

ORIGINAL

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21

BURO STAIRÉ MILEATA 1913-21

No. **W.S. 389**

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BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21.

STATEMENT BY WITNESS

DOCUMENT NO. **W.S. 389**

Witness

Mr. Roger E. McCorley,
"Juverna",
Howth, Co. Dublin.

Identity

O/C. 1st Brigade, 3rd Northern Division.

Subject

- (a) National activities 1912-1922;
- (b) Military activities, North, 1918-1922;
- (c) Execution of Inspector Swanzy 1920;
- (d) Execution of R.I.C. Roddy's Hotel, Belfast.

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STATEMENT BY ROGER McCURLEY.

I joined the Sean O'Neill Sluagh of the Fianna in 1912 at the age of eleven. At this time the Parliamentary Party was at the height of its power. Home Rule was on everybody's lips and although I was an ardent Home Ruler I was much too young to appreciate the pros and cons of the Parliamentary campaign. All I knew about the matter was that Ireland was struggling for freedom and I was for Ireland. The tradition of my family leaned rather towards armed insurrection and I had been taught that some day when I grew up I would have the honour of "Striking a blow for Ireland". It was natural, therefore, that I should join the Fianna. In the Fianna I was taught that Ireland had never got anything and never could expect to get anything from England except by physical force; that the Parliamentary campaign was doomed to failure and it was, therefore, the duty of the boys in the Fianna to make themselves proficient in the use of arms so as to be in a position to form the spearhead of the revolution when the country eventually came to its senses. In the outcome that was just about what took place. Between the time I joined the Fianna and the outbreak of the Insurrection in 1916 there is little of interest to relate insofar as my activity in the Fianna is concerned. Events outside were moving with ever increasing rapidity. What with Ulster Volunteers, Irish Volunteers, National Volunteers, gun-running and the European war, there was excitement enough, but I had no part to play in any of these affairs.

When the fighting broke out in Dublin in 1916, I saw large bodies of British troops entraining from the Victoria Street Station en route for Dublin. The fact that these troops were able to march through the city without even one shot being fired at them caused me to feel heartily ashamed of the National movement in Belfast. I was not, of course, aware of the orders and counter-orders which had been

R. McCurley

received nor of the confusion thus caused, but even to-day I feel that a few determined men could have taken action which would have compelled most, if not all, of the British Garrison to remain in Belfast. It was from this that my detestation of faint-heartedness in war originated.

1917 - Volunteers.

The Sinn Fein movement spread to Belfast early in 1917. From the Sinn Fein organisation the Sean McDermott Branch of the Irish Volunteers was organized in February/March, 1917. I submitted my name when the appeal came for Volunteers but as I was only 15½ years at the time I was not called to the first meeting. I found out where the meeting was to be held and succeeded in getting in. These Volunteers were then raw recruits but from amongst those who were on parade that first night a number of first-class fighting officers were eventually produced. There was the nucleus of about four other Companies in Belfast at this time under various names.

In May, 1917, the I.R.A. organisation was put on a proper basis and we became 'C' Company, 1st Battalion of the Belfast, Antrim and East Down Brigade. In the early days there was a Civil Commissioner (or Political Commissioner) attached to each company. His function was to attend each parade and when drilling was finished to give a talk on Irish history. In our company old Harry Dobbyn, an old Fenian, held this appointment. I do not know if he did any real good as practically everyone in the movement was well versed in the national story. I believe that this idea was general throughout the country but it was abolished within a couple of months. We went on with the usual training, trying to gather arms, etc. There was a certain amount of training in field exercises such as extended order drill every Saturday night when the members of the company were mobilised and spent several hours drilling out on the hills around Belfast. The system of mobilising the

men was as follows:- The Company, in the first instance, was divided into two Platoons, with a Lieutenant in charge of each Platoon. The Platoon was divided into two Sections with a Section Commander over each. The Section was divided into two Squads with a Squad Commander in charge of each. For the purpose of mobilising for the Saturday exercises on the hills, the Company Commander fixed the venue. He informed his two Platoon Commanders who, in turn, informed the Section Commanders. They then passed the word on to the Squad Commanders. It was the function of the Squad Commander to mobilise the men. This meant making contact with each man in the Squad and informing him where the parade would be that night. This was more or less the only form of activity until 1919. One of the difficulties was that no one had any clear idea as to what form our activities would eventually take. There was a general idea that some day the signal for a rising would come and that we would drive the enemy into the sea with one fell swoop. The problem was therefore, how to procure sufficient arms and each individual member tried to arm himself. Early in 1918 I managed to get hold of a Lee-Enfield Rifle. I was a Squad Commander at this time so I took on the job of teaching myself how to handle this weapon and then passing my knowledge over to the members of my Squad. This was how we gathered all our knowledge. We had no very competent person to teach us so each man learned as he could and imparted his knowledge to others.

At this time there was the beginning of discontent among the rank and file of the company; this was also common to quite a few companies in Belfast. The idea was that the officers were not taking the matter as seriously as the general members of the company felt they should. This meant that there were rather stormy exchanges occasionally at the Company Council meetings. Later on when things started to move in the country, the younger element in the company felt that there should be much more military activities in the battalion. Actually, on a couple of

R.F. Mac

occasions we made unofficial attempts to start activities but these attempts only succeeded in giving us a bad name with the company and battalion officers.

The first activities undertaken with the sanction of our officers were the arms' raids. We started raiding about 1918/19. These were official but the results were meagre.

The first real activity came around Easter, 1920, with the burning of the Income Tax Offices. All the Offices in Belfast were burned with one exception which was burned a few days later. I took part in these burnings in North Street, Belfast. The operation generally was very successful. We lost no men either prisoners or injured.

The first major activity in which I took part was the attack on Crossgar Police Barracks, situated in East Down, approximately twenty-two miles from Belfast. This took place in July, 1920. This operation was successful insofar as we succeeded in wounding about half the Garrison stationed in the Barracks but we did not succeed in capturing the Barracks.

Attack on Crossgar Barracks:

I happened to be travelling to Co. Down with a friend. We were travelling by car. We were asked by Joseph McKelvey who was Battalion O.C. in Belfast to bring some arms to Co. Down. We were travelling in the vicinity of Crossgar so that was how I came to be in this attack. The Barracks was situated in a row of houses. The plan of attack was that we should force our way into the house on each side, take the people out of them, blow in the walls of the Barracks with explosives and then to pump petrol through the holes. In the houses opposite the Barracks there was another party armed with rifles and shot guns. They were to keep the Barracks under fire accordingly as the Garrison showed any sign of activity. This was the general plan. It seemed simple at the time but there were certain factors which militated against success. The first was the bad training in the East Down area where training

was of a very low standard. We assembled at the schoolhouse about two miles from the town of Crossgar and we started to detail the various parties to different posts during the attack giving them detailed instructions. As an indication of the bad training of the men in this area - there was a bombing party which was to go into the houses on each side of the Barracks when the attack took place and when the petrol was pumped in they were to throw in bombs to set the petrol ablaze. The men who were detailed for this bombing party had no idea of the mechanism of bombs which were of the Mills Hand Grenade type so I was given the job of instructing these men. I brought the instruction down to the very minimum they would need. I instructed them how to pull the pin from the bomb and told them that the bomb would explode five seconds after throwing it. I instructed them to keep their hands on the levers after pulling the pins. When I had given this instruction I told them to remain where they were so they would not get picked for some other party. I was then called away to fix a rifle which some fellow had taken to pieces and could not re-assemble. I just got back in time to find one of the bombing party with the pin extracted from the bomb and was just about to let the lever fly off. He appeared to be under the impression that nothing would happen if he did not throw the bomb. I just saved it in time. There was considerable difficulty in keeping the men under control. Sometimes a man would find himself picked on two or three different parties owing to the fact that they were moving about the hall. We were practically a full hour late when we finally moved down to attack the Barracks. The two parties took sledge hammers to break their way through the doors on either side of the Barracks. The problem was to get into the houses before any bombs would be thrown from the Barracks. On the door of the house which I was to enter the bar was evidently wooden and we could not force it. It struck me that the best way of getting in was to leave the door and knock the window

frame in. By this means we succeeded in entering the house in time. The Officer i/c. of the whole operation was Joe McKelvey. When we got into the house we found that the reconnaissance which had been carried out by the local people was inaccurate. They had reported that there were two compartments on the ground floor of the house with a substantial stone wall between them. The intention was that when the walls were being blown in we would find cover from the explosion in the second compartment. When we entered the house we found that it was built with one compartment on the ground floor and one above it. The room on the ~~first~~ ^{second} storey *R.E. Mee* had an ordinary wooden floor which was the ceiling of the kitchen. We experienced some difficulty in getting the family out of the house owing to the fact that the police were throwing out occasional bombs. We managed to get them clear alright. The difficulty was then that our party would have to leave the house while the explosion was taking place and work their way back to the house after the explosion. We slipped out of the house in ones quietly, each man leaving immediately after a bomb had burst. The last man to leave - apart from the Engineer - evidently lost his nerve. He rushed out of the house and ran into the centre of the street. This was the first sign the police could see of a target and, consequently, there was heavy firing both from the Barracks and from our people opposite the Barracks.

When the Engineer on our side had his job completed and the fuses lit he came out before the explosion would take place. When the gelignite exploded the Officer i/c. of the operation refused to allow anyone to take a chance on getting back to the house through the bombing. The exploding bombs made very heavy reports and, due to inexperience, he judged the effectiveness of the bombs by the noise they made. I volunteered, on a couple of occasions to go through with the petrol and pump it in but I was refused permission. I would

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like to make it clear that this was not weakness on the part of the Officer i/c. of the Operation but simply that it was the first time that he had come up against the realities of fighting. He evidently did not relish the idea of having some of his men killed. This impressed upon me the fact that an officer must always face the possibility of having some of his men killed.

The fight continued for about two hours and all this time there were continuous bomb explosions from the Barracks. The party on the other side of the Barracks were able to stay in the house while their explosion was taking place. It appeared later that their explosion was not very effective. Another thing that impressed itself on me was that in an action, co-ordination and inter-communications between the different units is vital. The general signal for the calling off of the attack was ^{but the officer in command forgot to bring a whistle} to be a blast on a whistle and with our lack of inter-communications it was found impossible to make contact with the other groups. The attack more or less broke itself off. During the attack it was arranged that for the purpose of preventing the police signalling by means of very lights, a number of men in the party opposite the Barracks, who were equipped with shot guns, would shoot through loop holes in the defences and also, if any lights got out, they were to try to shoot them out of the air. This appeared to be very effective for only two or three lights altogether functioned. We learned after the attack that the remnants of the Ulster Volunteer Force in the area had a scheme for coming to the aid of any barracks that might be attacked. A group of U.V.F. did mobilise in the vicinity of Crossgar but they did not appear on the scene. Afterwards they said that they were waiting for orders to move up to the assistance of the Barracks but evidently nobody gave the order.

The Belfast party, when the fight was over, walked back to Belfast by road and we had actually got into the

city and were back home before anything in the way of British re-inforcements had left Belfast to go to Crossgar. It seemed that the British forces were as inefficient as we were but they had not the same excuse.

This attack served a purpose by showing us our own weaknesses both from the point of view of training and equipment and it also exposed a certain lack of determination to carry an operation through even at a certain cost in casualties.

On my return from this operation I was appointed a 2/Lieutenant in 'C' Company of the 1st Battalion and almost immediately (18th August, 1920) I was detailed to go to Lisburn, Co. Down, with a view to watching the movements of District-Inspector Swanzy. He was one of those who had been engaged in the shooting of the Lord Mayor of Cork and he had been transferred to Lisburn on the assumption that that would be a safe post. Orders had come through from G.H.Q. that this man was to be executed. There was some difficulty about the timing of this as our Intelligence Department in Belfast were aware that a pogrom was being organised in the Belfast area and that the Orange Lodges were just waiting an excuse to launch the attack on the nationalist areas. Our Brigade had asked G.H.Q. to let the matter wait for a few weeks until the pogrom had actually started. When the pogrom began in July the way was clear to carry out the operations as ordered.

At the beginning of August a first move was made to execute D.I. Swanzy and a party came from Cork to take part in the execution. The reason for the party from Cork was that Lord Mayor McCurtain had been O.C. of the Cork area and the Cork people naturally wanted to take part in the execution. The car which was to bring the party from Belfast to Lisburn broke down on the way into Lisburn with the result that the operation was a failure. This was probably very fortunate

since the operation was not organised properly being more or less in the nature of a hit or miss attempt. On the second occasion I was sent to Lisburn to get completely informed of the movements of Swanzy. I went there on the 18th August and remained in Lisburn following him round and getting to know his general line of movement. Also, what is more important, I got to know the man himself which obviated the possibility of someone else being shot by mistake. On Sunday, 22nd August, the party came up to carry out the execution. There were two men from Cork named Murphy and Culhane and Tom Fox from Belfast. The driver of the car, Seán Leonard, who was serving in Belfast was a native of Tubbercurry. I was the 5th member. We placed ourselves in a position to intercept Swanzy on his way home from church. In my prior experience in the town I had never seen very many people at one time in the streets but on this Sunday, after Church, there were large numbers around. When Swanzy approached our party I pointed him out and as had been agreed the first shot was fired from the Lord Mayor's (McCurtain's) own gun which had been brought up from Cork. Immediately after we all opened fire on him and when we were satisfied that the execution had been carried out we started off for the taxi. Leonard had remained in the taxi all this time. When we were running towards the taxi which was waiting about two hundred yards from where we shot Swanzy the mob started to run after us. I halted and fired back into the mob which then cleared off. This left me a considerable way behind the others. I was then attacked by an ex-British Officer called Woods who seemed to have plenty of courage. Although I was carrying a revolver in my hand he attacked me with a blackthorn stick and by a fluke shot I shot the stick out of his hand. When I got within twenty yards of the car it started off and I was unable to make the necessary speed to catch it. Tom Fox noticed that there was a man short in the car and called on Leonard to

pull up and I managed to get aboard. We had been expecting that we could be pursued immediately and we had grenades and heavier arms in the car to enable us to carry out a running fight or to meet the police on foot if our car was put out of action on at least equal terms as far as arms were concerned. Actually the police did attempt to pursue us by car but the only car that was immediately available was a taxi which was generally to be found opposite the town hall. As soon as the police got aboard and started after us, one of the wheels came off the car. We had anticipated that the British machine was more efficient than it turned out to be so that we did not attempt to make our way into Belfast by car but left the car some miles outside Belfast. Leonard was instructed to report to the Police immediately that he had been held up and the car taken from him and that it had been given back to him. On his way to his garage in Belfast he picked up a fare and went to Bangor outside Belfast without reporting to the Police as instructed with the result that all the taxis in the Belfast area had been checked up on before he returned to the garage and his car was the only one whose movements had not been accounted for, but even so, the police accepted his story for some time. Eventually, however, they became suspicious and checked on his story and also on the place where he was supposed to have been held prisoner with the result that they formed the opinion that his story was not true. He was charged with the shooting of D.I. Swanzy. He was tried in Belfast by courtmartial and defended by Tim Healy. The verdict of the Court was that he be hanged. Healy took the matter up with Lord French. He said that the evidence was not sufficient to convict anyone with the result that the sentence was commuted to twelve years penal servitude. This whole matter is referred to in Healy's reminiscences.

Just a few weeks prior to the execution of Swanzy the

expected pogrom broke out in Belfast. It took the classical form of driving the Nationalists of all religions out of the shipyards, etc. in Belfast. Even the Labour men who were not associated with Republicanism were driven out of the shipyards. In the initial stages of this attack the I.R.A. policy in Belfast was to treat it as a purely sectarian affair although British troops had opened fire on the Nationalist areas and killed a considerable number of people. Brigade Headquarters even went as far as to courtmartial one officer for taking part in the defence of his own particular area against the attacks of the Orange mob. His defence was that it would not be very dignified for ^{IRA} ^{R. E. Mill} an officer to stand by and allow someone else to defend his home for him. This policy caused dissatisfaction generally throughout the rank and file of the Brigade, their point of view being that it was the duty of the I.R.A. to defend any section of the population ^{that was R. E. Mill} ~~when they were~~ being attacked by another section. This view point actually had some affect on the Brigade staff and they eventually agreed that where British troops opened fire on any of the Nationalist people, our men should attack and concentrate on the British officers ordering the troops to open fire. This still left the rank and file dissatisfied, their view being that British troops should be attacked at any and every opportunity, irrespective of whether they were engaged on firing on our people or not. They did not agree that if we were at war with the British that any terms should be laid down for attacks on the British forces other than the military opportunity being offered. This disagreement settled itself in a very short space of time when the Orange mob was provided with uniforms, paid by the British Government and called the Ulster Special Constabulary.

It was the function of this special constabulary to engage in the sort of activity that the Black and Tans and Auxiliaries were engaged in in other parts of the country.

R. E. Mill

The Nationalist mobs were taken in hands by our people and in so far as they had any arms, they were disarmed. Actually they had very little in the way of armaments.

On the outbreak of the pogrom we had got information through our Intelligence that a Catholic Clergyman outside Belfast had sixty Martini-Enfield rifles which had been the property of the old Nationalist Volunteers who were no longer in existence. He had sent information into Belfast to the Hibernian element that he had these arms and asked them to call out and collect them for use in the defence of the Nationalist areas. The information from our Intelligence Department was such that we were able to call out at the approximate time and collect these arms ourselves. The clergyman had instructed our men, he being under the impression that they were of the Hibernian element, that under no circumstances were these arms to get into the hands of the I.R.A. Our people assured him that they would make sure that no one would get control of the arms other than themselves. These rifles were distributed over the various areas in Belfast. They used Mk. VI, .303 ammunition of which we had considerable quantities which we had obtained from Ulster Volunteer Force sources. In the early stages of the pogrom our activities were confined mainly to the guarding of convents, Catholic schools and Catholic churches.

(The situation regarding Arms:)

About September, 1920, operations for the disarmament of R.I.C. patrols took place in Belfast during the course of which one R.I.C. man was killed. As a result of this shooting we had the first official reprisals carried out in Belfast, (Trodden and Gaynor). In due course our Intelligence got the names of the R.I.C. men who were engaged on these reprisals. The Brigade staff considered the situation and then consulted the Battalion staff on what action should be taken. The Brigade staff did not reveal to the Battalion staff what their decision on the matter was and a general

R E Mace

had been R E Mace

discussion took place on the whole policy of execution of R.I.C. for activities of this sort. Some of the weaker spirits took the view that if these men were executed, further reprisals would follow and that it would result ultimately in a situation which ^{we} ~~they~~ ^{R E Mee} would be unable to handle. The majority took the view that the R.I.C. men concerned would have to be executed, otherwise the policy of the reprisals would have ^{we} ~~been~~ ^{R E Mee} a complete success in Belfast as it was obviously designed to stop activities against the British forces by fear of the consequences which would follow such action. When the Battalion Council came to this decision, the Brigade Staff then revealed that this also had been their decision. It was also decided by the Brigade Council that preparations should be made with a view to stopping any reprisals that would follow the executions and each Company was given the task of preparing a defence plan for its area. When the Company defence plans were handed in, Battalion defence plans were then compiled with the result that a most elaborate operation was planned on paper. To my mind, at the time, such an operation was beyond our means. Eventually the Brigade Staff got alarmed at the possible outcome of this operation and decided to postpone the whole matter including the execution of the R.I.C. who had taken part in the reprisals. This decision caused very grave discontent amongst the junior officers and the rank and file of the Brigade and caucus meetings were held with a view to trying to unseat what was called the peace party from power. In the meantime the whole situation in Belfast had become very much more difficult. The attacks on the Nationalist areas became much more serious and since the mobs had by this time practically disappeared from the field, the fight gradually took on a purely military complexion, i.e. the fight became more and more a fight between two disciplined bodies. During this period the general outline of the ultimate tactics began to appear. We found that we had to

R E Mee

divide our operations into:-

- (1) defensive operations, and
- (2) offensive operations.

The defence of the areas was worked out more by a method of trial and error than by any preconceived plan. In theory it had appeared impossible to use the rifle as the main weapon in the fight but in practice we found out that not only was it possible but it was essential to use rifles for defensive purposes, since a high percentage of the casualties in the Nationalist areas was caused by snipers. These snipers were generally members of the Ulster Special Constabulary, principally of the 'B' class. During this time the Company captains of the First Battalion, principally captains of 'B' and 'C' Companies had been discussing ways and means of breaking the obstacles that were being put in the way of offensive activities with emphasis laid on the execution on the members of the R.I.C. reprisal gang. These meetings formed close friendships amongst the junior ^{officers} ~~members~~ ^{R.E. Meade} of the First Battalion based on their common views on the whole way in which the fight should be carried on.

About this time a system of posting pickets at the entrances to Nationalist areas was first instituted. These pickets went on duty about an hour before curfew and remained on duty throughout the night. The purpose that these pickets served was to guarantee that during the hours of darkness no parties of British forces could enter the Nationalist areas to carry out further reprisals. The numbers on each of these pickets depended on the amount of arms available in the area and the general practice was that the men on picket duty changed over with each other from time to time. Attacks during the night were comparatively rare but the picket duty had the great advantage of training men both in the use of weapons and of being under orders for long periods.

At a Battalion Council meeting held about September,

R.E. Meade

1920, it was decided that in view of the danger of senior officers of the Battalion being captured by the British forces deputies should be appointed who would take over the duties of the arrested officers and carry on until such time as appointments were made in accordance with the Constitution of the I.R.A. I was detailed to take over in the event of the Officer Commanding, the 1st Battalion, being captured or killed. Efforts were still being made by the 1st Battalion to force the issue of the execution of the reprisal gangs and it was for this reason that the Battalion Council had appointed me to take over as deputy to the Battalion Commander, since I was one of those who strongly advocated that the executions should take place irrespective of the consequences.

Early 1921:

About the beginning of January, 1921, the Officer Commanding, 1st Battalion, was transferred from Belfast and appointed as a G.H.Q. organiser in Ulster. When the time came to fill the appointment the Brigade nominated a successor. The Battalion Council refused to accept the Brigade's nominee and insisted that it was the right of the Battalion Council to appoint its own Battalion Commander and that the Brigade Staff could only intervene in the event of an unsuitable man being chosen. The outcome of this disagreement was that I was elected Officer Commanding, 1st Battalion, and the appointment was approved by the Brigade Staff. Shortly prior to my appointment I had put forward a scheme for the shooting of the recruits for the Auxiliaries (R.I.C. Auxiliary Cadets). I had been informed by one of the men in my Company that recruits for the Auxiliaries sometimes travelled via Larnè to Belfast and stopped overnight in Roddy's hotel where, I suggested, they should be shot. The difficulty in this operation was that Roddy's Hotel was situated next door to Musgrave Street Barracks which was the

Headquarter Barracks of the R.I.C. in Belfast. The Detective Headquarters was also in the immediate vicinity. My difficulty was that 'C' Company, of which I had been Captain, had no got sufficient service pattern revolvers to carry out an operation of this sort. I had asked for the assistance of one of the other Companies in the provision of arms and it was decided that the other Company, 'D' Company, 1st Battalion, would also provide half of the men required for the operation. The intention was to take the recruits into some of the hotel rooms and in compliance with a G.H.Q. order, to shoot the recruits. (The G.H.Q. order referred to was one in which it was stated that auxiliary cadets and Black and Tans, not being members of the properly constituted British forces would not be given the benefits of the International Conventions governing war and were to be shot at sight irrespective of whether they were in or out of uniform). The arrangement was that the Captain of 'D' Company was to remain at home every evening so that he would be immediately available when the word came through that a party of cadets were at the hotel. The operation as planned did not take place owing to the fact that a special party of R.I.C. on special duty came to Roddy's. One of our Intelligence men, who was a member of the R.I.C., passed out word to us about this party. He said that the duty these men were on must be of very great importance since no one but the most senior officers of the R.I.C. were aware of its nature. In addition he informed us that ^{the} ^{R.I.C.} party which numbered three, consisting of two men whose duty it was to guard the third man, were in the hotel. We decided that the party should be shot since it was obvious from the precautions that they were on some very important duty. I got the machinery in motion for the mobilisation of our men to carry out the operations, but I was informed that the Captain of 'D' Company could not be found. The difficulty was then that we were short 50% of the arms that we had

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decided would be necessary. The Captain of 'B' Company (Seamus Woods), who was a very close friend of mine by this time, heard that I had been trying to contact the Captain of 'D' Company and knew that the Roddy's Hotel operation would therefore be coming off. He gathered a party of his Company and arrived with the necessary reinforcements just as we were about to leave to carry out the operation with such resources as we had in the Company. We had been warned that there would have to be some very quick shooting on this operation since the two members of the escort were obviously taking no chances. Owing to a misinterpreted message which we received when we arrived at the hotel, we gathered that the R.I.C. party were drinking in a closed cubicle, so that, when we entered the hotel we threw caution to the winds and shouldered our way through the crowded bar with our guns in our hands. To our astonishment, when we opened the door of the cubicle we found it empty. Fortunately, since most of the people whom we had shouldered out of our way were under the influence of drink, no one seemed to have noticed the fact that we were armed. The barman in the hotel, who was a member of 'C' Company, 1st Battalion, and who was the contact with the friendly R.I.C. man in Musgrave Street, came into the cubicle in which we had seated ourselves and informed us that no one had apparently noticed anything out of the ordinary. He also informed us that a party of R.I.C. men were drinking at the bar. We had not noticed this party owing to the crowded state of the bar itself. Fortunately one of the R.I.C. party at the bar was our contact and he, on being informed by the barman that an operation was about to take place, managed to get the other members of the party to leave the bar. The barman came back and informed us that the men whom we were looking for had gone to bed and were sleeping in the third or fourth storey of the building. We waited until the bar had been cleared and then, guided by the barman, we went up to the room in which the special party of R.I.C. were in bed; opened the door, switched on the

light and opened fire. Our entrance took the R.I.C. party completely by surprise and all of them had been hit by our fire before they had time to realise the situation. We then made our way from the hotel and made good our escape. The sound of our shots had been heard in the Barracks next door but we were well away before any action could be taken by the R.I.C. It consequently turned out that the principal man in the party was a man by the name of Gilmartin who, it was reported, had been a member of the I.R.A. but had gone over to the British and was in Belfast for the purpose of giving evidence in the case of a man named Grey who was accused of shooting D.I. Hunt in Thurles. The two men who were guard to Gilmartin were killed; Gilmartin himself, although critically injured, recovered. The importance of this operation lay mainly in the fact that it was from this party that the active service unit was formed in Belfast (See notes on A.S.U.)

From this point on, the younger element, who had control of the 1st Battalion, took the bit in their teeth and travelled under their own steam. We were still subject to a number of restrictions from the Brigade Staff who took up the attitude that our activities might possibly jeopardise activities which the Brigade might decide to carry out. The attitude of the 1st Battalion was that it would be ridiculous to hold up activities merely on the off chance that the Brigade would decide to carry out something in the future. The 1st Battalion had, by this time, learned that in guerilla warfare targets of opportunity were the only ones that could be effectively attacked. Operations that called for long term planning would be few and far between and the enemy would not be put off his stride by such operations. We decided to take our chances as we found them.

R. T. Meel

Line of Tactics:

By now the defensive tactics in Belfast were developed. It was ~~ascertained~~ ^{found} ^{R. E. Meek} that where defined areas had to be held against all comers, the best allround means was an elastic system of defence. This meant that men defending an area would have to move from point to point and in the initial stages this was generally done by climbing across backyard walls when the post from which they were firing was no longer reasonably safe. The danger about the backyard wall was that if any of the enemy succeeded in penetrating to the rear of the house and were first up over the level of the yard walls, movement was impossible. On two or three occasions some of our men had been killed when attempting to cross walls. In order to cover this, the idea of breaking holes through yard walls was generally practised in the border line areas such as at Raglan Street. This left complete freedom of movement throughout the rows of houses which in Belfast are generally built back to back. We had discovered that in using these tactics we had very little to fear from parties of British forces moving on foot, since we could deny them access to the area. Our chief danger was from armoured cars, but they too, were not very effective owing to the fact that the crews could not leave the cars. The cage type of armoured cars we found was very easy to handle by shooting down into the car from the upstairs windows of the houses. This meant that any time one of these cars entered any of our areas that it could be driven out with the greatest of ease. This was the type of armoured car principally used by the Special Constabulary. They also had a number of Rolls Royce armoured cars. These were an enclosed type of car equipped with Vickers Machine Guns. The method of handling these cars was to dig trenches in certain parts of the area and the wheel mechanism of these car was so delicate that they would never chance crossing these trenches although the trenches were passable to horsedrawn traffic. Another weakness in this type of car was that if a shot was

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fired into one of the tyres, the car was crippled. The British forces seemed to be very much aware of this weakness with the result that the Rolls Royce type of car generally passed through the areas at a very high speed with the result that the amount of real damage they could do was limited. The third type of armoured car, which was generally used by the military, was the Peerless Double and Single Turret cars. There was no effective way of stopping these cars short of deep trenches or land mines, either of which were considered unusable in the city. The only safeguard we had against these cars was the fact that their crews never left the car itself. We did not use the grenade against vehicles since we found the rifle much more effective and reliable. This use of the rifle accounted for our comparative freedom from attacks by British forces on foot and also for our practical immunity from raids and searches during the night in any of the areas where we were able to institute these defensive measures. There were, however, occasions when small parties did succeed in working their way into our areas at night through loop holes in our defences and carried out occasional shootings, but as I stated before the ordinary raid or search was almost unknown in our strong areas.

These occasional shootings at night were a considerable worry to us since it shows that our defences were still too weak. We studied these weaknesses but did not immediately find a solution.

On one occasion, after the funeral of a Special who had been killed, a number of cars, lorries and armoured cars, travelling at great speed down the Falls Road, which is one of the principal thoroughfares in Belfast, opened fire on all passers-by and wound up by machine-gunning two women who had not heard the shooting as the cars approached. That same day there was very heavy fighting in the Raglan Street area, principally at long range. We had been very

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successful since we brought down a number of snipers and had also carried out a couple of close range attacks on patrols of specials, without any loss to ourselves. The fighting continued up to curfew time and then died down. We fell back into the centre of the area and remained under arms. Sometime about midnight we heard a woman scream and the cry of murderers was raised. This resulted in an outburst of hysteria all over the area. It spread throughout the Nationalist areas for a distance of several miles. There was no real basis for the outburst as it was a false alarm. When we considered the consequences of this outbreak we decided that the best action to take in the circumstances was to ask the people to call out the name of the street in which ^{an} ~~the~~ enemy patrol was located. This idea was a complete failure because a few nights afterwards, when an enemy patrol again entered the area everyone remained perfectly quiet and gave no indication that anything unusual was taking place. Fortunately, one of our men observed the patrol and passed the word to the picket which moved out and drove the patrol off. We had some reports through our Intelligence that the enemy suffered several casualties in this encounter. Nevertheless, it was from these two experiences that we got the idea which finally solved the problem of adequate protection during the night hours. The system which we adopted was to place in a central position in each area, a picket armed with rifles. At each of the entrances to the area we placed men equipped with flash lights of a special type. These torches could show a light in any of three colours, white, green and red. We placed a continuous line of these men, one at each corner each within view of the other and any time that the British were seen moving in the vicinity of the area the man who observed them sent in a series of flashes in white. These were taken up along the line and ultimately it reached the picket. If the patrol passed off the signal was cancelled by a green flash.

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In the event of an enemy patrol entering the area, a red flash was sent in and each man continued flashing at red until our picket had passed him on its way to the danger point. This system proved effective insofar as we were able to cover and protect a very large area with a small number of armed men. It also had the advantage of demoralising the enemy since they could see that all their movements were being signalled and they had no idea of the point from which attack might come. This had the effect of keeping the enemy patrols completely outside the area.

On one or two occasions patrols did enter the area, but with the new system of signalling our picket were upon them within a matter of one or two minutes. The most successful of these operations against an enemy patrol took place on the night of the 9th/10th July, 1921, when a reprisal gang actually entered the heart of one of our areas. Their advance was signalled and our picket was posted in position to meet them. The enemy party were in a Crossley Tender and were armed only with revolvers. This armament was typical of a reprisal gang. When they approached to within forty or fifty yards of our picket, fire was opened on them, the first volley being aimed at the engine of the car which was put out of commission immediately. The fight continued for some time, the advantage in armament being with our men since they were armed with rifles and Mills bombs. It was immediately discovered that the armament of the enemy was ~~a~~ revolvers only, which left no doubt as to the mission upon which they were engaged. I had issued a general order that where reprisal gangs were cornered, no prisoners were to be taken. The enemy, after a short time, offered to surrender but our men, in obedience to the order, refused to accept their surrender. The fight continued for about forty minutes and only finished when the last of the reprisal gang was wiped out. Just as our men were about to pick up the arms from the enemy party, a large number of British reinforcements arrived in lorries. Our people retreated and then opened fire from another position on

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the reinforcements, causing further casualties. The British made a half-hearted attempt to burn a house in the area but did not take time to see that the place was properly on fire. They took away the bodies of the reprisal gang and also the casualties from the reinforcements and left the area almost immediately. The lorry in which the original party had arrived was left behind and was left lying about in the area for the best part of a day.

This system of protection continued in Belfast during the post Truce fighting and was found to be an effective one to the end.

Sunday, 10th July; was known in Belfast as "Bloody Sunday". There was very heavy fighting all over the city, even the city centre itself was swept by rifle and machine gun fire. Every weapon which we had in our possession was in action that day. The British, especially the Special Constabulary seemed to be completely out of hand and were bent of massacre. Armoured cars passed through all our areas and kept a continuous fire into the houses. Anything moving, man, woman, or child, was fired on. A heavy concentration of snipers kept up a continuous fire into the Nationalist area. I arrived at Brigade Headquarters about 2 a.m. and found that the situation was very grave in a number of our areas. This was particularly the case in the Carrickhill area. A messenger came through from that area to tell us that a party composed of three Lancia Armoured Cars and about two hundred Specials were trying to break into the area. Our men were able to drive back the armoured cars which were of the cage type by shooting into them from the upstairs windows. This meant that the Specials on foot were unable to enter the area but the messenger informed me that there was only sufficient ammunition left with our men to continue the fight for, at the outside, one hour and that judging from the demeanour of the Specials, there would be massacre of the Nationalist population. To make matters worse, he informed me that it

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had taken about forty minutes to work his way out of the area so we anticipated that the ammunition would be exhausted within a matter of fifteen or twenty minutes. We had sufficient supplies of rifle ammunition available for transport into the area but the messenger informed me that the route by which he had worked his way out was not blocked and that there was no possible means of getting back in. We confirmed that the area was completely cut off and the situation seemed hopeless. Just about this time two civilians arrived at the Brigade Headquarters and said that they had been sent by a clergyman with whom the local R.I.C. had made contact. The R.I.C. had pointed out to him that since little more than twenty-four hours remained until the Truce would come into force, there was nothing to be gained by killing each other and stated that they were prepared to withdraw their men and the Special Constabulary back into Barracks in the Falls Road area if we would agree to withdraw our men. I refused to accept this arrangement for any one locality and sent back word to the R.I.C. that we would only accept the arrangement if it was extended to the whole city. Word came back almost immediately that the R.I.C. were agreeable to this. We then established direct contact with them. We told the R.I.C. that they would have to arrange for our despatch carriers to pass through their lines and asked them to provide escorts. We informed them that our despatch carriers would, in turn, act as escorts to the R.I.C. men when they were passing through our lines. This was necessary since some of the despatch carriers would have to pass through several areas. The R.I.C. agreed to this proposal and said that if our despatch carriers would report to Dover Street Barracks the escorts would be provided there. This operation was carried out without any loss to either R.I.C. or our men. All the despatches got through in time and within the hour fighting had ceased.

To indicate the attitude of the Special Constabulary in the Carrickhill area, I should like to mention that when

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our Despatch Carrier was passing through the Specials' lines in that area, the R.I.C. escort informed him that they would have to tell the Specials that he, i.e. the Despatch Carrier was under arrest on a criminal charge, otherwise they would be unable to protect him. This actually turned out to be the case for when the Specials saw the R.I.C. with what they took to be a prisoner, they came over and showed every sign of shooting him but when they were told by the R.I.C. that he was an ordinary criminal they allowed him to pass through in safety.

This Truce, which continued on up to about an hour before the official Truce, then broke down. Fighting opened up again and while it was wide-spread it was not of a very serious nature. We had the misfortune to have one of our men killed about ten minutes before the Truce. This man's name was Seamus Leddy who was a Squad Commander in 'C' Company of the 1st Battalion. When the Angelus had rung at noon, which was the official hour for the Truce, fighting died down immediately. The people in the Nationalist areas turned out in thousands and started to wave table cloths and handkerchiefs. That same evening a most unexpected state of affairs came about. An element of the Nationalists, under the control of the Hibernians, started to loot the Unionist business premises in the Falls Road area. They also set fire to the stabling yard of Messrs. Wordie, Haulage Contractors. It was obvious that this was due to pique at the fact that our people were now accepted by the British as the official representatives of the Irish people. On several occasions during the day our men had to turn out and fire on this mob. They fired over their heads but later on in the evening I gave instructions that if the mob gave any further trouble they were to fire into it. We also sent our patrols with orders to arrest the ring-leaders of this group and bring them to Brigade Headquarters. This was done and we ordered several of the ring-leaders to leave the city within twenty-four hours, otherwise they would be shot at sight. This action ended this Hibernian attempt to break the Truce. It is unfortunate that we did not go after the

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instigators of this attempt rather than their dupes.

The situation in Belfast during the Truce period was extraordinary. Commandant-General Owen O'Duffy, who had been appointed as Chief Liaison Officer for Ulster, had his Headquarters in Belfast. He immediately established contact with the British Headquarters there, but the fighting continued practically without ceasing. The British troops kept a more or less neutral attitude but the Special Constabulary continued to carry out attacks on the Nationalist areas. These took the form principally of sniping by 'B' and 'C' class Specials into the Nationalist areas. Very often attacks were made by the plain clothes men on Nationalist areas but the arms that they carried were almost invariably the arms that had been issued to them by the British by virtue of their membership of the Special Constabulary. About this time a new ^{factor} ~~fact~~ ^{R.E. Meele} made its appearance. This was a hostility between the British military, especially the rank and file, and the Special Constabulary and on several occasions British troops opened fire on 'B' class . . . Specials who were attacked the Nationalist areas. The basis of this hostility seemed to be in the disparity in rates of pay between the British soldiers and the Special Constabulary. The 'A' class Specials were paid a wage of £4.10s. a week while the British soldiers were paid something in the nature of 1/- per day. The Nationalist population were quick to take advantage of this hostility and on several occasions were able to influence the British troops to use their arms against the elements attacking the Nationalist areas.

On one occasion I and a couple of officers from the 1st Battalion had our attention attracted by a lorry manned by Specials who were bringing supplies to one of the police barracks. We pulled up with a view to finding out what the nature of these supplies was. In the immediate vicinity of the Barracks a patrol of British troops under the command of a Sergeant had halted for a rest. They saw

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us watching the lorry and eventually formed the opinion that we were intending to attack it because the Sergeant ordered his patrol to move on and in passing he said to us, "We are moving off now and you can do what you like with the". This new attitude of the British ^{Troops} in Belfast ^{R E Mice} seemed to spread rapidly and in the later fighting which took place there, they kept as much as possible out of our way when we were attacking the Special Constabulary. This state of affairs in which we had official relations with the R.I.C. and British military and open warfare between ourselves and the Special Constabulary continued right through the period of the Truce in Belfast.

Some weeks after the Truce I got permission to leave Belfast for a rest. I went to Co. Antrim to the Training Camp and gave lectures there on musketry and general military tactics. After I had been there about a week I received urgent order from O'Duffy to return to Belfast without delay as the situation had become very serious there. When I arrived in Belfast I found that there were very large numbers of British troops on the streets and on reporting to Divisional Headquarters I was informed that O'Duffy had contacted the British military authorities and told them that if they did not take immediate action to stop the attacks on the Nationalist areas that he would order the I.R.A. to take action, with all means available, with a view to carrying the war into Unionist areas. This action evidently caused alarm in British military circles because they turned out every available man. The fighting died down for a few days but it broke out again. This time the British did not take any very special measure to handle the situation. From my experience it would appear that the British gave up the attempt to control the actions of the Special Constabulary and Orange Order and did not raise the question of our actions in the defence of Nationalist areas. According to the terms of the Truce we were supposed to have

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our arms in dumps or under strict supervision in training camps but it was perfectly obvious that this part of the terms was not being observed by us in Belfast and evidently the British were satisfied that it could not be observed while armed attacks were being made on us. This might also account, in some way, for the hostility between the military and the Special Constabulary.

This state of affairs continued during the Treaty negotiations in London but when the Treaty was signed and had been accepted by the Dail, the situation changed in Belfast. Early in 1922 we were informed that the British military were going to occupy premises that we were still using as liaison offices. On one occasion I received a telephone message from Victoria Barracks in Belfast and the officer at the other end of the wire asked for some British officer (he asked for him by name). I told him that he was evidently making a mistake as he was speaking to the I.R.A. headquarters. He then informed me that he was Brigade Major in Victoria Barracks and he thought that his men were in occupation of the Liaison Office. I told him that he better look up his files and he would find that that was not the case. I came to the conclusion that this was a scheme to get us to evacuate the premises but instead I reinforced the guard in it and gave orders to resist any attempt to occupy the premises. I remained on the premises myself for several nights in case the British would appear but they made no move. On one evening we decided that the guard was not necessary and left the premises vacant that night. The following morning we found that the place had been occupied. It was unfortunate that we gave the British this opportunity since they were evidently in a very difficult situation from the political point of view. From this point onwards there was no liaison between ourselves and the British. We went back to our normal wartime footing. This continued until about 22nd May, when it was decided that a big effort be made to bring about, if possible, the

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downfall of the six-county Government by military means and various offensive actions were planned. This operation was decided on in Dublin at a meeting at which the Army Executive from the Four Courts, G.H.Q. Portobello and Divisional Commanders from the Six County areas were present. Seamus Woods was our representative at this meeting. He will be in a position to give the details of the negotiations. Insofar as I was concerned I was only interested in the military decisions arrived at there. I was informed that on a given date all the Units in the Six County area were to go into action and that certain supporting actions would take place on the border. I was also informed that supplies of warlike material would be sent to each of the three Brigades in the 3rd Northern area. These supplies were to be 150 rifles for each Brigade, plus 150 revolvers for the Belfast Brigade together with supplies of bombs, explosives and ammunition. We were not very much concerned about supplies of either explosives or bombs since we were manufacturing ample supplies of each of these in the Belfast area and although we did accept the Mills bombs without question, we indicated that we did not want supplies of explosives but the people in Dublin sent them along anyway. The explosives were Irish Cheddar and Warflower both of which had been used extensively during the black and Tan campaign. We requested that they send us some supplies of gun cotton which we had been unable to manufacture but evidently no supplies were available since we received none.

The date of the general attack was fixed for the 19th May. It was unfortunate that the date was fixed before the supplies had arrived. These supplies were to be transported across the border in Oil Tankers. The first supply came to the East Down Brigade of the 3rd Northern Division and some of it at least came by sea and was landed on the Co. Down coast. The second supply was to go to Co. Antrim. This consignment was actually on route when the

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Tanker broke down at Carrickfergus, a very hostile part of the Co. Antrim. It broke down outside the house of the British Colonel i/c. of the troops in Carrickfergus Castle. While our men were attempting to get the tanker fixed up sufficiently well to carry it back into Belfast, the British Colonel came out and invited them into the house for tea. When the tanker was eventually fixed up it was too late to get into Belfast again owing to the fact that there was curfew in that city from 10.30. The British Colonel took our men to an R.I.C. Barracks with a view to getting them a permit to travel through the city during curfew but the R.I.C. would not open ^{the R.I.C.} up Barracks and said that they were under orders not to open to anyone during the night. The Colonel then gave our party a military permit to travel through Belfast and told them that if anyone questioned their authority they were ~~to tell them~~ ^{R.I.C.} to get in touch with him and he would arrange matters for them. I was at a Conference in Co. Down while this was taking place. Seamus Woods was also at the Conference. We received news of the break-down and started back by car. We were now faced with the difficulty of having the whole operation postponed since Belfast would be short of its supplies. We eventually got in touch with General Duffy in Beggars Bush Barracks and conveyed our difficulty to him and asked him to agree to our getting in touch with the other Northern Divisions and having the operation called off for a period of three days. We did get in touch with the other Divisions but the 2nd Northern Division said that it would be impossible for them to cancel the operation since final orders had been issued. The officer with whom contact was made in the 2nd Northern Division was the Vice-Commandant of that Unit, Daniel McKenna. In all the other areas the operation was called off and we understood that they would go into action on the 22nd May. There was some confusion in some of the areas about this second date and when we opened up operations on the 22nd

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May we found that we were carrying much more weight than we had anticipated. The Co. Down Brigade was over-run within a matter of days and the Co. Antrim Brigade were still able to carry on and did so under the greatest difficulties. In Belfast city we had no difficulty in continuing owing to the fact that the British had reached saturation point much earlier so that the re-inforcements which were arriving in Belfast at the rate of three special train loads per day made no very great difference to us from the military viewpoint. This was caused primarily by the fact that the forces opposed to us in Belfast were handled very inefficiently. We suffered heavy casualties during this period but this would undoubtedly have occurred even if no reinforcements had been provided in the city.

The general idea of the operation in the 3rd Northern area was that the country Brigades would carry out a series of attacks on police Barracks and Crown forces. In Belfast the initial operation was an attempt to capture Musgrave Street Barracks. If this operation had succeeded we would have gained possession of a number of armoured cars and about 250 rifles, together with large supplies of ammunition. The plan of attack on Musgrave Barracks was worked out in great detail and only for one unfortunate incident would have been a great success since our people had effected an entry into the Barracks and had actually captured the arms room. The cause of the failure was due to the fact that a member of the main guard on the Barracks was able to fire a shot which gave the alarm. On the Buildings surrounding the Barracks proper a number of machine gun posts had been placed and when the shot was fired these posts opened fire. Patrols outside the Barracks also opened fire through the gates of the Barracks and since we had only twenty-two men engaged in the whole operation we had to retire since very many more men than we had were available in the immediate vicinity and it would have been impossible for us to hold the Barracks even though we had

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control of the arms' room. The normal garrison in this Barracks was 150 men. We succeeded in making good our retreat and although the Crown forces went through the whole area with a fine tooth comb, none of our men were captured. In the Barracks itself one policeman was killed and another wounded. These were, with the exception of the guard in the arms' room, the only police with whom we came into contact.

In addition to this operation which was only an initial operation, a series of attacks were planned on other Barracks and Posts in the Belfast area. It was also the intention to burn industrial undertakings in Belfast city. These operations, with the exception of the first attack on Musgrave Street, were successful. Damage to the extent of several million pounds was caused. The enemy also suffered considerable casualties during this fighting which at times was very severe. We were able to face up to any attacks by the enemy since by this time we had a well-armed, well-disciplined and well-trained Brigade. The fighting continued until the outbreak of the Civil War in the South.

Insofar as I was personally concerned, I was only available for the first nine days of the campaign in Belfast as I was shot on the 31st May.

We had no difficulty in Belfast concerning wounded I.R.A. men as the hospitals in the city were full of gun-shot wound cases. The total number of wounded during the period '20 to '22 in Belfast was about 2,500 so that there was nothing unusual in anyone arriving in Hospital with gun-shot wounds.

On my way to hospital the ambulance was held up by a group of Special police. The ambulance man told me to close my eyes and pretend that I was dead as it was Specials who were holding up the ambulance. The ambulance was opened by a Special Policeman who asked the ambulance man who he had in it. The ambulance man replied - "It is alright, they are all dead", (there were two or three others there who were dead).

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The Special then said "That is a good job but we will well make sure". He made as if to enter the ambulance and I thought that this was the end as far as I was concerned. Just at that point there was a very heavy outburst of rifle fire directed from some point which I had no means of ascertaining, but evidently aimed at the party of Specials. The Specials then cleared off and the ambulance moved off again. (Afterwards I made enquiries if any of our people had seen the incident. I was informed that no such incident had been observed by our men so that the only conclusion I could come to was that the British military had fired on the Specials.) The greatest point of interest in this matter was the attitude of the ambulance attendant who became alarmed as soon as he saw that it was Specials who were holding up the ambulance. This seemed to indicate that there must have been some previous instances of an ambulance being interfered with by Specials although I have no knowledge of any such incidents.

I was still in a certain difficulty when I arrived in the hospital as I would be known and discovered in the event of the hospital being searched but I was fortunate in that the Medical Officer who came to attend me was one of our own Medical Officers named Michael McConail who is at present a Professor of Anatomy in Cork University. I asked him to have me removed immediately to a safer place which I indicated to him and he had me taken from the Hospital in a matter of minutes.

ARMY CONVENTION

About February, 1922, a circular was received from General Headquarters, Dublin, notifying all units that it was intended to hold an Army Convention at an early date. The representation at this Convention was to be two or three delegates from each Brigade staff according to the numbers in the Brigade and two delegates from each Divisional staff. I was not aware of the reasons which prompted the calling of a Convention but I was of the opinion that a Convention of this sort was inadvisable since I believed that as a military

body we should avoid an action of this sort which seemed to me to smell of politics. However, we appointed delegates and I was selected as one of the three delegates to represent the Belfast Brigade. Shortly after G.H.Q. decided to abandon the idea and banned the Convention. It appeared that certain elements throughout the country were still pushing for the Convention to be held. I became very suspicious of G.H.Q.'s action in banning the Convention which they themselves had called and advocated that our delegates should attend any Convention that might be held, although G.H.Q. had notified us that any delegate who attended the Convention would be dismissed from the I.R.A. Together with the other delegates from the 3rd Northern Division, which was fully represented except for the Divisional staff, I went to Dublin and attended the Convention. It seemed to me that a certain element at the Convention took control of the whole proceedings and there was no effort made to come to any agreement with General Headquarters in Beggars' Bush, which, of course, had no representatives at the Convention. There was considerable discussion about the situation in the North in which I did not take part although several of the other delegates from the 3rd Northern Division spoke. The outcome of this discussion was that certain promises of aid were made by way of making arms and ammunitions available in the north. This seemed to clinch the matter insofar as I was concerned since we were finding it very difficult to get sufficient supplies of ammunition to continue the defence of Nationalist areas in Belfast. From time to time we had endeavoured to get a supply from G.H.Q. but although they did send along some ammunition, the supplies went nowhere near the quantities that we needed. When the Convention ended I went back to my hotel and had a discussion with some of my fellow delegates. I told them that I felt most unhappy about the whole position but that unless G.H.Q. would make at least as good an offer of supplies as had been made by the Executive, which

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had been set up by the Convention, I would have no option but to advise the Belfast Brigades that they should support the Executive. On the following afternoon I went to Beggars' Bush Barracks to call on Seamus Woods who had been transferred from Belfast to G.H.Q. sometime previously. I was accompanied by Thomas Fitzpatrick who was O.C. of the Co. Antrim Brigade. After some trouble we eventually were admitted to the Barracks and had a conversation with Woods on purely social matters. Woods then told us that the Chief of Staff, General Duffy, would like to see us and asked us if we would agree to meet him. We agreed. General Duffy then brought up the subject of our attendance at the Convention and I informed him that since we had been offered arms and ammunitions by the Executive that I intended to support them and would advise Belfast accordingly. He told me that G.H.Q. would be better placed to provide the arms which we required than the executive would be. He said that they had the markets of the world open to them. I told him that I understood this was so but that so far G.H.Q. had not been very generous with supplies. I told him also that as far as I was concerned I was in the market for the first time and that my support would go to the people who would help us to honour our obligations to the Nationalists in Belfast. I said that I would not allow my own personal opinions as to the rights and wrongs of the quarrel between G.H.Q. and the Executive to influence me in this matter. He then made me a definite promise that the G.H.Q. would provide all the supplies necessary within a very short space of time. I told him that if that were so I would be in a position to advise the Belfast Brigade to support G.H.Q. with whom my personal sympathies lay. I told him that I at no time liked the Treaty or any part of its terms except for the one item which would allow the Irish people to maintain armed forces. I told him, however, that I did not think that G.H.Q. had any option but to obey the orders of the majority in the Dáil, however small that

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majority might be. I arranged to call the other delegates from the 3rd Northern area together and ask them to meet General Duffy later in the evening and hear his guarantees personally. I told him that that would be better than any second-hand version of his guarantees which I could give. We met General Duffy later in the evening and had a talk with him lasting about an hour, after which we returned to our hotel and had a discussion amongst ourselves. No clear decision was arrived at that night but on the following day the majority of the delegates agreed to give their support to G.H.Q. We returned to our areas in the North and all delegates, with the exception of Hugh Corvin of the Belfast Brigade, and Seán Murray of the Co. Antrim Brigade, spoke in favour of G.H.Q. One item that General Duffy had stressed with me personally was that if the majority in Belfast decided to go with the Executive that I should use my influence with the minority and get them to go the same way since, he said, a split was a luxury that we could not afford in Belfast. He asked me to bring this matter up at the beginning of the Brigade Convention and ask anyone who intended to support the Executive to agree that in the event of the majority going against them, they would fall in with the majority. This seemed indicative of the good faith of General Duffy in the matter and at the Brigade Convention when the majority decided to support G.H.Q., practically all of those who opposed G.H.Q. came along with the majority. There were a few exceptions to this but the number involved was so small that it had very little affect on the fighting efficiency of the Belfast Brigade. G.H.Q. honoured, in the main, this undertaking and it was as a result of this that the arms previously referred to arrived in the 3rd Northern area. We were not completely satisfied with the quantities of rifles, etc. allotted to the Belfast area since the 150 rifles which we did eventually receive only increased our fire power by 50%. The supplies of ammunition which we

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received from G.H.Q. were inadequate as only seventy rounds per rifle were sent to us although we had been promised about 200 rounds per rifle. General Duffy was no longer in G.H.Q. when the supplies of ammunition were being sent. It was obvious that the people who finally allocated the supplies of ammunition had no conception of the situation in Belfast nor were they aware that the rifle was the principal weapon used in that area.

Organization of Ulster Special Constabulary:

The Ulster Special Constabulary, which was ^{founded} ~~organised~~ ^{organised} subsequent to the outbreak of the pogrom in Belfast was ^{as} ~~was~~ as follows:-

(1) 'A' Class Specials: These were fully uniformed in R.I.C. type uniform. They were armed with rifle and revolver and provided with armoured cars of the Rolls-Royce and Lancia types. The members of this 'A' Class were fulltime men and were accommodated in Barracks. They were paid, to the best of my recollection, £4.10s. per week.

(2) 'B' Class Specials: These were part-time men who were paid 10/- per patrol. They were uniformed with an R.I.C. waterproof coat and an R.I.C. cap. These men kept their arms at home in the Belfast area in practically every case. They were the people mainly responsible for the sniping into the Nationalist areas in Belfast. They were armed with rifle and revolver.

(3) 'C' Class Specials: These were unpaid and were only called up for service in special cases. These men were uniformed with a police cap and police belt. They were armed with revolvers only.

The higher organisation of the Special Constabulary was something on the lines of the R.I.C. In each county there was a County Commandant whose rank approximated to County Inspector in the R.I.C. The County was divided into districts with a District Commandant in charge of each. In

Belfast the 'A' Class Specials were sometimes stationed in R.I.C. Barracks and in other Districts they had Barracks of their own. The 'B' Class Specials did not seem to have any men attached to the R.I.C. Barracks but were a separate force. The co-ordination between the R.I.C. and Special Constabulary was at the highest level, i.e., the County Commandant of the Special Constabulary was in close liaison and, I think, under the order of the County Inspector of the R.I.C. The Specials in general were recruited from Imperialist families and in Belfast were merely the Orange mobs under a different name.

ARMS When the end of the fight came about in Belfast we were fairly well equipped with arms. We had in day to day use about 450 rifles, 150 of which we had obtained from G.H.Q. We had obtained the other 300 ourselves from various sources - sixty of them from the old National Volunteer sources. A considerable number had been bought from intermediaries. The rifles which we obtained from the Ulster Volunteer Force were Steyer pattern and were in very good condition. They were a very fine type of rifle and had the advantage that they were the same calibre as the German Service rifle. A considerable quantity of German Service rifle ammunition was picked up from time to time in Belfast. It had been brought home as souvenirs by soldiers returning from France during the 1914/18 war. Another source from which rifles were obtained was from soldiers of the British army who had been deserting during the war. We also bought quite a quantity of rifles from serving British soldiers during 1919 and 1920. The remainder of the arms were picked up here and there by individuals and a few were captured in arms' raids. The main supplies of .303 ammunition were obtained from Ulster Volunteer Force sources. A considerable quantity of this ammunition had been purchased about 1918. 60,000 rounds from this source were sent to Dublin. With regard to the transport of ammunition from Belfast to Dublin, it was that the people responsible for sending the stuff out of Belfast

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had no idea of the form in which the fighting in Belfast would take, otherwise they would have retained larger supplies. They could not be blamed for this since no one could have foreseen that the rifle could be used for guerilla tactics in what was, to all intents and purposes, a hostile city. There were still fairly reasonable supplies of this ammunition retained in Belfast, principally as a supply for a Colt machine gun which had been in the Brigade Area since the earliest days of the movement. This machine gun, which was of naval pattern with naval mounting, was absolutely useless for our purposes but the supplies of ammunition which had been set aside for use in it were used for the rifles. Insofar as explosives were concerned, large quantities of these were manufactured in Belfast - in or about the time of the Truce. These explosives were Irish Cheddar and Warflour. We had no difficulty in buying the chemicals necessary for the manufacture of these explosives. As a matter of fact, Belfast was one of the principal sources of supply of chemicals for the whole country. With regard to bombs, large quantities of partially manufactured bombs were to be found in the foundries in Belfast which had been left over from the 1914/18 war. We were able to find sufficient spare parts to help us to obtain sufficient for our needs. It should be pointed out, however, that the bomb was an unusual weapon in Belfast. Subsequent to the Truce we set up a plant for the manufacture of a new type of contact bomb which had been designed by our Divisional Engineer. This bomb was a very fine type of bomb but the manufacture of it was not always up to standard with the result that a number of the men had very little faith in it.

Another source of supply for ammunition, a percentage of which was Peter the Painter ammunition, was tapped immediately after the Truce when one of the staff in Carrickfergus Castle was found to be willing to sell

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ammunition at 25/- per hundred rounds. This was a very valuable source since Peter Painter ammunition was very scarce and difficult to obtain. The Peter Painter itself was an ideal weapon for use as it could be used as a short arm or as a carbine fired from the shoulder. A short time after the Truce a few Thompson Sub-Machine guns were received from G.H.Q. but the supplies of ammunition for this weapon were so short that we never used them to any great extent but reserved them for an emergency.

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Notes on A.S.U.

After the operation in Roddy's Hotel in January, 1921, the friendship between 'B' and 'C' Companies of the 1st Battalion was cemented and I had several conferences with the officers and men from 'B' Company with a view to continuing the type of operation begun in Roddy's Hotel. It was decided that the men who had taken part in that operation, together with some additions from each of the two Companies, would form an Active Service Unit. The outstanding men in this Unit were Josephy Murray, Seamus McKenna, Sean Keenan, Tom Fox, J Finn, Seamus Heron, and of course, Seamus Woods. I held the senior rank in this group being O.C. 1st Battalion. The others held Company ranks or N.C.Os.' rank but it was from this group that the principal officers of the Brigade and Divisional staffs was later drawn. Seamus Woods was later appointed Divisional Adjutant and consequently a Divisional O.C. Keenan was subsequently O.C. 'A' Company, then O.C. 1st Battalion and then Vice Commandant of the Brigade. McKenna, Heron and Finn were later transferred to Co. Cavan on a Flying Column which had been sent to that area from Belfast. These three men were captured after a hard fight and were, at the time of the Truce, under a sentence of death. After the Truce they took up important appointments in various parts of the Division or in the Northern Area generally. Seamus Woods and I were the leaders of this Unit and I always found Woods worthy of the greatest admiration. He was by nature highly strung but was very cool in action. Never, on any occasion, did he try to avoid any operation. We still had the difficulty of dealing with certain elements on the Brigade Staff who were not very favourably disposed to active service unit activities. However, we ignored this influence. We decided that the next operation of the Active Service Unit should be an attack on the Balck and Tans, parties of whom sometimes came to Belfast on various missions. We

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found some difficulty in locating these parties of Tans although we spent practically every night patrolling the city. We eventually evolved a scheme of sending out parties of two to cover as much of the city as possible. These men were instructed to follow any group that seemed to be Black and Tans and listen to their accents. If they were found to have English accents they were to be followed until they eventually went to some place where they were likely to remain for some time. We anticipated that this place would probably be a public house. The men were then ordered to split and one of them was to keep the party under observation. The other was to make contact with the Active Service Unit which was generally waiting down in McDevitt's premises on 5, Rosemary Street. After this scheme had been in operation for a few nights a party of Black and Tans were located and followed. The Active Service Unit were then called and attacked the Black and Tans in Arthur Square, Belfast. There were three Black and Tans in the party all of whom were killed.

The next operation of this type that actually took place was an attack on a party of Auxiliaries. These men had come to Belfast to collect some transport which was to be brought to Gormanston. As soon as we were informed that Auxiliaries were in the city we moved down in search of them. We had only four or five men immediately available. When we got to the city centre we found that the smallest party of Auxiliaries which were to be seen numbered eighteen. They were taking all the necessary precautions against attack. We decided that the odds would be too great for four or five to attack such a large party so we decided to organise a larger party - half of them equipped with revolvers and the other half to be a bombing party. The idea was to attack the Auxiliaries first of all by revolver fire and then, when the odds were in our favour as a result of casualties inflicted in the first attack, we would fight the matter

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out with revolvers and bombs. As soon as this party was organised we moved into the city centre and spent several hours combing it but we could see no trace of any Auxiliaries. Eventually when it looked as if we had missed them I gave orders for our people to disperse. Within a few minutes of this order being given I saw two Auxiliaries. They were only three of us still in contact with each other so we decided to take advantage of this opportunity. The two Auxiliaries were killed. Again we suffered no casualties although we came under fire from a number of plain clothes police who were in the vicinity. In the interval between these activities we had been watching for members of the British Reprisal gang in Belfast. We had the greatest difficulty in getting any knowledge of the movements of these people since they were evidently relieved of all ordinary police duties. We were also searching for D.I. Ferris who had arrived in Belfast from the south and who was under sentence of death from General Headquarters in Dublin. He was one of the party with D.I. Swanzy who had taken part in the shooting of Lord Mayor McCurtin of Cork. When the orders came to us for the execution of Ferris, G.H.Q. stated that this operation would have to be very carefully organised because Ferris seemed to have a charmed life. One or two previous attempts had been made on him and he came out of all of them unscathed. Unfortunately most of the regular members of the Active Service Unit had by this time gone to Cavan and such of those as remained in Belfast were on other duties that day. However, Ferris was shot at point blank range and we left him perfectly satisfied that the execution had been carried out. To our astonishment, although he was seriously wounded, he recovered.

After the attack on the Auxiliaries in Belfast the brothers Duffin, who were associated with 'B' Company, 1st Battalion, Belfast, were shot as a reprisal. We had reason

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to believe that D.I. Ferris was associated with this reprisal. We had definite information that Constable Glover of the R.I.C. was associated with the shooting. Glover had also been involved with an earlier shooting in which Messrs. McFadden, Gaynor and Trodden were killed. It was rather a blow to us that two of the men for whom we were seeking had been allowed to live long enough to take part in the Duffin shooting. We went on duty immediately the following morning outside the Duffin home in the belief that some of the people for whom we were searching would pay an official visit to the Duffins. We were correct in this, but unfortunately the visit had been paid shortly before we came on duty.

About ten or twelve days after this shooting we came into contact with Constable Glover on the Falls Road. He was one of a party of R.I.C. and our difficulty was to execute him without killing any other members of the patrol. We wanted to make it very evident that this was no ordinary attack on a patrol and that it was Glover and only Glover that we were after. We had to wound two members of the patrol in order to carry out the execution. The two members of the patrol who were wounded were harmless insofar as they had no political activities. Glover was killed on this occasion.

A major operation in which ~~all~~ the A.S.U. was engaged was an attempt to rescue from Belfast Jail, members of the Cavan Column who had been taken prisoner, together with a number of other men from various parts of the country who were under death sentence in Belfast Jail. The general scheme for the rescue was as follows. Our Intelligence had reported that small parties consisting of R.I.C. and Military officers seemed to be able to gain admittance to the Jail without question. This would only bring them in to the first gate and into the office of the warder on duty. When the warder was satisfied as to their

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bonafides he would then pass them through the second gate which opened on to a prison yard. The warder on duty had the keys of both gates. Between the second gate and the prison proper a military sentry was posted and he had within immediate call a guard of approximately twenty troops. It was our intention to get a party; dress two of them as military officers; one as an R.I.C. Sergeant and one man to act the part of a plain clothes policeman; and get the party into the prison. The idea was that when the warder would bring them to his office they were to hold him up and take the keys of the inner gate. The prisoners inside were to rush the indoor staff of the prison and hold them prisoner and to signal through one of the windows when everything was ready for the attempt.

When our party were admitted to the prison and had taken the keys from the warder, they were to open the second gate when the sentry had reached the end of his beat which was farthest away from this second gate. They were then to enter the prison proper, form up the escaping prisoners who numbered about fifteen, and march them out in military formation. We were relying on the stupidity of the sentry and the authority of our men in military officers uniform to bluff their way past the sentry and get the men out through both the front gates. The party outside, of which I was in charge, was then to cover by revolver fire the gate giving entrance to the prison from the street. We were to hold this sufficiently long to allow the prisoners to get away. The difficulty in this operation was that on the other side of the street a large Special Police Barracks was situated and a party was told off to prevent any of the Specials from coming out to take my party in the rear. Another small party was to prevent a guard, which was posted in the Courthouse which was also opposite the prison, from coming out to take part in the fight. When I studied the situation

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outside I realised that we would be able to hold the three parties of British for sufficiently long to allow the prisoners ample time to get away, but when we tried to effect our own escape it appeared to me that it would be impossible for any of us to get away. When selecting men for the parties outside I told them that in my considered opinion any man who volunteered for this operation could consider himself as good as dead but I pointed out to them that it was better that a number of men should be killed fighting than that we should leave our fifteen comrades to be hanged without any effort to rescue them. I told the men whom I approached that they were not being ordered on this operation; that I did not even expect them to volunteer since this was asking more than I was entitled to ask from anyone but that if they wanted to go on the operation I would accept them. All the men to whom I put this proposition volunteered to go on the operation.

When the signal was given from inside the prison our party approached the gates and were admitted evidently without question. When they entered the first gate the warder recognised one of them, Sean O'Neill, as a former I.R.A. prisoner in the jail. He became panic stricken at the sight of O'Neill and started to appeal for mercy. The party were unable to quieten him with the result that the sentry's attention was drawn to the situation. He, instead of covering the party and calling the guard, ran off to call the guard. Our party saw that the game was up and left the prison immediately, taking the keys of both gates with them. When my party outside saw them leaving, we could not understand what had happened nor did we receive any information since two of the party leaving the jail had passed us on the opposite side of the street and the two who were on the same side of the street as we were were engaged in returning the salute of a British soldier who happened to be passing. We were in a quandry as we did not know whether to stay in position or move off.

There did not seem to be any sign of activity from the prison. We were not aware, of course, that our people had taken the keys with them and therefore everybody in the jail, including the warders and guard were locked in. I remained in position until I saw Seamus Woods turning and looking back which I immediately recognised as a signal to us to clear off. It was always a principle of men who served in the A.S.U. never to turn around to look behind them. I immediately contacted the other two parties and we retreated and got clear away.

The names of our men who entered the jail on this occasion were Seamus Woods who was dressed as a British Military Officer; Sean O'Neill who acted the part of an R.I.C. Sergeant; Thos. Murphy also a Military Officer and Pat McKerragher who took on the roll of a plain clothes man. The reason that everybody got clear was that no one could get out of the prison since our people had taken the keys and evidently no one in the prison had sufficient presence of mind to telephone the Special Barracks across the road or the guard in the Courthouse. Eventually, after we had got clear, the authorities inside the jail made contact by 'phone with the British outside and later on the fire-brigade came up and used their ladders to establish a means of entrance and exit in the prison.

During this period the Active Service Unit were carrying out their ordinary duties in their ordinary units. On the formation of the Division, Seamus Woods, who had been appointed Divisional Adjutant did all his divisional work in the morning and spent the evenings with the Active Service Unit. I was able to co-ordinate my ordinary duties in the 1st Battalion with my duties in the Active Service Unit. About this time we decided to abolish the system of electing officers by the votes of the unit concerned and

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substituted for it a system of appointing officers. Insofar as it was practicable we brought potential officers for a few days' service with the Active Service Unit so as to see how he re-acted to the strain of service with that Unit. This was a very successful innovation since it insured that only officers with fighting experience would be appointed in future. The result of this was that Companies were able to carry out activities of a local nature without having to obtain prior permission. If this system had been adopted earlier the fighting record of the Belfast Brigade would have been very much better.

This Active Service Unit system continued until the Truce, after which the type of activity on which they were primarily engaged was no longer carried out. In 1922 a city guard was formed, consisting of sixty fulltime men ^{divided into} ~~consisting of~~ ^{R E Mee} four fifteens, one attached to each of the four Battalions. These Units were each under the command of a well-tried fighting officer but the whole unit was commanded from the Division. The idea in attaching them to the Battalions was that they could be used by the Battalion for activities at all times except when they were required for special activities organised by the Division. This Unit continued in existence until the end of the fighting in Belfast and they were the spearhead of the offensive campaign carried out in May/June and July, 1922. It is not possible for me to give details of the activities engaged in by the city guard since they were occupied every day in activities such as burnings and attacks on Six-County Government forces and also in the defence of ^{their} ~~other~~ ^{Details of} ~~areas.~~ ^{R E Mee} These activities would take more space and time than it would be possible for me to find.

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Intelligence Service.

One of the main factors in the success of the I.R.A. was the Intelligence Service. For what must have been the first time in any country certainly the first time in Irish history the British Intelligence Service was not only outwitted but completely broken. Belfast was particularly well served by its Intelligence Service. Intelligence agents were placed in telephone exchanges, post office sorting offices and telegraphic services. The duties of these people were, first, in the telephone exchanges to tap messages between the varying British Headquarters and, in some instances, to connect a friendly 'phone to the circuit. We had one place in Belfast in which a man was on duty at practically all hours for the purpose of listening in to any messages passing through the Belfast circuits and to keep a record of the conversations. Some very important pieces of information were picked up in this way. In the Sorting Offices the practice there was for some of our agents to remove official correspondence from the post, bring it out to our Intelligence Service who had copies made of it and then return the original correspondence to the Post Office again where it passed through in the ordinary way. In the Telegraphic Service copies of all code messages passing through were taken out and handed over to our Intelligence Service. This practice of the British using codes for important messages was of great convenience to us since it saved the trouble of bringing out copies of all messages which passed through. We had copies of all the police codes. We also had agents, who were serving members of the R.I.C., in a large number of the Police Barracks in the City including some very important men in police headquarters. In the later stages of the campaign in Belfast, one of our agents had access to the highest Councils of the police and actually brought us copies of the minutes of meetings held in police headquarters.

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The man concerned in the last affair was named Stapleton. We first made contact with him in or about the time of the Truce when the Brigade Quartermaster came to me and informed me that an old school friend of his who had joined the British Army and had been discharged after the 1914-18 war was employed in some capacity in Victoria Barracks, Belfast. The Quartermaster said that so far as he knew this man had no National outlook but that it was possible that he might be willing to lend some assistance to us. I told him to approach the man which he did and came back with the information that this man, Stapleton, was willing to help but that Stapleton had informed him that he did not think he could be of much use to us since he had not access to any very important files. He would, however, bring us out details of the strengths of the various British Military Posts in the Ulster area. These reports were of very little use to us since we already had practically all the data contained in them, but they enabled us to check the bona fides of Stapleton. We found out that his information coincided with the information we already had. After some time we sent a request to him for particular sorts of information, most of which he obtained. Some of this information was of the utmost importance to us. After some months Stapleton informed us that his engagement with the military was about to terminate. This seemed to be unfortunate at the time but the outcome of it exceeded our wildest hopes. It appeared that Colonel Wickham, who was head of the Police in the six-county area, had paid a visit to Victoria Barracks, and, in the course of the conversation, informed the officer to whom he was speaking that he had great difficulty in getting an ^{efficient} ~~official~~ Secretary. *R E Meel* The military officer told Wickham that he had an ideal man available and recommended Stapleton for the post. When Stapleton informed us of this possibility our reaction was that it was too good to be true but within a week or so

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Stapleton actually was appointed to the post of Secretary to Wickham. It was part of his duty to attend all meetings that Wickham called and at which the senior officers of the R.U.C. and Specials were present. It was at these meetings that the plans to counter our movements were laid. Stapleton had the duty of keeping the minutes of these meetings. He had to type a copy of these minutes for each of the officers present at the meeting. The best and clearest copy of these minutes was always handed over to us immediately after preparation. This left us completely informed of the intentions of the Police. Another part of Stapleton's duties was to prepare or at least to keep custody of the police codes. It was the practice of the police to have one code in actual use. This code would be available only to the Officer in charge of each Police Barracks. There was also a second code which was kept in a safe in each barracks. This code was under seal and the Police Orders were that, under no circumstances, was the seal to be broken until orders came through in the code actually in use to change code. At the Police Headquarters in Belfast there was a third code prepared and under seal ready to be sent out to each Police Barracks when the order to change the first code had been sent out. Insofar as the Police were concerned outside the Headquarters only one code was known or available. We had all three codes which left us two codes in front of the Police themselves. He also had access to all sorts of files at the Police Headquarters with the exception of a few files which Wickham kept in his own private office. It was due to these last files that Stapleton was eventually uncovered. On one occasion Colonel Wickham left the office to attend some meeting outside the Headquarters and he neglected to lock his own private office. Shortly after he had left Stapleton entered the office with a view to going through the private files. Unfortunately, just as he had entered

the office Wickham returned to pick up something which he had forgotten to take with him and found Stapleton in his office. He asked Stapleton for an explanation as to why he was in his (Wickham) office. Stapleton concocted some excuse which Wickham seemed to accept. Wickham then left the office. Stapleton was well aware of the fact that Wickham was not satisfied with his explanation so as soon as Wickham had left the office Stapleton gathered together all the important files including Wickham's private files, parcelled them up and handed them over to our people and then left the city. Within a short time the ~~h~~ cry for Stapleton was raised and a warrant was issued for him on a charge, I think, of high treason, but Stapleton was never picked up. I never actually saw the files myself but it appears that they were files concerning the defence of the Six-Counties in the case of an attack from the South. The scheme of defence had been prepared by Sir Henry Wilson. Where our agents in the British Forces were concerned, we took the utmost precautions. We did not even in our most secret Councils refer to them by name. Very rarely did any of us outside those attached to the Intelligence Service have any personal contacts with those agents. We even went so far as to tell our Intelligence Service that they were to give no particulars to any of us concerning the names or any other information about those agents that would enable anyone to identify them. Only on two or three occasions did I meet any of those agents and then only when it was unavoidable. Another system organised by the Intelligence Department which showed very good results was a scheme whereby the whole Nationalist area was covered and all items of gossip in each district heard in public houses were gathered together and compiled by an individual. These reports were then handed to an I.R.A. man who, in turn, co-ordinated the reports and handed them over to his Company's Intelligence Officer.

These reports passed on up the line until they actually reached the Brigade Intelligence Officer. It was at this point that the various reports could be fully co-ordinated and it was found that by piecing together a few remarks heard here and there that some very important items of information could be built up. This last scheme was designed and put into effect by a David McGuinness, the Brigade Intelligence Officer. The three most important men in the Intelligence Service in Belfast were :-

- (1) Frank Crummev, the Divisional Intelligence Officer;
- (2) David McGuinness, the Brigade Intelligence Officer;
- (3) Ben Donigan, his assistant.

Of these three McGuinness was by far the most valuable and efficient officer.

SIGNED Roger E. MacCarley

DATE 28th May 1950

WITNESS

John Mc Boy.

28th May 1950

