

ORIGINAL

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21

BURO STAIRÉ MILEATA 1913-21

No. **W.S.** 279

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BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21.

STATEMENT BY WITNESS

DOCUMENT NO. **W.S.**.....279.....

Witness

Mr. Seamus Dobbyn,
2 Rathlyn Road,
Glasnevin,
Dublin.

Identity

Member of Dungannon Club 1907;
" " I.V's. Derry 1913-21;

Brigade Intelligence Officer
Belfast Brigade I.R.A. 1920.

Subject

- (a) National activities 1907-1921;
- (b) Mobilisation in Derry and journey to Belfast
some days prior to Easter Week 1916;
- (c) Reorganisation of Ulster I.R.B. 1917;
- (d) Pogrom - Lisburn-Belfast 1920-22.

Conditions, if any, stipulated by Witness

Nil

File No. **S.**1061.....

Form B.S.M. 2.

ORIGINAL

STATEMENT BY SEAMUS DOBBYN
2 RATHLIN ROAD, DUBLIN.

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21
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No. W.S. 279

My father, Henry Dobbyn, born Rocktown, Co. Derry, 1858, was one of the links that connected Republicanism in my young days with the men who were active in the Rising of 1867. He devoted his young manhood to the organisation of the I.R.B. and was prominent in the organisation from about 1880 or perhaps earlier. He was closely associated with Neal John O'Boyle from Staffordstown, Co. Antrim, who had a publichouse in Staffordstown in my young days. My father, Neal John O'Boyle and some others were denied the sacraments by the Catholic Church as a punishment for their I.R.B. activities. My father was for a long time in close touch with John Devoy, but 'broke' with him on some lines of policy, and travelled to America to attend a Clan na Gael Convention in 1894. He took a very active part in Land League and in the Amnesty Campaign (release of Fenian prisoners) Was close friend of John Daly (Limerick) who stayed in our home in Belfast for a time after his release in 1896-7? Was associated with Dr. Alice Milligan and Anna Johnstone ("Ethna Carberry") in the "Shan Van Voct". Helped John McBride in organisation of "Irish Brigade" during Boer War. Was nominated to go with McBride, but an attack of pneumonia followed by rheumatic fever (10 months) settled that. (Above is information I got from my mother, who is now 86 years old).

Neal John O'Boyle, Robert Johnston, Martin Higgins, Dan McCullough (Denis's father), James Scullion, Joe Connolly, Dan O'Hagan, my father and a number of others, whom I cannot now remember, formed a club named the National Literary Club, which was used as a recruiting ground and cover for the activities of the I.R.B.+ This club was started about 1898 and it was responsible for organising one of the first branches of the Gaelic League, ^{in Belfast S.D.} Lios-na-bhFiann. The Literary Society and the Gaelic League met in the same premises, first in Carrick Hill and later on in Tower Hall, Peter's Hill. The Literary Society was also responsible for the formation of the Mitchel Hurling Club.

In 1907 the Dungannon Club was formed. I became a member of the Dungannon Club soon after its formation. The principal men in the Dungannon Club were Denis McCullough, Bulmer Hobson, Sean McDermott, &c The Dungannon Club was formed by the younger elements in the I.R.B.

organisation. These younger elements were in 1907, or thereabouts, slowly superseding the older men in the I.R.B. This attitude on the part of the younger men in the I.R.B. was not due to any feeling that the older men were past their usefulness, but was the natural inclination of youth to take control. As a matter of fact, the older men in the organisation in Belfast had been most active, and a few years previously had managed to import a consignment of Snyder rifles. This happened about 1895. There was a number of cases of these rifles stored in my father's house in North Queen St. Belfast. They were later transferred to Toome Bridge, Co. Derry.

The Dungannon Club carried on a programme of lectures on National and cultural subjects. Its objects were similar to the Sinn Fein policy as outlined by Arthur Griffith. The Dungannon Clubs started about 1906 or 1907, as far as I can recollect. The Dungannon Clubs ceased to exist as such when the official Sinn Fein organisation was started in Belfast. In the initial stages of Sinn Fein in Belfast, the men who were at the head of the Dungannon Clubs went enthusiastically into the new organisation. Denis McCullough was the driving force behind Sinn Fein in Belfast. I cannot remember when exactly Sinn Fein was started in Belfast.

The men who ran the Dungannon Clubs and later Sinn Fein were also the driving forces behind the Gaelic League and the G.A.A. organisation. A number of other men were prominent in both G.A.A. and Gaelic League, such as Dan Dempsey, Art McGahan, Tom Clear, Paddy Cleary and Pat McFadden.

I remember at one of the Lios na bhFiann classes where two organisers from Gaelic League headquarters in Dublin, after having highly praised the work being done for the language, objected strongly to the prominent display of the National Library Club's pictures on walls of the Hall. These were pictures of Wolfe Tone, Robert Emmet, Henry Joy McCracken, Jemmy Hope, etc. Their protest was made to the committee. They pointed out that the Gaelic League was non-sectarian and non-political, and suggested that if the pictures could not be conveniently taken down, their faces could at least be turned towards the wall during classes. They were immediately ordered out of the hall, and it took many months to heal the breach between the Lios-na-bhFiann Branch and Gaelic League headquarters in Dublin. I mention this incident to illustrate that in spite of the narrow-minded attitude of many of the founders of the Gaelic League, the Gaelic revival movement bore great fruit in every

branch of national life.

In the late Spring of 1913 Carson formed his Ulster Volunteer force, and later on, many important British military officers and influential British politicians gave the movement their wholehearted support. A fund was opened to arm and equip the Ulster Volunteers. The Belfast Section of the Irish Volunteers was formed in St. Mary's Hall, Belfast, at a meeting called for the purpose by Denis McCullough. This meeting was held in the Winter of 1913. At the meeting it was indicated that we were got together for the purpose of fighting the Ulster Volunteers. I remember that I and some others disagreed with this policy, as we believed that the Ulster Volunteers should not be our target, but our old traditional enemy, England. It was stressed that our main task was to get the Volunteers formed, and that the U.V.F. would only be our enemy insofar as they helped England.

The Volunteers were formed, and a Governing Committee was appointed, of which Denis McCullough was Chairman. We had two companies in Belfast, "A" and "B". It was some months before we formed the third "C" Coy. Shortly after the start our numbers would be 150 or thereabouts. Before Devlin's nominees came on the committee we had between 200 and 300 men enrolled. We took part in regular weekly training practice, foot drill and, periodically, miniature rifle practice. We also took part in route marches about once each two weeks. We were kept busy in our efforts to gain recruits, and at our training practice.

On the admission of Redmond's nominees, our membership increased rapidly, and before the Split in September 1914, I know that at some parades in the Falls Road area we had about 3,000 men marching.

The Ulster Volunteers did not actively interfere with any of our activities. They issued many and venomous threats as to what they were going to do to us, but never attempted to carry them out.

A useful historical fact emerges here:- The strong sectarian (and semi-political) feeling then existing in the North Eastern Counties was steadily growing in venomous bitterness and was patently being engineered by the Masonic-Orange leaders who were working in England's interests against the granting of Home Rule to Ireland. This effort to inflame the sectarian passions was unfortunately (perhaps unwittingly) aided by the leaders of the Devlinite "Ancient Order of Hibernians" who seemed more intent on adopting the tactics

of Masonic Orangism than on following a line of real national advancement.

The sectarian bitterness had reached such a pitch in the Summer of 1914 that serious bloodshed was expected at any moment. But, on the declaration of war by England against Germany the venom disappeared literally overnight and Orangemen and Hibernians vied in showing mutual friendship - England needed peace at home and made it.

Shortly after the admission of the Devlinite representatives, there were two important developments. One was that our training practices developed into mere parades to open air meetings, where we were addressed by Joe Devlin or some other M.P. The second was that we were supplied with about 800 rifles which were of Italian make but which - unknown to the rank and file - were entirely useless, and for which there was no ammunition.

These were nicknamed afterwards, when we realised their uselessness, "Gaspipes".

The danger in these developments was that we were not being prepared to meet the U.V. threatened attacks, and that if an attack had materialised we were expected to meet it with useless guns. Joseph Devlin was mainly responsible for the supply of the Italian rifles, and our ignorance of military matters at the time made the deception

he imposed on us under these circumstances all the more culpable.

At the time of the Split meetings were called all over Ireland, and our meeting was called and held in St. Mary's Hall, Belfast. Joe Devlin, M.P., presided. He made his statement, giving the Redmondite view of the policy of the Volunteers, which briefly was the same idea as Redmond had already indicated in the famous Woodenbridge speech, where he had called on the Volunteers to aid England in the war against Germany in the so-called fight for small nations. Joe Devlin then called on Denis McCullough to give the views of the opposition. McCullough made many attempts to get his statement across, but was booed down by a patently packed meeting. Devlin made a couple of obviously feeble attempts to get him a hearing, but each time called on Mr. McCullough not to say anything that would hurt the feelings of the majority at the meeting. These statements of Devlin's were patently intended to encourage the meeting not to give McCullough a hearing. After possibly fifteen minutes, Mr. McCullough and others of his party left the platform, and his supporters left the hall.

Prior to this, a few interrupters of Mr. Devlin's speech were literally beaten out of the hall by the Devlinite supporters.

On the following Sunday, I remember well, the Devlinite section of the Volunteers paraded as usual up the Falls Road. Our section did not meet for possibly three weeks later, when we were mobilised at Willowbank at the Upper Falls Road, when we had a total of 46, as compared with, roughly, 3,000 of the Devlinites. The founders of the Volunteers were all with us; those who had broken away were all Devlin's nominees.

The Devlinite section, now called the National Volunteers continued to parade but not to drill. Their numbers, Sunday

after Sunday, were noticeably reduced by hundreds. They finally ceased to parade, until 600 or 700 uniforms were secured - incidentally, we learned, from Manchester - and immediately that number of Volunteers began again to parade, that is, the number for which there were uniforms. Hundreds joined the 16th so-called Irish Division of the British Army.

Our section settled immediately to military training, rifle practice - mostly miniature rifle practice - and field drill. This continued right up to the Rising, and we gradually increased our numbers to about 130, I would say. That included old and young. Belfast was a great stronghold of Hibernianism which would account for our sparse numbers.

I was not actually at O'Donovan Rossa's funeral, but at the time I was the writer of the G.A.A. notes in the "Irish News", and coming towards Rossa's funeral I wrote on Rossa and the desirability of all G.A.A. men doing their part and attending the funeral. The editor of the paper sent for me when my article went in and pointed out that this was against the policy of the "Belfast Irish News". He dismissed me from my post as writer of G.A.A. notes for mentioning Rossa's funeral. He cut out Gaelic notes for about a month until the G.A.A. met and as an organisation demanded that the paper be re-opened to G.A.A. notes. The editor agreed on condition that someone other than I would be the writer. This is only to show that their policy was ^{then} so much against things Irish that even the mention of O'Donovan Rossa's funeral was too much for them.

We were actually afraid to appear in public, afraid of our own people, because we were informed that if we appeared we would be attacked by the people themselves, the Hibernian people. We did appear some time in the winter of 1915, when The O'Rahilly came to give a lecture in St. Mary's Hall, D

Belfast, and it was decided by our leaders that an armed Guard of Honour should meet him. The Volunteers were mobilised at Willowbank, to march down the Falls to St. Mary's Hall and act as a Guard of Honour to The O'Rahilly, a march of about two miles. The R.I.C. came to McCullough, who was then our leader, and advised him not to bring our men out, as they would be attacked by the people, but McCullough said that we were prepared to defend ourselves. They then gave him an order that he was not to take his men out. He replied that the men were going, order or no order. We did march and there was no attack made, because every man was armed with a rifle and a bayonet. From that on we were able to parade in public without attack.

The first indication we got of the coming Rising was when James Connolly came to Belfast and gathered a number of us together. As far as I can recall there were about 30 of us altogether in a room in Divis Street, Belfast; I do not know the number. Connolly told us that we must make active preparations. He apparently thought that we would be fighting in Belfast, and gave us detailed instructions on house to house fighting. He was asked at the meeting when we might be called, and his answer was "Soon". That meeting was held either very late in 1915 or else in January or February, 1916. I am not sure of the date, but it was held in the winter. I know it was close to the Rising, but it was not any closer than four months because we were waiting for the word. I got the impression from his talk that it would be about a month before we would be called. I think that meeting must have been in January or February, 1916.

I cannot recall anything of importance between that and the Rising.

About eight, ten or twelve days before Easter Sunday, 1916.

we were mobilised and told that our rifles would be collected and taken to where we would be called on to assemble at a later date.

When we got the order to go to Tyrone we were told it was for serious military manoeuvres, and we were advised to be prepared for any eventuality that might arise during these manoeuvres. No further hint was given as to this being the real Rising. A few days prior to our going to Tyrone we were told what provisions, etc., to bring with us, and particularly to bring every scrap of ammunition we had, of any kind whatsoever. I myself thought that this was a plain enough hint. I took a serious view of the hint we got, and most of the men had the same idea and went to Confession before entraining for Tyrone. Our rifles, which had been collected the previous week, were sent by vans to Tyrone during Holy Week. We ourselves carried small arms, haversacks, bandoliers and rations for a number of days. We were divided in sections and went by different trains to Dungannon and Coalisland. I forget the exact number, but I would say about 106 or 108 men went.

My father, who was a man past middle age, was not mobilised, and Denis McCullough asked me and my brother not to tell my father where we were going as he thought my father was too old to take part. However, that evening after we had left, my father learned from another source that there was something big afoot, and came on the midnight train to Dungannon, where he "landed" some time about one o'clock in the morning. He carried his revolver with him, and we had already sent on his gun. He told Denis McCullough that he had lived all his life for that day and that he was going to be in it whether McCullough liked it or not. Denis McCullough told me that himself. SD

The section that I was with spent Saturday night in a place called Derrytresk, a few miles from Coalisland. Liam Gaynor was in charge of our section. We slept in a barn that night, with sentries posted and so on. The following morning we were paraded with full kit to Mass. We had not got our rifles. As a matter of fact we never saw the rifles in Derrytresk. After Mass and breakfast we were paraded on the roadside and were informed that our rifles were on the way. We were then informed that the Tyrone men were to join us!

We marched to a crossroads where we were halted, and soon saw two more sections arriving, one from Dungannon and one from Coalisland, all our own men save about a dozen strangers whom I took to be Tyrone men. We were addressed by Denis McCullough at that crossroads, and informed that we were marching to Cookstown. We marched to Cookstown. On the way there was some shooting at Stewartstown, where a number of Orangemen apparently had tried to block the passage of the rearguard. A small number of police were cycling and marching on both sides of the road, but very few.

At the fall-out on the journey between Stewartstown and Cookstown we learned definitely that the Rising was to take place, but were informed that we were going to Belfast to go later to Dublin. I cannot say who brought that information, but the man who told me was Manus O'Boyle.

When we reached Cookstown we were halted by a number of police outside the barracks. They parleyed for a while with Mr. McCullough, Cathal McDowell and others immediately in front of our ranks. Mr. McCullough then asked us to go peacefully to the station, but just as we were moving off a number of R.I.C. charged into our ranks and seized one of the men. I forget this man's name. We immediately surrounded the R.I.C. and struggled with them to try and release this man,

but we were called on urgently to re-form ranks and to let the man go. He was taken into the barracks and we marched to the station and entrained for Belfast.

Just as I was about to enter the train, I was called by Peter Burns, who was our military commander, and given a packet of documents. I was told they were the plans and maps and that I must take them to a place of safety and not go on to Belfast with the others. I was told to leave the train at Castledawson. I was asked by Burns would I want or need company, and Liam Gaynor and Manus O'Boyle immediately volunteered to accompany me to help in guarding the papers. We left the train at Castledawson and walked down the line to a place called Anaghorish, where I had relatives. I had the papers hidden there immediately.

We three returned to Belfast on Monday with the papers. The papers were stored in our house until about 1917, when they were handed back to Denis McCullough or Peter Burns - I do not know which of them got them eventually.

Gaynor and I went on Monday to Willowbank, to the Árd Scoil and to various other places to find some of our leaders, but we failed. Some time about midnight on Monday we met Cathal O'Shannon, who informed us that a late train was due in from Dublin. We went to the Great Northern railway station in the hope of learning something from the people off the train. We learned there that the Rising had started in Dublin, and immediately came to our Headquarters in Divis Street in the hope of finding some of the leaders, but found only Sam Heron, our Adjutant. The three of us went in and spent about two hours discussing plans, none of us knowing what to do. We finally decided to separate, and individually seek the leaders. I think it was Cathal O'Shannon found Peter Burns, and the

SD

Volunteers were mobilised for half past six in the morning at the Convent fields, near Broadway in Belfast. We were informed there that we were to return home, prepare our rations again and leave them constantly prepared, as we would be called any time at a moment's notice. We were advised to carry on our ordinary work as if we had no interest in the Rising, so that the R.I.C. would not be aware of any of our intentions to come out again.

Late on Friday night we learned that the Rising was over, and that was the end of activities on our part. We got word on Friday night that the surrender was taking place.

About a week after the Rising there were about 32 of us arrested. Two "G" men called at my school and said they had been raiding the house and that there were some papers they wanted to ask me about. They brought me to the barracks to ask me about them. No papers of any kind were produced at the barracks, or since, but I was brought in a closed cab to Crumlin Road jail. Shortly afterwards, when I was in the jail about half an hour, my father came in and informed me that they had called at his place of work and told him I was arrested. They asked him to come and bail me out, but there was no question of bail. He too was lodged in jail.

The following day all the Belfast men were brought in a furniture van to the Great Northern station under military guard, brought to Dublin, and lodged in Richmond barracks. A fortnight or so later we were taken to England, with a couple of hundred more, in a cattle boat.

The executions of the leaders were still being carried out while we were in Richmond Barracks.

Our group was sent to Wakefield, and we were later transferred to Frongoch. SD

We were brought to London to the Commission of Enquiry held there by the British Government. From the questions put to each man at the Commission they were more concerned with information about other people rather than the man himself. They put very definite leading questions to get admissions from the prisoners that they did not know they were being called out to an actual Rising. I questioned a very big number of the men who had appeared before the Commission, and it was from them I gleaned the information in regard to the type of questions put to them.

We were released some time in the Autumn, and within a few months got together again to make plans for the future. At a meeting ^{in Belfast} it was decided to re-organise the Volunteers. It was decided that this re-organisation would first take the form of lectures, debates and other social functions, where an opportunity could be got for recruiting suitable men and women. From that on it gradually developed into regular Volunteer units. We had practically the same leaders as we had prior to the Rising. Amongst those who took a very active part in the re-organisation was Eamon Rooney. Denis McCullough was still in jail at this time. It was just routine up to about 1918.

In the month of May, 1917, I was sent ^{to Dublin} to meet three members of the Supreme Council of the I.R.B., Diarmuid Lynch, Mick Collins and Sean McGarry. I was asked ^{by them} to go on a six months tour of inspection of the nine Ulster Counties, to find out the exact position of the I.R.B. in those Counties. A plan was laid out for me as to how I would contact the various Centres of Circles and of Counties. I reported at the end of five months and my report, with my recommendation, was accepted. My recommendation was that the whole organisation be scrapped, and, if necessary, revived with SD

different personnel. The position generally throughout Ulster was that they were doing nothing. A number of them thought themselves superior to the I.R.A. and were not even supporting the I.R.A. Some of the Centres had not met for years, and those who had met simply met to discuss ^{current} ~~current~~ ^{S.D.} affairs. ? It was due to this state of affairs that I recommended the scrapping of the organisation.

I was sent for about a month later, and informed that I had been co-opted a member of the Supreme Council, and was given the duty of re-organising the I.R.B. in Ulster. That would be about the end of 1917. In the beginning of the winter of 1917 I started off organising. My instructions were to do as I thought best.

I carried on that organisation for about a year before being instructed to act as Inspector of the I.R.A. This, I believe, was given as a cover for my activities in connection with the I.R.B. because a number of our own men, that is, the I.R.A., were beginning to wonder what I was doing all over the Province. For this purpose I carried a written commission signed by Michael Collins instructing all units of the I.R.A. in Ulster to give me every facility for inspecting their units and their work. I was instructed to carry this commission with me, incidentally that it might fall into the hands of the British and so put them off the scent of my I.R.B. work. This commission was found on me when I was arrested later.

In 1918 I was arrested and sent to Lincoln in connection with the so-called German Plot. De Valera and Terry MacSwiney were there at the time. Sean McGarry was there too, ~~He~~ was chairman of the I.R.B. District Justice Michael Lennon was there also. I ~~did~~ ^{had already done} ^{S.D.} three months hard labour in Belfast early in 1917. At that time I was dismissed from ^{S.D.}

from teaching SD.

teaching. I was suspended after 1916 and finally dismissed in 1917 for I.R.A. activities

In 1919 Sean McGarry was Chairman of the Supreme Council, Mick Collins was Treasurer and Sean Ó Murthuile was Secretary. Andy Lavin represented Connaught, Liam Gaynor represented North East Ulster, Gearoid O'Sullivan represented South Leinster, Tom Hales represented Munster, Dan Branniff represented Scotland, and Neil Kerr represented the north of England. That is all I can remember of the personnel of the Supreme Council in 1919.

The instructions then to the I.R.B. were to organise and if possible take control of the I.R.A. and, if possible, also to take control of other national organisations, like Sinn Fein, the G.A.A. and the Gaelic League.

Some time after Eamon de Valera was released from prison in 1917 a Convention of Sinn Fein was held in the Mansion House, and de Valera was elected President in place of Arthur Griffith. I.R.B. men were instructed to have themselves elected delegates to that Convention, if possible, and to vote for the election of de Valera as President. I was ordered by the Supreme Council, and carried out the order, to give instructions to suitable I.R.B. men to join the local Sinn Fein Club and if possible to have themselves elected as delegates to that Convention.

A number of us in Belfast had funds always available to buy arms and ammunition and we bought them in small and large quantities from the U.V.F. Stores. The Ulster Volunteer Force was inactive during the period of the Great War and afterwards. The U.V.F. arms were stored in various parts of the city of Belfast. It was our duty to get in touch with *SD*

the storekeepers of these arms, and, by bribery and otherwise, to secure as much of the arms and ammunition as possible. This purchasing of arms and ammunition was carried on for two or three years and a considerable amount of stuff was procured

In connection with the I.R.B. organisation in Ulster at the time of my arrest in 1920 there was a number of Circles in every County and a County Board in each County, together with the Provincial Boards. There was an East Provincial Board and a West Provincial Board in Ulster.


Prior to the Belfast pogrom I was I.O. for the Belfast Brigade. The Brigade Council was specially called about three months prior to the beginning of the pogrom to deal with information we had got of the coming of this pogrom. Through our espionage system we had learned that the Orange section were being prepared by the Masonic pro-British junta to attack the Catholic population in Belfast, but such an attack, while previously planned, was going to be made as a result of some action on our part either against them or against the British authorities. The impression to be given was that the Orange section were rising in just wrath against some action we had taken, as indicated above. We investigated thoroughly, over a period of a month or more, the genuineness of this report of the coming pogrom, and satisfied ourselves that it was genuine. The Brigade Council decided that I should go to Dublin and report to Headquarters. I was given two reasons for reporting to Headquarters. The first reason was that at that time no unit in the I.R.A. was allowed to carry out any major military operation without having plans submitted to H.Q. and having secured the consent of H.Q. We had at that time a number of plans with H.Q. awaiting sanction. My first duty was to request Headquarters to postpone the carrying

out of these military actions until after the date arranged by the British for the pogrom. My second was to request as many guns as Headquarters could possibly give us, to meet the pogrom. We offered to buy these guns.

Within a few hours of being instructed by the Brigade Council to go to Dublin to I.R.A. Headquarters I got a message from Dublin to attend a special meeting of the Supreme Council of the I.R.B.

I went to the meeting of the I.R.B., and, as amongst others present were Michael Collins and Gearoid O'Sullivan two chiefs of the I.R.A., I decided to explain the case to the Supreme Council. I did so. Michael Collins pooch-pooched the idea of the Orangemen, as he said, wrecking their own city and suggested that we in the North were more inclined to fight against Orangemen than against the Tans. He said that under no circumstances would we be supplied with any more guns.

The following day I decided that I must see someone in authority outside the Supreme Council, so I went and saw Dick Mulcahy, who was then Chief of Staff. I spent most of the day with him explaining the whole circumstances in the North, Masonry, Orangeism, Hibernianism, and all the other factors which might lead him to believe our story of the coming pogrom. I finally succeeded and he gave me written authority to postpone the military action, but regretted that he could not supply arms. He offered to supply men, but on instructions I told him we had enough men who knew the ground better than outsiders might know it. That was some time about the first of July 1920.

The first real proof we got that we were to be led into committing some "butrage" was that on the evening of the 

12th July following, a number of sidecar loads of Orangemen and women, dressed in full regalia, came across Divis Street, an entirely Catholic quarter in which hundreds of people were gathered. These car-loads drove through the crowd. Meanwhile we had noticed early in the evening that the Falls Road and the approaches to it were entirely without R.I.C. patrols, and we had mobilised our own men in anticipation of trouble. We, the I.R.A., armed with hurling sticks, had to fight back our own people and escort the four car-loads right through to North Street.

Amongst the "military operations" postponed was the Swanzy affair, and it was on account of our holding back on that that the two Corkmen were sent to carry out that operation unknown to us. These men might have succeeded but that their car broke down on the way to the scene. Joe McKelvey and I learned from the Corkmen themselves on the following morning of their mission and of its temporary failure. Thinking that the pogrom date was now well enough passed we agreed with them to have the operation carried out the following week. The result of that operation was that the pogrom began in Lisburn instead of Belfast. Two days later the pogrom was in full swing in Belfast and continued intermittently from then until the middle of 1922. But for the fact that we were prepared for the first big onslaught many hundreds of the Catholic people would have been butchered by the Orange mob, who were patently acting under orders.

The British authorities could at any time have stopped the pogrom, as was indicated by the fact that when an Italian Catholic on the Newtownards Road was attacked, the Italian Government was asked to intervene with the British Government, and did so overnight, under threat of sending

Italian warships to Belfast Lough to protect their Nationals. The warships did not come, but definitely no Italian was attacked after that. It was Mr. Joseph Raffo, an Italian then living in Belfast, who, through the Italian Consul, sent the information to the Italian Government.

A short time before my arrest, Paddy MacLogan was appointed by I.R.A. Headquarters Brigadier of a new Brigade formed of North Antrim and some East Derry Battalions. I was instructed by Headquarters to be present at the first meeting of the Brigade held at Gulladuff, County Derry, and introduce Paddy MacLogan as the new Brigadier.

After the meeting Paddy MacLogan and I returned home to Toomebridge at about three o'clock in the morning, and some time about five o'clock in the morning the house was surrounded by military, and MacLogan, my father, brother and myself were arrested, taken to Belfast and later courtmartialled. MacLogan, my father and myself got two years' hard labour, which we served in Mountjoy. We were released shortly after the Treaty was signed. In connection with our trial in Belfast, it is worth noting that my brother who, under instructions from Headquarters, "recognised the Court" was informed before the Courtmartial was held that he would be released, which he was.

A number of incidents occurred in Belfast and elsewhere which I will not deal with at the moment, as I do not think that now is the proper time or place for them.

Signed: Seamus Dobbs

Date: 18th July 1949

Witness: John MacGoy.
18/7/49.

