

Document Ws.7.

ORIGINAL

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21

BURO STAIRE MILEATA 1913-21

No. W.S. 7



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Telefón 61018.

ROINN COSANTA.

BURO STAIRE MILEATA 1913-21

(Bureau of Military History 1913-21),

26 RAEDH NA NIARTHARACH,
(26 Westland Row),

BAILE ÁTHA CLIATH.
(Dublin).

DOCUMENT WS. 7.

Statement by

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dated 2nd May, 1947,

on

- (a) Contacts and conversations with Arthur Griffith, Eoin McNeill, Seán T. O'Kelly and other persons from Holy Thursday to Easter Monday, 1916;
- (b) Delivery of the cancelling order to various units, Easter Sunday, 1916.

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ORIGINAL

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1013721
BURD STAIRS MILEATA 1913-21
NO. W.S. 7

In 1916 I was an ordinary private soldier in the Irish
Volunteers, a member of F Co. of the ~~1st~~ First Battalion
of the Dublin Brigade (capt. Fionán Lynch, 1st lieut.
Shouldice ~~Diarmuid O'Hegarty~~, second lieut. ~~Patrick O'Keefe~~)
I was also a member of the I.R.B. since 1915 (sworn in
by Sean T. O'Kelly; a member of the "Clarence Mangan" section,
presided over first by George Irvine, then by Frank Fahy.) I was
then an assistant in the French Department of U.C.D.

F Co. 1st Batt. used to meet for indoor drills on
Thursday nights at the Gaelic League Hall, 25 Parnell Square.

On Holy Thursday night 1916, I had no suspicion whatever that
anything abnormal was afoot. I knew, as everyone knew, that
at the "manoeuvres" ordered for the following Easter Sunday,
a prize would be given for the best-equipped company, and I
was a bit worried as my equipment was not complete.

On my way to the drill hall, I went into the ~~large~~ large
D.B.C. restaurant situated at that time in Lux. O'Connell St.,
went up to the top floor and sat down opposite two men
very well known to me, Seamus O'Connor, solicitor, and
Piaras Béaslae, vice-commandant of the 1st Battalion. They
were talking earnestly together in Irish, and in a very low tone
so that I could not follow their conversation.
After a while, Piaras Béaslae went away and
Seamus O'Connor turned to me and said in English: "I have
just had the life frightened out of me by Beasley."
"How is that?" I said. "He has just told me that the rising
is to come off on Sunday!" I said, "Would you mind
passing that tea?" The statement had seemed to me just
a pointless absurdity. O'Connor went on to express indignation
at being left in ignorance, pushed aside, treated like this
when he was a member of the Volunteer Executive and
entitled to know everything that was going on. He
said he would seek out Tom Clark and Sean M^c Dermott next

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morning and he asked me to come with him and I made an appointment with him for next morning.

I mention this incident as it shows a member of the Volunteer Executive as completely ignorant as I was of everything up to Holy Thursday evening and then only learning of the coming Insurrection accidentally and unofficially from Piaras Béasláir who, I believe, would only have mentioned it to him that evening because he would have assumed that

Seamus O'Connor was already as well informed as he was himself. I went to my company where we got a long address from a strange officer telling us to turn out with all rations and equipment on Sunday and to be prepared for anything: "you may be up against it" he said. The officers of the company were told more definitely, but I didn't know that at the time though I did notice a strange, (I don't like to say frightened) look in their eyes.

I met Seamus O'Connor next morning and we went to Tom Clarke's shop and to Sean McDermott's office in 12 D'Olier St. but drew a blank in each case. Seamus was still grumbling at his treatment. We parted and I didn't see him again until 1946.

Some time later that ~~evening~~ Good Friday I found myself in the Father Mathew Park in Fairview where Volunteers used frequently drill. Some officers of the Second Battalion were there and their Commandant Thomas Mac Donagh, whom I knew well in U.C.D., arrived.

He spoke to me as if I knew all about it "Do you know that the Pope has blessed this thing? I was ashamed to say "what thing?" ~~several~~ I think it was then that he spoke in enthusiastic praise of Joe Plunkett, as a wonderful man on a committee, thinking of everything, foreseeing everything down to the smallest detail. ~~several~~ He was in high good humour. This would be between one and two on Good

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Friday. He certainly radiated the impression that everything was going as he desired. But then ~~and~~ I never saw MacDonagh otherwise.

I spent the rest of Friday and most of Saturday looking for a bayonet and other articles of equipment. In spite of all the hints I had heard, I was still completely incredulous as regards a "rising" on our part. I thought either that the whole talk was a rumour spread deliberately by the Volunteer chiefs to make the men make a big effort to complete their equipment - in that it certainly succeeded - or, at most, was due to information or leakage from British sources that we might be attacked while on manoeuvres on Sunday.

At about 6 o'clock on Easter Saturday evening I met Sean T. O'Kelly near Nelson's Pillar. He was talking to a former leading man in the I.R.B. alderman Nowlan of Kilkenny a man I never met before or since. Sean T. said "Well are you ready for anything?" I answered cheerfully. At the Pillar exactly, a reporter of the "Freeman's Journal" called Sullivan came over to Sean T. and said: "We have just got an order ~~in~~ in the office, from Major Price to say nothing about the ship which has been sunk off Kerry." (These ~~are~~ as near as I can remember, were the exact words he spoke.) Sean T. muttered under his breath: "That's the first disaster." I looked at him sharply and said: "What do you mean?" He said: "Shut up!"

That is all I remember of that conversation. Sean T. left me almost immediately, saying, as far as I remember (but I would not swear to it) that he was going to look up Griffith. [At any rate, I as I often heard from him afterwards, he did pick up A. G. in Ridgeway's, the barbers shop at the corner of Westmoreland St. facing O'Connell Bridge (underneath Purcell's

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the tobacconist] and both proceeded thence to see John McNeill.]

I went from the pillar still in search of equipment. I was given a beautiful Japanese sword at Lawlor's, Fownes St. about 7 o'clock. The shop was filled with volunteers struggling for pull-throughs etc. all out to win a prize for their company at the next day's manoeuvres.

I then went to confession at Whitefriars St. holding my sword under my overcoat, then walked back across town, called in at Tom Clarke's shop [he was not there of course] met Mr. J. Ryan, a journalist and old Fenian, well-known in Dublin at the time, walked home partly with him, he ~~was~~ like Sean T.O.K. and others hinting at what was coming off on the morrow and saying that everything was very well planned, I still incredulous. I arrived home between 10 and 11 o'clock.

~~a~~ Foot-note: a statement should be got from the barber Ridgeway.

He was a very active volunteer, was fighting in the G.P.O., speaks Irish well.

He told me once a very strange thing that Sean T.O.K. and A. Griffith had frequent long talks in his shop during Holy Week sitting among the customers;

that various well-known volunteer officers also sat talking among the customers, yielding their "turn" to other people. It

seems as if, haunted by the possibility of an "Oliver Bond" round up at last moment, all officers etc were ordered to quit their accustomed haunts and meet in unaccustomed ones?

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when I arrived home on that Easter Saturday night of 1916, at 11, Keinster Avenue, North Strand Rd., between 10 and 11 o'clock, to my great surprise I ^{wrote} found that Arthur Griffith himself had called at the house, in a motor car, some time previously - close on 10 o'clock. I remember my brother saying he had left a note. The note stated ~~Arthur~~ (quoting from memory) "Go at once to 54 Rathgar Road - Arthur Griffith." A.G. had never been at my house before. I hurried to Nelson's Pillar and caught what must have been the last ~~tram~~ Terenure tram. I got off and looked for the address given me. I saw a car standing at the curb stone and just getting into it, recognised Thomas McDonagh. I said: "Hello, Tom's, where is no. 54?" He said: "In there, Dr. Seamus O'Kelly's." Until that moment I did not know I was going to Seamus O'Kelly's house. McDonagh said nothing more and went off. It was the last time I spoke to him. Dr. O'Kelly let me in and ushered me into a room and went off out. During the period I was in his house, he stayed outside, letting people in and out, but

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my brother, Valentine O'Brien, still resides at ~~the~~ 11 Keinster Avenue.

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taking no part in discussions. In the room I found: John McNeill; Sean Fitzgibbon; Arthur Griffith; Sean - T. O'Kelly; Paddy Little (now minister of Posts and Telegraphs); Colum O'Connell (now of The 2 Three Candles Press); Páidín O'Keefe (now of Dail staff); Mr Joe Connolly of Belfast (later Parliamentary Secretary for hands)

Was Dr. Jim Ryan (now minister of agriculture) there for a short while after I went in, leaving before others? I cannot quite remember and that is the only name I am doubtful about. His memory would clarify this small point. John McNeill was sitting at a small table with his back to the fire-place, John Fitzgibbon beside him. A. G. stood most of the time with his back to the fire. The others were all sitting in a line to the right of the door, on chairs and a sofa, with the exception of Joe Connolly. He was sitting close to the ~~the~~ table, where McNeill was, but had his back turned to the table and to the rest of the company, facing a corner of the room, and with his head bent down, and so remained without a word or a stir all the time I was in the room. I took a chair quite beside him and remember looking at him curiously once or twice and finding

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or to ... to
Minister of
Agriculture
- please put in
correct title
- or if you like,
- what he is now
(1947) - I refer
to Joe Connolly
little of
Alec Connolly

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this attitude strange.

The atmosphere was very tense. MacNeill seemed strangely ^{unlike} like his usual self that I knew so well (I had been his very first student in U.C.D.) This is not a present-day recollection merely, I remember distinctly that night looking at him and saying to myself: "this is a different MacNeill to the MacNeill I have always known." The difference consisted in the excited, highly-strung, almost bitter note in his voice, so different to his usual calm, collected, objective manner and voice to which I was so long accustomed. For the best part of an hour, or maybe more than an hour, he and Fitzgibbon did practically all the talking - Griffith put in an occasional ~~word~~ murmur of assent or very brief comment. The others said nothing, I said nothing. All looked oppressed, almost frightened, shall I say? by the seriousness of the situation; all except A.G., who seemed almost as usual, certainly far cooler and more "normal" than anyone else - like himself when he was very serious, thinking hard and keeping rigidly cool and very taciturn - a mood that all his old friends will remember well.

Fitzgibbon was talking when I came in and continued after I had sat down. He was telling of his experiences in Limerick. The gist of it, as far as I can summarise it now was as follows: a fortnight before he

had been told of what was to come off on Easter Sunday, [by Pearse? Mc Dermott? Mc Donagh? - I cannot say now, but generally speaking by the Rising leaders] and had been told that Mc Neill was in it and "everybody". So he had accepted the job given him to ~~do~~ do in Limerick. He had been there ~~ever~~ since then. His job was to cooperate with and assist the local leaders there in their part of the general plan: the reception of the German arms which were to arrive by train from ~~the~~ Tralee, their ferrying across the Shannon (if necessary), while the local Volunteers were to pin the British garrison in Limerick in their barracks, and ~~then~~ send the arms on through Clare to Athenry, distributing on the way to the Clare people, who, although only weakly organised in the Volunteers, could be relied on to join in a scrap against the R. I. C. So much I gathered of the general plan that night. The ever growing amazement with which I listened to the ~~the~~ gradual revelation of all this can be imagined. ~~Mc~~ Fitzgibbon said he had found the greatest good will and readiness to fight among the Limerick Volunteers, but was impressed by the poorness of their resources in

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arms and ammunition for the task assigned to them, and, ~~as far as~~ ^{as far as} he could see and hear, of the equipment of the Country Companies in the vicinity of Limerick. Then on Good Friday, he began to hear of the events off the coast of Kerry. I think ~~but~~ ^{but} am not sure, that he mentioned hearing of the three men drowned at Killorglin and travelling somewhere Kerrywards to investigate.

Finally, on Saturday morning very early, he decided to come to Dublin, went straight to John McNeill, and had been with him since the afternoon.

McNeill spoke a good deal too. As I had a long conversation with him on Easter Monday following, ~~between~~ about midday, it is hard for my memory to separate what I heard from ~~him~~ on Saturday night and what I heard from him on Monday morning, especially as the Monday conversation took place in the same room. But the gist of it is clear enough; namely that McNeill told how he had been left completely in the dark, only found out things gradually and by accident, and realised that Sunday's ~~in~~ all-Ireland manoeuvres were to be turned into an offensive action, an insurrection.

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how he had expostulated with the leaders; how (but of this following point I am very uncertain as to which conversation with ~~the~~ McNeill I was told it) he had agreed with them that if the British attacked, he would stand in with them, of course, such having always been his position; but that in the course of the day (that Saturday) hearing of the disaster off Kerry, and especially in view of the utter unpreparedness of the country as reported to him by Fitzgibbon, confirming what information he had himself, he had come to the conclusion that the enterprise was madness, would mean a slaughter of unarmed men and that ~~he~~ he felt it to be his bounden duty to try and stop it.

A. G.'s attitude and such words as he spoke, were clearly quite in approval of the sentiments expressed by MacNeill. The row of men on the other side of the room remained silent. I cannot recall a single remark being made by anyone of them. Joe Connolly continued to sit with his back turned to us all and his head down. I remember finally A. G. remarking that it was very late and that he would be off; that I would be going the same way home; "Give Mr O'Brien his orders and we will be going" he said. Then I noticed a little pile of sheets of ~~the~~ notepaper of the usual

Small letter size on the table. There were
~~two~~ copies of the "cancelling order" as it
~~is~~ was called, the same text as appeared next
 day in the Sunday Independent. Fitzgibbon
 took three of these and gave them to me
 saying: "travel with these in the morning to
 Edenderry, to Tullamore and to Father
 Smith's volunteers; in Edenderry find
 out a man called Beatty, in Tullamore
 a man called Carroll, volunteer secretaries
 both of them, and Father Smith himself
 in the other place." "What other
 place?" I said. "Tyrrell's pass, I
 think" he said "yes, Tyrrell's
 Pass." I knew very slightly a
 Fr. Smith who had attended
 a summer course at Spiddal
 a few years previously and
 after a few exchanges with Fitzgibbon,
 recognised that it was the same
 man.

James McNeill
 afterwards Gov-
 General, had written
 out these copies
 earlier in the day - as
 I heard from so

I took the three copies of the
 order and made for the door. I stopped
~~and~~ to talk to Sean - T. O'R. - who was
~~is~~ sitting nearest the door. "What is
 all this about Sean?" I said. "You see
 for yourself and you know as much as I
 do now. You see there has been a
 split" he answered. "What have I
 got to do with a split?" I said. "I am
 only a private soldier." "I am
 in the same boat" he replied "only
 when I came ~~to~~ to McNeill

(1947)
 Father Smith was
 interned with
 me in 1921 in
 Rath Camp,
 Curragh - later
 P.P. somewhere in
 Queens Co. (Kaojise)
 Died in 1939 or
 1940, I think.

this evening and found that this order had already gone out to some places, it seemed to me that it would be only right that every place should ^{get it} to prevent people in one place going out thinking that the place beside them would be going out, when they wouldn't be "

"Then you think I ought to travel with this order " I said " yes, I think you ought " replied sean "all right " I said.

This is as near as possible to being verbatim the conversation that passed between sean - t. o'k - and myself. It ~~is~~ what I remember most distinctly of the whole night, and I have never let that little conversation slip from my memory although I have never written it down before.

Colm Ochohlainn, who was sitting near sean joined in then, but I have only the vaguest recollection of what he said. It was mostly about a journey to Kerry and back and about the men drowned in Killodglin.

I went off then with Arthur Griffith. It must have been about one in the morning. Dr o'Kelly let us out. Somewhere outside we picked up an outside - car and drove down

for the purpose of effecting a burglary wireless equipment in Maurice Fitzgerald's wireless school in Cahirciveen - to use for communication purposes not only with German ships but afterwards ~~for~~ during the fight as I heard (?) at the time. The 3 men drowned were going to Cahirciveen too. Nothing to do with meeting Callment. Consult Colm Ochohlainn.

town. Even then I remember saying stupidly to Griffith: "What was intended for tomorrow night?" "a general insurrection throughout Ireland" he replied shortly. I don't remember anything else said on that silent drive. Griffith was plunged in thought and I had to give up attempts at conversation. On the way home we stopped at Thompson's Garage in Brunswick St (now Pearse St.) near the Fire Brigade Station and I ordered a car for the morning. I should have said that before leaving Doctor O'Kelly's house, McNeill had given me eight pounds in notes.

I wish to add here that at no time had I the idea that I was present at a "meeting" while I was present at Doctor O'Kelly's house; that is to say, a regular meeting with a chair^{man}, with the right to propose or second things, or vote. The decision had been taken long before I arrived there. My impression then and immediately afterwards and ever since was that I had been sent for to be a messenger and that most of the other men present were in the same position.

I do not wish it to be inferred that my opinion was sought for in regard

to anything or that anyone then attached the slightest importance to any opinion of mine. I do not wish it to be inferred that I was on McNeill's "side"; if we must talk of "sides" that I was against the rising and in sympathy with his act. I was, I may say, too well-drilled and disciplined a private Volunteer for that. I travelled simply on the advice of a man whom I ~~looked~~ looked up to greatly at the time and who had a great influence with me, namely, Sean T. O'Kelly, as I have reported above. But had my company captain Fionán O'Leary been there or the company lieutenant Jack Shouldice I certainly would have gone over to either one of them and asked him to give me an order and obeyed it.

now Judge

[I was the last to arrive in Dr. O'Kelly's house that evening. The statements of the men I have named above will show that a great many things happened and that various important personages had come and gone in that house that day and evening before I arrived.]

(Signed) Professor Liam O'BRIEN, M.A. University College, Galway, 1st May, 1947

Continuing May 2nd 1947

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On Easter Sunday morning, I ~~was~~ left Dublin in a car with my copies of the ~~the~~ McNeill order. I found the man Beatty in Edenderry and gave him the order. He told me the local company there had not anything - manoeuvre, route - march or anything else - arranged for the day! I went on to Tyrrell's Pass.

I inquired in the street for Father Smyth and was told that he had been transferred ~~to~~ shortly before to Basteppollard, twenty seven miles

~~away~~ away. This left me rather in a quandary. I decided to go first to Tullamore which was quite near.

In Tullamore, after some cautious enquiries I found the house of the man Carroll, a small shop, where the people were very suspicious and reticent.

I finally gave my order to the girl and asked her to bring it inside and show it to Mr. Carroll if he was there. I was then brought inside and found a man in full volunteer uniform, ^{complete} with bandolier, in the kitchen. This was Jimmy or Seamus

Brennan, the local commandant who in a fracas in the local Volunteer hall about a month before, had fired a revolver shot, had since been on the run in the camp at Kimmage, and had received his orders the previous day to return to Tullamore and lead his men out - orders which he was determined to obey. After much discussion he

To-day living in Drumcondra 9th Div. I met him at the 1916 dinner in Blary's, 23/4/1947 - with the sister whom I had not seen since Easter Sunday 1916.

decided to come back with me to Dublin to find out what was going on. As the house was being watched by a policeman a hundred yards down the street, I went to the door of the car surrounded by a crowd of women, ~~among~~ covered by whom he slipped into the car, lay down in it, his sister got in beside me and we drove down the street, with our feet on Brennan, so to speak. A couple of miles outside the town we stopped at a farm-house and picked up Peadar Bracken, who had also been on the run for the same affair and had returned with Brennan to lead the men ~~out~~ out. Bracken piled into the car as well as he could and we drove on. A few miles further ~~on~~ they sat up. It was time as my driver, hired from Thompson's Garage, was getting more and more uneasy at these "manoeuvres" in his car. They stopped the car on the side of the road at a place which they said was Drumraney. There a young man with a bicycle appeared on the top of the ditch from a field. They passed him the order and we went on. They told me there were fifteen Drumraney boys in the field already mobilised and ready to join up with Yullamore - and move westwards towards the Shannon.

They directed this Drumraney man to send the message back to Tyrrell's Pass.

[As I heard afterwards, the message from Drunmore caught up with seven lads of the village of Tyrrell's pass who, led by the Malone brothers, Tom and Seamus, were going on an outside car carrying some explosive, with which they were to blow up some Railway bridge (on the line between Athlone and Dublin, I presume, and am nearly but not absolutely sure that I heard so at the time) on the way they had met an R. I. C. man and in answer to his query said they were going to a Ceilidh! After doing the job on the bridge they were to move ^{to the} west across the Shannon.]

all this I heard almost immediately afterwards from these two Malones the moving spirits in Tyrrell's Pass - in Frongoch. Seamus Malone, now (1947) a secondary teacher in Waterford, I believe. His daughter BRIGID NI MAOILEORN is married to sean O'Hegarty, son of P.S. O'H.

Brennan and Bracken, by the way, agreed that my message for "Father Smith's Volunteers" would mean Tyrrell's Pass and not Castlepollard.

We returned, without further adventure to Dublin and made for the Volunteer camp at Kimmage, where the returned exiles from England were. In the lane way leading up to the camp, our driver got a sudden and loud "halt!" pulled up the car, Brennan and Bracken immediately produced revolvers and handed me one - but a friendly D.M.P. voice said quickly "that's all right, we are only taking numbers of cars coming into the city to-night." I noticed the indefatigable

Hoey, the G. man who was always on the track of all Volunteer activities (afterwards shot in Dublin - 1919? - 1920? - 1921?) leaning against the wall, but he made no move. Meanwhile the sentry at the gate had given the alarm, and men with rifles and bayonets were rushing to the gate from the interior of the camp. We made quite a triumphal entry.

[~~off~~ about a month later, in Wandsworth prison, London, I was interrogated by what seemed to be a Staff officer from the War Office about my peregrinations about Tullamore and Tyrrell's Pass on Easter Sunday. This was I think during the trial of Brennan and Bracken who after spending the week in the G. P. O., were subsequently tried, if I am not mistaken, for shooting at the officer in Tullamore. That shot in Tullamore about a month before ~~the~~ the rising, was, I believe, the first shot fired in the insurrection any period of 1916-1921.]

Peadar Bracken is has been for many years, district court clerk, I think, in Tullamore. I have never met him since 1916.

I made my way from Kimmage to 19 Ranelagh Road. It was about 11 o'clock on ~~Sunday~~ Easter Sunday night. 19 Ranelagh Road was the residence of Miss Mary Kate Ryan who became two years later the first wife of Sean T. O'Kelly. I was a constant visitor there at the time. I found Sean T. O'K. there.

I shared a bed with him that night. I, of course knew nothing of what had been going on in Dublin during the day and he told me nothing. Next morning he was insistent that I should go out to McNeill's house and report to him ~~at~~ my movements on the previous day. I left the house for that purpose, sometime ~~after~~ between 10 and 11 o'clock. I ~~thought~~ considered that everything was at an end and that nothing abnormal was going to happen that day. I tried to get a car, but found, as so many others found, that Fairy House races were a serious obstacle to procuring transport. Finally at Stephens Green outside the College of Surgeons I picked up an outside car. I was surprised to see a body of Volunteers, more than a company, it seemed to me, lined up there with full arms and equipment.

I went over to one I knew well, Dick Cotter and said to him "B'fuil Rud ar biz ar siubal indiu?" He said very earnestly; "Tá go deimhin". I went away on the car, saying to myself that he was wrong, that I knew more than he did about the situation and that it would be only a route-march.

Dick Cotter, married to Bridgid nee Fhlannagán, sister of Mrs Devalera

[This was the second Dublin battalion or part of it. They went from there and

seized Jacob's factory. Some of them told me afterwards in Frongoch that only when they saw me going off on the outside-car, did they begin to feel that there was something up!

on Rathgar road, almost outside Dr. O'Kelly's, who should I see cycling towards me but the man I was looking for, John McNeill! He was accompanied by John Fitzgibbon and by a boy who, I found, was John McNeill's son. We entered Dr. O'Kelly's house again and took possession of the room we had been in on the previous Saturday night. Dr. O'Kelly again only let ^{in people} in and out, he did not stay with us.

I believe the son afterwards killed, on the Anti-Treaty side, during the Civil War.

I learned that Fitzgibbon had gone out to John McNeill that morning to tell him that he had heard a rumour that "they" had decided, in spite of his cancelling order, to go into action that morning. McNeill had refused to believe it and they had decided to come into town to pick up news. It was lucky for me that I had met them just outside Dr. O'Kelly's house. When we were inside McNeill was still completely incredulous. He was quite cheerful and quite his normal self again, unlike Saturday night. Fitzgibbon suggested that he himself should cycle towards

the city, have a look round and come back and report. McNeill agreed and he went off accompanied by McNeill's son. For nearly three quarters of an hour (as it seemed to me then and since) I was alone with McNeill. It was moving towards midday and already, unknown to us, bodies of Irish Volunteers, who within the next hour were to become the I. R. A., were on the march to take up their different positions in the city.

McNeill was convinced that ~~all~~ all that could be afoot was a route-march of battalions or of the whole Dublin Brigade. In fact, he said, their leaders would probably reckon that the Dublin Castle people would think it queer if the Volunteers were not out marching on a Bank Holiday like Easter Monday and on such a fine day, too — so much had they been accustomed ~~for~~ during the previous year or two, to seeing the Volunteers marching all over the place; that in fact, the Castle people would be more relieved than otherwise to see them out walking. He went over a good deal of what he had said on Saturday night — how he had

only found out by accident during Holy Week that action was contemplated (I believe he mentioned to me then that he learned of it from a U.C.D. student, Liam O'Rollaicín, son of Doctor Bradley of Drogheda, a well-known old Gaelic League. This student had innocently mentioned to him his orders which were nothing less than to blow up the big bridge at Drogheda or at least put it out of action for trains with reinforcements coming to Dublin from the north.) How he had protested to Pearse and his companions. He explained his own position of which he had never made a secret, that the great thing, the important thing was to preserve the Volunteers, and the newly won "right" to carry arms, right through till the end of the war; how he had told them what they knew, that if attacked by the British, he was one with them in being determined to resist to the death; how on Saturday he had decided, on hearing all the news from Kerry and the other details which Fitzgibbon had brought him from Limerick, ~~and~~ as to the unprepared state of the Volunteers, joined

I don't know
where Liam
O'Rollaicín is
to-day

to his own general knowledge of the weakness, unarmed condition and rudimentary training of the volunteers ~~generally~~ throughout most parts of the country, he had decided, I repeat, to act on his own initiative and issue the order cancelling the "manoeuvres" on Sunday. He was emphatic that his main motive was to save the almost unarmed volunteer companies throughout the country from massacre. He said that "he believed," ~~or~~ "had heard" (or some such phrase, I cannot now remember which one he used) that on the previous day "they" (the I.R.B. leaders) had been in consultation with men from the country up in town for the G.A. A convention: that they ^{men} had all confirmed their weakness in arms and ammunition and that they (the leaders) had been most impressed when they found that even the redoubtable Tom Kenny of Craughwell Co. Galway had said that the country was utterly unprepared and that it would be madness to go into action. He believed that when they heard that from an out-and-outer like Kenny, they had finally been convinced that he, McNeill, was right and that they had, he

was convinced, abandoned their desperate enterprise. As he was saying these words shots must have been already going off at the G.P.O. and other places throughout the city.

This was the first time I had ~~never~~ ever heard of the "great" Tom Kenny of Craughwell, Co. Galway. I was then a Dublin man born and reared. Later on when I became a Galwayman by long residence, I was to hear more of Kenny.

McNeill talked nearly all the time. It seemed as if the decision he had taken, had relieved a strain and as if he had had a quiet restful day on Sunday. I only remember saying one thing: "it is a pity they did not arrest you on Friday, as they did Hobson. That would have relieved you of all responsibility." He assented saying "it would."

Fitzgibbon ~~returned~~ and the boy returned. It would be well after 12, probably nearer to one o'clock. He ~~was~~ was very excited almost flung himself down on an arm chair and said: "They are ~~out~~ going out." He wiped perspiration from his forehead and face.

But, on questioning, all he had seen, was small parties

(May 1947)
 Kenny died ~~two~~ two months ago or less. He was said to have something to do with the famous shooting of Constable in ~~the~~ ^{the} ~~York~~ ^{York} ~~drick~~ at Craughwell in 1907 - the only physical force action, I think, between the Park assassinations in '82 and the Volunteers' agrarian shootings. Kenny is said to have sworn in a great many men into the I.R.B. round about Athenry and Craughwell; about 1914, ~~he~~ ^{he} was, I have heard, practically independent of the Dublin leaders. An article on him in the Connacht Inquirer when he died, said he sought out McNeill on Easter Sunday to hear why ~~my~~ ^{my} statements above

McNeill did not tell me this. But it is likely enough, in view of ~~he~~ ^{he} had issued his cancelling order

of Volunteers and Citizen Army men moving about. But, he said, from his own intimate knowledge of the plans for going into action, that was enough for him; these small parties were moving to take up positions. He had not seen actually any fighting. McNeill was not satisfied and I volunteered to go and reconnoitre. "You will

bring us back any news" said Fitzgibbon. "Yes" I said. I took one of the bicycles and, accompanied by the boy, cycled down to Portobello bridge. Fighting was going on. Shots were coming from the public house on the city side of the bridge, known at that time as "Davies".

to-day?

Soldiers were firing from the cover of the canal wall opposite ~~was it then or was it when~~ I saw a policeman who seemed to have got a bullet wound in the wrist going up into a house near Rathmines church. Was it then or was it when I passed that way again, about half an hour later, that I saw a party of troops coming at the double out of the ~~barracks~~ canal road entrance to the barracks and along the road which runs ~~along~~ beside the canal towards the bridge cheering and wheeling along some vehicle which might have

been a mounted machine-gun or the like? I think it was then.

There was no doubt now about the situation, I remembered my promise and cycled back with the boy, as hard as I could, to 54 Rathgar Road and gave them my news. McKeel, I remember was smoking his pipe. His head sank on his breast and he remained for quite a while in profound thought and looking the picture of misery. Finally he said; "Now that they are out, I will join them." This astounded me and I said: "What, after all that has happened?" He said "Yes, now that they are out. I will join them. I will first go home and put on my uniform. Then I will go down town and join them."

I remember distinctly that I had the sensation then that something great and noble had been said in my presence. His words made me begin to consider my own position for the first time. I realised that my company must be mobilised somewhere and that it was my business to join them. I said; "I think I will be going now." Fitzgibbon

said, "will you come back with any news you pick up?" I said: "I might," but this time I had no intention of coming back. Dr. O'Kelly let me out of the house at the gate, there was ~~some~~ ~~one~~ standing alderman Tom Kelly. "Is John McNeill here?" he said. "He is in there." I said and alderman Tom went up into the house.

subsequently
hord mayor

I made my way on the double to Portobello. soldiers were still kneeling along the canal wall and putting occasional shots into Davies. (No reply was coming from the pub. ~~some~~ The small party of Citizen Army men under John Doyle had already I believe evacuated the premises and retreated to Stephens' Green.) A young officer, the back of whose khaki coat ~~was~~ ^{was} all ripped up showing the lining, covered me with a revolver and ordered me back. I went back and round the lane which goes round Rathmines church and across to Ranelagh Road. I knocked at no. 19. to see if Sean T. O'K. was still there and to inform them that

the fight was on. The door was opened by Philip Ryan who told me that Sean T. had left long before. I did not go in, but went across Charlemont Bridge, down Earlsfort Terrace and

(1947)
the present
Sean an
Uachtaran

, along with Harry Nicholls, (Dublin Corporation Engineer) whom I met there, climbed across the railing of Stephens Green and joined the Citizen Army men there. They ~~also~~ supplied me with arms and ammunition and I spent ~~the~~ the week with them ~~in~~ there and in the College of Surgeons and its vicinity...

Liam O'Brien M. A.

Professor U. C. Galway 2nd May 1947

[Addendum - it will be noticed that I do not say that McNeill either on Saturday night or on Monday morning made use of an argument that I only heard expressed many years later, namely, that he had the support of the majority of the Volunteer executive for his action that Saturday. The point was put to me first, by the late Desmond Fitzgerald, perhaps ten years ago or less. When the stories of all the people I have mentioned and of others are compared, it will be seen that I was only one of the messengers whom Arthur Griffith ~~collected~~ and perhaps others collected for McNeill that night. Páidín O'Keefe's story I think, is that A. G. came into Paddy Gleeson's shop in O'Connell St. about 8.30 looking for Gleeson. Not finding him he

"Irish Goods only"

told Páidín to report to 54 Rathgar Road. Páidín did so, arriving there long before me, and found there not only Seán Fitzgibbon, but Seánus O'Connor, (2 members of Volunteer Executive) also Thomas McDonagh arguing with McNeill (I saw and spoke to him as he was going away, as I have stated above) and that he, Páidín went and fetched Cathal Brugha who was there for a short while and argued with McNeill. I did hear long ago — ~~but~~ I think, but I am not sure, from Seán T. O.K. — that McDonagh said: "It is time you realised, McNeill, that you have only been a pawn in the game."

As I believe, the O'Rahilly had been much earlier in the day with McNeill, had approved of the cancelling order and had gone off with it to Limerick.

All this would give O'Rahilly, Fitzgibbon, O'Connor and ~~McNeill~~ McNeill himself in favour of resting on the defensive and against the rising — a point John McNeill could have used with great effect, I believe, in the years immediately after the rising; but he never, as far as I can remember mentioned it publicly.

four out of seven?

Páidín told me quite lately (23-4-47) all this and also that he had

handed in himself the cancelling order to Fred Cogley at the Sunday Independent office for publication in the paper, ~~with~~ about 2 o'clock on Sunday morning. Hitherto I had been under the impression that it was McNeill himself who had cycled down to the paper with it: long after A. G. and I had left. These are points for investigation by the Bureau, if it be not presumptuous on my part to mention them ~~at this time~~.

For ~~reference~~ Eoin MacNeill's movements after I left him at Dr. O'Kelly's house 54 Rathger Rd on Easter Monday 1916, the statements of Sean Fitzgibbon and of Bulmer Hobson should be of interest

Since deceased.
Husband of
Mrs Bannard
Cogley, well
known in theat-
rical circles
in Dublin.

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I. C. W. S. 7