was the substance of it: *There would be no other army other than the Irish Republican Army. The reasons we had accepted the situation created by the Treaty was because it gave us an opportunity to train, to get arms and to build up an efficient military force. When all this was done, he had no doubt but that the fight would go on.*

A great many lads, probably Brennan himself, sincerely and honestly believed that that was how things would proceed. That evening we got our vouchers to go on the train to Birr where we took over the barracks there. Parades and training continued as before. We were still a united army, or at least the 3rd Southern was. Yet underneath it somewhere lurked an air of discontent, of misgiving, that no one could put a finger upon, and that no speeches or arguments



could dispel. One of the factors contributing maybe to this was that half of the barracks was occupied by 120 men of the First Eastern, fully rigged out in Free State uniform, under a Captain Boylan, with a Lieutenant Mooney under him. They were there on their own and were in no way subject to any of our officers. You could see from this that something was brewing, something that we did not understand. We were not in uniform ourselves, we had just Sam Brownes and trench coats, short arms and some rifles. There were men there, Paul McKenna, a great hurler, Danny Costello, Tom Lawless and Jim O'Meara and more that I knew very well, and of course Sean Glennon was still O.C. I remember this day I was in charge of the guard. Birr barracks is laid out like a big H with an archway through the cross bar and a clock over it. I had to go back for something; as I returned I met this person obviously coming in to join. I was surprised because I recognised him as I.O. of our Second Battalion. *I think a lot of the lads are thinking of getting out*, I told him. *Are they?* said he, advancing, carrying a small pasteboard suitcase. *Yes*, said I, *and I may not stay too long myself*. Who was he, but the man we knew in later years as General Michael J. Costello. That was the last time I ever met him.

Then this morning we all got notice to appear on parade; no one was excused, not even the First Eastern. We paraded in one of the squares facing east when an officer mounted a few steps to address us. It was a carefully chosen moment. The sunlight fell upon his figure as he made the briefest address you could imagine: *All who are prepared to stand in defence of the Republic, take one step forward*.

The First Eastern did not stir. They would have to have a direction on this, said an officer. Nor did Michael J. Costello. He remained where he was. The rest of us all stepped briskly forward. And at that moment Birr barracks became a stronghold of the Republic. Men had entered the quarters of the First Eastern and removed their rifles and equipment, all British supplied anyway. There was nothing they could do now except march out. And the officer who came to address us? It was none other than Andy Cooney.

Thereafter we continued with our military routine as before. A detachment was however sent to Mullingar where trouble was brewing. Actual hostilities had not yet opened up however when I was transferred to Roscrea, to what is still the police barracks. One story I must relate though, before I leave Birr completely. I remember a morning in April when a squadron of small vans arrived from the north of Ireland. At that time the roads were not tarmacadamed the way they are today. It was easy to see from the way they were covered in a fine white dust that they had travelled far. I remember looking closely at them and I recognised the number plates of Tyrone and Derry under the grime. They stayed overnight, and the next morning



they disappeared terribly early. They were proceeding to what we later learned was a rendezvous near Ballynagaul, Co. Waterford. That evening they returned again and it was clear from the way they sat down on their wheels that they were loaded down with something, weapons we supposed. Those were the guns brought on the schooner *Hannah*. It was part of the build-up to where we expected the final stage of the struggle would be fought.

Meanwhile Joe Mangan was placed in charge of our forces in Nenagh. I was at home when I heard of the attack upon the Four Courts. I must say the bulk of us never thought it would come to that. I returned at once to the barracks at Roscrea. We were ordered to vacate that evening and proceed to the assistance of Nenagh where hostilities had already started. When we neared it however, we found our lads in retreat out of it. There was no cohesion and no plan of campaign. We had arrived to support Nenagh only to find they were leaving it. We had evacuated Roscrea, and we left our strong point in Birr a short while after. After that we were fooling around here and there, not too sure of what action we should take. Wedger Maher was in charge for a while, but he gave up a short time after and took no further part in the struggle.

#### TURMOIL IN ATHLONE

Liam Carroll of Roscrea, an officer of the I.R.A. at that time, interjected here to explain that he and a party of five volunteers were in Athlone on the night of 24th April, that the Free State officer, Brigadier George Adamson, was shot dead. It was one of the unruly events that in retrospect was used to precipitate civil war, although at the time disclaimed and condemned by the Republican forces. *There were six of us*, said Liam, *And I forget now what purpose we had being there.* Tom Burke, also known as Squint Burke, Brigade O.C., Offaly, I recall, was a member of our party. We arrived in a Model T Ford, and were lodged in Claxton's Hotel, now rebuilt as the Prince of Wales Hotel. Shooting started outside, and Free State soldiers seemed to be all over the place. The six of us left the hotel at once and crossed into the old churchyard which is still there. There was a terrific hullabaloo going on all around. We had no idea at the time what was happening, our sole desire was to stay out of whatever trouble was afoot. We therefore made our way out of Athlone that night. The next day however, on learning what had happened, I came back in and took possession of the motorcar which had been untouched. Along with some of the others I sat into the car and drove home, back to Banagher.

Following this, continued Liam, an inquiry was held in Mullingar,

into the shooting of George Adamson, at which I was present. It was held in the courthouse, then garrisoned by Jack Maloney (who was present during this conversation) along with other Republican forces under the command of Tom Lawless. Sean Gaynor, our Divisional O.C., was in Mullingar for it. The inquiry broke up in disorder. There were some very angry words and guns were drawn. This was the prelude to the attack which followed that very night by Free State forces upon the courthouse and other Republican posts in Mullingar, which resulted in their evacuation(4). Following this, Millmount in Drogheda was bombarded. One could say that the shooting of George Adamson in Athlone — which Republicans believe was done by one of McKeon's bodyguard — precipitated an attack on posts in towns across the country and their loss to the Republican forces.

Meanwhile, continued Liam, Bill White, a veterinary student from the Ferbane district, who was good on chemistry, and had learned some of his stuff from Sean Russell and Jim O'Donovan, was making Irish cheddar, the so-called war flour, by the barrel. Co-operating with him was Paddy O'Meara of Crinken, near Birr. He had a foundry going there which successfully cast the grenade case, the spring mechanism, neck and all. He did not need much instruction to get going, just half a look at a thing. He had an old Ford car rigged up, interjected Jack, blowing the bellows, that was keeping the molten metal hot. The moulds were made by Kieran Neligan, a blacksmith from near Johnstown.

The reason why Squint Burke was pulled so quickly from Mullingar, chipped in Liam at this point, was because there came an SOS from H.Q. in Dublin to stop McKeon breaking out of Athlone and moving south into Limerick, where our forces held some of the posts. I had been engineer with Offaly No. 2, and the hair often stands on my head these days, when I read about explosions and consider the chances we used to take. What with carrying around biscuit tins of war flour, cans of paraffin wax, sticks of gelignite in your pocket to soften them up, it is a wonder there were not far more accidents.

It was thought McKeon might come down the Shannon by boat. Our first assignment therefore was to immobilise the Victoria Lock on the Shannon Canal, which we did. Between that and Borris-in-Ossory we then blew twenty-three bridges. I can remember well boring the holes in the middle of the road, putting down plenty of the war flour, shoving down sticks of gelignite, then going back with a car battery and ducking my head as I pressed the contacts. How we escaped I don't know.

#### TWILIGHT

An attack was made about this time on the Free State held barracks



in Nenagh, and the Republican Commandant in charge, Jimmy Nolan, was killed. I was suffering from pneumonia at the time, continued Dan, and had no part in that. There were a good many engagements in North Tipperary as the Free Staters continued mopping up. I still had no active part in any of these. Some of us continued to hope that this was only a passing phase, and that we would all be together again.

Jack Maloney came in here with a story that illuminates the harassment and the hopelessness of the Republican situation in late 1922. Myself and Paddy and Charlie Nolan were sent to meet four of the party of 99 that had escaped from a tunnel out of Newbridge. Two were from Kerry and two were from Limerick. They were Jackie Price, McKenna, Coffey and Tim Healy. We were all on straw in a fine new house up in Summerhill. This morning early I heard the noise of a Crossley. When I looked out I saw the Staters coming up the hill in open formation. They were clearly making for where we lay. We rushed out without coats and lay in a mountain drain where the water poured down upon us. Paddy Temple saw them then come down the hill towards the house where they were joined by the force that had come from below. Without delay we crept upwards, still keeping inside the fold of the drain. We kept on the mountain before swinging across to a big house where the caretaker was Tony McDowell. We were barely in when Paddy says, *there is something telling me not to stop here tonight*. So out we all went again and over to Paddy Hayes where we lodged in the haybarn. We were all half soaked and without raincoats. Next morning Mrs. O'Meara came out with a bucketful of fresh boiled blue duck eggs, a kettle of tea and fresh home-made bread. Did we feel at peace with life again? I'll say we did! But we had to help our four escapees along. So reluctantly we set out again across Coolroe bog, with Paddy in front. He was a divil to walk. Then taking this big step forward, we saw him sink to his shoulders in a green patch that he took to be grass. *Well, the curse of Jasus on De Valera*, he cried, as he dragged himself out of it. We reached Bill Quinlan's of Ballinakill, a good old house. There was no woman in the place. Bill and the brother lived alone, looking after themselves. *Oh, sure boys, it won't be long till we feed ye*, as he shook flour upon the middle of his table. Then with plenty of spuds still in their jackets, hot griddle bread and a slab of farmer's butter in their stomachs, the famished lads rolled in again on top of the hay.

The executions started in November and continued on every month, Dan went on. That put all ideas about a coming together out of our heads. Commandant Joe Mangan got in touch with me then. He had no time for a few fellows running around aimlessly. *Would I join an active service unit to defend the Republic?* I said I would. Just at that time, however, the Free Staters in Cloughjordan raided our house and



arrested my brother Paddy and another fellow. They had come on bicycles, so they made the prisoners walk before them into the town. They were there only a few hours, and that evening — it was Friday, 3rd March, — a Lieutenant Flanagan, he was from somewhere around Portarlinton, accompanied by an officer, whose name I have too, from Dublin, entered. *Do you want to visit the toilet?* they said. It was a W.C. in the yard outside. *Ah, sure no*, said Paddy. *Well, this is your last chance before we lock you up for the night*, said Flanagan. *Alright so*, said Paddy again, *I'll go*. As he crossed the yard, he was shot dead from behind. One of their soldiers that was on the guard that night gave me the whole story just a few years ago. It was an unofficial killing, one of many, but it was passed off with the excuse that he had been shot while trying to escape. And at the time, with control of the newspapers and everything else in their hands, no one could question it. The real reason we knew was that there had been a big round-up of the Column attempted a few days before near Moneygall, a round-up that failed, and some of their men were shot in the subsequent action.

I did not get the chance after that to take any part. Within six days Commandant Joe Mangan himself was mortally wounded in an action near Nenagh. It was the end virtually of the struggle in this area. Offensive action was suspended throughout the nation on the 30th April, and that was followed by the "dump arms" order on May 24th.

As for me, said Liam, I was caught under extraordinary circumstances in March 1923. We were then only a small unit in the Rathcabban area, between Portumna and Banagher. It was the dying days of the Civil War and there were not many of us left. I found myself near the Blue Ball about three miles from Tullamore. Paddy O'Meara, Mick Seery from South Offaly ASU, Mick Carroll, Peter Kelly and Dick Whelan who had been a member of Sean McKeon's unit, formed our group. We had temporary quarters in an old mansion there. We had some terrific escapes because we were being closely pursued by a Free State officer who had been active with us in the Tan war. One morning, I don't know what came over me, but I said to the lads, *get into the boat on the lake and row out to the island*. Lying there in the bullrushes, we watched the place being ransacked for us. I made my way from there accompanied by Martin Morris. We commandeered a car preparatory to joining a unit under Joe Mangan and Sean Daly at Pollenagh, Dolla. Proceeding along we found ourselves blocked by a party of soldiers. A few days after that Sean Daly, Joe Mangan and the few lads with them were surrounded at Tullymoylan and Mangan was killed.

I was taken from Birr to Wellington Barracks and then on to Gormanston where there were about 1,200 prisoners. Most of them were from the south of Ireland, although the camp was under the

control of the Dublin Brigade. Among them were Sean T. O'Kelly, Paddy Houlihan, Oscar Traynor, Mick Tallon, Sean O Muineachain and others. (Tom Barry had escaped by walking out of the camp just a few days after I arrived. I will always remember it because he came south through Lorrha afterwards, where I come from, and on his way collected a Thompson machine gun, the only one we had, and brought it on to Cork with him.) There was a tunnel going of course, but it was confronted with more technical difficulties than the usual tunnel. Gormanston, as far as I know, was a creation of the First World War and much of it was built upon made ground close to the beach. To tunnel out it was necessary to go below this made ground, to the solid earth and work on from there. I was at it for months on end, making straight across the camp in the direction of an old quarry outside the perimeter at the north end. We were within about a week of realising our ambition when, with scarcely any notice, we were moved. Most of us went to the cavalry barracks in Newbridge, where every part of it, including the stables, were used to house prisoners. Lo and behold, there was another tunnel proceeding there. However, I did not see much of that as I was taken out and placed for some weeks in the glasshouse in the Curragh. From there I was transferred to Birr, where I was charged with robbery under arms. This was harkening back to my activity of March, the previous year, when I had commandeered a motor car. We were tried in Nenagh, but the lad from whom I took the car failed to turn up so the case was dismissed. It was early summer of 1924, and I was released. My brother, who was imprisoned at the same time, was released a while before me.

Jack Maloney came in here. I was in Roscrea on the morning of 15th January, 1923, when four Volunteers(5) were executed. One of them, Martin O'Shea, was the brother of Ned present with us. There was a Mrs. Eileen Phelan who ran a small hotel there. She overheard some officers speak of executions to come off the next day. She got word to us and I came in with Barney Brady from Tullamore. We met there in the garage. We were not sure what was to happen. We went up to a room in the hotel, hoping to find out more. Had we known for certain it would have been easy to ascend a building, where Shaw's is now, overlooking the barracks, and pick off the firing party from it. It could not have saved our lads but at least it would have been some sort of an action. Grimsel from Portlaoise was in charge of that barrack, not the best type by all I heard. A priest from Templemore was called by the Staters to attend the men the night before — they rarely had more than a few hours notice — he refused to come, so Fr. Maloney from this town, later Canon, went instead.

While heretofore North Tipperary had been a brigade, in future, now that the war had ended and due to the reduction in numbers, it



would be a battalion. We all understood that and plans were made accordingly. Jim Mangan, who was a brother of Joe, joined with me, Dan continued, and we organised a local company of the I.R.A. here. Then in 1926 Fianna Fail was formed. This resulted in great confusion as one of its objectives was stated to be the abolition of the Oath. Their policy seemed to duplicate exactly the policy of the I.R.A., with the result that many of the lads joined them and were lost to us. Certainly of the people I saw at the re-organisation meeting in Jim Mangan's house, very few of them appeared with us after. They joined De Valera's Party, as it was called. He carried out a few stunts, such as appearing in the North and having himself arrested, and this consolidated his position.

#### EMIGRATION

The cream of the lads went to America, said Liam. Paddy Lackan was one of the wild geese. I was all set to go myself, but wiser counsels prevailed. However, Paddy Doherty, Mike(6) and Peter Flannery, and a lot of the Offaly lads, Jim Brien and Dick Fagan, went. It was next to impossible to get a job here, and if you did get one you might only have it when you would be arrested for something and your chances spoiled again. I was the first Republican in this area to get a semi-official post as an assistance officer under the then Minister for Local Government, James Burke of Rockforest. At that time it was obligatory to take an oath of allegiance to the Free State. I was appointed. I refused to take the oath and the matter was never mentioned to me again. The second man appointed, who also refused to take an oath, was Denis Healy, engineer, whom we lately buried in Holy Cross.

Meanwhile, efforts were being directed to having a monument erected in Nenagh to the memory of all those who had died in the struggle, continued Dan. The council, it is said, had been thinking of giving the site for the purpose of a war memorial, but we got in first, and a brass plate was put in the ground, pending completion of the stone. At one of these meetings, I spoke to a G.H.Q. officer on the situation regarding Fianna Fail. He assured me that there could be no ambivalence on this; you could be a member of the I.R.A. or you could be a member of Fianna Fail, but you could not be a member of both.

Saor Eire came then. I understood that it might be necessary to try different ways to reach the same objective. There might be other ways apart from the military approach. There was a world-wide economic slump then, which favoured Fianna Fail, and I suppose our people wished to take advantage of it too. But other political changes came too quickly, and Fianna Fail's victory a few months later meant that



there could be no future for Saor Eire. I did not see the victory of Fianna Fail as a victory for us.

*A quill and a penny bottle of ink*, De Valera said, *would do all the work of the Governor General*. The people were not looking for pensions, but there were many with Free State pensions, and we would have been glad to see them lose them. We were led to believe that this might happen. Instead more pensions and doles were given out. Pensions as low as £7 per year were paid to people, but they were grateful for them. They were bought and stayed bought; people were De Valera-ites when they should have been Republicans. He dismantled many of the symbols of the Free State without changing its political and social status in any way. We were however distracted by the onset of the anti-blueshirt campaign. We bore the brunt of that. Afterwards I often thought, should we have bothered with it? Should we have become involved? It was like the Civil War again, with the Free State Army running around impounding cattle. I thought that was wrong. My sympathy was with a lot of the people that were losing their cattle.

I knew Peadar O'Donnell, Gilmore and Frank Ryan very well. I had a very high opinion of George Gilmore; Frank Ryan was completely different, boisterous and lively, but loved by all. None of them contacted me about the formation of Republican Congress in 1934; I would not have gone with it anyway. Earlier on Padraig MacLogan was well-known and highly thought of around this area. *A unique individual*, said Liam Carroll. *A great man for detail*, they all agreed.

I was one of the men on the courtmartial of Sean Russell in the early summer of 1936. There had been a number of courtmartials of other important men before that, Peadar O'Donnell, Frank Ryan, Mick Price, and so on. I had not been on those, but I mention them only to show that another fallen star from the G.H.Q. firmament was not considered unusual. Tomás Ó Maoileóin was at that time on the Army Executive. Sean MacBride was newly appointed Chief of Staff after Moss Twomey's arrest, and Donal O'Donoghue was Adjutant General. Tomás informed me that I had been selected to participate; he brought me to Dublin to the house of Dr. Andy Cooney, where I met the other members of the court. Sean MacSwiney, Jimmy Dolan and Ned Kerrigan. To my mind it was a fiasco of a courtmartial. They were challenging him on the misappropriation of funds and the withholding of documents. MacBride, McLogan and Donal O'Donoghue were there. Tom Barry also; he had called for the courtmartial and pressed MacSwiney into being a member of it. Russell, as far as I can remember now, chose to have no one to speak for him. He had long harboured a deep resentment against MacBride and Barry. None of us however felt happy in our roles, although the upshot of it was that he was expelled.

On balance I came later to hold the same views as Sean Russell. It may be true what you say and what Moss Twomey reportedly found<sup>(7)</sup> on his visits to the English units, that they were ill-prepared and too weak to sustain the 1939 bombing campaign; yet I believe that if a military group involves itself solely in politics, it will eventually have to choose a role that is wholly political with all that that implies. Russell was the first one to my mind to enunciate the policy of non-attack in the Twenty-six Counties. He obviously hoped that if the I.R.A. could carry out successful attacks upon the English mainland, it must eventually spill over into the Six Counties as well.

For my part, the most important aspect of my life's work does not lie in the 1919-21 period at all, but in my activity in helping to rebuild the Movement since 1950. But that is a chapter which I would prefer to leave closed until some other time.

#### REFERENCES

1 The second ambush that was ever in Ireland, the second after Soloheadbeg, explained Liam Carroll at this point, was here in Lorrha in 1919, and it has never been written up or mentioned by anybody. It was entirely a local effort against a patrol of four R.I.C. who went out from the village. They were ambushed near a disused quarry about midway between Lorrha and Carrigahorig. It was carried out by six or eight lads with a few single shotguns and double-barrel shotguns. Two of the police were shot dead and one was wounded. The fourth ran down Annagh lane and got away. Three police carbines were captured, which was thought to make it worthwhile. The condemnations that rang out were loud and long. There was an old priest there in Lorrha, Fr. Gleeson, he was hardly able to get over it. Pulpit and press joined in the imprecations. The fellow that escaped, McCarthy was his name, was courting a girl in the Lascelles estate near Portumna. She, he thought, was showing affection towards a John Joseph Madden from the same neighbourhood. For reasons of jealousy, evidently, he had Madden accused of taking part. The evidence, although fabricated, was strong against him. He was charged with the murder of two constables. The trial went to Green Street in Dublin, where the star witness, by name Gilligan, was paraded. Tim Henly, was counsel for the defence and he succeeded in breaking Gilligan. But the whole story, of which this is only a bare outline, as recounted in the *Nenagh Guardian* of the time, is a thrilling one. Modreenny ambush: see O'Malley's *Raids and Rallies* for a detailed account.

2 McCarthy's on the Pallas road.

3 There were bonfires, toasts and rejoicings . . . The curfew ended. The ordinary man could enjoy the driest summer of the century. The restriction on motor travel was abolished . . . Within a few days creameries were re-opening, markets and fairs were announced. There was a widespread impression that Britain had capitulated and that her troops would soon be withdrawn . . . Mellows, Brugha and Etchingham set off for Wexford like schoolboys . . . "Wexford welcomes its great hero," ran the headlines of the *Enniscorthy Echo*. At last the terror was at an end — *Liam Mellows*, by Desmond Greaves.

4 See account of Con Casey.

5 Frederick Burke, Patrick Russell, Martin O'Shea and Patrick McNamara.

6 Treasurer of Northern Aid U.S.A., 1972 and later.

7 In conversation with the writer.

## Tom Maguire

*Commandant General, I.R.A.  
(Second Division)*



*We had been escorted in by Tom and were seated with him and his wife in their comfortable two storey house — rebuilt after its destruction in 1921 — on the banks of the fast flowing River Cross.*

My mother was Mary Greham from this parish. We were very close; she had an uncle who had been in the Fenians. My father was William, from here also. The tradition was that a regiment of Maguires from Fermanagh fought under Cúconnacht Mór at Aughrim against the Williamites in 1691. They moved in here gradually after that. My great grandfather, Martin, was the first to come to this village, Cross, in the 18th century. William Mark, or Liam Márchis, was an earlier grandparent. The tradition is that, when the French landed at Killala in August 1798, he travelled from Headfort to Cong, borrowed the horse of his uncle the Abbot of Cong — an O'Malley — and galloped off to meet them. He joined Humbert around Castlebar and remained with him until Ballinamuck. These Christian names, Liam Márchis, have remained in our family ever since.

My father was also active in the Fenian Movement. We had a good organisation in South Mayo. The Boycott farm is only a few miles from here. I am talking of post 1867 Fenianism. The men that made the backbone of the Land League in 1879 and after in the Plan of Campaign were Fenians. At the same time he thought my nationalism was a little advanced. The Movement had broken up and fragmented and there had been a lot of bitterness over it. I suppose he did not want me disappointed too. *I see you walking the roads with people who will betray you*, he would say. He never entirely trusted De Valera, even when he was at the height of his popularity. His father had been evicted when my father was only three years old. He was evicted from the Anderson estate. They were lucky however, that they had their trade of vehicle building and wheel making to turn to. I was born in 1892, the



fourth child of eleven. My two elder brothers and a sister emigrated, a comparatively low proportion when one considers the poor prospects people had of surviving at home.

I always had what I will call military leanings. I loved reading about battles, both at home and abroad. The nationalist and separatist papers however, did not reach our home so I cannot say that I was influenced by them. My father however was anti-parliamentarian; so it was natural that I would be also. However, one time when they were seeking a banner for a festive occasion, they asked him to design one. Under his direction, a local painter, by name of Willie Brett from Ballinrobe, painted a picture of George Blake, who lived not far from here. He joined Humbert's army, and was later executed at Castlebar. He had been in the British Army himself, his brother Richard was a famous duelist, they were lesser members of the landed gentry around here, they had no great national leanings, but something sparked off George when he saw the green cockades to go off and lead them. My father had not known George Blake, but he had sufficient descriptions from those that did, that this painter was able to make a fair representation of him. The most striking thing on the banner were lines taken from Thomas Davis:

Slaves and dastards stand aside  
Knave and traitors fág a bealach.

That would have been around 1910. My father got a great delight out of instilling this bit of nationalism into them.

#### OUR FIRST RAID

Shortly after the Volunteers were founded in 1913, I joined them. I was well aware of the issues when Redmond split them with his recruiting speech for the British Army in 1914. There were only a few of us here however when 1916 came and of course we could play no part. The Easter insurrection came to me like a bolt from the blue, I will never forget my exhilaration, it was a turning point in my life. To think that Irishmen, were fighting England on the streets of Dublin: I thanked God for seeing such a day. Liam Mellows was active in this part of the country, but he never came here. The first properly organised company in this area was formed in 1917. When the conscription crisis of April 1918 broke we were flooded out with recruits. I welcomed them in, but although I did so, I thought I should test them out on a few route marches. That finished most of them, they melted away. There is a story told of a man 'at stations' here who was asked by the priest in confession, *were you ever in the I.R.A.? I was*

*indeed, answered the man, but Tom Maguire brought us on a few marches for a couple of nights and I could not keep up with him.*

We had no arms at all at this stage. However, there were eight rifles in this village that I coveted very much and they were not too far from where we are sitting now, but they were well guarded; they were in the R.I.C. barracks. Now, as you know, the Royal Irish Constabulary, were trained as a military force, very much like the R.U.C. today, for holding down a subject people. I used to see them here, as a boy, being drilled every morning by the sergeant. There is a place, a mile from here, called Faunchenagh, with no town or village, or public house nearby. I saw the police being marched from the Neale to the fair there, complete with helmets and rifles, keeping watch all day, and clearing the place in the evening by going in and pucking the fellows with their rifles. They were a completely military trained force, an extension of the British Army, except that they wore different uniforms. They were a splendid body for the purpose. Those that remained in it were terribly bitter towards the end, far tougher fighters to have to deal with than the soldiers.

There was no barracks here at first, they patrolled from the Neale. Then a hut was fixed up for them about the start of the century, to be followed by a barracks. It was not the conventional stone built structure; it was a timber frame and brick. Of course when the troubles came it was heavily sandbagged, and was as strong as any other. We are about five miles here from the border of County Galway at Headford. When I was a little boy they walked that, from the Neale to there and back again, all of sixteen miles every day, and they knew every house and person along the way. That was before they got bicycles.

Now to come forward again to 1920. There was then one brigade in Co. Mayo. Joe MacBride was O.C., that is the Major's brother, Sean's uncle. Dick Walsh was adjutant. Now he was a good little man but not really the fighting type. I had heard the police might leave here, and if they did that would be the end of the eight rifles. So I went to Dick Walsh, as my nearest senior officer, and told him of my plan. He told me that there was a new order down from Dublin that all such operations must be vetted by them beforehand. *I will arrange a meeting with Richard Mulcahy, the Minister for Defence, he said.*

I went to Dublin to meet Mulcahy, and I told him of my plan to attack the Cross barracks. Now at that time these people were little gods, people even treasured their autograph on a letter. Mulcahy listened to my proposal carefully, and studied the sketches I drew out showing my whole plan of attack. After a while he nodded slowly and said: *It is a good plan, but you are not yet on the run down there and we know of the sound work you are doing. If the barracks is attacked and*



*you are involved, you will have to go on the run and your work is going to be less effective. If you could think of some plan whereby the barracks could be taken and you could prove you were somewhere else I would say go ahead.*

I came back here and I thought hard about it. I dropped out of things, making my movements very obvious to the police in the barracks, past whom I had to go whenever I left the village. The tension there must have relaxed too, because, whereas before, only two went to Mass, now six of them would go together leaving only two police in charge of the place. I figured that they would not be as sharp as the sergeant, and that it was during the latter's absence at Mass that I could carry out my plan.

I sent a message to Dick Walshe, my superior, outlining my proposal. He replied, offering to meet me in Claremorris, which is twenty miles from here. I did not like the idea of stirring out, but I mounted the bicycle anyway and cycled in to Claremorris. He did not turn up. I met instead, by accident two Volunteers, neither of whom were from my command. One of them, by name of Donleavy, had the reputation of being out in 1916. I therefore placed some confidence in him. The other chap was Harry Burke, a native of Claremorris. I told them of my plan. They offered to help. Now at that time George Maguire, a brother of the late Chief Justice Conor Maguire, was a demobbed British officer. He had been a doctor in the army, and Conor had got a month in jail for reading a proclamation. They were friendly to me, and I knew that they were sympathetic to the Movement. I therefore approached them and obtained the loan of two uniforms, which were a vital element in my plan.

I then arranged for Donleavy and Burke to come to Cross on a certain day. They would be met and brought to a wood where they could change into the uniforms. There would be a man positioned to see that the six police had entered the church. There was a good company of Volunteers from a place about ten miles from here. They would be placed in the porch to make sure that, should there be any noise from the barracks, they would not get out too easily. There would be a group of men placed directly opposite the barracks. On hearing the words *Hands Up*, they were to rush across in and collar the stuff. We had arranged for paraffin to be around, and when the raid had taken place the barracks would be burned down.

I went to Mass of course. When I came out, imagine my disappointment, the barracks was still there. Everything had gone like clockwork, with every man positioned, but our decoy had failed us at the vital moment. They were to arrive by car outside the barracks, which they did. I had arranged the car and driver for them. The door of the barracks opened. One of the police emerged and came down



to the car. The driver requested a fill of water, a common thing at that time. The policeman went in and returned with it. During all this time, with everybody poised, the 'officer' Donleavy remained immobile. He had got cold feet. When the last drop was poured in by the policeman, he whispered to the driver, *drive on*. The peeler sprang to attention, and saluted the departing car.

Apart from the loss of the eight rifles, I knew that we would not have the same opportunity again. Once a plan is set up and it does not come off, it is impossible to recreate the same circumstances for another go. And stunts like that, whenever they were successful, were a great morale boost for us.

We were badly equipped. We got no help in the way of material from Dublin. We would be told, *well the British have them, take them from them*. I was on such a begging trip to Dublin in October, 1920 about the time Sean Treacy was gunned down in Talbot Street. I met Collins then in Vaughans Hotel, it seemed like a regular G.H.Q. I could never understand how they got away with it for so long.

We did try another time to rush down the back door of the barracks in Cong. I approached the back door on a Sunday night, late in 1920, knocked hard and held my gun at the ready. A step approached along the corridor. My heart was thumping, I need not tell you. However, at the last moment, the footsteps stopped and the person inside withdrew. It was a solid place and they were not opening it, so we had to leave it.

The county was divided in September, 1920 into four brigade areas. I was then appointed Brigade O.C. of South Mayo. Michael Kilroy was active in West Mayo. Later he was appointed O.C. of the Fourth Western Division which included North Mayo, West Mayo and Connemara.

There was some agrarian trouble here too. People would clear land and that would involve us. There was a farm quite close here that they cleared, there was another one east of here, and one back the Ballinrobe direction at a place called Milehill. The people involved were no help to the Volunteers. They were just greedy and selfish, taking advantage of a situation. I used to get daily reports about them. In the Milehill case, I heard this day that they had planted the flag in it. *That is a bit too much*, I said, *insulting the flag*. I went out and told them that they would have to stop. So it stopped, they removed the flag and withdrew. I was coming out the same road shortly after. It was a pitch dark night, with very heavy showers and black clouds. You could see nothing. I had no light on my bike of course. I was coming from visiting a company six miles on the north side of Ballinrobe, at a place called Newbrook. Coming through the town I called on a soldier who lived alone, a Volunteer and a very intelligent man. I used to drop in on

him as he would always have some interesting bits of information. I dropped in on him this night, although it was late. He had not yet gone to bed. Placing a mug of cocoa before me, he sat down. Just at that moment we heard a patrol approaching outside. It passed by the house. They were on bicycles. *Now, said I, they are either going out to Milehill or to Sarsfield, both of them cleared farms. I will wait until they are past the turn for Milehill.*

We chatted on. I gave them plenty of time before setting off. It was pitch dark and raining heavily as I have said. I had topped Milehill and was freewheeling down when I found myself inside a herd of cattle, as I thought. *Heavens, I said, there is a right drive on tonight.* It was not cattle, it was the constabulary of course. Some were on their bikes, and some were getting on. They had no lights either, and in the dark with their billowy black capes it was very easy to mistake them. I was a wanted man, on the run, but there was nothing now to do but brush through as neatly as I could as though I was one of themselves. Wheeling and turning, I slipped ahead of them. I could not be sure however, that they had not identified me; a bullet in the back would settle that. I pedalled ahead furiously. It was a long, straight road. Would they suddenly open up and fire at me, I wondered. At that time it was commonplace for notices to appear, *Shot while trying to escape.* They could easily do me that way, but they did not. To this day, I do not know how I brushed past more than a dozen men without one of them reacting or becoming suspicious.

On this subject of agrarian trouble, and stepping back a little in time to May 1920, I recall what was, I think, one of the first Dail Eireann Land Courts to be held in Ballinrobe. Art O'Connor, B.L. and Kevin Shiels, B.L. were there constituting the court. Although Ballinrobe was close to a garrison town, I was able to provide protection for them to function openly in the Town Hall. The purpose of that court was to decide on the ownerships of these cleared lands. The court upheld the original owners. The reason was simple. Landlords were forever badly off for money in this part of the world; therefore the man who could scrape a few pounds together could get in. He might not have title, but it was his and it was not fair to put him out.

There always has been a history of land agitation in these parts. Lord Mountmorris was killed not far from here in 1880. There were the Maumtrasna murders when a man, his wife and three children were slaughtered in a peasant cabin on the 8th August, 1882; nobody ever knew why, but three local men, one of them innocent, were hanged for it. Joe Huddy was serving writs of ejectment on tenants of the Guinness's at a place called Crocbrack. He and his grandson were waylaid and their bodies cast into Lough Mask.

There were several ambushes planned by us about this time which



came to nothing. You would get information about a patrol and you would be in wait to waylay it. The night you would be prepared they would not come. There was a good deal of that but eventually our turn came.

#### KILFALL AMBUSH

We planned an attack on the road between Ballinrobe and Castlebar for the 7th March, 1921 at a place called Kilfall. We had information that a British party came that way on Mondays. Now, it was very bad ambush country, with little or no cover. As well as that it was market day in Ballinrobe, so we could not block the road. Then again, if we did block the road and nothing came along, it being the only spot where we had a chance of doing anything — it was finished. Anyway, we decided to have a rattle at them.

I picked three of my best marksmen to bring down the driver of the lorry. If you had him, you had the rest of them copped. Of course, you would be into the middle of it yourself, because once a fight was started you could not run away from it. So, initial surprise and advantage was of paramount importance. My first marksman anyway, was Martin Conroy from Gortnacaille near Srah in the Tourmakeady district. The first time that I encountered him was after I had been appointed O.C. I went up to see the Srah company. I had a chat with the men first — they were assembled in a field, and I then addressed the commander; *Ask them to fall in.* As they did so, this one backed away, a slight little man, he withdrew to one side. I spoke to the O.C. *Who is he? What is he doing here? He is a volunteer, and a reliable man, but he will not stand into a line to drill. He is a man you can rely on.*

In the meantime, I had got to know Martin better. He was very fond of fowling along the Partrys, an excellent shot. So I chose him as the one to pick off the driver. To make sure however, I placed three men, Martin, then another, then another.

Having placed them, I went back over each. *Now are you quite sure you will get your man?* Martin did not have to take a bird off the wing that day, and he knew it. *I am quite sure,* said he, *I'd get him if he was a snipe.*

The man in charge of the British party was a Capt. Chatfield; he had as his second in command, a man from the north of Ireland, Lieut. Craig. They were regularly drilled for dealing with an ambush, alighting from the vehicle, taking cover and returning fire. They were well drilled and were no easy cop. On this occasion, they were taken so much by surprise that only three soldiers and Craig succeeded in getting out. I had two fellows a little to the rear to cover the backs of the vehicles. One of these was a most reliable volunteer; he never



missed a drill or a parade or anything like that. I had not picked him in my original selection. I noticed then that he was very hurt about this. The second fellow was a good hefty lad. He had been in the R.I.C. but came out and brought a supply of Mills bombs with him. These I placed at the rear.

The leading lorry appeared and with that my marksmen's shots rang out. The fight was on with a few short bursts, and the ex-R.I.C. man, I could see was busy throwing his little grenades. But he must not have known to remove the pin because they were rolling down the road like pebbles and not exploding. At long last, I saw my other men taking aim and firing. We had the cartridges loaded up with buckshot and only a weak charge, so that they could be very wounding at close quarters. Immediately, they felt this, four of the enemy turned tail and fled up the road. We let them go. The others lay down, at the same time throwing their weapons away from them. They surrendered. Rushing out upon the road, I reached the lorry. There was a young soldier there, apparently dead, with his head hanging over the side. When he felt someone near him he looked up nervously. He was bleeding from the face. Opening the eyelids he gazed at me with anxious brown eyes, and I returned the stare, but I did nothing more except to tell him to drop everything he had and step out.

We had an ex-Irish Guards man with us that day, a man by the name of Michael Costello. Picking up one of our unexploded grenades, I saw him pull the pin out. *What are you doing with that*, said I. *I am going to lob it into the middle of these bastards*. Now, *none of that*, said I, holding his hand. Reluctantly he held his thumb upon the spring. *You don't know the ..... as long as I do*. I succeeded in taking the grenade from him.

#### TOURMAKEADY

One of our biggest operations after that was the ambush near Tourmakeady. The British had built a very strong barracks in a very commanding position at a place called Derrypark. We had not the explosives to attack it, and in any case, it would have been a big undertaking to do so. So after the smaller barracks in this area had been cleared, Cross, Cong, Clonbur, it was still left, a thorn in our side, in an area we badly wanted cleared.

There was one weakness in its situation however. It had to be supplied every month. A well-armed relief party went there on one of the commencing days of the month, but whether it might be the first, second or third I could not say. My intelligence was good but it was not good enough for that. However, they bought their supplies in a shop in Ballinrobe, Birmingham & Co., and in that shop worked a boy named

Patrick Vahey, who in later years would have been an uncle of Frank Stagg who died — many say he was killed — suffering intolerable conditions in English prisons in February, 1976. Anyway this boy was one of our Volunteers. When the police came to place their order he was to let us know.

Ever since Kilfall we were *on our keeping*, a flying column of around thirty men out in the open country sleeping where we could and when we could. The local units in each village were in an important back-up position, not, seemingly doing much, but contributing a lot in the way of supplies, intelligence, safe houses and of course impeding the enemy at every hand's turn.

It was the beginning of the month. We therefore decided to move. On the Saturday we came close to Derrypark. We lay low over the Sunday, and on the Monday the 3rd May, 1921, we took up positions. We were accompanied now by some local men, but we still had not heard from our source in Ballinrobe. Then, as we waited, we got the word; *they'll be along today*.

Five of them were killed and more wounded; we suffered no casualties. The ambush position was right in the middle of Tourmakeady where the road bends sharply and a gateway enters a house. A flanking wall commands the road. We had a couple of fellows, good shots, placed there. They stopped it. There was a second lorry close behind. When it heard the shots it tried to stop, but it had already entered the ambush position. Some of them were hit, too. One R.I.C. man that was in it lost an arm and died near here only very recently. Dismissing the local men we retired at once westwards into the hills. It was not long until the chase was on. A few hours later, at about twelve o'clock, we were contacted by a party of British troops. A running fight ensued. We withstood their attack with Lewis guns and rifle fire all day. There were two hundred and fifty or more of them, and of course they would have liked to out-flank and surround us. At one point I got hit. They were concentrating a terrible barrage on us just then. My adjutant, Michael O'Brien, crept over and tied me up, but I was still bleeding profusely. A party of them, led by a Lieut. Ibberson, moved up to outflank me. He was not in uniform, his frock-coat was off. He walked nonchalantly along, carrying a rifle, his bandolier across his white shirt. Suddenly taking aim he fired at O'Brien, who had just finished attending to me. He hit and fatally wounded O'Brien, who was in the act of picking up his rifle again, but at the same time, to my astonishment, I saw Ibberson collapse in shreds, his bandolier sliding off him, and his rifle falling to the ground as one of our lads got him. There was so much shooting and so much noise that I could not say where it came from, but it came from our side anyway, because there was a load of buckshot in it and it



splattered all over Eberson. He turned and ran; he could still run although his arms and body had pellets everywhere. When he turned up months afterwards in the court at Claremorris claiming damages, he still bore the scars.

Anyway, we held them off there for a day. It was a fine day in early summer, and unfortunately a long one. Crouched there in the fern, conserving our fire, we wondered if it would never end. They pressed us very hard. A couple of us were wounded and one was killed. I had six bullet wounds, yet, strangely, enough, I remained in full control of myself, and could stand up. As the hours crept by however, I became progressively weakened from loss of blood and shock. I found I could scarcely raise myself to look around.

It was dark at last, we had our first respite. Very lights shot into the air calling in the troops. We could hear the whistles too as they made their way back to the twenty four lorries that brought them. What a relief it was. We were left in possession of the field.

I was carried upon one fellow's back, my arms hanging down. The first house they came to, I was brought in and laid down. I was comfortable there, but feeling very weak. Very early in the morning two Volunteers arrived. *Are you able to move*, they asked? I had never taken spirits before, but that morning I was given a double egg flip mixed with whiskey and it did me a power of good. Leaning heavily upon both of them, I left the house and moved towards the end of the gable. Rounding it, there came a puff of wind, which flattened me. My legs buckled and I could travel no further. The British were everywhere, searching for stragglers such as myself; still there was nothing for it but to return to the cottage.

At that time there was a doctor in Tourmakeady village who had informed our lads that if ever he was needed he could be called upon. A message was conveyed to him by some youngster, and he came at once, but of course he could bring nothing with him. He rummaged around the house, picking up a few *sceilphs* of wood, and some bits of wool, and a clean flour bag. With these he improvised the necessary splints and bandages. I was inside that cordon from the Tuesday until the Saturday night. They were unable to move me out of it; neither could they leave me in a house. I had to be moved away outside and left in the bracken. On the Tuesday, it was a holy day, I remember, they were again carrying me early up the hill to place me in a hollow, and I could feel the trees and bushes striking the shawl they wrapped me in. At the same time an aeroplane came in low, so low it would deafen you, but it passed on. They left me in this hollow anyway, and retired down again. They had scarcely gone when it commenced to pour rain. In a short while I was soaked through. I don't know if you have ever lain soaked through but if it is not too cold it can almost be a



pleasurable experience. While I lay like that I could hear the soldiers about me, methodically criss-crossing and retracing their steps. I was as near as that, but they did not find me. At long last, in the evening the whistles were again blown, and I could hear the sound of the lorries starting up.

They got me out on the Saturday night. They took me across country into the Ballyglass area, between Ballinrobe and Balla; and of all places they were heading for it was to the herd's house on the Fitzgerald-Kenney estate. He was later a Minister in the Cumann na nGael government, and was never in the Movement. They had been carrying me up to this a distance of twelve miles or more. It was not doing me any good. One of the fellows thought if we go ahead and ask for the use of Fitzgerald-Kenney's car I could be brought more quickly to a place of safety. At that time he had one of the few cars in the neighbourhood.

He was met by Miss Fitzgerald-Kenney; *oh*, she said, *could you not take him in the car? I suppose we could*, said the Volunteer, *but he will suffer a lot. If he is a soldier, he will not mind suffering. Well*, answered the Volunteer civilly, *we could take your car, but on this occasion we shall not*.

They then put me in a cart; it jolted badly on the rough road. They unharnessed the horse and commenced drawing it themselves. That was just as bad, but I pretended it felt much better. After I travelled through the night for six miles thus we reached the herd's house attached to the estate. The next morning, Miss Fitzgerald-Kenney called to see me. It was Sunday, and I had not eaten anything for some time. The woman of the house made tea and an egg, and Miss Fitzgerald-Kenney fed it to me. She inquired about the fight. When I mentioned Lieut. Eberson, she remarked, *oh, I know Lieut. Eberson*. She was very nice to me. I was not left there long, however. I was moved again that night, eventually reaching a place called Castlecarra, a very out of the way place, to the house of a man called Terry Cochran.

Terry, although of Irish extraction, was born in Glasgow, and had a very Scottish accent. I now needed medical attention urgently. In Balla there was a Doctor O'Boyle, who had been in the army during the War. He had a major's rank. He came readily. Sitting on the end of the bed he cleansed the wounds, no anesthetic, no half brandy, or any nonsense like that. He was about three hours at it, but he did a great job. When he was going, one of our lads whispered, *what do you think of him? He is finished, he has lost too much blood. If you could get him into a hospital he would have some chance, but here!* . . . And he glanced around eloquently.

The following week he came out again. *Well, what do you think of*

*him now? He will be fighting fit in a few weeks*, he replied cheerfully. It was the will to survive. I suppose if we had been beaten after Tourmakeady, I would have died. Meanwhile I found our home here at Cross had been wrecked by the police and the British Army. They came on a number of occasions carrying out punitive raids as they call them now in the North. They would start up a fire inside, but on three different occasions the neighbours entered quickly and put it out. Then one day they came and did a real job; they demolished the house, the house in which we now sit. We had to rebuild it completely. I can tell you that it was not easy doing that after the Civil War when our business was in ruins.

The Column meanwhile had remained intact despite the enemy pressures. Michael O'Brien, my adjutant, would have taken over from me, but he was gone, and his loss was keenly felt. They therefore avoided any action, and that was the position when the Truce came. I need hardly say it was a bombshell. None of us had any inkling that such a move was contemplated. My first thought was, the English are after this so we must have won. When the terms of the Treaty were published however, six months later, I said, *how could Irishmen have put their names to it?*

I had been selected as a candidate in the general election of May, 1921 while I was lying wounded out upon the hillside. I knew nothing about it at the time, but I was returned unopposed. My selection got over the difficulty of a number of possible candidates who were presenting themselves. Conor Maguire, the barrister, was one and he had been a prospective candidate in 1918. He was popular. There was also Dick Walshe, Adjutant of the original Mayo Brigade. He had a Fenian background. There was a third, by the name of Coyne, a solicitor from Ballyhaunis. I do not know who proposed my name. Maguire and Walshe supported me then but Coyne put it to a vote. I thus became a member of the Second Dail.

We established training camps straightaway in this area. There was a big one at Clydagh, five miles from here. Headquarters had another set up, and I had one at a place called Ballycurrin, on the shores of Lough Corrib. They were very well run and discipline was tight. We faced up to the training on the assumption that we might have to resume the war. I remember being one of a party brought to Dublin for training in bomb making and chemical devices. A group went from this area, and were met by Sean MacBride. I was in bad form physically. I had been working hard and had never got built up properly after Tourmakeady. When Sean saw that two of my party were missing, he spoke tartly, we were to be here on Tuesday, it is now Thursday. We trained hard there. There was plenty of euphoria among the public alright, but not with us.

## DIVISION

I was overwhelmed when the news came through that a Treaty such as this one, had been signed. I was absolutely convinced that the Republic that the people had established had to be recognised. I did not see the North as a separate issue. What counted was that the vast majority of the people of Ireland had voted for a Republic and we had no right to disestablish it.

I had been in Castlereagh when the news came through. I returned here with a flu, feeling very sick. I went to Dublin for the opening of the debates on December 14th. I still had this flu and was unable to shake it off. Fellows would gather around, and say, *damn it man, what you need is brandy*. Foolishly, I listened to them. It drove my temperature sky high, and I suffered terribly. Eventually, I was placed under the care of a doctor who ordered me to bed. I remained there over Christmas, not returning home.

In the interval, I received a letter from our parish priest, Canon Henry; it is rumoured here, the letter ran, *that you are determined to vote against the Treaty. If you cannot see your way to vote for it you should at least abstain*. I also had a letter from Dean Dalton in Ballinrobe ordering me to vote for the Treaty. I did not reply to that one because it was an offensive letter, but I did reply to Canon Henry setting out my reasons clearly. I added that, in the circumstances, I could not abstain. He replied with a nice letter; *as you know*, he said, *I have never touched politics and I would not have written to you now, had I not been requested by my Archbishop to use all my influence*. Even the Chinese Mission at Dalgan Park near Shrule got on to me. They knew me of old. We had been preparing an ambush near their place the previous Easter Monday. We were in the locality. O'Brien and myself walked across the fields and approached the front door. It opened before we had time to reach the bell. There was a great welcome. We were brought in, treated very well and sat down for breakfast. The man in charge then was Dr. Cleary; he afterwards got severe treatment from the Chinese communists in the late forties. They wrote to me too. The pressure was strong and concerted upon every T.D. and those who returned home over Christmas were the most exposed. It has been said with truth, that if the vote had been taken before Christmas it would not have been carried. Remember too, that apart from newspaper and I.R.B. pressures, a lot of our men were teachers; they depended very much upon the parish priest for the security of their job. They could not afford to go against him.

I was staying after Christmas in the Exchange Hotel in Parliament Street. I returned this evening to receive a message from the porter that two priests had called, had waited a considerable time and wished to see me. They were at the Gresham. As soon as I had my tea I walked



over to the Gresham. Dean Dalton was one of them, and the parish priest of Kilmaine, Martin Healy was the other. They were in a very amicable mood, chatting to me about everything. They called for drinks. What would I have? *A brown ginger*, I replied. *Nonsense*, said Dean Dalton, *this is no time for that, we shall have champagne*. I need not tell you I did not have champagne.

I do not agree that the Plenipotentiaries should have been arrested immediately they returned. The man that I blame for that is De Valera. He was the man who asked the Dail the previous August to confirm his appointment as President of the Republic. He was proposed on August 26th, 1921 by Commdt. Sean McKeon, at a session I attended, and was unanimously elected. The purpose of that public re-election was to formally record our status as a Republic in view of the negotiations then commencing. Yet, the treaty they were engaged in negotiating was designed to subvert the Republic. He was in a very strong position had he wished to press it. He had the Army overwhelmingly behind him. He therefore should have acted decisively when they came back, he should not have allowed a vote. He should simply have said, we cannot do this, and he would have had the support of the nation.

I had the greatest respect for Mulcahy whom I had met a number of times, as I have already related. He had none of the Mick Collins bonhomie. He was very much the leader and a disciplinarian. In fact, I liked him very much because he was so straight and forthright. I had met Mick Collins also. I thought he was very solid, but I did not like his habit of taking the country fellows off for a jar. He got a grip on fellows that way, but Mulcahy would not do that; he was all business. Still, all of us had faith in Mick, yet they undermined him too. Some blame the I.R.B. for this, with good reason. I myself was in the I.R.B. I had been initiated into it by Dick Walshe who was the Adjutant of the former Mayo Brigade. I think their purpose was to nab anyone who showed promise in the Movement, and of course their intention at that time was to strengthen the Movement and secure the Republic. I never had much to do with them however, nor even with Sinn Fein; my whole attention was concentrated upon the Volunteers, the I.R.A.

The very night I arrived in Dublin for the commencement of the debate, I arrived on the 13th December. I was met in the hallway of the hotel by a man who was my senior in the I.R.B. (I would not admit that he was my senior in anything else, particularly, in the fight). He had a message for me; it was to the effect that, although the I.R.B. Council had not met, certain senior officers had, and they supported the Treaty.

The day the Treaty was voted upon at Earlsfort Terrace, on the 7th January, 1922, I was standing with two other Dail members awaiting

our turn to go in and vote. When I came back I was joined by them. *If I had known*, said one, *that you were going to vote against it, I would have voted against it too.* Which shows how casually, almost, it was passed, with a majority of only seven. Later that was reduced to two when it came to selecting the President. (1)

Document No. 2 was never presented of course. If it had been as an alternative line to the Treaty, I would have voted for it, but only because it would have avoided the disastrous split. From then on we watched the course of events with the deepest misgivings yet without being able to exert the slightest control over them. I was present at the meeting four days after the fateful vote in Earlsfort Terrace that set up a Military Council. The commandants then decided that the Army would be placed under its own Executive henceforth. The Convention of 26th March which was called by Rory O'Connor and met in the Mansion House, was a confirmation of that position. It amounted to a repudiation of Dail Eireann: I was again appointed to the Executive. We were undecided however, because the last thing we wanted to do was to start to shoot. We would have done anything to avoid that.

It was a mistake, I felt, to withdraw allegiance from Dail Eireann. They had a right to remain under it. I was opposed to the withdrawal. Later Liam Lynch, called another Convention, (2) that was the one for Sunday April, 9th. I asked him his reasons. He said: *there are three men whom I want on the Executive, if I can get them elected. They are Tom Hales, Florence O'Donoghue and Liam Deasy.* They were officers from his own divisional area, and I am sure they were good men. I cannot say anything for Tom Hales, but the other two did not prove themselves after. Deasy let the side down in January 1923 when he allowed himself to be the instrument of a surrender message from the Free Staters. (After his capture and sentence to death). O'Donoghue took no part in the Civil War. Instead he went from this bishop to that bishop trying to bring the sides together. I would not allow my name to go forward for the Executive. The Convention wanted me to go on. They were pressing me hard, but I said, *there is Kilroy over there, ask him.* And Kilroy went on.

After that the two armies called a truce on May 4th in an effort to reduce the friction which had developed between them in Limerick, Kilkenny, Dublin, Mullingar and many other places. The Dail discussed a Coalition which might be expressed through an agreed election. Finally on May 20th Michael Collins and Eamonn De Valera announced that they had signed an Election Pact, whereby a panel of candidates representing the two parties would be placed before the people. The British Government was strongly opposed to the Pact on the grounds that it was in breach of the Treaty.



Griffith and Collins were later summoned to London. Speaking in Cork on his return two days before the election Collins advised the electorate to disregard it. The Pact was thus broken.

One effect of the Pact was that it gave a residual advantage to the supporters of the Treaty, enabling more of them to be elected than might otherwise have happened. I was happy when I heard about the Pact, but at the same time I had doubts that it could work. I was returned unopposed. We were to meet two days after Free State forces attacked the Republican garrison in the Four Courts, on June 30th. That meeting, if it had taken place, would have dissolved the Second Dail, and commenced the proceedings of the Third Dail. The Second Dail never met, nor were we ever summoned. I was already in Dublin and attended the I.R.A. Convention held in the Mansion House on Sunday, June 18th,<sup>(3)</sup> but can recall no details of what went on there. I left Dublin shortly after.

There had been no military confrontation in this part of the West. The British had evacuated Ballinrobe, Claremorris, and other towns and we were in control. We heard of the attack upon the Four Courts from the newspapers. The position here was that there was no strong force opposing us. However, here, as everywhere else, we adopted the strategy of evacuation. We had not the material, so we retired from the barracks and made for the hills. There was no cohesion or military council formed between the provincial commanders here, Liam Pilkington of the 3rd Western, Mick Kilroy of the Fourth or myself. There were instead many desertions; you might be in touch with personalities on your side today, and tomorrow you could be told that they had gone over to the Free State. (The rapid and businesslike way whereby the Free State gained control of the country, especially in areas where Republican garrisons were undecided was a major factor in this). It had a weakening effect upon our effort.

I was back upon the run again, mainly in South Mayo. I was concerned very much by what you termed fragmentation, by the effort to travel around, make contact, and hold our groups together. Ours was a wholly defensive strategy. While we made a few attacks upon Free State posts, I can think of nothing spectacular, certainly there was no longer the thinking or the will power that had created the ambushes of a year and a half ago.

You could not bring yourself to want this sort of warfare. There was a different feeling altogether. The British were the enemy, the old enemy; there was a certain pride in having the ability to attack them. That feeling was entirely absent in the Civil War. It was very disheartening. We knew the Free State Army comprising 50,000 newly recruited mercenaries would not hesitate to shoot us, but that made it no easier for us to pluck up enough anger to really fight them. You



were in doubt too about approaching houses where before you had been made welcome. How are they taking the situation, you would wonder? The people themselves were disheartened.

#### DEATH

When I heard of the deaths of people on the Free State side like Griffith, Collins, Sean Hales, I could not be glad. You felt these are people who fought the British and now they are gone. Britain is really the victor.

It was on October 10th they passed the Army Powers Resolution,<sup>(4)</sup> the Murder Act, as we called it, giving tribunals power to execute anyone found carrying arms or ammunition, aiding or abetting in attacks, destruction or seizure of property; so wide indeed was it that it could be used against anyone having any connection with the Republican resistance. The implementation of such draconian powers enraged us but it was futile. We could make no response in the circumstances. I was captured myself anyway just a few days after that in the Headfort district, not far from here. I was at my usual task of getting around, trying to hold things together. Suddenly a body of Free State soldiers were in on top of me and I was captured. It was then that I really experienced the sort of mercenaries they were, ex-British Army soldiers, tramps and misfits of every conceivable type. They had expanded their army to over 50,000 men and I suppose you do not find numbers like that unless you rake them from off the street corners.

I was brought to Athlone where there were two prison camps within the boundaries of the former British Army military barracks. In one, known as Pump Square, they held the ordinary detainees and prisoners. In the other, Garrison Detention, they kept people arrested after the passing of the Murder Act. There were regular cells in the Detention, and it was well enclosed as it had been used to hold the delinquents of the British Army. Having been caught in arms after the passing of the Resolution I was held there, from October 1922 until June 1923, when I escaped out of it. During all the months I was there I never knew but that I might be executed. Five men were shot there by a firing squad in January, my youngest brother John, not yet twenty years of age, was executed in Tuam, only forty miles away in April, 1923. It seems like, from the way Peadar O'Donnell tells in a book of his<sup>(5)</sup> they found it easier to make an example of younger brothers, leaving the older and more senior ones alone. I was a T.D., but that had not saved Mellows or Childers, and I did not expect that it would save me.

They courtmartialled me in January, 1923. The court, if you could call it that, was a military one although they were all in civies. I

enquired when I was brought in, *what is this?* Although I knew damned well, *I do not recognise this court*, I answered, *you have no authority to try me*. They went through their rigmarole of accusations nonetheless, and of course they found me guilty. The day before, the five executions I have just spoken about, a military policeman of theirs - a Sgt. Browne came in and handed a list of six names to Dr. Tom Powell, our O.C. Powell came to me. *This fellow says that he has instructions to take these people from their ordinary cells tonight and put them into different cells*. The six men were changed that night before lock-up; five were taken out in the morning and shot by firing squad, and one was not. I am that one. (6) I often thought afterwards how did that happen to me, but I cannot tell you. Unless it was because I was popular. I did have a reputation for fair play. During the Tan struggle unionists and loyalists could call upon me if someone was trying to lean upon them. You have yourself said there how the Free State "provincialised" its killings, both official and unofficial, by having the majority of them carried out away from Dublin in contrast to the British who had all of theirs, except one, in Dublin and Cork. It is my opinion that their objective was to involve all of their senior officers in this policy, so that there would be no denying it afterwards. Joe Sweeney carried out executions in Drumboe in Donegal. Dan Hagan had them in Dundalk, Michael McCormick had them in Maryborough, Birr and Roscrea, Joseph Cummins had them in Wexford, Liam Stack had one in Carlow, Sean McKeon had them in Athlone and Michael Brennan had them in Tuam, Limerick and Ennis. Eleven of my command were executed by them. With my brother, John, five others were executed in Tuam on the 11th April. (7) (The executions of March, April and May, 1923 were unnecessarily vengeful; the Free Staters knew that the I.R.A. was about to suspend its resistance). He had been arrested in the Tuam area sometime after myself and they had far less on him.

#### ESCAPE

I escaped from the Athlone Garrison Detention on the 10th of June, 1923. Our jail was inside other lines of military buildings, two sides of which were used by the other detained Republicans, but with barred windows between us and them. On the other two sides were tall impressive walls. A small wash house containing a single tap stood against one of these walls. At the floor, where the tap dripped, a brick had been removed. I always thought that our only hope of escape would be out through a hole near the floor. Two military watch towers overlooked our small yard, in the centre of which was a recreation shed. The soldiers in them could not quite see into the wash house.



Mick Mullen was a medical student from near Castlebar. I said to him one day, *our only hope of getting out of here is through that wash house, but I don't know how it can be done except through the roof.* Mick tackled it, but found that it would not work. Meanwhile, a few local lads were brought in who knew Athlone. One of these recommended that we work upon the hole near the floor and escape that way. Six o'clock was lock-up time, so it was necessary to complete it before that. One chap stood idly in the door opening. If a military policeman appeared the chap working on the hole would draw his basin across it, scattering a few shirts alongside it meanwhile. At long last a very small hole penetrated through. We had very little time left.

We decided we would go in pairs, taking one of the local lads to make up each pair. Quickly the first two scrambled and scraped their way through. They found themselves in an enclosed yard. Pushing at a barred window, it opened into a vehicle workshop. Emerging with a screwdriver and some tools they hastily opened a door out of this yard on to an internal roadway running parallel to the public road, entered now just past the rail station, and bordering a fetid canal.

The internal roadway, was enclosed by another high wall. They proceeded on from there but I cannot say how exactly they went. We were now following close upon their tail. I went head first horizontally through the hole scraping myself abominably because I could not wear my jacket, but eventually emerging in the second enclosed yard. We did not know whether to attempt to cross this as the sentry could see into it also. Should we wait here for the change of guard or take the chance now? We felt we had to push on. We followed where we presumed the first party had gone. This brought us straight onto Pump Square, in other words right into where our own lads, the detainees, were housed. Would they spoil our chances by involuntarily greeting us? Again we had to take the chance. Jimmie Martin, was with me now. Hastily donning our scuffed jackets, and pulling each out a hankie — they'll take us for officers, we boldly walked into the big square. It was Sunday afternoon, and our lads were hanging about in the bright sunlight. Red caps and soldiers supervised them. Now, I thought, is the testing time; if there is a single shout we are finished. But they had enough sense to keep quiet.

We crossed the square and emerged in the corner of Artillery Square, another big square, in the corner of which had been a tall old elm tree. It was cut down, but its big branches had not been lopped and these stood up almost reaching to the top of the wall. Could we make it? At the corner, suspended from an upright post that was carrying the barbed wire on top of the wall, was a strong length of wire with a loop upon the end of it. This was suspended above one of the branches that we now climbed up. I sprang for this loop and fortunately, got it on the



first grab. With both of us holding it, we pulled ourselves to the top of the wall, passed through the barbed wire, and dropped twenty feet into the Protestant minister's garden. There is a road close to this, and we got on to it. It leads to a place called the Batteries, where Free State soldiers were out walking their girls. The alarm had not been raised so we passed them without anyone taking notice. We got away as quickly as we could, leaving Athlone behind us. That night we were safely hidden in a house on the road to Athleague.

Three separate pairs got out we learned afterwards, before the shutters closed and the escape hole was caught. It was well worth the effort, even though I was now on the run. I remained under cover until the end of 1925.

(Tom's wife took up the story here)

The thought occurred to me that he must need a new suit. I took one of his from the wardrobe, brought it to the tailor in Ballinrobe, who took the measurements from it and had a new suit made. I posted it on to Athlone. An orderly from Garrison Detention collected post at the post office each day. Lifting the parcel containing the new suit he remarked, *this man must expect to go through the front gate any day now.*

Within a fortnight he and his five companions disappeared. This must have caused further consternation among the Free State authorities at their enquiry. Sure a suit of clothes was sent in to him. They probably thought that cars and everything were arranged, but of course, we knew nothing. That evening we were going to the mission in Cong by sidecar. Free State cars and lorries tore past us at Ashford Castle coming from the Ballinrobe direction as they fanned out to scour the countryside. We wondered what for.

Meanwhile, we had a woman friend in Athlone who was forever concocting plans to release him. She had arrangements made with a boatman to bring him across the Shannon. Sal was her name. *I will send you a telegram, said she, if we get him out. Agnes is very sick, come and visit her.*

Nothing however came of Sal's well intentioned efforts. Tom's father was the first to bring the news. He had called to a house in Ballinrobe. There were two soldiers there, and they told him that his son and some others were being sought. He hurried home to be met on his arrival by the prearranged telegram from Sal.

(Here Tom takes up the story again)

My companions did not really expect a thorough search. *We are as safe here, they said on arrival at the house as if we were in God's pocket.*

But I did not feel easy, nor did I retire to bed. Before dawn army lorries came tearing down the road. We quickly left. It took me a week, never showing my head above ground, to pass from South Roscommon to Boyle, where the North Roscommon Battalion had a secret dug-out right at the water's edge on Lough Key. It was a boggy place high over the lake in the Rockingham Estate. The land steward was a man named Pat Flanagan, and Pat was friendly to us. Months before, when the heat came on, he had directed them to an out-of-the-way part where two dug-outs were constructed. Outwardly they looked fine. I got a bunk in the big dug-out, from the ceiling of which galvanised buckets hung containing the few bits of food our lads had. Light inside was provided by a car battery, carbide and candles perched on timber ledges retaining the earthen walls. The floor was supported clear of the damp earth on crude timbers.

The light was only doused for the night when the racket started. Rats were entering from everywhere, big brown ones. Making frantic squeals as they tried to crawl along the roof timbers to reach our food buckets. Some would fall to the floor or on to our bunks scampering in all directions. Some fought with each other, squealing. You could not imagine the clamour. I hate rats, but I put in the night anyway, wishing it was morning and wishing I could go out and be away from them.

Eventually, I surfaced with the rest of them. Not a rat to be seen. But we were in a very out of the way part of the estate, heavily overgrown by shrubs and fern, the fern and tree trunks falling and blocking drains, and making a heavy soft compost over the earth. The ground was drowsy with richness, but if it was, it was intersected by the *bótharín dearg* of the rats. Just then, I was not aware of this. I hung back therefore when evening came. I did not want to go below. The others had already dropped down. One young fellow spoke to me from the hatch; *are you coming?* No, said I, *not for all Roscommon would I spend another night in a dug-out with those rats. What are you going to do then? I spotted a nice clump of bushes over there, I will dig in there for the night.* He tried to explain to me that it was as bad over ground as it was below. *It is from above they are going down.* But it was no use. I insisted on staying above ground. I found that it was almost as bad. The rats scampered past me and over me as I tried to sleep. No place was safe from them.

I put in a week there, half wishing I was back in Athlone, when I was called to Dublin. There were vacancies on the Executive of the I.R.A., one of which they wanted me to fill. I left Rockingham and was conveyed to Carrick-on-Shannon, staying overnight in Duignans, a friendly pub, beside the bridge. I was picked up the next morning by Peter Casey who had a new hire car. He brought me safely to Dublin. I was met by Cathleen McLoughlin, later the wife of Maurice Twomey,



and a skilful courier for the I.R.A. in those days. She brought me to a house in Earlsfort Terrace, in which there was a well constructed dug-out, free of rats, I am glad to say. I was appointed to an Executive with Frank Aiken as Chief of Staff, upon which sat also such people as Bill Quirke, Austin Stack, Sean Dowling, Tom Barry, Humphrey Murphy, Sean Hyde, Sean MacSwiney and Tom Crofts.

I took no appointment on the Executive,<sup>(8)</sup> nor did I remain in Dublin. I stayed for about a week, then I returned to my own area. There was an election coming off, and I wanted to take part in it. I was being opposed on this my third appearance before the electorate, but I won nevertheless. Sinn Fein did much better, coming back with 44 seats. There was no fairness in the election. I could make no public appearances although I chanced one or two. George Maguire, of Claremorris, my election agent, told me afterwards that bundles of votes intended for me were put to one side as spoiled. When he asked to inspect these he was assaulted. Two and a half miles from here, in Glencorrib, the presiding officer, a local teacher, was obliged to leave the polling station because of rowdiness from Free State supporters.<sup>(9)</sup>

You mention now, a meeting Eamonn De Valera had in Rome with Cardinal Mannix in 1925, when he was accompanied by Sean MacBride — although MacBride was not present at the meeting. He was consulting the prelate, and Mannix convinced him that he should recognise the existing political institutions and enter Leinster House. I heard also, a long time afterward, because, so far as I know, De Valera never reported on this meeting to the Sinn Fein Ard Comhairle or to the Second Dail. I tried to meet Moss Twomey some few years ago to try to learn more about this, but I was unable to keep my appointment. (In any case, fearing what was about to happen, following the resignation of its Chief of Staff, Frank Aiken, the I.R.A. reverted to its independent status free of any control by Sinn Fein. Thus it returned to the position it had held prior to August, 1919, and for nine months during 1922).

We got married in December 1925. That was the first time I surfaced for eighteen months after my escape. The pressures had eased off, but not completely. They came raiding here that very day. One of our lads, who had no clothes that were respectable, was persuaded to wear his uniform. They arrested him, and held him for a few days. We were just building this house again, and it was not quite finished. It was a hard, hungry time. My father's business was wrecked. They had stolen, or taken away the models and templates for wheels that are so necessary in this trade. So it was hard for me to start back again.

After 1925, you had the virtual dissolution of this thriving political party with its 44 seats in the South in order to create Fianna Fail. That



was almost inevitable, once De Valera had made his decision to take part, in view of the great personal magnetism of the man. This abrupt departure arose from the resolution put forward to a special Ard Fheis on March 9th, 1926 on his behalf that declared, and I paraphrase, *if the oath is removed it becomes a question of policy not of principle whether we enter Leinster House.* (10)

De Valera resigned, and on May 16th at La Scala Theatre, founded Fianna Fail. (In the June 1927 election they improved on the Sinn Fein position by going from 44 seats to 47, a modest increase. Following the assassination of Kevin O'Higgins in July, Cosgrave brought in a sweeping series of coercion bills. There was an election in September: he had hoped to better his position in the wake of a wave of sympathy for O'Higgins, instead they slumped to 81 seats, while Fianna Fail raced ahead to 57 seats. Sinn Fein did not contest the election. Meanwhile on August 11th they had presented themselves in Kildare Street and signed the form of oath. De Valera had been quite categorical that they would not take this oath, and had sought by every means, considering a court case (11) to avoid taking it. In April 1926 he declared, *the person who takes it will be held to have taken an oath in the strict sense.* Sean Lemass said, in July 1927, *we have been urged to take it and break it; we will not do that because political morality should not sink so low.* On 25th July, two weeks before entering De Valera stated in answer to a question, *under no circumstances whatever would I subscribe to such an oath; that is final.* (12)

The Oath was taken on August 11th and was administered by the Clerk of the Dail, Colm O Murchadha. It ran as follows;

*I do solemnly swear true Faith and Allegiance to the Constitution of the Irish Free State as by law established, and that I will be faithful to His Majesty King George V, his heirs and successors by law by virtue of the common citizenship of Ireland with Great Britain, and her allegiance to and membership of the British Commonwealth of Nations.*

This was the oath taken home from London by Griffith in May 1922, although strenuously objected to by Collins, and published then on the morning of that election. By any standards it was very strong medicine for Republicans: no wonder they rejected it. De Valera abolished this oath in 1933.

His volte face at this time was partly explained by the opportunity presented by the knife edge election returns of September 1927 which offered the chance to unseat Cosgrave and the Cumann nGael Party. The figures were as follows;

Cumann na nGael	61	Independents	12	Workers League	1
Fianna Fail	57	Farmers	6		
Labour	13	National League	2	Total	152

Fianna Fail, Labour and the National League of Capt. Redmond made a hasty compact and put down a vote of no confidence. The figures, after some critical absentees, were even at 71/71. On the casting vote of the Ceann Comhairle it was lost. However, it could have been won had Alderman Jinks of Sligo, a member of the National League, presented himself. It was later learned that he had retired to a hotel in Harcourt Street. The Cosgrave government was thus saved for the Tailtean Games of 1928, and for the Daniel O'Connell Centenary of 1929. It is interesting to speculate whether a Fianna Fail government, elected in 1927, might have turned out to have had a more enduring radicalism than the one elected in 1932.

My main objection to Leinster House was that it was a British institution, and a lowering of the flag. I said this at a meeting of the Second Dail, early, as far as I can recall now, in 1926. De Valera who was present, resented this. *It is not a lowering of the flag*, he interjected. It reminded him painfully, I knew, of his own statement in October 1917, when he had been elected President of Sinn Fein in succession to Arthur Griffith. *We say it is necessary to be united under the flag under which we are going to fight for freedom — the flag of the Irish Republic. We have nailed that flag to the mast, we shall never lower it.* (13)

We remained on after 1926 as a shadow government in the same shadowy form in which we had existed since the dissolving of An Dail in April, 1922. Even in Easter 1928 — the time at which our group's picture, on the wall here, was taken for reasons of historical record in Dublin — there was still a full quorum of 23 Second Dail members. (14)

I was no longer on the Executive of the I.R.A. at that time. They seemed to be giving Fianna Fail a certain measure of support. I was concerned solely with the political life of Sinn Fein. We were aware now that the chances of ever achieving political power were slipping away, yet we were up against a stone wall. We could not go into the Free State parliament. Our hope after 1923, and the organisation's policy was simply to go on increasing our strength which we had been doing. (15) When we had reached a majority, in other words after another twenty seats or so, we would reconvene the Third Dail, and proceed away from the Treaty position. That was agreed by De Valera and everybody else, within the organisation. He breached that policy, although he could still have reverted to it — and gained the wholehearted support of Republican Ireland — if he had taken it up again in 1932.

The people had already come back to him. However, he chose, after a small amount of window dressing, to work the Treaty. You mention Peadar O'Donnell and his Land Annuities campaign. Now, while I agreed with his campaign, I must point out that Peadar was more of a

socialist leader than a national leader; the nation did not mean so much to Peadar as it did to me or some others. I believed in the historic Irish nation.

As I said above, I was no longer on the Executive of the I.R.A. I chose to stand in 1927 as a Republican candidate. They told me that I could not do that, and if I did, I could not remain a member of the I.R.A. I fell out over that. I know my mind; I knew I was not going into the Free State Parliament. Later, some of them did. It was Moss and MacBride, that got on to me about that.

I was not in Saor Eire in 1931, nor would I have anything to do with it. I was selected however to give the oration at Bodenstown, in June 1932. I arrived at the Exchange Hotel, my old place in Parliament Street, in Dublin to be confronted by Mick Price. He had largely the same ideas as Peadar, you know. *We want you*, says Price, *to draw parallels between the French Revolution, 1798 and the Russian Revolution of 1917*. My answer was that whenever in the past I had spoken in public, I did not require to seek inspiration from others. Mick was not going to write my speech for me, and I told him that, I did not know Frank Ryan very well, but I liked him. He was a fighter: if he could not fight with a gun he fought with his fists. I met George Gilmore scarcely at all, although I knew Harry well, a very nice fellow.

I had nothing to do with the Bass Boycott of 1932, nor with Republican Congress in 1934. I put no faith in Fianna Fail, although I hoped they would improve the country economically. They did a lot of political window dressing, but it never impressed me.

We were still the shadow government of the Second Dail, when in the Autumn of 1938, Sean Russell, whom I liked personally, Chief of Staff, I.R.A. and his Army Council asked us, those that remained, about nine of us, to transfer our powers as a government to them; to enable them to pursue their military campaign in England. The I.R.A. asked formally for this. I was not present at the meeting in Dublin at which it came up, but they wrote to me. I refused at first, as I was opposed to it. They wrote again, *is this not the recognition of the Republic that we all seek*, or words to that effect. I then signified agreement.<sup>(16)</sup>

In 1955, Commdt. Gen. Tom Maguire unveiled at Drumboe a memorial to his friend Charlie Daly, of Fries, Tralee, executed there in March 1923, along with Tim Sullivan, Sean Larkin and Dan Enright.

#### REFERENCES

- 1 Arthur Griffith was elected President of the Irish Republic in place of Eamonn De Valera on the 9th January, 1922 by 60 votes to 58. Desmond Greaves in *Liam Mellows*, pages 276-283 cover the Treaty debate in detail. See Appendix for a full list of those who voted for or against.



- 2 Not a new Convention in fact, but the adjourned session from March 26th.
- 3 See Sean MacBride's account of the Convention.
- 4 See *The Irish Republic* by Dorothy Macardle for the full text of this measure.
- 5 *The Gates Flew Open*.
- 6 The five who were executed were Tom Hughes of Bogginfin, Michael Walsh of Derrymore, Herbert Collins of Kickeen, Stephen Joyce of Derrymore and Martin Burke of Cahirlistave, all of Co. Galway.
- 7 James O'Malley, John Newell, Martin Nolan, Frank Curnane and Michael Monaghan.
- 8 Minutes of an Executive meeting of the 11/12th July 1923, lists the following Roll-Call.

*Present:*

Gen. Frank Aiken, Chief of Staff.  
 Comdt. Gen. Liam Pilkington, O/C 3rd Western Division.  
 Comdt. Gen. Sean Hyde, A. C/S.  
 Comdt. Gen. Mike Carolan, D/Intelligence.  
 Comdt. Gen. Sean Dowling, D/Organisation.  
 Comdt. M. Cremin, D/Purchases.  
 Comdt. Gen. P. Rutledge, Adj. Gen.  
 Comdt. Gen. T. O'Sullivan, O/C 3rd Eastern Division.  
 Comdt. Gen. Tom Barry.  
 Comdt. Gen. B. Quirke, O/C 2nd Southern Division.  
 Brigadier T. Ruane, O/C 2nd Brigade, 4th Western Division.  
 Comdt. Sean MacSwiney, Q.M. Cork 1st Brigade.  
 Comdt. Gen. Tom Crofts, O/C 1st Southern Division.  
 Brigadier J. J. Rice, O/C Kerry 2nd Brigade. (Substitute for Humphrey Murphy, who arrived late.)  
 Comdt. Gen. Tom Maguire, O/C 2nd Western Division.

*Absent:*

Comdt. Seamus Robinson.

Comdt. Gen. M. Carolan was appointed substitute for A. De Stac on the Executive.

Among the business that followed it was decided that the Executive should keep intact the Organisation. To that end the emigration of Volunteers, except for pressing reasons, was forbidden. (Nonetheless emigration by the poverty stricken remnants was widespread.) There was discussion on certain actions proposed by Gen. T. Barry who had arrived. Barry refused to give undertakings pressed for by Aiken, and resigned from the Executive. Mr. De Valera then arrived and explained the Sinn Féin policy for contesting the August General Election. This was heartily endorsed.

The Executive later selected an Army Council consisting of:

Gen. Frank Aiken	(Dublin)
Comdt. Gen. Liam Pilkington	(Sligo)
Comdt. Gen. Bill Quirke	(Tipperary)
Brigadier J. J. Rice	(Kerry)
Comdt. Gen. P. J. Rutledge	(Mayo)

9 See Maire Comerford for an account of official Free State intimidation in Cork, in 1923. In Ennis, De Valera was shot at and then arrested. In Dublin the Director of Elections, Eamonn Donnelly was removed to jail. Throughout the state on polling day streets were patrolled by military, with armoured cars present in garrison towns.

10 De Valera, Tom Maguire says, then approached individually those who had voted against the resolution. He convinced some of them, including Smith of Cavan. *My interview with him did not last a minute, not a minute.* He had no trouble where Frank Aiken was concerned; it was already arranged with him. He was De Valera's lap dog.

11 The idea of such a case was quickly dismissed; *it would be like arraigning the Devil in the Court of Hell*, Sean Lemass said.

12 *Irish Times*, July 26th, 1927.

13 Macardle; *The Irish Republic*.

14 Pat Shanahan, Prof. Stockley, Mrs. Callaghan, Art O'Connor, J. J. O'Kelly, Miss MacSwiney, Daithi Ceannt, Count Plunkett, Brian O'Higgins, Count O'Byrne, Eamonn Deale, Seamus Lennon, F. G. Colivet, Austin Stack, Charles Murphy, Sean O'Mahony, Dr. Ada English, Thos. O'Donoghue, Dr. Crowley, Thos. Maguire, Sean MacSwiney, Sean O'Farrell, Brian Mellows, Mrs. Cathal Brugha, Mrs. Tubberd, stenographer and Councillor Joe Clarke, courier, Sean O'Farrell, although included in the group, was not a member of the Second Dail. The names are as printed upon the mount, although half the above used the Irish form normally.

15 Between August 1923 and March 1926, Sinn Fein had improved its vote at nine by-elections according to Eamonn Donnelly, its Director of Organisation.

16 *The Secret Army*, by J. Bowyer Bell.

Ernie O'Malley in *Raids and Rallies* covers the Tourmakeady ambush descriptively and with a map. Besides Michael O'Brien there was another casualty. Young Peadar Feeney of Ballinrobe went out, first to warn and then to join them. He was intercepted by police, taken prisoner, and later that night shot by them.

## Peter Carleton

*of Belfast*

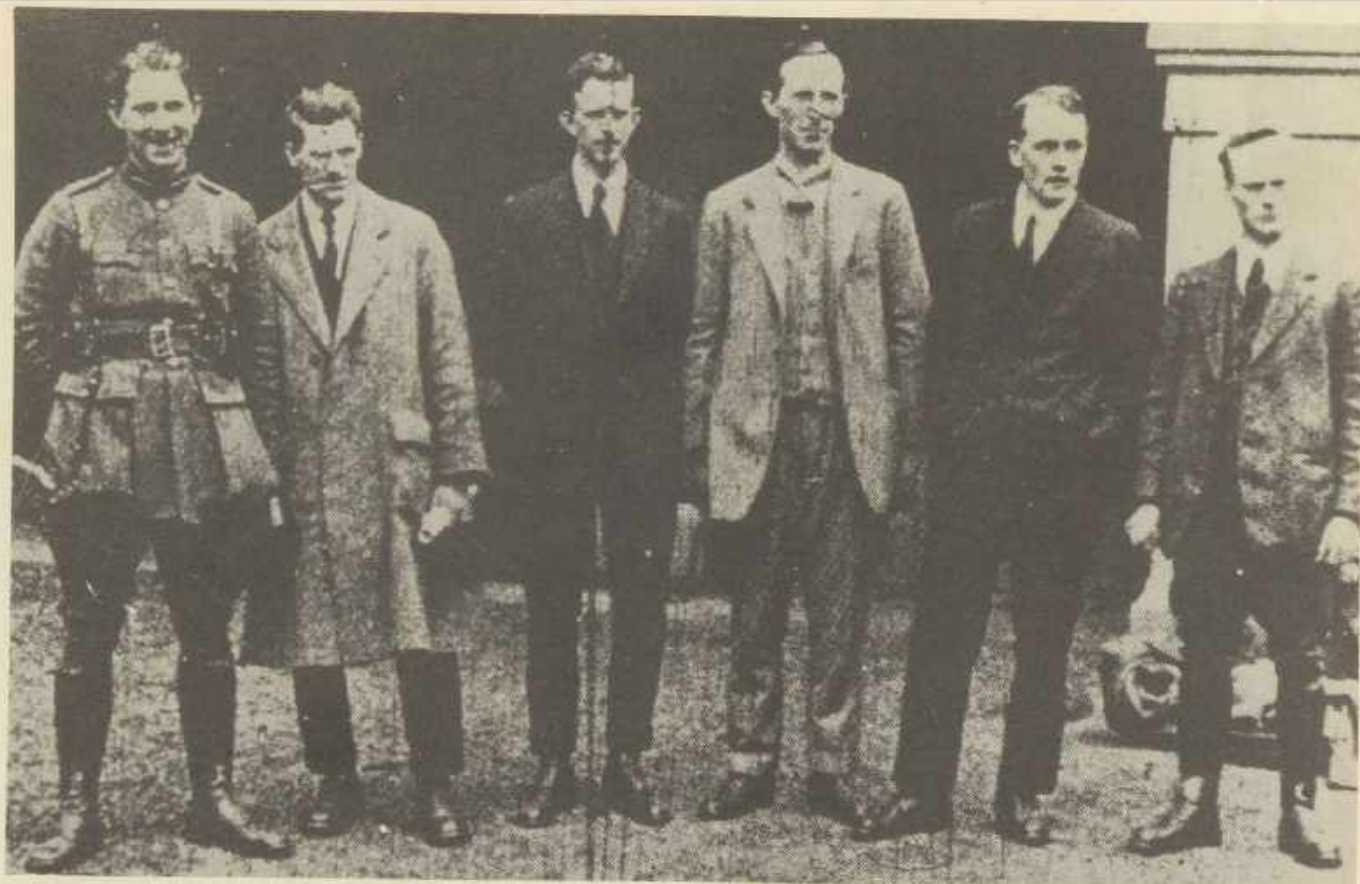
*Section Leader  
in Fianna Éireann*



I was born in Toomebridge in 1904. My father, Robert, was a small farmer, making a living by labouring as a ploughman on neighbouring holdings. My mother's name was Elizabeth McLarnan. Everyone around Toomebridge has strong national views, so they did not need to instil them into me. Times were bad then, and the family moved to Belfast shortly afterwards. I was eight years of age and Belfast to me, with its trams, its heavy industries and the many fine buildings, was a city of great wonder. We lived in a wee brick house in a street off Carrick Hill, where Unity Flats stand now. My father had no particular trade, and as the big steady posts in Belfast have always been closed to us, the only jobs open to him were at casual labouring. I was too young then to realise how difficult life must have been for the small farmer immigrant class, who formed such an important wedge in the Catholic population of this fiercely developing city. When the War came in 1914, things became even tighter. Employers were officially encouraged to "facilitate" their workforce by disemploying them, so that they would be forced into the army. That was the policy of Joe Devlin and the Irish Party at that time. I remember Nicholas Ward, an old Fenian from Boundary Street, passing one of Devlin's recruiting meetings in the Falls in 1915. There was Devlin holding forth on the platform, a Union Jack fluttering in the breeze, and backed by a row of poor 'creathurs' invalided out of the war. Waxing to a new height of oratory, Joe lifted one of the crutches and waving it over his head, he cried: *this was earned for a small nation! You'll never earn one anyway, Joe*, Nicholas shouted. Do you know, he had to take for his life, the crowd turned on him!

My father wasn't going to join the army, so he went to Glasgow, where he sought and got work as a foundry man. He remained there for three years. He returned here at the end of the War and carted for a building firm — Connolly of Agnes Street. That is off the Shankhill, on the other side now of the "Peace Line".





*April 1922. The IRA leaders are still together but split down the middle two months before the Civil War*

*Sean McKeon, Sean Moylan (anti Treaty), Eoin O'Duffy, Liam Lynch (anti Treaty),  
Gearoid O'Sullivan, Liam Mellows (anti Treaty)*



*May 1922. The Free State Army,  
(Beggars Bush Troops as the Republicans called them) being reviewed by General Richard Mulcahy*

Everyone in Toome had a nationalist background. Therefore it is easy to see once things started happening here in Ireland that I would want to take part. I joined our own local Carrick Hill company of Na Fianna at the age of fifteen in the Spring of 1919. There were sixty members in my company, all aged twelve to sixteen. Many of them were the sons of the scrap, rag and second-hand book dealers who had stalls in the Smithfield market. All of them were from poor families living on potatoes, tea and margarine. I was placed in charge of my section which was attached to A Company of the Second Battalion of the Belfast Brigade. Our main operations then were in the field of economic war, the burning and destruction of buildings likely to be of use to the English enemy. Every picture-house, courthouse, tax office and crown building was a target. The man directing us here was John Maguire, our Company O.C., who became Battalion O.C. afterwards. The Adjutant of the Brigade then was Hugh Kennedy. Prominent among the other officers were Jimmy Bateson and a chap called Brady who was a staff officer.

We did the scouting for these arson jobs, noting down carefully when staff finally left and what the means of ingress were. We tried to disregard the pogroms that were then commencing against Catholic workers. The only direct action I recall against that was the bombing of some tramcars carrying shipyard workers. The Bone, Carrick Hill and the small Catholic areas in that enclave were under constant attack from Orange rioters, led, in many cases by the B-Special Constabulary. I must make it plain, however, at this stage, that my whole outlook is non-sectarian. I never saw the struggle here as something between Protestant and Catholic. It was against English rule and the capitalist system itself. It was not, however, possible at that time to reach out across the religious divide. Our company of the Fianna, for instance, was entirely Catholic. In the nature of things, it would have been impossible for it to be otherwise. (1)

The only type of conventional warfare that took place in Belfast and that bore any resemblance to what was then taking place in the South, was the ambush at Raglan Street. Twelve men took part, yet nearly a hundred put in later for Free State pensions, though indeed I would be the last to blame them. It was directed against the R.I.C. and B-Specials. There were not a lot of casualties, but they captured some arms and burned the Crossley tenders.

#### AN ORANGE STATE

I can remember when the Truce was declared in July, 1921. *Thank God*, said my mother, *that I have lived to see this day*. Everyone that could dig up a flag hung it out. The Truce meant far more to us than to



the rest of Ireland. We knew what Unionist domination meant, and we hoped that now we were saved from it. In a few months' time she was crying her eyes out as the family split and some of them joined the Free State Army. Their motivation seemed to be twenty-four shillings a week and a dyed khaki uniform. Four of my brothers joined it. They were bought, like other lads from the North, with the promise of a month's extended training. Once in the army of Ireland, as it seemed to be, they stayed in it. Some of those that went there, however, returned here later and rejoined the I.R.A. They turned out very useful subsequently.

We had however, in Fianna, received a directive from Dublin that we were to stay neutral. To illustrate the upside-down situation that existed here, when Collins was shot, most of the staff of the Second Battalion went to Dublin and joined the Free State Army. Even up here Collins had an aura that no one else had. I had a pretty good company at Greencastle, to which I had been transferred. There were thirty in it. When the order instructing us to remain neutral was read out, many of them left. No more than seven remained, and that included many of the officers. The nationalists here were somehow in favour of the Treaty. They were disappointed of course, but somehow they hoped it would work out in their favour, and meanwhile they were content to wait.<sup>(2)</sup>

I was interned in 1923, shortly after the Cease Fire in the South. Terry Lee, our Battalion Commandant, ordered all arms to be dumped. He belonged to Albert Street, and was a brother of Tommy Lee, also prominent. He had taken over from a chap called Brennan of Sorella Street, who had emigrated to America. The staff at that time included Lee, Johnston and Brennan. Following the cessation of hostilities, it had been reduced from a Brigade to a Battalion status. I was at home in Concord Street in August, when a heavy knock came to our door and I found the B-Specials and R.U.C. waiting for me. They gave me a few minutes to pack and get into the lorry; otherwise they were quite civil to me. I was brought to Larne internment camp where there were about two hundred at that time. Among them were Hugh Corvin and Dan Turley. Before we were arrested, we had been warned by our Battalion Commandant that there was trouble among the prisoners themselves. If we found ourselves there, we were not to take part in this trouble. We were very surprised, of course, to hear that there could be dissension among our men, but there was. When, therefore, I met Chip Burns of the Markets, who represented the O.C. of the camp, Hugh Corvin, I told him what our instructions were. He never bothered me after that, and we never became involved in whatever the dissension was. We ran our own show in the prison, taking direction only from our own officers. Fr. Gogarty was the

chaplain for a while. We heard they got him sacked on the plea that he was too mild. He was later in St. John's here in Belfast.

The camp was an old fever hospital; the walls were covered with a network of new barbed wire around which armed B-Specials patrolled. The British Army was not present; the entire state at that time was run by armed loyalists, known as A-Special Constabulary, B-Specials or C-Specials. Even before the Treaty, Britain had transferred these powers. I was there from August 1923, until February 1924, not a long time, I admit, compared with what some people have had to endure since that time. The Unionists were very much top dog in the Six Counties; they knew they had won. The *Argenta*, moored out on Larne Lough, was closed about the same time. In many ways it had been a symbol of their victory. The men left behind on it were transferred to our camp; some however were sent to Derry jail. We went on hunger-strike then, hoping to hasten our release. One lad — we were all under age — became quite ill. His name was McGovern. I was told that if I came off, he could be persuaded to come off too. It worked alright and he recovered.(3)

#### HUNGRY

When I got out in 1924, I returned to Concord Street. There was only my mother and father there then. I was on my uppers. Not a job to be had, and none for years and years. I don't think I got any work at all until sometime in the thirties. There was no dole either at that time; not for single men anyway. I can tell you we had few luxuries, it was bread, a pinch of tea and margarine we lived on. Sometimes my father would cop an odd job that kept us going. He had nothing steady either. You would have no idea now how grim things were for working class people at that time. Life was a real struggle for the people in the Nationalist areas from 1920 until 1940. Discrimination was open and unashamed. You couldn't get outdoor relief either if there was a single person working in the house. That would be enough to disqualify you. Nobody today could understand it. Despite this, there was still great loyalty to Joe Devlin and the remnants of his party. Of course he was a great speaker and had the support of the conservative elements of the Catholic Church. Their mouthpiece, the Catholic Protection Committee, on 4th July 1922, congratulated the Free State government after its attack on the Four Courts, and *wished it God speed in its efforts*.

In October 1924, there was an election and we put up Paddy Nash for Sinn Fein. The Nationalists boycotted the election and opposed us. I remember holding a meeting in Cullingtree Road and the people

came out and sang *Rule Britannia*. Then they pelted us with potatoes lifted from the sacks outside the shops.

In spite of that, as the years went by and the depression bit deeper, the city became ripe for revolution, if only the Republican Movement could have taken advantage of it. George Gilmore was one of the few people in the leadership who saw the opportunities, but he was, unfortunately, in Dublin, with little sway over events in Belfast. He came here just after the ODR riots in October 1932, to try to get the Republican Movement to direct events. I met him at Mary Donnelly's house in Wall Street. He gave me a letter to bring to the Belfast O.C., Dave Matthews, which I did. Dave was not in the Pearse Hall when I called. Dan Turley was very insistent that the Adjutant, Joe McGurk, should open the letter, but I objected to this. Shortly after this, Davey arrived from a meeting in the Painters' Union. He read the letter. *This is Communist philosophy*, Peter, said he, coming down the stairs with me. *And there is as much difference between Republicanism and Communism as there is between day and night*. I never knew what was in the letter and I never met George again.

At that time Mick Price used to come to Belfast every other week. I liked him very much. I thought he was the most sincere and genuine Republican I ever met. He had not started out as a socialist, but had moved towards it in the course of his revolutionary activities. One tends to see more of life that way and to rationalise things for oneself.

I met Frank Ryan also a number of times. He came to Belfast for the Wolfe Tone Commemoration in 1925, which then, and occasionally in after years when it was not banned, was held on the summit of the Cave Hill, at Mac Arts Fort. He made the sort of strong speech that we had come to expect from Frank Ryan. Referring to the Union Jacks flying about the city, he declared: *where I come from, if we can't pull them down, we shoot them down*.

I was involved in the autumn of 1931 in the attempt to form Saor Eire in Belfast. It had a brief existence; it never got off the ground. My brother, Paul and myself were associated with McVicar, an ex B-Special from the Shankill, and with William McMullen. Later I helped to form a company of the Citizens' Army, a group to the left of the I.R.A., which however, co-operated to some extent with us. I can remember we had the support of Anthony Lavery, who was on the Battalion staff and who lived in Balkan Street. That was the time that Republican Congress was formed. We were acting as its military wing. We numbered about two hundred. I can remember being present at a Citizen Army Convention held in Gardiner Street, and presided over by Nora Connolly. I was among the group attacked at Bodinstown in June 1934. We put up our banners in the (inner) assembly field. Just at that moment we were told, *No Banners*; that was the first we heard of it.



It was evident, however, that the red banners of Congress were not welcome. As we marched from the field, we were attacked by this group and the two banners we carried broken. We continued on nevertheless until we reached the cemetery gates where we did an about turn and came back to Sallins.

With a number of other Belfast people, including Maura Laverty, I attended the Congress meeting of the 29th September 1934, held in Rathmines Town Hall, at which our organisation split irrevocably. We had decided to vote for the Workers' Republic resolution against the advice of most of the leadership. Peadar O'Donnell was furious with us, especially since he was told that I had brought pressure to bear on one of our party by threatening to leave him in Dublin. I had indeed done this, but it was as a joke. No Belfast man could imagine a worse fate than being left behind in Dublin. After the split, Roddy Connolly came here and informed us that we must in future adhere to the orthodoxy of O'Donnell, Gilmore and Ryan, which, with some regrets, due to the circumstances of Belfast, we could not see ourselves doing. So we politely told him so and parted with Congress; what remained of us infiltrated back into the I.R.A. again or moved further leftwards.

Sometime after the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War, I applied to a professor in Glasgow, who was recruiting names ostensibly for an ambulance unit. I was short-listed, but not subsequently called. I did not wish to apply locally in Belfast where labour politics were dominated by Harry Midgley, M.P. He had already coloured attitudes by adopting a stand that was both Loyalist and at the same time in support of the Spanish Republican Government. Midgley was well known in Belfast as a shifty sort of socialist, (he subsequently joined the Unionists and became a cabinet minister); his adherence to the Spanish Republican cause was enough therefore to drive many Northern Irish Republicans away from it. Nonetheless a number went from Belfast, and two of my friends were killed there.

In 1937 I left Belfast for Birmingham, where I worked on the railway. I was there the evening in January 1939, when a bomb went off in New Street Station where I worked. It was part of the I.R.A. campaign which had commenced a few weeks before, but of course I knew nothing about it; not beforehand, that is. In fact when the first communiques came out, I refused to believe them. Anyway this evening I was sitting in a canteen with these Englishmen, when a blast went off. It sounded to me like a backfire from one of our steam engines. Up jumped this man; *what's that?* said he. Laughing, I said; *that's the I.R.A. talking to you now.* When we knew what it was, we rushed over. It had gone off in a cloakroom, aimed evidently to hurt nobody, though it caused a lot of damage. There was a train standing

opposite the opening; every pane in it was splintered. As we returned to our canteen, one of the Englishmen said to me; *well, what do you think of that now? It's the expression*, said I, *of an oppressed people. He's talking right*, said a gingerhaired man in a corner. *I remember, twenty years ago, seeing men leave this city; they were known later as Black and Tans. They carried a ticket of leave in one pocket and a Webley revolver in the other.*

I had free travel on the railway. The day that war broke out, in September 1939, I went down to the station, collected a voucher, and returned to Belfast to my family. I came home with nothing but the clothes I was wearing. England's difficulty, I hoped, would be our opportunity.

#### REFERENCES

1 Since 1860 until the present day, religious tension has been deliberately fomented by British and Protestant employer interests among the working class. July 1920 saw the commencement of a two-year long period of sectarian warfare aimed at consolidating the new Orange state of Northern Ireland and as a counterforce to Republican warfare in the South. As Michael Farrell in his book, *Northern Ireland: the Orange State* tells it. The fiction that only Sinn Feiners were to be expelled was soon disposed of. All Catholics in the two yards were put out, together with a number of Protestants of radical or Labour views, including James Baird, a Labour Councillor, and John Hanna, ex-master of an Orange Lodge, who had worked with James Larkin in the Belfast dock strike of 1907.

—p. 28-29, Farrell.

2 *The partition of Ireland had been part of the British design since the eighties. A largely rural community, 95% Catholic in the South, counter-balanced by an industrial community, 60% Protestant in the North, formed the basis. This they consolidated through favouritism and carefully fomented outbreaks, the resident and totally isolated Catholic population being used as an anvil by these colons.* In the circumstances, defensive thinking — unfortunate though it may be — has been an inevitable part of our make-up. From the moment, therefore, early in 1914, that the principle of partition was accepted by Joe Devlin and John Redmond, it became a weapon that would be used to circumvent the nationalist struggle. It is significant that less than twenty days after the local Parliament here was opened in June 1921, the British sought a truce with Sinn Fein. As Churchill remarked later: *From that moment, the position of Ulster became unassailable.*

—p. 41, Farrell.

3 *Argenta* was a U.S. ship completed in 1919 at a cost of 150,000 dollars. As it was not required for wartime use, it was sold to the Six County government for £3,000. It was in use from early 1922 to 1924. As few prisoners could swim there were no escapes. The brass bell was later purchased by Sir Dawson Bates, Minister for Home Affairs, for fifteen shillings.

## Tony Woods

*Staff Captain, I.R.A.*



My mother was always very nationalistic and got involved with Cumann na mBan at an early stage. Her name was Mary Flannery from Monasterevin, where you will still find today a '98 monument commemorating a Flannery among the unnamed heroes. The family had strong connections in Ballaghderreen (through the McDermotts of Coolevin) where my mother was educated. Later she went to work with Major General O'Farrell, Surgeon General, after which she went with that family to Malta, where he was Governor. She stayed a number of years there. Altogether you could say she had quite a cosmopolitan existence for those days. Coming back to Ireland at the turn of the century, she married my father and from 1917 onwards, she was very involved with Maud Gonne MacBride, Mrs. Despard and the ladies of Roebuck House.

My father, Andrew, was from Co. Wicklow, a strong A.O.H.(1) man. His grandfather built much of Victorian Donnybrook. They were in the dairy business and lived around there. He was politically minded in a bookish way and could claim a friendship with Griffith and Diarmuid O'Hegarty. Early on he joined Redmond's Volunteers. They used train in McDonald's field, opposite the present Telefis Eireann headquarters. De Valera, who lived at that time in Albert Villas, Donnybrook, used go there. He often told me afterwards: *Your father was the first one who taught me to shoulder arms. Well, I would say, he did little else for Ireland.* Which is true, for to a great extent he was a neutral, shadowy figure, while my mother was a political extrovert, and a strong Nationalist, despite being from a Galway Blazer type of set.

We lived around the corner at 131 Morehampton Road, from the O'Rahillys. She was also a great friend of Eamonn Martin, Madame's chief scout, and also Joe McGlynn. She was therefore privy to much that was going on. When the arms came from Howth, for instance,



some of them came to our house for safekeeping. She was so involved, therefore, that I cannot say that 1916 was a shock to her. She may not have known about it, but she could have guessed.

There is a blank in my life in the years following 1916 — I was little more than a schoolboy anyway. It was about that time, 1917, that I was sent to the Irish College at Omeath. Frank Aiken, who lived then in Bessbrook, was a governor there. I often travelled by bike the seven miles to stay with him. In the atmosphere that prevailed we were all imbued with the nationalist cause. In 1919, therefore, I joined E Coy of the 3rd Battalion, under a man called Tanham. He was succeeded by Noel Lemass, who is, in my opinion, a very underwritten person. In fact he was a flamboyant extrovert; a very tall, swashbuckling type. (1a) But a great company man; very keen; an attractive person. He ran our company completely differently from other companies. We had about twenty-six men, and when he came to us, he set out immediately to heighten the whole level of activity. There was in the battalion as a whole six companies, I think, A to F, with Joe O'Connor as Battalion O.C. Our company extended from Ballsbridge to Clonskeagh, including Ranelagh and stopping at the canal. We were fairly active there, carrying out a number of ambushes.

#### AMMUNITION IN SHORT SUPPLY

Arms classes were held in a place near the library in Pearse Street, while in Wexford Street, they made ammunition and grenades. Instructors in the Thompson gun came from America to Pearse Street sometime in the twenties. (2) We used also meet in Lower Rathmines Road, close to the church. Our armoury was very limited. We had about eight or ten revolvers in the company. They were an assortment of Webleys, Colts, Mausers, Parabellums, along with four Mauser rifles, — not much good — and some grenades. We had not many of those, and as they were the ideal weapon for urban ambushes, we, and all the other battalions, were constantly trying to find ways and means to manufacture them. That entails a lot of skills combining together to make the iron moulds, to pack and fill them, to make the priming devices, to procure spring detonators, as they would be hard to make, and so on. Quite a long process of manufacturing, difficult to locate safely, and difficult to obtain the necessary supplies for. Up and down the country, there were these little grenade factories going or attempting to get started. They made a contribution alright, but we never really had enough grenades.

Supplies of ammunition were so bad that we had to try to convert rifle ammunition, of which there was a surplus, to revolver ammunition. You would think it could not be done, but it can. The

battalion issued us with moulds and crimping pliers, to make the lead revolver bullets. We would empty the rifle cartridges, cut them down and expand them, and put the necessary explosive compound into them. An instructor came from the battalion to show us how to do this, and signs on it, we must have been successful, because we never had any serious accidents as a result of faulty bullets. Of course at that time, you must remember, people were very diligent, very devoted. We all worked on slender resources, but we pulled together; there was no carelessness, and we got an enormous amount done despite the forces and the experience ranged against us. We were imbued with an idealism that has long since died.

We had our factory for carrying out these tasks in a stable in Waterloo Lane, on the right-hand side, which we hired from a man called Saul, who was in coal and hardware on Leeson Street Bridge. I knew the family because they lived in Donnybrook too; in fact he was the father of Captain Saul, who later, assisted on the first east/west trans Atlantic flight with Captain James Fitzmaurice and their two German companions. We did not tell them the purpose for which their mews was taken by us. That would never have done. Eventually it was discovered by the military, but if one reads the impending signs of a raid, one can be out beforehand, as we were. They got nothing except four post office bikes which we had commandeered and had been using.

We were making use of, for a while, one of the summer houses in Herbert Park. We stored some ammunition and grenades in the roof space. It would not hold much, but it seemed safe. We could enter and leave at night, when the park was shut. Children came upon it however, and the military then raided it. We got into hot water for being so careless, because such a place is not really safe at all. The company staff, including myself, was courtmartialed by the battalion in Rathmines. Joe Guilfoyle, the Battalion Quartermaster, came along, and of course complained loudly about how difficult it was to replace stuff that was captured. We were rather terrified, not of what they might do, but because of the *dereliction of duty* and *carelessness* that was laid bare. However, they were not too hard on us. In fact they made up to E Company what had been lost.

The activities of our patrols were, at the start, rather amateurish. That is understandable, as we had no military people in our company. Most of the other companies had. Perhaps they had a more proletarian background; there were ex-British soldiers scattered among them, some 1916 Volunteers, and so on. We had nothing like that. I can remember one ambush we had on Sandford Road, between Marlborough Road and Belmont Avenue, when we attacked some tenders carrying Auxiliaries. A man called Morrissey was in charge, but the actual operations were under the control of a man called John



McGowan, who had a long history with the North County Brigade. There were seven of us, some being hidden in a bank of trees that flank one side of the road, and the rest of us in the grounds of Muckross Convent. There was a major shot dead by us in one lorry. You could say it was a fair trophy for a day's outing. He was sitting in the back of a cage car, going out to a raid in Enniskerry as we heard afterwards. That caused great consternation among them and enabled us to get away. One of our lads, who received a shrapnel wound, was caught and got ten years for it. We had flung a number of grenades, when the lorries stopped, and these had proved very effective. Poor McGowan was mortally wounded afterwards, on the day the Civil War started, in St. Stephen's Green.

How did we plan these operations? We maintained a constant system of watching main routes in our area. We would report any sort of regular activity to the battalion. If that sort of feed through was not reaching them, we would get a gee-up, why not. Lemass was a marvellous man at writing reports. They read just as though they came straight from a military manual. They were so good that they were reproduced as samples of what was required in *An t-Oglach*.

Lemass was not in the Sandford Road ambush, but he did take part in one on Mespil Road. That was a much more dangerous one. We were patrolling a main route as usual on the chance that the right sort of target would present itself. This day, we had started off walking from Appian Way along Upper Leeson Street, turning down by the canal along the then quietly residential Mespil Road. Somebody observed tenders approaching from Baggot Street Bridge. Quickly we slipped into the front gardens of the houses, all of which had plenty of trees, shrubs and the sort of cover we needed. There were three tenders, one a caged one(3) the other two open. Cathal O'Shannon, a 1916 man, flung his grenade at the caged Crossley, but it bounced off, rolling on to the road, where it exploded. They stopped at once, and there was quite a bit of shooting, as they took us on. In fact they jumped out and tried to surround us. We retreated through the gardens into Burlington Road, but they did not follow us. I think they were being cautious. They could not be sure that they would not walk into a trap if they did so. It was a tactic often used at that time, to run away while a better placed group, frequently armed with a machine gun, took them on. That was done, I know, in the Dardanelles, as the narrow part of Wexford Street was called. Noel Lemass, as I said, was in charge, and he came back to our house at Morehampton Road, and stayed the night. I laugh still when I think of it, how light-hearted we could be, and how we could joke with each other as we drank tea and ate our boiled eggs afterwards. Between the scraps, it was an



extraordinary unreal war, part-time civilians and youngsters, pitched against a real army.

There is another one I remember, a rather feeble one, that occurred on Stillorgan Road, a short distance beyond Donnybrook Church. That was the end of the tramline then, and the end of the city; it was entirely open fields with a few big houses, Montrose, Belfield and places like that. My recollection is that a big operation was planned by the South County Battalion around Stillorgan. Our instructions were that if the Crossleys attempted to pass out by us, we were to try to waylay them. The other was to be a bigger operation and was to have protection. We were in position behind walls and hedges when shooting broke out prematurely on our side. Someone had reacted precipitately and had started firing. In the excitement, we hit a closed van and blew up a car though I don't think we hurt anyone. However it was a fiasco and we had to make a sharp getaway.

There was another one on Leeson Street Bridge itself. McGowan was in charge of that. The British were approaching from the city, coming over the bridge and turning to go down Mespil Road towards Beggars Bush Barracks. When the shooting started, they stopped on the bridge, but because of the limited range of our short arms in an open area like that, we could not fight it out with them. We gave them something to write home about before we disengaged.

There were other ones that I cannot now recall; ones that I was not on and would not have much information about. There were raids too, by our Volunteers, for arms. Intelligence would hear of caches of guns in big private houses. In the main, these were not very successful as frequently all we got was an antique, something that was of no use whatever.

As a company, and as a battalion, we had a considerable amount of independence. We could do our own jobs, provided they did not conflict with overall army policy. We might be handed down minor tasks to do by the Brigade, such as to watch houses, or to send in specific reports. I knew a few fellows in the Fourth Battalion, which stretched from Rathmines, through Harold's Cross, and over to Inchicore. There were some very important barracks in that area; it also had the Great Southern Railway works, where we had a few friendly fitters that were willing to do "nixers".

I knew nobody at all in the First and Second Battalions, located on the North side, nor anyone in the Engineers' Battalion, known as the Fifth. Later on I got to know Andy McDonnell, O.C. of the South County Battalion, but that was mainly because he was a friend of the family.

#### ATTEMPTED RESCUE OF SEAN MCKEON

Would you like to hear a sidelight on this, related to me later by Liam Tobin, who took part. McKeon was captured a month after the successful ambush at Ballinalee, brought to Dublin, and on June 14th sentenced to be hanged. Collins resolved to get him out of Mountjoy. The toughest men in the A.S.U. were selected, Tobin, Charlie Dalton, Bill Stapleton, Pat McCrae and some more. The plan was to capture an armoured car, use the uniforms of the Auxiliaries, and present themselves at the Joy with a warrant for McKeon's removal. Every Thursday, or it may have been Friday, an armoured car arrived at a bank in Camden Street. As soon as the door was opened, the A.S.U. men would leap in. If there was resistance, they would just mow down anyone that opposed them. That would of course spoil the plan, which depended upon a peaceful surrender and capture of their uniforms. It worked alright. They got the car and the uniforms, and they then dumped the Auxiliaries in a convenient house nearby. Proceeding then to the Joy, they presented a letter from O.C., Portobello, requesting the Governor to deliver over Sean McKeon. At this point a hitch occurred. The Governor was suspicious, not that the request was out of order, but because he feared that if McKeon was delivered up, the Auxiliaries would certainly murder him. He went off to make inquiries. Uneasy at the long delay, the squad decided they had better retreat, which they did. Indeed they may have shot their way out. McKeon was a goner only for the fact that the Truce saved him.

#### IN THE CASTLE

I was attending university at the time, the College of Science, in Merrion Street. Tony Lawlor, who later attained rank in the Free State Army, was there; also Farrell, later of the E.S.B., who was on our side, and a number of others closely linked with the Movement. During this time, my mother was working actively for Collins. She bought a number of H.Q. houses for him, at least one that I know of, at St. Mary's Road, Ballsbridge, where she — outwardly anyway — lived with him. You have got corroboration of that already in the account of Maire Comerford. Early in May 1921, the Tans raided our company H.Q. in Denzille Street(4) and caught six of us, Lemass, Morrissey, Fergus O'Neill, myself and two more of the staff. We were taken from there to Dublin Castle and herded into a small room in the Lower Yard. We were each separately interviewed by a man in R.I.C. uniform, a fine looking man about six foot two inches tall, who, I afterwards discovered, was the famous Sergeant Igoe. Major Hardy came in, took one look at us and went out again. He, evidently, was not going to bother with us unless Igoe decided that we were important.

Hardy was a slight man and walked with a limp, but he could be deadly. He had interrogated Ernie O'Malley only a few weeks before. (5) He was a brave but desperate person who never spared himself or others. He was responsible for the shootings, tortures and beatings which took place in the Castle, but he reserved himself only for the most important fish which was a relief to us. Prior to Bloody Sunday, he had lived outside the Castle in a hotel in Harcourt Street, and he used to cycle in daily. Liam Tobin and Kelleher had waited for him one day near Wicklow Street, determined to get him, but through some mischance he got by, and the opportunity never presented itself again. He was a most interesting character, a born murderer; he had been a prisoner in Germany in the Great War but had escaped. Shortly after he wrote a book called *I Escape*; when he left Ireland in 1922, he wrote another *Never In Vain*, which covered the situation, as he saw it, here. Then he wrote another, I cannot now recall the name, which dealt with the shooting of Sean Treacy in Talbot Street on the 14th October, 1920. He was the one who was responsible for tracking Treacy down, and he wrote the book I would say, because he wanted to get him out of his system. It was in the form of a novel. It painted quite a good picture of Treacy, and it also mentioned a number of the other people, such as Tobin, who were on the opposite side.

After spending a day in the Castle, we were taken to an internment camp at Collinstown aerodrome, where the airport is now, and from there to Kilmainham. I was there just a few days when the men who had been captured at the Customs House operation on May 25th came in. They were put down in the cages in the basement. We were shifted then to the Rath Camp on the Curragh. Lemass was O.C. of it. It was clear to us now that they had no evidence connecting us with anything important. I was given parole to do an examination in June, and following the Truce, sometime in August, I was released.

#### WITH LIAM MELLOWS

It was from the Rath Camp that Peadar O'Donnell later escaped. He made straightaway for our house. (6) I was fascinated when I first met him. Such a marvellous talker; such a great gift for conversation. I returned to E Company; the Truce was still on, when I was seconded to N Company, where a Captain Connolly was O.C. I was not long there, when Oscar Traynor, O.C. of the Brigade, informed me that I was being transferred to the staff of the Director of Purchases, Liam Mellows. I already knew him slightly which may have accounted for my appointment. He was a low-sized man with a very high forehead; extremely witty and a great story-teller; eternally playing jokes. Batt O'Connor arranged that he would stay with us at Morehampton Road.



He never really left us after that. Being a Wexford man, he knew Bob Brennan(7) and Sean Etchingham.(8) He was a man who stumped the Midlands and the West for the Gaelic League and the Fianna, so he knew an awful lot of people there. Religious in his own way, he nonetheless tended towards socialism.

I travelled with him a number of times to meet Pax Whelan who was organising the arms landings in Waterford, though I had nothing directly to do with them. I do however recall being at Cheekpoint when the *Frieda* came in there on November 11th, 1921. That time we stayed at the home of Dr. Vincent White, Sinn Féin T.D.

I was again in Waterford, April 1922, when the *Hannah* came into Ballynagaul. I spent two days there. Those arms were sent to Birr and from there to the North, where it was hoped the struggle would continue. They were Parabellums and sporting Mausers, and some of these did find their way to the Four Courts. On one of these trips some German officers, possibly merchant marine, arrived. They travelled to Dublin, three stayed with Sally Mellows at Rialto, and the other three remained with us. They had no purpose here and were becoming an embarrassment. Eventually Barney Mellows and Liam Pedlar brought them to Southampton where they joined a ship.

I was in Birr soon after that again, when I arrived as a member of the Four Courts garrison. We dismissed the Free Staters who were in one part of the barracks.(9) Sean Gaynor, the O.C., and Andy Cooney helped to capture the armoured car which we took to the Four Courts and christened *The Mutineer*. It did sterling service there.

During those early weeks of the Four Courts occupation, which occurred on April 13th, eleven weeks before the outbreak of the Civil War, a very close liaison was maintained by Liam Mellows with Sean MacMahon, Quartermaster of the Free State Army. I accompanied him on a number of occasions into Beggars Bush, the headquarters of the new army.

Sean McMahon was married to one of the Fitzgeralds of Pearse Street, a family well known to me. There were two brothers there, Theo and Leo, they were in a position to organise useful undercover dockside activity. For instance the *City of Dortmund*, which the army owned, ran in guns there. I am not quite certain about what I am going to say now, but I have been informed that some guns received in this way by the Free State Army, and which would not be recognised, were transferred to us.(10) Some of those guns, still covered up, were in the Four Courts when it was attacked on June 28th. That will give some idea of the speed with which events moved in the week preceding and how suddenly and completely personal relationships came to be broken.

We were not revolutionaries. Brugha, Plunkett and many others

were very religious men, and would have run a mile from Communism. Not so Mellows; he had some indirect contacts there. All I can tell you is that when it came to faking passports, it was done through a member of the Communist Party in London, with whom Eamonn Martin was in contact. I remember he rang me up and said, *will you pick up some papers from Churchtown?* (his house). I brought these passports to Mellows. He looked at them with a half smile. *Bring these to Mrs. Culhane*, who lived at the Nine Arches at Milltown. Her husband, a judge, or a barrister, was dead. Dev used to stay there. I knew this because I had brought other messages there. She had a big American car which fascinated me. The driver was a man called Paddy Saunders, a sound Republican, who was later in the Four Courts, and who, later again, was driver to Sean Lemass. I remember that day, bringing the passport in a sealed cover and delivering it into her own hand. It was on that passport that he travelled in late January to the Irish Race Convention in Paris. Prior to that I accompanied Eamonn to Bayswater and met there a deaf mute, the forger, who was a member of this left-wing circle. He could forge money too, and frequently did for his own use. On that occasion when I had pushed a ten shilling note into the taxi driver's hand, our friend took the note he was proffering and tore it in two in feigned annoyance. *It was a dud anyway*, he declared. Eamonn Martin was tied up with people like that. He had been to Russia<sup>(11)</sup> with Pat McCartan, Harry Boland and Archie Heron's future wife, Agna Connolly, the daughter of James Connolly. At that time, the Irish Republic was prepared to recognise Soviet Russia and they were prepared to recognise us, but De Valera, who was in America, did not want their recognition as it would embarrass him with Congress to whom, even more than to upper crust Englishmen, Soviet Russia was anathema. I remember Eamonn saying to us afterwards — he came frequently to our house — that the Russians whom they met seemed reluctant to get tied up with us. *We know*, they said, *you will negotiate a treaty with England that will fall far short of a Workers' Republic*. How right they were!

As a result there were a number of sub-rosa contacts going on with people whom I did not know, and did not inquire about. I remember going with Mellows to meet one of these people at Sir John Rogerson's Quay. It was very cloak and dagger. The man we met was a stranger. He wore glasses. Very little was said. We received then implements for overturning trams to create barricades. There was also some scheme for printing an enormous number of English fivers and flooding them on to the market. I cannot say if these Bolshevik people, whom I presumed they were, had ideas about us, that we were facing a counter revolution, and that therefore we were the ones who needed support. If they were of that mind, there were not enough of them to make much difference, and there were few people on our side ready to accept them as allies.



# THE RACE CONVENTION: DASH TO ROSSLARE

(As Jacqueline Van Voris, in her *Constance de Markievicz*, tells of the splendidly stage-managed Irish Race Convention held in Paris in January 1922, where deputies of the now disastrously divided Dail met with Irish men and women from all over the world. The Congress had been projected a year before — when complete freedom seemed attainable — in February 1921, at a conference of branches of the Irish Republican Association of South Africa. They had high aims but no power. Their initial purpose was to help Ireland in her struggle for independence; they also hoped to establish a permanent world organisation to promote trade in Irish products.

The well-organised Congress brought together representatives from seventeen countries, held an exhibition of Irish art, and gave an impressive number of concerts and lectures. Papers were read by Jack Yeats on painting, Evelyn Gleeson on Arts & Crafts, W. B. Yeats on Contemporary Lyrics and Plays, Arthur Darley on Irish Music, Douglas Hyde on the Gaelic League, and Eoin MacNeill on History. Andy Dunne was one of the singers at several concerts, where Madame's *Hymn on the Battlefield* was a favourite.

Madame was one of the Republican delegates to the Race Congress, as were Mary MacSwiney and Eamonn De Valera. Republican and Free State delegates were so divided that they would not travel together; Robert Brennan had to split the finances so that each group could have its own treasurer at the unity meeting. Madame's departure had been a stormy one. Word had gone out erroneously that the train from Westland Row Station, on which the delegates were travelling, was carrying some departing Black and Tans, and a crowd had gathered to hurl insults.

Robert Brennan went to Paris later in an attempt to persuade the two factions to present a united front at the Congress. He immediately realised such plans were hopeless. Already, as he expressed it in *Allegiance*, the Congress was a hotbed of intrigue, with each side canvassing the delegates for support of their respective stands on the Treaty. What might have become a great movement, was being wrecked on the rocks of party bias. Roughly as matters developed, the delegates from America, Britain, Chile and the Argentine were ranged on the Republican side, while those from the British Dominions were on the other.)

As I mentioned a moment ago, I knew of the departure by road for Rosslare, England and Paris, of De Valera and MacBride (as his secretary) en route for the Congress. I had picked up from Eamonn Martin the faked passport (MacBride always had a selection of his own) for the Chief. Mellows asked me to drive him in a car some way behind them, the intention being that, if they broke down, we could





*July 1922. A wounded Republican soldier at his post*



*The confident stride of General Michael Collins a few weeks before his death*

give them a lift. They left Dublin about three o'clock in the afternoon, but we did not leave until nearly eight in the evening. For some unaccountable reason, Liam was late that day. It was a very stormy night, but I drove the big touring car fairly fast, passing through Wexford town at eleven. We got mixed up then on the back road between Wexford and Rosslare. I remember inquiring at a house, and the man would not open the door or come out, though he shouted directions. We proceeded on. I was very tired from all the frenzied running about we had had to do, and it was not long until I realised with a jerk that we were hopelessly lost. It was now pitch black and with driving rain I could not see a thing. Eventually I found myself grazing alongside a wall or ditch. *Stop there!* said Liam. I halted, while he alighted. He came back in a moment. *You were nearly doing a Con Keating*(12) he said, with a serious smile. *Put on the brake.* He held the door. I got out to find we were on the side of a cliff with only a foot to spare.

I got in and backed away carefully, guided by Liam. We turned then and made our way into Wexford. Outside that town we pulled in on the verge, took out a flask of tea and ate some food. I found then that I could not start the car. It was now about two in the morning. Wearily we both pulled a rug over us and dozed off. Around eight o'clock we woke. I tinkered with the plugs and got her going again. We drove on, contented enough now, to the Workhouse in Enniscorthy where we were greeted by Dick King, Quartermaster General, a great friend of Mellows, and Sean Etchingham.

They were all Wexfordmen and as such had always stuck together. We then made our way back to Dublin where I returned the car to Oscar Traynor.

#### ATTEMPT TO KIDNAP COPE

I can claim the distinction of having attempted to arrest A. W. Cope, the Under-Secretary for Ireland, whose office was in Dublin Castle. It happened during the post Treaty period, when the Provisional Government was in process of formation. We suspected the worst about what was going on, and we hoped that some lead might be found if we captured the despatch case of the Under-Secretary. Cope used to travel between Richmond Barracks and Beggars Bush in a large Hudson car with a driver. He usually came by Dame Street, around King William's monument at College Green and along Nassau Street to Merrion Square. I was asked could I waylay this car. I was rather good at this, having picked up the Lord Lieutenant's car at Fairymount, and even an armoured car.

With Bobbie Byrne and another chap, I waited at Merrion Square.



The idea was to take Cope, obtain his briefcase, and then dump him around Booterstown. Under no circumstances was there to be any shooting. That is why they picked me. They could have had any of the A.S.U. men, Kelleher or McHenry, the real hard men, but they wanted to avoid gun play. I was then to take the briefcase to Paddy Fleming, later O.C. of the 3rd Eastern, and a great man for jail breaks.

Anyway we got in behind his car in Nassau Street, and followed it on to the junction of Merrion Square where it stopped in the cross traffic. Quick as anything, I jumped out and rushed up to the driver; *Get out of the car!* To Cope, I said, *Stay where you are!* The driver alighted and was detained by our man. My companion should have got in at that point. Instead, Cope, with a shout — *I'm a friend of Michael Collins*, jumped out. That was alright. I had the case which was all I wanted. But I reckoned without Cope. The car was an open tourer, and the case had been lying on the back seat, while he sat in the front. Now, as it began to gather speed, Cope jumped up behind me on the running board, grabbed the case, and though he fell on the road, he gathered himself and quickly made off. He had to go only fifty yards to the safety of Oriel House, which is precisely where he went.

Well, I thought, it could be worse. We have a nice big, powerful armour-plated car. Where can I bring it that it may be useful? I was directed to bring it to Dundrum, Co. Tipperary. When I got there, there was no one at all to receive it, so I brought it back to Dublin, to Roebuck House in fact, but I thought that was not the place to leave it, so I decided to take it to a safer location. Coming down Belmont Avenue, I saw an Oriel House car coming the other way. A man in it raised a gun and fired at me. The bullet 'parted my hair', in fact it knocked me out. The marksman was Frank Thornton. Without more ado, he brought me to Baggot Street Hospital, where he rang Dr. Linda Kearns: *Look, I am in a bit of a jam. I am after shooting Tony Woods. The old lady (meaning my mother) will have my life. Come over and do something.* Needless to say, it was not a time for remaining on one's back in hospital. I was out of there within twenty-four hours.

Thornton had been a prominent figure in the Dublin A.S.U. along with Donald Bolster, Pat McCrae, Kelleher, McHenry and the rest. He had an unquestioning allegiance for Collins and Liam Tobin. Tobin, of course, was the real Intelligence man in Dublin in the Tan struggle; not Collins, and Collins would be the first to admit that. A few weeks after this episode, Thornton was badly wounded in a Republican ambush near Clonmel and his brother killed. Aodhgan O'Rahilly could tell you about that; he was involved on the Republican side. (See Appendix for a note from O'Rahilly on this incident.)

## AFTER THE FOUR COURTS

After the Four Courts, we were taken to Jameson's Distillery in Bow Lane. (13) There had been much heartsearching before the surrender. The building was never a fortress and had become untenable. But Ernie O'Malley, as O.C., was reluctant to surrender a whole garrison. He succeeded Paddy O'Brien when he was hit by shrapnel. He felt we should break out across Chancery Place and make off eastwards into the city from there. He asked for thirty volunteers to rush across, seize the houses opposite — one of them was a mission — and form a bridgehead on to which the rest of the garrison could alight. There was myself, Bobbie Burns, Morrissey, Kelleher, McHenry, mostly the staff of the garrison and the Brigade. We had picked the best rifles. We were going to open the gate, which was partly blocked by a tender dropped there by Charlie Dalton, go out, rush across and seize the mission. But it came to nothing. They surrendered, and Ernie went along with them only because he was the O.C.

Going along the quays, we were so loosely guarded, that we could talk to many of the onlookers. Bobbie Burns and I had taken some of our guns out — most of them had been smashed before surrender on the orders of the staff — and we were able to slip these guns to the Cooney girls when they approached us. As I walked along the quays, leaving the burning building behind us, I could not think of it as the commencement of a civil war. To me, it was just part of a great adventure in which I was eager to play a part. When we reached the distillery gates, we found ourselves locked out and we had to knock to be admitted.

I knew a number of the Free State officers inside. Many of those in Beggars Bush had been in the Third Battalion. G.H.Q. staff were upstairs. I was told that Mellows was looking for me. We were not long there, however, when I learned that O'Malley, Commandant of the First Eastern, Joe Griffin, Director of Intelligence, Sean Lemass and Paddy Rigney had walked out through a side gate. We were packed into lorries and brought to Mountjoy, where we occupied eventually all four wings of the prison.

Let me here say a word now about Ernie. He stayed with us here in his latter years and I came to know him and love him. He was a very flamboyant, extrovert character. He used to attach himself to us in Morehampton Road, and then later at Piper Hill. Earlier he had been in Spain, during the Civil War, but only as a correspondent in support of the Madrid Government. He never spoke of that period. He sent his three sons, Cormac, Cathal and Etain to Ring College, because first, last and all the time, he remained a Republican. I was raging, nonetheless, when I read Frances-Mary Blake's book (14) about him. It was no more a story of O'Malley; it was just adulation for a man which was not true. You would imagine there was no one else there.

Yet O'Malley was only a third-rate general; that is all he was. He was a great man in many ways, but he could not compare with Pilkington, Barry or Maguire.

#### TUNNEL

In November/December there was a tunnel being dug into us from a house in Glengariff Parade. It would have to travel only two hundred yards to reach us. The leadership inside the prison, Rory O'Connor and the rest, knew about it, and there were high hopes for it. (15) They had already tried at least two tunnels out from C Wing and A wing but these had both been discovered. I was involved along with Rory O'Connor, Joe McKelvey, Barrett, Tom MacMahon and MacBride in that one. (16) Tommy Doyle made dummy handguns for us to take with us. These were to be used in a forced break-out if the tunnel adventure did not succeed. Some of these were kept under a floorboard in my cell, where I slept — mattress upon the floor, since there were no beds — with Sean Nolan. I remember an occasion — we did not think it funny at the time — when Paudeen O'Keeffe accompanied by the Hammer Mangan, formerly of the Dublin A.S.U. — came in, pushed our mattress with his toe and addressed me. *Your mother, the owl battleaxe is inquiring how you are.* He was *mait go leor* at the time and rocking around on his heels, while he intoned, *drunken Paudeen O'Keeffe is battering the prisoners again.* Paudeen never battered anyone; he was repeating what *An Phoblacht* was writing about him. I was quaking because I saw our floorboard was moving. Fortunately something caught his attention and he departed as quickly. I forget how far we got. All I can remember is that I hated working in it. It was very disheartening however, when it was discovered. Unfortunately it required only one regular good search a month to unearth a tunnel. Then Barry tried and almost carried off a one man escape in an army great coat. Then there was the attempt to escape with the aid of two soldiers through the large window in Peadar Breslin's cell. It failed also. Finally on October 10th, there was another effort at an armed break-out. It depended upon split second timing and the sort of human reactions that are not always predictable. It failed. Peadar Breslin and a Stater died, the soldier being shot by Simon Donnelly because he reached for his gun instead of the ceiling. At this time, McHenry, Kelleher and some others, were in the outer circle where they hoped to hold up the military police and grab their keys. Shooting occurred there too. It completely spoiled the plan, as the real prize, soldiers with rifles in the guard room, were still safely behind an outer gate, and they now emerged to confront us.

Peadar Breslin, who was a great friend of Paudeen O'Keeffe, got



shot dead by a ricochet bullet. This upset O'Keeffe more than the loss of those on his own side. The soldiers now surrounded us, mad with anger. We were saved only by O'Keeffe's peremptory order to fall in and march around the yard. He kept us so, while he allowed tempers to cool. Half way through, Andy Cooney, the O.C. sauntered over to him: *I take complete and sole responsibility. Well, be Jasus, Cooney, you're a man*, said O'Keeffe. *Come on.*

There was only one thing to do after all these failures and that was to try digging in from the outside. It is an expedient that has often been resorted to since, but at that time it was still quite novel. Sean MacEntee was in charge of that along with Joe Downes and Mick Price. My mother had some involvement also: she used bring them food to the house from which the tunnel proceeded. I cannot say how it failed but it did. It is not that easy to operate unobserved from a small brick house in a quiet neighbourhood, which Glengarriff Parade then was.

A word here about Simon Donnelly before we pass on. He was a fascinating person. I first met him with Andy McDonnell and Barney Mellows early in 1922, when he was O.C. of Police. He was a Dubliner and lived on the South Circular Road. On his staff was a man called Hardy, a cripple, who lived in Church Street, but he would frighten the devil out of you.

After some months in the 'Joy I was brought to the old barracks at Newbridge. I was there in October 1923, when the great hunger-strike began. Shortly after it commenced, the Staters came in one night and removed Tom McMahon, D. L. Robinson, Tom Derrig and other members of the staff to Kilmainham Jail. We had been comfortable there; four of us occupied a saddle room in the stables, which was quite agreeable. The hunger-strike was called off on November 23rd. It did not seem to have achieved anything, but by Christmas most of us were released.

#### MACBRIDE'S ATTEMPTED ESCAPE

Sean MacBride, who had been all round the Free State jails, made an attempt to escape from Newbridge, while I was there. We knew he was going because he had informed us. His plan was a simple one. A swill cart left the kitchen daily. If the guard was distracted momentarily, he would slide in. MacBride is fairly fastidious as you know, so it must have taken some grit on his part to get down into it. Whatever happened at the gate, I do not know. The sentry may have probed the swill, for the next moment I saw him returning. He was a sight. It was a most courageous effort and reminded me of George Gilmore's escape from Mountjoy, when he ran up the ladder and,

rather than waiting till he reached the top, jumped over it. It takes an agile man to do that.

#### THE ST. GEORGE

This extraordinary interlude in our activities occurred in December 1924. We were, so to speak, down but not out. Sean MacBride was staying then under cover at Maloneys, near Beechwood Avenue church. Maloney was married to Roisin Ryan, a Cumann na mBan girl. He was one of the Maloneys of Shelbourne House. He was not politically conscious himself, but, motivated by Sean no doubt, he had a secret room constructed inside the house. Sean and Tom Heavey used to stay there a lot. This day, it was late in November, he sent for me. *Tony, would you like to come on a venture with me? We are buying a boat. Heavey, yourself, myself and Frank Barry of Cobh will crew an ML submarine chaser that I am buying in Belfast. You'll be the engineer. Barry is a good seaman and I will be known as Lieutenant John Swift of His Majesty's Navy. I have already introduced myself in Belfast as the nephew of a retired admiral residing in Southampton. The venture has the blessing of the Chief of Staff Frank Aiken, and the full support of Mike Carolan, Director of Intelligence.* MacBride had already been to Belfast where he bought this ex-Canadian ML boat from the big linen merchants, Lindsays. Lindsays had already adapted the boat for cruising, but it still had its powerful engines which ran on petrol. We got the engines overhauled. We were there for about three weeks, because I remember there was curfew then in Belfast. We were all there together, though Sean used to come back and forward to Dublin. It was in one of the shipyards, Workman Clarks in fact, and they had a fitter helping us. We were to leave there as soon as it was ready and head for Larne where it was to be used to rescue fifty Republican prisoners then digging a tunnel out of Larne military camp. We resided on the boat, and of course in view of where we were, we had to conceal our identities and behave with complete respectability. We had a pass for moving in and out of the dock area; the harbour police got to know us. They used to come on board occasionally for a drink. We had the boat registered *St. George*, and the night before we sailed we decided to invite the superintendent and some others on board. Now I must explain that Barry never indulged in this sort of camaraderie; he kept in the background. We were at this for an hour and felt quite jolly. Barry was upstairs preparing food in the galley, when a toast was called. Without blinking MacBride toasted the *St. George*. However the superintendent called the next one to *The King*. We took our cue and raised our glasses, but we hadn't reckoned on Barry. When he heard this upstairs, he was so appalled that he let the tray fall with a clatter.

The next morning, Sunday, we nosed out of the harbour with

MacBride navigating. I was on the engines. We had a pilot, and I remember when he directed me to slide out of the lock. I threw her into gear and since I was not used to it, it sprang backwards, scraping along the lock. The pilot could scarcely contain himself at such navigation. Anyway he continued to guide us down the Lough, slipping the tow rope opposite Holywood. Sean took over then and sailed it through Donaghadee Sound, west of Copeland Island, although he had been warned by the pilot not to do so. I should explain that we were no longer heading for Larne. The tunnel had been discovered, and since Sean was now left with a ship, but no base and no assignment, he decided we should sail to Southampton and sink it in one of the channels there. But at this point, we developed trouble in one of the plugs, so we decided we would pull into Newcastle the next morning and see what we could do. It was a beautiful frosty calm night as we lay off Newcastle. At this point, a pilot came out offering to guide us in. We did not see any necessity for this though we were sorry after. Newcastle is a shallow port; if we missed the tide there, it could cost us a few hours. So we stayed where we were.

About 2 a.m. Sean came to me. *Get up, Tony. There is a storm brewing and the boat is shaking terribly.* In truth it was. The waves were causing it to bob around like a coracle. It was dragging heavily on the anchor. We tried to haul that up but we could not. We just had to let the waves buffet us until the chain broke and we started drifting out to sea. I can remember seeing how the lights around Slieve Donard receded from us. We were helpless because we had not been able to start the engines. We were completely at the mercy of the waves. For some crazy reason, we decided we would launch the lifeboat. It was a fixed davit, which meant we could lower it only on one side. I was standing in it as it reached the water, whereupon it promptly filled. I was lucky that I could still scramble back on the *St. George*. We huddled inside as the bridge was wrecked bit by bit. We just held on. Barry the seaman and Heavey were very sick. I can remember, at one point, receiving a firm handclasp from MacBride. However she did not sink. The storm eased and she drifted back in again, a sorry wreck after the night's events. It was the tanks, that unwittingly we had left empty, that gave us buoyancy.

We beached her at the third hole on the golf course, a hopeless wreck. We tried to salvage her then, we brought tugs, but they could not haul her off. We had nothing of value on her except a typewriter and some papers. MacBride destroyed those. The R.U.C was a little puzzled by it all, but although they knew we were from Dublin, they did not connect anything. So we just returned there a week or so later, and auctioned off what we could. While so engaged, Sean, with his usual effrontery, took up residence at Ballykinlar, where he was treated as an honoured guest by H.M. Naval Reserve. I believe the wreck is duly recorded at the Lifeboat Institute in London as having



occurred at 9.30 a.m. on December 15th, 1924. Afterwards Moss Twomey used to joke me about it; *The first Republican naval squadron*, he would say; though he lamented the loss of some thousands of pounds in purchasing her. I believe Sean still has the binnacle and compass.(16a)

FRANK RYAN: SEAN RUSSELL

I cannot say that I knew Frank Ryan well. He was younger than I. However I can confirm that he did meet Liam Mellows, for he met him in our house. Sean MacBride always had a high regard for him also. I am speaking now of the early thirties, when Frank was Editor of *An Phoblacht*. Frank spent much of his time then in Roebuck. He was a strange character; very definite in some ways. I liked him very much. I recall one occasion when we had to do a quick flit out of a premises in Abbey Street. Frank, MacBride, Tom Heavey and myself helped to move printing machinery from there. I am delighted that his remains now rest here. It was always to this country that he gave his first loyalty.

I remember being in the States on Sweep business in July 1937. Connie Neenan said to me: *Do you know who arrived last night, Sean Russell. We will be picking him up afterwards with McGarrity. He is going to California.* (Russell, Quartermaster-General of the I.R.A., and Director of Munitions in the Tan struggle, was slipping rapidly into disfavour with G.H.Q. because of such behind the scenes activities. In January 1937, he was courtmartialled, suspended and then dismissed, but he made a spectacular comeback and in April 1938, was reinstated by a General Army Convention, *whose decisions we intend to respect only if they suit us*(17) as Chief of Staff of the organisation. The English bombing campaign was on.)

I had known Russell slightly since I had been on Mellows' staff in late 1921. I never liked him very much. I don't know why. I had no reason not to like him except that I thought he was a devious person, quiet and absolutely ruthless. McGarrity gave him the money to run that bombing in the belief, as he expressed it himself, that; *there should be definite plans for demolition operations in Britain with a view to demoralisation of the enemy.* McGarrity himself was a very good man, simple and naive in many ways. He gave all his money to the Movement. On my way back on that occasion, he gave me an American Express draft: *Give that to Barry or MacBride when you see them, and don't forget to get a receipt for it. Meanwhile come with me for a few extra days to Philadelphia. I'll show you where Casement stayed. You need not worry, I'll sort it out with Joe.*(18) When I returned home to Morehampton Road, I found Barry and MacBride

there. I handed Barry the draft, which was for a considerable amount of money. Taking it, he laughed: *You did not hear, but we have been ousted. Don't worry*, he then said, referring to the draft, which he had handed to Sean. *We'll sort this out*. I had an immense admiration for Barry. None of the controversies about him could ever wipe out for me the memories of Toureen, Kilmichael and Crossbarry. To me he was one of the big generals of the struggle against the British.(19)

#### REFERENCES

- 1 Ancient Order of Hibernians, a middle-class, ultra Catholic society.
- 1a The body of Noel Lemass was found on the Featherbed, or Cruagh Mountain eight miles south of Dublin on October 12th 1922. He had been seized by Free State troops on July 3rd. Among the gang may have been the notorious Capt. James Murray. A Republican called Tuíte was held by Murray at Ledwidges of Stillorgan. *We will dump him where we left Lemass*, he was heard to say. Tuíte escaped from them and Lemass was found. Murray was himself convicted by a Free State court in July 1925, for killing Joe Bergin at Milltown Bridge, near Newbridge, Co. Kildare in December 1923. He died in Maryboro Prison in July 1929.
- 2 Five hundred Thompson guns were destined for Ireland but in June 1921 they were seized by Customs in New York. They were released four years later into the hands of Joe McGarrity, and most of them reached the I.R.A. subsequently. In July 1942 a cache of 92 was seized by police near Swinford. A few did however arrive before the Truce, some of them being used to ambush a troop train at Drumcondra on June 26th. See *The I.R.A.* by Tim Pat Coogan.
- 3 Caged with mesh to protect them from grenades being tossed in. This was effective until fish-hooks were attached to the grenades.
- 4 Fenian Street.
- 5 See under December 1920, *On Another Man's Wound*.
- 6 O'Donnell tells it in *The Gates Flew Open*: I could fix the date of my escape from the files of the *Independent*, for it chanced that I escaped two days before the Free State Army mutiny became public. I remember the fact easily, for a raiding party searching for mutineers passed through the skylight of Wood's house, 131 Morehampton Road, while I lay concealed between the rafters and slates in the dark corner opposite.
- 7 Director of Elections; also on Publicity.
- 8 In the Cabinet as Minister for Fisheries.
- 9 See Dan Gleeson's account on page 268.
- 10 Andy McDonnell's Republican garrison in Bray barracks received its entire armament from Beggars Bush. Tony Woods relates. He recalled also a visit by Liam to a

Free State Army office in Abbey Street, where he met for the first time, D. P. Walsh, attired in the new uniform. Spinning him around like a model, Liam exclaimed without the least malice, *well, the uniform suits you anyway.*

11 I.R.A. contacts with the Soviet Union and the Communist-oriented international anti-imperialist movement were fairly extensive. In 1926 Gerald Boland, Sean Russell, Mick Fitzgerald and Pa Murray went to Moscow on an unsuccessful mission for arms. In the following years, Sean MacBride and Peadar O'Donnell attended an anti-imperialist congress at Frankfurt; Donal O'Donoghue and Frank Ryan went to another in Paris; George Gilmore and Dave Fitzgerald were in Moscow for a military training course when word leaked to British Intelligence and they returned home; Sean McCool received treatment in a Russian sanatorium; The I.R.A. passed anti-British intelligence to the Red Army. — *The McGarrity Papers*, by Sean Cronin. On the subject of the London forger of passports, the man who may have forged De Valera's passport, Desmond Greaves in *Liam Mellows* had this to say: De Valera had no passport for the Race Convention and it was distasteful for him to apply to the Provisional Government. It was decided that Eamonn Martin would cross to London, make the necessary arrangements with the Communists, and have Ramsey, the photographer, ready when De Valera arrived. As it happened Ramsey was working Bournemouth beach, and the photograph had to be taken at a small shop in the strand.

12 Con Keating, Charles Monaghan and Donal Sheehan were driven into the sea at Ballykissane on Good Friday, 1916, while going to meet the *Aud*.

13 *The Singing Flame*.

14 *The Singing Flame*.

15. See Sean MacBride's account on page 118 of one of his last conversations with Rory O'Connor. Fourteen weeks before this, in August, an attempt was made to tunnel in from 28 Innisfallen Parade with the connivance of its owners who conveniently went on holiday. It was discovered on the night of the 10th of August, and the men inside arrested. See Greaves *Liam Mellows*, page 361.

16 These escape attempts are described in detail in *The Gates Flew Open* by Peadar O'Donnell.

16a See a full account of the sailing of the *St. George* in the Appendix.

17 Letter to McGarrity, November 3rd, 1937, quoted by Sean Cronin.

18 Joe McGrath, head of the Sweepstake organisation, for whom Tony was then working.

19 The papers of 4th July 1980 report the funeral of Tom Barry with many personality photographs.



## Sighle Bean Uí Dhonnchadha

(Sheila Humphreys)

National Vice-President,  
Cumann na mBan



The O'Rahillys, from whom I am descended on my mother's side, were natives of Ballylongford in Kerry, but came originally from Sliabh Luachra in the heart of that country. It is an upland area of bogs and heather, east of Killarney on the borders of Co. Cork, the *ceannntar dúchais* of the 18th century poets Aodhagán Ó Rathaille and Eoghan Rua Ó Súilleabháin, and in our own day, of that great compiler of the Irish language, An t-Athair Pádraig Ó Duinnín. I have often wondered could there be another twenty-five square miles in Ireland that has done so much for the literature of the Gael.

The Ballylongford O'Rahillys were first cousins of the late Professor Alfred O Rahilly's family. My grandfather's brother lived in Listowel, and it is from there sprang that extraordinary clever family, Thomas, Francis, Alfred, Albert and Cecile. There were fourteen in that family, all of them gifted in some way. Later we used to joke among ourselves that what we had in nationality, they had in intellectualism.

You know that I dislike talking about my family, it sounds boastful, but since you insist, I will show you our family tree, researched and sketched by my brother Dick. Beautiful, isn't it? It goes back to the eleventh century. Richard Rahilly(1) my grandfather, was a prosperous merchant and Justice of the Peace in Ballylongford, in the closing decades of the last century. One of his daughters, Mary, married my father Dr. David Humphreys of Limerick City. She was accompanied by her sister, Áine, my aunt, to whom I attribute a great part of my nationalist and radical sympathies. Their brother, Michael Joseph, succeeded his father in the business in 1896. In 1899 he married Nancy Browne of Philadelphia, and afterwards he remained out of Ireland until 1909. Wealthy for those days, and very much a man of the world he is the most surprising of the revolutionaries of 1916. When he returned here, he became literally more Irish than many of the leaders of the political and cultural movement into which he cast

himself with such enthusiasm. He built himself a commodious house at 40 Herbert Park, in which some of his family still reside. When we came to Dublin in that same year, we lived at 54 Northumberland Road, later moving to 36 Ailesbury Road. So whether we liked it or not — and we liked it — our lives continued to be closely entwined. In our family there was Dick, myself and Emmet. Dick had qualified as a barrister, but hated the law and commenced building cars in association with Frank Jones of Haddington Road. Jones was a very sound type; he often loaned cars to the Volunteers when they were needed.

I was, as I have said, very influenced by my aunt Áine. My father died when I was three, and she came to "Quinnsboro", Parteen, to live with us. She was very nationally minded. She had all the ballads, the poems of *The Nation*, the whole history of the national struggle. We could not have grown up any other way. I got all of my ideas from her. She was strongly pro Labour; we would call it socialist now. She was different in her views from the general run of the people at that time. From 1899 onwards, she was a regular reader of Arthur Griffith's paper, *United Irishman*. That was later replaced by *Sinn Féin*. Both of these were the staple diet of Nationalists before the arrival of *Irish Freedom*, *Claidheamh Soluis* and *Workers' Republic*. *Irish Freedom*, generally regarded as the paper of Bulmer Hobson and Sean Mac Diarmúda — in other words the I.R.B. — came in 1910. Pearse had most of his writings in that or in *An Claidheamh Soluis*, all of which came into our house.

Following the death of my father some years earlier, we came to Dublin in 1909 and settled in Ballsbridge; it was entirely residential then. Our house at that time was as I have said at 54 Northumberland Road, which is where we were during the Rising.

#### ST. ENDA'S

Áine used to go to Liberty Hall to collect Connolly's paper there, *The Workers' Republic*. Everyone admired Larkin at that time. We were all on his side, completely, from 1913. Connolly was a less flamboyant, almost unknown, figure, though in fact he was the deeper thinker.

Both Dick and Emmet went to Pádraic Pearse's school at Rathfarnham. Dick was there shortly after the move from Cullenswood House in Ranelagh. Let me show you his diary:

*8th January, 1912:* Came back to school by the motor; very wet day. There were only very few of the boys back, owing to the terrible rain in the morning.

*10th January, 1912:* Started work; half day; had no matches as no balls were got yet.

*14th January, 1912:* A fairly wet day; went home. There was a match in Jones Road for the All Ireland Football final between Cork and Antrim. Cork won by 18 points to 5.

*15th January, 1912:* Started collecting Gallaghers cigarette cards with the noble sum of two. Went by cycle to St. Ita's. There was a play and dance there; came back at eleven tired and weary.

*17th January, 1912:* Had the first football match after Christmas.

*18th January, 1912:* Nearly all the boys went out to the Panto. I went down to the Lady of the Lake, had a good time, came up and read at the fire in the linen room 'till eleven o'clock.

*21st January, 1912:* Had no out match, played hurling with Bulfin. Dwyers were up practising.

*23rd January, 1912:* Rode home and settled it alright. Was stopped by a bobby coming home for having no lamp, name and address taken, but nothing happened.

*25th January, 1912:* Mr. Pearse told some of the boys to get rifles.

*27th January, 1912:* Had a hurling match, rode home in the evening, took a dive from the cycle into the mud. Got the rifle with Michael at Truelocks.

*28th January, 1912:* Played a hurling match in Ringsend against Fontenoys; was late for first half. Won by 7-2 to nil.

*29th January, 1912:* Tried the rifle. Mr. Pearse cleaned it afterwards.

*31st January, 1912:* Frank Burke and Fred O'Doherty went into town. Came back with the hurling and football cups and medals.

*1st February, 1912:* Went down to Confession after tea, walked back slowly as it was a lovely night and as I didn't know my Euclid.

*2nd February, 1912:* The hurling and football cups and medals were given out by Mr. Pearse in the study hall; had a living picture performance afterwards.

*3rd February, 1912:* Made a slide on the lake, had great fun. Played the Westland Row team in the snow, a very bad match.

*5th February, 1912:* We got a whole holiday for the medals; went for a walk up the mountains as the lake had thawed.

*10th February, 1912:* Mr. Pearse started boxing. Saw some good fun between Fred O'Doherty and Clarke. I was made master of games.

*11th February, 1912:* Very cold day; was shooting with rifle down at the lake. Went home in the evening. Cleaned rifle.

*18th February, 1912:* Experimented with a desk as to hardness; had to retire in disorder.

*19th February, 1912:* Shrove Tuesday, went down to doctor. A lot of the boys went to town; went to the Lady of the Lake about 8, very dark. Had grand pancakes; half-day.



*23rd February, 1912:* Michael Rahilly came out here and gave a lecture on '98 in the study hall.

*24th February, 1912:* We played the 'Davises' a friendly match here; were beaten by 3-0 to 2-2. Rugby final in Lansdowne Road between Ireland and Scotland, Ireland won by 11pts. to 8.

*25th February, 1912:* We played the 'Purveyors' at No. 4 ground in the Park; a very good match (hurling); beat them by 2 goals to nil. Went home afterwards and got about 100 Gallaghers from Sighle and Emmet.

*27th February, 1912:* Found a new hurling field between the handball alley and the gate, coats as goal posts.

*28th February, 1912:* Played a football match. Catechism all day.

*29th February, 1912:* Mr. Pearse went away; went home on cycle in the evening and got about 110 Gallaghers from Sighle and Emmet.

*1st March, 1912:* Had a lecture in the study hall on poetry by Pádraic Colum.

*3rd March, 1912:* Went down to the lake shooting, fairly wet day. Cleaned rifle.

*6th March, 1912:* Catechism exam: answered all the questions. Had hurling match instead of football. We heard that Mr. Doody was very sick.

*7th March, 1912:* Ryan and Frank Burke asked for a whole half day but it was not given. Drill in refectory as the new desks cannot be moved.

*8th March, 1912:* We had a very good lecture on India by Miss Mayden. We came up to Dublin on this date three years ago (1909) which was a Monday.

*9th March, 1912:* Played a very bad hurling match here; went into Gleesons; met Mama.

*10th March, 1912:* Went down shooting. Played handball most of the day. Owen MacAvock and I made a big wooden target with a bell for the rifle shooting. Cleaned my rifle.

*12th March, 1912:* Wet day, tried to play handball in the alley, but found it too dirty. Would not go into Mathematics as we did not know Euclid.

*14th March, 1912:* Splendid day. Mr. Pearse had to go out about his new paper so he gave us a half day. We played a great hurling match. Rowan got hurt on his lip and Joe O'Connor his temple. We had no study, made a big water snake.

*15th March, 1912:* It snowed in the morning, but it became quite fine in the evening. Drove the motor in to Gleesons, went home, had tea there and got back at the school just in time to hear a grand lecture on the Irish Brigade in Africa by Major MacBride.

*19th March, 1912:* Fine day but very cold; rode into town in the

evening, met Mr. Feely coming out and got a new handball. Fred O'Doherty and Frank Burke went into town and arranged for hurling matches on next Saturday and Sunday.

*21st March, 1912:* St. Enda's Day, a whole holiday; changed and had a hurling match before lunch and a football match afterwards. Had a céilí in the evening. St. Ita's girls were here. Lost my hurl.

*22nd March, 1912:* Drizzling day. Mr. Pearse took up my handball from C. MacG. Pearse nearly went mad about things broken; said he would stop all half-days if culprits were not found. We had a lecture here in the evening by Mr. Mopson, on patriotism.

*25th March, 1912:* Fine day, we got a whole holiday. Were to go to Mass but we were too late. Played hurling during most of the day. Went home in the evening. Lamp went out and got punctured on the way back.

*27th March, 1912:* Fairly fine day; mended football; had one exam. Arithmetic. Searched every place in the study for my handball. Joe Buckley got it for me. Cleaned my rifle; had a rotten football match as it became too wet.

*30th March, 1912:* Fairly fine day. Mended two punctures in my bicycle. Went to the park, played a football match against St. Andrew's; we were beaten by 2 goals 3 pts. to nil; became very wet afterwards.

*31st March, 1912:* Lovely day; read for most of the day and played football. Had no study. We had a grand feast about twelve o'clock that night with cakes, sweets, apples etc. Had songs and storytelling afterwards.

*3rd April, 1912:* Rode to Finglas golf club with Sighle; read there, rode home beat. Mama and Anna on the motor. Went down town after dinner, then went over to Michael who was mending the gramophone.

*7th April, 1912:* Easter Sunday, fine day. Looked for our Easter eggs in the garden, got a grand big one. Drove the motor out to Kingstown. Played hurling on the strand at Ringsend in the evening.

*10th April, 1912:* Fine day. Mac and Aodhagán came over in the morning; played hurling. Mama gave us a party in the evening. Brian and Dick Newland were in here at it. Brought Dick Newland home.

*11th April, 1912:* Fine day. Went out to Finglas to golf. Drove the motor back. Home Rule Bill brought into the House of Commons today. A false rumour got about of the Pope's death.

*13th April, 1912:* Fine day. Drove out to Donnybrook in motor. Painted my boat. Mem: Holidays.

*14th April, 1912:* Fine day. Mac and Aodhagán came over; played hurling. Emmet broke three glasses. We all got into hot water over them. Mama, Anna and Emmet went to Rahilly's. Sighle and I had great fun. Played tennis.

*15th April, 1912:* Fine day. Found chimney broken in garden. Went to Finglas to read there. Heard the collision of the Titanic with an iceberg. Drove out to the school with Miss McCarthy. Took up Peter. Very few of the boys back.

*17th April, 1912:* Splendid day, had full day's class. Played hurling. Burke, the O'Tooles, Reddins and the MacGinleys came this evening. Had Science, but no Maths. The Titanic sank this morning, about 500 saved, 1,000 drowned.

*21st April, 1912:* Very wet day. Stayed in the house all day, played handball, boxed with Kenny and Clarke; mended my hurl. Had study; went down to the Lady's. Kicked up a row in the dormitory.

*23rd April, 1912:* Splendid day, played handball. Had no Science or Maths. National Convention today in Dublin. Started a Society of Rooters. Read the adventures of Sherlock Holmes.

*26th April, 1912:* Splendid day. Played hurling. Went down to the Lady's. Had a grand lecture about life in Australia by Father Fitzgerald. No Maths.

*28th April, 1912:* Splendid day, found my cycle punctured already. Went down shooting. Had a football match here against St. Andrew's, we won by 9 pts. to 3.

*30th April, 1912:* Splendid day, mended a puncture in my bicycle. Went home, met the priest from Australia. Got a new hurl as birthday present. Rode back in time for Science.

*1st May, 1912:* Fine day, mended the football; played a match, ball burst, played hurling. Mr. Pearse went into Dublin for new hurls. Joe Buckley came back.

*3rd May, 1912:* Drizzly day, went to Mass; burst the hurling ball. Had a lecture here in the evening by Madame Markievicz on the Rebellion of Ireland.

*6th May, 1912:* Fairly fine day. A new Master came, called Mr. Campbell. Had drill in the evening, played chasing after tea; a lot of the boys went out to the Shakespearian plays. Had drill.

*8th May, 1912:* Splendid day. Mended the football, played a football match. Played chasing through the classroom; went down at night in our pyjamas and frightened the boys.

*10th May, 1912:* Splendid day, played hurling, played chasing after tea. Had no lecture or Maths. Went up to Mr. Pearse about the beds.

*13th May, 1912:* Mr. Pearse went away to Enniscorthy where he is giving a lecture on Education under Home Rule Bill. Went down to Lady's, had Mr. Doody for study, had drill.

*16th May, 1912:* Whole holiday. Played hurling with Bulfin. Went for a ride up the mountains, cleaned my rifle. MacAvock shot a thrush with his rifle.

*18th May, 1912:* Fine day, played hurling, getting on all right with



new style hurling. Rode to the Park, were to play Marlborough Street, they did not come up, so we got a walk over. Went home, stayed for tea.

*25th May, 1912:* Fine day, went to the Park, played a football match in No. 1 ground against the Josephs. Very rough, beat them by 3-2 to 0-2. Fred Doherty punctured my bicycle. Brought it home in the tram.

*27th May, 1912:* Splendid day, got up at 4 o'clock; went shooting. Played hurling and football, found a hurl on the top of the press. Went down to the Lady's. Had tea at six. Played with a bladder.

*29th May, 1912:* Splendid day, half-holiday was stopped because of the birds broken in the museum. Did not go into class.

*3rd June, 1912:* Wet day, had the drawing exam, did all right, I think. Started rehearsing for the pageant. Played hurling. Sports notice put up.

*7th June, 1912:* Fine day, played hurling. Had no Maths. We were to burn Pedro the Cruel, but Pearse was nosing around so we were not able to do it. The measles campaign commenced with Dennis Glennon.

*8th June, 1912:* Fine day; went down to Confession. Had no hurling match. Went into town on MacAvock's bicycle, had to pump it two or three times. Big rehearsal of the Pageant.

*10th June, 1912:* Fine day. Practised for the sports. Felt very sick during the day. Rode into town on Dowling's steam roller to get the sports programme printed; the price was too dear.

*12th June, 1912:* Splendid day. On getting up this morning, I found that I had the measles, I did not say anything about them, however, Dr. Kelly met me and sent me to the infirmary.

*14th June, 1912:* Mama came out in the evening for me, went home in a cab. Fairly fine day. Stayed in bed all day. Got a letter from Mr. Pearse to say that Joe Rooney has the measles too. Got enough to eat. Could not go to sleep at night.

*16th June, 1912:* Fine day, did not go to Mass. Went over to Mac and Aodhagán with Mama. Went to Herbert Park. Played tennis with Anna in the garden.

*6th August, 1912:* Wrote to Motor News for the Encyclopedia of Motoring.

*8th August, 1912:* Received the Encyclopedia of Motoring.

*31st August, 1912:* Went to the living pictures, met Anna at the station afterwards, coming back from Carrigaholt.

Doesn't it all sound very natural and boyish! Imagine they were at St. Enda's — Dick was then about fifteen — and they were allowed to practise shooting! Of course it was only from a sporting rifle. But the diary is a wonderful account of an extraordinary broad and liberal

education, something that, alas, we do not get today. The Lady's mentioned was a little wayside shop above Rathfarnham. You can see also that Dick was already developing a mechanical bent, towards motor cars. He could already drive. It was he who taught De Valera how to drive a car, when he came to live in Donnybrook.

#### THE RISING

We were known to the Dublin Castle authorities before the Rising. They raided and searched the house prior to 1916. (2) Some of the rifles later used came to our house from Birmingham. Much of the correspondence was directed there too, rather than to my uncle's house in Herbert Park. He was Director of Arms and was largely responsible for importing them. It was inevitable therefore, that he would be looking for "safe houses" in which to store them.

We knew of course, that the climax was near. Young and all as I was, I knew it. MacNeill, the leader of the Volunteers, seems to have been the only person in ignorance.

All that week-end, Dick kept in touch with the 3rd Battalion, the battalion commanded by De Valera. Loyal O'Rahilly had assisted MacNeill, however, by travelling to Limerick on the Sunday with the countermand order. However, at ten o'clock on Easter Monday morning, Desmond Fitzgerald walked into 40 Herbert Park: *The Rising is on*, he said. Without hesitation, The O'Rahilly joined him, driving to the G.P.O. in his car. He left with a wave and the briefest of good-byes to his family, whom he was never to see again. Dick, who had planned to go on a route march with the Fianna, joined them.

Amazingly they were visited twice there on the Monday and Tuesday by my mother. On the Monday afternoon, she was admitted and distributed prayer leaflets and medals of Our Lady. Years afterwards, I was shown these by people who received them. She returned again on Tuesday evening. Overnight she became very worried about Dick being there, and about her brother too. British Army preparations were building up. This was not going to be a sham battle. There was every likelihood that they would be killed. Pearse called Dick to one side. In Irish, he told him: *You had better go home. If anything happens your uncle, there will be no man there.* It was very noble of Pearse, considering his small garrison, but Dick was crestfallen. Home he came, however, with my mother. They walked the back streets and lanes, passing quite unwittingly, close to Boland's Mills. Now you may not know that De Valera was the only commandant who refused absolutely to have Cumann na mBan girls in the posts. He was against having them. The result, I believe, was that the garrison there did not stand up to the siege as well as in other posts;

some of them had an attack of the jitters and were liable to fire at anything. Anyway, my mother had no sooner come in sight of Boland's Mills — of course it was dark at the time — than they were fired upon by a sentry. Dick used to say afterwards: *It was far safer in the G.P.O. than it was coming home with my mother.*

When he arrived in, Tomás O'Rahilly, his mother's cousin from Listowel, was in the house. Dick said little and went to bed. The next morning he rose early, went to seven o'clock Mass in Haddington Road, and then returned to the fight. But, although he was no more than nineteen, you could understand his feelings.

That week passed, and then in only a matter of days seemingly, the executions commenced. Almost every day brought more dread news, until the most appalling of all, the execution at the very end of James Connolly and Sean MacDiarmuida. Willie Pearse too. That was entirely wrong. He had played such a small part in the Movement. Yet just because his brother was prominent, he was executed.

If we had drums and trumpets, if we had  
Aught of heroic pitch or accent glad  
To honour you as bids tradition old,  
With banners flung or draped in mournful fold  
And pacing cortege; these would we not bring  
For your last journeying.

We hated England for that and for all the executions and we pledged that our lives would be devoted to getting even with them. (3)

#### DESMOND FITZGERALD

We pass on through the national re-awakening as it is called; then the great election of December 1918. Do you know, we got Desmond FitzGerald elected in this area, which was a miracle; Donnybrook and Ballsbridge then were so loyalist. It was the Ringsend people, the working class, that elected him. He was an extraordinary person, and at that time, very Irish. I never knew what he did for a living, except write poetry. Prior to the Rising, he had been a Volunteer organiser. We were all very friendly; he had a strong regard for my uncle, The O Rahilly, to whom he was nearer than to any other leader. That probably accounts for his being in the G.P.O. when 1916 came. We used to go to the Kerry Gaeltacht together. We knew his wife, too, Mabel. She was an extraordinary character. She was from a wealthy northern Protestant family. 'Tis said they cut her off without a penny when she married Desmond. I knew her well in Cumann na mBan. They were reconciled to her only when Desmond became a Free State



Minister; then they forgave him everything. But they had had a hard enough time. He was arrested only a short while before the Rising and sentenced to six months imprisonment and deportation. He has written a good account of it all in his book. When Sinn Féin set up the Dept. of Publicity in 1919, he was placed in charge of it. He was arrested again in March, 1921, although with the onset of the Truce, he remained only a short time in prison. I was intensely disappointed at the stand he took on the Treaty debate. I remember well cycling past Earlsfort Terrace, where the debates were held, on a day in January, 1922. I saw Desmond and dismounted instantly. He came over to me. *Oh, I said, do not tell me that you are on the wrong side? I am afraid I am,* he smiled lamely. *I am afraid I am.* I tried to talk him around, because I felt so sad about it all. *The way I look at it,* he replied, *for our generation, we have gone far enough. Let us leave it to the next to finish it.* It was a calamitous decision. Could they have made a worse one, in the light of all that has happened?

#### CUMANN NA mBAN

I was in Cumann na mBan throughout the 1919-21 period. It all seems so short now, so abbreviated. A mere eighteen months of military struggle before the Truce. That is why I have such admiration for the people in the North—twelve years now; they have suffered far more than the people down here, and all because of that decision to put things off until the next generation.

We had moved to 14 Herbert Park, after 1918, then to 36 Ailesbury Road, where the French Chancellery is now. It was built on contract for my mother by Batt O'Connor for a mere £8,000. Oh, the value of money in those days. He was one of Collins' right-hand men. (4) It was inevitable that he would want to build a secret room into the first floor. We used to worry after, when he went Free State, and we were using the secret room, would he tell, but he didn't. That is where the fight was later with Ernie O'Malley. But we were only like hundreds of families that time, suffering raids, having floors ripped up, people taken away. Dick was arrested in 1919, and was on hunger-strike for twelve days with the others. Mama then got a banner with Our Lady of Perpetual Succour emblazoned upon it. She wanted the I.R.A. to march behind it to the prison gates, but they would not do that. Very chivalrously Sean MacBride offered to carry it. It was pinned to the gate of the jail, and remained there for weeks. It appears in many of the photographs taken there.

The hard core supporters of the struggle were few and far between in Dublin then. That is why, when peace came, people grasped at it so anxiously. I can remember on the other hand, going to a farmhouse in

Kerry, to a place called Kilcummin, just after the commencement of the Truce. It was on a height and we could see over the entire countryside. I was there as a Cumann na mBan organiser. It was three months after the decision to organise the I.R.A. in divisions, and Cumann na mBan was being placed on a similar footing. I felt very shy about my role. There was a local girl there, a marvellous girl, Marguerite Fleming. She put me at my ease. This day, a large group of men came to the house — fifty or sixty men — many of them on horseback, and all of them with rifles. What a stirring sight! It was a Brigade meeting of Kerry No. 2. Humphrey Murphy, the O.C. had arranged it with Leslie Price, our Director of Organisation, so that I could meet the O.C. of each company and arrange that a corresponding company of Cumann na mBan be organised in their area. Leslie was a marvellous person. There would have been no Cumann na mBan only for her. Marguerite was busy preparing a meal along with the others. Calling me to the window, *Look out*, she said; *as far as the eye can see, every house there has put up our men*. Later, in Free State times, the same house was still ours, but alas the other houses were no longer open to us.

I remained in Kerry for much of that summer, organising Cumann na mBan wherever I could. I remember, perhaps it was eight weeks after its commencement, reading a column by Sean Etchingham in — it may have been in *Banba* or *Sinn Féin* — in which the writer, under the pen name Patsy Pat, questioned the direction in which things were going. Of course he did it in a humorous way, but he was a good Republican and the fact that he appeared worried caused me some anxiety. *Are they on the slippery slope already?* I thought. I remember writing to Dublin, to Leslie, about it. I always thought there should have been one woman, Mary MacSwiney, on that delegation. She was so logical and clear-sighted in her viewpoint. Dev, I think, wanted her to go, but Arthur Griffith objected. (5)

In the run-up to the Truce, a number inside the cabinet hungered after a settlement, and then, having got it, they were hooked upon it. The people relaxed; they thought they were home and dried. And Lloyd George, who had studied every speech they ever made, from De Valera's Cuban interview to the *Westminster Gazette* onwards, knew just how much he should offer them, in other words, where their *breaking point* would be. And a broken and divided movement was a bigger victory for the British than a defeated one. (5)

He himself said an extraordinary thing afterwards to this effect: *I would have been capable of going to the edge of the cliff without falling over it*. And you know he was able to do that. If he had gone himself, I don't think he would have given in. Our people, however, were not able for them; they are, after all, past masters in deception.



## SAFE HOUSES

It was one of my mother's jobs to find safe houses for the lads. Dick Mulcahy often sought her help. She found him hard to satisfy as he wanted always to keep on the move. Afterwards, when he turned over, she was sorry that she had disclosed so many useful addresses to him. One night Cathal Brugha came, only to find that there were already two young fellows in the house. They had come from the north side and they should not have been there. However Cathal instantly withdrew. Then at ten o'clock, there was a raid by Auxiliaries. Dick and Emmet rushed them upstairs and into the secret room. I went to the door, where the hammering was now incessant. Playing for time, I called out: *Oh, I must bring my mother.* Minutes passed before she came. They rushed in headlong. *How many men are in this house?* shouted an officer. *Only my two sons,* said Mama. We did not know that we had been under surveillance from a house opposite and that they knew we were telling a story. They searched the house rigorously. Under floorboards, they found a Parabellum that belonged to one of the youths. Dick and Emmet were arrested and brought off for a summary trial. The youths were not discovered. Dick was studying law at that time. Contrary to the Volunteer regulations, he decided to fight the case. *They would have to prove that the Parabellum was actually his,* he said, which they could not do. The case collapsed and he was acquitted. But unfortunately it was the end of his connection with the Volunteers. In their view, he had recognised an English court. Poor Emmet refused to recognise the court. So he was given a year in Pentonville. By the time he returned the Truce was on.

## ON THE EVE OF WAR. A JOURNEY TO DONEGAL

A week before the attack upon the Four Courts, Liam Mellows sent for me. He was staying at Mrs. Woods' house in Donnybrook. He seemed to be in an unusually cheerful mood. Outlining to me how the two sides hoped to sink their differences through united action on the North, he explained that Mulcahy was acting on the F.S. side. Cumann na mBan was needed to set up a field hospital in Co. Donegal. He asked me to pick six senior members of the organisation who would travel and set up the centre. He would have made all other necessary arrangements. They would be under the direct charge of Peadar O'Donnell's brother Frank, who would be travelling with them from Dublin by train, at 1.30 p.m. on Wednesday, 28th June. He emphasised the necessity of strict secrecy in case the proposal would be leaked, as the British Under Secretary was still in Phoenix Park. I immediately got in touch with Una O'Connor, Mary Cuddihy and Maire Comerford, and made arrangements with them. Liam promised each of us a small calibre revolver, which he duly delivered.



In addition to some first aid equipment which we packed, we also had cases of revolvers, ammunition and explosives.

On the evening of Tuesday 27th June, all of the Dublin I.R.A. were mobilised. They were expecting the Staters to attack the Four Courts or other positions which the I.R.A. had taken over. They waited until about midnight, when they disbanded and went home. It was early on the following morning that I awoke to the noise of heavy guns by the army attacking the Four Courts.

These were the guns loaned by General Macready to Emmet Dalton following arrangements made with Arthur Griffith in two days of conferences in the Viceregal Lodge. Macready had now, as he expressed it in his autobiography *Aftermath*, forced Michael Collins' hand.

Emmet and I dressed quickly and after a rushed breakfast went off into the city. He went off to contact Mick Tannam of the 3rd Battalion. I went on in as far as Parnell Square to try to contact somebody. I eventually met Maire Comerford on her bicycle and we discussed what we should do about the journey to the North. Were the two sides really locked in combat and had it all fallen apart? Maire said she would try to get into the Four Courts and find out. Off she went, to return after some time to say she got into the Four Courts and despite concentrated shell fire and rifle fire was told that the arrangements about the North still held and they were to proceed up there as arranged. This surprised me; perhaps it was just a localised conflict after all. It was now after 11.30, and I had to rush home to Donnybrook to collect a few things and hurry back to the station for the 1.30 train. When I got there however I found only Una O'Connor and Mary Cuddihy, Maire Comerford never turned up. (6) Frank O'Donnell was there however large as life as usual.

After an uneventful journey, we reached Sligo and went to the barracks which were occupied by Republican I.R.A. under Brian Mac Neill. Liam Pilkington, who was in command of the 3rd Western Division, was also there. He arranged for a car to bring us to Ballybofey, where the centre was being set up. The car was well crowded with the Cumann na mBan girls, Frank O'Donnell and local I.R.A. boys. We got as far as Finner camp where we remained for the night. Next morning we drove on to Ballybofey, and found the headquarters. There we were told that the armaments we had brought from Dublin were not needed; they had more than enough themselves and that they might be required more urgently in Dublin. Apparently the Cumann na mBan team were not needed either, so we all retraced our steps back to Finner camp. On the way there I got one of the I.R.A. men to sing some Donegal songs for us. He did so, in a hauntingly beautiful voice. We all fell silent, each one I suppose

thinking different thoughts. Then suddenly along the road, as we came around a bend, an armoured car followed by several lorries under the command of Sean McKeon, came rapidly towards us but luckily did not stop.

We got a puncture then, and, as we had no spare inner tube, we filled the tyre with dry moss from the ditch.

It was evening when we got to Finner and the garrison did their best to get us to remain for the night. Frank O'Donnell wisely said he would not; that he must see the girls were in a safe area. He endeavoured to get the garrison to abandon the camp. The Commandant however said that everything would be alright — that there was no tension or disagreement between the two sides so far north as Co. Donegal. I said I did not like to interfere but for once I made an impassioned plea for the garrison to get out — that the place could not be defended, it was so open. All to no avail; the Commandant pointed to his store of sugar and other provisions which they had acquired for a prolonged stay. *Leave now*, he said, *not likely*. Eventually with Frank we drove on to Bundoran. It was now quite late at night and we were all dead tired, so we went to bed and fell fast asleep.

Moments later it seemed, in the dead of night, there was heavy knocking at my door. It was Frank O'Donnell shouting that Finner Camp had been attacked and taken by the Staters. The young I.R.A. boy, Jim Connolly of Kinlough, who had sung for us all in the car earlier in the afternoon, had been shot dead. They'd better get out as fast as possible to a safe house which he knew and which was about two miles outside Bundoran, on the Sligo road. I dressed as quickly as possible, picked up some of the heavy cases containing the guns etc., and, with the other girls accompanied by Frank, with a rifle slung over his shoulder, started walking along the deserted street and out the country road until we reached the safe cottage. Here we all stayed sitting around the open turf fire until early morning when the people of the cottage knew of a van which went into Sligo every morning. We were given a lift on this and arrived safely back at the barracks.

Trains from Dublin had ceased running, so Liam Pilkington arranged for us to travel by taxi. He gave us passes for the towns which were held by Republicans, and got the taximan to go up to the Free State garrison which was also in Sligo to obtain passes for the Free State held towns they would have to go through.

We loaded the taxi with our cases and boxes. There were now five Cumann na mBan girls, Bridie, Una O'Connor, Mary Cuddihy and myself, and Nora Brick, the latter being a most attractive looking girl.

We got through Boyle without bother. It was held by Republicans, and we were able to show our Republican pass without our taximan



noticing it. We told him we were teachers returning to Dublin, and that we had to be there without fail that evening.

Some miles beyond Boyle, on a lonely stretch of road, a horse and cart driven by a man came towards us. As we came close to it, the horse took fright and bolted. He threw the driver on to the road. Our taximan was on the point of passing on, but one of us said to him: *Are you going to stop and see if he is alright?* We found however that the man had received only a shaking and was able to catch his horse and drive away. *Do you know ladies, there is something funny about you: ordinary women would have been hysterical if they saw that, but it does not seem to have taken a feather out of you.*

When we reached the bridge over the Shannon at Carrick-on-Shannon, there was a Free State road block. The sentry may have become suspicious as he told our taximan to drive into the barracks, which is just beyond the bridge on the Dublin side. We felt it was all up with us but, just as we drew up outside, a car containing some officers emerged and stopped before pulling out. Nudging Nora Brick, I asked her to attempt to use her considerable charm to see could we get away. Nora quickly got out of the taxi and stepped up to the other car. She spun them a yarn about how urgent it was to get to Dublin and how, if we had to go into the barracks we might be delayed. The officers couldn't have been more helpful. They said not to mind about going in that that would not be necessary, but that they themselves were going to Longford, and wouldn't some of the girls go as far as that in their car. Nora had great difficulty in refusing this gallant offer. It was agreed however they would drive at the same speed until we reached Longford, and that the girls would then have a meal with them in the barracks. It was not long after that, however, that our taxi got a puncture and we had to get out and sit by the roadside. The Free State officers had meanwhile driven on. They had gone a considerable distance before discovering that the taxi had stopped. Back they came then to give a helping hand to our taximan.

Off we went then to Athlone, our taxi following the military one into the barracks yard. There seemed no way out of that meal, yet if we went in, there was a real chance that some of us would be recognised. Eventually by dint of excuses and prevarications we got away. Our taximan was now becoming more nervous as he drove along the deserted road. Suddenly his headlights picked out a wild looking character who jumped out from the roadside waving a gun and crying to halt. We pulled up as he advanced towards us, still with his rifle trained straight. Suddenly he shouted: *What is that behind you?* We answered that there was nothing there. He insisted that there was. When we looked back, to our surprise, we saw a huge lorry stopped immediately behind. The wild man went to investigate, only to find



that the lorry lights had failed and the driver was making use of our car in front, to show him the road.

We were allowed drive on then and had no further trouble for a very long distance. At length they saw the spire of a church in the darkness ahead. We thought it must be Maynooth. To our surprise and disappointment it turned out to be Trim. Somewhere along the road we had taken a wrong turning. At this stage our driver said he could not drive another yard and he proposed to stay there for the night. Luckily he knew of a small hotel in the town and we all went to it. After a considerable amount of knocking, the door was opened. We were able to get rooms for the night but the question of a meal was more difficult. There was nothing left except some bread and butter. We were glad to have this, but next morning we found that the bread and butter was to have been the principal portion of our breakfast. However the proprietress ferreted around and produced a large pink coated cake. This, together with tea, was all she was able to offer us. Off we went again but this time only as far as Lucan. Our driver stubbornly refused to take us nearer Dublin from which we could now hear the distant rumble of guns. We had to be content, so once more we unloaded our cases of guns and other goods and took the tram for Parkgate Street. Thank goodness they were still running. Having arrived at the terminal at the Park, we all crossed to Kingsbridge Station where we deposited the cases in the left luggage office. Taking a roundabout route, on back streets, we arrived at the Sinn Féin offices in Suffolk Street. The first person we met there was Kathleen O'Connell, Dev's secretary, who immediately told me that Emmet was safe. She had heard that he had been arrested with half of his company at Harcourt Terrace.(7) Kathleen then took us on to the Hamman Hotel in O'Connell Street, where we met Cathal Brugha and De Valera. Next day it too was attacked.(8)

#### ERNIE O'MALLEY

Ernie O'Malley tells in *Singing Flame* how he came to us in Ailesbury Road in September, 1922, setting up a headquarters department in our house. He was then Assistant Chief of Staff. Madge Clifford was his secretary. She used to come every day to do the typing and to convey dispatches as no one else was supposed to call. The struggle had meanwhile taken a bitter turn. It was almost certain, therefore, that, in a house such as ours, he would be tracked down sooner or later. And so he was. It happened on November 4th at 7.30 in the morning. The Staters surrounded the house and Earnán, as I always called him, choose to fight it out. He had never said to me that he would, but I knew in my heart of hearts that he intended to die

rather than be captured. He was in the secret room when they axed their way into it. He fired out and they rushed helter skelter downstairs. They were so cowed then, that they let him advance and charge, firing down the stairs. They ran away from him then and he escaped into the back garden. But of course, he was surrounded there and riddled.

However, he forgot to tell the story in his book of how he got down the stairs that terrible morning. We were all arrested then; Mama, Dick, Madame O'Rahilly and myself. Emmet was already arrested. He was taken at a H.Q. house in Harcourt Terrace in July, and was in Mountjoy. Poor Áine was in a terrible way, having been shot through her face accidentally by a bullet from Earnán. She was taken to hospital and eventually recovered, only to be thrown into jail the following April. She was treasurer of the Prisoners' Aid, a fund over which Michael Collins once presided.

Anyway, to return to that terrible morning. As soon as Áine was taken in the ambulance, Mama phoned the O'Rahillys at Herbert Park, to see if Madame could come and mind our house as a Free State officer said he had orders to arrest us. Madame got on her bike and came over, only to find that they were taking her as well. A separate party had already been to 40 Herbert Park, had found Mary MacSwiney there and had taken her in. So we were all conveyed to Mountjoy. Mother was not released until July, 1923.

After being taken, we were all in the women's section of Mountjoy. I was in the women's prison, among our own political prisoners. Maire Comerford and myself went on hunger strike because we had been put in solitary for what the Staters called our "defiant attitudes".(9) After a few days, the concessions we sought were granted. We attempted escapes of course, and Maire and some others eventually did escape. Earnán was courtmartialled in December. After that, he could have been executed any time, though in fact he was not. I got complete notes of his defence while I was in prison. It would make a marvellous story. They were smuggled to me as we had figured so prominently in it. I smuggled them out with a friend, but they were never delivered. I would give anything to have them now.

Anyway, to cut a long story short, we were in many prisons. Mountjoy, the North Dublin Union and Kilmainham. Eventually we too went on hunger strike in October, along with the men. I was on — I now had plenty of practice — for thirty-one days. They released me then. That was November, 1923. We were flattened. We felt the Irish public had forgotten us. The tinted trappings of our fight were hanging like rags about us.



## POSTSCRIPT

I continued my work actively with Cumann na mBan and the I.R.A. from 1924 onwards. They were the fallow years of the Cosgrave administration when there was very little that Republicans could do except oppose, oppose. I remember in 1928, we produced a series of leaflets signed *Ghosts* in an attempt to win soldiers and gardai away from the administration. What naïveté! Most of the year 1928 was however spent in Mountjoy. The charge this time was *embracery*, which is a term used about people who try to influence jurymen. We had delivered letters, leaflets and appeals to jurymen in political cases. A number of us were arrested, including Maire Comerford. I was six months in prison on remand and when brought to the District Court, the jury disagreed. So I went to prison, where I lay for a further three months. This time, when I appeared again, the judge ordered that I be released. That was the great thing then about juries. They instinctively agreed with us, or, at the worst, they wanted nothing to do with us. As a result, governments have to bring in Juries Protection Bills, which are a pretence that there is mass intimidation going on. Eventually they end up logically, by having no courts but simply a "sentencing committee" which they call a Tribunal or a Special Court.

Fianna Fail might not have entered Leinster House in the way they did in August 1927(10) but for the Electoral (Oath) Act, brought in that summer, whereby candidates had to give an undertaking that, if elected, they would attend. I remember listening to De Valera speaking in Tralee upon the economic situation in 1925. He was magnificent when he urged us on to buying Irish, but there was no applause for him. Then he said: *I know you are all wondering if we will enter the Free State Parliament. As long as water flows, we will never go in. Our business is to stand fast and firm. And fast and firm we shall stand, even if we are reduced to the last man.* Within a few months, however, they were on their way in. Must politics be so devious?

We lost very few from Cumann na mBan to Fianna Fail then, except Madame Markievicz. It nearly broke our hearts to lose her. We did not even want to accept her resignation, which, under our constitution we were obliged to do. Alas, nobody won her, she was dead within a year.

## RAIDS AND IMPRISONMENT

On 10th May 1928, I was again a prisoner in Mountjoy. I had been charged in the District Court that day on an illegal organisation charge. Detective Officer Hughes said the police found 20,000 copies of "Ghosts" in my office.(11) Other charges were then preferred against me. In a letter I wrote to mother I said; *It is now one year and one month since I have been here before.*



I was tried at Green Street Court on 22nd June. Mac, Nial and Maolmuire O Rahilly were in the gallery. Mac cheered me, so he was put in the dock and lectured by the judge. The jury disagreed on their verdict and I was returned to Mountjoy to await a further trial. When this trial took place in the autumn I was sentenced to six months imprisonment, but since I had been kept so long awaiting trial, this period was taken into account and I was immediately released.

There was then a period of three years of freedom before I was arrested again. On the 2nd November, 1931, in the scare atmosphere generated by Saor Eire, several Special Branch detectives carried out a raid on our house in Ailesbury Road. These raids, let me say, were now of frequent occurrence. I have a note here of a single short period in early 1930 when they used to raid us continuously. The note is as follows:

- 24/3/30, Searched, Mark Byrne and two others.
- 23/4/30, Searched, Coughlin, Gill and two others.
- 28/4/30, Searched, Baxter and four others.
- 30/4/30, Searched, Gill and four others.
- 4/5/30, Searched, Gill and three others.
- 28/5/30, Searched, Gill and one other.

Gill was of a dirty appearance and a most repulsive person. That did not hinder him with his superiors however as he rose rapidly in the force, ending up as a Superintendent.

In the raid of 2nd November 1931, I received a summons ordering me to appear in the District Court for 23rd November to answer charges regarding documents found during the raid. These were copies of the draft of political resolutions submitted to the first national congress of Saor Eire, also the constitution and rules of the organisation.

I thought Saor Eire, when it came, was a wonderful organisation. On paper, it sounded marvellous. Unfortunately it remained only on paper. I was on the Executive when it was banned by the Cosgrave Government, along with twelve other organisations, in November 1931.

Three of us, Maeve Phelan, Kathleen Merrigan(12) and myself, were brought before the new Military Tribunal in December, 1931. Frank Ryan, Assistant Editor of *An Phoblacht* was already in; all our publications were banned or seized by the plain clothes police. We thought we were great heroines, three girls confronting a tribunal of three military officers. I had great fun at it. I had hoped to make them read out the programme of Saor Eire in evidence, so that it would be reported in the daily papers, but I was not successful. Another outlet

barred. We had been held in Mountjoy on remand. We were all, of course, familiar with that place. However, whatever sentence we received "from date of arrest", etc, amounted to this, that we were released immediately after the court hearing.

We were delighted, of course, when Fianna Fail won the election in February, 1932, and we were doubly delighted when they came officially as part of our contingent to Bodinstown. But the honeymoon did not last. They organised their own Bodinstown the following year, and they had their own emblem, a torch, instead of an Easter Lily. The Military Service Pensions which they introduced cut deeply into our support. We had to allow Cumann na mBan members, who needed the money, to apply for a pension. In many cases they simply faded away after that. It may have been a sense of guilt at accepting a pension for something that patriotic people should do anyway, or it may have been that they were afraid of the new government.

There was, however, confrontation with England from the start. There was the Economic War, the abolition of the trappings of royalty; they stood up to England, and that was popular with the real people. Then they stood up to the Blueshirts and that was popular too. We hated them like the Devil hates holy water. There were all the people in them whom we thought hated us. Even the colour *blue*; Republicans could not stand it for years afterwards.

In 1932/33 I was on the Boycott Committee with Donal O'Donoghue, Mick Fitzpatrick, Mick Price and some more. The things we got involved in then, going around smashing Bass. As if that was any help to the Republican Movement. And we wasted so much time on all those things.

I agreed completely with the ideas behind Republican Congress, and along with Eithne Coyle, signed its manifesto of April, 1934. But neither of us felt completely happy at the wide breach that then opened between it and our friends in the Movement. So Eithne and myself resigned from it in August. Peadar treated our letter a little facetiously, though he admitted that *the attack is heavy; this period will be marked with collapses*. It was not our wish to attack them, though they no longer seemed to have the faintest hope of success.

I was very fond of Michael A. Kelly of Roscommon. He had been in the Movement for a long time, he was imprisoned for five years in Belfast and was later one of the founder members of Clann na Poblachta. His opinions were very sound on every question. I considered him one of the finest men I ever met.

Then there was Fionnán Breatnach; he was a lovely sort unless you made him angry. Con Lehane also; my husband, Donal's, greatest friend. He was his best man when we were married in 1937. Donal had grown up in the Movement. He was in the Dublin Brigade, and later

upon the Army Council. He was a close friend of Frank Ryan and eventually succeeded him as Editor of *An Phoblacht* in 1934. He was many times "detained" from 1929 onwards; in April 1935 he got six months from the Tribunal for making what they used to call in those days a seditious speech. He was frequently a speaker at commemorations, although regarded by many as too realist, too moderate, or too pessimistic. Take your choice, because in the end he was nearly always proved right. We used to have great fun coddling him about it.

## REFERENCES

- 1 See Marcus Bourke's *The O Rahilly*.
- 2 See *Secret History of the Volunteers*; a pamphlet published in 1915 and written by The O Rahilly.
- 3 On Tuesday morning, a week and a half after the Rising began, (wrote Nell Humphreys, Sighle's mother, sister to The O Rahilly to a relative, a nun in Australia) we heard he had fallen. I cycled into town with my cousin, the Carmelite Rector of Clarendon Street, and after passing innumerable sentries we arrived at the morgue. There was Michael stretched on a stand. He looked fine, his head with its high forehead thrown back. He looked as brave and peaceful as ever a warrior sculptured in marble upon a tomb. By the great kindness of an undertaker, whose two sons were "out", we were able to get a plain coffin, and had him buried in Glasnevin on the Thursday.  
We were only home an hour, just had time to have lunch, when an officer and three soldiers came to the house, while ten more guarded the front of the house, searched every nook and corner for four hours and took me prisoner. I never could tell you of the cross-examination I had to go through, first at one barracks and then another, how I marched through our own streets between seven soldiers, how they threatened 10 years penal servitude for Dick unless I told everything.  
When I had been in prison a few days Aine came to see me, indeed she came everyday; in fact spent her time going around looking for me, as I was always moved with only a few minutes warning from one place to another. I was in a horse box in Ballsbridge R.D.S. grounds to begin with, then I was sent to Richmond Barracks, then to Kilmainham, then to Mountjoy where I spent 10 days, and before I forget it, there I was on 13th May, and one of my most bitter thoughts was would David be ashamed of me, making such a muddle of my life.  
Now Nora, I will say no more about that, only of the good the Rising has done. We have been shunned by almost all our society acquaintances, so I cannot vouch for the truth of the saying that it was not worth losing all those valuable lives, that the conversions to our side are not sufficient, but I can speak for the working classes. We have met so many of every sort and they are all proud of being Irish, of having lived and suffered for this, so anxious to do anything for the men who were out, for the wives and families of those who have fallen. It is again an exquisite charitable world as it must have been at the time of the early Christians; it is great to be alive now and to feel your heart warm as mine does over the goodness of man. You will say I am heroic and absurd, but it is what I feel.
- 4 Collins entrusted the gold cache of the 1920 National Loan to O'Connor. He buried it under his own house in Brendan Road, Donnybrook.



- 5 See Connie Neenan's account on page 235.

*The McGarrity Papers*, by Sean Cronin, gives interesting sidelights such as this telegram from John T. Ryan in Berlin to McGarrity on November 8th, 1921: *Only great pressure on trustees in London and directors at home will save surrender of free title to old homestead. All trustees weakening including M. C. Topman stands firm.*

Eibhlín Ní Cruadhlaóich of Ballintemple informs me that Mary MacSwiney had told her (in 1936) that she had requested De Valera at the time if she could be a member of the delegation. He refused. *You would not do Maire, you are too extreme.*

- 6 See Maire Comerford's account on page 35.

- 7 See Appendix, p. 430; *Eve of Conflict*.

- 8 See Maire Comerford's account on page 45.

- 9 There is a letter from O'Malley to Síghle while both were in prison in February, 1923, in *Singing Flame*, which captures the spirit of the time.

- 10 It was ostensibly in support of a motion of censure moved by the Labour Party.

- 11 The report from the *Evening Herald* of 10th May, 1928 is headed:

#### TREASON AND EMBRACERY

In the Dublin District Court today before Mr. Collins, Miss Sheila Humphreys (aged 28) residing at 36 Ailesbury Road, was charged on several counts with the offence of "embracery" or attempting to influence jurors other than by evidence and argument in open court.

She was also before the court on remand charged with taking part in the organisation or maintenance of a body purporting to be a military force not established as such by law.

The defendant, during the course of the taking of evidence, kept smiling sarcastically in the dock.

Detective Sergeant Hughes deposed that on April 11th, he searched the house, 36 Ailesbury Road. In a room pointed out by Mrs. Humphreys as that of the defendant's, he found the documents produced. In Ailesbury Road he saw the defendant, who ran away when he and the other officers approached. As she ran she took some papers from an attache case and put them in her coat pockets. When arrested pieces of torn paper were found in those pockets. These pieces were put together and pasted on the sheet of paper now produced. The document was typewritten on paper with printed heading "Oglaigh na h-Eireann, General Headquarters, Dublin". It was dated March 23rd, 1928 and addressed from C.S. (Chief of Staff) to S.H. (the initials of the defendant). The writer in the course of communication said:

"I disagree rather violently with some of the views you express in your note but it is not wise to be writing much about such matters, so will defer my comments till I see you. As I told you before what is really wrong with the entire Republican Movement is that while individualism may be good in many cases it is carried with us almost to anarchy as regards opinions. Until this is remedied there cannot be real progress.

I am glad to hear that you are taking over responsibility for political prisoners and hope that things will work more smoothly".

Witness also put in other typewritten and printed documents found in defendant's room. They were addressed to each member of the jury panel for the last sittings of the Central Court, and set out at great length the views of the signatories, "The Ghosts", as to the duty of jurors in cases in which prisoners were tried for treasonable offences.

Mr. T. A. Finlay, who prosecuted, asked to have accused returned for trial. When asked if she wished to say anything she started reading in Irish from a book in her hand. The justice told her that Mr. Cahill, the clerk of the court, was a finished Irish speaker and writer and would take her statement down in writing. She continued reading at a pace so fast that the clerk intimated that he could not record what she said, and the justice remarked that it was evident that she did not seriously wish the statement taken down. He returned her for trial at the Circuit Criminal Court in Green Street.

As she left the dock there were cheers and shouts of "Up the Republic" from the crowd of women who were in court waiting for the hearing of cases for street trading.

12 Née Kavanagh; at this time married to Tom Merrigan, an officer in the Dublin Brigade, I.R.A.

## John Joe Sheehy

*of Tralee*

*Commandant,  
Kerry No. 1 Brigade, I.R.A.*



My grandfather came penniless from Dingle long, long ago. They had nothing at that time. The famine was not long over, and they were very poor. They settled here in a tiny thatched house in Tralee; my father was born in Rock Street. My mother was Deborah Moriarty. They married; he found work on the railway, and they reared their family in a place called Gallows Green. His only outlet was to play the big drum in the Tralee town band. The Plan of Campaign and the Land League, through which he lived, did not touch Tralee, and if it did, it had little meaning for a poor railwayman. He never did more than play the drum and vote for Parnell. Ours was not a nationalist home in the sense that other homes were. I was not reared in Fenianism at my mother's knee. I had to find all that out for myself, and I found it out in due course through reading history, Sean Mac Diarmuida's paper — *Irish Freedom*, and papers like *The Leader* and even *Sinn Féin*.

I joined the Fianna in 1914. My neighbour, Billy Mullins, was a leader in it. We were enrolled by a chap called Joe Melinn. He was a great nationalist. Joe later was Austin Stack's quartermaster. This town was steeped in the cultural nationalism of the time. We had Austin Stack. He was a great footballer and very popular with the youth. A lot of what Kerry later did must be attributed to Austin. He selected Paddy Cahill, a well-up fellow, who had been to college when few fellows got there. Austin was in some ways shy and retiring, not the sort you would expect to emerge as the great jail fighter of later years. He was reared above in Strand Road, where he gathered about him a fine group, all very devoted to the Irish language. We had three districts in Tralee at that time. Austin had the Rock, but he also had a great following in every part of the town. We had Boherbee and there was also Strand Road. The room where we met was at the Kerry Auction Mart, close to the Post Office. This was all prior to 1916.



I was only a very young fellow, but I had graduated automatically from scouts to the Volunteers. Of course we had no inkling of what was in the offing, but there was a great war on in Europe and we were determined to strike some sort of a blow before it ended. There was a lead up in the way of parades and publicity. On St. Patrick's Day, 1916, we had a fine Volunteer turn-out at full strength. The police said afterwards that over a hundred of them carried rifles; but most of them were only shot guns. On the 25th March, Marie Perolz gave a lecture at the Rink on the Fenian rising, after Countess Markievicz had been banned by the Castle.<sup>(1)</sup> That was to the Tralee Sluagh of Fianna Eireann. Ernest Blythe did good work organising Kerry, until he was deported to England. Padraic Pearse was here in February when he reviewed 250 Volunteers.<sup>(2)</sup>

#### STACK AND CASEMENT

The prelude leading into Easter Week, embroiled Kerry in a sad sort of a way. Poor Austin, I was always anxious that he be cleared of the charge of not trying to rescue Casement, after his arrest on Good Friday, down there on Banna Strand. But we know now that Casement came single-handed, determined to stop the impending Rising, while the leaders in Dublin — who were just as determined to strike — had given instructions that there must be no action before Sunday. They even changed the arrangements with the *Aud* — although they never reached it, because it had no wireless — that it was not to land arms until the Sunday. Had it landed them on the Thursday, the day it came into Tralee Bay, the English would have been alerted and there would have been no Rising. As it was, the subsequent history showed that on the Sunday after that creature Bailey<sup>(3)</sup> confessed everything after being caught with Casement, the Lord Lieutenant Wimbourne, and Nathan, the Secretary in the Castle, wished to strike at the rebels colloquing in Liberty Hall, only that the British Army wanted to go to the races at Fairyhouse on the Monday, and preferred to put off the arrests until Tuesday. By that time, it was too late. Our lads were in action in Dublin anyway. They aimed for a seat at the Peace Conference table. Had they not struck, they would have been swept under the carpet of history and you never would have had a Tan War.

Austin was right to hold his hand. It would have done no good to attempt a rescue of Casement, who was held over Friday night in the local R.I.C. barracks. The misfortune was that he went there, hoping to speak to Con Collins who had been arrested, and he was himself held. Apart from Stack, and possibly Billy Mullins, no one else here had the faintest notion who Casement was, or the purpose of his mission.

On Easter Sunday, we were all mobilised for the Rink and the sportsfield here in Tralee. There was a good turn-out that morning, well over three hundred Volunteers, some of whom had marched in from outside. We were conscious of the fighting in Dublin immediately it began, and intensely ashamed that we had heeded the countermand. But there was nothing we could do now. Like dozens of other places, we felt trapped. We had no arms, and a sporadic outbreak in a place like Tralee was unlikely to affect the issue.

The executions brought it all home to us. Stack was among those sentenced to death, but his was commuted to twenty years. He was released, of course, in 1917, but after that spent many more terms in prison and long periods on hunger strike, all of which brought him to a premature end in 1929. He was one of the finest men I knew. Paddy Cahill, Joe Melinn, Con Collins, the link man from Limerick, were all picked up and imprisoned.

#### ACTION

Not many people were arrested from this area and very little damage was done to the Movement. If anything, from now on the British assisted us, with the executions, German Plots and most important of all the Conscription threat. No wonder Sinn Féin won hands down in the great election of December 1918. Very soon after that, with the example Breen was already setting us in Tipperary, we began to play our part. Very soon the known leaders had to go on the run, which thrust the Brigade leadership upon us. They hid out beyond Camp. They had a hut on the south side of Slieve Mish, and they used to come over Bothair na gCloch and down into Camp. But we had not sufficient arms, so an ambush was set up at Connor Hill; there were two R.I.C. killed, but they got some arms from it. The Dowlings, Paddy Paul Fitzgerald, Dan Jeffers, Mick McMahon and the rest of the lads of the Column, were involved in that. They had another success when they attacked the barracks in Glenbeigh. They got more arms there. They also attacked Lispole — there was a Volunteer killed there. How the Volunteers escaped after Lispole was a mystery, as the patrol they attacked was very heavily armed, and Lispole itself (on the Dingle peninsula) is a very exposed place. Had the police only known it, they had them surrounded. Gerry Myles was the real hero there; he acquitted himself with great daring in the break-out.

There was another attack by the Column on a patrol at Milltown which regularly went to Tralee. On its way back, they were attacked between Milltown and Killorglin. Constant harassment was now our motto.

## MAJOR MCKINNON

Then they started being militant in many other ways. The Tans were here, and the Auxiliaries. They occupied the Jail and the Technical School. Every night they patrolled the town, but we took awful chances, dangerous chances, because in the curfew there was nobody about, and if they saw you, they were certain to shoot. They were getting tougher and tougher. I had some narrow escapes myself. I was going with a girl at the time. You were young and daring, and you felt lively and active. I was in charge of the Active Service Unit. There were nine or ten of us. We availed of every opportunity that was presented to us. It was all short arms of course. That suited the sort of urban fighting we specialised in. But it was difficult to get hold of a rifle anyway. In fact we had to borrow the one that shot Major McKinnon. Connie Healy, an ex British Army man from Boherbee, did that. Johnnie Riordan, Tommy Barrett and Jackie Mason were with him. Others in the Unit were Patcheen Connor, Paddy Kelly, now a greyhound trainer near Celbridge, Tommy Sheehy, Donncadh O'Donohue and Tom Tangney.

McKinnon became so bold and brazen that he went around the countryside with a machine gun on his shoulder. He was a terror. In fact on one of those raids near Ballymacelligott, five miles out the Castleisland road on the left-hand side, he called to this house at Ballydwyer on Christmas night, 1920. It was the home of John Byrne, the local creamery manager, a key man in our organisation, and a brother-in-law of Tommy McEllistram. There were two Volunteers there, Mossy Reidy and John Leen. McKinnon went in and shot them dead. That is where the Ballymac Post Office is now.<sup>(4)</sup> A myth grew up about McKinnon that the last words he said were: *Burn Ballymac*. But it was the Boherbee section of the Column that slew him.

When the Truce came, there was a great feeling of euphoria. Our unit was out and well prepared. They wanted to see that the Tans behaved themselves. They did not come out, instead the regular military patrolled that night. How did Tralee take the Treaty when it came? Well they might have favoured it, but the followers of Stack managed to secure the town, so that it stayed anti-Treaty. There were 700 in jail later, out of Tralee alone. Some were in Gormanston, and the three Tintowns. That is enough evidence of the Republican spirit of North Kerry.

In the run-up to the Civil War we had home rule here, no clashes. Sean McKeon came here one time. Humphrey Murphy was above, in charge of the barracks. Then Humphrey was promoted, so I took over the barracks, put maintenance parties in it and ran the county from there. It was the toughest six months I ever had, administering a county in a country that was slipping slowly into Civil War.



It was a difficult period. Some of the fellows who had been out on the run, who had been strong in the Movement, lost their heads too much. I often thought something like that would have to happen to bring people back to their senses. We had land trouble. People trying to enlarge their holdings. Anyone who could claim that an ancestor had been evicted put the boot in. And then we were doing ordinary police work as well. There were too many trying to take advantage of things. But I suppose it was the spirit of the times.

#### BALLYSEEDY

With that, the Staters came. It was a surprise. We thought they might come from Tarbert. Landing at Fenit was not what we expected, even though we had a defensive party there. Liam Lynch had his line from Limerick to Waterford. All our best lads were in that line. The landing in Fenit was on August 2nd. Cork was taken later after a landing at Passage West, and was entered on August 10th. By August 11th, the Republicans had lost control of every town. It was rearguard action all the way from Fenit. We lost a Volunteer, Johnny Sullivan, out there on a hill called Sammy's Rock, and two more at the Spa village. The Staters lost a few here at the Rock. They fought their way up Boherbee. We were caught short in the barracks. We were only a small number. They had an armoured car. We threw up a barricade at Moyderwell Cross. They could not come up except in the armoured car and they could not get out of that. That was the area of the sharpest fighting, up to Moyderwell. Johnny Connor held them there. We burned the barracks. We nearly lost a few of our fellows there. They set fire to places and became trapped, and we had a job getting them out. The town fighting went on all day. I suffered a shrapnel wound in the left arm. That knocked me out. With nightfall we retreated. We went out to Farmers Bridge. The I.R.A. had headquarters there. We decided to fall back to Killarney, but the Staters were already there. We had to face facts. We decided to settle down where we were. There were great houses there. Johnny Duggan was there of course, a captain in the Volunteers. His house was open to us. We stayed around that district. Johnny Connor and Mossy Galvin went off then with the Kerry Two Brigade. I succeeded in keeping out of enemy hands right through the Civil War. I thank myself for that, for we started virgin. But the secret I learned is not to disclose your whereabouts to anyone. We established our column in a dugout a mile at the back of May Dálaigh's at Cnocán. We stayed there for a month until we thought we had enough of it. We had several dug-outs. The principal one was in Griffins Glen. That was a great dug-out. We stayed there for a long, long time. We had several contacts of course. Dan Dálaigh on top

of the hill, for instance, made certain signs to tell us when all was clear.

We carried out a constant series of actions, attacking convoys from Killarney and Castleisland. They were guarded needless to say. There was an awful lot of fighting done in Ballymachthomas, that is below Ashill. The road and rail line are adjacent to each other at that point. On one occasion, we had three columns there. The intention was to wipe out three lorries that went every day between Killarney and Tralee. It was to be a dawn attack. We had three machine guns, a colossal amount at the time. Instead of the lorries, what came but an armoured car from the direction of Castlemaine road. Maybe they were alerted to us. I moved the Column to attack the armoured car on its way back. Just at that moment, the three open lorries came, hours late of course, and weren't they loaded with our own prisoners, Republicans, and they put seated with their backs to the hill. The Free State convoy was using these unarmed men to protect themselves. We could not have fired one shot. As a consolation, Johnny Connor let fly at the armoured car coming back on the Castlemaine road. *Let it go*, I said, but Johnny did not hear me. There was a desperate fight then, as it swung the Vickers around. We had a terrible job getting out of it. It was very exposed country and the other two Columns did not know where they were. I was behind a wall against which the bullets were flattening themselves. I could hardly breathe with the powder off the stone. There was an open bog behind us, so it took real fast thinking to get away. Johnny Duggan fell into a bog hole and lay there.

We were in our dug-out on the morning that the Staters blew the mine at Ballyseedy, killing eight prisoners. We heard it go off, and wondered what it was. It was followed by more explosions, as grenades were thrown in among the prisoners. They boxed the remains in nine coffins, but one, Stephen Fuller, had crawled away. He was thrown to the south side of the road, where he managed to slither across the river and into our territory. We rescued him and brought him to the dug-out at Cnocán.(4a)

On the same day, four more prisoners were killed at Countess Bridge, Killarney, and a week later at Cahirciveen, five more. There were no survivors from that one. Tate, a Free State Lieutenant, told the truth: *It was a Free State mine*, he said. *They put the prisoners over it and blew them up.*(4b)

## SURVIVAL

Our Column survived until the Cease Fire. Word came then from Frank Aiken to dump arms, which we did. We used to go back regularly and check them. I stayed on the run until May 1924, when I went back into Tralee and played in a match for the prisoners. It was

my first appearance in public, except for the Truce period, in two years. I had to begin to pick up the threads again and it was hard. People were emigrating in droves. The best of Republicans were going. The very people that Ireland needed. There was despondency everywhere. I could hardly drum up enough for an Easter Commemoration. But I did. And I went to the local Town Engineer and got him to stake out a plot for us right in the centre of the graveyard. We had to shift out some Staters that were buried a bit too close to where our lads would be lying.

After that, it was re-organisation again, though it was difficult to see with the new state strengthening its grip all the time, that there could be a victory. I was on the Army Council until 1926, and then on the Executive for a long period after that. I had joined the New Ireland Assurance, and that, together with my G.A.A. interests, brought me to every part of the country.

#### G.A.A. CAREER

From the time that I came home after being on the run, my main occupations centred upon Gaelic football and my efforts to restore the fortunes of the Republican Movement. Between 1924 and 1930, I won four All Ireland medals with Kerry, 1924, 1926, 1929 and 1930. In 1926 and 1930, I captained the Kerry teams as well.

The 1924 final was not played until April 1925, because in July '24 the members of the Kerry team announced in a published statement that they would refuse to play until all Republican prisoners were released.

The 1926 final is remembered as a great final featuring Kildare and the celebrated Larry Stanley. The 1929 final was a repeat of '26 as Kildare provided the opposition again this time, although without Stanley. Eight of the fifteen players in that match were playing their football here in Tralee, with either Boherbee or Rock Street and Strand Street.

The final in 1930 was against Monaghan and it was a very one-sided match, as we won 3 goals 11 points to 2 points. I got the Sam Maguire Cup that year; it had not been available for the '26 final.

Kerry visited New York in 1927; and also more memorably after the 1930 final. Attendances for matches over there were about 55,000; and we won three magnificent trophies on that tour, as we won all our matches. When we returned home, massive crowds and bands welcomed us. I myself was shouldered all the way from Castle Street to my home in Boherbee and the other players got similar treatment. I retired in 1931, having won all the major awards the game had to offer, including the Sam Maguire Cup, the National League Cup, the



Munster Championship Cup, the John McCormack Cup, the McGovern Cup and other fine trophies that we won in America.

Of course my connection with the G.A.A. never ceased, having been president of my club Boherbee John Mitchels, and selector for the county for many years. I should have mentioned hurling too, which has been a great favourite of mine. I had the honour of representing Munster in hurling as well as football, which was very unusual for a Kerry player, as the team is always chosen from the other Munster counties, which are hurling counties, whereas Kerry is not.

I might add that in my travels to matches up and down the country I got a great knowledge of the people and the countryside, and there is hardly a part of the country that I have not been to.

#### THE FENIAN TRADITION

In November, 1926, after police barracks had been raided in Kerry and Tipperary, I was held in the Joy for a couple of weeks, along with Johnny Connor, Sean Keating and a number of others. I resigned from the Executive early in 1938 as I did not hold with the policy announced by Sean Russell. Others who resigned then or a short while before, were Sean MacBride, Con Lehane, Tomás Malone, Tom Barry, Mike Fitzpatrick, Tadgh Lynch, Donal O'Donoghue and Jimmy Hannigan. It was a big breach, a watershed in policy, whether Republicans should try a military initiative, a political approach, or retire from the field. Russell wanted to resume where the Fenians left off in the Eighties; or where Rory O'Connor and Michael Collins had laid off in 1920 and 1921. Few of us had any faith in it, though we had to pay tribute to the single-minded dedication of the man. He met and saw everybody, all of the old Republicans, George Gilmore, even De Valera, and tried to rope them all in.<sup>(5)</sup>

I was arrested in 1941 following a swoop upon the remaining Republicans around here. There had been an effort made to get the German agent, Hermann Goertz, out of the country in February, a boat was bought from Jimmy Sullivan of Kenmare. It was to be skippered by Sean Brosnan and was to depart from Fenit. We knew by that time that Sean Russell was dead and that Frank Ryan was lonely in Germany. We hoped to bring him back. We had that idea anyway. I suppose it was naive. It failed anyway. I spent two years in Tintown as a result of it.

On release, I picked up the job again with New Ireland. I continued as Kerry delegate with the G.A.A. I did all I could to maintain here in Kerry the pure flame of the Fenian separatist tradition. Rinne mé mo dhícheal an teanga a chur chun chinn ag an am céanna.

I admire the struggle of the oppressed Northern people, and how

they are hitting back at an invading army trying to do the *cos ar bholg* on them. But foremost of all throughout this period, I have tried to see that our own martyrs' graves were looked after. That is why I made the effort to have Ballyseedy and Yann Goulet's fine sculpture erected.<sup>(6)</sup>

#### REFERENCES

- 1 See *Constance de Markievicz*, by Jacqueline Van Voris.
- 2 The *Weekly Irish Times Sinn Féin Rebellion Handbook* gives in full the evidence of Co. Inspector Hill of the R.I.C. on the state of the organisation in Kerry.
- 3 As Beverley, his assumed name, he had joined Casement's abortive Irish Brigade in Germany. He was selected by him as an aide on the submarine which brought the two of them with Captain Monteith to Banna Strand, there hopefully to rendezvous with the *Aud*.
- 4 A small tablet commemorates Reidy. The family of Leen, having turned Free State, wanted no such reminder.  
  
There were numerous shootings inside Tralee by Auxies and I.R.A. On 26th March 1921, Willie McCarthy of Lixnaw, was killed by Auxies trying to escape, an obviously trumped up charge. They had come under fire, and in the shoot out also shot a boy named Twomey in both legs. He had been accompanying his mother from Confession.
- 4a See Appendix, for a remarkable account of one of those killed, ex R.I.C. man Patrick Buckley.  
  
4b The names, John Daly, George Shea, Tim Twomey, Patrick Harnett, James Connell, John O'Connor, Patrick Buckley, and James Walsh. Stephen Fuller, the sole survivor, was laid to rest in February 1984. All of the unauthorised killings are documented in a slim paperback published in the twenties by Dorothy Macardle, *Tragedies of Kerry*. Col. David Neligan, along with others of Collins' hardmen, notably Joe Dolan, Paddy Daly, and W. R. E. Murphy, were held culpable. Neligan was with the secret police "Oriel House gang" until 1932 when De Valera promoted him into a less sensitive job in the Land Commission. The newspaper eulogies at his death in 1984 refrained from mention of this epoch. Some years before his death, in response to a question from Tom Heavey, he stated that it was Joe Dolan who planned it.
- 5 See *The Irish Republican Congress* by George Gilmore, published by the *Cork Workers Club*.
- 6 The enormous clay model was crated and transported overland to and from Italy for a nominal sum, through the good offices of C.I.E. whose chairman at the time was Tod Andrews.

## May Dálaigh



"They say we got all our patriotism from my father's side, the Lyons; his mother was Mary Lyons," began May. The house was searched by the old R.I.C. for Fenians in 1867. My father remembered the police entering the rooms and outhouses. He was eleven years then. My mother's uncle, Canon Healy, stood in the dock with the Fenians in Caherciveen. There was no land league activity in this area, except the moonlighters, and we had no part with them.

After the Volunteers were founded in Dublin in 1913, they quickly came here. My father started the local company of Volunteers with his three sons in Currans. I well remember it, I was thirteen myself a few weeks after.

1916 came. We heard of the fighting in Dublin. *Our time has come*, said Tom to Charlie, who had been waiting expectantly for this. It was a Tuesday evening and they had been to the usual drill practice. My father rose to go with them. It took Charlie with all his persuasion, to stop him going. The youngsters started to cry. They did not want to part with their father. *Stay with the young ones, your day will come*, Charlie consoled him. He sat there, in that chair, and he put his head down between his hands, like this, and he burst out crying, and he said we deprived him of the one thing in his life that he looked forward to.

So then they told us the big railway bridge at Currans was to be blown up. We were out there in the front all night, waiting for the bang, but it was not blown up. Whatever about the spectacle that we had missed, we were still glad to see our two boys come in the morning. Tom took his books and went off to school, to Tralee Christian Brothers. Tom had been drilling Brosna and Lyrecrompane at the age of seventeen. It was Tom who enrolled those people. Only a few days ago, I myself was told so by an old man, Mick Dálaigh of Lawless Cross, over near Killarney. He is stone blind now. We came on then to



the Conscription scare; they all rushed to join then. We had a good company there in Kiltallagh. We are Kiltallagh parish, you know that. That is where the lads are buried. The first man on the run here was Paddy Riordan. His brother, Jim, shot two policemen in Firies village in May, 1916. He succeeded in getting away out of the country, so they went after his brother Paddy. Nobody would give him a cup of tea, so he landed here. He was here for months. He slept in a little outhouse back there in the field. One morning there was a raid and Charlie slipped out to warn him, because he had a habit of coughing in his sleep. He heard him taking the cartridges out of the rifle. Had they gone back, they had him. He was to be shot at sight, and anybody harbouring him. Nobody would take him in. My father took him to a relation to see if they'd take him, but they were afraid. We had to bring him back home. That happened twice. So he was taken down to Limerick, where he was captured later on.

Now about 1917. Things were now warming up. There was the usual fair at Currans. A few of the lads were a bit wild and they stoned the police. Charlie stood up on the ditch and he called upon them not to stone the police. The following morning, Charlie was arrested and charged with incitement under DORA (Defence of the Realm Act). Now I want to say who put the handcuffs on him. Paddy Buckley, the Farranfore policeman, who was blown up in Ballyseedy(1). Paddy was no joke. He was a real policeman. He hid on the hayshed in Riordan's, to shoot anyone who came out of the house, the night Jim was got away by boat. But he went over to the lads later and gave them a barrack in Clare one night he was on duty. Charlie was arrested anyway. There was a few more of the Currans lads with him, the real blackguards. They were tried in Castleisland. They were put back to November. When Charlie then appeared in the dock, he quoted Sean MacDiarmada: *I deny your right to try me*. The next thing they were found not guilty and he walked out of the dock.

He decided then that he would be prepared the next time. He prepared a dug-out near the house. There is a mountain ash growing in it now. But it is sacred to us. John Joe Sheehy and others made a dug-out also, right alongside Charlie's. But he was so close about it, that he never told any of us. As if we did not know. He was out a lot from then on. He knew that they could get a new warrant and he was resolved not to give them the chance. Eventually, anyway, a cousin died who was in the Volunteers. The people came here and asked him if he would make the arrangements for his funeral. Now Charlie should not have gone to Tralee at that time as he was still on the run, but he went, and he was arrested. He did not stir or make an effort to escape. Instead he waited until the two armed policemen moved outside the door with him. Now Charlie was a terror for tripping you. He'd put you

on your head in a minute. He did it to these two policemen just before going up to the barracks. Instead of dashing up the bit of a road to escape, he stood to give battle. That time you defended your gun with your life, not your life with your gun. You know that, don't you? Well they overcame him with their two guns, and he was battered to bits, inside there in the barrack. After a week he was taken to Cork, tried there and courtmartialled. He got two years. The policeman with him swore that only he had gripped the hammer of Charlie's gun, he would have shot him dead.

#### HOME BURNED IN REPRISAL

He did a hunger strike while he was there. A year after that, he landed home. From then on, he was a full-time organiser, doing Dail Loan, forming Sinn Féin clubs and training. Early in 1921, a wire came from Dublin. He was appointed to the 2nd Northern Division in Tyrone and Derry, where he was associated with Major Morris and James McElduff(2).

Now here I have to digress. When Dorothy Macardle was writing *The Irish Republic* in 1935, she called on Tom in Dun Laoire. She told him that they never issued commissions in those times. But sure I had the letter from Cathal Brugha as Minister for Defence, appointing him Commandant General. I had it inside in a little drill book. I posted it off, registered to Tom, to the hospital where he was in Dun Laoire. There was a man by name of Heeney from Donegal that had been with Charlie. He was sent out from the Museum to see it. He took it away and now it is in the 1916 section there. Meanwhile we had been burned down by the Tans in May as a reprisal following the shooting of two of them in Castleisland. It was two o'clock in the afternoon, and my father was out at a funeral. My eldest brother, Willie, Jackie Brosnan and Jack Shanahan of the column were here, but fortunately Willie and Jackie had gone out across the fields, leaving Jack down in the room developing snapshots. He was a chemist's assistant, and our first-aid man. *Bring me down water*, he called to me. I went out to get a bucket and walked straight into this officer. There were twenty — or more Tans behind him. I made to go down to the room, shouting a word of warning meanwhile. Jack had his rifle and dropped on one knee ready to use it, when he suddenly realised that I was between him and the officer, while my young sister, Nancy, was likely to emerge from one of the rooms. So he jumped through the window, but his rifle jammed across it. He managed to free himself then, and land in the boreen, but he was shot and badly wounded in the stomach. His intestines were exposed, but he had enough sense to lie upwards and hold his hands over them, because he was still fully conscious. I knelt



down beside him. Some of them raised their rifles to finish him off, but I lay across him. Then an officer ordered that he be lifted upon a stretcher improvised from three rifles. They placed him in a position where he could watch the house which was now ablaze. That seemed to satisfy them after a while, because he was lifted aboard one of their lorries that had now come up and brought to Tralee. He recovered eventually and died only two years ago. That night we stopped with neighbours. We had not a stick of furniture; everything was consumed. Within a few days we had one of the outhouses fixed up and some of us could come back. But it was 1924, after Willie and Tom were released from Tintown, before the homestead was built up again. A few weeks later, Jack's brother, Dick, was shot dead in an ambush in Castleisland. During the entire months of the Truce period, my brother Charlie could visit us only for two days. The British had set up their Government in Belfast and Charlie was kept busy trying to organise the I.R.A. in Derry and Tyrone so as to impede them. He came here looking for men. He had friends in Cork, the Crowleys, great men; one of their sons, Dermot Crowley, was killed there in the North in this campaign. But we were not happy with the Truce. It meant nothing to us, *fárior*. People will never understand that. Will I tell you the uneasy feeling it gave us? Men that had been great men, that never drank before, people made much of them: they got swelled heads. Those are the ones that went into the Free State Army. They are the same ones that later raided our houses. I hate to think of it now. You have often heard the saying: *Safe in our neighbours' houses*. Well that happened here with a vengeance, because those fellows had all been here.

When the Treaty was signed, he was overcome with despair. He spent nearly every day at the debates in Dublin, in January 1922. He was terribly anxious about the outcome. I have all his manuscripts here, in this big case, his letters, correspondence with others, plans, everything right up to the end in Drumboe.

#### THE CIVIL WAR

I will never forget it! We were back in Kiltallagh at a funeral. Somebody said: *Do you know there is fighting in Dublin?* British guns were bombarding the Four Courts. We nearly died of shock. That was 28th June, 1922. Anyway five weeks after that, the Staters landed at Fenit. All the barracks held here by our lads were evacuated. They took to the hills. There were raids on houses everywhere. Tom was arrested at Kilcummin, near Killarney, on the day that Michael Collins was shot. The Staters, under Neligan and Brigadier Paddy Daly, surrounded the house in which were Tom Crofts, Connolly of



Liscurran and a few more. The lads fought it. A bomb was thrown down and it killed a soldier. A girl in the house was wounded then so they decided to surrender.

The Bishop of Kerry was my father's second cousin. He was relieved that Tom was arrested. He felt now he might be safe. He had tried to talk Charlie into going Free State. *If you go over, he said all your men will follow.*

Then this day a man came up; it was just after an ambush at Quill's Cross. *Is this Charlie's house? I am John Joe Sheehy.* It was raining at the time. My father directed them where to put their rifles. He used to stay on guard then along with our Kerry-blue. They all came in then and they made a big dug-out right beside where Charlie's was. They did not realise it. And they thought we were so green that we would not notice a horse and cart going through the yard, with logs to make a dug-out. That's their idea of country people. I used to say to John Joe: *Kerry One had to run to Kerry Two for shelter.* He did not like that.

They built a hut inside and covered it with earth. I think at one time there were twenty-eight of them there. They had beds brought out from Ballyseedy, and blankets and everything. They were too cosy sometimes. One fellow slept there for two days.

Someone would say there is a raid coming on. I would have to go up the boreen then. We would put a white cloth at the back of those sheds. If the white cloth was up on the tree there, they would not be able to come down. I used to go up and call out however. I had been doing that for Charlie. The first time after this raid, I went up and called out. They did not hear me. And why? Because John Joe was arguing inside! The raids were now taking place continually. We had three hundred soldiers around this house one day. And what was there to raid here and half of it already burned down by the Tans! There above your head, that is where the house stopped. The rest was open to the sky. But I want to say this: *There was never a weapon caught in this house, because no one ever brought a weapon inside it.* They were all put well away from the house.

Stephen Fuller, the only man to escape the mine at Ballyseedy, was put in the dug-out. My father brought the doctor, Dr Shanahan, brother to the man who was shot here. He was our friend, of course. He had not a scrape on him, except that as he came down after they were all blown up by the mine, he put out his hands to save himself. They were lacerated by the stones on the old road. My father used to go up every day to feed him and to bandage his hands.

Then on the 19th May, two years to the day after the burning of this house, the dug-out was discovered. John Joe was so careful that he only took the one man with him every time he hid the guns after an operation. He said that if a young lad was caught, he might give way.

Then, *faior*, there was this other fellow, Hanlon. My father warned him not to have him in the ranks. And this night we heard there would be a raid and so there was. The soldiers came and found eleven rifles and a Lewis gun, but not a single Volunteer. It was now near the end of the Civil War(3).

How did we feel about it, now that we were beaten? We dreaded the future. Charlie was dead and Tom and Willie were in prison. The Free Staters arrested Charlie and Sean Larkin when they were driven out of the North in February. The four — three Kerry men, Tim Sullivan, Dan Enright, and Charlie, along with Sean Larkin from Magherafelt — were shot for possession of arms in Drumboe Castle, Co. Donegal. I shudder every time I hear that name.(3a)

I remember the great hunger strikes that followed in the late autumn. Why wouldn't I and my two brothers on them! It was so bad that my mother could not look at the lads when she went to visit them. Tom was the last to be released along with Kevin Boland's father.

After the Civil War, Tom resumed organising. He went to Mayo and Sligo. There are men there who know him yet. You ask about Fianna Fail? They were as bitter as hell that we did not go with them. And 'tis we who should be bitter and we are not. I hate to say it, but we showed them up. Tom eventually emigrated to the U.S.A., and Mexico. In 1931, he returned to Ireland, settling down near Dun Laoire. He died in 1939, still a faithful soldier. Barry, MacBride, Moss and many more accompanied his remains to Kiltallagh.

Now who stayed here? Well, there was Moss, and before that Andy Cooney, known around here as Jack Browne. He formed the Flying Column. He came here with Tom, many times after. We had Pádraig MacLogan too for months. He came in 1926 or 27. He came with Jim Killeen. Jim was a great man on a bicycle; he would travel or race anywhere. They were from G.H.Q. while they were here they were organising the area. MacBride too, he had the greatest sense of humour of any of them, really and truly. He laid siege to the place for a whole fortnight. He stayed with Tom in Dublin, the night before he got married to Kid Bulfin in 1926. I knew her well too, she came from a real Irish Ireland family in Offaly. Tom was his best man. He drove them to the boat in the morning. He was going off with her to France to get a job on a newspaper. We stayed in his house in Roebuck three years ago, prior to Kid's funeral. Nancy, my sister, met Cearbhall O Dálaigh there. He was part of our clan; he came from Baile Uí Dálaigh. Nancy, as Mrs McMullan, was standing beside him and she said in Irish: *As one Dálaigh to another, I am to congratulate you on the stand you took*(4). And he immediately said, *I did it for Charlie and his brothers; you can't beat Kerry*.

We are related back at my great-grandfather's time.

Frank Ryan: and sure we knew him too, very nice, always full of fun. He was very deaf of course. I remember coming down in the train with him after a match. Every word I said to him, with the motion of the train, he knew it. He had a sister a nun in Tralee.<sup>(5)</sup>

Sean Russell was here very often. He had been Director of Munitions in G.H.Q. in the Tan period. He was as innocent as a child. If you did not go up to him in the yard, he would not come into the house. He would want to know who was here before he entered.

Peadar O'Donnell: No, I did not care for him. It has nothing to do with his socialist attitudes, nor religion either. Anyway, he would never mention those subjects before my mother.

Mick Price was the one I like best. Imagine he came all the way from the British Army in Egypt, like Tom Barry and Liam Mellows' father to help us. But I liked him best because he was the only one that ever washed the ware for me.

#### REFERENCES

1. March 7th, 1923 . . . A mine placed by Free State Army agents killed eight Republican prisoners including the former policeman. For a precis of his "own account" left by this remarkable policeman — one of whose sons is highly placed in the Carmelite Order — see *Under Two Flags* in Appendix.

2. See under James McElduff on page 74.

3. The decision to Cease Fire and Dump Arms was issued over the names of Frank Aiken and Eamonn De Valera on May 24th, 1923.

3a. Following an ambush in early March of Free State troops near Ballymacaward in west Donegal, it was decided to shoot Republican hostages. General Joe Sweeney, himself a Donegal man, saw to it that they were not from that county.

4. A reference to his resignation from the Presidency, following insulting references by a Fine Gael Minister for Defence in 1976.

5. Ryan was interred with full honours, with a sister present, in Glasnevin in June 1979.



## Con Casey

Adjutant,  
First Eastern Division  
I.R.A., 1922



My name, said Con's wife, is an *ainm cúl le cine*(1) one that is not traditional within a family. When the children in a family fail to survive, the mother may christen a new-born an '*ainm cúl le cine*' in the hope that one that departs from tradition may have a better hope of life. An t-Athair Peadar in '*Mo Scéal Féin*' tells how his mother broke with tradition when she called him Peter for that very reason. My grandmother was Susan Kelleher. The name Susan came by way of the English governess of the Mahonys of Dunloe Castle. She was grandmother to an earlier Susan Kelleher, who also had survived.

Con Casey was born in Tralee in 1899. On his mother's side, he was a Langan, her father being born in Tralee in 1816. His wife, Susan Dálaigh, is a descendant of one of the great scholar and bardic clans of Kerry. They are still known around here by the Irish way Dálaigh or O Dálaigh. The late Cearbhall O Dálaigh was a distant kinsman. Her father, Con Billy, was steeped in the Fenian tradition; in the Eighties and Nineties he spent fourteen years labouring the hard way in the U.S.A., before saving enough to return to Ireland and settle down.

*My people had a provision store in Bridge Street, says Con. Like most of the Volunteers and fighters of that period, they came from what you would call the lower middle class. Not too much to lose that they might be scared of being involved, yet with enough knowledge of history and tradition to show them why they should be involved.*

His brother-in-law was Charlie Daly, later Commandant of the Second Northern Division, an anti-Treatyite, executed by Free Staters in Drumboe Castle, in Co. Donegal, on March 14th, 1923, along with Tim O'Sullivan, Sean Larkin and Dan Enright(2).

Con Casey joined the Volunteers early in 1919. From then until 1927, he was involved in all aspects of I.R.A. activity, lying for a while as a hostage under sentence of death by the Free Staters in December, 1922. In 1927, he retired from the Movement. *I was a bit disillusioned,*

he says. He became involved instead in the cultural movement, playing a greater part with Connradh na Gaelige. About the same time, he joined the staff of Dan Nolan's paper, *The Kerryman*, with whom he remained for 48 years — fifteen as editor — until his retirement in 1974.

#### CON CASEY'S STORY

My people ran a small family provision store down in Bridge Street. My father was very strong for the restoration of the Irish language. He was one of the people who, in the early years of the century, advocated the establishment of summer schools in the Gaeltacht, the sort that were soon established in Béal Átha an Ghaorthaidh, Baile an Sceilg, and Dún Caoin. You had the same movement elsewhere setting up schools, a few of which still exist, at O Meith, Gort an Choirce, An Spidéal, and other places. Had it not been for them, we would have lost the Irish language completely and there would never have been a revival.

After the foundation of the Irish Volunteers in the Rotunda in Dublin, in November 1913, they spread quickly in Kerry. My mother, tied to the provision store though she was, gave the young lads every help. There was always a meal ready at night after they had finished patrolling around the town.

I was only a senior schoolboy in the Christian Brothers in 1916. Kerry had, of course, received the Mac Neill countermand on the Sunday, though some Volunteers did rally in their drill hall at the Rink, under Paddy Cahill, their O.C. Austin Stack having been arrested. It was there that Captain Monteith came, after coming ashore from the U-Boat on Good Friday. He was there on the run and sought after by the British. The Volunteers smuggled him to Ballymacelligot, before he finally made it to the U.S.A. Down the road, one hundred yards from here, living still is Willie Mullins, who took the word of the arrests direct to the Military Council in Dublin, *direct to Pdraic Pearse and James Connolly.*

I can remember the R.I.C. in the days following Easter Week, arresting lads in the streets and taking them in. Both military and cavalry were involved. Some were taken away to internment. Things of course were following a pattern that we could not then foresee. The executions, the release of most of the prisoners at the end of 1916, the reorganisation of the Volunteers, Count Plunkett's successful election against the old Irish Party of Redmond in Roscommon, all the signs of an awakening nation. It was May 1917, before Stack was released. I can recall him at the head of a procession, *waving his felon's cap as he passed our door.*

Meanwhile like any other young fellow leaving school, I was casting around for a job. That time, as you know, the ideal in most young people's minds was the civil service. I had the right educational attainments and I got a temporary job in the Labour Exchange, which was then close to the Rotunda in Dublin. Most of my clients were British ex-servicemen. The British had arranged a fixed sum for them as an allowance on leaving the army. It was something like 29/- a week, £1.45 in today's money.

Strange to say a few of the fellows on my side of the counter were former 1916 men, and now it was our job to dole out money to British soldiers. I had no contact then with the Volunteers, except that I went to the Keating Branch, Craobh an Cheathinigh, of Connradh na Gaeilge. Dublin was a strange place to me at the time, and I had no desire to remain there. So when that phased out I returned to Tralee and joined D company, the company based on the Rock Street section of the town. After a while I was invited on to the Battalion staff as their police officer. It was now 1919, and Dail Eireann had been formed. We had the usual cases of small-scale robberies and petty crime. The fight, however, was warming up so I had the unusual job of telling publicans to shut their shops an hour earlier than the official time. The publicans closed of course, but the Black and Tans, who had now arrived in Tralee, went around and kicked their doors open. The Volunteers were heavily on the side of abstinence, but the Tans were not.

Following the hanging in Dublin by the English of Kevin Barry, the eighteen-year-old student, a general order came to every unit to have a go. All British military became a target. That night our section was out, myself along with them, and just down here at the end of the street, they shot and wounded a sailor attached to the military as a wireless operator. At the other end of the town, they captured two Black and Tans. They took them off, they held them, and did not surrender them, and Tralee was closed down, absolutely closed down, for ten days. Lorries of Black and Tans moved into the town and if anyone stood around at corners, they fired at them. Of course there was widespread action throughout the whole country at that time. The Active Service Units, of full-time volunteers were spreading out from Dublin. On the 21st they swooped and killed fourteen top enemy agents. That was followed, you will remember, by the Tans firing into Croke Park — Bloody Sunday. But the fight was being stepped up everywhere. Later the same month, Rory O'Connor organised the burning of fifteen warehouses in Liverpool. It was part of the economic campaign. It was not long until I was picked up by the Auxiliaries, the English recruited police. They had taken over the Technical School, down the road from here. The man in charge of them was the infamous Major McKinnon. He interrogated me anyway. I lied like a trooper



and pleaded innocence. I told him I was in Sinn Fein but he would not listen to me. He drafted me into the local jail here; there is not much of it left now and what there is, is now the County Council machinery depot. I spent about three weeks there. I was then courtmartialled and they gave me three months for being a member of the I.R.A. I served that three months in Cork Jail, in February, March and April, 1921. One of the young men there at that time was Moss Twomey. I must have been one of his longest acquaintances. Whenever he came down here in later years, in the Twenties and Thirties, he would call. He always stayed out with the Dálaighs at Firies. At this time, anyway, he was in the same yard with me and we became very fond of each other. There was a right row going on. Some of the members of Cork Corporation were in it, Alfred O'Rahilly and a few more lads like that. While I was there, they brought in the remains of the nine young men they had caught and shot after the attack at Clonmult in East Cork. I got a job that was a very coveted one. I was going around with a warder bringing the parcels to different fellows. I had access to different wings and of course that was very important from our intelligence point of view. One of the most poignant things I recall was the sight of some of our lads recuperating after the hunger-strike begun by Terence MacSwiney. One of them lasted over eighty days. Skin and bones they still were when I saw them.

I was released from Cork Jail in May 1921. We could not make it all the way home because curfew was on. We stayed in Ardferit and with us that night was a Volunteer who had shot dead an R.I.C. man, Sergeant Benson, in Tralee that same day. I should tell you now that McKinnon too was dead. He had been playing golf on the links here; our fellows ambushed him there. That was the same time, the month of May. We were going full pelt. The I.R.A. never felt stronger. John Joe Sheehy can give you the details on that one; he was actually in charge of that affair.

On the 11th July, 1921, on the day a Truce was declared, I walked down to the end of the town and there coming against me were three men, two of whom I knew well, Mick Fleming and Paddy Barry. They had come in from West Kerry where they had been on the run. The third was a tall man whom I did not know at all. He turned out to be Andy Cooney; you've heard of him of course. As Dr Andy Cooney he succeeded Frank Aiken as Chief of Staff of the I.R.A. prior to Moss Twomey taking over in 1926. He remained a sound Republican until his death some years ago. (2a)

Andy Cooney had come to Kerry as an organiser in the next brigade to us, Kerry No. 2 Brigade, under Humphrey Murphy. Meanwhile Headquarters had found fault with us and Cooney was sent over to take charge of No. 1. That meant displacing Paddy Cahill, the O.C., a

local man and also a T.D. That caused a good deal of friction, a local man being succeeded by a fellow who came in from outside. I met Cooney and shortly afterwards he invited me to become his Brigade Adjutant. This coincided with a big reorganisation that was taking place in May, 1921. All the Brigades were being linked into Divisions, Kerry becoming part of the First Southern under Liam Lynch and Liam Deasy as Adjutant. It comprised Cork, Kerry, West Limerick and Waterford. O'Malley was in charge of the Second to the north of us. To a great extent they existed only on paper at the time the Truce came. Barry, and some of the soldiers doing the real fighting, never thought much of the idea. Anyway Lynch came, accompanied by Deasy, to our camp at Ardfert. I was very impressed with Lynch. You know his appearance, priestly and ascetic; the photographs describe him perfectly. At the same time, he was a strong disciplinarian.

The onset of the Truce period allowed us time to get down to serious reorganisation. Cahill's removal anyway meant that a number of battalion commandants were dissatisfied. They were drafted, a nice phrase for replaced. We set up a headquarters and training camp in Ardfert, that is six miles north west of Tralee. Before the Truce finished, anyway, Cooney was recalled to Headquarters and replaced by Humphrey Murphy. He rose to the top in the Civil War and was later a member of the Army Pensions Board. He had been O.C. of Kerry No. 2 Brigade. He was now transferred to Kerry No. 1 Brigade. I continued as Adjutant. Others on the staff were Tomás O'Donohue, Vice Commandant; Maurice Fleming, Quartermaster; Dr Arthur O'Connor, Medical Officer; Jim Flavin, Engineer; Neil Moriarty, Signals, and some more I do not recall.

#### AFTER THE TREATY

Kerry No. 1 took over the staff barracks and the military barracks here in January, 1922, following the Treaty, together with all police barracks around here. We then had the problems of keeping proper maintenance parties in them and of providing some form of a police force. We were acting as the Irish Republican Army and not as the Free State Army. Dick Mulcahy had given a guarantee that we would be maintained intact<sup>(3)</sup>. Then on March 26th — originally at the invitation of Mulcahy and Eoin O'Duffy though they later reneged on it — an Army Convention was held in Dublin. I was there, together with strong representation from the southern divisions. We resolved to act independently of An Dail as it was clear that it was now becoming the parliament of the Irish Free State. Cooney was appointed in March, Commandant of the First Eastern Division, with H.Q. at Millmount Barracks at Drogheda. He asked me to come there as his

divisional adjutant and I went. One of our first tasks was a courtesy call on the Free Staters under Frank Thornton, then occupying the White Horse Hotel. We then went to Dundalk where Frank Aiken, who was still neutral, was in occupation of the military barracks. You ask me now about my O.C. Andy Cooney was from Nenagh. Facially and physically he was a very fine-looking man. He was, however, rather withdrawn; definitely not the sort who would laugh or crack jokes. He was a good organiser and a strict disciplinarian. He commanded respect even by his appearance. To the very end, he remained an unswerving Republican. The staff consisted of Cooney, myself, Mick Price as Quartermaster, and Tod Andrews as Organiser. There was a training officer too, Denis Lordan, one of Barry's Kilmichael crowd. It was quite a galaxy. Price of course had strong social leanings. Even at that time, we called him Comrade Price. Constantly in a state of agitation, he was nevertheless very sincere, yet assertive, the last man to be overborne by opposition or argument. Years later he came to this house. I always thought he was a man under stress, so deeply was he concerned about Ireland and its future.

This was the period, March and April 1922, when the Free State was organising the Civic Guards and building up an Army from some of our lads that went over to them, but mostly from Irish men and others demobbed from the British Army. Posts and barracks were being seized on both sides.

About this time an inquiry was held in Mullingar with a view to preventing hostilities. Sean McCarthy from Cork was there on the Republican side. Tom Hales was chairman. There was Free State representation too. As I say, we had no directives what to do. We were improvising locally while the other side was under a central command in Dublin. Still the pressure was on us in Mullingar. We had taken over the local technical school, the police barracks having been burnt down by Mick Price and myself. We found this invested by Free State troops under A.T. Lalor, a former British officer. We arranged a kind of truce and, as I say, not knowing whether to fight or not, we just had to get out of the place. Had we stood up to the Staters on that occasion, then history would be recording that the so-called Civil War had started in Mullingar and not at the Four Courts.

Tom Bourke was in there with an active service unit from Offaly. Squint Bourke he was called. So with Mick Price we shifted to Drogheda. When we arrived there, however, we found Millmount surrounded by Free State soldiers.

We decided to report to G.H.Q. staff in the Four Courts. I appeared before Liam Lynch, Rory O'Connor, Liam Mellows, Joe McKelvey and Dick Barrett. I told them what I knew about events in the First Eastern Division. Lynch came to me one day: *Come along and act as*



*my escort while I get my hair cut.* He was always so meticulous about his appearance and dress. I accompanied him outside to a barber's shop where, on entering, imagine my surprise to find among those waiting, a detective sergeant of the old regime from Tralee. Cooney went into the Four Courts then, and remained there until it was captured. What exactly became of Mick Price and Tod Andrews I do not know. To my mind the divisional staff disintegrated. I found nothing to do except to come back to Kerry.(6)

I was attached then to the First Southern Division, on organising work. I went to West Limerick and shortly afterwards to Waterford, where I liaised with Pax Whelan, the local Brigade commandant. While I was there, a fellow reported that two or three transports had passed Helvick Head. Shortly afterwards the Free Staters landed at Fenit. The Civil War was now five weeks old and the Free State was clearly gaining the upper hand. The tactics we used against the Black and Tans were of no avail in the new situation. I came back to Kerry. Our fellows had evacuated the barracks in Tralee after trying to destroy it by fire. I went on active service then. Cork had been invested on August 10th, and the province of Munster was being rolled up. I set up a brigade H.Q. at Lyrecrompane. Regularly they sent a cycle patrol into the area I was occupying. On the 1st November, I was staying at Knockane(4), Susie's home. I took a few fellows to have a go at the cycle patrol, but they were too numerous and strong for us and we had to retreat up the side of a hill. We got into a kind of shady covert; we thought we might be safe there; but they still kept coming. They overran us. I was captured, along with Jeremiah O'Connor, Matty Maloney and Tom Devane. We were taken into Tralee Jail. We were tried in December, 1922, and sentenced to death, by a courtmartial presided over by Brigadier General W.R.D. Murphy. His name hardly matters now. It was a very dangerous time for us. They had already executed Childers and twelve more in Dublin. They decided after a time that they would treat us as hostages for the county. They sent out notices and posted them all over the place that if there was any hostile action they would shoot us. We were six weeks there in Tralee Jail, under armed guard, not knowing but that any morning we might be shot. After the six weeks, the sentence was commuted to ten years penal servitude and we were packed off to A-Wing in Mountjoy(5).

It was a relief, though things were pretty rough there; Andy Cooney, Austin Stack and several T.D.s were there; Ernie O'Malley was brought in eventually. I talked to him regularly along with Paddy Fleming, Bob Barton, Austin Stack and Sean Lemass. Eventually we had an almighty row with the authorities. The Staters came in, used hoses, and beat us into the compound. It was October, a bitter cold time. So we started the hunger strike. They came along then after a

while and told us they would release some of us. It was a trick really to find out our names as we were not co-operating; we had moved into different cells and they had lost track of us. Eventually some were released while the rest were transferred to Newbridge Jail. I was one of those. I was still on hunger strike there, until we were ordered off it. I can tell you I was pretty low after forty-four days without food. They took me to the hospital in the Curragh where I remained for months. Then I was brought to Harepark Camp via the Glasshouse. I remained there until June, 1924, when all of us were at last released. I returned to Kerry, where reorganisation of the I.R.A. had already commenced. I became Adjutant of what they called the Kerry Command. Humphrey Murphy was still O.C. Eighteen months afterwards, you had the first political moves from De Valera to change the abstentionist policy of Sinn Féin. That was followed in May, 1926, by the foundation of Fianna Fail, after which they took the Oath and entered Leinster House.

In November 1926, following I.R.A. raids on barracks in Cork, Kerry and Meath, they arrested John Joe Sheehy, John Joe Rice and myself, and carted us off to Mountjoy. There is an old photograph here, signed, from Michael Kilroy of Mayo, Dr Madden, T.D., of the Western Command, and Frank Kerlin of Dublin, George and Jack Plunkett. George Gilmore was there later. He had been sentenced to eighteen months hard labour — which he refused to do — for organising the rescue of nineteen prisoners from the Joy on November, 27th 1925. In 1923 he was in the next cell to me. He was a withdrawn sort of man whom you would not intrude upon. I remember passing one evening at that time, looking into his cell. He was up at the window, gazing out. I passed no remark, but that night he was gone.

The two Plunketts were released before me because George was getting married. I gave him a hair-cut the night before. After a stay of only three weeks, we were sent home again. By this time, however, I had become disillusioned with things, believing that the right thing would be if I devoted myself to the cultural side of the revival. In this way, something could still be saved. I became secretary of the local branch of Connradh, where I devoted myself to the language for the next three years. It is an inevitable transition, I suppose, when people become despondent at the way things have gone politically, that they move into cultural or trade union activity. Anyway, I more or less faded out of the picture then.

I had got a job with *The Kerryman* shortly before this, and remained with them for forty-eight years. I think it fair to say that while I was their Editor, I kept the flag of Irish culture and nationalism flying in Rock Street. That, as I saw it, was the only way left to me to continue the struggle.

## REFERENCES

1. A name that turns its back upon its kindred.
2. Daly, Sullivan and Enright were from North Kerry; Larkin was from Magherafelt.
  - 2a. Andy Cooney remained in the wings until the forties when he emigrated to the U.S.A. He died there in August 1968, when his remains were removed for burial to Youghalara cemetery near Nenagh. He had married Frances, one of the Brady sisters, of Belfast. They figure prominently in the Dublin recollections of Ernie O'Malley and Tod Andrews.
3. *If any assurance is required, the Army will remain the Army of the Irish Republic.* — Richard Mulcahy, Minister for Defence, Feb. 14th, 1922.
4. Cnocán Cúl Tí.
5. At this point, Susan came in. *I can tell you what really saved them.* Free Murphy (Humphrey) spent a night with us in Knockane. *There is only one thing to do. We will issue a proclamation in Tralee that if these four are shot, the Republican Army will shoot eight substantial citizens, whom he then proceeded to name.* This all went up on the posters, and I am convinced that that is what saved them, otherwise they might have joined the dozens of Republicans who were being executed officially and unofficially in this county.
6. Tod Andrews was involved immediately in the O'Connell Street battle, escaped from there, was at Aiken's recapture of Dundalk, was subsequently at Donaghmoynce, Carrickmacross, in Wexford, finally ended up as adjutant to Liam Lynch, being taken near Araglin. See *Dublin Made Me*, and *Man of No Property* for his racy account.



## Walter Mitchell

*Offaly,  
No. 2 Brigade.*



My father, Robert Mitchell, was a farmer's son near Tullamore. My mother was Dorothy Lowe from Westmeath.

I was born here in this lock-keeper's cottage in 1902. The house itself is two hundred years old; no one has ever lived here, only a Mitchell.

As a youngster, I went to the local national school. Irish history happened to be a great subject with one of the teachers there. So one way or another, between listening and reading, I came to the conclusion that we were a separate nation and that the English had no right to be here. It was my opinion too that a Republican government was the proper form of government, because it gave people a choice. I have nothing against royalty in its own place, but I do not believe in allowing so much power to be concentrated in the hands of a few.

There was a great musical house near here, Joe and Martin Minogue lived there with their parents. They were a bit older than me. The sisters had diplomas in music, while one of mine, Ruby, was also talented. We used to go up there and there would be a few half sets and reels. Joe's sister, Mary, used to dance the hornpipe, and right well she could too. I can still see her, in my mind's eye. We used finish up by telling stories of the history of these parts. Joe had some great tales, but my heavens, he had a terrible stutter.

We were quite a big family that time, but the sort of illnesses they can cure now cut us down. Two of my sisters died of diphtheria, spread maybe by the comings and goings on the canal, while a third contracted pneumonia. I had three brothers, one of whom, Herbert — known as Sean — was later in charge of the I.R.A. in Cork.

The period of Irish history that interested me more than any other was '98, the United Men, *Liberté, Egalité, Fraternité*. That seemed to me the true foundation stone of an Irish Republic. I was saddened by the precipitate action that was forced upon the pikemen, particularly in Wexford, where I felt their appointed leader, Bagnal Harvey, was

right in trying to hold them back. They needed training; he knew that. He knew they would be meeting disciplined troops, and that, in the long run, they would not stand a chance. The entire midlands over as far as this country was in ferment, and each area provided its own martyrs. You will find today '98 memorials in Portarlington, Tullamore, Mountmellick, Ballinakill, Monasterevin and many other places. Every second man in the yeomanry here was a United Man, but after the Leinster Directory was arrested in Dublin in March, 1798, they flogged the information out of them, shot them and purged the regiments. There was a man here in Newtown, Rahan, in a forge, that made pikes. His was not an Irish name, and today there is not a single one of his name around here. There was a fight here at Killoughey Cross at the time of the Land War. The police tried to stop a convoy of hay getting past. That was an affray in which the police came off the worst, many of them being shot. The local people made a song about it.

My brother Sean was a wool buyer for Athlone Woollen Mills, a big concern then that employed over six hundred people. Along with a chap named Gill, he designed the patterns for the tweeds. He was a company captain in the Midland Brigade of the Volunteers. He had his own green/grey uniform made for the initial public parade of what, six years later, became the Midland Brigade of the I.R.A.. Harry O'Brien was another officer. He brought down a consignment of Howth rifles to Athlone on the train a few weeks after they were landed. A contingent of Volunteers, including Frank Connor from Coosan, was drawn up outside the railway station to receive them. The Great War was already on. A Canadian-cavalry man, George Dobbey, from the 34th South Garry Horse, a relative of my mother, came to visit friends in Athlone. My brother was sitting there in his uniform. After a while the Canadian said: *Well it seems a right mix-up chum. Here am I after travelling thousands of miles to fight for King and Country, and here you are preparing to go out and fight against them.*

The Volunteers were not popular in Athlone at that time. They had been stoned once or twice when they attempted a route march. Athlone was a garrison town with strong loyalties and attachments. They provided plenty of recruits to the British Army. The towns everywhere — not just in the North — were intensely loyal at that time.

#### TULLAMORE STRIKES THE FIRST BLOW

I was fourteen years of age when 1916 occurred. I remember it well, particularly as I was within fifty yards of where the first shots were fired in that campaign. You think it was against the Lancers in Upper O'Connell Street on April, 24th, but it was not. The first shots against

the British Government were fired in Tullamore on Monday, 20th March, a full five weeks before the Rising. I was living in the town then, having been apprenticed to the drapery trade with the firm of Morris. It happened like this: Tullamore had a large garrison of "separation women", soldiers' wives, just like everywhere else, and they provided a kind of proletarian backbone to loyalism everywhere. Therefore Sinn Fein, the Volunteers, or even green flags with harps — the tricolour had not yet appeared — were not popular in the back streets. In fact, on the Sunday, at the time I speak of, there was a hurling match held in aid of the Wolfe Tone Memorial. One of the spectators there attempted to remove a green flag from one of the Sinn Feiners, and he retaliated by drawing a revolver. Needless to say that got around the town very quickly and created much ill feeling against the Volunteers. The next day a number of women were seeing their husbands off at the station to join the Leinster Regiment at the front. A couple of Volunteers and Sinn Feiners appeared. There were cat-calls and shouts from the women and children accompanying them. The boys retreated, but they were followed closely by the women now joined by more who had been drinking their separation money in the local pubs. Along came this youngster propelling a three-wheeled box cart, much used on the railways at that time. He tore down from the station with this loaded with newspapers. There must have been a headline which he thought the Sinn Feiners wouldn't like, because he stuck one of these papers into the face of our lads. He swiped it from him, tore it and threw it in the gutter.

That started the row. The cart was then taken by the youngsters down another street, where there were stones piled up for steam-rolling. They filled the cart with these, hauled them back and started pegging the Sinn Fein rooms in William Street. A crowd soon gathered, Union Jacks were waved, and the lads, who had now retreated inside, were loudly booed. It was not long until the windows were smashed, and there was even talk of a battering ram being used. I was outside and could see everything that was going on. A window was thrown up suddenly and a hand appeared. It held a gun. I suppose they hoped that the sight of it would deter the crowd but not a bit. Next minute a shot was fired from this revolver well above the crowd, but it entered the curved plate glass window of Scally's opposite, leaving a right little hole. (It cost sixty pounds to replace that window afterwards). The police appeared then, armed with carbines and revolvers. They rushed into the ground floor, calling on the boys upstairs to surrender, and when they would not, started firing up at them. They fired back vigorously, wounding Inspector Crane and seriously injuring Sergeant Ahern. As the wags around the town had it: *They aimed at a crane and shot a heron*. The lads had a plank out



from the upstairs window, crossing into another yard. They escaped that way, getting the guns away safely, but of course, some of them were arrested soon enough and charged. They were tried in June, and were released on a technicality(1). But of course some of them later spent a while in Frongoch and other places.

That was my experience of 1916.

#### IN THE VOLUNTEERS

We come on then to the executions. You know what that did. It changed everything. And as if that was not enough, England had to put the *caip bháis* on it by attempting to introduce conscription. She had got a higher proportion of volunteers from Ireland than she did from her own country, but she threw her hat at them by her action and stopped everyone from volunteering.

I joined the Volunteers, now the Irish Republican Army, in August 1919. Sean, my elder brother, was in them since 1913. I remember when I joined the controversy about a volunteer oath of allegiance to Dail Eireann was under way. The Volunteers swore allegiance to An Dail, but the Dail three years later proceeded to dismantle the Republic.

I always had close connections with Athlone and with every activity there. I never went there but there was trouble. I was there the night of the bayonet charge when Larry Ginnell, M.P. was arrested. I was present when the Yankee delegates came in the autumn of 1920 to investigate atrocities in Ireland. Our dossier was prepared by a girl in the local newspaper office, and we went along to the station to present it when the train would arrive. The Mulvihills, Frank Connor and a group of girls in uniform, embroidered with stars and stripes and the tricolour, formed the delegation. The police had the station bolted against us. We had strict instructions about decorum, that there must be no ructions. We went to a gate; it was a very high wicket gate at one end, and of course the crowd followed. I was lifted up and pushed over. When I was across, the pressure from the crowd was so great that I could scarcely draw the heavy bolt. Pishin Connor from Coosan tried to get the crowd back. When I opened it, the rush was so great that I was thrown back against the stationary train and had to stay there. Anyway, the delegation presented their documents to the Americans, who then proceeded on. They were stopped, I know, at the next station, but sure that was the best propaganda we could have had.

#### THE CORK CONNECTION

Sean had had to clear out of here after 1916. He went to Cork and

has lived there since and raised his family there. He rose to be O.C. of Cork No. 1 Brigade. Tomás Mac Curtain was a great friend of his. Sean was Chief Marshal at his funeral. He had been hit and wounded a fortnight before the Truce with shrapnel from one of his own bombs. They had been trying to capture this armoured car, intact, if they could. They hoped to use it in a prison break. The lad on the other side could not reach the slot in the armoured car with his automatic. Sean had fired his gun in but the driver accelerated. As he drove off, Sean pegged a grenade at the turret, but it bounced off and a piece of shrapnel passed through his belt and left a nice scar upon his stomach.

He narrowly escaped death in the Civil War. He lived then on a piece of land at Kerrypike, out along the Lee. From early on, he was out with the Column. This day the Staters were lying in wait for him. Suddenly a figure appeared, looking like him and wearing his clothes. The guns rang out and the figure fell, riddled. What was it, but this poor devil, a neighbour, who had been out all day, driving cattle and got soaked. He had come into the brother's place and borrowed his old suit.

Sean and I had a great affinity. He was the eldest boy, and I was the youngest. No doubt that accounts for it. He was fine and big, and quite a useful boxer. After he got his first job, he used bring home every week to me a boys paper, *Comic Life*, so that will show you the difference in our ages.

It was shortly before the Truce that I went on the train to Cork with a load of arms. I brought them to Big John Horgan, who was Quartermaster. The arms came from the Athlone area, shotguns mostly, with a few rifles. They had been put on the train there, wrapped in sacking, and disguised inside shrubs. They were addressed to the Rev. Somebody at some college. I never looked at the labels, but I could see there was something wrong with the shrubs. They were too heavy. Our job at Portarlinton was to lift them off, carry them on to the Cork train and accompany them from there on.

I carried them aboard the train at Portarlinton myself. We had an hour and a half to wait. All around lolled these Auxiliaries with their kits lying about the platform. The porter that was supposed to help me lost his nerve: *Lord, it's suicide, leave them there.*

We were supposed to cross by the metal bridge, but there were two soldiers on that searching even old women. The consignment lay at the end of the platform, convenient to the ramp, where it had been dropped from the guard's van. There was an officer strutting about near it. I can remember him well, even the Peter the Painter automatic he carried in his holster, which I could see was not strapped. I moved to cross by the tracks. *You know you are not supposed to do that*, he said. *Ah sure, I would break my neck on them steps* — it was a drizzly

sort of a day — *Hauling this load over there*. He paid no more attention to me.

I was met at the station in Cork by "Georgie" Burke, mounted upon a side-car that, as luck would have it, was parked right beside an armoured car. Burke was in the Active Service Unit there. His real name was Sean, but no one in their right senses called themselves Sean at that time. We placed the shrubs carefully in the middle of the side-car, then we sat up on each side, a girl I met on the train along with us. It was driven by a Volunteer called Benson. We crossed the city to a place called Clarke's Bridge, where there was a warehouse, one half of it belonging to Mahony, and the other owned by O'Brien. It was there that we brought them. Nearby was Union Quay Barracks, headquarters of the Auxies. It was to be attacked. My bargain was, that if I brought them, I would be included in the attacking party.

We had decided in Offaly that, as there were men enough out, any men who had volunteered for active service should stay above ground at home. They should have a kit bag, bandolier, ammunition, weapon and spare gear at the ready however, to take the field if required within minutes. There were enough men in the Flying Column or on the run who were already a burden on the country, without encouraging any more. Our local O.C. then was Pat Coreoran. There were not many raids here anyway. As you can see, the house is single storey on the front and two storey at the rear, with a stone spiral staircase connecting them. I remember one time they surrounded the house. I had a Smith & Wesson under my pillow. Taking it from me, my father walked down the yard and stuck it under a box in which we had a clutch of bonhams. There was a big sow beside them, and the military were not likely to investigate that.

#### COOSAN POINT

We were training a small active service unit here in the use of the rifle and grenade. We had the services of a former sergeant major in the British Army, a chap called Touhy. He emigrated to America afterwards. There was another unit based over at Coosan, above Athlone. They were in two houses mainly, Connors and Mulvihills. My brother was married to a girl from there, so I was known in the neighbourhood, and always made welcome. Coosan had for me the great attraction that I could cycle over there without passing through the town. I would often spend a night with them. I was there the night before Larry Maguire's drinking establishment in the town was burned by the Tans. Its owner had a habit of saying; *it's a soft night, the night. Well, said they, Larry will be saying, it's a soft morning to-morrow morning. He will need it all.*



The Tans knew we used Coosan. There was a grand little village there, and one day they came out and they burned seven houses in it as a reprisal. They came by yacht from Athlone — the element of surprise you know — but they were fired on going back, though we did no damage. The water deflected the bullets too high.

#### COMMANDANT TORMEY

He was a powerful man to look at, well over six feet, a fine figure of a man. He had been in the British Army. At seventeen and a half years of age he was a corporal in the trenches. His father was a soldier and his grandfather before him. There was a thousand pounds reward upon his head, dead or alive. Anyway, this night, in Athlone, shooting broke out, and Jim was trapped in Larry Maguire's pub. The Tans set fire to a number of houses as a reprisal. The regular army came then and pushed them back. Meanwhile the fire brigade arrived, though they found that their hoses were being sabotaged by the Tans sticking their bayonets in them. In the hullabaloo, Jim saw his chance. Picking up a case of brandy, he carried it out on the street. *Where are you going?* said an officer. *I am trying to save some of my stock, sir. Let this man through!* and Jim was waved through the cordon. He gave us the whole account back in the dug-out, celebrating it with one of the bottles that he still had with him. A great fellow was Jim. One of his brothers, Lar, an even finer-looking man, was killed in action at Cornafulla, Co. Roscommon, in February, 1921. Jim himself was shot dead in Ballykinlar Camp, Co. Down, only two weeks before that. It was a double tragedy for the family.

Snow fell that May. I can remember well, it took us by surprise; it brought down the canvas of our tent around the pole. I can still see some of the faces then, George Madden, Joseen Kennedy, Sé do Bheatha from Castlepollard . . . .

#### THE TRUCE

I was not one of those who thought we should have gone on fighting. We needed a breathing space and a chance to get armed properly, though some of the younger men around here were eager to go ahead. I was in Cork again when it was announced. Quite a few men from other parts gravitated towards Cork that time, in the hope of getting action with Barry, but they could not be accommodated. Accommodation and local knowledge was the key to everything. Now that the Truce was on, there were now plenty of officers to take charge. You would be surprised the way the ranks swelled. I was out with the brother in Cork for much of that time. I was tremendously impressed

with the spirit of the people. I came back then to a camp in the Blue Ball near here, where we had a good programme of military training going.

I was not at all confused about the Treaty when I read its terms. I could see it fell far short of our objective. But an aura had been created around Collins and they used that to gain support for the Treaty.

#### BALLINALEE

I am not reflecting on McKeon's ability, but there are some who say that he never would have won at Ballinalee that February, 1921, had it not been for the good service he got from an ex-British Sergeant called Connolly. The lorries had come along; a mine was exploded that wasn't entirely successful and the Auxies leaped out. There were deep water cuts in the sides of the road, which gave them good cover. The Volunteers found that they could not dislodge them out if this; besides they were getting short of ammunition. McKeon was not inclined to wait too long, when Connolly said: *Hold on there and I will outflank them.*

He moved around to a position where they had no cover from his fire. He bombed them out of it. They surrendered then. A District Inspector of Police and two Auxies had been killed with more wounded, but Connolly himself died also. He created havoc among them, while McKeon got the credit. That is what is said; I cannot say for certain, as I was not there. (McKeon performed well at this prolonged engagement, known also as the Clonfin ambush.)

#### GEORGE ADAMSON

He was a great fighter. He had been shot through the lungs by the Black and Tans on the canal bank in Athlone in 1921. I knew him well then as we had often stayed with the group, that included Jim Tormey, Sean Hynes, George Madden and the rest, who occupied the dug-out around Coosan. He was a fine soldier; hot-tempered and all that, but he was able to handle men well, including parade formations on the barrack square.

There is a mystery about how he came to be shot that 24th April, 1922. He had joined the Free State Army and was promoted Brigadier. There are some who say that Sean McKeon was jealous of him because, while McKeon was good in an ordinary scrap, he was completely uneducated. Adamson had far more military science. His death led into the Civil War alright, because the Staters used it very effectively for propaganda. *Tan Hero Murdered*, and all that, but whether it was really themselves or our forces who accidentally shot him — because no Republican would set out to slay George Adamson —



we will never know. I could have known the answer to this mystery, had I only asked Sean Hynes. Sean was from Banagher. He brought a car over to Athlone that night, but he is dead now. He was in charge of the Battalion at that time.

#### JOSEPH TORMEY

Talk of Joe Tormey reminds me of his death which took place earlier in February, 1921, at Cornafulla on the Roscommon side, at the hands of armed police. His brother Jim, of Moneen, Moate, had been shot dead in Ballykinlar Camp in January. He became reckless for revenge. *Ten of them, he swore, would be shot for Jim.* This day anyway, he was having his dinner in this house only a field in from the road when a cycle patrol of police passed by. He was seated with the Brigade O.C. McNamara. *Come on lads, said Tormey. They will be back in half-an-hour and we could have a go at them then.* McNamara for some reason did not consider it opportune. *Sit down there, he said, and finish your dinner.* But Tormey could not be dissuaded. He went out and across a field with a rifle. They were coming back. Jumping up on a ditch, he opened fire. They thought there were more there than had appeared, so they hopped off and dropped behind a wall. Tormey kept them pinned down. Unknown to him, however, there were two police who had dropped behind. Hearing the firing, they approached it in a roundabout way, coming up behind Tormey. They could see him standing there alone, on a bank of bracken. Hearing them then, he turned quickly, but in so doing, fell through the rotten whitethorn. Without waiting one of the police raised his rifle and shot him through the nape of the neck. He died instantly. He never bled. They left him there, clearing off at once.

McNamara, George Adamson and some more, alerted by the shooting, came over and found him. He was a big man, so they had to drag him out. They conveyed him to Connors of the bog, on the Leinster side of the Shannon. He was dressed in full uniform, coffined, and a plate put upon the coffin: *Commandant Joseph Tormey, I.R.A., Killed in Action.* He was laid to rest then secretly in Clonmacnoise, but that was not the end of it. The Auxies in Athlone found out, went down and dug up the coffin again a week or so afterwards. His father was called to the barracks, where he found an Auxie officer strutting about, and passing disparaging remarks about murderers in uniform. His father lost his temper at this. *As a soldier, he was entitled to wear a uniform, just as I, his father, wore one in the Boer War, and just as his grandfather wore one in the Crimean War.* That silenced them.



### EVACUATION OF MULLINGAR

The Republicans had evacuated the barracks only to find themselves besieged by Free State troops in the hotel they occupied. I was notified to go there with Tim Campbell and a number of others. We had a reluctant volunteer along with us, a young man who had come hoping to get a job in the new police force. Anyway, we were on the road and half way to Mullingar, when this car came speeding along, all bullet holes, one tyre off, and it hopping on the road. It was our lads, they had evacuated. They had to get out or lose what guns they had. An order was then sent out directing other reinforcements to return to their units. We were, in effect, being stood down.

I was then sent scouting by Jim Keenagh into Athlone. I called to Mulvihills at Coosan, where I learned that the Four Courts had been attacked that morning. A girl came in then with a message. The Free Staters were already on the move, and coming for us. We were about to be raided. I left and drove on, on my motorbike, towards the town. On the outskirts, I see coming at me a Lancia armoured car. An officer jumped out: *Halt, and put up your hands!* I turned the bike towards the town. Instinctively the armoured car moved across to block me, which is what I wanted it to do. What I really had in mind was a side boreen, where I did not expect it could follow. I shot up it like a bullet, while the real bullets clattered all around me. Fortunately they went wide, but it was a sorry machine that brought me back to Clara. There were spokes broken everywhere and the silencer had clattered off when I sent her chasing over the rough stones.

### CIVIL WAR

A few weeks after the start of the Civil War, we got orders in our area not to fire upon the Staters. We were to fire over them. *That's alright, I said. But they never fired over me. So don't be in any two minds about what I will do.* They were trying for a truce, I heard afterwards. So while they got off with a bang, we never got properly started.

We had burned the barracks at Tullamore and retreated from it. Most of the lads, seeing we were not prepared to make a stand, dispersed and went home. There was a local curate here, Fr Smith, who had been a Volunteer, but was now neutral. He was one of the two best priests in this country. The other was a Jesuit, Fr Thompson, from Rahan. His people were said to have been involved in the '98 Rising. I remember he came here to see me before being transferred to somewhere else. He sat here talking over the situation for many hours. *I have missed my dinner*, he said, as he rose to go. We never met again.

The executions came then in October. We were called out for a scrap. I took two lads, Mick McManus from Athlone and Sean Fagan from Leixlip. They had been attached to the Westmeath Battalion, but there was no one there with whom they could link up, so they came here. We were part of a squad that planned to ambush a Stater column coming from Tullamore. We were in this gravel pit, behind a wall, but cut off from the others. McManus had a rifle, while Fagan had a short arm and some grenades. Our job was to stop the military cars getting by. Along came this charabanc, filled with soldiers. I realised that we were not well placed in relation to the other parties. We could not see them and they could not see us. We opened up anyway. The soldier driving was hit and the charabanc headed over the side of the road and they were all thrown out. But the second car of their party got by although my rifle was firing until it was nearly hot. I had 120 rounds fired by now, which was nearly as much as a Lewis gun in the same circumstances. Mick and Sean came to me then. *It is time we moved before they can get reinforcements here. Alright, I said. Go up through Bradley's yard and I will cover you.*

One of the other squad had already ventured out to take their surrender, which was being offered, but at that moment the third vehicle of their party arrived and the fight continued. I had to get out of where I was. I leaped down from this wall, but the drop was far more than I thought. I picked myself up anyway, and commenced to run up the hill. I did not run very far because I was exposed. So I dropped upon one knee, pulling an automatic Webley from my pocket. I fired a few rounds from it, sprang up and reached cover. The fight had been on for two hours now, so it was time to move. Tom Barry always said that Offaly would never be a good guerilla country. *It is too flat and there are too many roads.* Ye could attack coming on to night, and rely upon the cover of darkness if you had to move.

I was finally taken prisoner in March 1923, in a house over at Tully. I had had plenty of escapes up to that, but they were closing in. I remember walking across fields with this lad when I saw Staters approaching. A farm boy, that happened to be in the field made off, and they followed him. *Take off your coat, said I to my companion. When they see you in a shirt, they may take it that it is a fella and a girl who are crossing over.*

After I was arrested at Tully, they brought me to Tullamore and from there to Maryboro Prison. There were about five hundred prisoners there, some of them under sentence of death. We were very bitter; some of our comrades had just been executed there. Could I have got out just then, nothing would ever have got me back while I had a bullet. I was brought then to Tintown, where I remained until June 1924.



We had plenty of time for recrimination if we had wanted it, but there was no point in indulging in it. No one had wanted a civil war, and no one had liked fighting in it when it came. When a clergyman said to me: *Would you not apologise? It might help you to get out.* I said: *The only person I will ever apologise to, will be myself, for having helped in any way to put these people in power.*

#### AFTERMATH

A year or two after being released, and with no job open to me in this country, I emigrated to Birmingham, where I got a job as a test driver in the B.S.A. works. I had good knowledge of cars and bikes, being fully acquainted with the theory of ring clearances, gear ratios, compression ratios and so on. I had studied all that here. But I was reluctant to take up the job, as I knew they had a rule about giving preference to ex-servicemen, and it would be difficult to explain my position. I was able later to walk into Fords of Cork, where I remained for two years. That was around 1929. My brother was Brigade O.C. in Cork still. He asked me to come in and take over from him, but the factory was on short time so I returned here.

I was a spare buckshee officer at the time that Congress was founded. I was present at the Athlone meeting, mainly because I was acquainted with Frank Ryan and had a very high opinion of him. I knew Sean MacBride equally well, he was an intelligent and able man. I always defended him in any of the discussions afterwards. He had some sense of reason; he knew what could be achieved and what could not. I knew his predecessor, Moss Twomey, even better, going back to the Cork days. A solid man and a good speaker.

Later, in the run up to the 1939 campaign in England, Sean Russell came here — it may have been 1937 — accompanied by George Plunkett, Stephen Hayes and a man from Clan na Gael. I remember my brother was present, because he took an instant dislike to Hayes. *You would be safer with a C.I.D. man present,* he remarked afterwards. I preferred Jack Plunkett to George, who was a bit of a bulldozer in his own quiet way. He had some queer ideas about recruiting. I remember there was a meeting called for a hotel in Dublin. The only reason I was invited was because I had a car and could bring others there. We were to meet at Amiens Street Station, and we were each to have a newspaper under the arm. I was there right enough, when up walks George, dressed in the way he always dressed, like a Presbyterian minister, with the black hat and the knee breeches. You could not mistake him. In we got into his car, and what happens but the bloody thing stops right outside Store Street Barracks. A car load of men, all with newspapers, and George Plunkett driving!



I got out to offer advice which he was not keen to accept. Instead he poured this tiny drain of petrol into the carburettor. *Burrup*. . . . it gurgled, but start it would not. So there was nothing for it, but the entire party of men to alight and to start pushing. It was a good opening for our top secret meeting.

It was at that meeting or another convention, that Tom Barry was elected Chief of Staff to succeed MacBride. We wanted Barry because he was an able military man, though my brother used to say that of all the column leaders in Cork, Sean Moylan was the cleverest. His ambush at Clonbannin, in May 1921, was a text book one of its kind(2) I could not agree with Barry's censure of Russell at that convention, because, whatever Sean Russell might have been, he was an honest, straightforward man. I could not agree, however, with the bombing campaign when it came. I felt it should have been held over and used only if Britain took drastic steps against us.

However G.H.Q. ordered it and we had to co-operate. Peter Barnes(3) of Banagher came to see me before he volunteered for active service there. I gave him no encouragement, as I felt he could be, what they call these days, a security risk. He was a good soldier, but a bit of a devil-may-care type. He told several people he intended going, before he went. He spent his last night here with me. *You will be writing to Jimmy Kelly*, I said. *Well, don't mention anything directly. Say nothing; that is the only policy.* I was battalion adjutant, but I had no say in the matter; he had already volunteered.

In 1940, I was interned in Tintown again along with seven hundred others. We had tunnels dug and were ready to push them beyond the camp perimeter in December, when there was a take-over by a new camp council, led by Peadar O'Flaherty. I always considered Peadar was hot-headed. I did not agree with the way the Council had been elected, so I refused to accept any office. Then on December 14th, there was a fire and many of the huts were burned. The Staters poured in and our tunnels were discovered. For days after that, we were confined to a small number of huts where we had no beds and the floors were of concrete. It was impossible to lie down. Frost hung upon the windows. If you possessed a newspaper, you were rich, because you could sit upon it. I was content however to let the row simmer and hope for the best. The Staters had lost their rag, but they would see reason eventually. Sure enough, after two days we were allowed to return to something like normality, in individual huts. But a heavy and visible military presence remained within the camp. Then this evening we were told to go out and collect our rations at the cook-house. I proceeded alone in that direction. I saw Barney Casey pass me going back to the huts. Suddenly firing broke out. It came from a group of Staters armed with forty-fives and they were firing at me. To this day I

do not know why. One of the bullets hit my boot as I lifted my step. I fell forward heavily. From where I lay, I could see a bullet tearing into the back of Casey's coat. The amazing thing is that he continued walking. He was within a few yards of his hut, which he managed to reach, before collapsing inside the doorway. He expired within moments.

The fury had eased now. Gingerly I picked myself up and slipped cautiously behind the shadow of a building. I still did not know about Casey, but I was not taking any more chances.

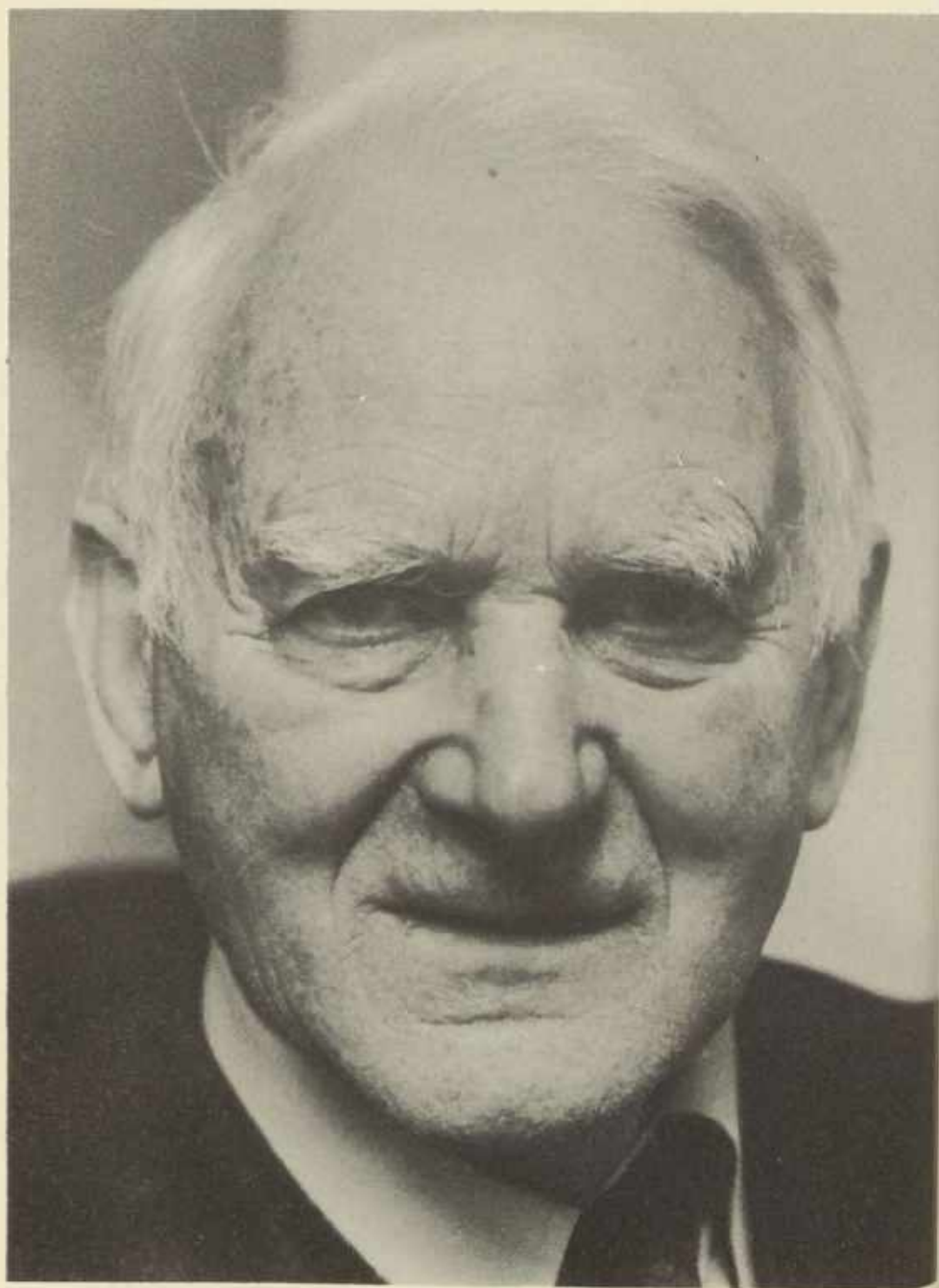
#### REFERENCES

1. *The Weekly Irish Times Rebellion Handbook* lists them as James O'Brennan, Frank Brennan, John Delaney, James Morris, Tom Duggan, Joseph Graham, Peter Bracken, Tom Byrne, Jim Clarke, Henry McNally, Tom Hogan and Joe Rafter.
2. On 3rd March 1921, Sean Moylan's Newmarket Column, assisted by units of Kerry 2 Brigade, after a wait of several days in the ditches along the Mallow/Killarney road, six miles from Kanturk, engaged five British vehicles. They were evenly matched and the English armoured car was able to continue firing. After three hours, with ammunition running low and neighbouring garrisons alerted, the I.R.A. columns retired having killed thirteen, including a major general, and wounding many, at no loss to themselves. See Florence O'Donoghue's *No Other Law*.
3. Moylan continued to distinguish himself in a rip roaring way in the Civil War also, but entry into politics in the thirties, as with Breen, Traynor, Rutledge, Aiken, Killalea and so many others, emasculated him.
3. Peter Barnes and James McCormack of Mullingar were hanged in Winson Green, Birmingham, on February 1st 1940, on charges arising from a fatal explosion at Coventry in August, 1939.



*The home of James Cullinane, Bliantas, Co. Waterford, where the March 1923 meeting was held, De Valera and Frank Aiken slept in a small ground floor room on the left.*





*Tom Cullinane of Bliantas as he is today.*

## Sean Dowling of Dublin

*Surviving Staff Commdt.  
I.R.A.*



Sean Dowling had not taste for military matters; it would be impossible to think of him leading a column into action. He had been the star pupil of St. Enda's and the favourite pupil and protege of Thomas MacDonagh in the English literature faculty at U.C.D. He took his degree in English literature with such distinction that he was offered a lectureship in the college. For some reason however he had decided to study dentistry. Despite the tensions under which we were living, I found constant pleasure in listening to Dowling discoursing on subjects as diverse as Irish place names, Vasari's *Lives of the Painters*, the French impressionists, or his own excellent painting, also English poetry, with particular preference for Browning, some of whose poems he often recited to me. He spoke Irish well and knew the literature too. He had a scholarly knowledge of Irish history, was familiar with the works of George Moore and Walter Pater and was particularly devoted to Robert Louis. He could play a Mozart rondo or a Beethoven bagatelle on the piano. He had a wide repertoire of Irish songs and ballads which he sang in a pleasant tenor voice. He engaged in boxing and fishing; in his time he was lightweight champion of U.C.D. He varied his fishing trips with painting landscapes in oils. In later life, he had two plays produced in the Abbey. He believed Cathleen Ní Houlihan was a Queen among nations, and that we could well do without foreign influence.

C. S. ANDREWS, in *Dublin Made Me*, 1979.

Sean Dowling was born in 1896 at 21 Elmgrove, Cullenswood, Ranelagh on the south side of Dublin. Cullenswood itself was long remembered in the history of the garrison as the scene of a terrifying massacre by the Irish mountain clans on Easter Monday 1209, when 500 of the settlers were slain. By the end of the 19th century however, it was a settled suburb of middle class brick houses with neat front

gardens and a tram service that brought one to Nelson's Pillar or St. Stephen's Green in ten minutes.

Sean's father was an official in the Valuation Office, then, as miraculously still, located in adjoining georgian houses in Ely Place, just off St. Stephens Green. Both parents, father and mother Marcella, were Dowlings, distant cousins, from the same background in Dublin. They were both nationalist, of Fenian stock, with father, James, probably the most outspoken nationally.

Marcella's uncle was an artist of considerable repute. Second last of nine children of Bernard Dowling and Marcella McIvor, who were married in 1813, William Paul was born in 1824. In the eighteen and forties, shortly before the great famine, he had gone to London, as so many Irish artists had done for generations, and while residing there had joined the Davis Confederate Club, a small patriot group of that time. A certain Kennelly, a lawyer, who later figured in the Tichbourne heirs scandal of the seventies, was at that time a member. On taking silk at the bar this gentleman commenced to steer the club in a safe constitutional direction. On putting forward a resolution to this effect, Sean's uncle rose and proposed an amendment that it be considered on the Day of Judgment. His uncle was then invited by the Chartists to join their organisation, led at that time by the Irish landlord Fergus O'Connor, and this he did. The Chartists had been deflected from their modest constitutional aims of seeking the abolition of pocket boroughs, universal suffrage, payment of members, limiting property qualifications for voting, and an annual parliament. At this time, (1848) realising that nothing could be gained in England without the overthrow of the ruling class, the movement, influenced by the turmoil in Europe, had become more radical. A rising was planned for August 16th, 1848, but Sean's uncle, and many others were arrested days previously. He was tried before his companions Cuffey, Fry and Lacy on a charge of treason felony. He was sentenced to life imprisonment, and deported to Van Diemen's Land, now Tasmania. Eight years later he was given his freedom, but although he returned to Ireland on one or two occasions, he decided to remain in Tasmania, dying there in 1878.

#### ST. ENDA'S

As a result naturally of this Nationalist background, commenced Sean, when St. Enda's was started by Padraig Pearse in Cullenswood House on Oakley Road in September 1908, my younger brother Frank was sent there on the first day. He appears in *An Macaomh*, the school magazine, published later at the Hermitage to which St. Enda's transferred in 1910. I remained on with the Christian Brothers at Synge Street, going to St. Enda's when it moved to Rathfarnham. Nobody knows how much this country owes to the Christian Brothers and to Ignatius Rice. They lifted this nation out of the mud.



My father, as a result of his post in the Valuation Office, was able to do a turn for Pearse in 1909 when he contemplated a small extension to the house. This is referred to by Pearse in a letter to his good friend J.T. Dolan of Ardee, writing on the first of February, when he refers to building contractors pressing for settlement of sums that amounted to £300. At this time he had a hundred pupils in the house, and he had just extended study facilities over an old laneway that ran down along one side. These extensions could have resulted in a revision of his valuation with dramatic results upon whatever rates he might pay. My father was able to avoid entering the house in the annual lists for revision, a piece of tax avoidance that was extremely useful to Pearse. As a result, the Pearses, Padraig and Willie, were constant visitors to our home located at Parnell Place, Harold's Cross. As soon as the boys moved from there the following year, the school became known as Scoil Íde, for girls, presided over by a Mrs. Bloomer and with Maggie Cotter from Kerry as one of the teachers. It flourishes still to this day but absorbed into the much enlarged Scoil Bhride, originally founded by Louise Gavan Duffy, and transferred twenty years ago to this site. (although the good old house itself is being let moulder)

My younger brother Frank commenced attending in 1908, and I went there in 1909. With some other pupils we both frequently wore the green Irish kilt. This was the Irish Ireland period, passing from the period of Celtic revivalism in art, literature, drama and architecture, to the real thing: the need for political independence. No one at that time passed any remarks when boys wore kilts. Others at the school whom I recall were, a Dublin boy named Bloom, a Belgian boy who edited our paper, Frank Burke who was later head, Brian Joyce, Joe Sweeney, Eamonn Bulfin and Desmond Murphy.

Frank had a prominent part in the pageant of that year, Mac Gníomhartha Chíchulainn, historic pageants of the heroic days being a favourite with Pearse. I appeared in the following year in *Da Deargas Hostel*. On the brake which brought us each morning to Rathfarnham - Dublin had a great tram service at that time, but traffic was otherwise light - were the MacNeills, Brendan O'Shea and another lad, at whose shop on Rathgar Road it stopped, along with Frank and myself. Tod Andrews joined us at Terenure, but he did not remain long at the school. It is terrible nonsense of him to say (I) that he was bullied or looked down upon because of his Dublin accent, (Tod having been born off Gardiner Street in the heart of the town). I told him so only the other day, Tod was well able to give as good as he got. Later on he was in E. Company of the Fourth Battalion, and one day on manoeuvres my brothers collided accidentally with him. Tod did not treat it as an accident; he gave him a ferocious belting.

St. Enda's was an excellent school for somebody who had rich parents, though none of us were rich. To prepare you for the battle

of life however, it was not a good school. Pearse set out his aims and objects for the school in *An Macaomh*, but he was a bit of a rogue you know. Have you read the diary of Dick Humphreys(2) while he was there; an awfully nice fellow was Dick. Thinking of him reminds me of 1909, the last term in Cullenswood before the move in September 1910 to the Hermitage(3). There was a teacher there, a Mr. Doody; I think he was going on for the priesthood. He spoke with a gentle voice but he was not very gentle. Physical punishment was not allowed, but Mr. Doody had his private cane, and he knew how to use it. One day Dick Humphreys, who was a very good student, had missed something. Doody called him out. *Hold out your hand*. Doody raised the cane and made a swipe at him, but Dick, terrified, had withdrawn his hand. Doody was furious. *Hold out your hand*, he commanded again. The cane was again raised, and once again at the last moment Dick pulled back his hand. Well, do you know, he made a swipe at him with the cane across the face, and, Christ, I have never seen anything like the black eye; it was lacerated; a bloody welt. Pearse came in a terrible state, and that was the end of the cane. Doody did not accompany us to Rathfarnham.

I loved St. Enda's and everything about it. Lord God, if only we could have schools like it. I got an exhibition there and that flattered me greatly. Thomas Mac Donagh was a marvellous teacher and a gentle soul. He lived opposite in the gate lodge of Mount Eden, residence of George Houston, whose son, Cyril, attended.

He shall not hear the bittern cry  
In the loud sky where he is lain  
Nor voices of the sweeter birds  
Above the singing of the rain.

I was a friend of his until Easter Week when he was executed; his brother John too, and all the Mac Donaghs.

One of my teachers at St. Enda's was Joseph Campbell, the northern poet.

I will go with my father a-ploughing  
To the green fields by the sea,  
And the rooks and the crows and the seagulls  
Will come flocking after me.  
I will sing to the patient horses  
With the lark in the white air,  
And my father will sing the plough song,  
That blesses the cleaving share.

All of his poems were like that, and so was the man; a man for the out of doors and for nature. His definition of an Orangeman; clay marred in the mixing; God's image gone wrong. But they were filled with faith, hope and charity, he would add; faith, yes; in 1690; hope, well none. And charity? That the devil may sometime lay the Pope by the heels.

#### 1916: ROE'S DISTILLERY

We were expecting the Rising for weeks, and were eagerly looked forward to it. I was with my brother Frank in Roe's Distillery off Marrowbone Lane. It was held only for a few days because we were completely surrounded. We saw nothing, I will tell you what happened the first day. The Sunday, you remember, it had been put off. Then on the Monday we got word but I was somewhere else, and had to follow down on a bicycle. I tied the rifle on the crossbar, yes, just like that. We were to meet at Emerald Square; that was the word we got, but when I got there, they were gone. There were children all around staring. *They've gone that way mister*; they cried: *and they had spears, big long ones*. And so they had, because the officers carried pikes, Shades of '98! I had been appointed N.C.O. to the Battalion staff, so I tried to hasten forward. I overtook Captain Douglas Ffrench-Mullen who was at the back. *Bicycles to the rere*, he commanded: *I am supposed to report to the staff*, I said, but he would not listen to me; I had to stay where I was. He was in an awful state of excitement naturally enough. Cathal Brugha addressed us then. Eamonn Ceannt was not there; perhaps he had already gone into the Union. But Brugha told us the Germans had landed in the south and were advancing on Dublin. I wonder did he really believe that? C. Company then went into the Distillery while the rest of the Battalion entered the Union. We could shout across to them. Then the soldiers from Richmond Barracks, having been warned that the G.P.O. was taken, came along. There was an advance guard and an officer and two men who thought it was all a joke. We had them in our sights, but they got away because some fellow in the Union fired prematurely and they took cover. No more came, we never saw another soul. Instead they proceeded to invest us by taking over the surrounding houses from which they commenced firing. One of the volunteers, Sean Owens of D. Company, being caught in the open on high ground on the opposite side of the road was wounded; woulded badly. A first aid man, taking his life in his hands, crept out to him from the Union. He could not assist him, nor could he move him. We called encouragement to him, but we could do nothing for him. The poor devil, he just lay there groaning; he did not die until hours later.

There was firing all around. We just lay there taking an odd pot shot while conserving our ammunition. The timber floors of the place were



covered with fermenting grain. There was no whiskey as far as I could see; not that we would have been interested. Capt. Tom McCarthy was in charge with Lieutenant Egan, second in command. The other officer, a book-binder by trade, - I cannot recall his name just now - was a very good fellow afterwards.

We were at home when the surrender came. We had left Roe's Distillery as there was nothing we could do. They were firing from above us and into us. They held Guinness's and all around us. It was a wise decision(4). As a result of that Frank and myself escaped internment. We just disappeared out of sight to surface again when the Volunteers were reorganised.

There was a young priest then, a Father Costello, that we had got to know. I presented his portrait by Hilda Van Stockum, a very good likeness, to the National Gallery some years ago; he went into Dublin Castle to give the Volunteers there absolution. You know, like the people at large, there were some priests who would not touch them, but he was curate in Michael and Johns on the Liffey, and was chaplain to the Brigade. Eamonn Dore, a Limerick man from Glin, in Dublin, told me this story. He was courier for the Military Council, and had come to be bodyguard to Sean MacDermott during Easter Week. Like many other volunteers, he went to Confession on the Saturday; that was before the countermand appeared from Mr. Bastard Eoin MacNeill - you know he was the man who handed the English the Border on a plate in 1924 - and when Eamonn heard on Monday that Pearse was in the G.P.O., he decided he would join him. But again he thought he had better go to Confession. Kneeling before the priest, he was asked: *how long is it since your last Confession? Three days. What on earth has you back? I am thinking of joining Padraig Pearse and MacDonagh in the G.P.O. You're what? I can't give you absolution if that is what you are going to do. Away with you.* He had to rise and go out. When, however, he got to the G.P.O. he quickly forgot Confession. Father Costello moved among the garrisons, as far as he was able, and there was the brave Fr. Aloysius of Church Street who placed the Father Matthew Hall at their disposal as a hospital for the Four Courts garrison.

There were plenty of fine priests, notably Albert and Dominic the Capuchins, who surfaced afterwards; but on the subject of religion, I cannot forget that it was the Roman Catholic Church which, in the person of Nicholas Breakspear, Adrian IV, the only English pope, in 1156, first directed the Plantagenet Henry II to invade this country. And that papal bull has never been withdrawn(5).

Then back again I rode to the glen,  
And my heart with grief was sore,  
For I'd parted then with gallant men,  
That I never shall see more.

But to and fro in my dreams I go,  
 And I kneel and pray for you,  
 For slavery fled, oh rebel dead,  
 When you fell in the foggy dew.

There was an Irish history symposium here some thirty years ago at which an Irish Redemptorist, Fr. Frederick Jones, read a paper which he had put together among the three miles of shelving within the archives of the Vatican. He had come across something relating to the fifteen and nineties when Hugh O'Neill of Tyrone was at war – The Nine Years War which ended in Kinsale – with Elizabeth. Clement VIII was Pope, and Hugh was desperate for his assistance. He sent a petition signed by three bishops, which I suppose was all he could muster. He realised that as long as Adrian's bull existed you could not unite the Irish people; the Church would be against it. The Pope did nothing about it(6). I looked forward to a précis of the paper when it would appear in the society's journal, but bedad when it appeared, there was no précis of Fr. Jones' paper. He had just been made head of the novitiate at Orwell Road, Rathgar, so I wrote to him there; could he give me the name of the three bishops who sought the abrogation from Rome. He never replied, nor could I find a report of it in the National Library.

I am reminded of the great Father Michael O'Flanagan. *The trouble with me*, he used to say; *I was twenty four years an Irishman before I was made a priest*. He was witty, you know; very witty. After 1918 Dr. Swift MacNeill lamented the demise of the Irish Party. It had been thrown away like a sucked orange. I wonder what else you're supposed to do with a sucked orange, said O'Flanagan. And speaking of religion, *the Irish*, he used to say, *have too much in their knees and not enough in their backbone*.

Nicholas Breakspear had been appointed in 1151. From humble beginnings he became extremely haughty, waging war, first against the Sicilians, then with the Lombards against the Emperor Frederick I. The friar, Arnold of Brescia, a zealous preacher for twenty years, appeared in Rome where he denounced abuses in the Church. Adrian had him siezed, burned as a heretic, and his ashes thrown into the Tiber. A year before the papal bull, Henry II, to curry favour no doubt, appointed Thomas Becket as his Chancellor. One year after the Normans came to Bannow, Henry, tiring of him, had him murdered; so the following winter the king came to Ireland spent many months in Dublin while the storm blew over. He was welcomed here by Laurence O'Toole who, with Malachi and Oliver Plunkett, are the only three Irish saints canonised by Rome; you can see why.

My mind is blank on the events following the conscription crisis, the so called German Plot, and so on. To an extent social and intellectual life was again resumed, in a Dublin that, apart from many ruins,

resumed its old daily tempo. Strolling in the Green, or along Grafton Street; coffee in Roberts; mixing with the students in Earlsfort Terrace, where at that time I was studying for an arts degree. It was an intimate town then, and one could do a lot on a few shillings. Tod Andrews does me the honour of saying, that it was about then that I commenced to exercise an influence on his intellectual development. Well, I suppose I did, because I had always been an avid reader, and from my own background I knew something about painting and the arts. To wind things up, I remember an Armistice Day 1918 with Fergus Kelly, Jack Plunkett, and a few more we removed the Union Jack from our university, and later we went along Grafton Street taunting the G. men.

We had manoeuvres and training; I don't know if Soloheadbeg on 21st January 1919 surprised me; I don't think it did. After all we had tasted the fight already in Dublin, and I suppose I wanted more of it. Breen and Treacy had ambushed a quarry cart in order to remove the gelignite, and in doing so they had shot dead two local policemen, who, I hasten to add, were armed. I knew two sisters Maureen and Tessie Power from Donohill nearby(7). They were returning in a pony and trap to catch a train to bring them back to university. They saw the two policemen dead on the road. But their driver did not utter a word; nor did he say anything: he just drove on. I heard no criticism of Soloheadbeg from our lads in Dublin. Soloheadbeg was the start of the armed struggle and we all considered Treacy a great man.

I was now adjutant of the battalion while the commandant was a man named Kelly, a doctor. We were ordered this day to go down to Virginia Road, in north Meath. It was now into 1920, and there had been outbreaks of agrarian trouble in many places. We went there to supervise the trial of two local men, both ex British soldiers who had been involved. They had gone to frighten a neighbour, and their idea seemed to be that they would shoot his horses. Begod, one shot the horse, and in his excitement the other shot the man; he shot him dead. And his name? It was Mark Clinton. I was defending this man at the Sinn Fein court. I tried to make out it was an accident, that he was a bad shot, but he indignantly denied it. I did my best for the poor wretch, but he was sentenced to death. There were about seven others engaged in this agrarian trouble, and they were given sentences that would make your hair stand on end. They were banished from the country.

What kind of men were they? They were questioned by this bloody fool Kelly; *you're a farmer? Yes sir. How many acres have you? Four acres. Have you any children? I have six.* And this bloody bastard gave them sentences of three to fifteen years banishment. And they had to go; Oh yes, they had. They went to England. Of course they came back after the Truce.



Our vice commandant Peadar O Broin was clerk of the court. He was walking up and down during these proceedings. *I think it is a bloody shame. I said afterwards, to hand out such sentences to those unfortunate men. Oh, said Kelly, we have to show these people that the I.R.A. are determined to deal out even handed justice.* Peadar was still walking up and down. *Aye, said he, justice, and heaps of it(8).*

I was not of course present for the performance of these sentences, but I well remember that there were four of us in the car returning to Dublin, and as it entered Dunboyne, driven by a chap called Hyland, we saw this cordon of soldiers across the road ahead of us. Four men together was noteworthy enough, but we also had enough documents dealing with the damned case to hang us. However the cordon opened as we approached and we cruised through. A group of officers standing at the other end of the village, seeing this, also let us through. We fanned ourselves with relief.

FRANK DOWLING: ERNIE O'MALLEY

Tod Andrews said to my brother Frank that he was the reincarnation of Cuchullan, and do you know it is true, he was a noble character. At the commencement of the Tan struggle, he was a lieutenant in C. Company of the Fourth Battalion covering the area from Rathmines to Inchicore. He transferred to G. Company where Johnny MacCurtain was captain. I had been MacCurtain's best man. However he was kidnapped, like our S.A.S. these days, and taken over the border which had just been established. I had been doing a B.A. degree at Earlsfort Terrace while engaging in the usual hit and run ambush activity against the Tans. I was involved too on the intelligence side with Dan Bryan, F. X Coughlan and Tommy Daly of the battalion who happened to work in a particularly sensitive location, the billiard room of the Kildare Street Club.

Very little of that stands out for me now. One thing I do recall however was the part we played in helping the escape of Ernie O'Malley, Simon Donnelly and Frank Teeling, from Kilmainham Jail in February 1921. Teeling had been wounded in the secret service operations that preceeded Bloody Sunday on November 1920, and was certain to hang. O'Malley, arrested under the name of Stewart, was sure to swing also once his real identity was discovered. Paddy Moran from County Galway could have escaped, but decided that they had not much against him and remained. They hanged him later, as a result of which the song *Shawl of Galway Grey* which he had been heard singing in his cell the night before, was banned by the authorities. The whole story of the escape was told from the inside by O'Malley in *Another Man's Wound*.

There was curfew throughout much of Ireland so we were not supposed to be about after dark. The Vice Commdt. Christy Byrne and myself, stayed nearby at Inchicore with the three sisters, Flood, at

Bluebell, from which it was only a short walk to the jail. We had a third man from F. Company acting as a road sweeper while keeping an eye out.

We were there a full week like that every morning expecting that that was the time they might arrive. There was a gate down the side to the west of the prison; it is still there, and it was through that they were expected to come. A bolt cutters had already been sent inside. This Sunday night anyway we were at a battalion council meeting when we got word, come quick because they are going to make the effort, tonight. When we got to the lane however, to our consternation, we found three soldiers and four women, prostitutes of course. We held them up although we had no guns; they came later. One soldier made a bolt for it, but I took him down with a rugby tackle. We then threw the rope ladder we had, with a weight attached to it, over. It landed on a tin roof and made a rattle that should have wakened everybody. Nothing happened. The waiting men inside could not reach the ladder caught where it was, and they had to return to their cells. Bitterly disappointed, we hauled it back again.

What were we to do with the seven unwelcome prisoners? We brought our charges then to the fields where the British war memorial is now, and I can remember one of the soldiers saying to me: *is this the end? You are safer here than we are*, I said. *Could you give me a pill; I feel faint*, then he said. Bobbie Burns, one of our volunteers, produced his revolver. *I have six pills here, would you like one? You are bloody funny*, said he but he shut up. We lodged them in a hovel of a house, leaving an armed volunteer to watch over them. The next evening, unknown to us, O'Malley, Teeling and Donnelly, with the assistance of a friendly soldier, got the bolts cut, were out and away. I think they got on a tram. As soon as we heard that, the seven prisoners were released.

Ernie you know, was a terrible chancer when it came to writing. He describes in his book frogs as grunting(9). Did you ever hear a frog grunting? He describes owls as hooting. They don't hoot, they screech. Of course he made it into a lyrical book; nice to read; a piece of literature. He had tons of courage.

Frank was in action on the eve of Bloody Sunday in November 1920. They called at this house occupied by Lieut. Col. Browne, intending to shoot him. But begod, Browne got out the back and away. They were left only with his crying wife in bed and a wall photograph of the King. Mickey Sweeney put a bullet through it.

Our area, the fourth, had all the military barracks in Dublin except Beggar's Bush, the Royal and what is now McKee. It was decided to take direct action against the military, and Armistice Day 1920 was selected. Myself and four or five others were at Christchurch Place where a ceremony was to take place. Similar assaults were planned at



other parade points, but it was called off at the last minute. Luckily, for we would have all been shot. The Tommies formed up, but they must have known we were hostile because they were looking across and were grinning at us. The police were largely driven off the streets by that time, as they are now in parts of the North. We wanted to get them too, so we organised a public meeting, the intention being to polish off the police who were expected to be there in numbers. But they did not come; perhaps they were tipped off.

We were not flagging in the run up to the Truce; we were still going strong. Sure, what if you were flagging; you had to keep at it. You are never that stretched that you can't still land a punch to an enemy. I knew a couple of days before the 11th of July that there might be a Truce. I had an order from headquarters signed by Mulcahy, as Chief of Staff, only days before, to do so and so; and when it was called off, like a bloody fool, I tore it up. There were orders made out by Mulcahy and Macready conditional upon a Truce being agreed. (My God, what a change came over that man; he was to remark later that St. Enda's should have been shut down the day Pearse was shot.) It was the British asked for the Truce; not the I.R.A. They probably asked for it because the I.R.A. started activities in London, and the British government, like Mrs. Thatcher today, would not care a damn what happened in Belfast or Dublin or anywhere else, but they did not want things to happen in London.

#### MICHAEL COLLINS AND BRUGHA

In the Truce period I ran into Kevin O'Higgins, assistant to the Minister for Local Government, whom I knew well. He asked me to take a job in the office which had been in Lincoln Place but was now moved to Harcourt Street, on the opposite side of number six. The head there was Tom Macardle, a great character who had been sacked by the British for not taking the oath. At first there was only one official in the office, a man called Kavanagh, who had been out in Easter Week. He had no experience of local government, and when all the local councils made their returns to this address, he simply piled them into presses. Macardle, single handed, sorted them out. There were four of us on the staff, Merrigan, Moore, Meegan and myself. The five of us did the entire work of the Department of Local Government for the whole of Ireland except for the Unionists' areas of the Six Counties. Imagine! While over at the Custom House there were eighty British civil servants drawing salaries for doing nothing. I remained in the Department of Local Government until the commencement of the Civil War.

I now saw Collins frequently. On one occasion it was in his suite in the Gresham Hotel prior to his departure on the delegation to London. I had been approached by a man from County Cork who was desirous of an appointment on behalf of another individual. The Irish



disease of jobbery was just commencing. I suppose that I too must have made an appointment to see Collins, but when I arrived the suite was empty. After a few moments, Collins, accompanied by Dermot O'Hegarty, later secretary to the delegation and to the Provisional Government, and Emmet Dalton came in. It was evident that he had been drinking, none the less, they ordered more. I gave Collins my message. *That fellow is a bad one*, he shouted across to me, *I know nothing about him at all*, I said. *But I tell you*, he shouted louder, *that fellow is a bad one. Who are you shouting at*, I said, I know damn all about him and I don't care a damn. He stood up then, turned around, walked across to a table, and lifting a glass said, *have a drink Sean*, but he already had a little too much and I was not joining him. He was fine with his drinking butties, but he could be quite a boor too. I knew Maureen Power, who was high in the movement. She was at a meeting around Parnell Square attended by Sean Treacy shortly before he was shot by the Tans in November 1920 in Talbot Street. Collins was going full pelt with the language. Treacy jumped up; *how dare you go on like that in front of a lady*. It stopped him; he recoiled at once and apologised to both of them. A great fellow Treacy. Was it not amazing that there was a man — Horgan, was it, — on the spot there with a camera. It caught everything, and it caught Treacy wounding Francis Christian and shooting dead the Englishman Price.

Con Murphy, who was later a Sinn Féin T.D., had been in the British civil service here and was sacked for refusing to take an oath of loyalty, as was a brother of my own. He sent a subscription of twenty pounds for the arms fund to Cathal Brugha as Minister for Defence and received a receipt. Con's daughter Kathleen, was shortly to marry Paul Farrell the actor — he was a medical doctor also — I was friendly with them; used often play bridge at their home at 52 Marlborough Road, before they moved to 50 Upper Rathmines Road. On one such evening I was shown this receipt from Cathal Brugha on printed paper with the heading *Saorstát Éireann*, which to me seemed like a distinct watering down of *Poblacht na h-Eireann*. Unless I am greatly mistaken, you can say that even then they were preparing to go easy on the Republic; even then they were preparing to make concessions to the English. A year before that, I learned that with the passing of the Government of Ireland Act in December 1920, the British were engaged in moving taxation and other papers that pertained to the Six Counties to Belfast. I wanted it stopped; I did not see why they should be allowed to set up the apparatus of partition in Belfast. I called on Seamus Dwyer, the Sinn Féin T.D., in our area. *Not to worry*, said he, but nothing was done about it. Later in the Civil War, the same Seamus Dwyer was shot dead behind the counter of his shop by the I.R.A. He was behind something called the citizens defence force whose purpose was to keep a watch upon Republicans.

Cathal Brugha hated Collins like poison. It was pathological. I was in the Tramway Office in O'Connell Street early in July 1922, facing Free State attacks. He was there; he was also in a building occupied by a Protestant book store, and he was in Hamman and Granville Hotels, all of them being linked. It was understandable why he hated him. Brugha was Minister for Defence, but he never did anything. He was not able, yet he was never on the run. He continued to work as manager for Lalors candle factory on Ormond Quay. Collins on the other hand was Minister for Finance, was in charge of Dail Loan, was Director of Intelligence, and was virtual Minister for Defence. He was so energetic that he had usurped many of Brugha's functions; he sure was hated by him. That goes back to the time previously when Brugha had made allegations against Collins in connection with monies received by him. There was in effect an inquiry with De Valera in the chair. Collins came, he brought books and receipts and was able to account for all of it except maybe a hundred pounds. It was held in the Union Hall in Gardiner Place. Austin Stack told me the story afterwards in Waterford. He found it was very embarrassing. Collins was so upset by the accusation that he openly wept. *Now, said De Valera, it is quite clear that these charges are groundless.* Brugha arose without a word and left the room. Stack rushed after him; *come in, shake hands;* But Brugha angrily turned from him; *You'll find him out yet,* he spat, as he stamped out.

A few days before the outbreak of the Civil War, I went into the Four Courts and informed Oscar Traynor that I was resigning as commdt. of the Fourth Battalion as I did not like how things were going. It seemed to me that they were all jockeying for political power. The very day the war broke out, Cathal Brugha called me. This will show you how bad he was; how his hatred was centred upon Collins. Actually, I don't think De Valera shed many tears either when he was shot only miles from where he himself was in West Cork. After all Collins was the one political opponent that he feared. Anyway, my resignation was accepted at the Four Courts, but it did not rest there. Cathal called me at my home; I was then living in Rathmines. *What are you going to do; you were present and took part in the occupation of the Four Courts in April. Are you going to walk out on them now that they are attacked?* I assured him I would not; *I will call a meeting of the battalion staff,* I said. He was delighted, especially as he still regarded himself as a member, having been vice Commandant in Easter Week. I told him where we would hold the meeting, in Tom Crean's of the Tongue fields, and he came there. There was frantic discussion as to what we should do. Remember the British had not left entirely. They were still going around in armoured cars and lorries. *What are we to do about them, said one? Why the same as you always did, said I: shoot at them. Oh no, said Cathal, that will not do at all; it must be made*



*perfectly clear that our enemies are the Free State, the pro Treaty party.* Earlier on April 9th, he had opposed the Republican Army occupying the posts which they had taken. He went off then; and I turned to the others; *do not mind a word he says*, I told them; *shoot any British you see.* But we got no such chance; once the Civil War started, they could sit back. Tod Andrews and others had come to me for advice in the weeks proceeding. Any fool could see that we were on a collision course. But I was an iconoclast; I had no great reverence or trust in our leadership; still less in the Provisional Government of Mr. Griffith. Anyway, I was very undecided myself, so I was not much use to them. I was still in that mood when, against my struggling conscience, I found myself behind the barrel of a gun in Upper O'Connell Street.

In the following days, Brugha was most of the time with me in the Tramway Office, and we had long conversations. The paranoia continued; *I told Collins*, he said to me one day, *that he was a dirty coward.* Now anyone that would say that about Collins was mad. I saw him a few times at the Brigade meetings during the Tan struggle and I thought he had not noticed me; yet, one day during the Truce, I was walking along Richmond Hill in Rathmines. Collins came along on the opposite side of the road, a paper in his hand on which he appeared to be making notes. He looked up, saw me and came over and engaged me in general conversation, and could I do some turn for him, which of course, I agreed to. That was the thing about him then; he always seemed to be everywhere.

#### FIRES OF WAR

We had been keyed up and waiting for an attack and yet we could not believe they would attack us. I knew we should have struck earlier and struck first, but we did not. Why the hell is it when it comes to the crunch, Republicans go soft? On the morning of the shelling, Frank and Doyle and Tommy Morrissey, set out from our house in Harold's Cross. They had left their guns behind, not that they would have made any difference in the circumstances. They were stopped at a Free state post. *Where are you going? To our work in Guinness. Get into that car and we'll take you there.* They were brought to James Street; they entered, hanging their coats on a rack, and proceeded towards a workplace. The officer following them retired at this point, whereupon they immediately retrieved their coats and came out again. In Cork Street they ran into another cordon. *Where are you going? Into Shortts*, (a local building firm). Unfortunately it was closed. Knocking at the house next door, they were admitted. To the girl opening the front door Frank whispered, *say you know us.* They were passing through the hall her brother, leaning over the banisters, called out, *where are they going?* The game was up. Frank and Morrissey were grabbed by the posse which had followed them in. He was among the last to be let go when



the final release came in 1924. Frank never got striking a blow in the Civil War. He later married Sheila Bowen, became a manager of the Metropole and died in 1973. Meanwhile, as I have related, Brugha came to me and persuaded me to come to O'Connell Street.

Tod Andrews in his book tells how he returned from County Cavan(10) on Friday the last day of June, forty eight hours after the Four Courts attack. The most noticeable thing when he arrived at Phibsboro Church was the absence of trams, which, combined with constant rifle and machine gun fire, interspersed occasionally with shrapnel shells thudding from the quays(11), conveyed an eerie atmosphere of war. At Phibsboro he ran into Bobbie Bondfield of the Fourth Battalion who had made his way roundabout from Terenure to the north side, intending to reach the Brigade H.Q., now located on the east side of O'Connell Street. Despite Free State cordons, which in the first days of the war were remarkably inefficient, they had no trouble reaching the Hamman Hotel where he met Sean Dowling, O.C. of the Fourth, who had twenty or thirty volunteers with him.

Earlier the Four Courts had been hammered by artillery after a six hour ultimatum from 4.0 a.m. on Wednesday, 28th June. The big explosion, which destroyed the records of 700 years(12) occurred on Friday and it was followed within hours by surrender. Meanwhile the east side of O'Connell Street from Greg's Lane (now Cathal Brugha Street) to the little street flanking the Pro-Cathedral known as Cathedral Street, was fortified by the Dublin Brigade, thus imprisoning them and their leaders within it. (The lower half of O'Connell Street had already been destroyed in 1916; now much of the upper half was to be destroyed; being fine georgian, they were hopelessly fragile.) The main positions from Cathal Brugha Street down to Cathedral Street were, Mackey's Seeds, followed by the Gresham Hotel occupying four houses, since rebuilt on the same site, then the Crown Hotel, then the Granville Hotel occupying three houses, then two houses acting as a temporary G.P.O., then the Hamman Hotel and Turkish Baths, then the fine Drogheda House, the right half of which had been rebuilt as the office of the Tramway company, an imposing stone fronted exercise in Scottish baronial (13) on the corner of Cathedral Street.

These posts were attacked on the Saturday. On Monday, of the seventy men and the thirty girls, all were evacuated except for Brugha with seventeen men and three girls, Linda Kearns, Cathleen Barry and Mary MacSwiney — three of the most indomitable that the movement ever had. By Tuesday all of the buildings, except the Granville, were on fire and all were closely surrounded. On Wednesday evening the last post surrendered and Brugha emerged from the Granville. In the eight days of the fighting sixty-four persons were killed, only a few of them Free State, and in present money values two hundred millions

of damage was done to buildings.

Sean Dowling, Tod Andrews and upwards of twenty others occupied the Tramway Office, under the shadow of Nelson's Pillar, where their targets were the Ballast Office on Aston Quay and Westmorland Street corner, and some of the ruins occupied by the Free State snipers in Lower O'Connell Street. It would be hard to say what their thoughts at this juncture really were. The rupture with the men on the other side, although these were now massively reinforced by red cheeked recruits from the country, eager to take the ten bob a week jobs in the new army, had opened so slowly that most of them could not look upon them as foe. *At the dictation of our hereditary enemy*, as Liam Lynch said; *at the bidding of the English, Irishmen are today shooting down . . . brother Irishmen. The ambiguous position of the Irish Republican Army*, Churchill had written to Collins five days before, *can no longer be ignored by the British Government*. From a roof top in Merrion Street, Griffith, the rotten apple of the Provisional coalition, watched the glow, while the taciturn Cosgrave skulked inside. The foundations of prosperous family dynasties lasting three generations, were being laid.

Andrews was given a rifle and a Thompson. He was in a top window of the office with the ticket returns of tram conductors going back twenty years stacked up in front of him. He saw it was a futile exercise and was amazed to find later that so many of the leadership had cooped themselves into the block. Bobby Bondfield was shooting away from a lower window, while belts of fire came back from an armoured car in Henry Street. Sean Dowling glum and pessimistic, was in charge of the position. On Sunday, Andrews passed through holes in the buildings to the Gresham Hotel. He found Art O'Connor, later President of Sinn Fein, De Valera, Robert Barton, Countess Markievicz, Austin Stack, and Oscar Traynor, Brigade Commander, with Brugha there. All except Brugha seemed at a loss as to what they should do, or even where they should be. Brugha was at no loss; he spat venom on the Staters. In the lane behind, Charlie O'Malley, brother of Ernie, had just been killed by them. The following day, Monday, in darkness, the leadership sensibly dispersed, making their way safely through cordons, De Valera reaching Clonmel, then Ballyvourney, and eventually edging back to Dublin over the winter period, before finally stealing south for the ceasefire meeting of March in the Comeragh country of Waterford.

When it came to the final moment on that Wednesday inside the Granville, Brugha could have surrendered or he could have escaped. But he choose to die with a weapon in his hand, and to die fighting. Despite any criticism that may be levelled at him, his bravery and dedication was limitless. They did not want to kill him; they shot him in the leg, but it passed through the femoral artery. Sean Dowling,

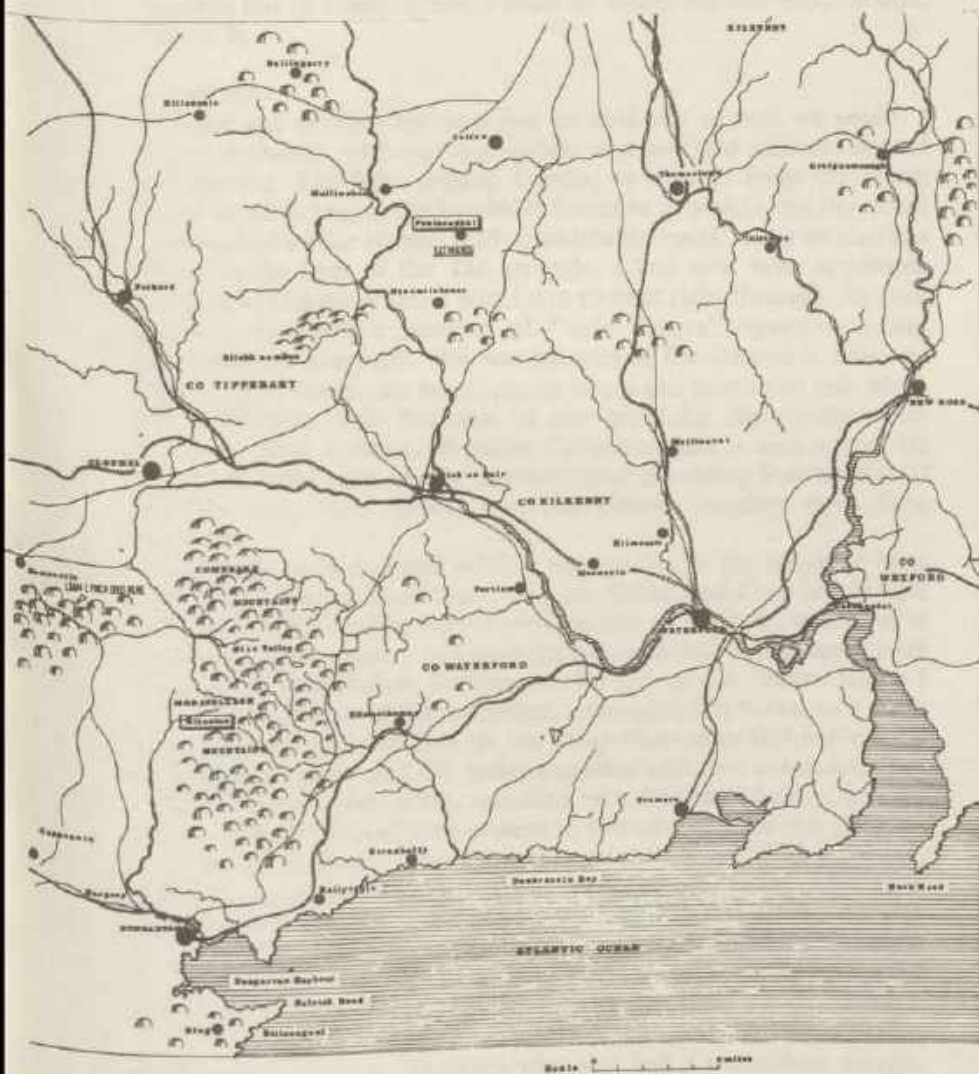


*John Wall's house at Knockanaffrin, Nier Valley, to which the party adjourned from Bliantas, March 1923.*





*Defenders of "Katmandu" in April 1923: Kitty Cashin (Mrs. Gardiner), Ned Gardiner and Bill Treacy today.*



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after his escape from O'Connell Street on Wednesday evening, reported this to Frank Aiken; *I knew he would die that way*, he said, *I knew it*.

#### ATTRITION

There was nothing left now but to hold out as best we could. I stayed in Dublin, with no fixed abode, and no fixed address, hunted and harried. The fight around Dublin, as distinct from the South where Republicans, or the Executive forces as they were initially called — Irregulars by the enemy, held considerable tracts, was a hit and run affair on the lines of the Tan struggle. I had now been appointed Director of Organisation, a post I was to hold right through. As such I had access into a number of "safe houses" spanning from Ballsbridge to Kimmage. One was Moores of Beechwood Avenue, or Powers of 19 Pembroke Road; places where one might run into Monsignor Browne, Bob Brennan of our publicity department, Tod Andrews, Sean Lemass, Brendan Considine and a host more. Of course, if I had been caught anytime after the Army Powers Bill of October 15th, took effect, I would almost certainly have been executed.

One night in that month while I was staying in the house of Miss Langan at Terenure Road West, we were raided, and I had barely time to pull on a few clothes before dashing out to the rear, which, as it bordered a deep quarry, was inadequately guarded. I clambered over a couple of walls before arriving on the top of one, below which I could see a dog kennel. I am finished, I thought, if it barks, so I made my way to the front instead. A few stray shots were still being fired in the search for me as I lay under a garden wall, but eventually they withdrew. Some years after, speaking to a Captain Murray, he told me that Dan Bryan had been present in Portobello when this raid was being planned. Bryan, who knew they might kill me if they got me, offered to accompany them but was shrugged off. Many years after at a picture exhibition, I met Bryan again and recounted the story to him. *Very interesting*, he said, *but it is not true?* Did Muray imagine it, or was Bryan, now high in military intelligence, covering up for the fact that he might be privy to the activities of their murder gangs?

Dr. Con Murphy, whom I have mentioned already, had a son Fergus Murphy of the Fourth Battalion who also had a miraculous escape. Arrested one night in September by Free State troops along with Volunteer Sean McEvoy of Leeson Park, in the vicinity of Jacobs, they were stuck up against the wall of the factory. The soldiers raised their rifles and all fired at once, but only at poor McEvoy. In the confusion Murphy escaped.

Then there was Bobbie Bondfield, the only son of his family, from Moyne Road, who was in the Tramway Office with us. He got away



from that, was active in Dublin, was arrested and imprisoned then, but escaped. With the war still continuing he went to the shop of Seamus Dwyer, T.D. in Terenure, and shot him dead behind the counter. If he did, he had good reason because Dwyer was carrying on undercover work through a group called the Citizens Protection Association. But poor Bondfield was run to earth, and this time he was not spared. He was a dental student, and he had to get in his attendance at the hospital in Lincoln Place. Foolishly, around March 1923, he resumed there again. Cosgrave with his bodyguard was visiting Westland Row church on Holy Thursday when they ran into him.

Sometime later he was found around the Tongue fields in Clondalkin on the last day but one of March with eighteen bullet wounds.

It may be asked, after the revulsion arising from the June and July onslaught, with hundreds already dead, and the country settled down to a seedy guerrilla war of attrition — that could not possibly be won by the Republicans: the Staters knew their safe houses, and held all the trumps — should not somebody have brought them together in the national government which only four months before under Collins and De Valera seemed close to becoming a reality? This middle period of peace negotiations — negotiations that were entirely unofficial on both sides — is covered personally and in detail by Florence O'Donoghue in *No Other Law*.<sup>(14)</sup> Briefly the personalities on both sides (apart from churchmen who adopted a neutral standpoint), were, on the Free State side, Emmet Dalton, Tom Ennis, Charlie Russell; on the republican side, Liam Deasy, Ernie O'Malley and Tom Barry. Among the public representatives and churchmen were, T. P. Dowdall, Fr. Tom Duggan, Frank Daly, Professor O'Rahilly, Mons. O'Hagan, Rector of the Irish College in Rome, Fr. Wall, brother of Commdt. Sean Wall of Bruff, killed in action against the Tans. Apart from Dalton, Ennis and Russell and Mons. O'Hagan, all of these were Cork men, or Munster men, motivated by a strong desire to end the conflict. In its closing weeks, Dr. Harty, Archbishop of Cashel, and Canon Ryan of Thurles, made discreet and persistent efforts for peace. However, to quote O'Donoghue: *the Provisional Government had decided against ending the conflict in any other way than through the absolute defeat or destruction of the forces in arms against them*. The fatuity of this is that it presupposes the death of all desire for independence among the Irish people, or at least that third of them who make the running, but this was the policy of the founders of the Free State, Griffith, Mulcahy, Fitzgerald, O'Higgins, Blythe, MacNeill, some of whose descendants are still among the kingmakers.

Lynch was not a peacemaker, would not authorise overtures, and in ten months of the war scarcely listened to any proposal. From being close to neutral in the weeks prior to June 28th; indeed for a while he

was proposed as deputy to Eoin O'Duffy, he was reincarnated as the leader of an army(15) that would not give in, and in February 1923, only weeks before his own death, could issue from Field General H.Q. in Dublin, a proclamation which commenced: *whereas the Junta called the Government of the Irish Free State . . .* Liam Lynch, following the adoption of guerrilla tactics by the Republican forces in August, remained in the County Cork area, but in October decided to move headquarters to Dublin. Like most of the leaders of this time, he was obliged to go by pony trap, cycle or walk most of the way. Occasionally a car lift might be risked. Early in November he arrived at Tower House, Santry, the home of Mr. and Mrs. Michael Fitzgerald, and Nora, Kit and Nan Cassidy. It was a large house with, inevitably, a secret room. G.H.Q. staff meetings were held there, and although it was raided, O'Donoghue says, due to the speedy effort of Nan Cassidy in giving all the apartments an innocent appearance, no one was ever found.

#### LAST WEEKS

Liam Lynch left Tower House on the 13th of February for the south. The war was going badly, with the Free State Army, now numbering over fifty thousand, mopping up the few remaining columns or rounding up the last individuals where columns no longer existed. After an epic journey(16) Lynch reached Ballyvourney and Cúl Aodha in the heart of west Cork, one of the few remaining strongholds.

At a meeting in James Moynihan's house on 26th February, the officers present left him in no doubt that for them further resistance was useless.(17) They pressed for a full meeting of the Army Executive which alone could decide.

On 23rd March, after venues had been changed because of harassment a number of times, the executive came together in James Cullinane's, Bliantas, in the valley of the Monavullagh mountains, ten miles north of Dungarvan. Present were Lynch, Frank Aiken, Tom Derrig, Austin Stack, Tom Barry, Sean MacSwiney, Humphery Murphy, Bill Quirke, Sean Hyde and myself. De Valera attended although not a member of the Executive. They are all gone now you can see except myself. The account of this four day meeting and the final one on April 20th, at Poulacappal — a hamlet that lies south of the road between Callan and Mullinahone in east Tipperary — are covered in *No Other Law* and by Pax Ó Faoláin in this book. Lynch, of course, was not present at the final meeting,(18) as he had been killed not far away on 10th of April.

My recollection of what was said at the two meetings, both of which were in session with thousands of enemy troops surrounding us, is blurred and anyway tends to merge. I remember that the decision to



continue to fight was a very close one — six to five — at the first meeting, but at the second one the decision "to terminate armed resistance to the Free State forces" (in the absence of Lynch) was almost unanimous. Of course if the Free State of that time had any sense, they would have given us terms, they had many opportunities, but they sought a complete surrender. And that they never got; with the result that day, twenty five per cent of the people, the Republicans, do not vote, and do not consider themselves a part of this state.

De Valera was scarcely allowed to speak at the first meeting; but he did succeed in putting forward certain political proposals which later formed the basis of Fianna Fail policy. In some respects the earlier meeting was dominated by Lynch. Even then, beaten to the ropes, he would not face the inevitable. In fact, in one conversation he had with me, not alone was he planning for mountain cannon to arrive, but he was also formulating the sort of uniform we would wear when we won. The decision to cease fire and dump arms became effective on April 30th. I was back in Dublin, having walked most of the way. I had escaped arrest, although there was over ten thousand in, and I was to continue to do so.

The army organisation was not to be allowed to disintegrate; I was appointed Director, and as such operated from a house at 70 Adelaide Road, now Kilronan House, the last house beside a rarely used church (since demolished) near to what used to be Harcourt Street Station. It is the house referred to by Tom Maguire in an early edition of this book, except that he misplaces it into nearby Earlsfort Terrace. Mention of Tom Maguire and his adventures in the rat infested dugout in Rockingham, reminds me that I also paid a brief visit there in the weeks following the cease fire. I met Liam Pilkington there, who was in charge of the I.R.A. in the West. In some areas, especially around Leitrim under Pat O'Doherty, in West Mayo under John Joe Philbin and around Wicklow under Tom Heavey and Plunkett Boyle, it continued to be an effective guerrilla force until the end. Pilkington had been hopeful earlier of making a stand, as was Lynch, though I must say, I was not; it was only a matter of time until the Staters concentrated their forces. In fact Lynch, as we have seen at the meeting of the Executive on 23rd March at Bliantas, laid great store, not alone on the hope of Mick Cremin purchasing mountain cannon on the continent — a mission that came to naught — but also upon a western resurgence under Pilkington. Signs on it, at Poulacappal on 20th April, following Lynch's death, Pilkington was appointed to the Army Council. He was a forestry man, with a great knowledge of trees and the creatures of nature. He was very pious too, and many years after entered a monastic order. When I called this time, June or July 1923, they were still in the Rockingham dugout, though this one was



a cave entered from Lough Key.<sup>(19)</sup> Anyway, this day they were lucky enough to commandeer an excellent ham, but, for whatever reason Liam refused to have anything to do with it. He was too scrupulous although he said nothing. He just remarked that he had matters to attend to, got into a boat, and rowed off to Ballyfarnon side. He was caught there shortly after; arrested by the Staters and interned.

To turn however to our Harcourt Road headquarters. It's location suited us perfectly. It was a big end of terrace over basement house with at least three entrances and four exits, very well placed for getting on trains to the south county or Wexford or Waterford. The street outside was dark and quiet; remember there were gas lamps then in Dublin. It was reached in one direction from under the tunnel like railway bridge that entered the station, while from the other direction, with the University nearby, it was not unusual for young men to be about the neighbourhood; and some of us were students or graduates.

The house of course had a secret room constructed in the Tan times in the basement by the Donnybrook builder Batt O'Connor. And, as in the case of Sighle, <sup>(20)</sup> we often wondered, now that O'Connor was on the Free State side, though not an activist, whether he would give us away. But he did not. The entire executive met and stayed there frequently, including Tom Barry and De Valera. It was owned by Miss Maud O'Day, and I'll have to say she was not a very clean person where food was concerned. I remember one day at dinner, everyone calls it lunch now, we were seated down to soup, when Frank Kerlin, who was from nearly Camden Street, found a knob which on closer examination he recognised as some of Maud's hair. Sweeping it off her comb and stuffing it into the range, she evidently had cast it into our soup instead. Frank, being of a mischievous turn of mind and not wanting to miss his soup, swapped his plate for that of Mick Carolan who had not sat down, Carolan, who was from Belfast, and was our Director of Intelligence, came in and wolfed up the soup, hair and all. While sitting back awaiting the next course, someone unkindly let him into the secret. It was not a nice thing to do. Poor Carolan paled, rose from the table and went out quickly, getting sick outside. Eamonn Martin, who with the Countess had helped build Fianna, was often there too. Not in any way antireligious, yet he used describe himself as a non-practising atheist. The late Father Albert took all of this seriously and spent much time trying to bring him back.

#### MY RETURN TO CIVIL LIFE

By 1924, I could see that the Free State had taken on the permanency of a colonial dominion. We would be unable to budge it. At the same time, I had to earn a living; the organisation being without funds it was a choice between that and pauperism. So many of us were being sheltered by friends as poor as ourselves that I did not want that.

I had escaped arrest completely; I had qualified as a dentist in 1920 before the real ructions started, so I decided I must move out and chance for a living, like so many others, abroad. I went to London first, and from there to Winchester of all places. But it did not appeal to me and after a while I sailed from Liverpool to New York where I had a brother. I also had an aunt in Boston. I found, soon after my arrival, that to practise as a dentist, you had to be registered. I filled the necessary form, accompanied by a small fee, and sent it to the State Capital at Albany. I got no reply. I sent in another letter enclosing the details, and again, did not receive a reply. All this time I was without funds, being afraid to look for a job. So I travelled to the Capital at Albany where, going to a particular room, I addressed a man through a grille. *Why had I not been called? Well, the way it is, said he, you will be put on the register when you do something about this*, making a payment motion with his fingers. I was incensed; *Keep your cursed register*, I shouted, departing in fury. I found that I had no trouble being employed as a dentist. If you had the skill you could get a job anywhere.

I remained no more than six months in New York, heading home again in the latter end of 1924. I started practising straight away from a hall floor flat in Lower Baggot Street — not the house, No. 68, that I finally lived in near the canal bridge — but one owned by Paddy Gleeson of Upper O'Connell Street, the Irish tweed shop, Earraí Gaelhealacha Amháin. I did not marry until 1930, and when I did, we had a family of eight, but the house in Baggot Street was big, and it had a fine garden.

I was not bothered by the authorities here; everything was over, and I did not myself resume in the organisation. I was on the periphery and there were times, especially later in the emergency years when, I suppose, I was watched. Anyway so many of the active Republicans were my patients that I knew nearly everything that went on. Although now involved in cultural and literary pursuits, my advice was frequently sought. Down the years I gave it as impartially and as knowledgeably as I could, although with my increasing years, I was obviously becoming more divorced from the standpoint of the younger men, many of them dead now, who sought it. One thing, I never got into was this condemnation game; "violence" and "methods that were not used in our day".

One of my last and proudest efforts was my involvement in the middle fifties in the effort to restore Kilmainham Jail as a national monument. We had the assistance of a number of former Republican prisoners of the nineteen forties, like Paddy Brown, Charlie Gorman, Paddy Kelly, all Dubliners, and Paddy Early, Joe Collins of Dunmanway, Harry White of Belfast, all under the redoubtable Lorcan Leonard; and we also had welcome support in materials and money

from some of the Fianna Fail business houses around the city. I was chairman for seventeen years; it was officially opened in 1960; and I retired only because I would stand no nonsense from anyone, especially staff or trustees. I must say I did not agree with the appearance and layout inside, much too antiseptic, too much cleaning done, too many delicate mementos of long ago lost. And all those glass cases with dull newspaper cuttings . . . What would a modern approach using audio visual techniques do for visitors! One of the trustees I refer to was Dan Stephenson the well known auctioneer and brother of the architect; he teamed up with this other man. We had in the Parnell Room, which is a nice drawing room, not a prison cell, two small pictures of Parnell's daughters presented by a nephew of his brother. Going into the room one day, I saw that one had disappeared. *It had worm in the frame*, bleated this person, *and I sent it to the Dawson Gallery to have it treated*. A likely excuse I thought, since it is easy to treat infestation. Going over to Smith I confronted him; *it is not here*, said he; *it is not in my gallery. Find it*, I said, *or pay a thousand pounds*. He paid the money without a murmur. Of course he had already despatched Parnell's daughter to London or New York. A slovenly fellow. Another article donated to us that disappeared was a grand piano. Stephenson told the committee that he had sold it. It was surplus, he said, and there and then he offered us twentyfive pounds. Another article that went was a porter's chair; one of those high backed antiques with wings. That was sold to Butlers for sixty pounds. Remembering what was taken from St. Enda's prior to its restoration in the sixties — a valuable bookcase went to France, while the Board of Works stored furniture and documents in a rat infested store in the Liberties — I must say that I am chary about leaving things to museums whether public or private. There are too many dealer sharks in Ireland, where there is a total lack of control over the few treasures we have left.(21)

I am at heart a Communist. The Russians do not want war; why should they when so many of the world's nations will go communist anyway? As for the Catholic Church; well, remember Pope Adrian IV and the Bull that was never lifted. Us Republicans were excommunicated in 1922, and that was never lifted either.

#### REFERENCES

- 1 *Dublin Made Me*, by C. S. Andrews, Mercier Press.
- 2 See Sighle Bean Uí Dhonnchadha.
- 3 Pearse had the Hermitage rented only, at £300 per annum having to spend close upon £10,000 putting it in order as a school. There were severe restrictions placed upon its use by the owners, the Woodbyrne Estate, represented by the solicitors T. F. O'Connell & Sons.



4 The Sinn Féin Rebellion Handbook of the *Irish Times* refers to this as follows: "A party of rebels in Messrs Roe's malting stores at Mount Brown gave trouble. On Wednesday they were driven out by heavy fire but in the evening made their way along the banks of the River Camac, with the object of getting towards the open country. Their progress however, was barred by firing parties judiciously posted, and some of them were killed, while others were rounded up and captured. There was unfortunately some casualties among civilians. Two children were shot in the vicinity of Dolphin's Barn."

5 The permission, *Laudabiliter*, was given to invade Ireland on condition that every family thereafter contributed a penny to the papal chair, hence Peter's pence. In his submission, Henry promised: *to enlarge the borders of the Church, set bounds to the progress of wickedness, reform evil manners, plant virtue and increase the Christian religion.* They are still at it.

6 This does not stand up. In 1592 the Primate McGauran was in Spain trying to drum up support through the Catholic League. He was later to fall on the Maghera in Connaught, as did many bishops and hundreds of priests from Heber MacMahon, Bishop of Clogher, slain by the Cromwellian Coote, in 1653, to Dean Bryan McGurk.

7 The Power sisters became well known in Republican circles then and in the gloomy aftermath of the Civil War. Of Maureen, Tod Andrews in his memoir had this to say: the principal place for our meetings was a flat in 19 Pembroke Road occupied by Maureen Power. She was a secondary school teacher in her mid-twenties. A Tipperary woman she was a close friend of Monsignor Browne, who was a regular visitor. Monsignor was a polymath and scholar of great distinction. He was regarded as one of the brightest lights of Maynooth. Maureen was an exceptionally beautiful woman having the complexion of a colleen idealised in so many coloured illustrations of Irish life. Unlike many of the women associated with the Movement, who effected to despise current fashions, she always dressed with care and actually used some make up which was a rare practice among Republican women. The net result to my inexperienced eye was very agreeable, especially as Maureen was as intelligent as she was beautiful.

8 In his book *Politics and War in Meath 1913-1923*, Oliver Coogan gives the details of this case. On the 10th of May at Cormeen, Moynalty, a young man Mark Clinton, was shot dead while ploughing his uncle's land. Clinton himself was a volunteer but there was a dispute over the land. Two horses were first shot, and then the ploughman. A month later, the I.R.A. arrested about a dozen men, some of whom were ex British soldiers. The ringleader turned out to be William Gordon, an ex soldier and a Presbyterian, from Balleboro, arrested six weeks later in a pub in Navan. Those still held were tried at Dunboyne. Gordon was sentenced to death, but another trial was ordered. According to Sean Dowling, John (later Hanger of the Free State Military Tribunal) Joyce, Kelly, and a third man were the judges, while Seamus O'Higgins of Trim was prosecutor. Seamus Cogan, a volunteer officer, who had been prisoner's counsel on the first occasion, had been killed in an affray with Tans, and was replaced with Sean Dowling. Gordon was again condemned to death, executed at Castlefarm, Dunboyne, and his body disposed of in a local quarry. Seven others were sentenced to terms of expulsion as already noted.

9 *On Another Man's Wound* (1936), *The Singing Flame* (1978), *Raids and Rallies* (1982). O'Malley spent much of the thirties and forties travelling again the scenes of his activities and taking notes from survivors. At his home in Mespil Road, he built up a considerable volume of well collated papers, little of which has been published apart from *The Singing Flame* and *Raids and Rallies* posthumously (he died in 1957) by Frances-Mary Blake.

He had three children with Helen Hooker. She took two to the U.S. in the late forties leaving him broken hearted.

10 *Dublin Made Me*. He also got away wounded from O'Connell Street to the Mater Hospital, playing a full part, before his capture in Araglin, in March.

11 The Provisional Government represented mainly by Emmet Dalton, Tony

Lawlor, (both ex British service) and Eoin O'Duffy, sought high explosive shells from Macready at Marlborough, now McKee, Barracks. They also asked for gas grenades but these were not given.

12 It may have been caused by Republican mines but more probably by the creeping fires started by the Free State bombardment reaching the dumps.

13 Originally built in the late 19th century for a Scottish insurance company.

14 Joe McGrath, a member of the Free State cabinet, and a former member of the Fourth Battalion in Dublin, made an effort for a localised truce in that area, but it came to nothing. Recounted in *Dublin Made Me*. There were many such localised truce efforts; in effect, offers for surrender.

15 In the final weeks I.R.A. strength stood at 8,000, Free State Army at 50,000, plus gardai.

16 Recounted in detail in *No Other Law*.

17 As O'Donoghue expresses it: with two exceptions — Cork No. 5 led by Ted O'Sullivan, and Kerry No. 2, led by John Joe Rice — they were of the opinion that there was no longer any prospect of military victory. On the other hand willingness to continue the struggle was expressed by all.

18 Having failed to secure any terms, the decision to dump arms was taken only on the 14th May and became effective on May 24th, 1923 in the famous message by De Valera, himself still on the run, which commenced: *Soldiers of the Republic, Legion of the Rearguard. The Republic can no longer be defended successfully by your arms . . . Do not let sorrow overwhelm you . . . Seven years of effort have exhausted our people . . . May God guard every one of you and give to our country in all times of need sons who will love her as dearly and devotedly as you*. This was the culmination of a critical meeting in Co. Waterford (attended by De Valera) in March, and a second one in South Tipperary in April.

#### FIRST MEETING: 23rd MARCH-26th INCLUSIVE: NIER VALLEY

The first two days and nights of this meeting took place in the substantial farmhouse of James Cullinane of Blintias in the heart of the Monavullagh Mountains facing down a long valley ten miles north of Dungarvan. All around is good nationalist country. Tom Cullinane remembers well this meeting, which took place in the now modernised room directly behind his big kitchen fire. They burned coal and timber at that time, he says, as the landlord, Chanley of Salterbridge, Kilbree, whose estate covered the mountain, would not allow the game to be disturbed by turf cutting. Off this room are two small bedrooms, in one of which Aiken and De Valera slept in the double bed together. The remainder of the party, watched by local volunteers under Sean O'Meara of 7th Battalion, Waterford Brigade, Mick Mansfield and John Boyle, also of the Waterford Brigade (these and many more fled to Canada after the cease fire), were disposed in the nearby houses, Wally Walls, Paddy Fraher and Mick Cullinane; and in nearby Glenanane with the Powers and the Morrisseys. Farms, being more self-contained in those days, could provide the basic food required, bacon, spuds and home made bread without arousing suspicion among local shopkeepers. They sat around a circular table in the drawing room. Breen had a machine gun mounted in the yard. Although the house had not been raided, and was not raided on this occasion either, they departed hurriedly when Free State troops were observed at the creamery of Kilbrien two miles below the house. Tom recalls that Austin Stack left his pipe behind. His wife Kitty, although not present at that time, reminded him of the young Miss Ormonde — now Mrs. Hourigan — who arrived the first evening and immediately sought a private room, calling for a scissors. Whatever for? To one of the ladies she confided: *its the despatch, I have it sewn into my knickers*. Irish was still spoken in the area, and James and his wife could converse in it. Tom Cullinane saw them depart after dusk and recalls that the President was upon a saddled horse. It was bitterly cold, with frost on the hills.

They headed north five miles over the mountain, and down to Lyre at the eastern end



of the Nire or Nier Valley, again strong nationalist country. The remaining two days and nights were spent at a meeting at John Wall's of Knockanafriinn. This humble cottage — now known as the Republican cottage, or *Tig na Siochána* — is up a boreen two miles from Nier chapel. It is a three roomed cottage, furnished in a simple fashion, with out buildings flanking it at one side, its blank rear wall to the boreen. The parlour, backing upon the open turf fire of the kitchen, was the conference room, furnished today with a circular table and five chairs. From outside one can enjoy the whole majestic sweep of the Comeraghs and the wooded valley of the Nier. No one there today however remembers the events, though not far away in the adjacent valley of Glanore, running east from the Nier, is Perry Wall's substantial farmhouse in which his great nephew resides. It was here, and just below at Lyre, that the leaders and the volunteers watching over them rested for the remaining days before departing and returning to their units.

Three views had been tossed about; fight on, which was Liam Lynch's view; negotiate with the Free State authorities (only they would not negotiate); end the war, but dump arms. It proved impossible to reconcile the divergent views. In the hope that De Valera might, by some miracle, bring off a worthwhile move, the conference broke up, arranging to meet again in two weeks, on April 10th the day, as it so happened, that Lynch, the Commander in Chief, was killed on the Knockmenlown mountains nearby. This had the effect of postponing the final conference for a further ten days.

#### SECOND MEETING: 20th APRIL-21st, POULACAPPAI

Liam Lynch was dead. De Valera remained in Dublin. There were other changes due to arrests and shoot outs. Those attending (these are principal names; there were local officers and volunteers close by) were: Liam Pilkington of Sligo, Sean Hyde of Cork, Frank Aiken of Armagh, Bill Quirke of Tipperary, Tom Barry of West Cork, Tom Ruane of Galway, Tom O'Sullivan of Wexford, Sean MacSwiney of Cork City, Tom Crofts of Cork, P. J. Rutledge of Mayo, Jack O'Meara of Tipperary and Sean Dowling of Dublin.

Lynch's dogged resistance to quitting had its effect in the prolonged length of the first meeting, just as his absence at Poulacappel made for a short one. Aiken had distinguished himself in South Armagh in the war against the R.I.C. and the Auxies; he performed brilliantly when he recaptured Dundalk from the Staters the previous August; he was close, very close as it can be seen, to De Valera. It was a gesture therefore on Barry's part to propose him now to replace Lynch as Chief of Staff. It was a gesture too by the southerners to appoint a northerner, but in so doing they were moving the army away from the intransigence of Lynch towards the political channel already envisaged by De Valera. (Later in 1925 Aiken hoped to lead the I.R.A. into the Fianna Fail party — still to be formed — and was only prevented, by being ousted as Chief of Staff at an Army Convention in the Queen's Hotel, Dalkey, in November 1925 when Andy Cooney was made Chief of Staff on a programme of action, followed in 1926 by Moss Twomey.)

The hide out at Poulacappel was an extraordinary one, the further end of a simple thatched cowbyre 30 feet long, with stone walls and a corrugated roof had been extended to create a small room, entered from inside the byre, through a tiny iron door, concealed by a tethered animal, a tiny door that swung closed under its own weight. Inside this small space, hardly thirteen feet by six, were bed boards in two tiers, with on one side, a hinged table. Overhead again in a cramped space under the thatch four men, maybe, might sleep. As many as fourteen all told could crowd in. The byre which had contained three cows, now had a jennet tethered in it; a jennet being the sort of animal likely to discourage intruders. *The devil would ate ye*, says Bill Treacy. Its roof and gable was thatched by Larry Madden, still alive in England. It was the brainchild of Jim Bryan, who died in 1977, and Ned Gardiner, Bill Treacy, Pat Egan and Jim Cashin, all local volunteers. Someone called it "Katmandu" and the name stuck to the present day (although it is no longer there, its material having been used for other pur-



poses during World War Two). It sheltered at one time or another during the Civil War practically every leader, including De Valera and Lynch. *We heard this night that De Valera was coming, says Bill Treacy, and bedad hadn't Pat Egan, drowned wet and with the clothes sticking to him to get out of his bunk to accommodate him. Dev wasn't aware of course.* The hideout defied all efforts to locate it, efforts made by the Staters in the knowledge that it existed somewhere in the neighbourhood. It is nationalist country, a land of small holdings and little houses; not grouped like a village, yet not widely separated either. Situated west of the road from Callan to Clonmel, Katmandu itself was two miles along a by road, then one mile down a rutted lane, past the small Treacy farmhouse, and on a hundred yards into a damp field.

Bill Treacy and Ned Gardiner, both of whom are alive and thriving near the spot, can recall the critical meeting as well as most of the events that led up to it. Mick Whelan was the caterer for those billeted with him. As he and his brother Johnny were bachelors, it was rough and ready. They lived in a thatched cottage with clay floor in the yard backing upon Katmandu. They were characters in their own way, Johnnie effecting to be simple. *We found yer dump, said a raiding party one day. Begob if ye did, said Johnny, it must be one of yer own.* On another occasion, Tans raked over heaps of soil and rocks. *I say sor, said Johnnie to the officer, there's plenty more of those heaps at the back.*

The lucky ones however stayed at Cashin's, across the field, at Minogue's, Gardiner's, Luttrell's or O'Gorman's. Egan's, a substantial house, had the son Jim, killed by a Stater party. *I was talking to him, said Bill, a few minutes before. Where are the rest of the lads, said he; I will go down to my own house for a bite to eat. He was shot without warning coming out. Ah, broke in Mrs. Gardiner (Kitty Cashin) at this point, weren't there men in every generation who knew they would fall, but went out anyway.* Mrs. Treacy (they use the Irish O'Treasaigh frequently) washed for and fed Liam Lynch during an earlier stay. Bill spoke to him in the yard on the morning of his departure, six days before his death. Lynch, seemingly confident, confided to him where he was going. Bill Quirke he remembers too; *an awful joker of a fella; do ye know, it being cold, didn't he feck the top coat of Fr. Kerrigan the P.P. in Callan.* Many of the party, including "the big tough man" Aiken, and Hyde came to Poulacappal after the March meeting in the Nier. They were away from it therefore only three weeks when they returned for the April 20th and 21st, conference. All present with one exception supported a resolution authorising the Republican government to make peace with the Free State authorities on the following basis:

1. That the sovereignty of the Irish Nation and the integrity of its territory are inalienable and,
2. That any instrument purporting to the contrary is, to the extent of its violation of the above principle, null and void.

The Army Council members: Pilkington, Barry, Hyde, Aiken — then returned to Dublin, and to a meeting between them and the government under President De Valera, (accompanied by P. J. Rutledge, M. P. Colivet, and Donal O'Callaghan), held on the night of 26th and 27th April. It was decided that armed resistance to the Free State forces should be terminated. Orders were immediately given that, while remaining on the defensive, all offensive action would cease on April 30th.

De Valera commenced now to negotiate from Dublin a basis for Republican participation in a government without an Oath. This proved impossible. Meanwhile pressure against the I.R.A. guerrillas throughout the country increased. It was clear that Republicans must unilaterally terminate — if they could — all actions, even ones of a defensive nature. Accordingly three and a half weeks later, on May 24th, came the order from Aiken to "dump arms" and from De Valera, his Legion of the Rearguard message. It was the ringing salute that inspired Jack O'Sheehan's fine ballad:

Crimson the roadside, the prison walls decayed  
 Trumpet the story of the gallant fight they made,  
 Weary, outnumbered, undaunted, unafraid.  
 True Gaels, soldiers, of the Rearguard.

Shell shattered fortress and shot scarred barricade  
 Proof of their valour, go sleep in peace ye brave,  
 Comrades tread lightly, you're near a hero's grave  
 There sleeps a soldier of the Rearguard.

Four miles south of Poulacappal is Carrigmoclear (Nine Mile House) the scene of the incident on July 22nd, 1798 when the Yeos and British Army under General Myers scattered the peasantry, led by James Meagher of Carrigmoclear: "a few stragglers having pikes in their hands were immediately executed". Tradition has it that Thomas Neil of the Grand Inn (still there, and a delightful place now run by Mrs. Coady) revealed to William Despard of Killaghy Castle (now occupied by the Sherwoods) that the United Irishmen had a beacon on Carrigmoclear four miles east of Sliabh na mBan. To confuse the peasants, Despard lit the beacon three nights before the appointed time, meanwhile arranging for the yeos and army to ambush the peasants, thus giving rise to Micheál Ó Longáin's sad lament: *Is oth liom féinig bualadh an lae úd*, a lament incidentally that used to be so well sung by the late Brendan Behan.

Michael Hogan, shot by Tans in Croke Park on Sunday 21st, November 1920, was from Carrigmoclear. A stone on the church pillar there commemorates him, while five miles away is Mullinahone, home of Charles J. Kickham. As we say, great nationalist territory.

Bill Treacy made a model of Katmandu which he presented some years ago to the local museum in Tipperary town.

19 One of Ireland's most storied lakes where the Boyle River and Shannon come together, Carraig Mhic Dhiarmada on the island directly out from Rockingham was the seat of The Mac Dermot until the 17th century. The *Annals of Loch Cé*, were compiled there, the *Book of Duignan's* and the *Annals of Boyle*.

20 See under *Sighle Bean Uí Dhonnchadha*.

21 An article in *Irish Times* of Dublin 19th 1985, describes the dangerously run down condition of the Kilmainham Jail national monument. The remnant then in control have since handed it over to the state.

## Commandant Tom Heavey

*Adjutant No. 1 Brigade,  
4th Western Division I.R.A.*

*Related to Michael MacEvilly*



My family came from Enniscorthy, the barony of Scarawalsh, Co Wexford, and I was born there on 2nd July 1904. The earliest recollections I have are of the grass covered slopes of Vinegar Hill and my father's quiet voice as he pointed out the Duffry Gate and other storied places where yeomen and rebels fought in 1798. My mother — Dora Hickey, came from Killane. All her life she was emphatically anti-British and anti-ascendancy. She was only a generation or two removed from the Rebellion. It was from her I first heard Swift's famous dictum, *burn everything English except their coal*. She heard at first hand of the depredations of the North Cork Militia, the Ancient Britons, and the soldiery under General Lake.

At that time my father, Pat, was a brewer in Lett's brewery in Enniscorthy. Its manager — Charles O'Farrell — was another great influence on my early life. He was to have been my godfather but the Administrator would not have him as he was a member of the Fenian Brotherhood. He had been, I think, a member of the Supreme Council of the I.R.B. and had travelled extensively on the Continent in the course of his Fenian activities. He spoke French fluently, and I often listened enraptured to his tales of strange cities with their beautiful churches and galleries. My mother rather disapproved of him; probably she was jealous of his influence over me. She was later thought to write of him as a *splendid figure — tall and dignified and as honest as the sun*. He died, I think in 1915. Robert Brennan described him to me in 1957 as *an unrepentant Fenian*. His grave in Corrig is marked by a symbolical broken column, which I believe will be completed when Ireland regains her freedom.

In 1912 the family moved to Westport where my father had got a similar job in Livingston's brewery. Westport, without a revered Fenian warrior, seemed tame to me. My parents, however, loved the area and I quickly grew to love it as well. It was around this time my



father introduced me to the various small journals such as *The Spark* which were described by the British as seditious. He also introduced me to the *Diary of Wolfe Tone* and also to Mitchell's *Jail Journal*. Anything published outside the country was forbidden until my father had seen it.

#### MAJOR JOHN MACBRIDE

At this time we lived at the Quay Hill, a mile out from the town in the direction of the harbour. It was a poor town then with the usual number of ascendancy families who had great influence in political and business life there. John MacBride's father, Patrick, had a ship chandlers on the Quay. He had been the captain owner of a merchant schooner which used to trade along the west coast. He was a native of the Glens of Antrim, and in the late 1850's married Honoria Gill from the islands and settled in Westport. The Gills, who had deep roots in the area, are still there. In the 1860's there was a cholera outbreak, and while giving aid to the community of Irish Christian Brothers he caught the fever and died at the age of 35 on 13th November 1868. John MacBride was born six months previously on the 7th May 1868 in Westport. In his early teens he witnessed the struggle of the National Land League (founded in Castlebar on the 16th August 1879) in its efforts to break the grip of landlordism. About this time he went to serve his apprenticeship in the drapery store of John Fitzgibbon in Castlerea, Co. Roscommon. (I know I am supposed to be describing myself, but MacBride was such a significant figure in our area that I have to tell you about him.) Even at that time he was active in organising the I.R.B. Then in 1892, he left for Dublin where he became involved in the Young Ireland League and the Celtic Literary Society. These societies, consisting of those who sided with Parnell, helped to keep the Separatist ideal alive. But three years later he emigrated to South Africa in order to escape police attention. Arthur Griffith related in the *United Irishman* of the 25th November 1899 of how MacBride attended a meeting in Johannesburg attended by over 500 Irishmen, none of whom he knew. He listened to the platform party heaping praises on the Empire. MacBride sprang to the platform and said: *if you want the Empire of the gibbet and the pitchcap, of the famine graves and the coffin ships, of the battering ram and the convict cell, why, these gentlemen of birth and wealth will show you how to serve it; but if you be for Ireland — Tone's Ireland, Emmet's Ireland, Mitchell's Ireland, Allen, Larkin and O'Brien's Ireland, why (not) let these gentlemen uphold their Empire themselves.* In 1899 he was elected as leader of the Irish Brigade and was commissioned as Major on the 2nd October 1899. The Brigade fought bravely on the Natal front and took part in all the major battles around Ladysmith and later on in the Orange Free State. During the war, following



*The location of the hideout "Katmandu" at Poulacappal, near Mullinahone.*

Michael Davitt's resignation in protest against the suppression of the Boers, he was nominated to fight in his place in the East Mayo election. The United Irish League, well organised and funded, refused to back Major MacBride and instead backed John O'Donnell of Westport. MacBride was defeated. In February 1903 he married Maud Gonne in Paris. The green flag of the Irish Brigade was lowered as a salute at the Elevation. Their son Sean was born in January 1904 in Paris. Later on Maud took him to Ireland to be baptised. Unfortunately the Major was not able to be present. The parish priest at St. Joseph's, Terenure,<sup>(1)</sup> refused to accept the old Fenian John O'Leary as godfather. However, Maud Gonne found a young sympathetic priest who baptised Sean. O'Leary's name does not appear on the baptismal certificate although it does appear on the police report of the event. Later on the Major's friends secured for him a small position in Dublin Corporation. On his visits to Westport, after returning from the war, he was treated as an outcast by the pro British element. From the time he returned he was totally dedicated to the business of *waiting for the day*. He spoke ad nauseam of what should be done. Commenting in the *United Irishman* in September 1904, on the Sinn Féin policy of abstentionism, he said, *it will have no effect unless the young men of the country back it with arms*. He was a most idealistic type of Irishman and had a great regard for the national games. Sean MacBride has a letter I gave him written by the Major in 1906. *See that the boys turn out and play properly, he advises; if the other side manages to win, accept it. Don't complain, and never let yourself down.*

In 1910 he was organising the I.R.B. in Connaught and the Midlands. Vol. Ned Sammon has told Eoin Hughes of Westport how the Major addressed an I.R.B. meeting in Tom Navin's in Sandyhill, Westport, in 1912. After it he was escorted by a bodyguard of members from the meeting to his home at the Quay. Somebody remarked that it was a wild night to which MacBride replied: *bear my words in mind — it is nothing to the wild nights we will have in Ireland before long*. After my family moved to Westport the Major visited my father on many occasions. I often heard them discussing the politics of the day. Remember, we were in the halcyon days of the Irish Party at Westminster and there was not much movement. He was bitterly anti British at that time and died that way. On the outbreak of the First World War it was no surprise that he became active in the anti recruiting campaign. In 1909 he had said at the Manchester Martyrs Commemoration in Kilkenny, *do all in your power to prevent your countrymen from joining the degraded British Army*. In late 1914 he earned the distinction of being listed by the Under Secretary Sir Matthew Nathan, along with Pearse, Ashe, Connolly, Larkin and others, as belonging to the *small knot of violent men*. He joined the



Irish Volunteers on their formation and, what is not generally known, attended the first mobilisation of the Westport Company of Volunteers in early 1915. When in Westport he always had an escort of the local Volunteers. Somehow the people who mattered held him in esteem. When Easter Week came, he immediately offered his services to Thomas MacDonagh in Jacob's factory and was at once appointed Vice Commandant. He must have known that by doing this he was signing his own death warrant as he had been a thorn in the side of the British for so long. Although not one of the signatories, they never forget; he was condemned to death. On the 5th May while facing the firing squad in Kilmainham, he refused to be blindfolded saying, *I have looked down the barrels of your rifles before.*

#### 1916

War came in August 1914 and I remember my father paraphrasing John Mitchell about it being *the death knell of the British Empire*. From then on, as was natural, I became a constant ally and protagonist of Germany. About this time my father had a visit by two R.I.C. men who warned him to amend his views. He listened quietly, rose then, and showed them the door. Father's employers — the Livingstons, were English, not just Anglo Irish, and they made it clear to their employees that they were expected to do their bit by joining the forces. They were awfully loyal, and recruiting posters were all around the premises. One of them was killed at Vimy Ridge in Flanders. Several overtures were made to my father. Finally in 1916 after the Rising, it was decided to close the brewery, and all the employees, including my father, were dismissed, presumably to make it easier for them to join His Majesty's Forces.

Well do I remember that beautiful morning at Easter. My father came in from Mass on the Tuesday jubilant declaring, *Dublin is out*. Then for days there were no trains and no papers. When we heard of the surrender there was nothing but gloom. The Westport Coy. had made preparations for three days manoeuvres to begin on Easter Sunday, but MacNeill's orders cancelling them was a great shock. Eventually, impatient at the lack of news, the Westport men went on a route march led by Joe Ring. As a result some of those identified by the R.I.C. were arrested after the Rising and imprisoned. Of course they had little or no arms. Then on the 5th May, I was standing in the doorway of Joyce's newspaper shop in Shop Street, when a railway man passed and said hurriedly, *MacBride was shot this morning*. Mrs. Joyce sent me like lightening on my bike to the Quay to inform the family. I met Honoria, his mother, and told her. Deeply shocked, the old woman just bowed her head.

## SCHOOL DAYS

My father had got a job in Holyhead with a firm of mineral water manufacturers named Keegan, so we all moved there, crossing in the ill fated *Leinster*. At twelve years of age I was the eldest in our family with two younger sisters and brothers. With my father's job we would have been considered reasonably well off. In September 1916 therefore I was sent to school to Belcamp College in Raheny which was run by the Oblate Fathers. Shortly after my arrival I got a letter from my father saying that he had now got a temporary job in Enniscorthy, so it was there I spent Christmas 1916. The country that year was snowbound and I seemed to have spent the Christmas huddled over a fire reading. I returned to college in January and continued to spend the holiday periods at home in Enniscorthy with the rest of the family. But in this year of 1917 a subtle change had taken place. Instead of cricket and rugby we turned to hurling and gaelic football. Notices on the notice board commenced to appear in Irish and soon it was being widely practised. In 1918 a Bill was introduced in the British Parliament giving the government power to apply compulsory military service to Ireland. Even in the sheltered corridors of the college, the echo of Irish indignation and determination to resist was heard. All but the British students signed the anti conscription pledge.

That year I could not get home for Christmas holidays as there was scarlet fever there. Well do I remember the news of the Sinn Féin election victory of December 1918 coming into the college. It gave us a new cause to be alive: we all wanted to be in the Volunteers. I commenced to learn the rudiments of drilling from Tom Collins of Kilnaboy in Clare. (He became a Chief Superintendent in the Guards and later on joined Interpol.) Early in 1919 while on a walk near Coolock we halted - about 35 of us, and started drilling under the command of Collins. An R.I.C. sergeant and constable arrived and ordered us to desist but we ignored them. The president, Fr. William O'Connor apologised, but Collins, myself and some others refused. Collins, game to the end, was expelled. In my case a letter to my father from Fr. O'Connor ended the matter. It was suggested that, as I had done well in my exams, a post in the British civil service was open to me. The letter also stated that I was *proof against discipline*, whatever that might mean. My father had by this time a job in Macardle's brewery in Dundalk, so it was to there that I returned to take up a mundane office job when my school days ended. At that time there were two family run breweries and two distilleries in Dundalk, besides a huge railway works.

Around September 1919, I joined the Volunteers in Dundalk and was allotted to a company under Capt. Paddy Brannigan. The only activity I remember is an early morning raid on the principal post

office for the purpose of getting mail. When the job was done, Ned Hughes, one of my fellow lodgers, calmly cycled up to where I was waiting and handed his gun over to me. I was not involved in any actions during my short stay in Dundalk. Our family had by now returned to Westport where the brewery had reopened under new ownership and my father had got his old job back. In mid summer 1920, I returned to Westport on holidays and did not go back to Dundalk. Instead I transferred to the Westport Company of what was now known as the I.R.A.

#### J. C. MILLING: START OF THINGS

Westport I found greatly changed as a result of the measures adopted by the British following the shooting of the Resident Magistrate J. C. Milling in March 1919, four months before I arrived there. Fairs and markets in and around the town, which had been declared a Martial Area, were banned. It all started on St. Patrick's Day; there had been a parade led by the Cushlough band. A scuffle broke out when the R.I.C. broke into the throng and attempted to arrest Joe Ring. The local magistrate, J. C. Milling, was heard to say in the Railway Hotel, *I will have Ring before me next week and I will make an example of him.* On the 29th March, three fellows went out the Newport road and from inside the demesne wall shot him as he was putting the clock forward to summer time. That put an end to him. It was always considered to have been an I.R.B. job. It was one of the Joes that did it, it was said. Mrs. Milling and her family were awarded £5,000 compensation, this entire sum being levied on the Westport Urban District. The Council, rather than strike a rate, resigned, so there was no statutory authority left to collect the levy.

The years 1919 and 1920 were spent on reorganisation work. Ned Moane was the main organiser. He knew the territory and travelled it from end to end, appointing officers, promoting and demoting, forming new companies and inspecting others, until he had established a complete unit that met with his satisfaction. A perfectionist, he had spent two periods in British prisons and he was determined never to return. He was also involved in the setting up of the Republican Courts which took over completely from the British judicial system, a system to which sadly we quickly reverted.

In September 1920, the Mayo Brigade was reorganised into four separate brigade areas – North, South, East and West. Tom Derrig became the first O.C. of the West Mayo Brigade. He was a cool, clear headed man, his emotions always perfectly controlled. At the same time he could be caustic enough if he believed anyone had failed in their duties. Michael Kilroy (Newport) was appointed Brigade Vice O.C., Ned Moane (Westport) became Brigade Adjutant and Michael McHugh (Castlebar) Brigade Q.M. There were four battalions in the



Brigade area: No. 1, Castlebar; No. 2, Newport; No. 3, Westport; No. 4, Louisburgh. The battalion O.C.s were James Chambers, Ned Lyons, Joe Ring and Paddy Kelly respectively. Josie Doherty later succeeded Ned Lyons after he was arrested.

During this time the activities of the Brigade, as in most other areas, consisted of raiding for arms, stealing petrol, and burning vacated police stations. Earlier it had been involved in the elections to the first Dail. We had not yet advanced our tactics as far as they had in Tipperary and Cork but we were taking note of them. Our main problem, however, was our lack of arms. Later on in the year Michael McHugh was arrested and Tom Ketterick — who later married a sister of Dr. Kathleen Lynn — became Brigade Q.M. in his place. Ernie O'Malley was to say of Ketterick that he could be trusted to borrow a sword from the Archangel Michael and question its return. Ned Moane declared later that he was one of the few Brigade quartermasters in the country who never lost arms nor one round of ammunition while being transported. On one occasion he arrived in Clifden, Co. Galway, with two suitcases of small arms from Dublin, only to be met with a party of R.I.C. under a Head Constable intent on searching the train and its passengers. Ketterick jumped onto the platform and informed the Head Constable that he had returned from some outpost of the Empire to visit a dying relative and wondered if he would arrive on time. Two R.I.C. constables were then detailed to fetch his luggage, carry it to a nearby garage, where Ketterick was able to hire a car and drive it and his precious cargo to Westport. He was a debonair, humorous and very brave man, and for a while I was delighted to assist him, taking over his duties while he was away on his questing missions. The only stuff he was able to get indirectly were small arms, dispatched by D. P. Walsh, a Tipperary man in Glasgow. Walsh used also send stuff to Billy Pilkington of Sligo, via Belfast. On one occasion, Sean Ó Muirthile, then Quartermaster General, heard about a consignment being sent by Walsh. He had it waylaid and the stuff was sent to Cork. Pilkington was furious. He met Mick Collins in Devlin's pub in Parnell Street and went for him over it. Collins cursed and swore. *You may be Mick Collins but you are not using language like that to me*, said Pilkington, who was a religious person. Collins sobered up at once but just two days after that Peadar Glynn, who was later on the staff of the 3rd Western Division, called into the same pub to see Mick. *Don't send that monk into me again*, he said. Now that was the real Mick, not the plaster saint he was made out to be; he never had the glass out of his hand. It was the first thing he would say in Vaughan's, *what are ye having*, and most of us did not drink at the time.(2)

The death of Terence MacSwiney on October 25th and the hanging of Kevin Barry on November 1st affected us deeply but in ways

it strengthened our resolve. It is worth noting that some three years later, Mrs. Charlotte Despard told me that she had made a frantic journey from some European capital to Dublin in an effort to use her influence with her brother Sir John French, the Lord Lieutenant, to have the execution called off. She told me she was certain that if she had reached "John" in time, the execution would not have taken place.

#### EDWARD LYONS

On the 24th October 1920, Ned Lyons, the Newport Battalion Commandant, was arrested by a party of British military and police. There is no doubt that he is Mayo's forgotten hero in the war against the British. What happened to him is one of the most horrific stories of the war. After his arrest he was taken to Galway jail where he was tortured in an effort to obtain information. His fellow prisoners were able to hear his screams. It got so bad that his screaming kept them awake at night. Then there was silence. Word filtered out that he had been moved, but all efforts to find out where he had been taken failed. The capture of a battalion O.C. was a great coup for the British, but to his eternal credit he gave no information. Nothing further was heard of him until the Truce. Then Michael Kilroy found him in Dundrum Asylum — totally insane. He had been moved there from Galway, his mind unhinged. Kilroy found him lying in a ball on a bed; he did not speak, nor give any sign of recognition. Michael, however, happened to notice that the nails on each of his fingers had been pulled off. He died, mercifully, on the 24th October 1924 in Dundrum at the age of twenty-eight.

#### KILROY TAKES OVER

About November 1920, a Brigade Council meeting was held in Kelly's of Brockagh, four miles south east of Newport, and a decision was reached to press ahead with the formation of battalion active service units and to adopt a more active and aggressive policy against the enemy. Tom Derrig at this time was teaching in Ballina but came home to Westport each Saturday to spend the weekend in various activities connected with the organisation of the Brigade. Although an order had been issued telling officers to stay away from home at weekends, he foolishly was arrested in his father's house in January 1921, and spent the rest of the War of Independence in Park Internment Camp. Michael Kilroy then became the Brigade O.C., Ned Moane Vice O.C., Johnny Gibbons, who was a clerk in a law office, Adjutant, and Tom Ketterick, Quarter Master. Michael Kilroy, a blacksmith by trade, was a very religious type of man, very proper, in his early thirties, and had a great dislike of those who drank. I remember the night of a Brigade Council meeting. It was snowing, and



when we got in the lady of the house brought Kilroy and myself upstairs where there was a fire burning. Shortly afterwards she returned with a tray of glasses, amongst which there was a bottle of poitin. It had been pouring snow but Michael said, *ma'am we don't drink*. I grabbed a glass and poured myself a stiff one. It was laced with honey and was delicious. I suppose I lost cast with Michael over that. He did admit years later, however, that the drinkers turned out to be the best fighters. I was not the only drinker. In the company below was an ex Connaught Ranger. Well do I remember the scandalised look that came over my O.C.'s face as a lewd ditty was wafted upwards. *Get them to stop*, he said to me, *there could be action in the morning*. *Not at all*, said I, *let them at it*. (Kilroy was an uncle by his sister of Jack McNeela of Ballycroy who died on hunger strike in April 1940.)

After Christmas 1920 I was detailed to travel most of the Brigade area to make a census of the various weapons and to examine their condition. The main strength was in the Westport Battalion which had twelve Lee Enfields in good condition. The other battalions, as far as I can remember, had scarcely any. The reason why Westport was so well off was mainly due to the generosity of business men like Charles Hughes and Myles Hawkshaw who always supported us. The Hughes are still business people in Westport. After finishing this tour, I remember lying up in the Aughagower Coy. area four miles south east of Westport, where I soon became friendly with Paddy Duffy, brother of Coy. Capt. Johnny Duffy. The Duffys were small farmers, Land League types. Paddy was a natural soldier, a splendid shot, and the most modestly brave man I ever met. One night I was in an out house of Duffy's with Paddy and Johnny, cleaning our revolvers. Paddy's went off and a .45 bullet entered his left hand. We rendered what first aid we could, deciding to say nothing until the household had retired. So when we went into the house, Paddy kept his left hand in his pocket. We sat beside the fire for what seemed to be a considerable time waiting for everyone to retire until at length Paddy fainted. The story had to be told then and a doctor was sent for. With enemy patrols it wasn't easy, and eventually a doctor arrived from Westport, five or six miles away, and fixed up Paddy. That was the only treatment he got for months, and for years after he had trouble with that hand.

Early in January 1921, I called to my mother in Westport one evening. She had news of various outrages carried out by the R.I.C. and Tans, particularly in the Newport area where District Inspector Fudge was active. I left the house shortly after that and called at Walshe's of Barrack Hill. As luck would have it, Willie Walshe, who was an officer in the Westport Coy., told me that Fudge and a party were enjoying themselves in the West Hotel. I resolved to go in and shoot



him there and then. I asked Willie to act as scout, but he refused as he did not want anything to do with an unofficial job. I decided to go along myself. I worked it out that in all probability Fudge would be in the front room just off the hall. I sorely wished I had a grenade, as the job would be easier. I entered the hotel by the Bridge Street door and listened outside the room where I thought they should be. I intended to push in the door and start shooting immediately. But I found the room empty. They had just gone. Smoke was curling up from an ashtray in the centre of a table. Mick Feehan, the proprietor, who was a brother of Jack Feehan, later of the 4th Western staff, thought they were still there, and no doubt was relieved that Fudge and the others had left. I rushed out, however, and fired after them as they crossed the bridge, but they were too far off.

News travels quickly, and I soon got a message from Kilroy to come to Ballinacorrige. I listened for half an hour to Moane and Kilroy lecturing me how irresponsible I was; that I might have interfered with other plans and all that. The result was that I was confined until further notice to the Ballinatsleive Coy. area. But I was soon in trouble again. One dark morning I was on sentry duty outside a house in Ballinacorrige, where Moane and Kilroy were sleeping, when I saw a figure coming towards me. Dawn raids were fairly common at this time. I called *Halt* and got no reply. I fired and the figure fell to the ground. It turned out that I had shot a man called Moran who was looking for permission to emigrate. At that time, one had to have a permit from an I.R.A. officer not below the rank of commandant, to leave the country. I brought him to Michael Murray's of Ballinacorrige where his shoulder wound was dressed. I believe he eventually got his permit. I had another starchy interview with Moane, but in the end my sentence of confinement was remitted.

#### ENGAGING THE ENEMY

The active service units based on the individual battalions did not have much success, so it was decided around now to amalgamate all the different units into one Brigade Column. Although many ambushes had been planned and positions taken, none had come off. It was now late in the war and the enemy had learned to be careful. Another reason for forming the Column was the fact that many of the activists had become well known to the R.I.C. and so had to go on the run. Those who were chosen for the Column were considered to be the best in the Brigade. This was proven later when most of the leading posts on the 4th Western Division were filled by ex West Mayo Brigade men. There were many who were disappointed. Some were not allowed to join as it was felt they were too valuable in positions elsewhere. An example of this was Capt. Paddy Gibbons who died some years ago at the ripe age of ninety-four. He was Captain of the

Glenisland Company which was situated between Castlebar and Newport. This was a strategic area for the movement of communications and men. He was bitterly disappointed when Kilroy told him he was too valuable to be released for active service.

Towards the end of February, twelve or fifteen of us paraded one wet winter's night at Carrowbawn under James (Brodie) Malone, Captain of the Westport Company. We marched along the Leenane Road, turning west at Brackloon Wood and finally finished up at Teevenacroghy National School, on the south of Croagh Patrick, where the Brigade staff were to meet us. By now we were drenched and miserable, sitting in the dark and no sign of the staff turning up. There was much grumbling and groaning and finally someone suggested that we would cease to recognise the staff. Joe Baker, who later led an active Flying Column in the Civil War, said, *who would recognise the Brigade since Moane took Kilroy's moustache*. (Moane now wore a moustache while Kilroy had shaven his off.) Paddy Duffy added to the fun by giving a parody on Clare's Dragoons, *feeble was the Old Brigade, feeble is the new one too*. It was some days later when they did arrive.

By now we were further west near Louisburgh and had been joined by some new arrivals. On the 17th March 1921, we took up an ambush position at Gloshepatrick, Murrisk, on the road to Louisburgh. It is near the point where nowadays the pilgrimage commences. It was a damnable day with sleet and snow. The intention was to knock out a convoy of troops which occasionally plied between Louisburgh and Westport. Although we waited all day, the enemy never came, but in those times that was not unusual. At length, after dark, we pulled out, moving over the shoulder of the Reek to Duffys at Prospect. Jim Duffy was a local volunteer. He was accidentally killed later by a bullet from my parabellum pistol, in another volunteer's hand at the time. A few days later, I was ordered by Ned Moane to go to Derryherbert twelve miles south of Westport to meet the local Company Captain — John Hastings of Cushlough — to get information on enemy patrols both on the Leenane to Westport Road and on the road linking that road with Drummin, where the last isolated R.I.C. barracks in the area was situated. It was two miles west of the man road, and near midway to Leenane. Brigade staff were to reconnoitre the area in order to select a good ambush position upon the main road itself. I finished my business with Hastings and had started back on the long lonely track to the main road across the bog, when suddenly, at Derrykillew, the silence was shattered by several volleys of shots somewhere ahead. I kept going, and suddenly ran into Michael Kilroy, Joe Ring and Brodie Malone. Ring told me later that, after examining various ambush positions, they were walking in the direction of Drummin when they were overtaken by a four man R.I.C. patrol. They sprang



from their bikes and called on the lads to halt. The three pulled their guns and, swinging round, opened fire. Sergeant Coughlan was killed and Constables Maguire, Love and Creedon were wounded. It was quite a bag, but then nobody in their right senses would tangle with Kilroy, Ring or Malone. Taking the police arms, the three left, and it was then I bumped into them. *Ah, but it is terrible hard to kill a man*, he said to me. The Very lights were already shooting up from Drummin, so we had to make off. We rejoined the Column and fell back on the mountain for safety. Enemy reaction to this fight was the burning of several houses in the vicinity. In trying to extract information from Thomas Hastings of Derryherbert, the Tans pulled off half his moustache with a pincers. Two days later they entered and terrorised Westport, burning houses and destroying Hughes' drapery shop. The Hughes of Lankhill, Westport, were great supporters of ours, and their home was a clearing house for communications until eventually it became too dangerous to use.

For about a month we did nothing except wait in ambush positions during the day, living with the local people at night. I cannot say enough about them. They were splendid. Most of them had scarcely enough for themselves and their children. I have always been ashamed that these people, without whom we could not have survived, have never got any recognition. Think of it, little children pulled up and questioned, and not once did they give the game away. I was by now pretty fed up with this inaction. About the 21st April I persuaded Dan Gavin, Jack McDonagh and Mick (Bully) Staunton to join me on a foray in Westport. We moved openly through the town intending to shoot any of the enemy we might meet. Although we met a few people who were not on our side, no patrols appeared. We fired off a few shots at the R.I.C. barracks in Shop Street, but we didn't even get a reply. Finally we left the town and returned to the Column, going straight to bed. After we had left, Joe Ring, the Westport Battalion O.C., alarmed when he realised we were missing, correctly surmised that we had gone to attack Westport. He decided that British reinforcements would soon arrive from Castlebar, which had a large enemy garrison. Ring force marched the Column to intercept these reinforcements. They spent a miserable night waiting in the wet, but the reinforcements did not come. Ring was furious, and became more so when the Column returned and found us in bed asleep. He immediately set up a court martial and we were sentenced to be dismissed from the Column. It was my third offence. Eventually, however, this was reduced to "disarming", and by mid-day we were let off with a caution. That same evening, the Westport section moved to another billet. Joe Ring and myself were at the point, and the remainder, about thirteen men, were behind. We reached the Newport to Clogher road and had turned right in the direction of Westport.



Suddenly from the Westport direction, we saw the lights of two vehicles. Ring and I dived across a wall on our right, followed by Johnny and Paddy Duffy. We let the first vehicle pass, but opened fire on the second, a Crossley tender. It was full of uniformed men, some of whom were smoking cigarettes. Both vehicles halted a short distance away and the crews dismounted. Concentrated fire was directed at us for about twenty minutes, the bullets bouncing off the wall, but finally the enemy, feeling it might be a trap, pulled away in the direction of Newport. I think some of them were wounded. Shortly after this, I was bitterly disappointed when I learned I was not chosen to take part in an attack on the R.I.C. in Westport. Tom Ketterick, Joe Baker and Brodie Malone were chosen, and a good job they made of it. A patrol of about eighteen R.I.C. were proceeding up Altamount Street, when they were bombed from the Red Bridge. Most of them were wounded, but our three men got safely away. On the 3rd May 1921, the Westport section of the Column had waited all day in an ambush position at Brackloon Bridge on the Leenane Road without success. Word was received that the South Mayo Column under Tom Maguire were engaged in a major fight in the Partry Mountains near Tourmakeady. It was decided to go to their aid and to relieve the pressure from the several hundred enemy forces we knew were attacking them. It was a lovely summer day, and we raced across moor and bog towards the Partry Mountains. Before we reached Glenmask, however, we got word that the engagement was broken off, and so we returned to the Westport-Castlebar area, on the lakeside near Islandeady.(3)

On the 6th May 1921, we had a full scale ambush laid south of Islandeady on the main Castlebar to Westport Road. A number of enemy vehicles had moved out from Castlebar, but unfortunately after searching the house of Michael Staunton they turned back and came upon an unarmed party of I.R.A. digging the road behind them. Two members of the Islandeady Company, Tom Lally and Tom O'Malley, were killed, and a number captured, including Frank O'Boyle. Paddy Cannon of Castlebar was lucky to get away with his life, and in the retreat was obliged to swim across a lake. The enemy did not come as far as our position at the Big Wall at Islandeady, and when we received a despatch telling what had happened, we pulled out and retired to Aughagower six miles to the south. The deaths of two of our volunteers saddened us greatly.

About this time, we captured in the mails a letter from Fr. Flatley, the P.P. of Aughagower, to McMahan, the Under Secretary, in which he denounced his curate, Fr. McHugh, as a supporter of the rebels, and as one who attended them regularly, hearing their confessions, etc. Fr. McHugh was a great man though he went Free State after. On one occasion I was visiting him when the house was raided by District

Inspector Cruise of the R.I.C. I was hidden in a wardrobe where I spent a very uneasy half hour fearing to move or even to breathe. Cruise, who was a Catholic, told Fr. McHugh that they had specific information that he visited us in our billets; *remember what happened to Griffin in Galway*, he warned.<sup>(4)</sup> In my opinion Fr. Flatley should have been shot. On another occasion I remember a messenger coming from north Mayo to a house in which Joe Ring and I were staying. He brought the information that a certain man in that area was going around with the Tans pointing out the houses of I.R.A. men. This man was never shot either. His son was later to distinguish himself in a public office from which he recently retired.

We were still spoiling for a fight but were finding it difficult enough to get one. One night in May the entire Brigade Column took over Westport, but we could not smoke them out. I met Dr. Madden, who had recently joined the Column, at the top of Hill Street, and he was wild as there was nothing doing. They may have got the tip, we suspected, from an ex British military man in the town, although this had been denied. We practically ruled the roost around Westport which had always been a very ascendancy town. Two nights later Vol. Patrick Marley was accidentally killed coming off sentry duty. We buried him at night, at a secret location, and he was later reinterred during the Truce.

#### KILMEEENA AMBUSH

On the 18th May 1921, in an effort to get a movement of enemy forces between Westport and Newport, Michael Kilroy detailed two columns to attack these towns. The first column under Brodie Malone consisted of Johnny Duffy, myself and five others, all armed with Lee Enfield rifles. We moved into Westport and commenced firing at any of the enemy that we met. The second column under Josie Doherty, the Newport Battalion O.C., along with Jim Moran, Michael Gallagher and Jim Browne went to Newport. About 8 p.m. Sergeant Butler came out of the R.I.C. station and was killed by a single shot from Jim Moran. This was unfortunate because he was an agent of ours, but Moran was not to know that. Kilroy had already decided to carry out a large scale ambush at Kilmeena, close to Knocknabola Bridge, on the main Westport to Newport Road.

About 3 a.m. the main Column consisting of units from Castlebar, Newport, Westport and Louisburgh Battalions — 41 men in all, took up positions at the bridge over the river there. It was later decided to move this position a few yards south. The Column settled down to wait. By noon, after lying in wait nine hours, Kilroy was thinking of moving the Column away as no movement had occurred. However, about 3 p.m. the approach of a British patrol was signalled by scouts



on the Westport side. The patrol of one Ford car and two Crossley tenders consisted of R.I.C. and Black and Tans, and was under the command of District Inspector Donnellan. It was heading towards Newport. Fire was opened on the leading lorry, and Constable Beckett was seriously wounded in the chin and neck. He died later. However, it managed to get through the ambush position and disappeared from view. Meanwhile the Ford car and the other Crossley tender had halted near the house of the Parish Priest, Fr. M. J. Conroy. This party dismounted and opened fire on the Column from the south. They were in a good position for a fight. The occupants of the first lorry which had broken through the ambush position, now returned and took up positions near the bridge. They mounted a Lewis gun, after some time, gave the order for the Column to retreat, and this the men had to do across the top of exposed Clooneen Hill. This ambush was a total disaster, and the Column suffered severe casualties. In all the British recovered four I.R.A. dead at Kilmeena. These were Staff Capt. Seamus MacEvilly and Vol. Thomas O'Donnell, both of the Castlebar Battalion; Vol. Patrick Staunton (Newport Battalion) and Vol. Sean Collins (Westport Battalion). Vice Commdt. Paddy Jordan (Castlebar Battalion) was wounded and died on 2nd June in the King George V Hospital (now St. Brigan's). Seven others were wounded, and of these four were captured. One man who was not wounded was also captured. The dead and wounded were dragged down to one of the lorries and thrown in, one on top of the other. Capt. Paddy O'Malley of Newport, whose leg was shattered by a bullet, was dragged by the legs across a field and thrown in with the others. After the ambush the Brits then returned triumphant to Westport, where the dead and wounded were thrown on the street outside the police barracks and left there for a considerable time. Even the sections friendly to the British in the town were shocked at this treatment. The Marquis of Sligo was one of those who went to the barracks and protested. The ambush was a disaster, as I said. I am unable to tell why Kilroy did not wait for the Westport and Newport units which consisted of some of the most experienced and best armed men to return.

Kilroy's great achievement, however, was in getting the Column away without any further casualties. None of the men were wounded or captured after the main onslaught was over in Kilmeena. The Column retreated northwards towards Skerdagh in the mountains five miles north east of Newport, followed closely by the enemy. In a follow up engagement there on 23rd May another volunteer, Jim Browne was killed in action.<sup>(5)</sup> Some days later, we rejoined the Column in Owenwee close to the now evacuated barrack of Drummin, six miles south west of Westport. It was at this stage that a plan was



considered for capturing the Marquis of Sligo and holding him as a hostage in case any of those who were captured were maltreated. We had every reason to fear this; however, permission was applied for to headquarters but was refused. Apparently Sligo was a friend of one of the members of the British Cabinet, and because of the negotiations leading up to the Truce, we were forbidden to go near him.

After this we burned Drummin R.I.C. barracks. In the hope of action, we occupied a position on the high ground on the main Westport to Leenane Road but not one enemy car appeared upon it. There would be another day.

#### THE CARROWKENNEDY AMBUSH

This ambush was completely fortuitous. Kilroy, Madden and Moane had set out on the 2nd June 1921, to find a suitable place on the Westport to Leenane Road to ambush a motorised patrol that regularly went that way. I was on sentry duty for part of the night when at a quarter to five in the morning the call came, *they have passed out on the way from Westport to Leenane*. The bridge that was at Glencullew was torn up, so we knew that the enemy had to return on the Leenane road back to Westport. The Column of thirty-three men rushed down as fast as it could from Clady where we were billeted. We took up position between the Widow Sammon's and the Widow McGrath's. By this time, Kilroy, Madden and Moane had returned. Suddenly the look out shouted that the enemy was coming. Then I did an unforgivable thing. I poked a hole through the loose stone wall and found myself staring at the face of the leading driver. I should have waited for the order; instead I fired, which I should not have done. All hell broke loose as the others started firing too. The first lorry had now halted as its driver was hit. The other driver was also killed instantly. As soon as the lorry halted, however, a Tan leaped on to the road and was followed by a second one. I remember shouting, *they are throwing out a machine gun*, and the second Tan, who had jumped out commenced to use it. We had learned our lesson at Kilmeena, so this machine gunner was quickly put out of action. Another man attempted to use it but he too was shot. The Tans in the lorry, which was armour plated, started using grenades, which were fired from the cap of a rifle, but they fell short of our positions. When the second lorry halted, Ned Moane, Jim Flaherty and Joe Baker opened fire on them, and one was killed by Flaherty. Eventually the majority made for McGrath's house and got to safety there. The fight went on for hours. Some of the Louisburgh men were caught in an exposed position and they had to get out of it. Kilroy, feeling that he had to bring it to a climax, detailed Johnny and Paddy Duffy to work their way down in order to get a grenade into the lorry. He then realised he was sending two brothers, so I went down with Paddy. The

Tans in the lorry were still firing their rifle grenades; one of them was shot just when he was on the point of letting one off. That was fortunate because the grenade fell back into the lorry and blew up, injuring some of those inside.

Shortly after this the white flag went up. Jimmy Flaherty then, who had been a machine gunner in France with the Connaught Rangers, picked up the machine gun and, although it was halted at a stoppage, after fixing it, turned the machine gun on the R.I.C. men still holding out in the widow's house. He put a pile of bullets through a small slit in the gable end. Near sunset, a Tan with a white flag was sent up the road calling on those in the house to surrender. *If ye don't surrender the blighters will shoot us all.* They dropped their guns and came out with their hands up. Long afterwards, Dick Mulcahy said to me, *why did you not take over the house beside them.* I said, *you were not there and you do not know how sudden and unplanned it all was.* Dick Mulcahy's reply to me was, *you deserve a firing squad for your behaviour.* Believe it or not, he was over eighty and we were at a dinner at the time. I can tell you he deserved a firing squad himself, having left papers to do with the intended destruction of Liverpool Docks in Professor Carolan's house in Drumcondra. These were found, and a couple of lads — three Achill men — Charlie Barrett, Johnny Gallagher and Sean Lynchicaun ended up in Ballykinlar as a result. The Carrowkennedy ambush was a tremendous success and was one of the longest in the war. It boosted our morale no end. One Tan officer said to me, *this is the third damned rifle I've lost in this country,* as he went to throw it into the flaming lorry. *Give it to me,* I said quietly. Twelve of the enemy were killed and thirteen had surrendered. Kilmeena was revenged. In all we captured 25 rifles, 25 revolvers, one Lewis gun with six full pans of ammunition and several thousand rounds of ammunition in boxes. We also captured one large box of Mills bombs and some smaller egg bombs. The capture of a machine gun, we knew, was a tremendous advantage. I was told later by District Inspector Donnellan, that this was what they feared most. That was why, although we were banging away for four hours, not one came out of Westport, and when finally they came it was the military from Castlebar. After collecting all the material and setting fire to both lorries, the Column headed back to the village of Clady. A huge round up operation now started. Heading north east we crossed over the bog into the village of Derryherbert, from there over to Creganbawn. From there to the villages of Ardara, Toinlagaath, Islandeady, Lahardawn, Park, Bohala, Ballyheane, all the time being helped by the people, who were great. While in the vicinity of Nephin, we were visited by Jack Leonard, a relation of Kilroy. He took the famous photograph of the Column. Some men are missing from the photo and others had been killed, but I believe that this is the only



photograph of a flying column taken while on active service during the War of Independence. The British rushed reinforcements to the area and were screening whole villages. Aeroplanes from Castlebar were used in the search, which was the biggest carried out in Mayo. By the time the Column had reached Owenwee, it was surrounded by 4,000 troops. In the early morning of July 4th, the Column was ordered to split up into twos and threes and in this way every single man melted away. It was after Carrowkennedy when we were moving by night towards the coast, that a curious incident occurred. As we were moving off through a valley under Joe Ring, a marching song broke out and Joe didn't stop it. Suddenly Michael Kilroy appeared. He was normally a man who never raised his voice but now he was furious. Security meant a lot to him. He attacked Ring in our presence for allowing the singing to happen. He then asked him to hand up his weapons, which Joe refused to do. Kilroy then hit Joe with his revolver in the face. In fact I thought he would shoot him. Eventually Joe handed them up. Kilroy should never have attacked him like that but he was obviously concerned for the safety of the Column. There was never any love lost between Joe Ring and Michael Kilroy. Both were great fighters and very headstrong. Ring was the only officer of any consequence in the Brigade that went Free State. I'm not saying it was because of this incident but it was a decision that we all regretted as we had a great regard for him.

#### TRUCE

When news of the Truce reached us, I have no recollection that it concerned us greatly. Johnny Gibbons and myself were near Lecanvey at the time and we marched there and were overwhelmed by the hospitality of the people. As for the cease fire itself we did not expect it to last. From Kilroy's point of view and that of the men in the Column, we were now in a good position to deal with the enemy. The men were well equipped and had received their basic training under fire. There was a powerful feeling of confidence. Shortly after the Truce was declared, Michael Staines arrived from Dublin to see Kilroy. He asked for Joe Ring to assist him. Kilroy, after consulting the Brigade staff, agreed to the appointment of Joe as a liaison officer for Galway and Mayo, although he was not keen on letting him go. About this time a big training camp was set up in Sheehaun Lodge in Ballycroy. Tom Derrig, who was then a T.D., was in charge. One man who was particularly valuable in this training work was Paddy Cannon, a teacher from Islandeady. Little did I know how our paths were to cross later. All the officers in the Brigade got a thorough course of training, and when they went back to their units were able to pass it on. I was not involved in this. At the same time as the camp was started, the 3rd Battalion took over part of the Westport





*The house at Knocknadruc, now occupied by the Nolan family, in which sheltered in May 1923 the column led by Neil Plunkett Boyle. Plunkett was shot by Felix McCorley as he advanced over a stone stile then at the right hand corner.*

Workhouse as its headquarters. There was a certain irony in this on account of the thousands who had died there during the different famines in the last century. The ships with the Indian meal used berth at Westport, and it is said that the bodies of the dead and dying lined the road leading to the Quay.

During the early days of the Truce, I escorted by train to Dublin one of our men who had been wounded. After leaving him in a nursing home, I went to the Exchange Hotel in Parliament Street which was a rendezvous for the Mayo people. Dick Walshe, who was head centre of the I.R.B. in Mayo, together with Tom Derrig brought me to Vaughan's Hotel for a meal, where I met Collins. He said to me: *when you go down remember this — you don't know when you will be wanted again. Above all keep the intelligence going. There will be no negotiated peace this time.* Later on I asked Dick Walshe why did he say that. Dick said, *I was I.R.B., you were not. He had one hat for us, another for you.* Shortly after Mick Staines came in. He was now chief Truce liaison officer for Connaught. *You can have a job with me*, he said, so I went along with him to Galway. I knew that Joe Ring and Johnny Gibbons were already on the staff. Shortly after I arrived, there was a shoot out between Auxies and our fellows in the Great Southern Hotel, and for a while it looked as if the Truce was breaking down. Michael Staines' father was ex R.I.C. Westport, and I attributed Ring going Free State to his influence. I did not stay long on the liaison staff although I do remember visiting two sisters called Power who were in prison. It was all office work and that did not suit me; I wanted to get back to my own area. When I was leaving, Staines fixed me a lift to Westport in the company of District Inspector Cruise and his wife — a person whom only a few short weeks before I would cheerfully have shot. A former Clongowes student, he had no worries about his future, as he knew that, whatever happened, his pension was guaranteed by the British government. At this time we concentrated on reorganisation work, visiting and inspecting each of the companies. About this time Achill was being organised by Mick Mannion. These Achill men did great work later on in the Civil War.

#### 4th WESTERN DIVISION

In early October, Eoin O'Duffy was sent from H.Q. to form the 4th Western Division. He arrived in Westport and met us in the Workhouse. I am not clear why it took the West so long to be reorganised, as it was completed in the South before the Truce. The area of the Division consisted of roughly west of a line drawn from Ballina to Spiddal. Michael Kilroy became the O.C. of the Division. Petie Joe McDonnell (formerly O.C. West Galway Brigade) became Vice O.C., and Jack Feehan (West Galway Brigade), Divisional Quarter Master. At a later date Christy Macken was sent down from H.Q. in

Dublin as Divisional Adjutant. We all felt that Johnny Gibbons should have got that job, but as Macken was the first to admit himself that he did not have any battle experience, we gave him our loyalty. The West Mayo Brigade now became the No. 1 Brigade, 4th Western Division. Ned Moane became O.C. and Johnny Gibbons Vice O.C. I was appointed Adjutant and Paddy Duffy became Brigade Quarter Master. His brother Johnny was offered a post on the Brigade staff but he refused, saying he'd rather be in charge of his own Company (Aughagower) where he knew the men. Next to nothing has been written on the Civil War in the West. The two main accounts give the impression that resistance finished when Westport was taken by the Free State. Nothing could be further from the truth. The 2nd Western under Tom Maguire and the 3rd Western under Liam Pilkington went Republican, but in the defence of the West resistance was quickly crushed. Fermoy was the last town to be held by the Republicans, and was captured on the 11th August 1922. Yet the recapture in late 1922 of Ballina, Clifden and Newport by the 3rd and 4th Western men has almost totally been ignored, possibly deliberately, by the history books. There were columns operating in West Mayo under men like Paddy Duffy, Mark Killilea and Joe Baker, all former West Mayo Brigade men, right down to the "dump arms" order.

#### TREATY

It became clear to us that these people who gave us little or no assistance in the fight against the British were beginning to question the usefulness of any further resistance. They were relieved of even pretending a show of support. When the terms of the Treaty were published and the debate started they really came into their own. For the first time in five years they emerged into the light of day. They were mainly the business and professional people, civil servants, the Maynooth clergy, and the newspaper publishers — the Fourth Estate having far too big an influence for the country's good. I was in Clifden with Johnny Gibbons when the terms of the Treaty came through. Straight away, I said *No*. I did not want partition; we were losing territory. We objected to the Oath and the occupation of the ports. Our T.D.s, like Tom Maguire, P. J. Rutledge and Tom Derrig voted against it. I remember the words of my father, who also was totally opposed to it. *If you go against this you will be defeated and you will be blackguarded like the Fenians*. How right he was. None of the leaders in the fight went Free State except Joe Ring. Later on it was mercenaries they used to subdue Mayo. There was no question of us blindly following what Kilroy and Moane believed. It was a personal decision for each of us.



## ARCHBISHOP GILMARTIN

Very few of the clergy were on our side, though some of the younger men stuck by us. It was a common mention amongst us that if he was an Order priest he was possibly all right, but if Maynooth — Maynooth had the taint of the Royal Grant. That was always the way with them. I got into trouble myself around January 1922, in Westport. Tom Derrig had ordered one of our fellows to be arrested and chained to the railings outside the church in Westport as an example. He had refused to report for all night sentry duty in the Workhouse. I didn't know anything about this, and it really wasn't Derrig's job to give that order, as he held no rank with us even though he was a T.D. Anyway, the next day I heard that Fr. Gibbons had released the man. I was mad at this interference and I wrote to him as Brigade Adjutant. I said I was surprised at his interference in our affairs and pointed out that in the first half of 1921 — I was careful with my words, when enemy forces were illtreating innocent citizens, there was no evidence that he, or any of the other clergy had intervened to save them. It was shocking the treatment they had got; Ned Moane's father was one of those beaten up. Fr. Gibbons came to see me and wanted to discuss the letter, but I refused. I forgot about the incident then until the letter itself was published in the *Freeman's Journal*. It was obvious that he had leaked it to them — very high handed. On the Saturday after this I was again visited by Fr. Gibbons and another priest, who said, *His Grace will be free at four o'clock and will receive you if you come down*. When I asked what for, he replied, *about your letter*. I told him that I would not go. The two priests went back to the presbytery and told the Archbishop who flew into a temper. Fr. Gibbons told me this later. The Archbishop then went to see Kilroy in Newport.(6)

On the Sunday afterwards, I went to Mass as usual and the Archbishop spoke at it. He made a bitter personal attack upon me. He said that I was not worthy of my position as an officer and that he had spoken to the Divisional O.C. who told him that I would be severely censured and might warrant dismissal. Now Kilroy knew nothing about all this, and in any event it wasn't him who was my O.C. but Ned Moane. I sent a letter of resignation to O'Duffy at G.H.Q., but was immediately told to withdraw it pending further inquiries. Kilroy and Macken, along with the journalists who were involved, were ordered to Begger's Bush to see O'Duffy. Macken, when he returned said to me, *you'll hear no more about it*. Canon McDonnell in Newport was another who had never been in favour of us. I was surprised later on, however, when he said at Mass after Jim Moran was killed in the Civil War, *Jim was a soldier when soldiers were few*. In general few of the clergy were outstanding in the Tan war, and of course the people largely followed them in the Civil War.

## TAKE OVER OF CASTLEBAR BARRACKS

Sunday, the 12th February 1922, was a pouring wet day. I was in my quarters in the Workhouse in Westport, and as Brigade Adjutant, was officer of the day. Everyone of consequence was away, Ned Moane was in Clifden, Paddy Duffy had gone to his home in Cloonskill. About noon this well dressed man in civies came in and introduced himself as Staff Capt. Michael Rynne of the G.H.Q. staff. He said he was in charge of evacuations in the West; could an officer help him with the evacuation of Castlebar Barracks eleven miles away? Now this was an infantry barracks and was occupied by the 2nd Battalion, the Border Regiment. It also contained some units of the Royal Artillery. There was another barracks in Castlebar, a cavalry barracks on the Mall (now the Garda station), but the Infantry Barracks was the largest. In fact it was one of the biggest outside of Galway and Athlone. He had all the proper credentials with him; I told him, however, that I could not leave the place. I made efforts to find Kilroy but was not successful. If I was to go with him I would have to get a replacement, so I sent out word on a motorbike to Paddy Duffy to come in. I knew Paddy was reliable, so dressed in uniform, I went off in a car to Castlebar with Rynne about two o'clock in the afternoon. We drove up the long avenue to the Infantry Barracks and presented ourselves at the gate. Rynne handed over his papers, and immediately a difficulty arose on account of my I.R.A. uniform. There was some argument, and I got more and more annoyed as I felt this was a deliberate insult to us. It was fundamental that we be recognised as an army. Rynne eventually went in, something I felt he should not have done. I had one bit of information that they did not know I had, they were under orders to entrain at 3 a.m. the next morning (13th February). So I just turned on my heels then and went down to Paddy Carney's in Castle Street, a pub quite near the end of the avenue. Carney's was a great house for us in the Tan war and stayed that way in the fight for the Republic. Eventually I ended up in the Imperial Hotel.

About 4 p.m. in comes this young lieutenant, greatly flustered, who said he had been sent down by the O.C. Col. Packenham. He informed me quite simply that the barracks could not be evacuated unless I agreed to take an inventory first and give a receipt. I said I wasn't worried about their difficulty and insisted that if I was to enter the barracks it would have to be in uniform; otherwise I was going back to Westport. He promised to relay the message. At one point in the conversation he remarked, *my mother is a papist. Well, if she is, said I, she must hate us because all the English Catholics hate us.* I was fed up with this nonsense about the uniform, so, to rub it in a bit, I then informed him that an officer of equivalent rank to me would have to act as escort. This shook him, as he had to



ask me what rank I was and also what the equivalent rank was in the British army. He went off, and about half an hour later a Royal Artillery major appeared and told me everything was in order and would I accompany him to the barracks. This time there was no problem in going through the gates and full salutes were rendered. I was taken to the O.C. Col. Packenham's office in No. 6 block. I raised the question with him of the non-recognition of my uniform, but he brushed it aside in his efforts to complete the arrangements. Rynne must have been in a difficult position on his own, but in any case we spent the next few hours going through the place with the barracks Quarter Master. We had to sign for everything that was being left. We had the option of refusing certain stuff like bedding, which we did. No war stores or intelligence files were left behind. They had obviously been shipped to Athlone sometime previously. At sundown we watched the English flag being lowered. There was no particular ceremony involved — just the usual detail being present for the lowering of the flag. Still, it did bring some satisfaction to me when I saw it coming down for the last time after so many years of British rule. Incidentally, we signed for everything on behalf of the Provisional Government of Saorstát Éireann. I have no recollection that this meant anything to me at the time. I suppose that in itself is an indication that whatever difficulties there were over the Treaty were of minor importance then, and would be sorted out between De Valera and Collins. Little did we know. It must have been after midnight when they left, marching out of the avenue, round by the Mall, up Spencer Street and Station Road, until they came to the railway station about a mile from the barracks. The Cavalry Barracks was evacuated at the same time. The Castlebar Battalion of the I.R.A. took over from us led by James (Brod) Chambers, its O.C. The other officers that would have been involved in this were John (Dailie) Chambers, Michael (Gas) Hughes, John Gavin and Mark Killilea. The Infantry Barracks then became the 4th Western Division headquarters. Shortly after that the No. 1 Brigade moved its headquarters there from Westport. We did not stay the night in the barracks, although I returned the next day to make sure everything was O.K. I never met Michael Rynne again. He stayed Free State and, I believe, ended up an ambassador in the 1950s.

Not long after this, I got a message to arrest Joe Ring. I wasn't keen on carrying it out as I liked Joe. Things had come to a terrible state when I had to arrest a man who had been my O.C. He had been going around trying to subvert our fellows. However, he did not have a great lot of success except for his home area Drumindoo. He was recruiting for the Guards and the Free State Army. I found him in Ned Harne's house sitting in a chair, and I said I was ordered to arrest him. He said, *send for Brodie Malone, I'll surrender to him but not to you,*



Tom. I didn't want a fight, and when Malone arrived he took him to Castlebar and handed him over to the Republican police. He wasn't held long; the papers created a fuss and Kilroy released him.

Officers from the Divisional staff and also the different Brigades attended the Army Convention on the 26th March 1922 in Dublin. Michael Kilroy was one of the five Divisional O.C.s to sign the summons to attend, in defiance of the Cabinet's order. This Proclamation was followed by an order from the Minister of Defence (Mulcahy) that any officer who attended would be dismissed. The Convention reaffirmed its allegiance to the Republic; it placed its forces under the control of an Executive appointed by the Convention. On 9th April Michael Kilroy was one of those appointed to the Executive.

#### COLLINS MEETING

One of our great problems at this time was shortage of funds. Some of the business people who had supported us with supplies had not been paid anything. Collins had refused to send us money as he knew we had taken the Republican side. He had a big meeting in Castlebar at the start of April. People like Alex McCabe and Joe MacBride, T.D., were on the platform. We objected to this meeting being held; it was an effort to undermine the Republic but Kilroy let it go ahead. There were a lot of Sligo pro Treaty men there as well. The meeting was well attended by No. 1 Brigade men interspersed amongst the crowd. I remember Tom Derrig being there, and also Paddy Duffy. Paddy never once took his finger off his revolver during the meeting. Collins asked, *could we not accept the policy of live and let live*, a subtle way of saying that Griffith, himself and the British were about to bury the Republic, and did we mind. After a while a row broke out and shots were fired on both sides. A man called Ben Beirne ran up Spencer Street and we made after him. He turned into a hotel, and a Mrs. Fogarty got a bullet in the shoulder. Beirne was then arrested, and I went back to the meeting. Kilroy, however, had closed it down and arrested the pro Treaty element. I was near Kilroy when he took Collins into the Imperial Hotel. Before they went upstairs I heard him say to Collins, *you have your hands on the money bags now, Mick*. Collins was furious at the charge but I did not get his reply. It was obvious that he was using the visit to size up the West for whatever the future held in store. That evening Collins and McCabe(7) were released and had dinner with Surgeon Anthony MacBride. The I.R.B. influence again. On 1st May a series of bank raids, authorised by the Executive, occurred all over the country to get the funds we needed. In Castlebar no violence was used. The manager was politely asked for the money, and was accompanied to the Infantry Barracks where he was formally given a receipt. Every last penny of the money taken in the 4th Western Division was accounted for. A detailed list of

expenditure was published later by Petie Joe MacDonnell who succeeded Kilroy as O.C. of the 4th Western.

#### OUTBREAK OF WAR

We could all sense the gathering storm and hoped it would not happen. In retrospect we were naive and under estimated the intentions of Griffith and his crowd. The first operation I was engaged in after the attack on the Four Courts was an attempt to relieve our men in Colooney. McKeon and McCabe were coming in from the north, and using artillery, had managed to surround our men who were led by Frank O'Beirne (3rd Western) and Brodie Malone. A Brigade active service unit had been formed under myself and Paddy Duffy, and when word reached us in Castlebar of their plight, we led a column of about thirty trucks to relieve them. We got as far as Cloon-nacl when we heard that the column had surrendered. After a strong fight Malone and about twenty others were surrounded in a house and, after fighting from 2 p.m. on Friday to 8 a.m. on Saturday, under continuous machine gun fire, surrendered when they ran out of ammunition. This was a severe blow to us. Shortly after this, Free State troops led by Joe Ring landed by sea at Westport with next to no opposition. A machine gun post that I had set up on the Quay had been dismantled. Westport was the only harbour they could have landed in outside of Galway and Ballina. If the post had not been dismantled, they might well have landed, but they would have had to fight for it.

On the 24th July, I was out mining bridges, when word came to me that Castlebar was evacuated by Michael Kilroy. An attempt was made to burn the barracks but it was only partially successful. Kilroy had divided his men into three columns, and I overtook Kilroy's column as it was heading for Newport. Shortly after this, Kilroy asked me to take a few men to McGraine's of Glenhest; I don't remember now what for. "Gas" Hughes, a man called McAndrew and some others were with me. Suddenly we walked into a Free State lorry waiting in the dark with its lights off. We were captured immediately. Two ex West Mayo Brigade men were in charge, Jack Keane and Joe Walshe. They were amongst the few who had gone Free State, and both had been great friends of Joe Ring. Keane said, *we got you very easy, Tom*, which was true. We were brought to Newport. I found myself in the house of Mrs. Walsh (mother of Walsh who later became Archbishop of Tuam), which was being used as some sort of headquarters. I was in uniform wearing my Sam Browne. There were a lot of Free State soldiers coming in and out, and I suddenly realised that I was being taken for one of them. I just walked out and made my way to a wood near the church. I stayed there for the night, and next morning was heading for Glenisland

when my luck ran out: I walked straight into a posse of troops and was again captured. I was taken to Newport where I met Joe Ring and he recognised me immediately. He was obviously pleased at my capture, as I was the first good cop he had got. He asked if I had been searched, and then ordered me to be searched again. They were over-looking nothing. This time they found my short Webley. I was taken to Westport and held for a night. The next morning I was paraded through the town to the railway station under guard. I wasn't too pleased at this treatment from a former comrade, but it was obviously meant to impress the people of the town. Maura Mullins said to me later, *the walk of you did us good*. I was then taken to Castlebar and lodged in the jail, where I became O.C. of the prisoners. This was a horrible job as you were constantly under the eyes of the guards. A Ballyheane fellow called Galvin was in charge of them, some of whom were from Dublin, with some local fellows as well. After a few weeks I was taken by train and was landed in detention in Athlone barracks.

#### ESCAPE FROM ATHLONE

At this time there were a few hundred Republicans in detention there and also some B Specials, who had been captured around Belleek. They were released soon after. It was some consolation to meet Brodie Malone, and also Jimmy Gavin of Castlebar and the others from my Brigade who were captured in Colooney. I quickly found out that there was an escape plan afoot, so I took some fellow's place. There were nine of us involved in the escape which was in August, three each from the 3rd and 4th Western Divisions. Macken and Brig. Seamus Maguire from Mullingar, and Seamus Fox from Athlone acted as guides. The Mayo fellows were Brodie Malone, who had been captured in Colooney, Paddy Cannon from Islandeady, who had been in action with Republican forces in Barry's Hotel, Dublin, and had been taken off the train in Roscommon the previous June while making under orders for his own area, and finally myself. The Sligo fellows were Frank O'Beirne, who was also captured in Colooney, Harry Brehony and Dominic Benson, whose brother Harry was one of those to be shot down along with Brian MacNeill and others on Ben Bulbin the following month, September 1922. We got out of our cell by cutting round the jamb of the door and lifting it off its hinges. To disguise the cutting marks, we used to fix it back with soap mixed with dust. The hacksaw blade came from a Northern Protestant named Hewton, whom the Staters dubbed the Sandy Row general. We then had a big hall to negotiate, so we had to be very quiet. By lifting up a large flagstone we were able to get down to the boiler house underneath. Big Jim Brown of Newport was the mainstay in this work. He lifted up the flagstone and, more importantly, was responsible for putting it back in its place when we had left. A door led down from



the boiler house to a yard which we knew was patrolled.

Benson had an iron bar to deal with any sentries. We were lucky in that it was pouring rain, and this kept them in their boxes. We had now to get over a wall, and for this we had a ladder with us, made out of bed boards. The boards were held together with nails we had extracted from the galvanised dining hall. Frank O'Beirne was first up the ladder which stopped well short of the top. When he got there, however, he threw down a rope made of sheets. Somehow he managed to lose his shoes and this played hell with him later. The rest of us followed in our stocking feet, and the last man, Benson, took the ladder with him. We found ourselves in the transport yard. There was an armoured car there and we had a whispered chat about whether we should try to take it and make a dash for the gate. We decided against it. Using the ladder and ropes, we got over another wall. As I said, it was pouring rain. Without this we surely would have been seen. We then got over the perimeter wall onto the main Galway road. We couldn't move down it as the bridge contained two sentry posts. Somehow we had to cross the Shannon to the Leinster side as we knew full well the Staters would search for us on the Connaught side first. Luckily we found two boats moored on the river and I waded out and dragged them in. They had no oars. We were piled in, five in one and four in another, and, using the boards, paddled across, all the time waiting for a shout from the sentry. It was slow progress but we managed it. We landed at an old factory yard and from there we made our way to a railway. This was the southern branch line. As we were heading for the southern station, we were fired on but we still kept going. We were wet and miserable. Poor O'Beirne was in misery, the cinders playing havoc with his sodden feet. He never forgave me for laughing at him. We eventually got to a wooded place and holed up there for the night, even the rest of the morning. I remember that morning particularly because there was a regatta on the river. Towards afternoon, Frank O'Beirne went up to this house; I found out later it was a place called Coosan. We said to the woman that we had escaped from jail and could she help us. *Come in, a gra*, she said, *I have a son in there myself*. Hughes was her name. She fed us and we got dried out. She told us that she thought she might be able to get us up the river, her house wasn't too far from it, and the Staters were still looking for us. That same night we made our way in the dark to the river where a cabin cruiser, *The Connaught*, was moored. For some reason I led the way, and when I got near it, I saw a fellow in a Free State uniform and carrying a revolver in the cabin. I told Malone. *Jay God*, he said. As Mrs. Hughes had arranged this, we went ahead anyway and got on board. This fellow must have known the place very well because he quickly headed out into the darkness. We had no lights. The next thing we saw a big boat coming towards us with its

lights on. I was waiting for the hail. I then heard an automatic being cocked and I said to myself, *this fellow is all right, he is going to fight*. The other boat just flashed its lights and went on.

We travelled to a place called Kid Island, north of Lough Ree, and landed there. We went ashore and said goodbye to the Free State fellow. We never found out who he was though I tried after. Malone tried as well, when he was based in Athlone after joining the Army when Dev came to power. We rested awhile and our two guides left us then. We headed off and the first house we came to was Paddy Quigley's, near Kid Island. There was also a man called Moran there. One of that family had been hanged by the Tans in Kilmainham. He was innocent of course. The poor fellow refused a chance to escape with Ernie O'Malley, Simon Donnelly and Teeling.<sup>(8)</sup> We kept moving west, picking up contacts here and there. It was a great summer with sunshine every day. I remember Harry Brehony saying: *Isn't it a great country to fight for*. He was shot later by the Staters in Sligo, the following February.

We kept on the move westward until we made contact with Dan O'Rourke of Castlereagh. He was a T.D. who voted for the Treaty but went Republican later. We doubted him but he turned up trumps. He got his pony and trap and packed the six of us into it and took us to Ballaghaderreen. For some reason there were no Free State troops about when we got there. The Sligo fellows parted from us then and headed off for their own area. They immediately got back into the fight. The rest of us headed on towards Kilkelly about twenty-five miles away. We then headed for Colgan's of Bohola. It was here we had a near encounter with an armoured car. This was the day after Collins was killed, 22nd August 1922. We saw it first and we did not run so we were not fired on. We heard later that it was on its way to tell Michael Collins' sister, who was a teacher in Bohola, the news of his death. We eventually arrived to Kings of Cnocbulgadan where we got a great reception. They told us that Tom Maguire's South Mayo Column was in Brize House near Claremorris.

#### CAPTURE AT BRIZE HOUSE

Brize was a large house between Balla and Claremorris, and was owned by the McEllin's of Balla. The three of us, Paddy Cannon, Brodie Malone and I, got there on the morning of 26th August. There was about twelve local fellows there and the O.C. was a butcher from Kiltimagh. I don't remember his name. We kept under cover and didn't move out. The whole set up didn't impress me from an operational point of view, as the local fellows were coming and going. They were well armed. Then as dusk came somebody rushed in and shouted, *the Staters are coming up the avenue*. An armoured car drove up, turned in front of the house, and without warning, opened fire. Malone,

Cannon and I armed ourselves and commenced to return the fire, but at that moment, Malone who was pressed against me, was hit. He was riddled with bullets. Instead of transversing, the machine gun on the armoured car elevated, and he was hit from his shoulder down his arm, even his leg. I felt the impact of the bullets entering him. I then dragged him away from the window and tried to stop the blood. All he wanted to do, however, was fight. The poor devil was bleeding, bleeding like a pig at the time. We tore up some cloth and tried to put a tourniquet on. Meanwhile the armoured car was going round and round firing at the house. We belted back at them but it was clear there was no way out. I was afraid that if we stayed where we were, we would be bombed. I then dragged Malone to the cellar. The firing stopped and an ex British N.C.O. named Ellis shouted, *five minutes and we'll bomb you*. I was conscious of Malone and him still bleeding. It was dark now but the lights of the armoured car and trucks lit up the place. Finally we had to surrender; Cannon and I helped Malone out. Going up the stairs leading from the cellar to the outside I fell and a Free State soldier asked me if I was wounded. Malone was carried up and laid down on the gravel. The others came out then. Malone was put on a truck and taken to Claremorris, and from there to Athlone. Frightfully wounded, it was only then he received attention. He was later moved to hospital in Portobello and from there to Harepark on the Curragh. He carried two of those bullets all of his life. Claremorris was only about five miles away and we were taken there for the night. Some of the locals shouted abuse at us. I was locked in a shed behind a shop for the night. The next day we were taken back to Athlone. On the way the truck stopped for some reason outside Tommy Flanagan's house in Brickins. His brother, T. P. Flanagan, later Mayo County Engineer, had been the Divisional Engineering Officer and was then a prisoner in Athlone. Tommy gave us cigarettes, and for his trouble was thrown into the truck and taken away with us.

#### DETENTION IN ATHLONE

When we got to Athlone, Paddy Cannon and myself were thrown into solitary confinement. We all got right hidings for having escaped. The officer was a son of a bitch called Cooney, uncle of Patrick, the late minister. He later offered me a chance to "escape". If I tried, I knew there would be somebody lying in wait for me. He was a right brute, it turned out. McKeon also was a ruffian; the conditions he kept us in and the rotten food. I didn't see it, but I was there when — shot Patrick Mulrennan of Liscaul. This was on the 6th October 1922. Mulrennan was sitting on the steps of a hut hammering out a ring. In order to prevent escape attempts, the rule was nobody was supposed to be in huts during the day. When word came that McKeon and



— had entered the compound, the prisoners came tumbling out. Whether it was bravado or not, I don't know, but — fired at Mulrennan and missed. He took aim again and hit him. *I don't believe in shooting as wholesale medicine*, — he wrote his mother after, *but it was a wonderful shot*. Mulrennan was taken up to the prisoner's ward in the barracks and died a few days later. The poor devil's brother was killed on the 14th October 1922, near Ballaghaderreen. After a while I was taken from the cells up to Pump Square. Tom Mullins of Breaffy, Castlebar, was O.C. of the prisoners there. I think a fellow called Mulcahy was O.C. in another part of the barracks.

I came across some of my other comrades there, including Pat Browne of Newport. On one occasion Joe Ring came in to see me. He was then a brigadier in the Free State army and was in uniform. *Ballina has been recaptured by Michael*, he said, *I'm going over there to clear him out*. The next thing word came in that he had been killed in action in the Ox Mountains at Drumree, in September 1922. There is a small monument to him there which I renovated afterwards. Poor Joe, he was one of the best. On the 8th December a young officer from Mullingar called Duffy came into us. He was cock-a-hoop about something but wouldn't tell us what it was. We then heard about the killing of O'Connor, Mellows and the others. There was no chivalry about those Free State fellows.

About the 9th or 10th of December 1922, myself, Paddy Cannon (Islandeedy) and some others were moved to Mountjoy. It was dark when we arrived and we were placed in individual cells. Boredom was the big problem we had to put up with. We had no reading materials, but I remember playing a lot of cards.

#### ESCAPE FROM TINTOWN

When Tintown No. 1 opened we were moved there from Mountjoy. The Staters had learned quickly and were getting their prison system organised. Tintown was not filled immediately, prisoners arrived in dribs and drabs. We were shipped there by train in handcuffs and walked to the camp. I remember I managed to get one of my handcuffs off. Peadar O'Donnell had done the same. There was a row about this later. Altogether there were four huts in the camp, each containing about 120 men. They were made with concrete and were floored with a similar tile as is found in stables. The camp had the usual barbed wire entanglements and posts around it, and there were flying patrols of Free State troops going on all the time. At night you could hear, *No. 1 post and all is well; No. 2 post*, and so on. Mick O'Hanlon was the O.C. of my hut. Dr. Ferran, T.D., was our M.O.; Peadar O'Donnell was also one of the leaders.

There were other ex West Mayo Brigade men in my hut, including Tom Mullins of Castlebar and Paddy Cannon. Immediately a plan

was hatched to escape by digging a tunnel and making our way under the wire. They were building Tintown No. 2, on our right, and Tintown No. 3 on our left, so we had to complete our escape before they were finished. The entrance to the tunnel was right inside the door. With a nail we were able to lift up a few of the tiles which were placed into a box which then became a lid. This was always in place, whether digging was going on or not, as the guards used to frequently inspect the hut. We had lookouts placed at various intervals. Digging went on during the day and night. If a man was on the night rota we had a dummy fixed up in his bed. We had three great diggers, one of them was Tom Reidy of Newport. He had been a miner in England and was a very gentle person. I am sorry to say he was shot afterwards in a bar hold-up in New York. The men on the digging detail were rotated and I don't remember if we had any particular arrangements for ventilation.

The soil was put in bags and was lifted up in to the hut by means of a rope, with a hook at the end of it. The main problem was getting rid of the soil, and a solution to this was found by packing it between the internal and external walls of the hut. At night it was simply got rid of in the latrine. Peadar O'Donnell was in charge of getting rid of the soil. Paddy Cannon was really the technical man on the job. He had a great brain and was very intense about the inspection work. At first the work was slow but gradually we got more organised, even to the extent of having electric light put in the tunnel. Late one night the guards came into the hut and took Peadar away to shoot him in Dungloe. It was one of the loneliest sights I remember, seeing Peadar saying goodbye to us. Each day we waited to hear news that he had been shot. It was Joe Sweeney, his old comrade, who would have to do the job. And he would too. They were like that.

Finally the night of the escape arrived. The O.C. in each hut decided who was to go. Men from other huts who were chosen were replaced with men from our hut. The escapers were divided into sections of six. Tom Mullins of Castlebar was in charge of the first section. There were about ten sections in all. Fortunately it was a misty night. Tom Mullins was first, and dug the exit out. He then found that there were a few more yards to go but nothing could be done. He crawled his way to the wire and cut a hole in it, binding some of the strands with surgical tape provided by Dr. Ferran. Luckily he was in the shadow of the lights. We all followed and crawled our way to a wash house that was being constructed in one of the new camps. This provided cover for us, and I remember straightening my back and standing up with relief. We now had just a diagonal to cross. Mullins led the way and marked it again using the surgical tape. The first section of six followed Mullins and then headed off into the night. We then followed. At first I was in favour of making for the West, but I was

told there was better cover to be had by going for the Wicklow hills. With me at this time was Battie Cryan of Westport, Jim Treacy from Galway, and a man from Laherdaun, Co. Mayo, called Flanagan. The escape was a great success even though it was a pity that more didn't get out. It gave a great lift to the fellows that were left behind.

By daylight we had not gone far, and we were in a little thicket when in came three dogs followed by a huntsman. The dogs were barking like hell at us. He turned out to be a Scotsman and immediately offered us his money, as he thought he was going to be robbed. He was told to keep it but not to tell anyone where we were headed. Flanagan had been a sheep farmer in Mayo and we followed him with difficulty. Someone said, *he could find a mushroom on a mountain*. He was completely at home on them.

#### THE KILLING OF NEIL BOYLE (PLUNKETT)

We hoped to join up with a Column under a fellow named Neil Boyle. This was his real name but he was always known as Sean Plunkett. He had escaped earlier from Newbridge and, although a stranger in the area, had gathered a Column around him. We were able to locate them around Valleymount. They had heard of the escape and were on the lookout for us. The four of us joined this Column and a splendid crowd they were, very useful. There were about twenty in the Column, which was a mixture of Northerners, a few from Dublin and a few Wicklow fellows, all very well armed. I remember Dan McGee from the North had a Thompson gun. I was to get one later. The Column had got a consignment in through Belfast. I was with this Column for a few weeks and all the time we were ready for action. It had the aerodrome, the Curragh with its different barracks, and the military from Dublin to deal with. The Free State army knew this Column well, and the area was being continuously swept. The people were great; they reminded us very much of the Mayo people. I remember Mary Zellar of Zellar's Hotel, and the Misses Lambert who were school teachers from the village of Lacken. There were the two, Miss Dolan and Miss Kenny of Granabeg school; they lived in the cottage behind. There was Mooney's of Kilbride; we stopped there; and in Lord Waterford's lodge at Glenbride, where the keeper was old MacKenzie. In Fr. Browne's house in Valleymount I came across a radio for the first time. He was a brother of Cardinal Browne; one of them wrote *The Big Sycamore*. Although we were wary of them, some of the local doctors helped us with the wounded. Paddy Purcell, the doctor in Blessington, often came to our aid.

On one occasion I remember holding up in Richardson's who had the hotel in Glendalough. They were completely sympathetic to the Republic. After two or three weeks Flanagan decided it would be safer in Mayo, and with permission, left the Column. He got back safely



to Laherdaun. Battie Cryan left as well. We were constantly on the go, ambushing Staters. On one occasion we even attacked a post in Tallaght, while the barrack in Blessington was heavily sand bagged after repeated attacks. We were part of the South County Dublin Battalion — although we were in the heart of Wicklow — so our ambit was a wide one, so wide that for a while we held Cobb's Lodge at the head of Glenasmole. We thought we would never get arrested, we were so well armed and the Column so well run and the people were for us. We were determined to wait the war out.

On the 14th May 1923, two weeks after the cease fire, when we had been ordered to go on defence action only, and while we were awaiting instructions that were to come to us via Gerry Boland, we were staying at a farm house at Knocknadruc on a side of a mountain overlooking the King's River, six miles south of Vallemount in the heart of County Wicklow. It is a wild and storied countryside. Up the valley from it is Glenreemore where on a January night in 1592, perished the young prince Art O'Neill, after escaping from Dublin Castle; his illustrious companion Red Hugh O'Donnell suffered such severe frostbite that his big toes had to be amputated. Accompanied by an O'Hagan from Tyrone, they were struggling to reach the safety of Fiach McHugh O'Byrne at Glenmalur. Next door to the very cottage in which we now sheltered, Michael Dwyer and his column, including Sam McAllister, Hugh Byrne and Martin Burke, had also stayed more than a hundred and twenty years before. We had been on the move in the area; you would be lucky if you stayed the second night anywhere, and we had just come from a shack a mile to the west (now covered in by forestry). Neil Boyle was on the point of breaking up the Column anyway; the cease fire had been announced, and he was ready to make back to Donegal.

The name of the people in the house was Norton, Mrs. Elizabeth Norton, a widow, her father, and her daughter Sarah, a young girl of fourteen. I better explain that it was a single storey farmhouse, as it still is, but at that time it had only one little window at the rear, and no back door. There is a porch on it now, but the front door that time was a bit nearer the right hand corner. There is a big driveway up to it now, but at that time it was approached up a steep walled-in breen. All around it are stone walls, snipe grass and heather.

Anyway, this evening I got instructions to go to Fr. Browne in Vallemount. I can't remember what for. I had to be careful. There were Free State soldiers quartered in the schoolhouse and one of them had been shot in an encounter only a week before. One of the local fellows came with me. Fr. Browne wasn't there even though it was after midnight, so I left a message we had called and headed back to Knocknadruc. We walked by Lockstown and reached the area after dawn; as we approached the farmhouse we could hear firing. We

scouted around for a while and saw troops ahead of us. It was crawling with them. They had surrounded the house and were firing at it. We guessed that Plunkett was inside with some of the others. The firing continued for a while. Then we heard shouts from the house and the firing suddenly stopped. We could see they were parleying; I heard the full story after. Plunkett wanted the mother and daughter to be let out of the house. The Staters wouldn't hear of that and threatened to bomb them out. That was a favourite trick, throwing grenades through the window. This put Plunkett in a spot as he couldn't let the women be injured. So he said, *let me come out*. Out he came with his hands up and walked slowly towards a stone stile, then at the right hand corner of the house. When he got there he spoke a few words with this Free State officer named Felix McCorley, a Belfast man, perched behind a stone ditch above him. Suddenly McCorley raised his revolver and shot Plunkett in the eye, the bullet passing through his upraised hands. For good measure he shot him again in the head. He just shot him, I saw it all. It was cold blooded murder.<sup>(9)</sup> The others in the house were rounded up and taken away. We made good our escape and were heading back towards Blessington when we walked straight into a Free State patrol. It was stupid; we should have stayed off the roads, but we hadn't a chance. Plunkett came originally from Donegal. He was a tall fellow with a strong face, upright and handsome and a good leader. When it was all over and we were released, I went and visited his mother outside Dungloe, where she was living in poor enough circumstances. I happened to say this to Maud Gonne when I came back. Nothing would do her but to drive up and leave her car with them so that his younger brother might run a taxi business. That was Maud Gonne. She was like that. After our capture we were taken to Blessington and from there to Naas where there was a military barracks. We were kept there for the night. At one stage I met McCorley who went on with the usual bluster of having us all shot. As if I cared.

When Ireland called forth her true sons of the heather,  
Neil Boyle was the foremost to answer the call,  
The sons of the Rosses he banded together,  
To drive the false Saxon from dark Donegal.

Over mountain and moorland undaunted and daring,  
Till all hope abandoned he turned on the foe,  
Long live the Republic, his words rang out clearly,  
The guns thundered forth and Neil Boyle was laid low.

#### MOUNTJOY AGAIN

The following morning I was taken to B wing in Mountjoy. I was glad

to meet some of my old comrades like Ketterick and Derrig. Michael Kilroy was there as well. Ketterick had been Assistant Quarter Master General in Beggars Bush when he got the news about the Four Courts. He just walked out. That happened to many Republicans already in uniform; they could not stomach the betrayal. They arrested him on the train in Athlone and he spent the rest of the Civil War in jail. For some reason I was offered the Adjutant's job in the wing but I refused. I did accept the censor's job, which meant vetting all incoming and outgoing letters. At the time there was an escape attempt going on led by Dr. Tom Powell of Galway. It was kept a big secret and only those working on it knew about it. Things got rough, a new Governor was appointed to succeed Paudeen O'Keefe. This was Dermot McManus, a mean faced ex British officer from Kiltimagh. I don't know why I was picked, but a crowd of us were transferred to Arbour Hill for treatment, though after some time we were taken back to Mountjoy. The hunger strike of October 1923 led to the discovery of the tunnel. Some days after it began they attempted to turn on the heating, and when it wouldn't work started investigating. Some of the pipe work had been disconnected in the roof where the entrance to the tunnel was. (10) McManus brought in hoses and batons and there were fist fights with the red caps. The riots were going on day after day. One day Felix McCorley fired at a crowd of us but no one was injured. Ketterick and I did time in punishment in the basement.

#### ESCAPE FROM KILMAINHAM

It was decided to send the most unruly people to Kilmainham. In the dead of night thirty three of us were picked out one by one. Paddy Delaney, Free State M.O. from Ballyhaunis, Co. Mayo, came in and found me fully dressed. He said there's nothing wrong with you, and I was directed to go in an ordinary lorry. Sean MacBride had put on a great act. He was in his pyjamas and let on to be so weak that he was carried down the stairs. Daithi O'Donoghue and Mick Price and another fellow did the same, and they were directed to a particular lorry. Somewhere around Berkeley Road they escaped. I was in Kilmainham for the remainder of the hunger strike. It was a bit of a mess. If it had been confined to those who really had a case, those who were getting punishment, it would have been better. It spread to other jails, and to the camps and it became uncontrollable. It went on for forty one days, yet I never felt bad about being on hunger strike. It affects different people in different ways.

Sometime in December I managed to escape by impersonating another man. I was sent for by the Governor, Thady McGowan from Sligo. He looked at me and said, *Tom Heavey from Kiltimagh? Yes, I said. I have your file and you are released.* I wasn't of course the man in question, but when I got the opportunity I wasn't going to give



it up. I went upstairs and got my stuff and left Kilmainham by taxi. I went straight to the Royal Exchange Hotel and I got in touch with Sean MacBride. Very quickly he had me up in Glencree where I stayed with the Salkelds. After a while I was switched to another house, a little bungalow owned by Francis Stuart, the writer, who had married Iseult Gonne, Sean MacBride's half sister. I had some very pleasant company there; people like Dorothy Macardle and Helena Moloney. Ten years later Dorothy produced her authoritative *Irish Republic*, while Helena, a spirited trade union leader, was always a firm nationalist and Republican, unlike the strange people at the head of union affairs today. When things simmered down again, I became attached to GHQ staff in Sean Maloney's house "Inis Fail", 5 Albany Road, Ranelagh. He was married to a Miss Maguire, sister of Edward Maguire, at that time a director of Clery's and later of Brown Thomas.

#### REORGANISATION: FRANK AIKEN

In early 1924, I got involved in reorganisation work. This was a struggle as a lot of our men were still in jail, and many of them were about to emigrate. With Frank Aiken I travelled to the south and west. In the south we met Tom Crofts and Tom Barry of Cork, and John Joe Rice and Humphrey Murphy of Kerry. In the west we were now badly defeated and most of our fellows were still in jail.

We met Johnny Gibbons, Johnny Duffy and Paddy Hegarty, whose brother Edward had been killed in action near Newport in July 1922. We tried to get things going again. There was another problem there. Some of them were operating against the new Civic Guard, who were not armed. They used to strip them of their uniforms, telling them they were not wanted. At this time there were some real crooks going around armed who were robbing people and roughing up the guards. The result was the Republicans were getting blamed for everything. Aiken didn't like these attacks on the guards, and he resolved to put a stop to it. We came down from Dublin to Newport and had a meeting in McGovern's house near Skerdagh. People like Paddy Hegarty, Willie Malone, Joe Baker and Johnny Gibbons attended, and that finished the I.R.A. attacks on the guards. I liked Frank Aiken although he was a very dour man. He spoke very little; it was hard to get him to talk, or enter into conversation of any sort. You would never know what he was thinking. As an example, I was with him in McEllistrim's kitchen near Tralee, and the woman of the house was pressing glasses of hot port upon us as we had come quite a way. *No thank ye, ma'am; I don't drink. Oh take it now. No thank ye, ma'am—didn't I tell ye.* Good God, it was amazing how short he could be. He didn't drink and that was all. But I took it, oh yes, whenever it was offered. He was a stern disciplinarian. I remember

reading a communication to a local company in Kerry. It finished, *mise le meas*, Frank Aiken. *Oh*, said one of the group, *he may be frank but it is us who are aching*. He had plenty of guts. He was not slow to teach the B Specials and Loyalists around Camlough a lesson in June 1922. A month later, having tried to keep the sides together, he made a sudden counter attack and recovered Dundalk for the Republicans. Aiken adored De Valera, so it was not surprising that he slid out of the leadership of the I.R.A., and joined in the foundation of Fianna Fail. To Frank, Dev was a holy symbol. I could not compare Aiken and Twomey, who succeeded him; they were two different animals. Aiken had the brusqueness of a Northerner, while Twomey had the smooth diplomacy of a Cork man.

#### AT ARMY MUTINY MEETING

I remember I was in "Inis Fail" when Sean MacBride ordered me to pick up a despatch at 2 Royce Road, near the North Circular Road. This was round the middle of March 1924. In it I was told to attend a meeting in 99 Connaught Street, and to report on what happened there. The same night I went there and was let in by Bill Tobin's mother without any difficulty. There were about ten or twelve men present, some of whom I recognised. I straight away realised that the meeting had something to do with the army mutiny, as the papers for the previous few days were full of it. Along with Tobin and Dalton were two members of the Squad, Slattery, who had one arm, and Joe Dolan, the man who had brought the orders to London for the shooting of Sir Henry Wilson. Also a fellow called Mooney, who later became a detective officer. These men were killers, and my first thought was that I'd never get out of the bloody place. Strangely enough no one asked my name, but I do recall being asked where I came from. None of those that I spoke to had any idea about the west of Ireland. It was obvious that the main business of the evening was finished when I arrived, as tea was being passed around. I had to endure the cup of tea given to me by Mrs. Tobin after which I left as quickly as I could and reported back to MacBride. Frank Kerlin, the Assistant Director of Intelligence, spoke to me after about it and laughed at the situation I had found myself in. Although they appeared to have Mulcahy on their side, it turned out to be a load of hot air.<sup>(11)</sup> They had not the guts to go on with anything; they allowed themselves be retired, and the Free State settled down to torpid constitutionalism.

Later on in March 1924, when some British soldiers were coming ashore at Cobh (I have never spoken on this before), a couple of Thompson guns opened up on them. There were five I.R.A. men in a big yellow car in Free State uniform. As they fired they shouted, *up Dalton, up Tobin*. It was hoped to cause a major incident with the

British. Those were Frank's orders. Aiken had the idea that if we got the mutineers to come in on our side, the old anti-British spirit would be revived. It was worth taking the chance, and I fully agreed with it. The government here, however, apologised and handed over compensation and that was the end of it.

But we had to stand by our own, the leader of whom was the legendary "Sandow" Donovan". GHQ decided to get them to America. Off with them then in the Rolls Royce to be met by Tony Woods who drove down from Dublin, collected three of them and took them to Sean Maloney's house, "Inis Fail", in Ranelagh. They were later shipped out. Tony Woods was a daredevil with cars. Another time — he never told anyone about this — at a roadblock at Mullingar he just drove through. They fired at him and he got a bullet in the shoulder, but he just drove on to Donnybrook where he fainted.

In July 1924, I was appointed to act as liaison between the I.R.A. and De Valera, in the latter's capacity as President of the Republic. Sean MacBride, for a time, acted in the same capacity. We used the Sinn Fein offices in Suffolk Street. There were three of us in it including Kathleen O'Connell who later became his lifetime secretary. The duties were light, giving interviews to journalists; in general anything that came into his head. One thing I remember, dumping some of his papers in connection with the Treaty in a house in Cowper Road. I think they were moved after. About this time I was involved with Sean MacBride in reorganisation work in the North, and after that came the St. George episode.<sup>(12)</sup> It is certain that if we had won the day and MacBride had any influence, we wouldn't be without a decent fishing fleet or navy. Dev at this time saw that Sinn Fein was dead. *There is no future in it*, he said to me one day, *not for ten years will it get in. You will waste your life*. I didn't pay a lot of attention to what he said at the time. Although Sinn Fein was winning by elections towards the end of the year, many of us felt we were going to have to tackle the Free State in some other way. This was the reason for the I.R.A. reorganisation work, but the I.R.A. was not sure of its direction either.

#### BACK TO COLLEGE

It must have been in 1925 that I went to U.C.D. to study medicine. Sean MacBride said that I should not; that I should do law. There were few Republicans there then. We were continuously being lifted by the Special Branch and released again. Frank Ryan was there at the time. I do not recall that he had any great influence in the I.R.A. then. Like many others I joined the O.T.C. in the college. On one occasion Tony Woods and I decided to lift some rifles belonging to the cadets in Griffith Barracks. I got Tony to make a replica of the key to the magazine. It wouldn't work and we got nothing.



The formation of Fianna Fail was a bit of a shock. I was in Westport at the time; I was at home for the Easter holidays. I felt its formation was a departure from the Republican line, and at the same time I could not see it as a success. At the time our fellows were leaving the country; it was tragic. Each day they were disappearing, so there were few of the top men left in West Mayo. Kilroy joined it, however, and was elected a T.D. in 1927. The women, like Mrs. Sheehy-Skeffington and Mary MacSwiney, were very disheartened. They felt that their best friends were going Free State. Kid Bulfin made some hard remark in Sean's house about Aiken when he joined. I met Ketterick in Westport after hearing the news. He cursed and swore and said why didn't they do it two or three years before. Ketterick was one of those who went to America, but came back before the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War. He got a job from Dev as one of those supervising the Non-Intervention in Spain. It wasn't long before he got injured and was repatriated. Later I met Derrig and asked how Ketterick was. It was then I found out he had been in the company of two ex British officers on Coronation Day 1937 when he got injured. I understood then; they probably came to blows because he was never a man to stand for the British Anthem.

My U.C.D. involvement on the periphery of the Movement brought the curtain down on my I.R.A. activities until I found myself raked in with dozens of others following the Kevin O'Higgins shooting in July 1927. I came down after Mass on Sunday into Howth and I saw a chap from Castlebar directing traffic, a guard I knew. He had been with me in the barracks in Castlebar. *The Minister for Justice has been shot in Blackrock*, he said. The next day I went into town to collect a Smith and Wesson which I was getting done up in Barry Keegan's. I collected that and gave it to my brother who lived in Howth to bring there. When I returned to Howth I had barely got off the tram at the top of the hill when I was then arrested by Chief Superintendent Finan O'Driscoll and two others. I was then taken to Dublin Castle and was brought before Dave Neligan. He just laughed and said: *what do those bloody idiots think they are doing*. That was the most astounding reception I ever got. *I know where you were*, he said, and went on to tell me that O'Driscoll had an idea that I was involved. To prove it he had driven in his little Swift from Howth to Blackrock and back. I knew from Neligan's attitude that he knew I had not anything to do with it. I remember, however, seeing Charlie Dalton and Liam Tobin under arrest while I was there. This gave the impression to me that the mutineers were involved, which wasn't the case. Another thing, at Kevin O'Higgins' deathbed was Eamonn Fleming. He had a brother Paddy. They went different sides in the Civil War. Eamonn was present when O'Higgins asked MacNeill to swear that there would be no reprisals against Republicans over this death. MacNeill did that.

Eamonn told this to Paddy, who told Maud Gonne, and she told me.

I never resigned from the I.R.A. but I ended up in the civil service, spending most of my life in the west of Ireland. Oh how futile and unsuitable the civil service system is for this small island. We took over a machine and we have not changed it. What the British accept, we accept, and what the British do, we copy. Our dream of a free Ireland is completely shattered. Pearse's dream never approached reality, but even De Valera's dream of the thirties is shattered too and it was only a diluted dream.

#### REFERENCES

- 1 Sean MacBride's account.
  - 2 All accounts agree (see Sean Dowling) that Collins, while adored within his circle, was boisterous to the point of being uncouth. Frank O'Connor, who was an admirer, has this to say in *The Big Fellow* published in 1937: nothing was sacred. In "exercise" as he called it, Collins would hurl the water croft, the wash-basin, the furniture — anything that came to hand . . . Even the beloved O'Hegarty would be dragged across the floor by his hair. His companions locked the door against him as the only way of escaping.
  - 3 See Tom Maguire's account.
  - 4 Fr. Michael Griffin, Gurteen, Co. Galway, language and Volunteer enthusiast. Taken to H.Q. of Crown forces at Taylor's Hill on night of 14th November 1920. Body found shot through the head at Cloghacolta, Barna, on November 20th.
  - 5 There is a detailed account of this fight in Ernie O'Malley's *Raids and Rallies*.
  - 6 Six weeks after Auxiliaries and Tans had burned the centre of Cork, and during a period when many reprisals and burnings were being carried out by crown forces, Dr. Gilmartin, Archbishop of Tuam, had this to say of an ambush at Kilroe near Headford in which six Auxiliaries were wounded: the misguided criminals who fired a few shots from behind a wall and then decamped to a safe distance, are guilty of a triple crime . . . they have incurred the guilt of murder . . . they come to do a foul and craven deed. Equally heavy against the Volunteers were Bishop Colohan of Cork (ambushes and murder), Bishop Finnegan of Kilmore (what hope have you against the British Empire). Most bishops, however, did not go out of their way in condemnation.
  - 7 As Alisdair Mac Caba he was instrumental later in setting up the Educational Building Society.
  - 8 See reference under Sean Dowling to Patrick Moran of Crossna, Boyle, executed in Mountjoy, 14th March 1921.
  - 9 The McCorleys, Felix and Roger, were from Toomebridge, Co. Antrim, claiming descent from the legendary Roddy. They were both very involved in the 1921-22 struggle in Belfast — Roger being severely wounded — and both went Free State. *We were following the expressed will of the people*, Roger told this writer recently. At Knocknadrucce, he says, Neil Boyle attempted to escape from the back of the house when he was shot; this statement being contradicted by the nature of the house which had no back exit, apart from a small window.
- Paddy Nolan with his wife and family now live in the house, Sarah Norton having died three years ago. Paddy confirms the circumstances of Neil Boyle's death. A very

*cowardly job, the way it was done*, he says. He remembers a local man cutting sods to place over the blood stained area. They took him in a cart down to the road where the body was put in a lorry. The remaining five or six lads of the column were put in another lorry, Paddy's mother giving them bread and milk. Another man, Paddy Lalor, ran for a priest, but Boyle had died instantly. There is a granite plaque, erected in the thirties, at the spot with a simple inscription.

Here fell 15th May 1923  
the noble patriot,  
Commandant Neil Plunkett  
R.I.P.

(In 1985 Neil's sister and daughter from U.S.A. visited the cottage.)

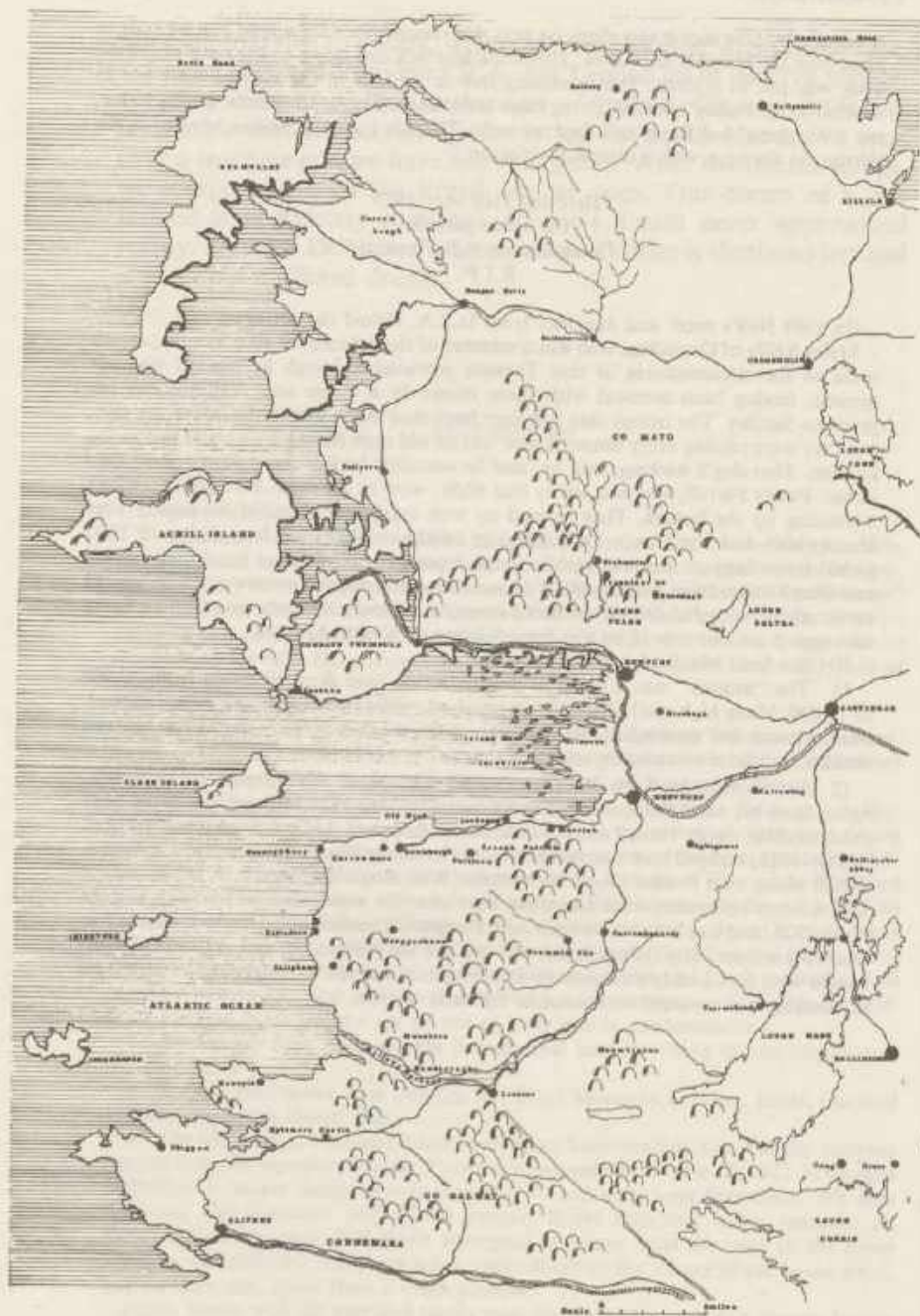
Myles Reilly of Granabeg, who was a member of the column for four months, recalls some of the circumstances of that Tuesday morning although he himself was not present, having been arrested with three others in a house near Valleymount the previous Sunday. The troops may not have been sure Boyle was in the house, he says, but they were raiding every house. There was an old man dozing on a settle bed in the kitchen. *That dog's barking*, said he, *and he wouldn't bark if there wasn't somebody about*. Paddy Farrell, who was sentry that night, went to the door. He fired at soldiers advancing up the boreen. They opened up with everything then. Myles recalls Tom Heavey well, and Jim Treacy. Others that he listed were Redmond from Firhouse, Fitzgerald from Saggart, Seamus McMurrough from Leitrim, another local man Burke and Dan McGee from Falcarragh. You would hear McGee anywhere when he roared forth, *my name is Pat O'Donnell and I come from Donegal*. There was Christy Barry too: now I am not sure if he was from Kildare or Meath, he adds.

10 See Sean MacBride's account.

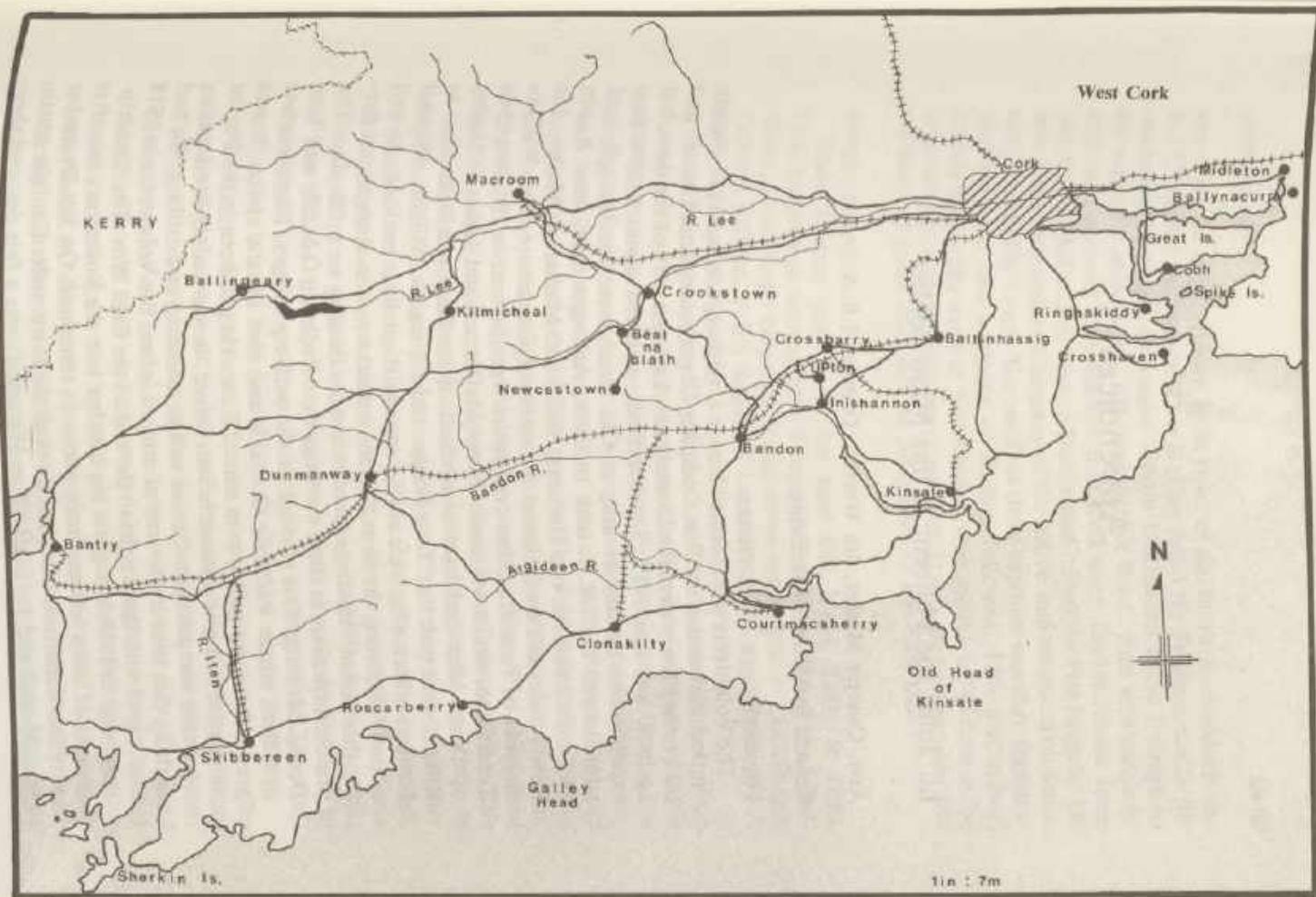
11 The "mutiny" was a result of dissatisfaction over demobilisation from 50,000 to 15,000. Many high staff officers were removed, while two cabinet ministers resigned. Mulcahy was not sympathetic to the aims of the mutineers; he resigned for his own reasons, but later returned to cabinet.

12 See account by Tony Woods; also Michael MacEvilly's report in Appendix. Apart from his uncle Seamus killed at Kilmeena in May 1921 Michael MacEvilly adds about another uncle, Tom; a native of Castlebar, Adjutant A, Coy, Sligo town, arrested in July 1922, escaped and was recaptured in the north Sligo round up around Ballin-trillick along with Peadar Glynn and others. With Brigadier Carney he led an escape with seventy volunteers from Longford Barracks. He was sentenced to death in February 1923, and was lodged in Finner with Peadar O'Donnell who mentions him in *The Gates Flew Open*. His father, Jerry, was in Cork No. 4 Brigade, and in the Civil War fought with Con Leddy's column around Araglin. Interned in Harepark, he later went to America but returned to Ireland in the early thirties.





PRIMARY DATA: WEST INDIES AND CARIBBEAN IN THE TWENTIES



## Appendices

Lt. John Joe Philben: A fine Mayo Soldier

Asst. Quarter Master, 4th Western Division I.R.A.

Related to Michael MacEvilly

### FORMATION OF VOLUNTEERS

The Volunteers were formed here in Louisburgh in late 1917. Austin McDonnell became the first Company Captain and Tom Harney and his brother Andy were the Lieutenants. I am not sure of the date, but again it was late 1917, Joe MacBride gathered about twelve men together one Sunday evening at Old Head, near Louisburgh, and administered the I.R.B. oath to them. Amongst them were Austin McDonnell and the two Harneys, Willie and Michael O'Malley, Joe Bowe, John O'Dowd, James Sammon of Carramore, and William Greylliss of Falduff. Other companies were formed in the area then like Killeen, which was under James McDonnell and James O'Malley of Cross, who died later as a result of hardship received. Also in Killeen were men like Tom Fergus and his cousin William, Michael Foy and others, who were always sound nationally in outlook. As well as the Volunteers, the Sinn Fein movement was also reorganised during this period. Meetings were held on a Sunday or a fair day. The principal speakers at these meetings were Padhraig Ó Máille and Tom Derrig. Meetings were also held in the outlying villages. There was one in Killeen where Padhraig Ó Máille and Ned Moane spoke. It was presided over by an old man named Kane. He had been in the Fenian movement and was a staunch Sinn Feiner. It was mainly fund raising work that was going on then as well as marching and drilling. We had nothing that time in the way of arms. I joined the Volunteers in 1918 and stayed with them right to the end of the Civil War. The conscription crisis in 1918 brought a big number into the Volunteers but after it most of them left and only about 25 remained. On 8th December 1918 the Volunteers marched through the town under Captain Austin MacDonnell and 1st Lieut. Tom Harney. It was a fair day and there



was a line of R.I.C. drawn up in front of the Barracks. Suddenly the R.I.C. rushed the parade. Tom Harney felled the Sergeant and in the confusion managed to escape. Austin McDonnell broke through to the outskirts of the town, followed by four R.I.C. men with carbines, and was captured. Tom Harney then took over. On his release from jail Austin McDonnell went to Dublin and joined the Fire Brigade. He also joined Rathmines Company of the I.R.A. and remained on active service until the Truce. The result of these captures was that organisation suffered and a period of decline followed. This was halted, mainly due to the work of Ned Moane, who spent a lot of time in the area reorganising the different companies. It was during this time that we were all given the Oath of Allegiance to the First Dail.

#### INVOLVEMENT

Andy Harney gave it to me near Old Head. Early in 1920, Louisburgh was formed into a separate battalion area (No. 4 Battalion, West Mayo Brigade). It had seven companies — Louisburgh, Cuileen, Killeen, Tully, Achoney, Lecanvey and Cregganbawn. P. J. Kelly was appointed O.C.

Andy Harney became Vice O.C., and Tom Joyce Adjutant. Dan Sammon then became Captain of the Louisburgh Company, and his two Lieutenants were Joe Fergus and Pat McNamara. During the spring and early summer, the Volunteers were busy raiding for arms, and interfering with the mails. On 1st July 1920, Pattern Day, the streets of the town were heavily patrolled by R.I.C. One of our men, Pat Sammon, was recognised and an attempt was made to arrest him. The R.I.C. were dragging him to the barracks when P. J. Kelly and another officer with some volunteers closed in and released him. This incident brought home to the British that they could not treat us lightly. The R.I.C. garrison was quickly reinforced by men from other barracks, and also by Black and Tans. Many houses were raided, some of the lads were arrested and others had to go on the run. Some went to England or Scotland never to return. Tom Harney left and got a job on the trams, and joined up with Austin McDonnell in Rathmines Company, where he too went on active service. The work continued. We ran dances and concerts to raise money for arms.

We drilled at night and did a lot of intelligence work. We also helped with the National Loan, and in the running of the Republican Courts. British administration was being boycotted and elbowed out. Midnight raids and marauding were the order of the day. Tans and Auxiliaries with their superior weapons, and high powered Crossley tenders struck again and again from their base in Westport twelve miles away. In March 1921, an attempt was made by P. J. Kelly, Andy Harney, Jim Harney, Martin O'Reilly and two officers who were visiting the area — Joe Baker (Westport Batt.) and Seamus MacEvilly

(Castlebar Batt.), to eliminate rampaging Tans and R.I.C. who had been shooting up the town after curfew. Whether it was luck or they were tipped off, the enemy did not appear that night. Shortly after this Andy Harney was accidentally shot, and Dan Sammon became Vice Commdt. of the Battalion. Pat McNamara had become Captain of the Louisburgh Company. Both of these men were lucky to escape when the enemy surrounded a house between Carramore and Askelane, and captured a number of volunteers after an exchange of shots. Many of the Louisburgh Battalion were on active service at this time, and a sizeable number took part in the Kilmeena ambush on 19th, May 1921. None of them were wounded or captured, and all got safely back to the Battalion area. The vast majority of the Battalion took the Republican side, and men like Dan Sammon, Joe Fergus, Pat McNamara and others did great work later on in terrible bad conditions in Connemara during the Civil War.

In October 1920 I went to the university in Dublin to do arts along with a friend of mine, Tommy Joe Prendergast, who signed up to do mechanical engineering. We got in touch with Tom Harney and Austin McDonnell and succeeded in getting into the same company as them — Rathmines Coy. We were immediately put on intelligence work. At that time they used to send up R.I.C. men from the country to see if they would spot anybody. On one occasion in Dame Street, we walked into two R.I.C. men from Louisburgh. They made a charge for us but we jumped on a tram in College Green and got away. We reported that they were there. Wexford Street and Redmond's Hill were hot spots at the time because they were so narrow. Tom Harney got wounded in an ambush there. I took part in some small engagements which involved lobbing Mills bombs into British lorries and skipping off as fast as you could.

In June 1921 when the exams were over, I came back to Louisburgh. When we came to Murrisk, at the foot of the Reek, we found out that there was a huge round up on. Field kitchens and everything. On 2nd June the West Mayo flying column, which included a number of Louisburgh men, had ambushed a British patrol at Carrowkennedy. It was a great success and they captured a whole lot of arms and ammunition. Mrs. Campbell, a relative of mine, called us into the bar in Murrisk. It was filled with military and we realised that if they searched us they would surely find something. We were having a mineral when this tall fellow in British uniform, Jim McDonnell from Cuileen, who was in the R.I.C. — came over and spoke to us. He must have recognised us but we did not know him. He walked out with us, past a machine gun post on the bridge and in this way we got past. He deliberately helped us as otherwise we would not have got through. We headed by the side of the Reek and on for Cuileen. From there we went to Louisburgh. I learned there that a number of

the Louisburgh Batt. had taken part in the ambush and were now on the run. There were over 4,000 British military involved in the round-up. They used spotter planes from Castlebar and in Clew Bay they had gunboats, whose search lights were used to light up the hill at night. Towards the end of the month we learned that the column had disbanded, and in the end not one of them was captured. It came as a blow to learn that Andy Harney along with his two brothers John and Larry had been arrested in Legan farm by the military who had a camp at Old Head.

#### TRUCE

What I wanted to do was to join the Column but the Truce on 11th July came. For a while there was great excitement, particularly among our own supporters. The Column now had plenty of arms and ammunition and the Truce did not impress them greatly. A truce was one thing, but peace in the form of a Republic was another. When the terms of the Treaty were eventually published I was disgusted. We had taken an oath to the Republic when we were sworn in. I felt if you went the other way and accepted the Treaty you would be breaking that oath.

Four of us from the 4th Battalion were sent to Clifden to join with the West Connemara Brigade after Christmas 1921, Anthony O'Toole who later became O.C. in Cleggan, John O'Malley, John Needham and myself. After the 4th Western Division was formed in October 1921 the 4th Battalion became part of the West Connemara Brigade. When trouble broke out in Galway with the pro Treaty crowd, the four of us volunteered to go there and help out. Others from Clifden went as well. Tom "Baby" Duggan was Brigadier in Galway City. He was the first O.C. of Renmore Barracks after the British left. In the fight he got a bullet through his face. This was a sad blow to us. When we got there it had just finished and we were brought back and stationed in Clifden R.I.C. Barracks which had been evacuated. We fortified it with barbed wire and steel shutters and remained there for some time.

#### LORD CLIFDEN

Our O.C. at the time was Brigadier Jack Conneely — known as "The Brig" — a great fighter and a first class mechanic. One of our fellows, a Connemara lad, got his leg broken. Jack Conneely knew that Lord Clifden who resided at Kylemore House, had a few cars; he asked him for one to take the fellow to hospital in Castlebar. Clifden refused. Conneely ignored him and took a big Lancaster car. On the way back from hospital, as they were driving up the driveway, the Lancaster was ambushed by Lord Clifden and his wife. Lady Clifden had a shotgun and Eugene Gillan was hit in the face. Jack Conneely



jumped out without being hit and disarmed the two of them. He was very cool and did not shoot them. Instead he gave them 24 hours to leave the country. They left for Belfast shortly after and Jack kept the Lancaster for the use of the Brigade.

#### LIMERICK

Limerick city was part of Ernie O'Malley's 2nd Southern Division which was solidly anti Treaty. At the end of February 1922, Griffith ordered Michael Brennan O.C. of the 1st Western Division into Limerick to take over for the Provisional Government a number of barracks evacuated by the British. Brennan's division was the only Western Division to go Free State. This was the first time that Treaty forces had been ordered into an anti Treaty area. Michael Kilroy ordered a column from the 4th Western under Brodie Malone down to Limerick to help the Republicans. Paddy Duffy was with them as well. Kilroy wanted to attack the Staters there and throw them out. It was realised that if firing started this could be the beginning of a civil war. O'Malley gave the Staters an ultimatum to evacuate, but unfortunately neither Liam Lynch or Rory O'Connor backed him and a settlement was reached whereby all armed troops would leave the city. This suited Collins, to whom Churchill had written, *thank God you have got to manage it, not me*. Kilroy was disgusted; he realised that by attacking them, the Republicans could have held the city and by showing decisiveness would have damaged the Free State position. O'Malley, a Castlebar man, had a lot in common with Kilroy, and if these had been listened to then, the outcome might have been different.

#### ARMY CONVENTION

On 27th February in the middle of the Limerick crisis, the Government gave permission to hold the Army Convention. But by the 15th March, when the crisis was over, they changed their minds and banned it. It knew full well that a large proportion of the Army was against the Treaty. The Convention went ahead on 26th March and I.R.A. delegates from all parts of the country attended. The West Connemara delegates were Petie Joe McDonnell, Jack Feehan, Jack Conneely, Gerald Bartley and myself. We drove up to Dublin in Lord Clifden's Lancaster. Of course, the Convention, which represented at least 80% of the Army, was solidly against the Treaty. It was a week or so before Michael Kilroy came down, and in the meantime he was appointed to the Executive on 9th April. By now I had been transferred to Divisional H.Q. in Castlebar where I was put in charge of the magazine and accounts and records. Myself, Jim Rush, Luke Faherty and Hugh Masterson were involved in this work.

## EXCHANGE OF RIFLES

About April or May seven or eight of us under Paddy Duffy were ordered to effect an exchange of rifles. Collins was badly put out at the attacks on Nationalists in the North. Beggars Bush had got new rifles from the British, and the idea was that if we handed over our rifles they would give us new ones. Anyway, we drove to Boyle in a Crossley tender with our rifles. When we got there we waited a while, and eventually two Free State officers arrived in a car and said to Paddy, that the lorry with the new rifles had broken down and that they would let us have them later on. Paddy said *You will get no rifles until I get the new ones*. The new rifles never appeared and Paddy brought the old ones back to Castlebar.

## ATTACK ON THE WEST

I had been sent up to Dublin to get stuff and stayed in the Four Courts. I left it at midnight on 27th June with a Winchester rifle and ammunition, 300 detonators and special wire for mining a British ship in Killary Bay. I safely arrived in Castlebar. At 4.07 a.m. on the 28th, the Four Courts was attacked with British artillery. This was a great shock. We blamed the politicians, and in particular, Griffith, who never was intent on a republic. The Free State decided then to take the West first: they met little opposition until they crossed the Shannon. Things were very bad in Sligo where a unit from the 4th Western was ordered north to help them. Brodie Malone was in charge. While billeted in Tubbercurry this column met Charlie Daly and Tom Mullins on their way to Donegal to take up divisional appointments. With Frank Carty and the Sligo fellows, Malone easily retook Colooney, while a local unit ambushed a Treaty force at Rockwood, capturing an armoured car, "The Ballinalee". Ballinrobe was the H.Q. of the 2nd Western under Tom Maguire. They entrenched themselves there as they were expecting an attack from the Galway direction. Other reinforcements were sent for, and a column from the West Connemara Brigade under Gerald Bartley went to help them as well. This column included two from Louisburgh — John Needham and Tommy Joe Prendergast, who was later killed in an accident after an attack on a barracks in Tuam. The attack from Galway did not materialise, so Malone's unit was sent to Boyle, where things were getting hard.

After three days they realised that they could not hold the position any longer and withdrew towards Ballaghaderreen. Anyway, they were near Colooney when they were surrounded. Malone himself has said that after his unit was forced to surrender he was astounded at the number of ex British army men he noticed among the Staters who had been rushed there by McKeon. Anthony O'Toole from Louisburgh managed to get away but Joe Baker was captured. A

column under Tom Heavey and Paddy Duffy was sent to assist Malone, but they arrived too late. Shortly after, word came that McKeon was coming into Claremorris. The Divisional H.Q. in Castlebar was his objective. McCabe and Lawlor were moving in from the east — the Claremorris direction. Michael Kilroy's intention was to go on to Manulla and join up with Tom Maguire's 2nd Western crowd and engage them at Claremorris. He pulled in all his units for the attack. Then word arrived that Free State troops under Joe Ring had landed from the *Minerva* at Westport on 24th July. Gerard Bartley and the West Connemara unit met some of them as they passed through Westport, in response to Kilroy's order to report for the attack. They avoided engaging Bartley. The Staters had information from their own crowd and that made it ready for them.

Westport had gone rotten; most of the merchants and clergy went Free State. Many of them were pro British anyhow. Kilroy was now in an impossible position, with the enemy at his rear. Anyway, when he reached Manulla he got word that McKeon had taken Claremorris, and that there were about 1,000 troops there. It was a pity that Westport Quay was not defended, as we had a great position there from the mill. He now had no choice. He had already evacuated his H.Q. in Castlebar. There were Free State troops on all sides, so he decided to break up into columns. The West Connemara crowd under Gerald Bartley went back to their own area. Ned Moane formed a column along with Tom Harney and Paul Riley and some of the men from the Louisburgh area and headed back there. I went with Michael's column, down the railway line to Ballavarey and up through Park. We made our way through the Windy Gap. Most of the divisional staff were with us. Many a man must have thought of the last force that went through that Gap, when the French under General Humbert and the peasant rebels came through and defeated the British outside Castlebar in 1798. From there we went to Laherdaun and on to Treanlaur Lodge outside Newport which became our H.Q. The Free State moved quickly from Claremorris to Castlebar and took it without a fight.

In an action at Coolnabinna on 17th July, Edward Hegarty, a brother of one of our Brigadiers, stood up to take the surrender of some Free State troops holding a white flag, and was shot down and killed. Newport was now taken by the Free State, and this only left Clifden in the hands of the Republicans.

#### GUERRILLA ACTIONS

We were far from beaten for at the start of August, under the command of Michael Kilroy, we carried out a major attack on Castlebar. Mick Mullins was in the old hospital on the Mall at the time, they tried to get him out but it did not come off. Four of us — Jack Feehan,



Jim Moran, Jimmy O'Connor from Balla, and myself were put in at the back of the asylum in order to ambush a patrol from the railway station. They did not come our way, but instead came down the town and were attacked by a section on the Mall which had orders to attack Burleigh House opposite it. I think a few Free Staters were hit. At any rate, they abandoned their weapons. John P. Sammon of Louisburg went out on the Mall, and under heavy fire gathered up the weapons. The Castlebar unit under Dailie Chambers carried out an attack on the railway station and pinned them down there. We could hear their shots as it was less than a mile away. At our position we did not know what was happening down the town. Near the asylum was the jail, which the Staters had occupied. They had a machine gun there and were blazing all round with it. We decided to get out as we had lost contact. We crossed the Westport Road and made our way to the graveyard right opposite the jail. Beyond the graveyard was a lake. We broke the chain on a boat and, using our rifles, paddled to the other side. We then came in by Newtown and made our way to Main Street. We could not see anybody, so we fired a few shots in the direction of the Mall. At that very time they had sent a party to pick up the wounded from the Mall. When they heard the shots they ran off and left the wounded there. Although the Cavalry Barracks was right on the Mall, and the Infantry Barracks near it, they did not come out to attack us. We then headed out the Newport Road and called in at Walsh's public house, where they told us that the others had called about 3 a.m. We were to meet at Litir; eventually we came to Paddy Jordan's house in Islaneady (Paddy had died from wounds received in the Kilmeena ambush on 19th May, 1921). We stayed the night there, and the next day joined up with Michael's column near Newport.

We gave them no rest. There were columns operating everywhere. Ned Moane was operating around Louisburg. Jack Connolly and Michael Mannion were on the Newport side. Gerald Bartley and Jack Conneely were in west Connemara, and Colm O'Gaora was in East Connemara.

#### CAPTURE OF BALLINA: REPUBLICANS COUNTER ATTACK

On 7th September a meeting of all the divisional leaders was held in the Leenane Hotel. It was mainly concerned with organisation, and the shortage of ammunition in particular was deplored. It was not attended by Michael Kilroy who in all probability was still in Clare for a meeting, driven there by Tommy Joe Gibbons. It was at this meeting that, I think, the Western Command was formed. Michael Kilroy was appointed O.C. This meant that he was put in charge of the 2nd, 3rd and 4th Western Divisions. Petie Joe McDonnell then became O.C. of the 4th Western. Liam Pilkington was in charge of the 3rd and Tom

Maguire led the 2nd. As far as I can remember the officers of the Western Command were: O.C. Michael Kilroy, Vice O.C. P. J. Rutledge, Adjutant. Dr. J. A. Madden, all of the 4th Western and Q.M. Charlie Gildea of the 3rd Western. These were good men. They would not put anybody into a fight unless they were in it themselves. Kilroy and Rutledge were away for about three weeks and must have had difficulty in getting back.

On the 12th September Michael Kilroy and the north Mayo fellows recaptured Ballina. With them were P. J. Rutledge, Seamus Killeen, who I think was the director of operations, Phelim Calleary and his brother Vincent, Tommy Ruane and John Gallagher of Rehins. They captured a large supply of arms and ammunition, and also released a number of Republican prisoners including Joe Baker who had been captured in Colooney with Malone. This was a great blow to the Free State who played it down of course. Kilroy did not plan to hold Ballina but instead retreated west.

Then on the 14th between Ballycastle and Belderg on the north Mayo coast, Kilroy, with a small party, captured sixteen Free State troops without a shot being fired. The next day Free State reinforcements arrived, and at Gortleetha Lodge an advanced guard of sixteen Free State troops were accounted for by four snipers, who killed six and severely wounded three or four others. The main body then advanced across country and engaged our men. After a three and a half hour engagement, the States surrendered. Thirty five prisoners were taken, excluding the six killed. We captured in all eighty rifles and ammunition. The same day Joe Ring in an ambush in the Ox Mountains was killed. General Tony Lawlor was wounded. Joe was a great fighter and we were saddened to hear of his death.

#### FREE STATE EVACUATES NEWPORT: THE NEWPORT REPUBLIC

We continued on and attacked the Newport garrison. They were there in the middle of a strong republican area and things were rough for them. We launched a particularly heavy attack on a Sunday in September, 1922, and it went on all night. We had occupied most of the town and could have taken it only for a misunderstanding about placing mines. The attack was led by Comdt. Gen. Petie Joe McDonnell, and the different sections involved were headed by Comdt. Jack Connolly and Paddy Duffy. Other units were officered by J. Gavin, Mick Mannion and Jack Feehan. Dr. J. A. Madden and Christy Macken also had their own sections. We withdrew at 5.30 a.m. on Monday. The following Friday a troop ship attempted to evacuate the garrison. Outside Burrishoole it was fired on by a party of our men under Jim Moran. The ship had an anchor thrown in such a way as to keep her in the channel; she could not retreat. A white flag went up then and she surrendered. As bad luck would have it, Jim and his



fellows could not get out to her, and when the tide came in that evening the troop ship retreated. Towards the end of September over one hundred Free State troops arrived and succeeded in releasing the garrison. Some left in a hooker, sailed by a fellow named Holleran from Inisboffin. We had captured the Free State O.C., a Captain Flaherty and his second in command Mick Walsh. Flaherty was later released, but Walsh, taking an enormous risk, stayed with the column to the end. His brother was on our side in Dublin.

At this time the food supply was very bad and the people were in a poor way. Some of the big merchants in Westport had refused to supply Newport as it was in our hands. They tried to starve us out. Intelligence had reported that a ship carrying flour was due in Westport. Michael Kilroy sent Joe Baker and three men to Islandmore to wait for it. He knew that the ship would have to stop at Innishlyre to pick up the pilot. There was no news for three or four days. Then one lovely evening as Mick and I were sitting down on a hillside at Trianbeg he said, *I will have to recall the men as the Staters must have got word.* I took the glasses, and the next thing I saw the ship coming. It halted at Innishlyre. The two of us then headed off for Newport to inform the people. Kilroy gave the orders, and suddenly there were asses and carts everywhere. As the ship was taking the pilot on, Joe Baker and his men boarded it and brought it up to Newport. She was the first boat of that size to go up Newport channel, but there were men there who had worked on the docks in Glasgow and who knew all about boats and berthing. The ship was unloaded in double quick time. The captain said it would have taken three days in Westport. We brought him and his crew up, and organised a feed for them in Grady's in Newport. The people round about got a full supply of flour, courtesy of the 4th Western Division.

During October we kept the pressure up and gave the Staters in the towns of Castlebar and Westport no rest. We still held Newport, an area now described in the English papers as the *Newport Republic*.

#### CAPTURE OF CLIFDEN AFTER A FIERCE FIGHT

Clifden was the strongest Free State post in Connemara, and so it had to be knocked out. In preparation for this attack, an armoured car was built in Newport by a man called Thomas Moran known as Number Nine. A Kerry woman, Miss Brosnan, was Manageress of the Mulranney Hotel. Every time you went there you had a bed. She allowed us to take out the hotel boiler. This was mounted on the chassis of a Crossley tender, and it became known as *The Queen of the West*. I think the attack was supposed to happen on Sunday, 22nd October. I was ordered on the Saturday night by Christy Macken, Divisional O.C., to report Petie Joe McDonnell in Leenane, and tell him that it was postponed for a week.



I went on a bicycle to Roigh Harbour, and from there by boat to Islandmore. I was then taken, by boat again, and landed at the point of Bertroy. I walked to Fair's house in Murrisk, where I borrowed a bike and made for my mother's house in Louisburgh. From there I went to Leenane, and reported to Petie Joe McDonnell and Johnny Gibbons. I was back in Mulranny Hotel again on the Monday night by 10 p.m.

We took the armoured car first from Mulranney to Leenane along with our men. I suppose this was on the Thursday. Meanwhile, other sections of the 4th Western were heading towards Clifden, even from as far away as Ballina and Castlebar. We had two drivers, Thomas Moran and Tommy Joe Gibbons. From Leenane we went to Kylemore House.

We waited there on Friday night, and on Saturday night we set out for Clifden. The main attack started at 7.15 a.m. on Sunday, 29th October. It was led by Petie Joe McDonnell and his deputy Christy Macken. There were three main enemy posts in the town, the Railway Hotel, two houses in the town centre used as a barracks, the coastguard station, and also the Marconi station. Twenty of us under Jack Feehan and Bartley Hegarty were ordered to take the posts in the town. As the Free State officers were staying in the Railway Hotel our first job was to capture it. It was well protected with steel shutters and sand bags. As we were making our way towards it, we were spotted and fire was opened on us. We returned it. Then Jack Feehan dropped, and we had to carry him to a house under heavy fire. He was not badly hurt, but we had a terrible job getting back to the hotel again as a fellow in the sand bags was playing hell with us. Eventually we fought our way into the hotel. Whether it was one of our lads, or the armoured car which had just arrived, that knocked out the fellow in the sand bags, I do not know. The armoured car got up to the front of the hotel. They were raining bombs and bullets down on it from the upstairs windows, but to no avail. A mine was placed in position, and it blew the shutters and windows all over the street. Then the armoured car was disabled. We had to get the five fellows inside with the mines out, so Christy Breen and myself were sent out to keep up a rapid fire on the windows. They slipped out, and came into us in the downstairs part of the hotel. We then took the remainder of it after a fierce fight.

After this we went from yard to yard at the back to where the barracks was, carrying the mines with us. Meanwhile the fire was continuous. One mine blew a hole in the gable, and the Staters left that house and got into the next one. We kept a woeful fire on it until they sent out a fellow with a white flag for a truce. We agreed, and two or three of us went out into the street but they opened fire again. Luckily none of our lads were hit. It got real hot then. Eventually we

fought our way into a kitchen and drove them upstairs. Jack Feehan, who had by now recovered, ordered myself and Louis Flaherty to set fire to the kitchen and burn them out. We shouted what we were going to do, and after a short time they all came out with their hands up. This was about four in the afternoon.

At the same time as this was going on, the coastguard station was attacked. One of our fellows climbed onto the roof, and with a hammer broke some slates. It was heavily defended with a machine gun. A bomb was then thrown down through the hole, and it went off. After this they surrendered. The last that came out were three officers, and as they were coming down the stairs, we stripped them of their Sam Brownes and weapons, and brought them to the hotel as prisoners.

The Marconi station, outside of the town was well fortified. The attack on this was led by a crowd from north Mayo under John Gallagher from Knockmore, and it went on all day. In the attack, two of our men from Rehins near Ballina, Lt. Pat Morrison, and Lt. Thomas James, were killed. Some of the Free State troops advanced from the station in an effort to relieve the garrison in the town. After the capture of the town, our men at the Marconi station were reinforced, and Lt. Heaney, the Free State O.C. in the station, surrendered on condition that his men were properly treated. The surrender was accepted, but when a guard was being sent for, Heaney and his men escaped.

Clifden was a great success. In all a hundred prisoners were taken. With the exception of the Free State O.C., P. O'Malley and his officers, all prisoners were released. That of course was the trouble; most were rearmed again. We captured ninety rifles and two machine guns and a load of stores and equipment.

#### FALL OF NEWPORT

November was a bad month for us. On the 1st, Patrick Mulchrone of Brockagh, near Newport was killed in his own house by a party of Free State troops under Comdt. Joe Ruddy of Westport. Mulchrone had been a lieutenant with the Castlebar battalion, and was then unattached. He was not carrying arms, and was shot with his hands up. Comdt. Jack Connolly was captured at Brackagh near Newport, and in the 2nd Western area, Comdt. Gen. Tom Maguire and Brigadier Tom Powell were captured. On 24th November a big round up started. They poured thousands of troops into west Mayo in an effort to wipe us out. They were led by Gen. Tony Lawlor, and they had armoured cars and field artillery and everything. I think Cooney was with them as well.

At the time, Major Gen. Kilroy and two of his officers, Col. Comdt. Jack Feehan and Lt. Comdt. Jack Leonard, were staying in

a house called Aitkens in Rossow above Newport. A Free State column of sixty troops under Joe Walsh and Joe Ruddy moved from Kilmeena towards Newport. Both of these officers were former West Mayo Brigade men. Near Carramore this column was attacked by Michael Kilroy and the two others, and in the fight five Free Staters were killed, including Walsh and Ruddy. Michael Kilroy had got cut off from his companions. He saw some men ahead and went towards them in the open, thinking they were some of Anthony O'Farrell's men. He was within 30 yards of them when he realised his mistake, and opened fire with his revolver. He made for cover, but before reaching it was wounded and captured. Jack Feehan and Jack Leonard got away. This was a major blow to us but we did not have much time to think about it. The Staters had a regular circle made around Newport, and we were inside it. Lawlor and his men came in the Castlebar direction, another column came in the Ballina side from Ballycroy, and as I said there was another column on the Westport side. Eight of us, who were in Faillins, were rushed up to Newport, and put along the convent wall. Petie Joe McDonnell and his crowd were along a fence on the Castlebar side of the river, but he later withdrew them to the far side. Lawlor's column led the attack on our position, using machine guns and artillery. They threw everything at us. Our men were great. I saw Tony Lawlor with his coat off and a revolver in his hand driving his soldiers on to the river, but we did not let them cross. We fought there for a long time until some of us were withdrawn to a new line under cover of darkness. Meanwhile at Glenhest, Mark Killilea and Johnny Gibbons and twenty men fought off a flanking movement of the Staters coming in the Ballina side. However, Johnny Gibbons, the divisional adjutant was later captured. There were three hundred in this column, and Killilea and those held them up the entire day. Our position at Mulranney Hotel was also attacked.

Some of our fellows who were sick were in it, and there were just two or three on guard. After a short while they retreated back. On the Saturday about one hundred troops of *McKeon's Own* advanced from Crossmolina on Shramore village. We had an outpost there. The fight lasted until dark, when the enemy pulled back. There were a lot killed and wounded in this attack that was never let on by the Free State. None of our men were killed. As we were running short of ammunition, McDonnell and Madden decided on the Saturday night to get outside the circle. We thought at first that we were going to be sent to Sligo to join Comdt. Gen. Liam Pilkington, but eventually it was decided to head for Connemara. They had failed to round us up. The town of Newport thus has the distinction of being the last town in the country to fall to the Free Staters, and not Fermoy which fell ten weeks before.



## FIGHTING RETREAT TO CONNEMARA

We went up the Horsehill Road, and on Sunday morning we were in Aghagower. Ned Moane and a few of us went to Fr. McHugh's house where the housekeeper, who thought we were Free State soldiers, gave us rashers and eggs. By the time Fr. McHugh arrived we had gone. He had become terribly pro Free State. We marched across country to Maumtrasna until we came to Derrypark. From there we went to Kilmilkin, and from there to Leenane, where we stayed until the following Saturday. That night forty seven of us, under Comdt. Gen. McDonnell and Dr. Madden, crossed the Killary and came to Henaghan's in Bundorragha. On Sunday morning about dawn, one of our scouts reported that there were some two hundred Free State troops on the other side of the bridge at Delphi. It turned out they were part of *Ring's Own*. Twenty of us rushed down, and a fight started immediately, and it went on all day. There was a river between us, and we had very bad cover. Two of them had managed to get into an old quarry and were playing hell with us. At one stage, Dr. Madden was down in the river with only his head up. Jack Feehan managed to get across under fire, and towed myself and Jim Moran over. By the time we got there, the two Free State soldiers had gone. Eventually the main body of troops retreated. We could have captured them all, but the lake prevented a flanking movement. One of them was killed, and at least four wounded. Myself and Tommy Joe Gibbons, and a fellow named Mulkearns, collected the dead and wounded and brought them to Packie Hearty's house. I remember this because there was a child born there that night. We crossed Mweelrea and moved off down into Tallaghbawn.

We wanted to break down to Newport again, to attack them there, and bring the pressure off Connemara, as another round up had started on the Galway side to get us. There was not enough food in that area for our column along with the West Connemara crowd. From Tallaghbawn we moved Roonah Quay, about three miles south of Louisburgh.

## NIGHTMARE VOYAGE TO CLARE ISLAND

Word was sent down to Paddy Kelly in Louisburg to make arrangements to get us down to the Newport area. With Brian Sammon he went into Clare Island to get the boats to come out for us. They could not get the boatmen to come out. Sean Lynchichau of Achill said to me, *you stay here and I will go in*. At Roonah Quay he took a curragh, and with two others, rowed the four miles into the island. He returned with two pucans, one under Johnny Bob O'Malley, an islander sympathetic to us.

Meanwhile the rest of the column had arrived at Roonah Quay. The pucans were filled with men, and taken into the island. The boats then

came out again. By now it had got very rough, and the boats had difficulty getting back into Roonah Quay with the swell that was running. Somehow they made it, and twenty seven of us got on board. Even today, with powerful motor boats, Roonah Quay is a very dangerous harbour. We headed off, and the sea was piling on top of us. We were wet to the skin. The boatman told us to lie down in the bottom of the boat, to try and keep the ballast on it. One of the men started to say the rosary. *We won't make it*, some said. We barely made Clare Island, and the boats could not come out again for the twenty who were left behind. These were under Anthony O'Farrell, and they had to travel right round Clew Bay on foot, until they got down to Newport. We only stayed one night on the island, and got fed by Johnny Bob's family and others. I was put on the phone to Johnny Gallagher in Carraun to get him to come up. About 5 o'clock the next morning three Achill hookers under Johnny arrived. They landed us in Corraun after a terrible wild crossing.

When we landed, myself, Jim Moran and some of the Tiernaur fellows were ordered to capture the train at Mulranney and wreck it. The idea was to draw the Free State away from Connemara again.

We commandeered a few fish vans and went to Mulranney. After firing a few shots the train halted at the station. We got on board, took over, and about a mile and a half from Newport, stopped and pulled up one of the tracks. The train reversed back and then headed off. Jim told me to jump off and after fixing the trottle jumped himself. She went off at full speed and dug into a bank near Burrishoole bridge. We took up a position, and waited for the Staters to come, but, they did not. When we got word that they had come out the Furnace Lough side we went after them. We were dodging back and forth but we did not make contact. We then met Anthony O'Farrell and his twenty men who had come from Roonah. While we were away the enemy raided some houses in our area for the flour that had been captured from the ship. They took it away, and gave it to houses friendly to them. We then seized this flour again and redistributed it. Those who had accepted the flour from the Free State were fined.

#### DISBANDING FOR CHRISTMAS 1922

Near the end of December the enemy made another attempt to round us up. Thirteen of us were down on the Tiernaur side when it started. They had the whole place surrounded that morning before we could even stir. They had an armoured train and lorries, and they hit us with everything, including bombs and machine guns. We spent that whole day lying down in drains and whins, but when it got dark the lot of us soon got out of it. Opposite Gibbon's shop is an island, McHale's Island, and when two brothers rowed out for supplies we took their boat. One of them came out of the shop, and when he

found the boat gone, lit a torch. At the time the road at Trienbeg was filled with Free State troops. We rowed into the islands until we made Islandmore. There we got a big boat, which was pushed off by the Gills and Kellys. The night was calm and misty, and bags were put on the oars to muffle the sound. We never felt until we were right under the patrol ship which was anchored outside Inishlyre lighthouse. They did not see us, and we pulled in and eventually landed at Bertroy. Near the Westport road there was a house with a light in it. We went in, and the man said, *there are forty Staters only after leaving here and they have Tom Fergus and three or four prisoners from Cuileen with them.* We left, and carefully made our way to Louisburgh. We disbanded then for Christmas, but we had to be careful as the round up was still in progress. We kept our arms though. We were very well off for arms. We had captured about one hundred and twenty two rifles: I know that figure, as I was Assistant Quartermaster to the division at the time. It was a great blow however, when Paddy Duffy, one of our column commanders around Westport, was captured that same month.

#### 1923: YEAR OF DEFEAT

We grouped again in Newport after Christmas under Petie Joe McDonnell. Between January and March it was very hard — all hit and run. We were continuously moving from place to place. It might be Newport today and next week we might be in Connemara. As well, Joe Baker had a column which operated around Newport. Mark Killilea had one operating on the Westport/Ballyheane side. This column did some great work and attacked Castlebar on a few occasions. With John Fadden and the Kings from Holly Hill, they continuously harrassed a Free State patrol that used regularly ply between Castlebar and Claremorris. In February they held up a train between Castlebar and Westport and captured 22 rifles and ammunition. The train was destroyed.

No one had yet been appointed to take over Major Gen. Kilroy's place as O.C. Western Command. In February Sean Hyde was sent from the South to take charge of it. He had a good reputation, but did not have the same first hand knowledge of the area. Liam Pilkington and Charlie Gildea arrived in Shramore and went on to Leenane. Michael Mannion and myself were ordered to stay behind and wait for Hyde. Eventually he turned up, and we crossed by boat from Shramore to Bertroy early on a Sunday morning. Although we got the all clear in Jim Fair's to go on, Hyde was very annoyed that scouts were not posted. Austie Mortimer then drove us in a side car to Louisburgh, and from there to Leenane. The meeting was held in Keogh's Hotel and it went on until Monday night. The Connemara column was posted to do guard duty, but they did not turn up. I was



on the Clifden/Leenane Road for the whole time, and did not go to bed at all. It was terrible with rain. Tom Derrig, who was Adj. General, was the senior officer present. Others who were there were, Petie Joe McDonnell, O.C. 4th Western, Liam Pilkington, O.C. 3rd Western, Charlie Gildea, Western Command Q.M., Christy Macken, Deputy Divisional Adjutant 4th Western, Jack Feehan, Divisional Q.M. 4th Western, as well as P. J. Rutledge and Dr. J. A. Madden of the Western Command. I do not know too much of what was decided. Certainly Liam Deasy's appeal of January 29th to surrender was condemned, as Petie Joe sent a circular around after.

After the meeting Sean Hyde went back to the South and did not return. We came back to Louisburgh with Pilkington and his crowd when the meeting was over. There was a mix up over the boat from Bertroy to Roigh Harbour and we did not leave. We then found out that Free State troops were waiting for us in Bertroy and the following night in Roigh. Luckily, we had landed at a different harbour near the Tiernaur side. We then realised that we had an informer amongst us, and it was not until after I came home from America I found out who it was.

#### CAPTURE OF BAKER'S COLUMN: THREAT OF REPRISALS

At the beginning of March there was another big Free State round up in the Newport area. They advanced from all sides, Crossmolina, Castlebar, Westport and Mulranney. Joe Baker's column, which was billeted around Skerdagh engaged them. However, they were surrounded in a house, and after a long fight they were forced to surrender. One of our best men, Capt. Jim Moran, E.O. No 1 Brigade was killed on the 7th. At that time Willie Chambers, Mick Mannion and myself were sent down to Sligo with dynamite as a swap for Thompson ammunition. We eventually met Charlie Gildea and Mick O'Hara of the 3rd Western and got the stuff. It was in Shanahan's of Ballisodare that we heard of the capture of the column. Joe Baker and his men were taken to Galway. We fully expected them to be executed. They would have been if it wasn't for the Divisional O.C., Petie Joe McDonnell. He got a message to Gen. Hogan who was then the Free State O.C. for the West. He said that if any of his men were executed, we would execute ten Free State sympathisers for every one of our men killed. Also he told him that we would burn every Free State house in the Division. Hogan knew that McDonnell meant business. Not one member of the 4th Western Division was executed during the Civil War. This was because they knew that we were a force to be reckoned with right down to the end. This is shown by their attitude to the 2nd Western Division. Tom Maguire had an awful time keeping it together as part of it went Free State. After he was captured things got worse and numbers of his men were executed.

They executed six, including Tom Maguire's brother, in Tuam on the 11th April, 1923. One bit of good news that we had this month was that Paddy Duffy, Jack Connolly, Tom Ruane and Johnny Gibbons had escaped from Galway Jail, and Paddy was then operating a column outside Westport.

#### CAPTURED AT BUNDORRAGHA

Just before the Cease Fire on 30th April we were captured in Bundorragha. Petie Joe McDonnell, Jack Feehan, Gerald Bartley and four others were at a meeting in Leenane, and we stood guard. After it we were to head down to Newport but, unfortunately for us, it was called off until the following night. A local volunteer, John Nee, was on guard that night, but somehow the house we were in was surrounded by hundreds of Free State troops under General Hogan. I was in bed when it happened. My own rifle was beside the bed, and my revolver was on the pillow. This fellow came in, in plain clothes — I thought he was one of our own. The next thing he had a bloomin rifle way down my throat. The same thing happened to the others, as Petie Joe McDonnell, Jack Feehan, Mick Ketterick, John Kilroy — a brother of Michael's, Jimmy Walsh — a local fellow, and John Nee were also captured.

Gerald Bartley had been captured sometime previously. Hogan came up and said to Petie Joe, *we'll see if you are as brave as you were in Newport*. Petie Joe replied, *do your damndest*, and turned away. The time of the Cease Fire we were quite strong in this Division. We had captured a lot of arms and ammunition. There were recruits crying out for arms — waiting for them. We knew the summer was coming on with the short nights and that it was going to be hard, but we were still prepared to fight on. We had a number of columns still operating. Mark Killilea was around Ballyheane. Ned Moane had another column around Louisburgh, and Paddy Duffy had one around Westport. On the Ballina side, John Gallagher had a column in the Knockmore area. The last thing that struck us was that it would end up like that — with a Cease Fire.

#### GALWAY JAIL

After our capture we were marched all the way to Maum Cross where we were put into two or three lorries to be taken to Galway. At Oughterard one of the lorries broke down, and we were put into a hotel under guard. After a while some Crossley tenders came out from Galway. I was put in between the driver and a Lieutenant by the name of Lenihan. He was from Limerick and his first words were, *how is Paddy Duffy and Johnny Gibbons. I hope they mind themselves*. He then gave me a packet of cigarettes. He was a very nice kind of fellow, and it turned out later that we owed our lives to him. There was a



fellow there from Kerry — a Capt. McElligott, and he wanted to take us to Renmore Barracks (now Dún Uí Maoliosa) in Galway. The reason for this was, in Renmore you got the works. An awful argument broke out between them, and Lenihan refused, saying that his orders were to take us to the jail. He said to me afterwards, *you are not going to Renmore because if you do you will get an awful doing in it*. There was another bad article there, a Capt. O'Grady. There were two Connemara fellows captured in east Mayo the very same day, and these were brought to Renmore. When they came down to us in the jail the next day you would not know them. Their heads were like footballs. They got an awful beating altogether. Anyhow we were lucky and were taken to the jail, on the site of which Galway Cathedral now stands, where we were lodged together in the lime yard. At the time there was a big crowd of west Mayo fellows there, and also a lot from around the Ballyhaunis area. It was not long before we were courtmartialed. We were taken in individually into a room, and there were three officers behind a table, one of whom was the Governor of the jail. The charges were read out. I was charged with possession of a rifle and a revolver, and with being caught in an illegal uniform. It was no surprise when I got the death sentence. Petie Joe McDonnell and Jack Feehan got the same. There were two sections in Galway Jail, one for prisoners who were sentenced called the Reception, and the other for those awaiting trial. There was a big gate between them. The Reception had eighty cells for one hundred and fifty seven prisoners, so three of us were left in the nonsentenced section. As luck would have it I was in a cell with this fellow who turned out to be an informer, a fact that I quickly became aware of. We were not allowed any cutlery in the jail, and when I was asked by some of the Newport fellows who were captured with us, I passed them out through the spy hole a cut throat razor that I had. It must have shaved every man in Ireland afterwards. It was bad in that jail during the hot summer with four or five of us in each cell. The place was crawling with vermin. It was some consolation to us that men like Moane, Tom Harney, Duffy, Gallagher and Gibbons were still on the outside operating against the Free State. A fellow named Joe Hoade, who was from around Headford, was O.C. of the prisoners in my section.

#### TINTOWN/HAREPARK 1923-1924

The next thing was, in September, 1923, we were moved from Galway by armoured train and taken to the Curragh. We were marched from Newbridge, and put into Tintown No. 2. There were a lot of western fellows there at the time. Petie Joe McDonnell and Joe Stamford from Gort were in charge. We were put into what the British used for horses, and there were about one hundred and twenty in each hut. The floors were concrete, and it was a devil to keep warm.



I was glad to meet Joe Baker again as I never expected to see him alive. We were there for the hunger strikes, and when that was over before Christmas 1923, they started releasing some of the prisoners. On New Year's Day 1924 we were lined up in front of the cookhouse. Next thing a detail with fixed bayonets came on each side of us and we were marched over to Harepark and lodged there. As far as I knew they were emptying the other jails and lodging what remained there. There were about three or four hundred of us who had got the death sentence. The day after we arrived in Harepark we were brought out and told that our sentences were commuted to twenty years. One consolation was the huts there were smaller and there were just forty men in each of them. There was no difference in the category of prisoners; we were all the same. In Harepark I met Michael Kilroy who had been in charge of the hunger strike in Mountjoy. Also Tom Derrig. He had served for a while as Assistant Chief of Staff and was captured in March 1923. He had got a bad doing from the Oriel House crowd, and had lost an eye. Ernie O'Malley was also there. It was great to meet some of your old comrades again. At least you knew then that they had not been shot.

Life in the camp was very monotonous but we made the best of it. We played the odd bit of football and also chess. We discussed everything under the sun, going back over the war and the personalities in it. What would the country hold for the likes of us when we got out? It was a gloomy thought.

#### A BAD TIME IN THE GLASSHOUSE

Not long after we arrived we were each brought in for questioning. A Comdt. Micky Love had me in front of him in his office. He started to grill me about everything. Who was on the run, where we kept our arms, who supported us, etc. I gave him no satisfaction and said, *find out yourself*. He lost his temper and started to beat me around the place. He gave me an awful doing. Then he turned round to a Sgt. Major who was there, wrote something on a form and said, *get a receipt for this Bolshie*. I did not know what was happening, but I was marched out and taken to the Glasshouse. I got fourteen days bread and water. I was handed a shovel by this ex British Sgt. Major and told to clear up some coal that was lying around. I throw it down and said, *I'll do no work for the Free State*. He picked up the shovel and hit me with it on the neck and shoulders. When I woke up I was in a cold bath. They then took me to my cell. Of course my boots and leggings were taken. They gave me a big pair of clogs; you could go to Clare Island in them. There were trestles in the cell, no pillow and a few dirty horse blankets. No matter which way you lay you were not comfortable. As well, every half hour, they would open the spy hole and shout, *are you awake*. I only realised later that all this was a

deliberate attempt to break me. The next day I was given a brush and a bucket and was told to swab a hall; I refused. For that I got another blow and was carried in again. They kept at it. The following day they asked me to do something else, and I wouldn't. I was then grabbed and handcuffed. *We'll sling you for a while*, this fellow said. They used to do that; hang you from the roof and your toes tipping the ground. Luckily they didn't, but they left the handcuffs on for a good while. Every day it was something else. On Sunday I was held in the guardroom while they were down at Mass. This soldier looked at me and said, *another one of ye so and so's that killed Kevin O'Higgin's father*. I said nothing and he hit me with a poker. I would have got more except for a big swarthy ex British army fellow. Later he said, *I've seen prisoners ill treated before but these are the rottenest bloody crowd I was ever amongst*. I was left alone then for a while and in comes this priest in civilian clothes. He started to question me about arms and dumps in Mayo. I could not believe it. I told him he would be better off looking after his duties. He got kind of snotty at this and left. The following Saturday morning, three or four officers came into my cell and started questioning me as if I had just been taken prisoner. When they asked me my name they pretended not to believe it. They told me I was a liar. I knew then I was in for something. At the time you were kinda desperate. The beatings, one after the other, and the lack of sleep, you did not give a damn what would happen.

I was standing with my hands in my pockets. One of them shouted to me that I was speaking to an officer and to stand to attention. *I don't recognise you as an officer*, I said to him. He drew his revolver and said, *I've a good mind to shoot you. You haven't the guts*, I said. Suddenly he drew out and hit me right in the face with the revolver. I was knocked out, and woke up in my cell nearly stuck to the threstle with blood. My teeth were broken, and the tubes in my nose were damaged. I got no medical treatment, but the following Tuesday I was released from the Glasshouse. When I came down to the camp, Tom Derrig and Dailie Chambers and all came around to enquire what happened. As I knew my mother would go up the walls if word got to her, I told them to stay quiet; it was not too bad.

#### RELEASE

There was some talk of moving us to different county jails, and for this we had to be medically examined. Comdt. Love and this other doctor were in these two cells examining. Luckily the one I went into was not Love's as I would have been in trouble. Who was in the other one, but Dr. Bertie O'Malley from Altamount Street in Westport. He recognised my name and said, *I suppose you don't want to be medically examined*. I didn't. We chatted for a while, and he asked after Baker and Malone and the others. It was he that had saved

Brodie Malone's arm after he had been shot up at Brize House. He gave me some cigarettes to divide out. He was a real gentleman, and I am sad to say died young. Some time later I was taken up to the Governor's office. I think his name was Fitzpatrick; a Capt. Hughes was his deputy. He wanted me to sign the form of submission to the government, saying that I would be able to go back to my studies. He even offered to pay for my passage to America if I wanted to go, but I said, *I'll sign no form*. They did everything but batter me. In the end Hughes said, *I hope you stay in the Glasshouse until you rot*.

It was coming on near June and gradually now we were being released. Just Baker and Malone were left of the Westport crowd. I was the only Louisburgh man left. It got on our nerves a bit waiting for your number to be called. There was only one or two in each hut where there had once been forty or fifty. Then at the end of June 1924 the Camp Adjutant, who was an ex Christian Brother, called out numbers to about ten of twelve of us, and we were released. The lot of us then were walking to Kildare but it shows what our nerves were like, when we heard this lorry coming behind, without a thought we all jumped in behind a fence. We thought they were going to lift us again. I got into Westport on the train that night. I remember I was going down Bridge Street when my uncle passed. He did not recognise me: I had gone down to eight stone. For a long time after I could not eat, just a drink of tea in the morning, that was all. I was home for a good while, but there was nothing for us to do. We could not get a job as we were barred. Then one day five of us booked for the States, and we left on the 6th November, 1924. The boat was packed out. I met some of the lads from Drogheda and Dundalk that I had been in prison with. We were sad at having to leave the country we had fought for, but there was nothing for us. When we arrived in New York it was like coming home, there were so many Republicans there. I stayed there for eight years, and came home finally in 1932.

The politicians I feel have ruined Ireland as they still continue to do; many would say it is for their own ends. The people were different. The grass roots kept the faith but it was at the top the split came every time. De Valera, even though I supported him after, forgot about the men who fought for the Republic. My greatest regret today is that we failed then to establish the Republic.



## The Shooting of Intelligence Officer for Munster

Tom Kelleher

*There lived in Innishannon a retired Lt. Col. of the British Army. He was Intelligence Officer for Munster and he visited Belfast once a fortnight. We also believed that he led raiding parties of the Essex Regiment. Now he was heavily guarded by 4 R.I.C. men round the clock. Myself and another Volunteer were given the task of disposing of him. His movements were very irregular and with the heavy security he was a difficult nut to crack. Around the end of May 1921 we got a report that he was sleeping at home. Carefully we entered in daylight the grounds of the house which was right on the edge of the river. I hid in laurels near the house to put him under surveillance. While I waited he crossed from the house to a garage where he had some sort of workshop or power house. Leave him to me, I said to my companion as I approached the garage. The door was slightly ajar and I could see that he was taken aback when I entered. I was afraid he might raise the alarm as I was too far away from him and I only had a short. I knew I had to get near him without alarming him. I took the initiative and said could he direct me to Bandon. Now remember I was well dressed for this purpose, not at all like a man from the Column. He replied as I took another step nearer him: *Keep straight west young man*. I could not help thinking of Danny Hobbs, a popular singer in Cork at that time who had a song with that very title.*

I held my short under a gaberdine draped over my arm, a coat loaned to me for that purpose by Dick Barrett. I took another step nearer and he was still not alarmed. Whipping out my gun I let him have it. He spun backwards and fell. I now had to escape before the R.I.C. guarding him could catch me. On hearing the shots they rushed to a window and opened fire upon me with rifles. Some of their bullets winged me as I jumped over a ditch and fell into a drain. Both of us were then out of the line of fire. We were not followed, and I escaped back to the west through Innishannon village to my own country. At one stage I had to take refuge in a dyke as I could see a lorry of Tans coming from Bandon to investigate the incident. But we got away.

## The Fight at Upton Station

*The account by Tom Kelleher  
to the Kerryman 7/10/1967*

May the moon shine out tonight along the valley,  
Where those lads who died for freedom now are laid,  
May they rest in peace those lads who died for Ireland,  
In the lonely woods of Upton for Sinn Féin.

Upton Station on the long branch line west from Cork to Bantry is nowadays like its railway line, a memory. Closed in the mid sixties, it once served every township and village between the capital of Munster on the east, and Bantry and Skibbereen in the west, with branches to Kinsale, Courtmacsherry and elsewhere. Today, as then, it is the centre of prosperous farming country. Little did I think that this little rail halt was to be the scene of my toughest fight.

During 1920 and 1921, members of the Crown forces travelled frequently on the West Cork line. The troops invariably occupied a carriage in one of the ordinary passenger trains, and when they travelled it was usually on the train leaving Cork at 9.30 a.m. I.R.A. intelligence had noted these frequent movements of Crown forces, and the O.C. of the Third (West Cork) Brigade consulted with Dick Barrett and other officers and decided to attack one of the detachments.

The decision to attack was taken at a meeting held at Brigade headquarters then located in the back kitchen of O'Mahoney's, Belrose House, Upton. Seated beside the meal bin in the back kitchen of the farmhouse, Charlie Hurley, the O.C., and his officers reviewed the data available to them from their intelligence personnel.

One of these was John O'Connell of Ballymurphy, Upton, who was employed as a clerk in the Cork railway station. Others were observers at Kinsale Junction, which was a mile and a half east of, or on the Cork city side of Upton.

Kinsale Junction was a station on the line from which a branch ran to the sea port and garrison town of Kinsale, fourteen miles to the south. The train usually delayed twentyfive minutes at the junction before proceeding the one and a half miles west to Upton.

Upton was chosen as the ambush position for a number of reasons. It is five miles from Bandon, and fifteen from Kinsale and was thus reasonably distant from British reinforcements. The delay at Kinsale Junction itself would afford ample time for the I.R.A. scouts to examine the train before cycling back ahead of it to report to their O.C.

The composition of the attacking party was one of the several points discussed at the council of war held to finalise the details of the action. At the meeting were the men who had been selected from the local Crosspound Company with some of the Brigade and Battalion officers who would lead the attack. It had been decided to make this effort a local one as far as possible.

From John O'Connell, in the railway office in Cork, came the information that a party of fifteen British soldiers would travel on the 9.30 a.m. train from the city on February 15th 1921, and that they would be occupying the centre carriage of the train.

That morning the I.R.A. party assembled in a field north of Upton, adjacent to the Cork, Crossbarry, Bandon Road. It consisted of Charlie Hurley, Brigade O.C.; Sean Phelan of Dublin, Brigade Staff Officer; Flor Begley, Bandon, Battalion Staff Officer; Pat O'Sullivan, Raheen, Upton, Battalion Engineering Officer; Company Captain Patrick Coakley, Lisaniskey, Upton; First Lieutenant Paddy O'Leary, Ballyhandle; Second Lieutenant Jack Hartnett, Killeens, Crossbarry; Section Commander Batt Falvey, Ballymurphy, Upton; Daniel O'Mahoney, Belrose, Upton; John Butler, Upton; Denis Doolan, Crossbarry; Neilus Begley, Ballymurphy, Upton; and myself (Commandant) Tom Kelleher, who became second in command in the course of the fight.

Our party, as so frequently happened in those times, was under-armed. Charlie Hurley had a Peter the Painter automatic pistol; there was a Lee Enfield, one police carbine, six Ross Canadian rifles — one lacking a magazine and all liable under stress to jam; the remainder carried revolvers plus a few Mills bombs. I myself had forty-six rounds, and all but three were expended in the fight.

From the assembly point two scouts were despatched to await the arrival of the train at Kinsale Junction. Having noted the positions of the soldiers in the train they were to cycle back. Final dispositions of the ambush party would then be made. But it was at this point, unknown to all but the two scouts, that the plan went awry.

One can imagine their consternation on finding when the train arrived that, in addition to the fifteen soldiers on board in one carriage, a further forty clambered on from Kinsale. They immediately distributed themselves through the crowded little train. Undoubtedly this was a new precaution on their part, prompted by the now frequent train ambushes, and especially by the highly successful one near Millstreet, in the same county a few days before.

While the two scouts watched in surprise, but in the belief that given a thirty minute delay by the train, they could still stop the ambush, the attacking party, a mile and a half down the line at Upton, commenced moving into their allotted positions. Little did the fourteen know that



they were now set to ambush a train of fiftyfive military distributed throughout the length of it.

Moving into the station the I.R.A. party arrested the station master and his staff. They quickly shunted a number of wagons to give them a clear field of fire. Sean Phelan and Flor Begley occupied the station house. Pat O'Sullivan was stationed on the northern side of the stone built toilets. Captain Coakley was inside an upstairs window of Cronin's public house overlooking the railway. Batt Falvey and Neilus Begley held the goods shed. Dan O'Mahoney at the corner of Cronin's would block an enemy enfilading the roadway.

Denis Desmond was outside the small post office, behind an embankment, leading to the goods store. John Butler was on the southern side of the embankment. Paddy O'Leary was behind a buttress of the bridge. Charlie Hurley was on the iron fronted bridge over the line, while Denis Doolin and myself were behind a wall only three feet from the railway, but fronting the engine and with instructions to prevent it moving. Jack Hartnett was right across on the other side to stop it from there.

Meanwhile back at the junction, the scouts received their second shattering surprise, for having taken on the extra troops and some water, the train commenced to move. Instead of twenty five or thirty minutes, the train puffed away after ten. The scouts pedalled furiously ahead if it, but they knew that they would never make Upton on time. Desperately one of them rushed at the train at "Stanley's Gates", an intermediate point, hoping to flag it down or force it to stop. But it failed to stop, and with its fifty five armed soldiers chugged on to Upton.

Meanwhile inside the station, we heard the whistle of the approaching engine as with a great blow out of steam it passed under the bridge on which Charlie was perched and ground to a halt between the platforms. The first carriage I immediately saw from my position was half filled with military. Now we had been told the third carriage. I sensed something was wrong, but before I could think further, a shot rang out from Charlie Hurley's Peter the Painter, signalling the commencement. He was on the bridge and could not have seen what I saw. Immediately hell was let loose. Most of the British soldiers hurled themselves from the train and ran to the Cork end dropping below the platform and under the carriages for cover. Firing indiscriminately they shot a number of civilians including a rail official sheltering under a van. Batt Falvey and Neilus Begley found themselves too close to this large group and relatively unprotected. Falvey was shot dead in these first exchanges. Some meanwhile attempted to enfilade Denis Doolan and myself but were held back by fire from Denis O'Mahoney from the corner of Cronin's. Unfortunately at this point the Ross rifle which

Denis had, jammed, thus knocking him out of the fight. Effectively our fourteen were now down to ten or eleven, only five of whom had rifles.

On the northern side, away from me, Pat O'Sullivan, the Battalion Engineer, advanced on knees and elbows, firing his revolver with both hands, at the soldiers still on the platform. Although he did not realise it at the time, it was here that he received a fatal wound in the stomach, from which he died two days later. Only when both his guns were empty did he withdraw. It was then that he discovered his wound.

Sean Phelan and Flor Begley, maintaining a heavy fire from the station house were attacked early on. Phelan, at the back window, fell dead. Begley, who a month later piped us to victory at Crossbarry, was lucky to make a getaway over Phelan's dead body.

Jack Hartnett, on the north side of the line from us, was now hit by a bullet that passed through four inches of timber before reaching him. He was severely wounded. Suddenly I was under fire myself. While I was reloading I found myself confronted on the other side of the wall by an officer and two men. One poised his rifle at me, I immediately poked my barrel in his face. He had no knowledge that the bolt was not home, and I could not have shot him; he dropped instinctively. Frantically trying to close it I had to repeat the trick when the second soldier tried to pop over. For thirty seconds we played hide and seek like this, each on his own side of the low stone wall. Then one appeared to my left and my rifle flashed. Blood spurted from him and he fell while his two companions dived under the train.

Meanwhile the enemy was recovering and becoming better organised. Accurate concentrated fire was pouring forth. Charlie crept from the bridge. Coming up behind me he decided we must withdraw. He placed his hand on my shoulder. *Fire again and fall back Tom*, he said. At that moment he was wounded, by a single shot. The bullet entered the right side of his nose and emerged under his right ear. Blood spurted again and mingled with the English blood already there. Yet he gave no indication of what he must have felt. Instead he waved — as already prearranged — the wounded to withdraw north-east, while we would conduct a fighting withdrawal south-west. We continued to fire at any enemy that exposed himself, and then, with Charlie and Doolan, I crawled back and leaped into Murphy's field opposite Cronin's pub. The minute we regrouped inside Charlie exclaimed, *my God Tom, I am a casualty*, I thought it was the bullet wound, but no, it was his ankle which was sprained in the jump. With Charlie on my back we crossed towards Thady Mahoney's gates. Half way there I put him down to fire back at the enemy. He suggested we push on to a turnstile at the level crossing. Made from sleepers it gave

fairly good cover. Neilus Begley was running up the field after us hotly pursued by four soldiers. To my amazement they halted to fix bayonets. I let rip at them and they immediately fell to the ground. Neilus staggered over to us where the teachers from nearby St Patrick's school lay waiting. They helped him on to Miss Baby Forde's house at Ballinphellig where he found the sole of his boot shot off, so close had been the chase.

From the turnstile I watched Pat O'Sullivan approach. I knew he was in pain. Hands clasped to his stomach he staggered towards Cronin's of Clashanimud. They saw him come, tackled a horse and car and bolted with him to Cronin's Hill, at a safe distance from Upton. But he was not to live although brought safely to a hospital in Cork. As it happened, he died, and the three who gave their lives that day, Sean Phelan, Batt Falvey, and Pat O'Sullivan, now lie close to Lord Mayors MacCurtain and MacSwiney in the Republican Plot in Cork City.

Meanwhile I continued to fire from the turnstile, but my position was now observed and coming under a heavy barrage. Bullets splintered into the wooden planks. I looked back at Thady's window where the old man was peeping out intensely interested. I waved him down but he took no notice. Suddenly the glass splintered and a bullet parted his hair. The bullet marks are still in that fence and on the gable end of the house, even if Thady is long gone.

From the turnstile I maintained a rapid fire against the station making them think many more were with me. Suddenly Charlie said; *Take over; I am a casualty.* Brushing my protests aside, I suggested he make a getaway using a piece of timber as a crutch. Meanwhile I continued to range at the station below or at the roadway leading from it. Some soldiers however managed to outflank me on the left. Firing rapidly at them I retreated with Denis Doolan and the now wounded Dan O'Mahoney. These two made for John Murphy's house and were conveyed safely from there. Charlie and myself made towards Bandon, believing that if we headed into the enemy's area we would have a better chance of escaping the dragnet spread about Upton.

But it was touch and go all the way with never a let up. We had barely started when Charlie shouted; *they're coming towards us*, I suggested we take cover in the furze, but he saw that they had bloodhounds. Lifting him on my back we headed down and we crossed the deep Brinny River on a convenient tree trunk; I going first and carefully handing him over. We were in a winning mood and felt we could escape. Up we went to Desmonds of Rockfort where he had his wounds dressed. But we dare not wait. The entire countryside was patrolled by military. Heading on towards Bandon we crossed fields and almost collided with a party of soldiers spread out and advancing towards where we were. They were staring at the ground, looking for



signs of blood maybe, but that is what saved us. We lay behind a loose stone wall watching them slowly approach only a hundred yards away. *We can't get away*, said Charlie. *You run, I'll stay and paddle my own canoe*. I could not agree with him. Instead, putting him again on my back, I tried to race up the hill away from the stone wall. A high hedge blocked my path. To avoid being silhouetted crossing it, I burrowed through the briars under it, hauling Charlie through. We were again safe though only two fields separated us from the enemy. We crossed the Kilpatrick Bandon road at Coveney's and made past Ridgie Perrotts of Little Silver. As we crossed his yard Perrott himself saw me with Charlie on my back. He must have known who we were. Almost at the same time three lorries drew up and a party from one came in. We saw them quizzing Perrott, but he, decent man, denied seeing us. Breathing a prayer for him we headed north to Jim Doyles of Kilmore, a fearless I.R.A. soldier, who five weeks later did outstanding work at Crossbarry. We were welcomed there by Nurse Doyle and her sister Mary, stalwarts of Cumann na mBan, but we declined their food and pushed on.

Two fields away we heard the British raiding party entering Doyles. Congratulating ourselves on another narrow shave we kept moving and reached Patsy Sheehan's house at Kilmore as dusk was falling. We had been on the run and hotly pursued for six hours but we outdistanced them in the end.

Sheehan's was a great house and there was always a welcome for us. Charlie's wound was dressed and disinfected, and Dr. O'Sullivan of Cloughduv was sent for. On the following day we went over to their house and lay up there for a few days. Charlie, of course, was not to live much longer. Four and a half weeks later, now nearly recovered, he was tracked down at Humphrey Forde's house at Ballymurphy. It was the morning of Crossbarry. Did Charlie have a premonition of it, as he fought it out, taking one of them with him? For his fight that morning, within earshot of Crossbarry, saved the day for us. It diverted one enemy column; it gave us plenty of warning, and it cost the British forty or fifty of their own . . .

Dhéan sé troid ar son saoirse a thire,  
Le sprid neam spleideach iongantach go h-Éag.  
'Stá a chuimhne comh glas 'gainn an lá seo,  
Leis an bhféar ar an bhfód ar a uaig.

Feachaidh bratach buí, bán agus uathne,  
Gá luascadh in Eirinn fé dheoidh,  
Beidhmí saor fé Dhia fós mar an fáile,  
'gus an buadh ar gach Oglach fíor-oig.

It just goes to show why, in military affairs, you should always keep in mind what your main objective is. It seems to me that the British did not do that on the morning of Crossbarry.

Everyone around Upton helped us before and after the fight. Mr Bennett, the station master, was interrogated in Cork but gave nothing away. Of course we would never have attacked if we had known what the odds were against us, or that the enemy was distributed through the train. But in war one must be prepared for surprises. What were our casualties? Well, there were three I.R.A. volunteers, Sean Phelan and Batt Falvey, and Pat O'Sullivan who died two days later. There were eight civilians killed on the train, and we were sorry for these, and six British soldiers. So although Upton has been classified as a failure, they got the worst of it.

## John Harrington

When the Civil War started, John Harrington was studying at the home of his uncle at Monkstown, south of Cork City. The family's sympathies were with the Free State, and with Collins. To take his exams, he travelled back to Dublin on the *Classic*, the ship that had brought the Free State troops to Cork. Qualified, he left Ireland in mid 1923, and was a ship's doctor all over the globe until 1929, when he returned and settled in Belfast. There is nothing, he says, that will wipe away the Free State political scene more quickly than a sojourn in Belfast. Catholics were second class citizens. Unemployment was imposed upon them. He was revolted. Then came the 1935 riots when, following the burnings, partly complete houses were seized in Andersonstown and Ardoyne. The bishop, Dr. Patrick Mageean, directed us to take them over. But sectarian trouble was forgotten in the air raids of 1941. At that time the people of the Shankill used to make for the crypt under Clonard Monastery. There was no fear of the Pope then. In those few raids of April and May a thousand died, and they were of every religion and no religion.

In April, 1941, as he was entering the Mater Hospital, a young fellow, accompanied by four others, ran in from behind. On the braces of one was a Sacred Heart badge as large as an onion. They were Liam Burke, Phil McTaggart, Gerry Doherty, Eddie Keenan and Paddy Watson, and they had just scaled the wall of Crumlin Road prison behind, and escaped from prolonged internment. Sizing up the situation in a flash, he signalled, *get in*. He was one of the few people in wartime with a car. He brought them to a safe house in the city where they were left for a week or so. Then, choosing the date carefully, he drove them to a big gaelic match in Armagh. From there they merged with crowds streaming back to Monaghan. *They were safe there*, he says, *for the present at any rate*.

## Account of Volunteer 'M' (John Harrington)

*Section Commander, Dublin Brigade, Pre Truce I.R.A.*

I was born in Lindsay Road on the North side of Dublin on the 2nd February, 1899. My mother's name was Elizabeth Collins from Ballyhooly in Cork. She had an uncle Eugene Geary, a brother of my grandmother who was transported to Van Diemen's Land.

My father's brother was a Fenian. I can remember as a boy in West Cork, he showed me, stuck in a hedge, part of a musket that they had used for training.

My colleagues all went to Belvedere College; it seemed the natural place for professional middle class Dubliners(1). However, I was sent



to the Christian Brothers, to O'Connell Schools. Later, in the Movement, I met men from Christian Brothers schools everywhere. They were studded all over the Brigade. Indeed, before we pass on, I must tell you of one teacher we had who made a great impression on me. He was a young Irish teacher, what we used to call a monitor, called Kenny. He brought me to "The Hollow" in the Phoenix Park — I was scarcely fourteen at the time — to hear Padraic Pearse making a speech. At that time, like everyone else, I thought of John Redmond as Ireland's leader. Compared then with this man, Pearse, I asked Kenny: *Who is the most likely to survive in history?* Oh, Pearse, he said, *Without a doubt the man you heard today is the man who will leave his stamp on history.* I would say that this man fed me the seed; he awakened my interest. The Christian Brothers' attitude towards Irish history had also a lot to do with it.

Young and all as I was I can recall the labour troubles of 1913 and the years preceding. We are back here to the *Strumpet City* situation with William Martin Murphy, the arch enemy on the side of capital, controlling *The Independent*.

Dublin, despite the labour troubles, was a completely loyalist city at that time. I can remember, after the 1914 war broke out, watching the Pals battalion of the Fusiliers marching along the quays. Everyone applauded them. But the wheel turned full circle after the executions. Recruiting meetings were a flop. As a Dubliner would say, *They are great gas.* I attended a few of these at the Fountain in James's Street, where Colonel Lynch would arrive accompanied by a brass band. Perfect order would prevail until he mounted the platform when all hell would break loose. The Sinn Feiners were determined to prevent him speaking. They would break into song interspersed with patriotic slogans. Eventually he would have to give up and instantly one of the boys would mount the platform and turn it into a Sinn Fein gathering. The place was alive. There would be thousands of people there. Everyone was agog and waiting, and each day would be asking: *Where is the recruiting meeting going to be tonight?* Very soon afterwards all outdoor meetings by the British Army came to an end.

#### FROM FOOLS TO HEROES

Nineteen and sixteen had burst upon all of us like a sudden explosion. We had no premonitions, no warning, nothing. Looking back upon it, we should have known. The steps leading up to it were so logical. The events were such as could only terminate in a great watershed, like a rebellion, exactly the way they did.

Close to our home there was a barricade manned for a few hours by Volunteers. I saw puffs of smoke come from it as they fired their rifles. That was as near as I got however. The outbreak fascinated me. Most people, however, were not actually angry at such dislocation and

destruction, dismissed them as fools. I had no strong views myself. Being of the younger generation, I instinctively supported them though I doubt if I would have joined them. After it happened, the University where I then was became a hotbed of revolution. We had watched silently the prisoners marched away to Frongoch. *Fools*, they were in the eyes of most people. Seven months later they returned. Now they were heroes. That is a measure of the change. I had commenced at University at the tender age of fifteen, the previous year at No. 76, St. Stephen's Green. Thomas MacDonagh, Assistant Professor of Literature, taught me English. My father insisted that I would do Arts and Science. I can still recall MacDonagh talking earnestly away to us on academic matters; he rarely allowed his political leanings to intrude.

When the inquiry opened a few weeks after the Rising into the shooting by Captain Bowen Colthurst of Sheehy-Skeffington and McIntyre, I made it my business to be there. I was there every day, and every day too, more than a year later in September, 1917, when the inquest on Thomas Ashe came on. I listened as the jury censured and condemned forcible feeding, the Governor of the prison and the Castle authorities. Tim Healy cut the Crown witnesses to bits. He was at the height of his form as he paraded Austin Stack through a dramatic question and answer session. Dr. Lowe of St. Stephen's Green was the man who forcibly fed Ashe. Healy must have made him feel like a worm as he brought forth statements about missing records and pages that had been torn out. I realised that I was now immersed and excited. The magic was really beginning to work.

#### ACTIVE SERVICE

In 1918 I joined H Company of the First Battalion. I was then stationed in the Richmond Hospital in North Brunswick Street. This was a very useful place to be, as the Auxiliaries — who came later — were stationed nearby in the North Dublin Union. Their records were available to me in the hospital. I was able to go through these, take the English addresses and pass them on to the Battalion Intelligence Officer. From there they were fed to — Flood, O.C. of operations in England. He was a brother of Frank, a member of our company, a student engineer and member of an A.S.U., and who with five others(2), was executed in Mountjoy in March, 1921. He had other brothers in the Army, the youngest being Peter, who became A.D.C. to Tim Healy, gave up soldiering and became a Marist Brother.

Conscription, when they came to threaten it in May, 1918, was the dynamic that set the struggle alight. Overnight they filled the ranks of the Dublin Brigade, and the best of these remained afterwards. It was the same throughout the country. The mere threat of it enabled parents to approve their children joining the Volunteers, where otherwise they might have withheld it. That is what the Conscription

threat did; it tore the last barriers against full hearted support for the national movement. It was a bigger political mistake even than the executions(3).

I was a poll clerk in the Naul for the election of December, 1918. There was a sense of rapport in the air which affected everyone. It was very, very infectious, and everything that happened was like wind to the flame. Everyone seemed to have the idea that we were on the threshold of an overwhelming victory, and no one really seemed surprised when it occurred. I cannot even begin to explain the feeling that was abroad at that time. Were you to say to a young man: *Look, throw yourself in the Liffey, you will never be any good to Ireland!* he damn near would. Most of them felt so strongly and so fervently about it. If you smoked, it had to be *Grand Parade* by Carrolls, or another from Taylors, in a blue packet. Everything you wore had to be Irish. It was a fantastic national spiritual revival.

While I was still a second year student, late in 1917, Richard Mulcahy, Patrick McGilligan and Ernie O'Malley drifted at different times into the College, trying out the medical course(4); they were at a loose end then not knowing whether to commence a course or await events. It was not long until events caught up with them again. Ernie had been at school with me, so I knew him quite well. He was a natural leader. Even at school, he had an O'Malley Gang. An extraordinary thing about him was that his elder brother, Frank, and the one below Ernie, Luke, went into the British Army and fought throughout the war. Frank died in East Africa. Being older, they belonged to the pre 1916 generation of young fellows ensnared into England's campaigns. Then there was Ernie, with his five Free State bullets, Cecil, who fought on the Republican side in the Civil War, and Charlie, aged seventeen, killed defending a post on the third day of that war in O'Connell Street. A remarkable family, broken — fractured one might say — on the anvil of two nations.

Another person at school with me, and whom I ran into later, was Emmet Dalton. He came back with his brother Charlie, as a young boy from America, where his parents had been. He joined an Irish regiment early in the War and was awarded an M.C. when the Order still meant something. Eventually he came back, joined the I.R.A. and was very active in the Tan struggle. I met him again shortly after the Truce, when he asked me to take charge of a training camp in Sligo. This was the same training camp where, so far as I recall, Brian MacNeill was later appointed to, and was unfortunately killed near there by Free State forces afterwards(5). I declined because it didn't suit me to go there, as I wanted to remain based in Dublin. Besides, if hostilities resumed, I was of far greater value from an intelligence point of view in Dublin than anywhere else.

Other members of H Company were Frank Flood, whom I have



already mentioned, and Kevin Barry, both executed, Liam Grimley and Mick Robinson, (both qualified as doctors later). Others that I recall were Tom Kissane, Tommy McGrane, Frank O'Flanagan, John Joe Carroll, Dave McDonagh, Bob O'Flanagan, Paddy Young, Jim Moran, Maurice Higgins, Sean O'Neill, John P. Kenny, John O'Dwyer, Eugene Fox and Tom Staunton. The O.C. was Seamus Kavanagh. I was not involved in the ambush at Monk's Bakery at the corner of North King St, and Church St on the morning of September 20th, 1920, where Kevin was arrested. The ambush by H Company was quite successful(6), but Kevin's Parabellum jammed, and it was while sheltering under the military lorry, trying to release it, that he was captured. It was not his own gun he had that day and that can be disastrous, as you know. Amazingly too, he was due back in the afternoon at College for his second year medical examination; things were that jam packed and exciting at that time. He never made it.

I was a section commander in the company. I was put on Intelligence, along with Maurice Higgins, who later went to America. He was my senior and he usually went along to the regular Battalion I.O. meetings, though I attended a few of these too when I sometimes noted that my opposite number was frequently another ex C.B.S. student. We used to meet as the Frankfort Association Football Club — Gaelic clubs were too much under British surveillance at that time — and we had a room on the second floor in Upper Abbey Street(7). Training was taken very seriously. We worked with maps of the city, diagrams drawn upon a blackboard, and we spent long hours taking guns and Mills grenades apart for examination and instruction. In addition, we had a Brigade training camp at Balrothery.

One action that I do recall was at the corner of Dorset Street and Blessington Street, a favourite spot. There was a pub there on the corner, a short distance down in the direction of Bolton Street, with an angle porch having a substantial pillar in the very corner. I lounged behind that while other members of the company were placed strategically around. We were of course armed, and each of us carried some grenades. However there was an accidental hold up of trams near the junction, and the O.C. could see that there might be heavy civilian casualties if a full-spirited ambush took place. He was reluctant to miss the opportunity completely. When therefore one Crossley lorry came into view, complete with wire cages that they were equipped with to ward off grenades, Liam Grimley and the rest of us let fly, and one, at least, of the grenades landed right inside the lorry. In the resultant confusion we separated quickly. I retreated up Blessington Street, Berkeley Road and into Geraldine Street which is a street of small residential houses. I could see that the top of it was already cordoned off. Well now, this will just give you an idea of the spirit among the people at the time. I could see that if I proceeded with

the hardware I was carrying I would be a goner. I therefore turned inside the first little porch, tapped at the door and was admitted inside. There was a hall stand there. Taking the weaponry from my pockets, I slipped them into a drawer. *There*, I said, to the woman, a complete stranger to me, *I will call back for those later*. Scarcely another word was exchanged as I emerged upon the street, fit now to pass through any cordon.

#### CEASE FIRE

When the Truce came, it took us all by surprise. All sorts of actions had been planned; there was no inkling that we were being switched off without warning. In fact we were preparing then, for ten days, for what was going to be our biggest action. I can remember getting instructions and going home to take a few hours rest so that I would really be on top of my form. What was intended was something much bigger than Bloody Sunday. The centre of the city was to be surrounded by our Volunteers. It was pay night for the Auxiliaries. Every hotel, I remember the Moira was one, and public houses frequented by them would be entered simultaneously, and any found there would be shot. I don't know how many of us were involved, but I can tell you that everyone in the Intelligence end was mobilised for it, and that included myself. We went down and reported, dead on with everything. Then, at the last moment, it was called off. We thought it was madness calling it off at that stage. We were ready. We expected casualties on our side, but it had all the appearance of being a ready made and daring coup. Unlike the situation today, at that time military and officers were not screened off from the public. They could be seen frequenting bars and hotels around the main garrison bases, and particularly in the area stretching between Dublin Castle and Baggot Street. They were there for the plucking, provided the operation was properly organised, and here it was organised and, at the last moment, not proceeded with. England would have no stomach to continue the war had it happened. Instead, our leadership had called it off. It was not until a few days later, when we all woke up to a Truce, that I began to understand. But I could feel with O'Malley when he asked himself in Tipperary(8) *Why had the Truce been ordered? We were gaining ground; each day strengthened us and weakened the enemy; why was it necessary to stop hostilities?*

Shortly after the Truce commenced — having turned down the offer of a training camp in Sligo — all of us in Dublin who had a University background were called together under Barra O'Briain, a man who became a judge afterwards. The intention was to create an officer training corps because nobody thought that the Truce would last more than a few weeks. Among the people I met there were Sean Dowling and John Joyce. Joyce, who was on the Military Tribunal afterwards,

was very far on in medicine then, but he packed it up for the other career. I asked McKinney, who was a lecturer in anatomy, to join us, because we felt the need for someone with his skills. He did; he joined us then and later became a colonel.

Around the same time, maybe the last week of July, the Brigade had its first public parade in O'Connell Street. We were being reviewed by Cathal Brugha, as Minister for Defence, and other notables. Our Battalion, the First, led the parade, and the colour party leading us was composed of our O.C., Seamus Kavanagh, flanked on one side by Sean Morrissey and on the other by myself. I felt very proud that day.

I was at work in December when the terms of the Treaty were announced. Busy as I was now with other things, its repercussions meant less to me, but, I would say, being an admirer of Michael Collins, I instinctively favoured its acceptance. Shortly after that, in 1922 I was appointed an N.C.O. in the new Free State Army at Marlborough Barracks, later known as McKee Barracks, beside the Phoenix Park. There was a considerable amount of controversy then about the course the new army should follow, whether as the army of the Provisional Government or as an extension of the Irish Republican Army. I cannot now recall the precise details of what occurred at this point, but it came about that this day we were paraded. We were then given the choice, whether to remain or not. At that point I chose to resign, and I received an honourable discharge from Colonel Bishop.

#### REFERENCES

- 1 It was also the school attended, for two years, by Kevin Barry.
- 2 Thomas Whelan, Patrick Moran, Thomas Bryan, Patrick Doyle and Bernard Ryan.
- 3 Since the time, early in 1915, that Britain first introduced conscription for her own people, Irish nationalists were aware that it might be imposed on Ireland. On 18th July, 1915, James Connolly held a huge anti-conscription meeting in front of Liberty Hall. He warned then that it might be introduced piecemeal at anytime.
- 4 O'Malley commenced it in 1915.
- 5 On 20th September, 1922, on the slopes of Benbulbin, six Volunteers were killed after surrender. One of them was Commandant Devins, T.D., and another was Brian MacNeill, a son of Eoin MacNeill.  
— *The Irish Republic* by Dorothy Macardle.
- The names of the four others were: Harry Benson, Joe Banks, Patrick O'Carroll and Tom Langan.
- 6 The full story is told in *Kevin Barry* by Sean Cronin.
- 7 The Company earlier met in Ryders Row, on the North Circular Road, near Jones's Road and at 44 Parnell Square.
- 8 *Singing Flame*.



## The London Associates of Michael Collins

The Irish delegation reached London on October 8th, 1921. Collins arrived on Monday 10th, accompanied by Ned Broy, Emmet Dalton, Sean MacBride, and others of his bodyguards and couriers. They put up at 15, Cadogan Gardens, a fashionable town house, one of two reserved for the Irish delegation. The group included a full staff of cooks, servants, typists, technical advisers, secretaries, couriers and bodyguards, an impressive back up of twenty five people. Led jointly by Arthur Griffith and Michael Collins, the delegation itself consisted of Robert Barton, George Gavan Duffy, Eamonn Duggan, Erskine Childers, and John Chartres(1). Chartres and Childers had the joint role of advisers and secretaries; Childers being chief and Chartres the second secretary. They stayed at 22, Hans Place, just south of Park Lane and Hyde Park, convenient to Westminster. Most of them knew London; Childers and Chartres being English and having spent many years in the Foreign and Intelligence Services, knew it very well, while Collins had worked there from 1906 to 1915, first as a post office clerk, later as a stockbroker's clerk and finally as a civil servant. This long acquaintanceship with London may have induced him to relax, particularly in view of the adulation now heaped upon him by press and public.

The delegation, as we have said, included John Chartres. Little was or is known of him or how he came to be appointed. Who was he? Giving a straight and balanced answer to that is like lifting the lid off Pandora's box, for it releases a stream of characters whose backgrounds will cause shivers of suspicion, especially when we recall the effectiveness of the British Secret Service in past times and the vulnerability of the leading figure in the struggle, Michael Collins.

The pedigree and background of Chartres was printed in the *Who's Who* of the period. But although in print, it does not appear to have come to the notice of the three principal leaders, Griffith, De Valera and Collins, who, from time to time, availed of his services.

He was the son of the late Major Chartres, M.D., of the 8th Hussars, and a grandson of Richard Chartres of Dublin. From other evidence we know that he was born in 1862, and was thus, at fifty nine, the oldest of the Treaty delegation, being nine years the senior of Griffith. He was the great grandson of Richard of Grace Dieu, Co. Waterford, Granitfield, Co. Dublin and Limegrove, Surrey. His wife was Annie Vivanti, a Piedmontese from northern Italy. He was educated at Wellington College, in Germany and at the University of London. He was a barrister of the Middle Temple, specialising in Workman's Compensation and labour law. He was Chief of the Intelligence Section of the War Office Armaments Output Committee 1915, after

which he was transferred to the Ministry of Munitions in the same year. He organised, and for many years directed, the Intelligence Department of *The Times*. He founded the Industrial Reserve in 1915. He wrote papers on the Public Authorities Protection Act, Workman's Compensation, Munitions Acts and interpretations of them.

The attention of researchers was first directed to him by obscure references in Frank Packenham's *Peace by Ordeal*, wherein, after summarising the above, he remarks that (up to the time of his becoming involved) *his Sinn Féin sympathies had passed unnoticed and his last minute selection caused surprise . . . . . Even to the Irish Delegation, some of whom knew nothing of him personally, he remained something of a mystery man throughout*. The delegation needed a constitutional lawyer desperately — Gavan Duffy did not have sufficient international experience — but Chartres, although chosen for the purpose, could not supply it either. He was an expert only on Workman's Compensation. Austin Stack had been insistent that they should have a sound constitutional lawyer advising them. When he pressed Collins on this (the two, close friends until early 1920, had become estranged) he replied lightly, *oh, we have John Chartres acting for us*(2). Packenham does not relate whether Stack was satisfied with this, but he does note that Chartres had considerable knowledge of procedure and sources of information. As a lesser member of the delegation however, he managed to occupy a pivotal position between Griffith and Collins, overshadowing the chief secretary, Erskine Childers, for whom Griffith developed a deep and unreasoning antipathy.

This open division — plainly visible to the English side — was one of a number of fissures that ran through the Irish delegation, weakening its negotiating strength with calamitous results. At a crucial moment in late October, Chartres "saved" the negotiations by putting forward his own interpretation of recognition of the Crown, which, with partition, occupied the prime place in the discussions. *Ireland*, he wrote, *would accept the Crown as symbol and accepted head of the combination of signatory states*. This was not agreed to by the British, but what was eventually accepted evolved from it.

Significantly Packenham then adds: (The proposal from Lord Birkenhead that Griffith, Collins and himself) *should meet again was not as innocent as it looked. It eliminated Barton, the spearhead in British eyes of the De Valera-Childers faction. Nor was Birkenhead beyond Lloyd George in guile. He expressed a hope that Griffith and Collins would bring a constitutional lawyer and declared himself satisfied when Griffith agreed to bring with them Mr. Chartres. Birkenhead had discovered that Griffith would be likely to pass over Childers and pitch on Chartres. He had learned too, a good deal about*

*Chartres' experience and attainments. His enquiries had confirmed his self-confidence — as well they might. Expert indexer of the Times Library, formidable over Workman's Compensation, it was unlikely that in knowledge of constitutional law he would make much headway against a British Lord Chancellor who was known to carry a professional erudition at his fingertips.*

How had this member of the British Intelligence Service managed to insinuate himself on to the Irish Delegation? His first contact here was when he came to Ireland as an agent of the Ministry of Munitions to Kynock's munition factory, Arklow, in the latter part of 1916. The following year, (December 1917) he was offered an O.B.E. by the Home Office, but refused it. This refusal, may have been on advice from Intelligence to stay out of the limelight, or it may have been from conviction since, even now, no one has anything more than circumstantial evidence about Chartres and his associates.

It was in the year 1917 that Chartres wrote to Arthur Griffith from London, shortly after the latter was released (in December 1916) from Reading. Griffith, from now on, was to become in many eyes the rotten apple within the Movement, a small, tired out, prematurely old politician, who found himself carried along like a cork upon the revolutionary torrent. As a dedicated middle of the road politician he never missed an opportunity of trying to divert the torrent by offering settlement proposals.

In an official message to him after Bloody Sunday, November 1920, Lloyd George appealed to him to keep his head and not break off the slender link — through Archbishop Clune — that had been established, cynically adding: *Tragic as the events in Dublin are, they are of no importance. These men (the fourteen who were shot by the I.R.A.) were soldiers and took a soldiers risk*(3). Thus, if we are to assume that the approach from Chartres was part of a probe by the Secret Service, Griffith was selected because he now occupied an important position in an invigorated movement. *He had been moved*, Chartres told Sean T. O'Kelly a few months later, *because of 1916. It awakened him*, he said; *from then on he regarded himself not as an Englishman but as an Irishman. All my love was now for Ireland: I would fight for her*(4). From then on he read all he could about Ireland. He studied her history. He did not however disguise his English background. That was seen to be a useful part of the counter intelligence activities assigned to him later by Collins, activities which would seem to have conferred no marked benefit to the struggle.

The initial approaches to the Movement were made from London in a series of letters to Griffith, following which he visited him at Sinn Féin Headquarters at 6 Harcourt Street. Griffith took him out for a



meal, and the friendship developed from there. Later in 1919, he came to reside in Highfield Road, Rathgar, after which evidently he met Sean T. O'Kelly. Through them he became acquainted with De Valera when he returned from the United States in December 1920. But Griffith and Collins were his main contacts. He wrote for Griffith's *Nationality*, restarted early in 1917 and funded by James O'Mara the bacon manufacturer. He was a professional journalist and he adopted a style close to Griffith's own.

According to Cormac MacCarthaigh(5) no one checked him out. He was accepted completely at face value and upon the story of his conversion, which is recounted above. He had no connection with Ireland, nor was he born here. He was entirely English, the son of an officer in the Army. Childers came into the Movement in the same way, as did many more, but he had a background and connections that provided a thorough verification for him. Chartres had none of these. A maverick, his sole contribution was a few newspaper articles.

There is no record that he contributed anything of value through intelligence. In December 1918, before coming to reside in Dublin, he met Collins by arrangement in London. Collins was accompanied by Barton, Gavan Duffy and O'Kelly. They were endeavouring to obtain an interview with President Wilson in order to press Ireland's claim for representation at the forthcoming Paris Peace Conference. Sinn Féin had, on December 14th, obtained a sweeping electoral victory. So whatever doubts may have existed in the mind of the British Establishment before, were now dispelled. Collins, and the people around him, were seen to be very important indeed. President Wilson however did not wish to see them and would almost certainly have kept out of their way(6). The delegation was diverted however by a reception which some might see as planned for that purpose. It was arranged by an ad hoc *Friends of Ireland Committee*, the members of which were:-

*Crompton Llewelyn-Davies*, a Welshman, and long standing friend of Lloyd George, in whose Kensington home it was held(7). He had been appointed Solicitor General to the Post Office for services arising from the Old Age Pensions Act of 1908 and subsequent land reforms(8). *Moya Llewelyn-Davies*, wife of Crompton, was a captivating and highly educated Irishwoman, who returned to reside in Co. Wicklow in later years and died there in 1944. She was the daughter of James O'Connor, M.P. for West Wicklow, born 1836, and Member of Parliament from 1892 until his death in March 1910. This James is not to be confused with John, M.P. from Cork City, who was member for South Tipperary from 1885, and, after he lost his seat in 1892 through supporting Parnell, was then elected for North Kildare where he remained until 1918. John rose from a humble level, to be secretary of

the Supreme Council I.R.B. in 1878. Diarmuid Mac Giolla Phadraig tells a story related to him by Supt. Dick O'Connell of the Dublin Metropolitan Police which suggests that John, in the early eighties may have given information to the Castle. Late in life he took silk, became a K.C. at the English bar, and died in Hampstead in October 1928. This is not our man, nor is John, M.P. for South Kerry 1885 — 1887, nor Arthur, nor T.P. Moya's father, we have established was James of Glen Imaal, a journalist who joined the Fenians, became sub editor of their paper the *Irish People*, and was arrested in 1866 with their entire staff consisting of Thomas Clarke Luby, Charles Kickham, John O'Leary, O'Donovan Rossa, in Parliament Street, and sentenced for treason felony.

Released in 1871, he joined the staff of Richard Pigott's papers (Pigott, the *Times* forger, of 1887, who killed himself in Madrid) which were merged under William O'Brien to become the Parnellite organ *United Ireland*. At this time James was residing with his young family at 2, St John's Terrace, Blackrock, where he befriended the almost blind and deaf Kickham in his last days from November 1878 to August 1882. A circle of young literary people met in the house, foremost among whom were, George Sigerson (not so young, but his doctor), his daughters Hester and Dora, Rosa Mulholland, Katherine Tynan and Rose Kavanagh.

There is today in the small Kickham museum in Mullinahone, an 1879 edition of *Knocknagow*, inscribed from Kickham to 'my god-daughter Mary,' which may be Moya.

What the *Freeman's Journal* describes as an exceptionally painful incident occurred in 1890 when the O'Connor family ate mussels which they had gathered on the beach at Monkstown, during the absence of their father. They turned out to be poisonous with the result that the entire family, mother and four children died, Moya and the servant girl alone recovering. It was a most impressive funeral, followed by the erection of a public monument over the grave in Glasnevin. The tragedy is referred to in Joyce's *Ulysses* in the Nausica episode where Bloom intones *poor man O'Connor, wife and five children poisoned by mussels here*. (Joyce was wrong: four children, as stated, died).

James married again, and the story was told that Moya left home shortly after. Sometime around 1908, she married Crompton Llewelyn-Davies, and for the following ten years commenced living a very successful life in London. Literature continued to be her bent, and she had edited some works — including Muirís O Súilleabháin's *Twenty Years a Growing*, (published originally as *Fiche Bhlian ag Fás*) — for Oxford University Press. We are therefore talking at this time about a mature blue stocking, considerably older than the twenty-eight (in 1918) year old Collins. A blue stocking nonetheless, who had both an impeccable nationalist background, and perfect connections among the London set.



Present also at this party in December 1918 was *John Chartres*, part of the set, and part of whose career we have dealt with.

Present also was his wife *Annie Vivanti*, educated abroad and widely travelled, subsequently secretary to Sean T. O'Kelly on the Irish delegation seeking a hearing in Paris. The delegation, including J.P. Walsh, Sean Ó Murchú and Gavan Duffy, was in Paris from late January until June, 1919, and intermittently thereafter. Annie Vivanti had some vague contacts with D'Annunzio, the Italian soldier poet, which it was thought might result in importations of arms from that quarter. None came however. (8a) If Chartres and his wife were agents of the British, they and their friends it can be seen had found it easy to reach sensitive positions right from the start in the councils of the rebels.

*Sir James Barrie*, member of the Scottish aristocracy, author of *Peter Pan* (written about the children of Llewelyn-Davies' brother) knighted on a recommendation of Lloyd George, novelist and playwright, was another guest at the Kensington soirée. He rose high in the Secret Service during the war. If this party was a once off affair for Collins, we could understand it, but in fact this jet set group from now on built upon their introductions, and when Collins and the delegation came to London in 1921 presented themselves again as confidants and advisers of himself and Griffith.

Sir James again sought him out and maintained a very close relationship during the course of the discussions. He was undoubtedly in a position to influence, to sway him. Barrie was a man *whose sincerity could not be doubted* (9) Collins said. Barrie on his part could not wait to phone the Davies, *he has completely charmed me, he is blazing with intelligence*. They met many times in the course of the next seven weeks when, presumably, the self flattery continued. What the two really had in common is difficult to say; Barrie, along with all these people was and remained very much a part of the British establishment crust. He was the father of the Earl of Ogilvy and the grandfather of the present Hon. Angus Ogilvy, who is married to H.R.H. Princess Alexandria. In 1922, he was recommended for the Order of Merit by Lloyd George, while living at Lobswood Manor, Farnham.

From the date of their first meeting in December 1918, Moya Llewelyn-Davies developed a close friendship for Collins (10). While her husband preserved his direct phone link with the Prime Minister, she slipped out of London in 1920, and came to reside in the big house in Killester, known as Furry Park, hidden by a large garage. *Mick is very well and hearty*, wrote Robert Barton to her in June 1919. In June 1920, he was telling her the total monies subscribed in the Dail loan issue, although that was very sensitive information. (11)

The correspondence — they can be called love letters — continued at very frequent intervals (12). Both of them enjoyed the friendship



although, almost certainly, it meant that Ireland's principal war leader was on a hook, dangling upon a line held firmly from Downing Street. With Griffith passing notes through "friendly" warders from the time of his arrest in November 1920, until the Truce, with De Valera safely back in December, but *not to be arrested unless instructed*, and with Collins himself on the end of a telephone line whenever A.W. Cope(13), the Under Secretary, choose, it can be seen that the Spider in No. 10 was keeping terror on a very tight rein indeed(14).

The final guest that we know of at the Kensington party was *Auberon Herbert, Lord Lucas*. He was one of the intellectuals of the Liberal Party and a former *Times* journalist during the Boer War. In World War One, he worked for the Secret Service in Cairo (then and now a notorious spy cross-roads) and later in Albania. Chartres was frequently in Cairo also. It is noteworthy that the fourteen slain on the morning of Bloody Sunday were known as the Cairo gang. Auberon Herbert was raised to the peerage after the war.

It may be said in defence of Collins consorting with such company, that, Easter Week excepted we were not yet, (in December 1918) at war with England. Also, in deference to the twenty-eight-year-old *bombastic and chain-smoking young man*, (Moya Llewelyn-Davies' description), Director of Organisation Irish Volunteers, soon to be Minister for Finance and Director of Intelligence, he may have been using the opportunity to assess the enemy. Nonetheless it is hard to square it with the distancing that foreign delegations normally adopt in the citadels of the enemy. If they mix socially, they mix with their own people and not with the socialite flotsam of the other side. One wonders in passing, did such occasions influence Collins in his attitude on those big social issues which should have been pressed to the fore during the revolution, but were not. Three weeks after returning from London, he tried to prevent the presentation of the *Democratic Programme*(15) to the inaugural meeting of the Dail, evidently because of its social content. P.S. O'Hegarty, who agreed with him — *my gorge rose at it* — said P.S., relates how Collins and other members of the I.R.B. tried to prevent its presentation in the Mansion House. *The others*, e.g. the non I.R.B. people, O'Hegarty wrote(16), *refused to go on without it*: the draft was handed to Sean T. O'Kelly, who finally produced what was put before the Dail.

#### JOHN CHARTRES, SUBSEQUENTLY

When he met Collins at the Christmas party in London in December 1918, it may have been for the first time, although they were already acquainted through Griffith. Straightaway he informed Collins that he would shortly come to Dublin as a civil servant in the Ministry of

Labour, which was the post war title of the Ministry of Munitions. He omitted to say that, up to a few weeks before, he had been in the Ministry of Munitions. Collins evidently welcomed his assistance in the post which was to be located, suitably enough, close to Dublin Castle.

In September, 1919, he arrived in Dublin and took lodgings at Highfield Road, Rathgar. He tramped it daily from there to Dame Street. Things were now becoming fairly hot in Ireland. On the 20th, he wrote to his friend, suggesting that they meet to renew their acquaintanceship. They did not meet then, because Collins was going down to the country, probably in connection with the recently launched Republican Bond issue or upon organisation work, the Dail having been just suppressed. They must have met shortly after that. There is an undated letter saying that he would meet on a certain Saturday for dinner. He had a Ministerial meeting, he remarks, and after that he will be busy on Bond work.

*There is close to £2,000 a day coming in.*

Once again we must rap him on the knuckles for such loose talk, since the British were now opening private accounts trying to locate the funds.

Meanwhile Chartres reports back that he is engaged on intelligence work, mixing with officers and keeping his ears open. After some time, in late 1920, presumably, he as good as left his Civil Service job and came over full time to the Movement. He was appointed by De Valera as principal officer of the Irish White Cross. This had been set up to aid the relations of the men imprisoned, and was funded upon monies raised in America. (A National Aid Fund already existed since 1916; Michael Collins was its secretary for a while).

About this time Collins requested Maire Comerford to accompany Chartres socially. She used to meet him in St Stephen's Green. Sometimes they would walk to Parnell Square where they might sit in for an Irish class.

The friendship was short lived. Maire did not take to a person whom she regarded as English in every way possible; to this day she is convinced that he was a plant. Sean MacBride is of the same opinion. Collins however continued to have a high opinion of him. There is a letter of June, 1921, wherein he sends him a pay cheque; he also enclosed the statement of Sean McKeon, then sentenced to death, asking him could he make some use of it. Shortly after that came the Truce and with it the appointment of the delegation early in October. Of the two leading secretaries, Childers and Chartres, it is clear that De Valera wished Childers to go, while Collins plumped for John Chartres.

Chartres fades from the picture completely following the Treaty and in the run up to the Civil War. He had been appointed in June 1921, by

De Valera to Berlin. He may not have gone there until 1922, when he went as an officially accredited trade representative of the Provisional Government, (later Free State). Nancy Wyse-Power, long associated with the cause, was his secretary there. From the little she wrote of this period<sup>(17)</sup> she seems to have had a good opinion of him. We do not know what time he returned from Berlin; it may have been two years later, whereupon he was appointed to a post in the Department of Industry and Commerce. He died at the age of sixty five, on the 14th May, 1927. At that time he had an address in *Lisieux*, Dartry Road, Rathgar, where presumably he was in digs, his only daughter being married abroad, and his Italian wife having already retired to Turin. His cash assets, as disclosed in the will, amounted to £486, plus £800 on deposit at Barclay's Bank, in London. Power of Attorney was granted to a Kathleen O'Kelly, in the presence of the British Vice Consul there.

### Arthur Griffith

We have said about that Griffith, during the eight week sojourn of the delegation in London, developed an unreasoning antipathy towards Erskine Childers. Anyone who questions this should read the level-headed day-by-day account of the negotiations given in *Peace by Ordeal*. One thing is clear from that, that Griffith was incapable of leading a delegation or playing poker at a conference table. Not alone was the Vice-President of the Republic — in which all too clearly he did not believe — at loggerheads with half of his delegation, but he allowed himself and Collins to be detached by the British for most of the time. He even gave Lloyd George a letter containing a personal promise which the Prime Minister produced on the last day of the conference; *do you mean to tell me Mr. Collins, that you have never learned of this document from Mr. Griffith*; Lloyd George could say. And neither Collins, nor the rest, had knowledge of it. It was a result of his wish not to let Lloyd George down, (*I have never let a man down in my life and I never will*) that the entire delegation caved in on December 5/6th, and one by one signed the Articles of Agreement. (Duggan's signature was forged. He had absented himself, and his name from an Albert Hall programme was stuck on.)

On his return to Ireland, he pursued the same vendetta against Childers, (*I will not reply to any damned Englishman in this Assembly*, he exploded in the Dail in January). From then on he assiduously applied himself implementing the Treaty to the extent that he became so obsessed by his task as to betray all of Ireland's rights and interests. It is not surprising therefore, that in the run up to the attack upon the Four Courts in June, it was Griffith, rather than Collins or Mulcahy, who led the discussions with Macready in the Vice-Regal Lodge,



arranging the order of the attack. It was a calamity that Arthur Griffith, who was anti Larkin in the 1913 lockout and who had taken no part in 1916, was given any role in the national movement afterwards. Prematurely aged at fifty one, possibly suffering from brain softening(18) he grasped frantically at the measure of freedom offered in the Treaty, working then with fanatical determination to saddle it upon the nation, with results from which it has not recovered.

## REFERENCES

1 Others were Michael Knightly, official reporter, Joe McGrath T.D., David Robinson, Fionan Lynch T.D., secretary, Lily O'Brennan, Eilis Lyons, Kathleen McKenna, Kathleen O'Connell, Alice Lyons, (all secretaries).

2 *The Lost Leader* by Margery Forester.

3 *The Irish Times* 16th November, 1965 quoted by Margery Forester.

4 *The Autobiography of Sean T. O'Kelly*, 1972.

5 In *Agus*, Méan Fómhair, 1977, Bealtaine, 1978, Meitheamh, 1978.

6 There was an agreement among the four powers which prevented the introduction of claims unless unanimously agreed. Besides Wilson had a strong anti Irish bias. The Irish Americans, especially Judge Cohalan, may have been partly to blame.

7 *The Lost Leader* by Margery Forester.

8 Lord Richard Llewelyn-Davies, (born 1912) noted architect, consultant to *The Times* and the Stock Exchange, is his son. In the early Thirties, while at Cambridge, he was a member of a group known as *The Apostles*, in which also was Anthony Blunt, the Soviet spy master. He was created a life peer by the Conservative Government on Labour's nomination in 1964. Died 1981.

8a D'Annunzio at the head of a party of Italian soldier volunteers, seized the Croatian city of Fiume, now part of Yugoslavia, from allied commission troops on September 12th 1919. Contacts through Anne Vivanti, if they existed at all, may have given rise to hopes of arms from Italy referred to by Pax Ó Faoláin.

9 *The Lost Leader* by Margery Forester.

10 Collins was friendly with Kitty Kiernan, of Granard, from the beginning of 1918 until August 1922. They were seen together at the Horse Show in August 1921. There is a collection of letters extant from Collins to her during this period. They show the complexities and contradictions of the man. There was little doubt that it was she he intended ultimately to marry. Nonetheless the handsome leader of twenty-eight must occasionally have felt lonely for womankind. If so it was a brilliant stratagem of the Secret Service to throw him the unusual and sophisticated London hostess, to have her chase after him, as seemingly was the case. Letters from Collins to Kitty Kiernan were published in Dublin in 1983. Kitty later married Comdt. Felix Cronin not Comdt. Ned, of the Blueshirts.

11 The magistrate, Alan Bell, was taken from a tram in Ballsbridge and shot dead in March 1920, for investigating too closely how the funds were deposited.

12 The family made available a selection of the correspondence to Rex Taylor, and later to Margery Forester. All of it is now stated to be lost.

13 Not nearly enough has been written of the significant part played by Tim Healy K.C. in this period. With his wealth of political experience and contacts into the Movement through his law practice (see Dan Gleeson) Healy kept tabs upon everything that was going on and was an invaluable sounding board for the authorities. From his home in Chapelizod, Healy was said to have a direct line to Cope, and through him to Lloyd George. Is it any wonder that Timothy Healy, the man who in 1891 called *Stop, thief* to Parnell, should be appointed as the Free State's first Governor General?

Sean MacBride recalls a James Thorpe who, reputedly, was the principal informer on the Invincibles; James Carey being the victim baited merely into the witness box. Thorpe, according to Tom Markham, a policeman employed in Dublin Castle administration, was in fact Healy. When Markham informed Collins early in 1922, Collins was embarrassed because of Healy's close connection with the new state. A note of this was found in Collins's diary after his death, but this note and all other leads to the Healy connection, have vanished from the Castle.

Alfred William Cope, the Assistant Under Secretary was a figure of considerable interest about whom too little has been written. Researchers might begin with W. J. Fitzpatrick's *Sham Squire* wherein considerable evidence appears of an earlier William Cope — maybe an ancestor — of Dublin and England who helped to persuade Reynolds to betray the Leinster Directory of the United Irishmen assembled in Oliver Bond's house, in March 1798. The betrayal effectively quenched preparations for that rising.

14 Far from being uncatchable, Michael Collins, from mid 1919 to mid 1921, should have been eminently catchable. His haunts were well known. A regular path, both of Volunteer leaders and Castle touts was beaten to Jim Kirwan's, Maurice Collins' and Liam Devlin's public houses in Parnell Street, and to Vaughan's Hotel in Parnell Square. They were frequently raided. Sometimes Collins hid, sometimes "he walked through them". But efficient police forces do not have misses like that, and the Castle forces, despite the loss of rural stations, were highly efficient up to the very end. How efficient may be gauged from the thoroughness with which Dick McKee, Sean Treacy, and Dan Breen were tracked down when the Castle felt they were overstepping things. The *myth* of Michael Collins may not be such a myth after all.

15 The Democratic Programme of the First Dail adopted on January 21st 1919 provided; for the right of the people of Ireland to ownership of Ireland and to the unfettered control of Irish destinies; its soil, resources and wealth producing processes; rights of private property to be subordinate to public right and welfare. That the country be ruled by Liberty, Equality, and Justice for all. Every man and woman to give allegiance and service. In return every citizen would have a share of the produce of the nation's labour. Children would be cared for; no child would suffer hunger or cold, lack of clothing or shelter; all to be educated in a free and Gaelic Ireland.

The poor law system would be abolished; the nation's aged and infirm would be cared for. The Republic would safeguard the physical and moral well being of the people. The nation's resources, soil, materials, bogs, fisheries, waterways and harbours would be developed. Industries would be invigorated on progressive co-operative lines. This would be assisted by an extensive consular service with foreign nations on terms of mutual advantage and goodwill. The government would seek with foreign governments lasting improvements under which the working classes live and labour.

See *The Irish Republic* for the full programme which appears largely the creation of Sean T. O'Kelly, Liam Mellows and Tom Johnson.

Neutrality is implicit in the latter end of the programme but is not mentioned.

16 *A History of Ireland Under the Union*, by P.S. O'Hegarty.

17 Writing in 1935.

18 A brain haemorrhage, officially; apoplexy, according to Greaves.





# FREE STATE TREATY DEBATE AND VOTE 7th January, 1922

## THOSE VOTING FOR (64)

Michael Collins	George Nicholls	Peter Hughes
Arthur Griffith	P. J. Hogan	James Murphy
Sean Milroy	Professor J. B. Whelehan	Justin McKenna
Paul Galligan	Piarras Beaslai	Joseph McBride
Wm. T. Cosgrave	Fionán Lynch	William Sears
Gearóid O'Sullivan	J. Crowley	Daniel O'Rourke
Patrick Brennan	Robert Barton	Ernest Blythe
Sean Leddy	C. M. Byrne	Eoin O'Duffy
Sean Hayes	James N. Dolan	Alex McCabe
Padraig O'Keefe	Andrew Lavin	Thomas O'Donnell
Sean Hales	Thomas Carter	Seamus Burke
Joseph Sweeney	Dr. Patrick McCartan	Dr. Vincent White
Peter Ward	Kevin O'Higgins	Richard Corish
Dr. J. P. McGINLEY	Joseph Lynch	Sean McGarry
P. J. McGoldrick	Frank Bulfin	Michael Staines
Frank Lawless	Dr. Richard Hayes	Richard Mulcahy
George Gavan Duffy	Wm. Hayes	Joseph McGrath
Desmond Fitzgerald	Joseph McGuinness	Philip Cosgrave
James Derham	Sean Mac Eoin	Daniel McCarthy
J. O'Dwyer	Lorcan Robbins	Liam de Róiste
Padraic Ó Máille	Eamonn Duggan	J. J. Walsh
		Michael Hayes

## THOSE VOTING AGAINST (57)

James Lennon	Con Collins	Frank Carty
E. Aylward	Eamonn Roche	Joseph McDonagh
Eamon De Valera	P. S. O'Cahill	P. J. Maloney
Brian O'Higgins	Thomas O'Donoghue	P. J. Count O'Beirne
Sean McSwiney	Art O'Connor	Cathal Brugha
Sean Moylan	Daniel Buckley	Eamon Dee
Daniel Corkery	Erskine Childers	Seamus Robinson
Sean Nolan	George Noble Count Plunkett	Dr. James Ryan
Thomas Hunter	Mrs. Michael Callaghan	Sean Etchingham
James Fitzgerald	M. P. Colivet	Seamus Doyle
David Kent	J. J. O'Kelly	Sean T. O'Kelly
Joseph O'Doherty	Dr. Crowley	Philip Shanahan
J. O'Flaherty	Tomás O Deirg	Mrs. Tom Clarke
Mrs. Pearse	P. J. Rutledge	Constance Markievicz
John O'Mahony	Harry Boland	Con Murphy
Liam Mellows	Thomas Maguire	Mary McSwiney
Dr. Brian Cusack	Sean McEntee	Daniel O'Callaghan
Frank Fahy	Dr. Fearon	Dr. Ada English
Austin Stack	Seamus O Dáomhín	Professor W. P. Stockley

## Charles McGuinness

Extract from *Liam Mellows and the Irish Republic*, by C. Desmond Greaves

One of Mellows' agents had been arrested in Cardiff. And a Captain Thompson, now in Hamburg Jail, had been caught in the act of sailing out of that port a cargo of arms for Ireland. Captain Thompson was Charles McGuinness. He had reported to Cremin on 9th, September. With the help of Briscoe he secured a leaky fishing vessel. Some weeks were spent caulking it. A crew of German Communists was found prepared to sail to Helvick. But unfortunately there was difficulty in starting the motor. While the engineers worked on it McGuinness bought beer. He made the mistake of paying in notes of high denomination. The Hamburg Harbour Police raided the ship as she edged her way out. *Gott in Himmel* they exclaimed as they turned rifles out of bags of salt.

Briscoe found a lawyer who explained to McGuinness that the export of contraband for use against England was not the gravest crime in the German calendar. He suggested that he should plead guilty and ask the indulgence of the court. The result was a fine of about £10. Questions were asked in the Reichstag, but apparently McGuinness had no difficulty in recovering his property which he resolved to export more circumspectly next time.

He secured an option on an old tub called the *Karl Marx* which he loaded with cement for a trial run. It was to be towed out by a tug named the *Frieda* which McGuinness purchased outright. The arms were aboard the *Frieda* which was cast off as soon as she was beyond the three mile limit, and while the *Karl Marx* sailed ostentatiously about the coast, before putting back to port, the *Frieda* swung west to Ireland. This time the crew were members of the extreme right irredentist movement, the Orgesh. Mellows was notified of the departure.

Captain McGuinness preserved the log of the voyage. He left Germany on 28th October 1921. The distance to Helvick was a little short of 800 miles, which supposing a speed of 12 knots could be covered in about three days. A watch was instituted at Helvick on 30th, October. Pax Whelan, Liam Lynch, and Joe Vize, who had escaped from the Curragh on 9th September, were waiting there. They watched all night for the distress signal which was to be the sign for two fishing boats to go out to take the arms off. On the 10th November Mellows concluded with gloomy feelings that the *Frieda* had gone down. Imagine the surprise and delight when McGuinness appeared in Dublin to report the safe landing of the arms on 11th November. Delayed by severe gales, he had ultimately overshot Helvick in dirty

weather. By the time he burned his flares off the coast the watch had been withdrawn. In the absence of a response he made for Hook Head. Ignoring the signals of the coastguards, he sailed up Waterford Harbour and anchored behind an island off Cheekpoint, after his last shovelful of coal had been thrown into the furnace. He went ashore, covered the five miles to Waterford City as quickly as possible, and with some difficulty persuaded the Mayor, Dr White, of the reality of his mission. Carts and wagons were assembled. The *Frieda* was warped alongside a jetty. Her 200 rifles and 10,000 rounds of ammunition were taken off. McGuinness then brought the crew to Dublin where they were distributed to Mrs Woods, Mrs Humphreys and Mrs Mellows, being shortly afterwards conducted to Newcastle by Eamon Martin.

Fuel was put aboard and before the eyes of the outraged harbour master, the *Frieda* was sailed to Boatstrand, whence McGuinness took her to Cork and sold her to Captain Collins. With the proceeds, which it seemed Mellows had not the heart to take off him, he bought the *City of Dortmund* from Palgrave Murphy. This vessel engaged in legitimate trade, but is said to have handled contraband in emergencies. She was the first ship to fly the Irish tricolour.

By the end of the month McGuinness was back in Germany. On Cremin's advice the Irish had decided to demand the return of sums paid to a dealer whose wares had not materialised. A confrontation was arranged in a solicitor's office. McGuinness was present. He had lived up to his reputation as a tough character. During his few weeks in Germany he had knocked out four Swedes who offended him in a bar, put his fist through the glass screen of a taxi whose driver he thought was taking him for a ride, and had tattoo marks removed from his wrist without an anaesthetic. He could be a terrifying spectacle when accompanied by a revolver. A considerable sum of money was recovered and earmarked for financing a fresh expedition.



## Diarmuid Mac Giolla Phadraig

*Resolutely refusing to join us as a Survivor, but a valuable source of reference, the late beloved bookshop owner — first beside the Savoy cinema in O'Connell Street — then later around the corner in Cathedral Street — Diarmuid of the droll and sometimes barbed wit, was a Dubliner of Dublin.*

I was brought up with a strong left wing background. In 1912 and 1913 we lived in Cabra Park, Phibsboro. I was at Belvedere College then. Like many of the boys I was very much touched by the hardships arising from the 1913 strike. After all we had only to walk a hundred yards from Sackville Street, to meet the worst slums in Europe.

After the strike commenced, I used wander around Mecklenburg Street, Waterford Street, Railway Street, all of those bleak decayed areas, the Nighttown of Joyce, now levelled. I was in O'Connell Street that Sunday morning of August 31st, 1913, when the Dublin Metropolitan Police charged the people with their batons after James Larkin had attempted to address them from the balcony of the Imperial Hotel(1). I have never seen people, most of them coming from the pro Cathedral, scatter so helplessly. Hundreds of them were hammered on the ground with the long truncheons. I hated the peelers for it; hated them. For years after I could not look at a policeman without hating him for what happened in 1913. I can still feel angry when I think of it.

It was a great impetus to us to do something, to join in. I was too young for the Volunteers, so I was taken in Fianna. We sang all the radical songs at that time. I could sing the Red Flag, and later the Internationale before I had learned a single Irish song.

At that time, we lived in Cabra Park, in Phibsboro, which is in the Second Battalion area. I had commenced working in the Hibernian Bank in College Green. Every Friday, as regular as clockwork, the members of the Dublin Active Service Unit, I.R.A. came in with their pay cheques for two pounds ten shillings (£2.50). I often wondered at their simplicity and the stupidity of the enemy. These pay cheques went back to head office with the names of the recipients upon them. A little bit of savvy on their part and the whole troublesome bunch could have been rounded up.

*It has been remarked over and over again that intelligence gathering is simply the collecting and making accessible of already published information. The established state always has an enormous amount of information published about itself which it is not practicable to withdraw from the market.*

There is a complete handbook of the Royal Irish Constabulary published in July, 1921 containing every name and station of members. It was available for the princely sum of one and sixpence.

We used to train then in the old Hardwicke Hall in Hardwicke Street. It was owned by Countess Plunkett and had been a Carmelite nunnery. The individual cells were still upstairs.

I was in charge of Fianna training now. The trouble with Fianna at that time was that it was used as a mere recruiting ground for the I.R.A. Every young Fianna lad fancied himself in an active service unit. The first task I set myself was the suppression of all arms training and of compulsory transfer to the I.R.A. There was plenty for them to do learning history, scout drill, and outdoor activities like camping without that. I told them that I was there to receive back all the guns they could offer to me. I remember going home for some nights afterwards with my pockets, my belt, and a bag weighed down with an assortment of guns and small arms of every sort.

#### THE COLLINS MYTH

Collins was caught in the web of his own myth, the myth of an invincible super spy who could reach out at will. It was built up sedulously by the British in the Truce period because they saw him as their man, along with Arthur Griffith. In the run up to the civil war he became quite mad. One day he was a supreme manipulator, ferrying guns to Republicans in the North, arranging the assassination of Sir Henry Wilson; the next day — after a phone call from Lloyd George — he became the statesman again, the one who would honour his bond.

Not many people knew of Collins' friendship with Moya Llewelyn-Davies — she was married to Crompton Llewelyn-Davies and has since written a preface to Maurice O'Sullivan's *Twenty Years A Growing*. Her father was a Parnellite M.P. for Wicklow by the name of James O'Connor. As an example of the limit to which English spy activity can go, I have it myself from an old R.I.C. sergeant how he was sent as a callow young constable to spy upon a meeting of the Fenians that was taking place in the eighties in Dunphy's pub, a thatched cottage upon the site of the present pub at Doyle's Corner.

They were upstairs in a small back room with another O'Connor, John, who also became an M.P., right in their midst. The constable had them under observation through a slit from the outside. However he became cramped and moved in some way, so much so that the group inside looked about them in alarm. The future M.P. was first to the door. He came outside where he could not fail to see the policeman. Completely overlooking him however he went inside again and reassured the meeting that there was no one there.

Later on, continued my policeman friend, *I followed him — because I could not understand his actions, from the canal bridge to the North Circular, down Berkeley Road, to the Stags Head in Dame Street. Imagine my surprise when I saw the supposed conspirator enter*

*accompanied by the Chief of Police, Supt. John Mallon, himself.*

To return to Collins, Moya Llewelyn-Davies attached herself to his entourage, and from 1918 on rarely allowed him out of her sight. Crompton Llewelyn-Davies, her husband, was at the time Crown Solicitor for the English Post Office and one of the closest, but least publicised friends of Lloyd George. Around Christmas 1918, Collins visited London, just after the Sinn Féin election, with the intention of heading a small delegation that would wait on the U.S. President Woodrow Wilson passing through on his way to the Peace Conference. It was arranged — by whom I cannot say — but one can see the hand of the Welsh Wizard in it, that Moya O'Connor, late of Dublin and whose daddy was the "patriot" M.P. James O'Connor (by patriot I mean that he had spent a short while in prison thirty years before on a political charge), would have a reception for the Irish party. This was done under the guise of a London *Friends of Ireland* group. It included such upper crust people as Sir James Barrie, Lord Lucas, John Chartres and his wife Annie Vivanti. All of these people it emerged later had associations with British Intelligence. For them really to be Friends of Ireland at such a critical time, is hardly conceivable. At all events, by the time the glittering reception was over, the opportunity for meeting Wilson was gone. The American President had departed for Paris.

Following this success, Moya Llewelyn-Davies appeared to leave her husband and came to reside in Killester. The close friendship with Collins continued there, and there were plenty of letters as evidence. When we consider how, about the same time — early 1919 — John Chartres arrived in Rathgar, while his wife Annie Vivanti, accompanied Sean T. O'Kelly as a secretary to the Peace Conference lobbies in Paris, we can see how hemmed in by British Intelligence Ireland's revolutionary leadership was and how well informed on events Lloyd George could choose to be. As the struggle developed, and as Collins moved into the strategic post of directing our clandestine war, it became even more important to keep tabs upon him.

They built up the myth about him, the Mick Collins myth, and Collins like a fool believed it.

#### CIVIL WAR

Late one night in October, 1922, I was coming along Clonliffe Road, near its junction with Jones Road. The Civil War was on now for three months and had been quite bitter although the Free State forces were now very much on top. Three young lads, Fianna obviously, were being held by soldiers on the footpath. They had been out bill sticking against the new emergency laws. I could plainly see their pots and brushes. I could see too the officer in charge.

It was Charlie Dalton, great coat open, and flapping in the breeze.



He was accompanied by Nick Tobin and both of them were well on. (They had been to the theatre and had just accompanied home the two nieces of Capt. Moynihan, in an army car.) I stopped momentarily, not sure what to do. At that moment they saw me, but not recognising me curtly ordered me on.

I never saw those two lads again<sup>(2)</sup>. The next day their bodies were found in a lane in Clondalkin, then a rural area. They had been shot. There was a bit of a hullabaloo over that, but not much. It was war-time and the Staters had a firm censorship upon everything. Emmet Dalton, who had been married recently, rushed home. The inquest was postponed. I don't know if anyone was ever charged. Nick Tobin was conveniently shot dead meanwhile, so that removed one source of evidence.

I was one of the few persons in the Movement who survived the Troubles, the twenties and the thirties, and was never arrested. I managed to stay upon the fringe of things helping with contacts, writing and providing billets. I was of course quite well known. Frank Aiken's secretary used to come into this shop. Aiken himself, you know was Minister for the Co-Ordination of Defence here in the Emergency. He had a strong belief in what he was doing, his army, his volunteers. He never forgave us for slagging them. He regarded the continued existence of Republicans as an impertinence. One day he came in here. Previously I had managed to retire or get buried in a book if I saw him approach. It was just after another big I.R.A. scare in 1941. From the side of my eye I saw him give me a quizzical look as though to say: *ah, him, how is he still out?* Within a day, the Broy Harriers (Special Branch) called and lifted me. I was interviewed by Sean Gantly in the Castle; I will not say interrogated; it was not that. He was alright you know; did his job, for he had been in the Second Battalion of the I.R.A. once, and after that had worked as a shop boy in Longs, the leather merchants of Capel Street. I am not saying Gantly was one of those, but a lot of the I.R.A. men joined the Broy Harriers in 1933 thinking they were joining an elite group to fight the Blueshirts.

*What did you lift me for?*, I asked. *Well, you know*, said he, smiling faintly, *I had my orders, straight from the top*. I knew well what he meant. I really believe Aiken fingered any active Republicans he remembered from his own days. Whether he was responsible or not, it was another three years before I emerged from behind the barbed wire of Tintown.

#### REFERENCES

- 1 See Nora Connolly O'Brien's account on page 92.
- 2 Brendan Houlihan, Eamonn Hughes, and Joseph Rogers, all from Drumcondra.

## Fr. Michael O'Flanagan

Fr. Michael O'Flanagan, noted patriot priest and orator, was born about 1872 in County Sligo, was educated at Summerhill College, and between 1895-1900 was at St. Patrick's College, Maynooth. He quickly distinguished himself as an orator and as an academic. For the first four years of the century he taught in Summerhill diocesan college, during which period he was sent by the bishop on a fund raising tour of the U.S.A. This was to cover the cost of the purchase of Lord Dillon's estate at Lough Glynn.

In 1912, after being appointed curate of Cliffoney, he appeared for the first time in an agitational role when he led the people against the Congested Districts Board in a campaign for turbary or turf cutting rights. *God put the turf there for the use of the people . . . I shall lead you myself . . . Have we been quiet too long?*

With such a firebrand attitude it was inevitable that after 1916 he became involved with Sinn Féin. Bishop Coyne of Elphin, sensing that he had trouble on his hands, had meanwhile transferred him to remote Crossna in the Arigna hills. There, in the run up to the closely fought bye election of January 1917 — the first Sinn Féin victory when Count George Plunkett won by three thousand votes to the Irish Party's seventeen hundred — he worked might and main for victory. *Count Plunkett will proclaim, he announced, that the freedom to be accorded to Ireland must be the same as Belgium, Serbia . . . France & Germany.*

Thereafter he was in the thick of it. The following year, despite the protests of his people, who closed Crossna church for three weeks, he was suspended by the bishop. He had meanwhile taken his place on a National Council for the leadership whose purpose was to put Ireland's case at the Peace Conference. But events were hastening on, and Fr. O'Flanagan now found himself up and down the length of the country addressing Sinn Féin meetings in the run up to the great election of December, 1918. At the Ard Fheis in October, 1917, he had already been elected a Vice President along with Arthur Griffith, De Valera being President. He read the opening prayer in the Dail on 21st January, 1919: *come oh Holy Ghost, replenish the hearts of Thy faithful . . .*

In December, 1920, he stepped out of line however when he went on a private peace mission with Sir James O'Connor to London. This, along with other peace moves at that time, dangerously weakened the Irish military effort. Nothing however came of it; Lloyd George thinking that he merely had to sit back and wait. The underground peace efforts continued with Fr. O'Flanagan meeting Mr. Cope of Dublin Castle on a number of occasions. Finally in July a Truce was declared.

He was staunchly anti Free State however after the Treaty, and in the civil war which followed. Meanwhile he had become an executive

member of the Irish Agricultural Organisation and Vice President of the Gaelic League. Accompanied by J. J. O Ceallaigh, Sceilg, a Sinn Fein T.D. — he visited America for the third time, proceeding on together to Australia where, due to English influence, they were imprisoned for three weeks, and deported. They returned to Ireland via Ceylon, India and the United States, to find the struggle long over in 1924. A year and a half later, De Valera broke with the abstentionist policy of Sinn Fein, and founded Fianna Fail. Fr. O'Flanagan remained on the ard comhairle of the shrinking party until, in 1933, he accepted an academic post from De Valera, when he had to retire. From now on he worked upon the letters of the 19th century scholar and researcher, John O'Donovan, editing some fifty volumes, and translating a series of county histories into Irish. His last political appearance was in support of the Spanish Republican government at a function in Dublin in 1937. His priestly faculties, which had been withdrawn by the Bishop of Elphin in 1925, were restored by John Charles McQuaid in 1938. Thereafter he took no further part in politics, ministering as chaplain to the convents around Sandymount in south County Dublin where he now lived. Meanwhile he continued to study and write. He died on the 8th of August, 1942, and rests in the original Republican Plot in Glasnevin, where his grave is close to Mrs. Despard (died November, 1939), Joe Clarke, the hero of Mount Street Bridge (died April, 1976), Helena Maloney (died October, 1971). The writer Sceilg, J. J. O Ceallaigh, gave the oration which was later printed as a leaflet by the National Aid Committee. There is a plaque to his memory inside the little church of Crossna.



## Eve of Conflict:

### *Emmet Humphreys' Account*

On the evening of June 27th, 1922, the entire Dublin Brigade of the I.R.A. was fully mobilised. The members of the local companies were assembled at their headquarters. Word had been received that the Free State Army was about to attack the Four Courts and the attack was to be resisted by the entire Brigade. As the hours passed with nothing happening the men grew more restless. Midnight came with no attack taking place, so it was decided that it must have been called off. We were all dismissed and wended our respective ways home and to bed.

What was our astonishment to be wakened early in the morning by the sound of exploding shells from the 14 pounder guns the Staters had got from the British and which were firing at the Four Courts from not more than 400 yards away. If we had only been kept mobilised for a few more hours perhaps the Civil War would have been scotched, I thought.

After a hurried breakfast, I went off to contact Michael Tannam, our Captain, at his home off the canal near Leeson Street Bridge. He asked me to get in touch with as many of the company as I could. This was not so easy, when I called to their homes, I found that they had already departed for their place of work and it was necessary to go on to such before we could assemble even half our total strength, but by early afternoon, we had about fifteen Volunteers available. All this time the shelling of the Four Courts was continuing. We were unsure what we should do but at length word came from battalion headquarters that each company was to operate armed patrols within its own area, and to take on the enemy whenever feasible.

There seemed to be no question of our co-ordinating our operations with adjoining companies or with the battalion as a whole. This enraged me. We had only enough men assembled to undertake one satisfactory unit, so we all patrolled together, strung out sufficiently far apart so as to prevent ourselves being caught unawares. We made our way towards Leeson Street Bridge, where there was an opportunity of finding Free State army personnel passing into or through our area. We had not long taken up positions at both sides of the bridge when a car containing officers came up from Adelaide Road. Our men immediately opened up fire on it, and a hand grenade was thrown. A few of us were on the opposite side of the bridge, practically in direct line of fire from our members. Luckily none of us were hit, but the car must have been as, although it continued on for some distance, it seemed to be getting out of control and it eventually crashed into the kerb near Sussex Road. We did not wait to see how the occupants of

the car had fared as it was quite possible that the car could be followed up by lorries of soldiers. We moved off hurriedly and continued our patrol along other roads of our area.

Some hours later we received word that we were all to assemble at No. 11 Harcourt Terrace. The terrace consisted of a quiet roadway situated between Adelaide Road and the canal bank. Houses were on one side of the road which, at that time, was tree lined. On the east side of it was an open field. No. 11, was an end house on the roadway nearest the canal. There was a front garden, a rear garden, and in most cases coach houses at the ends of the rear gardens with access to both dwellings themselves and to a laneway giving access to all coach houses. No. 11, belonged to Miss Butler-Burke, a lady who supported the Republican cause. I do not know how her house came to be singled out for taking over as our headquarters during the fighting. One would think that it would have been more fitting to have chosen the residence of a pro British or Free State supporter. It only shows the confusion that prevailed. Miss Butler-Burke, poor lady, was not very well off in worldly goods, and was hoping to make a livelihood selling post cards to the trade. She had taken some very attractive pictures of beauty spots in Ireland, and had those produced, in sepia, on standard sized cards. At the time of our take over she had them stored in boxes containing 100 cards each. The first thing I did when I got into the house, was to place all the boxes in a cupboard and keep the key. I am afraid that the cards were mostly destroyed or looted after we were captured as the house was left open to all and sundry and many things in it were looted.

Since we were to use the house as headquarters for some time the most important items required were provisions. Several of us were sent off to the shops in Charlemont Street, where we indulged in a regular spree of acquisition, including a whole round of cheese. When I say spree of acquisition, including a whole round of cheese. When I say round I mean the whole cheese, the size of a wheel barrow wheel and about eight inches wide. We were careful to give the shopkeepers receipts for everything we took from them. I believe they were all fully compensated afterwards.

When we came back to No. 11, we set about putting it into a suitable state of defence, as we thought. We were able to commandeer a load of peat bales which we put standing in the hallway hoping to use them as sandbags between the wide arch connecting the front room and the back. We also closed across the wooden shutters to the windows. This later proved to be a most stupid thing as, when we were eventually attacked, we could not see through any of the windows, and, if we attempted to pull back any of the shutters, the slightest move was observed from outside and heavy fire was concentrated on the window concerned.

While we were preparing the place for occupation, more of our members had been arriving who had been unable to contact us prior to this. We nominated one of our men, Thompson, who was an expert cook, to take over the kitchen quarters, situated in the lower ground floor at the rear portion of the house. He proceeded to prepare a good supper for us all. Just then McSharry who, before that, had been only a nominal member of our company, turned up with his married sister, together with her husband, Sean Fagan. The three of them stayed with us until the end. McSharry was arrested, and did his whole time in prison and internment camp. We all thought he would sign the form to get out, but he flatly refused. Mrs. Fagan was extremely helpful to us all. She took a leading part in seeing that, each one, got enough to eat and she helped Thompson in both preparing meals and in washing up afterwards.

We then divided into two sections, one going out on armed patrol, around Harcourt Street area, but everything was found to be quiet.

As Company Quartermaster, it was my responsibility to take charge of our armaments. These consisted of revolvers, mostly 45's, sufficient quantities of ammunition and some Mills bombs. We possessed no rifles or machine guns or any explosives such as gelignite etc. Apart from 45's, there were a few curious weapons, one being a small Derringer type pistol capable of being totally concealed in the palm of your hand. The Volunteer who owned it appeared to be perfectly happy as regards its capabilities, considering that he had a most lethal weapon in his possession which could equal the fire power any enemy might bring against him. I remember us all walking down Grafton St., some of us on the footpaths, some along the centre of the road, each of us armed with assorted types of guns and our friend with his toy pistol held in his hand, his eyes darting from side to side of the street, hoping to spot the enemy somewhere and exchange shots with him. I cannot now recall what we were doing in Grafton St., as it was not in our area and should have been patrolled by the company who patrolled that area. We all took advantage of being there, however, by slipping into Clarendon St. Church and going to confession, one after another.

It is curious, but I seem to remember much less about this period than I did of the previous years, in Pentonville etc. It was astonishing to think that it was only three days in all from the time the Four Courts were attacked until the explosion occurred which blew the dome off the top of the Courts and destroyed so many of the valuable papers, i.e. from 28th to the 30th June. I was almost sure that we were in Harcourt Terrace for at least a week, but, apparently, we were there only three days.

As time passed, we were becoming more and more frustrated at the fact that we were achieving nothing whatsoever.



Our armed patrols met no Free State troops. It is evident that they were quietly selecting their own time to attack us. Eventually, much to our delight, word came that each company was to leave its headquarters and proceed towards the centre of the city bearing on the Four Courts as our target. We were to attack all troops as we met them. We were to wear white bands around our left arms so as we would recognise our side when we met them as we advanced. The attack was scheduled to start at 10.00 o'clock on the night of the 29th. We had a busy time distributing all armaments among us, revolvers, bombs etc. Then we lay down on our mattresses resting until it was time to move off. We were all full of enthusiasm about the orders we had received. It looked as if, at last, a move on a co-ordinated basis was to be carried out. Imagine our disappointment when a messenger arrived with a note cancelling the operation. I never heard why the cancellation was made. It could be because the proposed manoeuvre would have been too late to relieve the garrison.

In any case it never has been made clear why such a co-ordinated move was not ordered for the first day's fighting. Had we advanced then, instead of sitting quietly in our respective company areas and doing nothing, there is no doubt that the Free State Army attacking the Four Courts would have found itself in trouble. It is possible that the Republican leaders had not the heart to indulge in actual warfare against their former comrades. It must be remembered however, once 24 hours had actually passed of actual bombardment by heavy guns on the Four Courts, there appears to be no possible excuse for not taking steps to counter the attack.

We were a dispirited group who lay down that night for our sleep. Next morning, being the Feast of Saints Peter and Paul, about half of our garrison went to University Church on the Green to an early Mass. We returned, had our breakfast and the other half left to attend a later Mass. They were not long gone when suddenly I heard a shout from one of our men who was up at the top of the house and happened to look out through a crack in the shutter of one of the windows. He said there was an armoured car with Free State soldiers standing up in it, moving slowly past. It stopped and they shouted something. The next moment they had trained the machine gun of the armoured car at the hall door and there was a burst of machine gun bullets sprayed upon it. After some time the soldiers in the armoured car changed from firing at the door to the shuttered windows, directing their attention to each window in turn. As I said, it was a most stupid thing for us to have closed the shutters over the windows. Some of the men at the top of the house tried to get the shutters opened and the windows up, in order to throw grenades at the armoured car, but the moment they approached the shutter the Free State soldiers saw the movement and directed a

concentrated body of fire at it. Our men narrowly escaped being shot as a consequence.

Some of our men were at the rear portion of the dwelling, in the kitchen on the lower ground section of the house. While we were occupied with the armoured car officers had come along a laneway and climbed through the mews and taken up position next door. They directed their fire at the rear of the house, pinning our men in the positions in which they were standing. Luckily none of them were hit, but the pot on the range where the cook was preparing our dinner, got a direct hit, spilling its contents of vegetables, meat, and boiling water down the front of the range and across the kitchen floor.

When the first burst of machine gun fire began, I had been walking down the stairs from the first floor to the main living quarters. I had just got down and was level with the bales of turf mould we had placed in the hall. To my amazement I saw little brown particles of turf hopping out from the face of the bales and little holes appearing in the front edge of the stairs. These holes became more numerous as more and more of them appeared higher up on the stairs. It was then that I realised that they were bullet holes. It showed that neither the wooden door nor the turf bales had any effect on the fire power of the bullets. They were being fired from completely close range, the armoured car being not more than thirty feet away from the window and door of the house. But it seemed that the Staters had bullets to burn. I had packed a half dozen grenades standing on top of the bales of turf. I was watching from where I stood in relative safety between the two doors to the hall and drawing room, the holes appearing in the side of the bales of turf, knowing that these represented bullets which were coming through the bales. Any moment the machine gun could be raised slightly when the bullets would find their way into one or another of the grenades and all would be up with me. This never happened, and none of the grenades were hit. Not so the pots and pans on the range, however; our poor cook was watching in frustrated anger, as the pots, one after the other were hit, spilling their contents out on the floor of the kitchen. Every now and again there would be a short lull in the firing as the gunner of the armoured car had to change his drum, but this did not give us long enough to do anything effective, as the officers at the rear of the house had taken up quite a good sniper position for themselves.

I was just beginning to wonder what would the outcome of our position be when one of our men upstairs called down that they had put out a white flag of surrender from one of the top windows. Firing from the machine gun stopped at the same time and then I heard that some of our people in the half basement were already crawling out into the rear yard, with their hands high.



The men upstairs came down and we all descended to the rear yard and from there through the house next door to the front street where we were lined up in two columns and marched away towards Portobello. It was a most ignominious surrender. I cannot recall that even one of us was able to fire one shot against the enemy.

We had not been led very far up the road towards captivity when the remainder of our company got back to Harcourt Terrace. One can imagine their consternation to find the place empty with all guns and ammunition gone. Luckily some of them, such as Kevin McCann, our 1st. Lieutenant, had brought his own Colt 45 to Mass with him. Some of the others did likewise, so all our armaments were not lost. It was however a very heavy blow to E. Company 3rd. Battalion.

We were lodged in wooden huts where a few days later I wrote to Mama to tell her I was alright; that the only thing I wanted was my hat. I also mentioned that Stephen O'Mara and Malachy Sweetman were in splendid form. I said that Stephen had been speaking to Michael Rynne and that Desmond FitzGerald had been speaking to us and that he seemed quite proud of his interview with Sighele. This remark refers to an episode that Sighele told us about. She said that she was in town on one of the days. She was passing one of the frequent Free State army cordons at a road junction. She passed through it without being stopped but as she was walking away there was a loud shout from the soldier in charge. *Stop that woman.* It was Desmond FitzGerald. She was never so delighted at getting the opportunity to tell him what she thought of him and more particularly of himself in regard to his treason to the Republic. Regarding Michael Rynne, she told me how surprised she was to see him sitting on the gun carriage of one of the guns that the F.S. army were given by the British to bombard the Four Courts. She told me that that had finally killed any special regard she had for him.

Somebody had a camera and took a snap of a group of us enjoying the sun beside our hut. There were six, Tommy Keegan and 'Podge' Farrell, in front, with Larry Doyle, Malachy Sweetman, myself and another man.

Both Stephen and Malachy escaped before we were removed to Kilmainham on Wednesday July 12th. Stevie calmly announced that he was going to get out, and that is just what he did. He waited his opportunity and climbed over the boundary wiring. Malachy went in a somewhat similar manner. It was always possible provided one was on the alert to take the opportunity. On the day we were being removed from Portobello to Kilmainham, we were all in open lorries at the front of Kilmainham. There were quite a number of people outside the jail and when they became aware that we were Republican prisoners, they rushed across the road and started to shake hands with us and cry out encouragement. The guards and their officers at first did not know



what to do but, while they were reacting and telling people to stand back, one of our men quietly slipped one leg and then the other over the side of the lorry and letting himself down disappeared into the retreating crowd.

Again, when we were removed from Kilmainham to Gormanston Camp in early September 1922, a number of prisoners escaped through the boundary wiring. We were transferred by lorry from Kilmainham to Amiens Street station and from there to Gormanston by train. There was a whole trainload of us, and we were marched directly from the station to our camp and allotted to the different huts. Each hut accommodated about 60-70 men.

The day we arrived we all went off on a tour of inspection of our new camp. Some of the men, to their surprise, found that workmen had not yet completed the filling in of the boundary with rolls of barbed wire. They were still in the process of doing so. Immediately a few prisoners lay down on the grass and started to wriggle under the strands of wire which had been laid. Before the workmen could call out to the nearest group of soldiers, at least twenty or thirty men had got away.

Kilmainham was a horrible place. Luckily for us we were housed in the relatively modern section of the prison. This was known as "A" wing. It was the part containing the wide semi-circular end, on the east end of the block of buildings beside the Courthouse. The cells were on either side of the block, with the wash room and lavatories on the curved end portion. On the top landing, this curved portion gave us a clear view of the public road. Our relatives and friends used to gather on the pathway at this point of the road and shout out to us. We found it possible to carry on several conversations at once; at least each family was able to fit in their message without too much trouble. In a note I wrote to Mama on the 6th August I said, in Irish, that I had a great talk with Anna and Sighle on the previous day, that there were not many people there at all, at first, but that after some time quite a number had gathered and it became more difficult to get heard.

Every now and then the sentries took exception to the talk and shouted at us to stop, or that they would shoot. We used to keep watching them from our deep window recesses of the bathrooms and would keep talking to the people below on the road until the soldier would put one in the breach and raise his rifle to fire. By that time we would have ducked back and the bullet would have harmlessly come through the empty window.

"A" wing contained quite a number of prisoners and new ones were arriving all the time. Tom Barry appeared one day shortly after we got there. He did not stay long. He came around to several of us seeking enough money to bribe a guard to get away.

He did so too; Sean MacEntee also arrived. He immediately took over command of all escape proposals. It was just as well he did as several were going on at the the same time, and if haphazard escapes were being arranged some were sure to be discovered and that would have jeopardised the more likely to succeed.

## Memories of the Civil War

### A NOTE FROM AODHAGAN O'RAHILLY

In the month of July, 1922 I found myself in Clonmel Barracks which was then in the hands of the Republicans. I was a kind of engineer, as I had done 1st year Engineering in the university, and I had acquired some knowledge of the use of explosives. It would be difficult to exaggerate the total lack of organisation and discipline which prevailed. If someone had asked me I suppose that I would have said that I was attached to the 3rd Tipperary Brigade, which was in the Second Southern Division. The Commanding Officer of the 2nd Southern Division was Seamus Robinson. All that I remember about him is that one day we were in Carrick-on-Suir and the Free Staters had taken Waterford, or were about to take it, and I recall Robinson asking me if I could blow up the bridge leading out of Waterford.

I do not recall what I told him, but as far as I know no effort was ever made to blow that bridge. I got to know Dinny Lacey, the O.C. of the 3rd Tipperary Brigade. But that may have been after we had been driven out of Clonmel.

I suppose that we knew that an attack on Clonmel was imminent, once the Staters had advanced from Waterford to Carrick. By this time I had succeeded in getting a Ford car, and I suppose that I did some missions with it, but the only one that I can recall was bringing one of the Cooney girls out to where the men were on the defensive positions on the way into Clonmel.

The day that the attack on Clonmel developed, and we knew that the Free Staters were determined to move on the town, I have no recollection of any kind that there was any intention that we were going to fight it out with them. If Liam Lynch was around I did not see him, and indeed, I never met him.

On the morning that the Free Staters were advancing on the town, De Valera was in the barracks, and I imagine that he considered himself to be in charge. I suppose that he wanted a despatch rider who could bring a message out for him and I was sent to him. He gave me an envelope which I was to deliver to a Lieut. Sharkey, who was in charge of a party who were assigned to defend the village of Kilsheelan, about half way between Carrick and Clonmel. I set out driving the Ford. When I got to Two-Mile-Bridge, which is about half way to Kilsheelan, there was our armoured car parked at the cross roads. I believe it was a Lancia and I think that it was called somewhat optimistically, "The Fighting Second". The man in charge was a Sean Morrissey, probably Lieut. Morrissey. It is strange that I can remember these names, after more than sixty five years and I could not remember the name of a man whom I met yesterday.



Anyway, I stopped at the armoured car and asked Sean Morrissey if it was alright to go to Kilsheelan. By this time there was heavy firing going on in every direction, rifles, machine guns and the occasional thump of the 18 pounder piece of artillery which the Free Staters had brought with them in case that we had tried to defend any position. Morrissey said it was O.K. to go on. No danger. I drove on down towards Kilsheelin, and as I went I could hear that the sounds of battle which had been in front of me were coming from alongside me, and as I got nearer to the village the sounds were coming from almost behind me.

I realised that I was actually driving behind the advancing Free Staters, and if I was nervous at first, this realisation made me really frightened. The only weapon which I had was a 45 Webley, which I had in my pocket, and I remember taking it out of my pocket and putting it on the seat beside me so that it would be ready for instant use. (I don't think I realised that if I drove into a party of Free State soldiers, I would almost certainly be met with a fusillade of rifle fire, if not machine-gun fire.)

I finally reached Kilsheelan. It was a big wide street and, needless to say, with the sound of firing going on there was not a soul to be seen out in the open. Our position in the village was a public house owned by people called Nagles. I may have been there before as I drove right up to it. As soon as I pulled up the car, and before I had time to get out, one of the windows opened, and one of the Nagle girls put her head out and shouted to me to get out, that the Free Staters were just coming into the village. I said, *where is Lieut. Sharkey, I have a despatch for him? He has gone across the river into County Waterford with his men, and you had better get out quickly, if you value your life.*

I was able to turn the car with one sweep in the wide street and away with me back as though the devil was at my heels.

I drove back to Clonmel and found Dev. I told him my story, and he was incredulous. I could see that he was doubtful if I had ever been to Kilsheelan, but I think that I was able to satisfy him that I had been. Then he said in despair, *My God, how can you deal with men who have so little sense of responsibility.* I suppose that if Sharkey had held his ground and put up any kind of fight for the village the despatch which I had brought him was to ask him how he was getting on and if he wanted reinforcements.

It would have been the next morning that I was again driving near the Clonmel side of Two-Mile-Bridge, and I saw Dinny Lacey and Bill Quirke, whom I knew. They stopped me and Bill said, *you can drive us along the line which we are holding.* I think that it was supposed to be a line along the Anner, as it flows down from the direction of Sliabh na mBan into the Suir. To my great relief Lacey said, *no, Bill,*

*I think that we had better walk.*

I suppose that I drove back to Clonmel and I have no other memories of that day or when we knew that we were going to abandon the town and take to the country.

I do recall marching with a group out of the barracks, which had been set on fire, and as we were marching out the barracks gate there was a crowd of women standing at the gate, and I suppose that they could see the smoke rising from the barracks, and as we went past them one of these poor creatures said, *Could you not get us some of those blankets and I will give you, "me darling"*. I was a very innocent seventeen years of age and did not realise what she meant. But looking back I can imagine how these women felt when they did not have enough blankets to keep themselves warm at night, and they knew that the barracks were full of blankets which were being burnt for no purpose.

I would say that the defence was a totally incompetent fiasco. The simple truth of the matter is that on the Republican side there was no serious commitment to fight the Civil War.

About the ambush in which Frank Thornton, one of the leading Free Staters, was wounded and captured, my memory was the following. I had become attached to a squad with a Lewis gunner called Jim Nugent. There were four or five of us. Nugent, Buddy Donoghue, Sean Hayes, Dick Dalton and misc. A young medical student from Cork, whose name was O'Sullivan was with me. He was our M.O. for looking after the wounded and we called him the Doc. We were part of Jack Killeen's column, which would have numbered twenty five or thirty. We were this evening at the village of Derrinlaur, which is just across the river in Co. Waterford, I imagine near Two-Mile-Bridge. I think that Jim Nugent was planning a foray, possibly with one or two others, into Clonmel. Jack Killeen heard of this, and I was present when Killeen was telling Nugent that he would have no part of this kind of stunting, and in the end telling Nugent that if he went there would be another man carrying the Lewis gun the next day. Nugent decided to obey orders. Both Nugent and Killeen were ex British Army and both had been for several years in France in World War I.

That night there was a dance somewhere and most of the men in the column went to it. But I suppose that we were told that we were going to move out in the early hours of the following morning, and as I could never get enough sleep, I decided that I would get to bed, so told them to call me when the column was moving off. I got into bed but in a matter of minutes I began to feel the bites. The bed was infested with some sort of fleas or lice. I slept in many poor enough cottages during the war but never did I have such an experience. In five minutes I knew that there was no chance of getting any sleep in this bed, and I got up and went back to sit at the fire which I had left. When they asked me why I had not stayed in bed I had to invent some



sort of excuse that I was afraid that I would not wake up in time. In due course the men who had gone to the dance came back and I imagine that about 2 p.m. the column moved off. I recall being so desperate for sleep that once or twice during the march when there was any delay, I would lie down on the road and tell some of others to wake me when they were again moving.

I suppose that we arrived at the ambush position at five or six in the morning, and I suppose that the idea was that we would get into position before there were any people around who would see us. Or maybe that Killeen had some word that a convoy was leaving Clonmel early in the morning. So we took up a position on the road near Powerstown, which is not on the direct road from Clonmel to Carrick but maybe the bridge was gone on the main road and this was the road that had to be used. The convoy was expected to be coming from Clonmel and our men took up positions for about half a mile along the road. Our machine gun squad was at the end of the group. We cut down a small tree, it was really no more than a large bush, and there was a small wall, jutting out into the road, and Nugent fixed this so that he could mount his machine gun on it and command a view of the road for about half a mile along which the convoy would have to travel, and where they would be subject to fire from the column on both sides of the road.

We assumed that we would hear the shooting as the convoy came along, so when the sun came out, as it was a lovely sunny morning, we lay down inside the ditch and we went to sleep.

The first thing that I remember was seeing Dalton, in his shirt sleeves, with a Colt 45 in his hand, and he said to us in a whisper, *There are hundreds of them there, lorry loads of them.* We could hear the sound of the engine, and we assumed it was one of the lorry loads. Nugent picked up his Lewis gun and I picked up my rifle and the next thing that I can remember is standing beside Nugent, who would fire a burst and then shout *Surrender!* I also fired some shots, at what I thought were the lorry loads of Free State soldiers. I imagine that Nugent knew all along that all we were dealing with was an open Ford touring car with five Free State soldiers in it. I think that in the first burst of machine gun fire, at point blank range of maybe fifty feet, he killed two of the soldiers and wounded Frank Thornton. The other two soldiers dived for the side of the road and were saved.

Thornton was lying on the road badly wounded. He was face down and to get his clothes off to attend to his wounds we had to open his Sam Browne belt. There was no way to do this as the buckle was in front, and Nugent got out his knife and said to Thornton, who was conscious, *Do you mind if we cut your Sam Browne belt? I don't care a goddamn,* said Thornton. Looking back I cannot imagine how he managed to cut through the heavy leather belt with a penknife, but he



did. When we pulled off his trousers and opened his shirt, I can still recall being somewhat shocked at the sight of a brown smear across his buttocks. There was no blood but further up there were three or four small marks, the entry points of the bullets on each side of his backbone. It was a miracle that one of them had not hit his backbone. We put some iodine on the wounds, but there was really nothing which we could do for him, other than sending a message into Clonmel to have them send an ambulance out as soon as they possibly could.

Many years later Thornton complained to Sean Dowling that we had given him no option to surrender before we opened fire. This was true, but equally if they had looked over the hedge and saw the machine gun squad asleep on the other side, do we think that they would have done anything other than lob a hand grenade into the middle of us, and when it had exploded they would then have called on us to surrender.

(About ten years ago, and fifty years after the ambush, I was looking through some papers of my father's, and I found an envelope on which there was written "Reliable men in Britain". When I opened the envelope the first slip of paper which fell out had the name Frank Thornton, and his English address.)

While we were waiting for the ambulance a priest came along in a pony and trap. He saw the dead bodies and, I suppose, Thornton still on the road, and came over to us. He thought we were the Free Staters as many of them at that time did not have uniforms, and he said to us, *oh me poor lads, what happened to ye?* I said to him, *We are all right, Father, we were the ambushers.* When he realised this he let us have a barrage of abuse, and said we were a crowd of filthy murderers, and that we would roast in hell for it, etc. etc. As soon as he stopped for breath I said, *There is a wounded man lying on the road, and we have sent for an ambulance for him. If you want to help get into your pony and trap and go as fast as you can into Clonmel and tell them to hurry out and we may be able to save his life.*

Thornton recovered, but I doubt if he was able to do any more fighting in the civil war. Many years later I saw some correspondence between Dev and Joe McGarrity of the U.S. One of these letters was a letter written by Dev about this time from somewhere in the South and Dev referred to this ambush and said that he had heard that a man who was one of the most determined of Collins personal squad had been sent to Tipperary with instructions to concentrate on getting Dev alive or dead. Dev commented that he did not think that this man would trouble us any more.

Some time in the middle fifties I would guess, I was introduced to Thornton outside the Gaiety Theatre in Dublin. I did not say to him that the last time I had seen him, he was lying face down on a road

outside Clonmel with several bullets in his back. The civil war was surely the most futile tragedy in Irish history.

After we had left Clonmel I met the Nagles of Kilsheelan one day and they said that they were watching the Free Staters who had an armoured car and they were just clearing a tree which had been cut across the road, when they heard my car coming from Clonmel, and that a minute or two later the Free Staters with their armoured car came into the village, and if I had delayed a minute I would have run smack into the armoured car. Well, if I had, I would not be telling this story today.

## The Shooting of Patrick Mulrennan

The following account of an incident on the afternoon of 6th October, 1922 demonstrates the casual manner in which the killing of Republican prisoners took place within Free State prisons; not only in Athlone as in this case, but in Tipperary, Kilkenny, Co. Kerry and elsewhere.

The following is the text of a letter written by Republican O.C. Peter Shortall from Costume Barracks, Athlone, October, 1922.

A chara,

On Tuesday, 6th October, about 3.55 p.m., Major General John McKeon accompanied by — came into the prisoners' quarters, known as the compound, Costume Barracks, Athlone.

Major General McKeon entered the first hut on the left, Q Block. While inside —, who was standing outside Q Block, drew his revolver and fired in the direction of N Block. General McKeon, hearing the report of the gun, rushed out and asked — if he had got any, to which — replied "No, but by Jesus I will not miss this time", while saying so he drew his revolver again and fired point blank into a group of men who were sitting on a dustbin outside N Block. The bullet, a 400, pierced the side of a young man, Patrick Mulrennan, a native of Lisacul, Ballaghaderreen. As he was about to fall he called out, *I'm shot*, and grasped one of his comrades by the shoulders pointing to his side where the bullet hit; on raising up his coat blood was oozing through his shirt. He was stretched on the ground while the shirt and trousers were removed so as to render first aid. Dr. Ferran, T.D. East Mayo and Sligo, was by his side in a few minutes and did all that was possible. The poor lad was lying in the yard, not able to utter a word, his blood gushing freely from his wound onto the ground. While in that position McKeon and — came along and stood over him; McKeon pressing his fingers on the wound, and then of a sudden turned round and said to the prisoners, *By God, some more of ye would need it too*.

After that they walked over to Q Block where there was a patient in bed. — asked what he was doing there, the young lad replied that he was sick. McKeon shouted *Shoot the f . . . . r*, and both walked out.

Mulrennan was taken to the hospital where he now lies in a very critical condition.

During the Black and Tan terror, the Mulrennans suffered terribly. Patrick, while in Mountjoy Prison, was wounded in 1919. His brother Seamus was wounded by the Black and Tans, six bullets being put into his body and legs; while another brother was wounded in the hand.



McKeon discharged revolver shots on a few occasions previous to the shooting of Patrick Mulrennan and many of the prisoners have had narrow escapes. On one occasion a bullet passed between prisoners sitting at a table. Later in the evening, while some of the prisoners were going to tea, Lieut. Duffy, a native of Mullingar, ordered one of the sentries to fire on the prisoners. A young lad named Walsh, who is only fourteen years of age, had a marvellous escape, a bullet whizzing by his ear.

This statement is given by eye witnesses and can be vouched and proved on oath if necessary.

(Signed) Peter Shortall,

O.C. Prisoners.

7th October, 1922

## Under Two Flags

Account by Ex R.I.C. man Patrick Buckley, Killed at Ballyseedy, Wednesday 7th March 1923

During the troublesome times in Ireland starting with the Rebellion, April 1916, and ending at the Truce, July 1921, many a story will be written of the experiences of the Volunteers. The following is a true account of the doings of one who was a member of the R.I.C. from 1916 to 1919, and with the Republicans from 1919 until 1921. Three years with the red flag and two with the green, white and gold. While under the red flag I was known as 64559 while under the Republican flag I was O'Sullivan.

Starting at the time of the Rebellion, I was stationed at Farranfore, Co. Kerry. The R.I.C. in Co. Kerry knew nothing about the Rebellion until the shots were fired. The town of Tralee being quiet three of our men returned next day bringing with them proclamations to be posted up ordering the Volunteers to hand in all arms before the 6th of May, seven days from the date of the proclamation. The next morning four of us started to post them up taking different roads, two went to Firies and the other pair of us went to Currans. I started in luck for the two that went to Firies were shot. They may however blame themselves, for an hour before they were shot they were told that James Riordan, then a Volunteer captain, would shoot them if they did not look out. From information which I got afterwards, I learned that they told Riordan to put up his hands. Where this occurred I could not find out; I think it must have been near the Post Office. At any rate Riordan obeyed by firing at them at close range from a revolver, all five bullets taking effect. Riordan must have been a cool, courageous volunteer seeing that they were two against one, and also that unknown to him they had got information. Although only eighteen years, he had those two men shot before they could pull the trigger. Strange to say, he left them armed as they were, though each was lying on the ground. Stranger still, though badly wounded, each of the police continued to serve on in the force.

I was at the time married about two years, unknown to the authorities as police at that time would be dismissed if they married before they had seven years served. At this time, my wife was ill in accouchement, and word being sent to her that I was one of the wounded men, it did not help improve her. She got nervous and very near died. It was the telling to her of that lie that changed my life, for up to that time I had taken no part in suppressing the Volunteer movement. I started then, and from that time until the following November, when to save my life the authorities sent me to Co. Clare, I did all I could to crush them. Indeed it was very easy to suppress them in

those days, for following the proclamation, the Currans volunteers arrived with their rifles and ammunition made up in a bundle and handed them into us at the barracks. A donkey and cart was used for the conveyance of same. Some of our men, after their departure, said they were traitors to their country. The men of Firies with few exceptions held their guns, but unfortunately they had only shotguns whereas the Currans men had rifles. Most of the volunteer guns being collected, we now turned our thoughts to finding the Riordan brothers, Pat and James. For this job I asked and obtained the D.I.'s permission to track them down dressed as a tramp, and in company with another, we started, armed with revolvers.

In those days we had no trouble in getting information, first from the people who had no sympathy with Sinn Fein, and next from those who had their country at heart but who were only too ready to believe any tale told to them. I met one day a County Council man from whom I got information. I called him from the road; he was about fifty yards away at the time. I asked him what place was this. He told me. I said, I am a soldier and I deserted from the British Army; would I get any place here to get work, or would anyone keep me for the night. He said, *you are welcome to stay in my house as long as you like. I will help anyone who turns his back to England. Well, I said, I would stop with you but perhaps the police would find me here. I am told that some Riordan fellows who shot some of them are around here, and when looking for them they might find me, so 'tis better for me to go further on.* He said, *well the Riordan's were here, but they are gone now to the Headford side, so you are safe.* The reader will see how easily we could get information in 1916. The next day while in the place underlined I met another who knew I was a policeman. He told me where to find the Riordans, believing that I would never take them. Well, thank God, I never met them. The next Volunteer I arrested was a man named J. O'Sullivan, a native of Currans. This man while passing the barracks in company with five others, called me to arrest him if I was able. I let them move off for about 500 yards and when I followed, arrested him and called on his comrades to clear off or I'd shoot them. While on the way to the barracks, this man said that I was alright, but that I was fighting with the wrong side. I summoned him to Petty Sessions in Killarney where the Magistrates with the exception of the R.M. were in favour of a Republic. These gentlemen dismissed the case after which O'Sullivan took an action against me for false arrest. The case was to be for hearing in Dublin, but being told that the British authorities would pay my expenses, and the law of the land being completely turned in favour of England and giving a free hand to the police, O'Sullivan let the action drop. I must say, so far as I could see, the shooting of the Dublin men had little effect on Kerry men outside certain sections of the Volunteers. I am



also certain that as far as most men knew in Kerry, they thought the fight was over, and perhaps most of the Volunteers who handed in their guns thought the same. I was, for my own protection transferred to Clare, and from the moment I left Kerry, and without I knowing it as it were, my activities against the Volunteers was all over.

The next eight months in Clare was of no importance, save that in the anniversary of Easter Week Republican flags were put up around the district. They were taken down the following morning by the police, but as far as I was concerned, I did it in a half hearted manner. The next excitement we had was after the death in France of William Redmond, M.P. for East Clare, followed by the contest for the seat which was contested by President De Valera for the Republic and P. Lynch for the Nationalists. It was during the election that I got an idea of how things were going on. Also for the first time I felt ashamed of my position as did several others, even the sergeant who was a Protestant. However time done away with shame as far as most police were concerned. The election passed away and the Volunteers once more started to drill. So for the first time I had a look at the East Clare men drilling. They did not seem to take any notice of us. Two of the officers from our village were court martialled in Cork jail where I gave evidence against them, as did the other men in the station. When we were leaving the sergeant shook hands with one of them; we did likewise, and that sickened me with the whole business.

I felt that those poor fellows were fighting for what they believed were Ireland's rights. I did not think so then. (The reader will say that I should have known by that time of my life that the Volunteers were right; but remember, I was reared in a backward place. I joined the R.I.C. in 1909 at the age of nineteen and never read Irish history. If you asked me what Cromwell did in Ireland anytime before the date of where I am in this story, which was September 1917, I could have truly told you I knew nothing of it). Well anyway, I was sorry for having given evidence against this man before he let go my hand, and that night I cursed the day I joined the R.I.C.

Nothing important occurred then in our village until England passed the Conscription Act, the first passing of which I paid little heed to. But between that and the second reading, a call was made to send on the names of all men between the ages of eighteen and forty two. That followed the passing of the Act a second time and it left no doubt on my mind but that it would be enforced. One day while on patrol I began to think about it. I was safe, I had only one brother and he was in the army, so that as far as my nearest relations were concerned, I had nothing to fear. That England had not right to enforce the Act, I had no doubt, I knew well she would be able to do it. But I made up my mind that she would do so without my help. Well what was I to do, remain on after my resignation? No, I wanted to be at

home once more and fight with my friends and neighbours on the mountains of Limerick and Cork. By the time I was at the barracks, I was determined to take advantage of my position while guarding the barracks and take with me to my friends all the arms I could lay my hands on. Clare at that time was under martial law. Every village was dotted with British soldiers and ten of those were in our barracks as well as six police men. Every soldier had his rifle and 250 rounds of ammunition. Besides there were six police rifles and 600 rounds of ammunition as well as five revolvers.

The lot totalled sixteen rifles, five revolvers and 3,130 rounds of ammunition, all of which was each night solely in possession of the guard who had the room which was next to the door all to himself. I thought to myself, how glad the boys at home would be when I arrived there with the stuff and especially when I would be able to train them, there being scarcely any Volunteers in my native place. The first setback to my plans was the oath I had taken when joining the police. This however was only temporary, for once the idea got into my head, I was determined if the oath did not interfere, to carry it out. That night I put on my plain clothes and put a copy of the the oath in my pocket and went to seek the advice of a learned man, Father Michael Murray who died suddenly at Nenagh some years ago, and whom I knew as far as the oath was concerned would not advise me to break it. I told him what I wanted to do, and asked him if the oath, a copy of which I produced, would prevent me. On being asked if, when I took the oath, I thought it bound me to arrest any boy and take him away from his home to be shot in France, I answered that when I took it I took it to protect life and property. Therefore, answered my advisor, you are bound to do everything in your power to protect life. I was bound to protect the lives of the Volunteers and others from the grasp of England who wants them for gun fodder in France.

#### PART II. I HAND OVER A BARRACK

I wish to relate now what I did from April 1918 until the sixth of August 1919, the sixteen months of which I remained wearing English uniform doing Ireland's work. I remained the next night with my advisor and many the night after. My advisor, though in sympathy with the Volunteers, was not a member of that army. One night however, he arranged a meeting between an officer of the Volunteers and myself. It was a strange meeting, for during the time it lasted that officer listened to what I had to say just because he did not want to insult our host by going away. I believe he did not heed one word of what I said. He was at that time on the run; there he stood like a rock and never made me one answer. What a picture to me he looked, like a man awaiting execution. Every nerve was strung, as if waiting an



attack. For the purposes of this story, I will call him "Emmet". Before leaving however, he asked me not to execute what I proposed to do, as I might spoil the chance of other men who may intend to help their country also. This put me in great heart, for I now expected that several police would turn out, a false hope as events proved. I waited on from day to day. Eventually I left on four days leave to my native place, where I met a man who had authority to speak for the Volunteers, but he also did not believe in me and promised me no help to bring the arms I proposed giving his men. So my journey was a failure. I was now determined to leave all to the Clare men and stay with them. With this in view, I got my advisor to call in six Volunteer officers. When we met, these men were not near as tongue tied as the former officer, so I told them for my safety as well as their own to tell nothing but to listen to what I had to say and take a note of anything useful. I gave these men all the secret information I could come at in the police. I was the most trusted man in the barracks owing to my activities in Kerry. I might here state that being a married man, I did not sleep in barracks more than a night in four, so that after the night patrol was over, I could stay with my new companions without being seen. I was generally with my learned friend, Father Murray, (he was then a young priest in Newmarket on Fergus) from 1 a.m. to 3 or 4 a.m. each night. However to my great surprise Conscription passed away without ever being put into force. I had no need then to turn out against England, so I met my friend just a few times more, and then our meetings died away. The last time we met was about June 1918. The following October a police union was started.. I took no notice of it at first, but as time went on I joined it, because I saw a possibility of trouble with England. I must admit that I felt uncomfortable. I did not care to be taking my pay and deceiving my master. Not that I had much compassion for England. All the same, I felt as if I'd be happier at any other job. Things went alright until the next Easter 1919, when we were kept four days and nights in the barracks fearing a raid. A letter came from Dublin Castle ordering a constable to be present at all Masses on Sunday to take note the number of men going to the altar rails. Any unusual number was to be reported. The letter went on to state that before the rebels would take any active part again, they would be at confession in large numbers. This letter made me worse against England than what I ever felt before. This letter was not read for all the police; some at the time being suspected of being lukewarm. We had one of those in my barrack. When he would be on guard another man would be kept in the barrack to watch him. I knew his feelings. They were not in favour of Ireland, so he was wronged. The next despatch was an order to watch out for prominent Sinn Feiners, amongst them being the name of the first volunteer officer I met. That evening I met once more my learned friend and informed



him of that above. A week passed, about the end of which I was going on leave to Limerick. I met a young man going the same way. He knew me though I did not know him. As I soon found out, he was a friend of the above wanted officer. I told him that his friend was wanted and that I sent him word. Well, he said, *the officer is still at home; he is not wanted*. I went direct to the officer's house and found him there. I told him he was wanted, he did not believe me and told me so. The result was, that I parted with him, after requesting him to keep away for a time. That night he was arrested, taken to Belfast, and was not released until his health had broken down. That officer had two other brothers; after his arrest one of them sent word and arranged a meeting with me. We met at his house and there, for the first time, I offered to give over all the arms in the barracks, which according to my plans could be taken without loss of life. I proposed on the occasion when the work was done in barracks that we proceed and take the barracks in the next village. At this barrack, I arranged that I would knock at the door dressed in uniform and of course the guard would have no hesitation in opening, he knowing me well. Once we got in all was right. (Somehow or another this proposal did not take place, owing I believe to the union organising activities in the R.I.C., which at the time was at its highest point.) On hearing this the officer was not long in settling a place for a meeting with a superior officer. At the very start this man informed me that the sum of five pounds would be paid for each rifle handed over to the Volunteers. This offer changed me; I did not wish to sell arms, I wished to help my country. I was sorry for this officer, though the latter did not like me, yet I felt that he would never insult me by offering money. I afterwards learned that the offer was never meant for me, but it applied to police or soldiers generally. It was unfortunate that I took it for my own case, although on the road to meet him, I fixed in my mind to get him to help me to take my own barracks, after which he would proceed to take the barracks in the next village. Immediately the offer of money was made my mind changed, and though I continued the conversation an hour or two, my help towards the Volunteers for the time being was at an end. On the road home I got sorry; and in thinking over what the Volunteer officer said, I saw at once I took the wrong meaning from that unfortunate sentence. The following morning, I applied to my authorities for four days leave and proceeded to Dublin to see the Police Union books there, and, if possible, to stay and get them to come out on strike. After three days I returned to Clare with great hopes that my object would be achieved. That night, I again met the last mentioned officer, and we remained in conversation until the early hours of morning. I urged him to try and take a barracks in a certain village in Clare. I knew very well that it could be managed without firing a shot.

A fortnight passed away and no one turned up to attack the barracks. It may be necessary for me to state here, as far as I was aware the Volunteers at this time would only attempt taking a barracks where they would be certain they could do so without loss of life. I believed at the time they wanted to collect all the arms they could for the purpose of another rebellion. At this time the assizes opened in Ennis; two of us were sent on duty there. The fellow who was to be guard on the following day, I knew very well he would be drunk. I sent word to this officer to come and take the barracks that morning, but the message only arrived a few hours before the time appointed; and as I was afterwards informed, some men from another county were on the run in the district at the time, my plans weren't carried out. All that morning I was expecting from minute to minute to see my poor sergeant coming in with his tale of woe to the D.I. For a long time previous to this I was supplying a copy of the police *Hue and Cry*, to the last named officer, whom in future I will name as O.C. My old advisor up to this time used to take the letters to and from the O.C. but our activities now taking a more serious light, and my advisor not being a volunteer, we decided to bother him no further with our letters. A girl from the village was chosen, Nurse McInerney (Newmarket on Fergus). The O.C. would prefer to keep women out of the business, but necessity has no law. I trusted her. She was alright and did all she was asked to the letter. At this time in my story, my wife was at home with her own people in Kerry. When after a few days a few people saw me speaking to the girl evil tongues began to talk. Some said it was better for my wife to return. I was told about it and I was delighted. Soon the sergeant was told about it. I added to it myself, and after a time no great notice was taken of me being in company. I used to call her my second wife. It was about this time that I happened to fall in great luck. I was out one day, and by chance met the sergeant who was stationed at Knocklong, Co. Limerick, where a short time before a prisoner was released from a train and an R.I.C. escort compelled to surrender. I asked him did they get any trace of the fellows who did it. He laughed, well he said, *I know who I am talking to; we did not yet arrest them though one of them is at home. We are waiting until the others turn up and we will take the lot together. The fellows in the Hue & Cry are not the fellows wanted at all; the case is too important even to let all police know who are the right men. I have men in my station that I could not depend on to tell them the simplest thing.* After some more unimportant talk we parted. I reported the above at once to the O.C. The latter I am sure saw the men that were at home were not there much longer. By this time, I had no trouble in deceiving the old sergeant and the four men that were in my station. They looked on me as a devil may care sort of fellow whose only object during the absence of my wife, was looking



out for women. One of them had a wife and no family, and his only object during those times was to watch his wife from me; and many the pleasant day and night we put down with him and her. He was the fellow I referred to early in my story as suspected of being a Sinn Feiner, though the poor fellow was as loyal to King George, as nearly all the rest of the police. It was at this time of my story that I planned the taking of the barrack for the second time. My wife and family had returned, and as far as local gossip went, I had two wives. Then the strangest part of it was this girl who helped us now left for Dublin, and once again we had to fall back on my old advisor. In his house we planned the taking of the barracks. One of my comrades was on guard on the night in question. Early in the evening, I got upstairs in the barracks and broke the catch in one of the windows in one of the disused rooms. After coming off patrol at 12 o'clock, I met the O.C. at my advisor's house. On my advice the attack was to be made in their stocking feet so as to prevent any noise. The idea being to take the three men in the barracks while they were asleep, to bind them with ropes, and to take all in the barracks.

Those men went to the barracks with a ladder to get in the window. When they arrived the shutters were closed; there was no chance of getting in. I was never in the habit of closing the shutters in this disused room but not so with other guards. The O.C. at once reported to me. How they could not get in. The men, he said were awake in the barracks and the dog barking, so they had to go home leaving the telegraph wires cut and two sticks under the window in which I had broken the catch off. Well, all was well in the morning, but it took me all my time to brace up courage enough to face the barracks. After parade I went up to the room, the shutters were still closed, I opened them, took the sticks from the window and put them away. Not long afterwards word came to the barracks that the wires were cut. The sergeant told me to come with him to see it. On our arrival he looked at the wire and saw it was cut by a nipper. He looked at it and then at me and said, *I think the barracks will be attacked tonight*. I began to laugh and asked him did he think the Volunteers were foolish enough to cut the wires the night previous to attacking the barracks. No, I said, if the barracks were to be attacked, they would not cut the wires until that moment. He agreed with me and was satisfied that it was the act of some fellow who had little more to do. However on the way to barracks he told me that as some of the barracks had been attacked a few nights before in Clare, it might be better for all of us to remain in barracks each night.

When in the barracks that night, we all suggested the best way to defend the barracks in case of an attack, I suggested that the guard should not sleep on the ground floor which all said was true, so that for the few more nights I was in the police I never again or any of us



slept near the front door. This was the second of August 1919. During the day I again sent word to the O.C. requesting him once more to take the barracks. On the following Monday night I would guard and would have the door opened. So once more they came, this time we were successful. The door that I promised to open was fastened by a bar of iron which, when not in use, was attached to the left side of the door. When the door was closed this bar could be put on by swinging it upwards and downwards until it would fall into a horse shoe like piece of iron. This bar should be on at all times day and night since the other barracks were attacked. And would be lifted off by the guard to leave police in and out, but no one else. The attack being planned for 3 a.m. to give time for patrols to be in, and the men who were to remain in barracks asleep. At 1 a.m. the last patrol returned. It was the sergeant and a constable, and that was the last patrol the sergeant ever did. The constable who was with him went to his lodgings and after he leaving, the sergeant started cleaning his rifle as we were expecting the D.I. next day. *Well, he said, times are getting lively, I think we will have an attack here. I saw J and M today, they are getting lively.* I took up the remark and said, *well sergeant, I think if we are, I am ready for them. I know you will make it hot for them, load a revolver for me, you may want help. I don't depend on more of the boys, 'tis the first shots that tell: mark me, if a few of them are shot, the rest will make off; and then keep firing at them while they are in sight. There was not half enough of them shot in Dublin, but if I ever get a chance, I'll do my best. I wonder was it Brennan that was wounded at the last attack? He may be dead; I pray to God he is, and if he is Sinn Fein is no more in Clare.* He turned and left the dayroom. I went with him to the front door, taking the bar in his presence. I lifted it up and brought it down brushing the catch but never put it in, only let it drop easily to the side. I now made up my mind that if the Volunteers did not turn up, I'd take the barracks by another means, and that was by shooting any man who refused to go into the lock up.

The reader would say that it would be wrong to do so, but remember, if the Volunteers were to fire as the sergeant had fired, we need have no trouble in taking the barracks nor no time in planning it. Remember also that the like of above statements were made for the past six months previous to this by the sergeant and all the men with one exception. Well I had to listen, and not alone to listen but to help so as to avoid suspicion. The barracks was a large house. The sergeant's rooms were over the back door and the men's room over the front door. Let the reader remember this, it will be important later on. The sergeant left to go to his own room to bed believing the doors to be secure. He had his loaded revolver near his bed; in the room was his son, a soldier on leave. Downstairs in another room was his wife

and daughter. In our side of the barracks, I had one man in my room, the latter was gone to bed since 11 p.m. He also had his revolver. All the rifles were hidden in a secret little hole known only to the police and, I might add by this time, also to the Volunteers. Then as a further precaution, the bolts of the rifles were removed so that if a surprise came, the Volunteers if they succeeded in getting the rifles, would take them away without the bolts, when of course they would be useless. However I made it my business to know all the hides, and before going to bed I put each bolt in the owner's box. At 2 a.m. I went to bed and never will I forget that hour. If any one in the barracks happened to want to go out the door would be seen opened, and then it would be for me to shoot them, or at least to clear off, not an easy job for a man having a wife and three young children and little money. However the longest road has an end, and so had my waiting. The clock struck three and a minute more, the O.C. in his stocking feet followed by nine or more others entered. I took up my revolver which was at my side so as to help if it came to shooting. The O.C. as arranged went with half of the company to the sergeant's room; the other half came to ours. What occurred in the sergeant's room I know nothing about, but at any rate when they entered the room with flashlights and revolvers, I directed them to the traitor at the other side of the room. They bound him with ropes to the bed as they also bound me. Will the reader now picture the man who was going to shoot the Volunteers. When this fellow woke and saw the Volunteers, he roared like the devil; he craved for mercy. He began to cry like a child. I was ashamed of him. I had told the men before now that the fellow was a coward, but little did I expect that he was so bad. The reader will now perhaps say to himself that I took the barracks. Listen a moment. That was the 3rd. attempt to take the arms. What had the O.C. to rely on? The word of a Peeler that he would open the door. How did he know but a force of police and soldiers would be ready to meet him when he took off the the latch? I know I would not like to be in his place. In my opinion, which does not count for much, he was one of the best Volunteers in the I.R.A.

Having bound us to the beds, they next secured the arms and ammunition which were as follows, six rifles, 600 rounds of ammunition, five large Webley revolvers, and 30 rounds of ammunition, also bolts, batons, handcuffs and all service articles including books in which were noted the movements of Volunteers. When all was secured they left. The sergeant's wife loosened the ropes tying him, and he in turn loosened us. Well I cannot describe the sergeant's acts and actions when he got free in a better way than to say he was like a lunatic. He was a piece, roaring, crying, praying both to God and the devil. In the end, he left for Ennis to report matters to his authorities. After going some distance, he returned, and again looking round to



try to find where he came in. He got a sledge, went into the back yard and broke the back door so that the authorities would think the Volunteers broke in that way. In doing this, he brought all the blame on himself as he was sleeping within ten feet of this door and should have heard this breaking whereas his case was that he was taken asleep. He now left for Ennis accompanied by the fellow who was with me. I left for home, and with the wife laughed loud and long. At last I had given these bulldogs what they deserved. I had humbled them in the eyes of their authorities. On my knees, I thanked God that at last I had struck a blow for Ireland, and as my learned friend said, when I was leaving Clare, when I asked him to know would I join the Volunteers in my district. Don't, he said, you have done your part. His words made me happy. That day brought a lot of new faces and very sour ones. I had a talk with the District Inspector, the County Inspector, and as for military officers, they are coming yet, as we used to say in the old days. In the evening, the Inspector General arrived from Dublin. I didn't find any bother in fooling the lot. The sergeant was blamed for all, and was that night suspended after making many statements about it. The next night, the unfortunate Orangeman cut his throat. However, like the raid, it did not kill him, he recovered. And I was told he got a small pension. That day we had to go and make a statement before a J.P. in Ennis and claim compensation. This statement was drawn up by the Crown solicitor, and it included the words: *Our barracks was raided by parties unknown*. To this statement I'd have to swear, and sooner than take the false oath, I resigned on the 7th, August 1919, two days after the barracks being taken. I was in luck to discover that when the men reported to the D.J. about the capture of the barracks, he said, *the guard is a traitor*. In my resignation, I stated that after twelve years service without a mark against me and without any one being able to say that I was ever seen talking to a Sinn Féiner, my D.I. had called me a traitor. I have no option now but to resign. I now close what I call the time that I served Ireland wearing a British uniform: as the reader will see, I left unsuspected.

### PART III: FROM THE R.I.C. TO THE I.R.A.

I believe few men ever started in civil life after resigning the R.I.C. as happy as I was. I left no enemy behind and as far as those who knew me in the Volunteers were concerned, I had no enemy there. I remained in Clare for about three weeks. During that time several police called to me, asking me to withdraw my resignation; they said they were sorry for my wife and children. In the interval my girl helper, who during the raid was away in Dublin, returned home. The day after we went together to the hospital to see the old sergeant, he



was almost recovered and was delighted to see us. Well, bad as he was, I was glad he did not die. Having completely outwitted the R.I.C. from the Inspector General to constable, I now tried my hardest at the police doctor. I reported myself sick to delay time until my resignation came back. The doctor was sent for and he said in his report: "The constable is suffering from a nervous breakdown. The raid on the barracks must be the cause: he will be unfit for duty for seven days." That certificate was a godsend, for now no man could say I was taken by surprise. I, having the wife and children to support, I could not afford to be put into prison if I could avoid it.

I now paid a visit to my native place to try to get a house, to start a shop on a small scale to help to support them. For after twelve years of idleness, I was not fit to work. I wish to state that my adviser could have got a good job for me. But by taking up a job under Sinn Fein at that time, an ex R.I.C. man would be gambling his life which would be his own until he was caught in some private place by his old friends. Well I returned home, and next day I told my father all I have now written, starting with the barracks raid. I was delighted to have this news for him, for when I was very young he was arrested and badly beaten in Limerick prison by warders. Well here was his words: *if ever I was in your shoes I would never have done it, I would never betray my employer, I would never throw up my job and my advice to you is to go back again.*

I started a shop, and only a small one, and we could not do that same but for help I got from a few friends in Clare. This place was in Co. Limerick and within a few miles of my old home. Here we lived in poor circumstances. I wanted to make what I had go as far as I could, and was going on fairly well. I took part with the Volunteers in anything that they allowed me, which was very little. They did however permit me to take part in one attack on the enemy's barracks. Also they made me a member of the Republican police. The latter job I did not enjoy very long as my officer was arrested and papers were found on him with my name therein. That night, 6th October, 1920, they (the enemy) arrested me and after four days in the lock up I was conveyed to Limerick prison. The night of my arrest I again argued the point with my captors and with good results, for I was liberated in ten days. My arrest however seemed to stir up things in Clare, or whether it was that or the fact that a letter reached me which was opened. It was from my brother in law in America stating that he had sent on a revolver and ammunition to me. It never arrived, instead on the following few days, after my release, the Black and Tans and R.I.C. arrived more like drunks than men to arrest me or perhaps shoot me. I got away though at one time they were very near me. The visits of the enemy now became very frequent. People were afraid to keep wanted men in their houses. In the night of above after getting

away from the military, I called to my father's house. He was in bed at the time, I told him of my escape and that I had nowhere to go for shelter. He told me, I should sleep in a cock of hay which was only about three minutes walk from his house. I parted with him, and my companion and myself slept that night in the open air near my father's house, while he with his two young men of sons, and four daughters and wife, slept in their beds and never even sent me a bit to eat. I could now only call to my own house after nightfall and go away again. I used to sleep in an open shed during the nights. I would be kept in my uncles' houses, but these were as likely to be searched as my own. By this time the raids became so frequent that my wife was afraid to stay in the house with the children, so she left with the family for her brother's house in Co. Kerry. On the night of her arrival at the latter place, a fourth son was born. I was now alone, and fearing a burning, I moved most of my furniture to other houses, also most of my shop goods, I was right, for next day an enemy lorry came to the house, and robbed me of all I hadn't removed, including my boots and clothes as well as those of the family. I called there that night with another member of the Republican police who was also on the run. Everything was broken and thrown about. A chicken which my wife left cooked escaped their notice, so we ate it without knife, fork or salt: the knives and forks being taken with the rest of the loot. The nights now being turning cold and very wet, I had to sleep in my uncle's house.

He had a young family, yet each night he kept his pike near the bed with the intention of helping me to fight if the enemy came. I had all this time a loaded Webley revolver, a present from the O.C. in Clare. This was great comfort to me during those troublesome times. For I knew I would settle accounts with some of them before I'd fall. I never left it away from my reach either asleep or awake in those times. Things being going from bad to worse, one day I started for a long walk. It was a fine day in the month of January, 1921; through bogs and mountains I travelled until I landed at my wife's place within three miles of where I was stationed when in the police in Kerry. During the days I worked with my brother in law, and at night I slept with a kind neighbour of his. So for the present I can sleep at my brother in law's house, as the Truce is now in force. Training camps were started by the I.R.A. and once more I offered my services to Ireland. On the 14th of September I was accepted. I got word to report myself at one those camps to be trained as a machine gunner and bomber. It is easy to train a man when he wants to learn; these were new to me still I picked them up in a short time. The camp being finished I was sent to another to be trained to the work of an Irish soldier which I now am, to my delight. I remained at this camp for ten days; during the time I helped to train others as well as being trained myself. One day the battalion Comdt. called and got me to drill the company,



which I did. I could have done better but the order came unexpected. From that day, I was prepared for everything. By this time an idea struck me to get all the resigned R.I.C. men into the I.R.A. knowing well that they being trained, and for some time past, being hard struck by the times, they would make great fighters. Anyhow after some letter writing and trouble, on the 27th October I held the first meeting of resigned R.I.C. in Killarney. Fifteen men were present, and here I made my first attempt at a speech, and strange to say, I met with great success. So like the handing over of the arms, I think I am responsible for being the first man of that old force to get together the men who for the sake of motherland laid down their arms and pay. Previous to this, I had been put in charge of some I.R.A. recruits, and under my instruction they have turned out good soldiers. Out of 26 I have, 9 are able to use the rifle perfectly well; 2 are snipers, and 9 are bombers. On the 2nd November I got charge of a training camp with 18 picked men from the battalion. These I trained to the use of bomb and revolver, and in three days they were as good as myself. On Sunday the 6th November, I met the Brigade O.C. He gave me his rifle and ammunition as a present, and so for the second time a Brigade O.C. gave me his arms in recognition for services rendered to the I.R.A. Now I'll close for another week when we expect to see things settled or . . .

#### DECEMBER 12TH 1921: BETRAYAL

Poor Ireland, once more you are betrayed. Your leaders have consented to certain terms of a treaty which most Irishmen will find hard to obey. The worst part is agreeing to pay compensation to their murderers and would be murderers. I mean the old R.I.C. who fought against their country after the Irish government called on them to resign. I will give here a short account of the doings of one who, if the settlement is fixed on Wednesday next, will be compensated for his work by Ireland. This is only one case, I know six more just as bad. In the month of September, 1920, a poor man about fifty years of age was arrested near Ennis. He was conveyed to Limerick prison. On the road the Crown forces left the lorry and fired at him, the bullet passing through his head, in behind the right ear and out behind the left. Half dying, but not dead, he was conveyed to Limerick, to William Street barracks. In the morning a priest called to see him, but one of the Tans would not allow him to go to confession, so he went on his knees and made an Act of Contrition. While doing so, a Tan with fixed bayonet and an Irish R.I.C. man, unarmed, entered. The Irishman asked the Tan to finish the poor old man with the bayonet. This the man refused to do until the man would be done praying. The poor man remained praying until some one of them who was not as bad as the above two relieved him. I know the man who urged the Tan



to the above crime, and this is some of the men I am expected to live with. I hope Ireland won't consent to leave them within our shores. If she will, I fear there will be trouble.

OCTOBER 1ST 1922. IN THE MIDST OF CIVIL WAR

Many bad acts have been done in the name of Ireland for the past three months. Be that as it may, I believe the Republic is right still, but I could not kill anyone to uphold it; I have been in the fight for the past three months. Thank God I have never taken life or for that matter since the trouble started in 1916. I have never shot at anyone with the intention of killing him. I have no blood on my hands. I followed a machine gun but I know even though I got a chance, my heart would not let me use it with effect; I have now resigned. Farewell I.R.A. and Republic. Poor Ireland betrayed by her sons can never win now. Well, let them have it. I must now work to try and support my children, for I for one, will never join the Free State. I am now resigning; farewell I.R.A. and Republic. — Patrick Buckley. October 1922.

FOOTNOTE ON THE ABOVE

I asked Declan Horgan of Tralee for an explanation of those words written in October, in view of the fact that he was killed the following March by the Free State as a hostage. Declan reads them to mean that, given the opportunity of joining the Free State Army or the new Garda Síochána, Buckley probably refused. He may therefore have been marked down as a Republican sympathiser; it being not unusual to offer prisoners the option of joining the Regulars or being held as hostages.

As to who planned Ballyseedy, Neligan's name has always been mentioned; he was in Ballymullen Barracks, Tralee, where he tortured and mishandled prisoners. Early on this Wednesday morning nine men were brought out, pushed into a lorry and driven three miles from the town along the Castleisland road. At a straight section of the road, where a by road from Killorglin joins it, they were placed in a circle around a fallen tree trunk, arms, legs, hands and ankles tied with rope or wire, and linked to each other. In this position, while the soldiers stood well off, they were ordered to remove the "barricade". A blinding explosion was followed by rifle fire and grenades from the soldiers. Miraculously Stephen Fuller was blown across a hedge on the south side of the road, into some shrubbery, and survived (although nine coffins had been made ready with his name upon one and all were duly buried: Stephen himself surviving until 1984).

Such operations being covert, the details would be known only to the participants. One Free State officer, Breslin, was recognised, while the name of another one, Daly, was also spoken of. A local group known as the Dandy Six aided the Free State forces on their arrival in Tralee. Being well got, they might have known afterwards something about the participants and who planned it. One of these still resides in London. On the same morning that this occurred four other hostages were taken out by Officers Wilson, Mack and others, and shot fifteen miles away at Killarney. (The Great Southern Hotel there was used as a troop barracks; prisoners being beaten in its basement.) Five days later, five more Republican hostages were removed from the workhouse at Caherciveen and blown up by another Free State mine a short distance to the east of the town.

Ballyseedy was said afterwards to be in reprisal for a Republican mine the previous day at Knocknagoshal, eleven miles east of Tralee, when two officers and two privates were killed, but the ferocity of the Free State reaction and its widespread nature throughout Kerry is hard to explain.

## The O'Malley Papers

*Magill* magazine in 1986 gave a selection from Francis-May Blake of the notes kept by Ernie O'Malley, Acting Assistant Chief of Staff until his arrest in November (see the account of *Sighle Bean Uí Dhonnchadha* on page 346) which graphically shows the stark discouragement faced in trying to hold together a fighting force against the onslaught of a well directed army.

In a general review from Dublin in July writing to Liam Lynch, Chief of Staff, in the south, he had this to say;

Dublin is being slowly reorganised; enemy very active; whole companies being picked up. Of the First Easter under Mick Price, there are only now 250 men; unable to obstruct the Curragh; met two officers from Belfast; nothing can be done there. First Northern (Donegal) has 60 men, but I understand they are starving; have sent on some money. Longford, in August, was described as unorganised; fifteen men there are acting as a flying column. Dublin is being steadily depleted of officers and men; extremely difficult to exist.

Nonetheless in the next few weeks, Dublin, Mullingar and Athlone picked up, and some encouraging actions took place. But the situation worsened in October with the Free State commencing reprisals. Lehané (in Donegal), he wrote to Lynch, is reduced to 20 armed men; the only dispatches I get from 1st, and 2nd Northern are appeals for munitions and money; communication is cut off with the 3rd Western; Daly thinks West Donegal is hopeless. Sean Russell had escaped and is a godsend; but later his premises in Gardiner Place was raided and three of his men were lost.

What emerges from his notes is the fragmentation of each area, some holding on, but most being whittled away. Part of a county showing promise could be quickly reduced by capture or by the enemy turning its forces there. With the loss of experienced staff and no control over road or telephone communication, the I.R.A. was unable to concentrate or direct what forces it had left.



## Sean MacBride and the Republican motor launch *St. George*

with acknowledgements to *The Irish Sword* no. 62, 1984, in which this account first appeared.

by Michael MacEvilly

Sean MacBride's career as Republican soldier, lawyer, politician and distinguished statesman is relatively well known. However, his naval activities in the I.R.A. have only recently been referred to by historians.(1) These activities were carried out intermittently during the years 1921 to 1924 and were concerned principally with the smuggling of arms to Ireland. While they were in the main successful, his last I.R.A. sea operation was of an entirely different nature to those previously carried out and was one which showed considerable daring in its planning and execution, although it nearly ended in tragedy.(2)

A report by the Newcastle correspondent of the *Belfast Telegraph* of 15th December, 1924 stated that a motor launch named the *St. George* had gone aground off Newcastle, Co. Down that morning and that all on board, including the skipper, Lt. John Swift, were rescued. The *Evening Herald* of the same day gave an almost identical report but stressed the fact that three Dublin men were saved. In the winter of 1924-5, with its frequent storms and sea rescues, such reports were commonplace. These and other reports gave no indication that there was anything untoward about the incident. The motor launch *St. George* was in fact an I.R.A. vessel under the command of a G.H.Q. staff officer. All on board were Republicans returning to Dun Laoghaire from a mission, which involved the attempted rescue of prisoners from an internment camp in Larne, Co. Antrim. The I.R.A. officer was Staff Commandant Sean MacBride(3) who, for the purposes of the operation, had adopted the name Lt. John Swift, R.N. Ostensibly he was a native of Kingstown and a nephew of a retired Royal Navy admiral, then living in Southampton. The others on board the launch were Commandant Tom Heavey, a former member of the West Mayo Brigade I.R.A., Staff Captain Tony Woods of Morehampton Road, Donnybrook, and Frank Barry, an I.R.A. Volunteer from Cobh, Co. Cork.

Following the cease fire and dump arms order of 24th May, 1923, I.R.A. activities were mostly directed to political rather than military matters,(4) in particular the contesting of elections and agitating for the release of prisoners. The Free State authorities did not respond to this as the Republicans continued to reject the legitimacy of the government. It was quickly realised by I.R.A. headquarters that its first task was to reorganise the army in preparation for another round. Plans for this were drawn up as early as July, 1923.(5) The reorganisation continued slowly and in secret, as I.R.A. members were still liable

to arrest. Following the November 1923 hunger strike, the Free State government began to release its prisoners and by the end of the summer of 1924 most had been set free. They were faced with a strong government clamp down on I.R.A. activities, a largely antagonistic clergy and press, little prospect of employment and, not surprisingly, low morale amongst their own supporters. To the public at large they "were in fact outlaws"(6) and it was not long before a large scale exodus of republicans began. The election results of August and November 1924 showed an increase in republican support. However, tensions which were later to split both organisations were building within Sinn Féin and the I.R.A. over the question of abstentionism. By the end of 1924, while some progress had been made in re-organising the army, funds were scarce and many prisoners were still held in Northern and British jails.

After his escape in October 1923 from a lorry taking himself and three others from Mountjoy to Kilmainham, Sean MacBride became attached to the G.H.Q. staff of the I.R.A. About November, 1924 he was approached by Frank Aiken, Chief of Staff, with a proposal for a rescue attempt.(7) The prisoners in Larne internment camp had informed G.H.Q. that they intended to dig a tunnel from the camp and work their way out to the sea shore. They asked if it could be arranged that they be picked up by boat and taken south. The proposal was approved by some of the I.R.A. executive, including Frank Aiken, Pa Murray, Adjutant General, and Mick Carolan, Director of Intelligence, and it was decided to approach Sean MacBride, who readily agreed to lead the operation.

MacBride set about locating a suitable boat and crew. He chose as members those who had a good I.R.A. record and who had particular skills to offer that would assist in the operation. Of particular importance to him was the fact that he had worked with most of them previously. Comdt. Tom Heavey was a native of Westport, Co. Mayo: he had seen active service with the West Mayo Brigade I.R.A. flying column and had been appointed adjutant of the No. 1 Brigade, 4th Western Division I.R.A. in October, 1921. He was captured shortly after the evacuation of Castlebar by the Republicans in July 1922. After escaping from detention in Athlone, Tintown No. 1 and Kilmainham (December, 1923), he became attached to the G.H.Q. staff. Eamon De Valera was released from jail on 16 July, 1924. Tom Heavey was then appointed to act as liaison between the I.R.A. and Eamon De Valera, in the latter's capacity as President of the Republic.(8) Chaffing at the inactivity of this post (caused partly by the imprisonment on 1 November, 1924 of De Valera in Belfast Jail for 28 days) he gladly accepted the offer from Sean MacBride to take part in the mission. He had acquired some experience of boats while operating between the islands in Clew Bay, Co. Mayo. Staff Captain



Tony Woods was also recruited. Along with Sean MacBride he had been a member of the 3rd Battalion, Dublin Brigade I.R.A. Captured after the fall of the Four Courts, Tony Woods was jailed in Mountjoy, where in October, 1923 he was involved with MacBride, Dr. Tom Powell of Galway and others in an escape attempt by tunnel. He was later jailed in Newbridge and was finally released before Christmas 1923. He had been involved in various arms landings and, on account of his engineering ability and experience at the College of Science, was asked to join the crew as engineer. Sean MacBride felt it necessary to have a professional seaman on board and Frank Barry of Cobh, a former member of the Cork No. 1 Brigade, was enlisted.

After their escape from jail both MacBride and Heavey became involved in reorganisation work on behalf of Army G.H.Q. Tom Heavey had been staying in Sean Maloney's house "Inis Fáil", 5 Albany Road, Ranelagh. This was a noted safe house which functioned as part of G.H.Q. In the early part of 1924 Tom Heavey accompanied Frank Aiken on various reorganisation tours. In the West they met Johnny Gibbons, Charlie Barrett and Johnny Duffy (4th Western), Peadar Glynn and Tommy McGarry (3rd Western), while in the South contact was made with Tom Crofts and Tom Barry. John Joe Rice and Humphrey Murphy of Kerry. Tony Woods had returned to work in his father's garage after his release. He was always available for operations, the most curious of which was the Cobh incident on 21st March, 1924. British soldiers leaving one of the occupied ports — Spike Island in Cork Harbour — were machine gunned at the landing dock in Cobh by I.R.A. men dressed in Free State uniforms. Two Thompson guns were used in the attack which was an effort to provoke the British governments to retaliate.<sup>(9)</sup> One soldier was killed, seventeen were wounded and large scale searches followed. G.H.Q. decided to send those involved out of the country. Tony Woods was ordered to Cork where he picked up "Sandow" Donovan and two brothers named Gary and drove them to "Inis Fáil". During their brief stay the operation was openly discussed with Tom Heavey. All three were quickly shipped to America.<sup>(10)</sup> Sean MacBride spent the months prior to November, 1924 reorganising the I.R.A. in the North and was accompanied on some of these tours by Tom Heavey. Occasionally they stayed in the Union Hotel in Belfast, owned by a Miss Owens from Kilkenny — a dedicated Republican. The B Specials were a useful source of information as they used to drink there. Derry and Dungannon were also visited by the two men who were driven on occasion by Miss Frances Brady. Sean MacBride was therefore familiar with operating in the North and, having chosen a crew he could rely on, he now tackled the more difficult problem of finding a suitable boat.

The boat to be used in the rescue attempt had to meet two



requirements; a shallow draft to get close inshore and sufficient speed to escape from any pursuers. MacBride eventually located a boat that met these requirements through the Belfast shipyard of Workman, Clarke & Co. Ltd. Its cost was £200 which would be close to £5,000 today. Tom Heavey was then instructed to collect the money from the Chief of Staff's department and bring it to Belfast. He arranged with Andrew Woods to drive him there. Having collected the money, the taxi first stopped in Ranelagh as Heavey had an errand in the post office. It was at this point that the entire operation nearly came to an end. After resuming their journey, Heavey realised in Amiens Street that he no longer had his wallet. The two men immediately set off for the post office with a very clear vision in their minds of a courtmartial and eventual disgrace. Heavey rushed in and found his wallet and money still lying under a brass rail on the counter. They then resumed their journey to Belfast and the money for the boat was handed to Sean MacBride, who later paid it over to the superintendent of the yard.

The name *St. George* was given to the boat by Sean MacBride who felt that such a British sounding name would assist in the operation's cover. His choice, as events turned out later, proved to be correct. She had originally been built in Canada as a submarine chaser and her late admiralty number was ML 476.(11) According to Tony Woods she had already been converted by her former owners, Lindsay's the Belfast linen merchants, for cruising, although at this time she still had her gun platform. While the detailed specifications of the *St. George* are now somewhat unclear she is believed to have been about 80 ft. in length, with a submarine chaser's characteristic narrow beam of about 18 ft. and was powered by two 600 h.p. standard engines, which used a gallon of fuel per minute under full power. These engines started on compressed air and for this purpose the boat carried an auxiliary engine. The chart room and wheelhouse were situated slightly forward, and midships were the engines and fuel tanks. Forward was crew's accommodation for eight and a chain locker. Aft of the wheelhouse was the stateroom which extended to the stern. She had a displacement of about 60 tons, was timber built and copper fastened, and had a shallow draft of about five feet. Her main flaw was the fact that the propellers projected below the keel level, and therefore it was necessary that the boat be kept afloat at all times. The crew were aware of this and the dangers it presented for navigating in shallow waters. The *St. George* at no time carried any weapons as it was felt their risk of discovery was too great.

MacBride was informed by Workman, Clarke & Co. that the boat's engines were in need of an overhaul and that this would take three to four weeks in their yard in Belfast. It was arranged that the four men would go there and assist in the work. Sean MacBride and Tom

Heavey arrived at the start and were joined later by Tony Woods and Frank Barry. They lived on the *St. George* for three weeks and were helped by a local fitter who came to be known as "five thirty" on account of his strict punctuality. MacBride was the only one to leave Belfast. He went to Dublin once or twice for money and instructions but, in general, tried to avoid travel to the south for fear of attracting attention to the operation. During this time he was in near daily contact with the prisoners in Larne through Frances Brady.<sup>(12)</sup> She was a member of a wealthy Belfast linen family which had a strong Nationalist reputation but were not suspected of subversive activities. With her sister Kay and other members, this family became the key link between the prisoners, G.H.Q. in Dublin, and Sean MacBride, who used to meet one of them every one or two days. When this was not possible alternative arrangements were set up for the delivery of messages. In this way MacBride was able to monitor the tunnel being dug at Larne and also was able to keep G.H.Q. informed of the progress of the conversion work on the *St. George*. At this time there was a curfew in Belfast and they had a pass for going in and out of the dock area. Gradually they came to know the harbour police and at no point did their identities come under suspicion. The occasional drink the police had with the crew on board the boat ensured this to a certain degree. The work progressed well and a number of trial runs were carried out in the harbour area which proved successful. Unfortunately when all was ready news was received that the tunnel was not completed and it became necessary for the crew to remain in the dockyard, on the pretence of carrying out further modifications to the boat.

Shortly before 14th December 1924 (probably the 13th) Sean MacBride received a despatch indirectly from the prisoners which caused the original plan to be changed. It stated that the tunnel which was being dug from Larne internment camp to the shore had been discovered by the prison authorities. However there was some doubt as to whether or not some of the prisoners had managed to escape. In order to confirm this MacBride arranged to meet a contact in Bangor who was in touch with the prisoners. If any had escaped he intended to try and pick them up. However there was a possibility that the Royal Navy might have been alerted and, consequently, he also arranged to find out in Bangor if there were any British naval patrols off Larne. In addition he needed to know the type of Royal Navy vessel involved, as there was a strong possibility that the *St. George* would be able to out run it. In order to allay any suspicion that they might be involved in a rescue attempt. Sean MacBride invited the superintendent of the yard and some others on board the *St. George* for a drink on the night before they sailed. Frank Barry never took part in this sort of camaraderie and stayed in the galley preparing



food. After an hour Sean MacBride called a toast to the *St. George* and all present responded. However, the next toast was called by the superintendent to "The King". MacBride and Woods without blinking raised their glasses and replied. But they had not reckoned on Frank Barry, who was so appalled at this, that he let a tray fall to the ground with a clatter.

The following morning, Sunday, 14th December, 1924, the *St. George* left the dockyard without assistance about nine or ten in the morning.<sup>(13)</sup> It was a lovely calm day but very cold. Sean MacBride was at the wheel, with the pilot beside him. Tom Heavey and Frank Barry were on deck and Tony Woods was in the engine room. Also on board was the punctual fitter "five thirty". The engines had started straight away and Woods, when directed by the pilot, threw her into gear. Instead of reversing straight out as they had done previously, the pilot attempted to swing her around. Much to his own disgust he underestimated the power of the engines and caused the boat to scrape along the dock, until hurriedly pushed off by Heavey and Barry. Barry then announced that they couldn't have much luck as they hadn't been to Mass. (Since arriving in Belfast all four had let it be known that they were Presbyterians.) The pilot guided the boat out through Belfast Lough. Although the engines had been tested in the harbour area they continued at a relatively slow speed until they pulled in at a big wooden jetty in Bangor. Sean MacBride paid off the pilot, who disembarked accompanied by the fitter "five thirty". On going ashore, he learned from his contact that none of the prisoners had escaped. Consequently the mission had to be abandoned. Although he was uncertain regarding the position of British naval patrols, he initially intended to take the *St. George* to Southampton, and keep her there in case she was needed by G.H.Q. for future operations.<sup>(14)</sup> However, as the fuel on board was not sufficient for such a journey, he decided to make for Dun Laoghaire in order to refuel and to obtain fresh instructions from Frank Aiken.

They left Bangor and continued at full speed down through Donaghadee Sound, going west of Copeland Island. In the Copeland Straights they met a small collier and passed it to starboard. MacBride and Heavey, who were on deck at the time, duly saluted it. As it was very cold Tom Heavey went down to the engine room but could not stand the noise. He went back to the stateroom and promptly fell asleep. Almost immediately he was awakened by a proud Tony Woods who announced "she's pounding away". Heavey's disgruntled reply was that he hoped they did not run out of fuel. Their journey down the coast off the Ards Peninsula was without incident and they passed Ballyquintin Point and Killard Point at the entrance to Strangford Lough. After rounding St. John's Point they made their way into Dundrum Bay. Off Newcastle, Co. Down, trouble developed in the



engines and MacBride ordered them stopped in order to effect repairs. The boat was anchored and Woods and Barry commenced work on them. MacBride knew that Newcastle was a tidal harbour and because of the propellor situation he made no attempt to enter it. Tony Woods initially believed that faulty plugs and carburettors were the cause of the trouble and with Frank Barry started to clean them. It was not until later that the full extent of the problem became apparent. By this time it was dark and they decided to stay where they were for the night. Dundrum Bay is crescent shaped and is notoriously hazardous for ships. However, as it was a calm frosty night they were not particularly concerned. About 9 p.m. a local came out from Newcastle and offered to guide them in. It was explained to him that they were unable to attempt a landing as there was not enough water and that as both engines were out of action, the boat could not be moved to safer waters. He left them with a warning that a storm was brewing, and indeed Tom Heavey remembers that there was a wide circle around the moon, a sure sign of a storm.

About 2 a.m. the storm hit them from the south west. The waves were causing the boat to bob around like a coracle and it was dragging heavily on the anchor. They attempted to haul it up but were not successful. They then tried to start the auxiliary engine, in order to ride over the anchor and release it. This too failed to start. Tony Woods discovered that there was nothing but water coming out of its float chamber. He then switched over to the No. 2 fuel tank and found that it also contained only water. Evidently a water tank had been connected to it in Belfast. He realised that it was necessary to segregate the water from the petrol by draining it off and that this was impossible in the middle of a storm. They had no alternative but to try and ride it out. Shortly after this the anchor chain broke with a loud noise and they began to drift in a north easterly direction. MacBride ordered a sea anchor to be made and the galley stove, tied to a rope, was thrown overboard, in an effort to keep the boat's head into the wind. This had little effect and without steerage the *St. George* was helpless before the fierce winds and heavy seas. Sean MacBride estimated that the storm was at least Force 9. Conditions were made worse by the bitter cold. The wind was accompanied by hailstones and the occasional flash of lightening. It was not long before the wind changed to the north east and they drifted back and forth a considerable distance in the raging sea. The crew became more exhausted and cold in the pitch black night.

On one occasion, as they were being driven towards the Slieve Donard Mountains, an attempt was made to launch the boat's dinghy. It is not clear who ordered this, as MacBride and Heavey have stated that they disagreed with the idea, believing that they would be safer in the bigger boat. It was on a fixed davit, which meant that it could

be lowered only on one side. After some difficulty the dinghy was lowered and Tony Woods got into it and untied the stern davit ropes. Tom Heavey, on board the *St. George*, was at the bow ropes, which were still connected to the dinghy. He pulled on them, the stern went down and the dinghy started to fill with water. Tony Woods somehow managed to get hold of the rail and he scrambled back on board the boat assisted by Heavey and Barry. He was wet to the skin and quickly made his way to the wheelhouse. Tom Heavey then let go of the bow ropes and the dinghy was blown off into the night. He was pleased to see it go. However, he was none too happy about staying in the wheelhouse in case the boat overtured. For a while he braved the storm from the outside but eventually he sought shelter in the state room.

Daybreak on Monday morning, 15th December, found the *St. George* again in Dundrum Bay and it was not long afterwards that she went aground on a sandbank, not far from the coastguard station in Newcastle. Sean MacBride's fears were realised when, after a while, one of the propellers came up through the hull and the boat began taking water. The constant buffeting of the waves continued to make the problem worse. Those fuel tanks which were already empty gave the *St. George* added buoyancy for staying afloat. However, the rising tide was gradually carrying her further on to the sandbank. MacBride now attempted to attract the coastguard's attention by signalling with a powerful lamp, whose beam was directed on to the station itself. In his opinion these signals were either deliberately ignored or were not seen by the coastguards for a considerable time. This played an important role afterwards when "Lt. Swift" attacked them for their inefficiency. It was reported that the coastguards gave the alarm at about 9.30 a.m.(15) The crew on the *St. George* watched the Newcastle lifeboat being launched. This was the *John Cleland*. She was named after her donor and had first gone on station in 1917.(16) For some unexplained reason the tractor, which assisted in the launch, led the way into the water and it very quickly became flooded. After much difficulty it was hauled back on to the beach. Meanwhile the Annalong lifesaving apparatus was taken to the scene and stood by. By about 10.30 a.m. the storm eased somewhat and the lifeboat was successfully launched into the water with four men at the oars. They reached the *St. George* and, coming round on its port side, shouted to the crew to jump in. Tom Heavey was clutching a suitcase which had been given as a wedding present to Sean Maloney and was promptly told by the cox'n to leave it behind. Instead he threw it into the heaving lifeboat and jumped, amidst curses from the cox'n who later mellowed and produced a bottle of rum. They left the *St. George* on the sandbank with mixed feelings of dejection and relief and at about 11.00 a.m. waded ashore opposite the lifeboat station. Mac-



Bride, Woods and Barry went on to the Beasley Hotel, which was then owned by republican sympathisers and were followed later by Tom Heavey. The necessary comforts were provided under the direction of an elderly doctor named Magill.

Sean MacBride later surveyed the damaged boat, which was lying broadside on the shore and initially thought it could be repaired. His first concern was the fact that some of the locals were trying to claim salvage and so a rota system was set up whereby one of the crew always remained on board. He was also concerned for some documents which had been left underneath the floor boards, but, in the event, they were never found. Attempts were made to float her off with barrels but they were not successful. MacBride considered getting some help from Belfast in the form of a tug and possibly some form of a jack. The fitter "five thirty" offered to come down and help, but when another storm blew up she was irreparably damaged. They now attempted to salvage what they could for auction. After seven or eight days, Tony Woods and Frank Barry returned to Dublin as there was little more they could do. Sean MacBride returned home also for Christmas 1924 and left Tom Heavey, who was still staying in the Beasley Hotel, in charge of arrangements for the auction. On Saturday, 27th December, it was reported that the ML *St. George* was still aground at the entrance to Dundrum Bay (and that another vessel, the S.S. *Katherine* was aground at the same place).<sup>(17)</sup> This report on the *St. George*, obviously written before the 27th, was not correct. Early on the morning of the 27th some coastguards came into Tom Heavey's room in the hotel and informed him that the *St. George* had broken up, near the third hole on the golf course. This is confirmed by the following item in the *Belfast Telegraph* on 29th December, 1924: "An exceptionally high tide was experienced at Newcastle on Saturday causing considerable damage. The Dublin owned motor launch *St. George* was battered to pieces." Sean MacBride returned to Newcastle immediately and the salvaged items, with the exception of the binnacle and compass, were later auctioned off for very little.<sup>(18)</sup> After this both MacBride and Heavey returned to Dublin.

During their stay at Newcastle the crew of the *St. George* received great co operation from the R.U.C. and coastguards and were even given passes by the R.U.C. for the pictures. Sean MacBride in his capacity as "Lt. Swift" of the Royal Navy, was entertained for a few days over the New Year period in the officers' mess in Ballykinlar army camp and was very well treated by the officers of the Queen's Own Royal West Kent Regiment. On 30th December, 1924, the 1st Battalion Durham Light Infantry took up the position vacated by the "West Kents".<sup>(19)</sup> Tom Heavey occasionally had a drink with members of the British army in the hotel — much to the disapproval of its owners, the Beasley family.



Sean MacBride's reaction to the wrecking of the *St. George* was one of great disappointment. G.H.Q. considered the loss unfortunate, particularly as it resulted in another rescue attempt being called off. It had been its intention that the *St. George* would go to Southampton, and after refuelling there they would motor up the east coast of England and take off a number of Republican prisoners, then undergoing penal servitude in Peterhead in Scotland. They were to rendezvous with a land party led by Peadar Glynn, who was on the staff of the 3rd Western Division I.R.A.(20)

It is not clear how the authorities, North and South came to know the identities of the crew of the *St. George*, Tom Heavey was told later by Moss Twomey's driver, who was from around Newcastle, that an R.U.C. officer there was reprimanded afterwards for not being more vigilant. It is most unlikely that the *Evening Herald* report of 15th December, 1924, which mentioned Woods, Barry's and Heavey's names, escaped the attention of the Special Branch in Dublin. MacBride was furious when he saw the names published and strongly upbraided those concerned for allowing it to happen. Certainly Dave Neligan later knew some of the story behind the *St. George*, as the matter came up when Tom Heavey was arrested in Howth and questioned by the Special Branch, after the Kevin O'Higgins shooting in July 1927. The fact that the name "Lt. Swift" and not his own name was mentioned in the *Evening Herald* enabled Sean MacBride to pay two further visits North in 1925. According to him an enquiry was held in the coastguard station in Newcastle early in 1925 into the wrecking of the *St. George*.(21) "Lt. Swift" attended and, as stated, strongly criticised the negligence of the coastguards. Again, according to Sean MacBride, about March or April 1925 there was a court action concerning salvage rights over the *St. George*. It was brought by a Newcastle man and Sean MacBride attended, again under the name "Lt. Swift". He took the offensive and bitterly attacked the man for trying to steal a march on unfortunate shipwrecked sailors. The court considered the local man's behavior outrageous and "Lt. Swift" won his case.(22)

Following the discovery of the tunnel in Larne, some of the prisoners were transferred to other internment camps. Their sojourn was short, as the last internees in the North (but not convinced prisoners) were released by Christmas Eve 1924.(23) Thus, the *Newry Reporter* was able to state on 25 December, 1924 "the internment camp at Larne is now cleared".

#### REFERENCES

- 1 Uinseann MacEoin, *Survivors*, (Dublin 1980), p. 326. Michael Farrell, "The extraordinary life and times of Sean MacBride" in *Magill*, December, 1982, p. 24, and January 1983.

- 2 This article is mainly based on interviews with Sean MacBride and Tom Heavey in 1983 and 1984, and on Tony Woods account in MacEoin, *Survivors*.
- 3 With effect from the date of the occupation of the Four Courts 13th April 1922, Sean MacBride was promoted from staff captain to assistant director of organisation with the rank of commandant (Sean MacBride, 7th Feb., 1984).
- 4 Thomas P. O'Neill, *In search of a political path, Irish republicanism, 1922-1927* (G. A. Hayes-McCoy, (ed.), *Historical Studies X*, 149.
5. Tim Pat Coogan, *The I.R.A.* (London, 1974), page 64.
6. C. S. Andrews, *Man of No Property* (Dublin, 1982), page 23.
- 7 Frank Aiken became Chief of Staff in April 1923, following the death of Liam Lynch. His successors (until the outbreak of World War II) were Andy Cooney (1925), Maurice (Moss) Twomey (1926), Sean MacBride (1936), Tom Barry (1937), Mike Fitzpatrick (1937) and Sean Russell (1938) (MacEoin, *Survivors*, pages 20, 100, 101, 121, 275, 373, 397, 398. Farrell, *Magill*, 28, U. MacEoin, *Harry* (Dublin, 1985), page 53).
- 8 Tom Heavey, 3rd Jan. 1983, confirmed by Sean MacBride, 3rd Feb. 1983.
- 9 There was no retaliation. The Free State government offered their apologies and the British accepted after payment of compensation (J. Bowyer Bell, *The Secret Army: A History of the I.R.A. 1916-1970* (London, 1970), page 47).
- 10 Information from Tom Heavey, 15th Aug. 1985. He also states that the operation was authorised by Frank Aiken. It is an indication of the extent of Free State intelligence that a government proclamation published in May 1924 named five members of Cork No. 1 Brigade I.R.A. as having carried out the attack viz. Dan ("Sandow") Donovan, James Gray, Jeremiah Gray, Frank Busteed and Peter O'Shea.
- 11 *Frontier Sentinel*, 20 December 1924.
- 12 She later married Andy Cooney. For information on her sister Kay, see C. S. Andrews, *Dublin Made Me* (Dublin, 1979), pages 240, 245.
- 13 Tony Woods states in MacEoin, *Survivors*, pages 327, that they left under tow. Where discrepancies arise, the version of events given by Sean MacBride and Tom Heavey has been used.
- 14 Information from Sean MacBride, 7th Feb. 1984.
15. *Belfast Telegraph*, 15th December, 1924.
- 16 The Newcastle, Co. Down, lifeboat station was first established in 1825. The *John Cleland* continued in service until 1932 (information from R.N.L.I.).
17. *Newtownards Chronicle*, 27th December, 1924.
- 18 The binnacle and compass are now held by Sean MacBride.
- 19 *Belfast Telegraph*, 30th December, 1924.
- 20 Information from Tom Heavey, 2nd Jan., 1983, confirmed by Sean MacBride, 7th Feb., 1984. Peadar Glynn was best man to Tom Heavey in 1938.
- 21 It is difficult to know what kind of enquiry this was; the British department of trade stated in February 1984 that they have no record of such an enquiry.
- 22 Sean MacBride, 7th February, 1984.
- 23 Michael Farrell, *Arming the Protestants*, (Brandon, 1983), page 236.

## The Mountjoy Prison Escape

*November 25th, 1925.*

The proposal to effect a rescue of Republican prisoners was discussed at an earlier date while Sean Lemass was Minister of Defence in the Republican Government, George Gilmore being then (1924) his secretary. Lemass, Gilmore considered, cool in emergencies, though 'class conscious'. He gave as an example of this the fact that he had Mick Price transferred to another part of Mountjoy in October, 1923, in case he might affect the other prisoners with 'Larkinism'. Despite this, Gilmore retained a high opinion of Lemass until the late Fifties, when 'he gave in to (foreign policy) pressure from Washington'.

The plan to effect a rescue was resurrected following an I.R.A. Convention held in the Queen's Hotel, Dalkey, on November, 14th. The scheme was to bring three 'poachers' in the custody of two 'policemen', complete with committal warrants to the 'Joy. The prisoners had to be from an area more than twenty five miles from Dublin; otherwise they would be automatically committed to the Bridewell.

Frank Kerlin, who was Director of Intelligence, travelled by train to Baltinglass where he obtained the names of police he could use. Henry Dixon, old I.R.B. solicitor, provided the official committal warrant stamps that would admit the poachers. In the dusk of a winter's evening, the two 'policemen', three 'poachers' and a 'sergeant' (Gilmore) drove up to the outer gate. Announcing that the lads would be serving a three months' sentence in lieu of a fine, they were admitted inside the archway as far as the second gate. At this point Gilmore alighted, stuck a revolver into the back of a warder, grabbing his keys. The car passed through the arch into the open space in front of the steel barred gate into the prison.

Here a Free State sentry, armed with a rifle, stood guard. Moving towards him the 'sergeant' asked for a match. Leaving aside his rifle, he too found himself disarmed. With the keys they already had, they were able now to enter the corridor of the prison. Entering the office on the right, they held up Warder Grace and three others. But a locked, barred gate at the end of this corridor stood between them and the triangle, the meeting point of the four wings of the prison. This they knew would be their hardest test, because no warder on the outside of that gate held a key to it. Confidently Gilmore advanced with his three 'poachers'. Calling out; *Three on!* the warder inside came forward, opening the gate to admit him. Instantly he was 'stuck up' by one of them. They were nonplussed however to find that there were more warders present than they had bargained for. However the plan went off well, and nineteen men, including such notables as Jim



Killeen, Mike Carolan, Sean Russell, and Dave Fitzgerald escaped.

They were met outside by Tom Finlay, a taxi-driver, who had helped many times in the past. To their consternation, it was the only car. Others that had been arranged, failed them. Some of them had to make off on foot.

Three months later, in February, 1926, he rescued Commandant Jack Keogh of Ballinasloe from Dundrum Asylum, using a commandeered Clery's van. Keogh had been sentenced to thirty years in 1924 for an incident of the Civil War by a vindictive judge, O'Shaughnessy, a leftover from the British regime, who lived in Fitzwilliam Square. In November, 1926, Gilmore was himself arrested and sentenced to a mere eighteen months. He refused to wear prison garb. After a week spent in bed, he was allowed wear his own clothes. Most of his time he spent reading *Decline and Fall*, the full volumes of which were then in the prison library.

— Told to the author by George Gilmore

## George and Charlie Gilmore

### *Attempted Escape*

George and Charlie Gilmore had been arrested and sentenced following the discovery of a dump at Killakee Castle, near which they lived, in June 1931. They decided they would escape from Mountjoy as they feared a death sentence under the new coercion act. Charlie made two dummy guns from a stool. With these, the one warder with whom they exercised was held up. At the same time, by arrangement, Sean Russell, upon a high railway bridge nearby, fluttered a red scarf. This was to indicate that his men were ready with a rope ladder on the other side of the wall.

The Gilmores were to reply by throwing over a bottle, but the bottle never came. All they had was a Bovril bottle, which was thrown over but not observed. They continued for ten minutes to throw articles over, but the ladder never came. They had to surrender then to military advancing with rifles.

The attempt was reported in *An Phoblacht* of October, 17th.

— Told to the author by George Gilmore.

## Gilmore Brothers

George, Harry and Charlie were a remarkable trio. They arrived in Dublin from Carrickblacker, Portadown, the 'blackest' part of Ulster.

Their grandfather had been land steward for Colonel Blacker, of Carrickblacker House, a late Elizabethan mansion, built in 1692. Colonel Blacker turned his hand at times to verse, one of his most stirring being a clarion call to Ulstermen:

*So put your trust in God my boys and keep your powder dry.*

The Gilmore brothers were involved in every form of Republican left wing activity from 1918 until the mid Thirties. George might have married Cora Hughes had she survived T.B. in the Thirties. Harry, George and Charlie passed away (in that order) in this decade.

### Cora Hughes

Cora Hughes was the god-child of Eamonn De Valera. He had a very high regard for her — as had George Gilmore — although she held left wing views. In the early Thirties he often confided in her. She died at an early age.

And Dev himself; an astute politician. Like Parnell, he knew how to hold the militants while going his own way. Typical was his remark at the March, 1926, Ard Fheis of Sinn Féin how plans need to be carefully laid 'like the boys that carried out the raid at Dundrum the other day'. This, to cheers, naturally.

— Told to the author by George Gilmore.

### Annuities Campaign

The Army Council agreed reluctantly to support Peadar O'Donnell from 1926 onwards. At the commencement, Austin Stack and Count Plunkett, in Sinn Féin, favoured payment; they regarded them as a debt of honour. George Plunkett, who was strongly left wing, along with his sister, Mimi (later Mrs. O Laoghaire), was against payment.

Plunkett helped to unseat Frank Aiken as Chief of Staff by confronting him during the Convention of November, 1925 held in the Queen's Hotel, Dalkey, with the report that he was one of those considering entering the Free State Parliament. Andy Cooney was elected in his place. It was at that Convention that the I.R.A. ceased to acknowledge the authority of the Second Dail. They did however adopt new standing orders on non recognition of courts — prepared by Aiken — which held them in a straightjacket for decades.

— Told to the author by George Gilmore.

## Dev and The Oath

Before signing their names to the Oath at Leinster House in August, 1927, De Valera was many times on record that under no circumstances would he countenance taking it. At the funeral of Madame Markievicz in July, Maurice Twomey, himself and Sean T. O'Kelly talked about it in view of a new bill which would preclude them contesting an election.

*Well of course, if this is implemented, it will mean the end, so far as we are concerned.*

*Oh, no, not at all,* said Sean T., puffing himself up. *Not at all.* The two then departed under heavy police guard, as they were supposed to have been threatened by the I.R.A.!

— Told to the author by Maurice Twomey.

## Dev and The Statute of Westminster

*Let the boys know,* said Michael Comyn to Maurice Twomey, *that we can have the Republic without firing a shot. I have prepared a memo for the Chief on the Statute.*

Twomey considered that out of this, De Valera developed the constitutional ideas which he put into practice from 1932 onwards, eventually resulting in a Document No. 2 situation.

— Told to the author by Maurice Twomey.

## Sean MacBride and the Oath

*If Fianna Fail remove the Oath and the Governor General, then I feel we must work politically:* Sean MacBride in a conversation with George Gilmore in 1933.

He was always cool to the Fianna Fail policy, Twomey recalls; equally adept at politics or soldiering, whichever came first. I first met him in Mallow in July, 1922. He was then aged eighteen, but was dressed in a hard hat and a tight fitting jacket, much in advance of his age. In a two part story in *Magill*, December 1982 and January 1983, Michael Farrell brings the "extraordinary life" of Sean MacBride up to date.

## De Valera and I.R.A.

In March, 1932, shortly after the election which brought him to power, De Valera requested, through Senator Bill Quirke, a meeting with the leadership of the I.R.A. Maurice Twomey and George



Gilmore met him at the residence of Dr. Farnan, a friend of long standing, at 5 Merrion Square. He spoke at great length until interrupted by Gilmore. Was his objective now a Republic or Document No. 2? The substance of his answer was that he would be satisfied with Document No. 2. *We cannot have a Republic, he said, until we get the Six Counties, and neither you nor we have a solution for that.* The office of Governor General he would reduce to the status of a *seana scuab* (old brush).

Gilmore considered that at that time the broad policies of the two organisations hardly differed.

—Told to the author by George Gilmore.

## Stunts

In the early Thirties, Maurice Twomey and Sean MacBride outlined plans to remove the *Lia Fail* — the *Coronation Stone* — from Westminster Abbey. It was removed for a short while by Scottish Nationalists (as the Stone of Scone) in the Fifties.

Likewise they also discussed taking the Lane pictures from the Tate, and that stunt too was emulated later.

## An Phoblacht

Started originally on 3rd January, 1922, as *Poblacht na h-Eireann* under the editorship of Frank Gallagher. All of the dailies and all of the local papers — except the *Connaughtman* of Sligo — being in favour of the Treaty. It disappeared at the commencement of the Civil War.

It was revived again at the instigation of De Valera on June 18th, 1925, with Patrick Little, later a Fianna Fail Minister, as editor; he was succeeded early in 1926 by Peadar O'Donnell, who edited the paper for four years from 39 Marlborough Road, with offices at 12 St Andrew Street. He was assisted during some of this time by Frank Ryan, Diarmuid MacGiolla Phadraig and others. In 1930 he was succeeded by Frank Ryan, who brought Terry Ward, a dental machanic, from Derry, to assist him. Ward was a born journalist, Twomey says, but the paper was losing money hand over fist, as a result of police seizures. Ward succeeded Ryan, being assisted by Hannah Sheehy-Skeffington, and later by Geoffrey Coulter, a former member of the Arigna column of Cull's. In 1934, Donal O'Donoghue came in as editor. He was arrested in 1935, shortly before the forced demise of the paper in June.

Alphonsus Farrell of Longford was the printer. He did not agree with the I.R.A., but he upheld freedom of the press. He used to pass

the material to his brother, a solicitor, for checking. *Every line is sedition*, but Alphonsus would print it nevertheless. When the end came, he was owed a lot of money, much of which was never paid.

— Told to the author by Maurice Twomey.

### Spa Hotel Meeting

Maurice Twomey recalled an afternoon in the summer of 1938, seated with McGarrity, Russell and Peadar O'Flaherty in a corner of the grounds of the Spa Hotel. Russell was recalling in glowing terms the initial success of Rory O'Connor's sabotage campaign in England, late 1920, early 1921. *You have the wrong parallel, Sean*, Twomey cut in; *you should look up instead the last desperate attempts of the Fenians under Captain Mackey Lomasney*.

Twomey foresaw trouble for raw Irish lads sent over after training in Killiney. Lads with serge suits and peak caps; the *fight caps* as David Fitzgerald called them earlier. Twomey advised Willie McGuinness to dress and act like a dapper Englishman, which suited him. He was never caught.

— Told to the author by Maurice Twomey.

## Nora Connolly O'Brien

In his work *Church and State in Modern Ireland*, J. H. White writes:

What went without comment (e.g. the Workers Republic objective) in 1920, at the height of a revolutionary era, would be scrutinised more closely in 1936, at a time when the recent publication of *Quadragesimo Anno* had drawn attention again to the Church's social teaching. The acceptance of a "Workers Republic" as an objective could be said to imply class war which had been condemned by the Church; and the advocacy of public ownership could be read as an endorsement of socialism, which had also been condemned by the Church.

Criticism came from within the Labour Party itself. It was expressed by an affiliated union, the National Teachers' Organisation, whose Secretary, Mr. M. P. Lenihan, was a well known lecturer on Catholic social teaching. The course of events can best be stated in the words of the I.N.T.O. executive committee's report for 1940:

"It may now be stated that for more than two years the question of alterations in the Labour Party Constitution have (sic) been engaging the attention of the Executive. The new Labour Party Constitution was adopted at a Party Conference in 1936. It was only after its publication in pamphlet form, that doubts began to be expressed regarding the propriety of certain of the Aims and Objects set forth in the Constitution, especially in their relation to the teaching and practice of the Catholic Church".

Early in 1937 the matter was raised at the Executive, and it was decided to seek authoritative advice thereon. A letter was sent to the Hierarchy who referred the whole matter to a Committee of Experts, and later informed the executive that there were definitely in the Constitution certain things that were opposed to Catholic teaching. These had reference mainly to the "Workers' Republic" — which was set out as the ultimate aim of the Party, and to certain clauses which appeared to interfere with the rights of private property.

As a result of subsequent discussions and correspondence, a series of amendments were placed on the Agenda for the following (1938) Conference of the Party by the Executive, with the object of deleting the objectionable features from the Constitution. It became apparent, however, after discussions and interviews with the Administrative Council of the Party, that these amendments would not be carried at that Conference. The Executive thereupon decided to withdraw them and give the Council and the members of the party a fuller opportunity of considering them. The amendments were again placed on the agenda for the 1939 Conference and a circular letter setting forth the arguments in favour of their adoption was issued to the Affiliated Unions and Branches.

The Administrative Council itself, however, asked and obtained



from Congress permission to redraft the Constitution, and made it plain that in doing so the objectionable clauses would be omitted. Thus the object which the Executive had in view was achieved. "The new draft Constitution has now been issued, and the Executive are glad to be in a position to report that there is nothing in the revised version to which objection can be taken on religious grounds. The new draft is in accord with that suggested by the Committee of Experts to whom the question was originally submitted by the Hierarchy. The Executive believe that it is due to their action and efforts that these desirable changes have been made, and their action in the matter has received the express commendation of the general body of Bishops". (From I.N.T.O. Directory, 1940).

In the amended Constitution of April 1940, the phrase 'Workers Republic' was replaced by 'a Republican form of government', and the statement about public ownership was rephrased as follows: 'The Labour Party believe in a system of government which, while recognising the rights of private property shall ensure that, where the common good requires, essential industry and services shall be brought under public ownership with democratic control'. The decision to allow the Constitution to be rewritten in this way was not universally popular in the Party, and it was carried on division at the annual conference by 89 votes to 25. A Protestant member, Mr. Sam Kyle from Belfast, protested that they were granting an outside body the right to say that the movement must act in accord with their ideas and not its own.

Extraordinary as it must seem to us today, the *Worker Republic* objective of 1936 was called into question within two years, and a short time later was removed from the Constitution of the Irish Labour Party. The turgid minute from the I.N.T.O. and the subsequent behaviour of the Party is redolent of the sort of hypocrisy that one still expects from these quarters.

### Sean Russell

George Gilmore liked Russell personally, but considered that he lacked political perception. He opposed Peadar O'Donnell's social campaigns on the grounds of 'politics': — Told to the author.

Maurice Twomey, while Chief of Staff, kept a firm hand upon him, not seeming to take him seriously. He told a story about one of his many disguises, a moustache and a pipe, (he never smoked). Supt. Mansfield told Twomey to ask Russell to desist as 'it did not suit him'.

Twomey was offered the Chief of Staff position in March, 1938, by Mike Fitzpatrick, who had succeeded Barry three months before. He

declined, thus allowing the eager Russell into the post. At this convention, the proposed English Campaign was the big, but unspoken issue as everyone was afraid to mention it. It had been conceived by Russell and McGarrity in the U.S. in 1936. They were alike in their single mindedness and in their ability to overcome opposition by ignoring its existence.

Twomey was very unhappy with the decision. Together with Jack McNeela he toured the English units in April, of 1938, and this confirmed his opinion. McNeela agreed with his assessment, but felt bound in loyalty to follow Russell. O Cadhain, Grogan and George Plunkett were in favour of the campaign. It was agreed that henceforth there would be no action in the Free State. Russell then went to De Valera to acquaint him but his overtures were rejected.

Two days after giving me the foregoing, Moss rang to 'clear up any ambiguity' by saying that while he did not favour the campaign, once the die was cast, he resolved to uphold it and do anything he could to assist 'especially for the sake of Sean and the lads'.

— Told to the author by Maurice Twomey.

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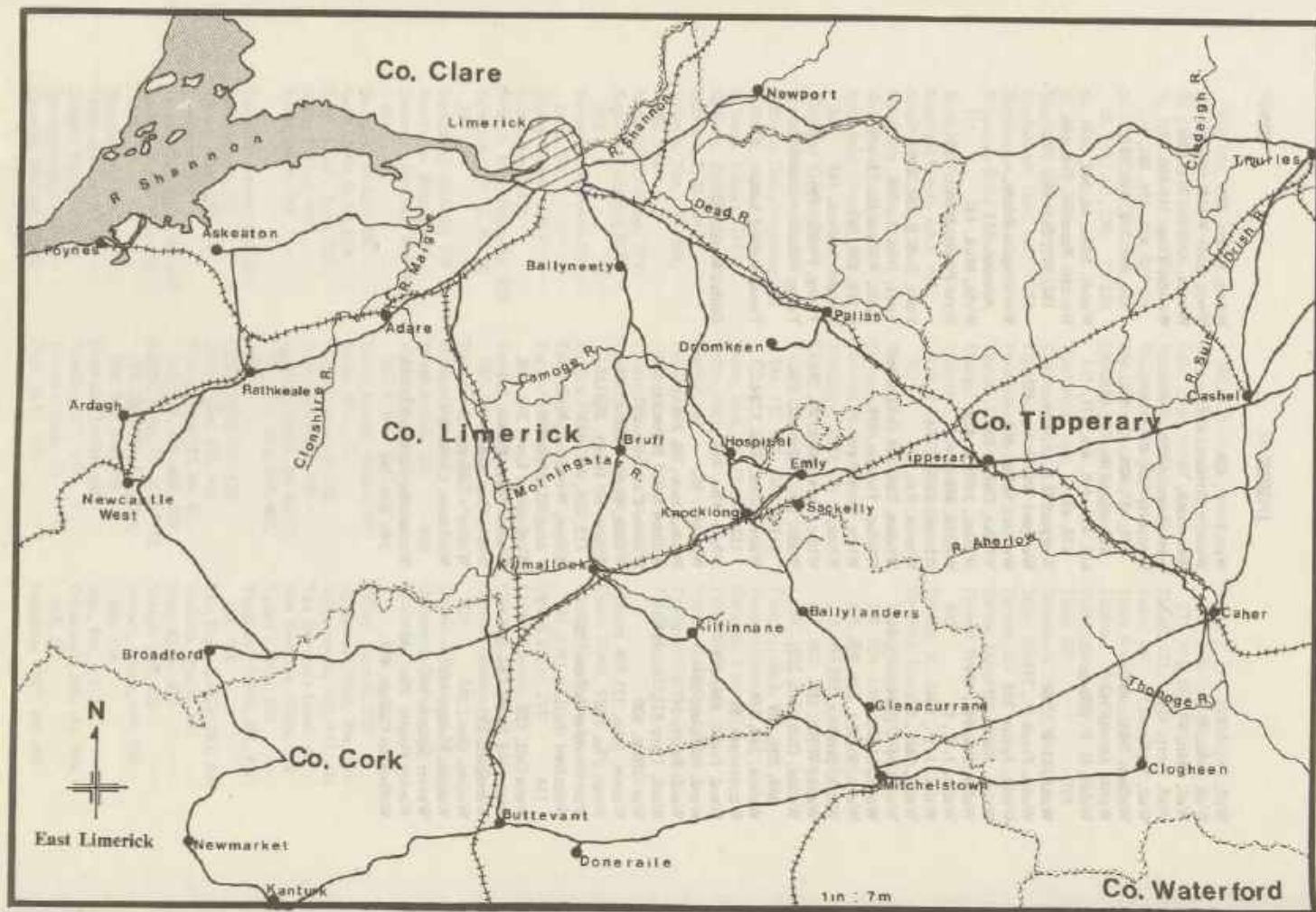
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