

ORIGINAL

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21
BUREAU STAIRS MILITARY 1913-21
NO. W.S. 402

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COSANTA.

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21.

STATEMENT BY WITNESS

DOCUMENT NO. W.S. 402

Witness

Mr. Sean Cusack,
8 Mount Temple Road,
Arbour Hill, Dublin.

Identity

Brigade O/C.
Antrim and East Down Brigade 1919;
I.R.A. Organiser East Down, 1920.

Subject

- (a) Storage of Arms
 - (b) Intelligence work
- Counties Antrim and Down, 1916-1921.

Conditions, if any, stipulated by Witness

Nil

File No. S.174

Form B.S.M. 2.

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STATEMENT BY SEÁN CUSACK,

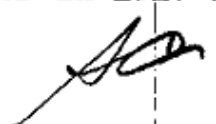
8 Mount Temple Road, Arbour Hill, Dublin.

The Aftermath of Easter Week, 1916.

There was an intense feeling of dissatisfaction amongst the men in Belfast who had travelled to Tyrone on the Saturday of Holy Week, 1916, against the leadership displayed on that occasion.

Denis McCullough's prominence in the republican organisation pre 1916, his undoubted control in Belfast and the feeling of confidence the Volunteers in Belfast had in his leadership pre 1916, was shaken when the time for action came. My own impression of Mr. McCullough's reactions to the orders for a rising on Easter Sunday, 1916, was his perplexity at the orders he had received and his feeling of inability to carry those orders out.


Shortly after Easter Week when we came together to discuss the prospects of reorganising the Volunteers and the I.R.B. in Belfast area, we decided to reorganise the remnants of the Irish Republican Brotherhood organisation. Liam Gaynor was appointed Head Centre for Ulster. Gaynor's attitude towards the Irish Volunteers was that the I.R.B. should control the Volunteers and make officer appointments and order activities. I was opposed to any I.R.B. control in the volunteer organisation. I held that the Irish Volunteers should be free from any outside or secret control by the I.R.B. Some time later in 1917 when



I started to reorganise the Irish Volunteers, my ideas were followed and the Volunteers appointed their own officers by the order of the members.

After the general release of sentenced 1916 prisoners in March 1917, I was appointed spokesman to interview Denis McCullough to find out what his future intentions in relation to the Volunteers and the I.R.B. would be.

Mr. McCullough explained to me his problems in Easter Week 1916. He told me that he had been asked by his leaders to do something which was beyond the reasonable expectations of his small force. He believed that McNeill's orders were proper for Belfast, at least, under the circumstances then existing. Those reasons prompted him to discourage action in Belfast after they returned from Co. Tyrone on Easter Sunday. I told Mr. McCullough that we all felt that he had to some extent let us down. We looked on him as being most prominent in the Councils controlling the revolutionary movement prior to 1916, and that when the time came for leadership we were left leaderless. I told him that I was personally satisfied with the explanation he gave re his attitude towards the orders issued to the Belfast men in 1916. I told him that I would be anxious to know if he was inclined to assume leadership again in Belfast and that I was instructed to inform him that the rank and file in the Volunteers would be relieved to know that he would not attempt to again assume leadership.



Mr. McCullough informed me that we could rest assured that in future he would not seek any active part in the affairs of the I.R.B. or the Irish Volunteers but that he would always remain thoroughly gaelic and republican and work for the republican cause, and would help to provide funds and do other useful work.


In July, 1917, I got a message in Belfast that I was to travel to Dublin and there meet Archie Heron at an appointed place. I met Heron as arranged, and he told me to have my breakfast. I then was to proceed to, I believe, an address in Suffolk Street where I was to meet Michael Collins who would explain why I was called to Dublin. I met Collins at the appointed place and he told me that a quantity of ammunition had been landed in Derry before the 1916 Rising and still remained there. He explained that the removal of the stuff would require two cars to convey from Derry to ^{DUBLIN} ~~Belfast~~, that he would provide a car and a driver from Dublin and that my job was to provide a car and capable driver who knew the roads between Derry and Belfast and who would accompany the Dublin car on the expedition to Derry.

The Dublin driver did not know the northern roads. Collins' car was sent to Belfast and I met it there and made all arrangements for both cars to leave Belfast together for Derry on the following Sunday. This was the first time I met Michael Collins and as it was Saturday and the next day was arranged for lifting the ammunition in Derry, I told Collins there was little time for me to make the Belfast arrangements. Collins told me that he had confidence

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from what he heard about me that I could do it and he said "before you leave for Belfast you must meet the Dublin driver and discuss all arrangements with him about making contacts in Belfast".

I met the Dublin driver and made arrangements with him and returned by the 3 p.m. train to Belfast. On the train journey I was thinking deeply over the urgent problem of providing a car and a safe driver to carry out this important mission, and I decided that the first person I would contact on my return to Belfast was a Mr. Finnegan, a chemist, Royal Avenue, Belfast, as I knew he was a reliable member of the Sinn Féin Movement for a number of years and he was an enthusiastic helper at the start of the Volunteers in 1914, and as far as I know, was a member of the Civil Committee governing the Belfast Volunteers. I also know he had no connection with the Hibernian organisation. I explained what I required to Mr. Finnegan on my arrival in Belfast, pointing out that, owing to the nature of the job, I was compelled to keep the matter confined to the people who would be actually involved in doing the work. As far as I can remember, Finnegan's reaction was to tell me that Dr. Harry McNabb was the man for the job. I told Finnegan I did not know McNabb personally but that I knew him by repute as being a member of the Sinn Féin organisation. Finnegan said "leave McNabb to me, I will fix that. If McNabb is not available I will guarantee to you that between McNabb and myself we will procure a reliable driver and car to undertake the job". Finnegan then enquired if I would give him full



particulars of the arrangements so that he could brief the driver as to what was required of him. I gave all the necessary information to Finnegan. He told me to call at a later time that evening and that he would give me the particulars about the driver accompanying the Dublin car to Derry. I am confident that on my return to Finnegan he informed me that McNabb was not in a position to undertake the job but that between them they had secured Dr. James McKee of Banbridge to undertake the work.


My next job was to call on a Mrs. Harvey to arrange that she look after the Dublin driver when he arrived. I arranged to meet the driver and bring him to this woman's place. I explained to the woman that the Dublin man being a stranger in Belfast would probably remain indoor awaiting the arrival of another car whose driver would have no difficulty in finding her address. Both drivers eventually met at Mrs. Harvey's and made their own arrangements about the journey to Derry. The Dublin driver had Collins' instructions about the location of the ammunition in Derry and the lifting of it. I had no further concern with the subsequent arrangements which were in the hands of the Dublin driver. I was later duly informed by Collins that both cars with the ammunition safely arrived in Dublin.

After this incident I was constantly in close contact with Michael Collins up to the time of the Treaty negotiations.

The most important matter to which I wish to refer is the appointment of company delegates to the re-organising convention of the Irish Volunteers which

was to be held on the Saturday of the week in which the Sinn Féin Convention was held in Dublin in October, 1917.

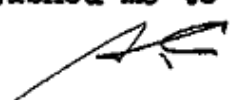
At this time there were only two Companies in Belfast, "A" and "B". "C" Company was earlier formed by the late Peter Burns from the young members of the Seán McDermott Sinn Féin Club. Burns requested G.H.Q. to accept an affiliation as a separate unit from the other two Companies "A" and "B". I was not aware of this move of Burns until G.H.Q. asked me for my comments. At the same time G.H.Q. informed me that they were opposed to granting permission to organise new companies until the existing companies were recruited up to reasonable strength. I replied to G.H.Q. to the effect that I had no objection to the formation of a new company but I felt that the formation of this "C" Company would lead to internal friction in the Volunteers which was undesirable. Before sending this reply on to G.H.Q. I also interviewed Burns and I showed him the communication I had received from G.H.Q. as well as giving him an outline of what my reply to it would be. Burns asked me to refrain from sending on my reply until I met him and a few of the members of "C" Company for a discussion of the matter which I agreed to. Burns, at this meeting, stressed his idea that the formation of "C" Company would add to the strength of the Volunteers in Belfast as there were certain members of "C" Company who would not join existing Companies; one of the reasons being that some persons would not like to expose themselves as members of the Volunteers for business and other reasons, the contention being that members of "A" and "B" Companies were very well known to the police authorities. I informed Burns that I had already been thinking over this problem and that I had decided that



should "C" Company members join up with "A" and "B" Companies in a joint affiliation but each keeping a separate identity as A, B and C Companies, I would make arrangements that men, such as Civil Servants and business men, who did not desire to be seen on open parades, could get drilled and trained indoor without attracting attention from the British Authorities. At this time I was not a Battalion officer. I was officially an instructor to the Belfast Volunteers. There was no Battalion organisation in the country until after the Convention in October, 1917.

Some time after my interview with Burns he called on me and expressed his agreement with my suggestions and handed me the affiliation fee for "C" Company. As a result I had three affiliated Companies in Belfast.


A meeting of the three Belfast Companies was held in St. Mary's Minor Hall to select delegates for the Volunteer Convention. At this time I was head of a Circle of the I.R.B. I can't now definitely state if my Circle received the instructions which undoubtedly other Circles received, to see that delegates selected to attend the Volunteer Convention should be I.R.B. men as far as possible. Before I took the nomination of delegates to the Convention, being the officer appointed to do so by G.H.Q. and accepted by the Volunteers in Belfast, I made clear to the meeting that I understood that an attempt was being made from an outside source to influence the selection of delegates to the Convention. I pointed out that as the officer appointed by G.H.Q. to take the nominations I was at the moment in the chair but I would vacate the chair when the nominations were being made even though the majority of the members present wished me to retain it.



My reason for this was that I was not in fact an officer of any Company and I wished to ensure the Volunteers would have a fair chance to exercise their rights under the Constitution to a free choice of delegates without any outside influences - mine or from other sources.


The nomination of the delegates was carried out in a manner which had my wholehearted approval. As far as I can recall the delegates were - "A" Company: Pádraig Ó Riain, a native of Dublin but then resident in Belfast; "B" Company: Seán Sullivan, a Kerryman; and "C" Company: Paddy Byrne (proper name Seamus Cunningham). I was a delegate at the selection of G. H. Q. and attended the Convention. My instructions on leaving Belfast was that I was to proceed to a certain Dublin address and I there would get final instructions where to go to attend the Convention. This I did and was informed that the place of the meeting was now altered and that I was to make my way to Croke Park and not to make any further inquiries on the journey there.

I can't now describe where the meeting was held; the building it was held in was a ramshackle affair, at least one storey up from the ground floor. I can remember it as being very cold. There was a good crowd of delegates there. I only knew the Belfast delegates and men, such as Michael Collins and Éamon de Valera. As far as I can remember, Mr. de Valera addressed the meeting and when it came to the question of selecting representatives on the Executive Council and when the question of Ulster representatives came up, my name was proposed. I immediately asked permission to withdraw my name and I desired to make a substitute proposal. I then proposed Seán McEntee, whom I stated, fought in 1916, and



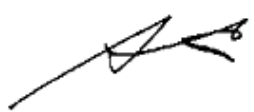
was subsequently condemned to death, as a proper person to represent Ulster. Mr. MacEntee was appointed. The impression I got at this Convention was the urge to organise. We had now an Executive Committee in charge - that we should drill and train and get proper and energetic quartermasters appointed and make all possible efforts to procure arms by any and every means - that the fight was not over but only commencing - that training in the open air, route marching and all such exercises should be indulged in to make men fit to fight and endure hardships.

Seán MacEntee who had attended a meeting of the Executive Committee of the Irish Volunteers called in connection with the conscription menace, sent word to me on his return to Belfast to call to his residence, and there informed me of what had passed at the meeting and that Michael Collins would be anxious to meet me at my earliest convenience. MacEntee also informed me that he believed the reason Collins wanted to see me was that I was being selected as a suitable man to organise resistance to conscription in north-east Ulster. I asked Mr. MacEntee what was the opinion of the members of the Executive in connection with the conscription danger. He replied that as far as the Volunteers were concerned their attitude was that no man was to leave the country no matter what other sections of the community decided. He informed me that as the Irish Hierarchy had given the people a lead by their condemnation of the British attempt to impose conscription and the right of our people to resist, the Volunteers felt that the overwhelming majority of the people would actively resist any attempt to impose conscription.



That week-end I proceeded to Dublin and met Michael Collins. He informed me of his appointment of me as an organiser of the effort to defeat conscription in the north-east area of Ulster. He expressed his desire that I should get down to the preparation of plans for the area without treating the question as a very urgent matter. He didn't think that the crisis would be sprung at a moment's notice. He, however, would like all plans properly made when the time for action arrived. He also advised that all Volunteers in my area were to throw themselves wholeheartedly into the people's demonstrations to show the British how fierce the effort to conscript our young men would be fought. The Volunteers should, in fact, go out to organise public demonstrations to draw attention to our determination and to get all our people enthusiastically behind us.

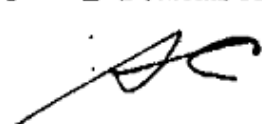
When I returned to Belfast I found it was not necessary for the Volunteers to take any leading part in the moves that were made in Belfast to resist conscription. They threw all their energies into helping the Sinn Féin organisation who took the matter actively in hands. It was not considered good policy to hold public meetings in Belfast area as meetings organised by the nationalists were likely to lead to sectarian trouble. Our efforts were more directed to getting resolutions passed at meetings of public Boards, and other bodies, such as, Foresters, A. O. H., Gaelic League, etc. The main idea behind the Volunteers' efforts in this matter were to protect the people's morale so that if the necessity arose that a hundred per cent effort to defeat Britain's plans would be made - physically if necessary. The signing of the anti-



conscription pledge at the church doors - which was done on the same day all over the country - was the first big public demonstration made in Belfast.

The next item of interest I will refer to is the alleged German Plot in May, 1918. A few days before the arrests in connection with the German Plot a meeting was called by G.H.Q. of delegates from various areas in Ireland and some from England and abroad. The meeting was held in Phil Shanahan's. I was summoned and attended. I travelled to Dublin and met the late P.J. Berrill of Dundalk, who attended the meeting with me. The meeting lasted for two days and a night. The matters discussed were, as far as I can remember now, concerned purely with questions of British military posts and their strengths. Discussions were on matters of strategy and information was sought on harbours, the coastline and railways. I remember very clearly the railway line from Dublin to Belfast being discussed and the question of the friendliness or otherwise of the population in each area where the railway passed. The question of communication between various units was discussed and also the location and strength of enemy forces.

I did not hear a word of any matter that would give me, an ex British N.C.O., any indication that the Irish Volunteers were in touch with the German Government or any other foreign source. I had little knowledge of ports, docks or matters of interest to natives of maritime areas and, therefore, I could not helpfully express opinions on those matters. Michael Collins had made arrangements for my stay in Dublin in ~~Barry's~~ ^{BARRY'S} Hotel while attending those meetings. I remember clearly on



the morning after the last meeting, a priest at breakfast passing the remark that there was a general round-up all over the country last night and up to an early hour this morning and that arrests were still being made in the city. This was the first news I got of the German Plot round-up. The priest did not know I was at the meetings in Shanahan's.

Some time in the autumn of 1918 - I was then employed in the electrical section of Harland & Wolf's - and was on this particular occasion going on night duty at 5.30 p.m., and my first break for a meal was at 8 p.m., for which I usually went home. On arrival on this occasion my wife informed me that a young man named Thomas McIlhone, who was a shop assistant in Lavery's Public House on Antrim Road, had called to see me and had left a small parcel for me which I was to examine before I went back to work, and that if I thought the contents were alright I was to leave word with my wife and he would call for my reply and the parcel on the following morning and we would discuss full details. On opening the small parcel I found one packets of 10 rounds of .303 ammunition as was used in the Metford No. 1 rifle. There was also a clip of five rounds of an ammunition of which I had no previous experience. I ascertained later that those five rounds were suitable for an Austrian Styer rifle.

I told Mrs. Cusack that she should tell McIlhone that I would call on him at 12 noon next day, that I was satisfied with the contents of parcel but I would have to see him and make further enquiries before making a decision. I called as promised at the time arranged and McIlhone signed to me, drawing my attention to a

solitary man sitting at the counter. I took his sign as a warning to be careful and I said to McIlhone, "I am tired after being up all night, I will go in and sit in the snug". When in the snug I told McIlhone that the stuff seemed to me to be alright, but not having tested the .303 I would like to know the date of its manufacture. Regarding the other ammunition (clip of 5) I told him that I would not accept it unless I was assured that I could get rifles to fire the ammunition. I asked him to enquire from the person who is selling the ammunition as to the points I raised and the quantities of each for sale, full particulars as to where it could be handed over and make provisions for paying only on delivery. He then told me that the man standing at the counter was the seller. I asked him to give the man a drink at my expense and when serving to inform the man that I was the person interested in purchasing the ammunition and to also tell him that for the present I believed we should not be seen together and McIlhone to ask him about the matter on which I required information.

He assured McIlhone that there were 5,000 rounds of .303 available immediately and about the other ammunition there was no hurry but that rifles would be available and some thousands of rounds for each rifle eventually. When McIlhone returned he informed me that the 5,000 rounds were available for immediate delivery and that he wanted them removed that evening. I got McIlhone to inform the man that the removal that evening was impossible, that it would be at least two or three days before I could arrange it and to also find out the price of the stuff. He informed McIlhone that it was a serious matter for him if the stuff was not

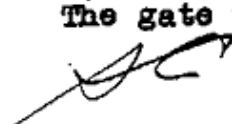
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removed that evening as he had it ready for removal. The price was £4.10.0. per 1,000, which at the moment didn't matter much to him; removal at once was really important. I gave McIlhone £2.0.0. as a payment on account and told him that I would arrange to remove the stuff the next evening and have the balance of the price paid.

It turned out that this man was the caretaker of Dunmore House which was used then as the dumping ground and arsenal for the Ulster Volunteers in Belfast area, and this man was responsible for the safe custody of the material stored there. He told McIlhone that he insisted on that only myself, McIlhone and the driver of the car know about the deal and that I was to accompany the car at that and at any further collections of ammunition.

At the end of the negotiations the man told McIlhone that he wanted a few words with me personally and advised that I should meet him in the lavatory. I met him and he told me he was satisfied with the arrangements, that I was to come in the car and to remain in the back of the car and be well muffled up. He said there would be plain clothes sentries on the gate and they would only let me in as being an important personage. When we were questioned "who is there?", the driver gave them a sign to ask the person in the back of the car and I was to whisper to them the name "Captain Sinclair", which I presume was a password for people seeking admission.

When we arrived in the car I lowered the windows and said "Captain Sinclair". The gate was immediately

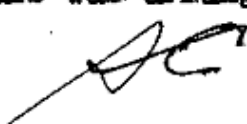


opened and we passed through. We collected the stuff - 5,000 rounds - and I paid the balance of cash due on it. In a brief chat we arranged that McIlhone would be our future contact.

After this first delivery I got delivery of periodical supplies which amounted to a large quantity in all and only ceased when the alarm caused by the capture of some of this stuff upset all future arrangements.

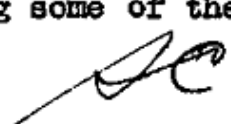
My difficulty in regard to the supply of .303 coming into our hands was a matter of safe storage until it was removed to Dublin. Our first idea was to transport the stuff to Dublin by car, but this did not prove satisfactory as, say, 10,000 rounds of ammunition constituted a bulky load which was not easy to hide. We purchased the stuff in the British Army ammunition boxes and it had to remain in them. So fast was the ammunition accumulating with me that I found great difficulty in finding safe storage accommodation. So I decided to go to Dublin and acquaint Collins of my difficulties. I notified Collins as to the purpose of my visit to him so that he could have the matter considered before my arrival. I travelled to Dublin at the week-end. When I arrived, Collins informed me that he would like I should remain over in Dublin until the following day. I was able to remain over until Sunday evening.

On Saturday I met a number of commercial travellers who were friendly and sympathetic to the republican cause, in a pub in Eustace Street. Amongst those was a man named Dick Stokes who frequently travelled to Belfast. This meeting with the commercials was arranged by Collins.



to enable me to find out the possibilities of their carrying frequent small quantities of ammunition in their skips from Belfast. Those men all were anxious to help, were interested in the weight of each consignment which I proposed to send and the arrangements re taking over the stuff. As far as I can remember it was agreed they would try what was possible when they were again in Belfast. This proposition broke down under test in Belfast as the transporting of the stuff and the increased weight of their skips would attract unwelcome attention. During this meeting a man named James McKavitt of Ardglass, made the suggestion that the stuff could all be moved in corn sacks, say 10 stone of corn and four stone of ammunition in each sack. As this seemed a feasible proposition we filled two sacks, one with corn only and another with ten stones of corn and four stones of ammunition. I found that a special narrower-made sack would have to be used for the ammunition and oats to correspond in appearance and height with the sack containing only oats as the ammunition was heavier than the corresponding volume of oats.

Later I discussed the question of the bags of oats method with Collins. I pointed out to him our difficulty in Belfast in first getting a man engaged on the oats trade and getting the ammunition when stored in his premises transferred to the bags. Even the question of disposing of the ammunition boxes, which carried the maker's name stencilled on the boxes, was a problem. I suggested that Collins should purchase a large lorry and a few runs of the lorry would clear all the stuff, and if successful, the lorry could be sold at little loss. Collins agreed that a lorry would be a good method but in the extreme urgency of getting some of the stuff



National Archives Act, 1986, Regulations, 1988

ABSTRACTION OF PART(S) PURSUANT TO REGULATION 8

Form to be completed and inserted in the original record

in place of each part abstracted

(i) Reference number of the separate cover under which the abstracted part has been filed: NS 402/A.

(ii) How many documents have been abstracted: 277

(iii) The date of each such document: 30/6/60

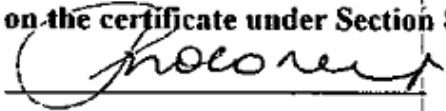
(iv) The description of each document:
NS 402 witness statement re Sean Casack. p 17 & 18.
name of individual

(Where appropriate, a composite description may be entered in respect of two or more related documents).

(v) Reason(s) why the part has been abstracted for retention:

(c) Would or might cause distress or danger to living persons on the ground that they contain information about individuals, or would or might be likely to lead to an action for damages for defamation.

(These will be the reasons given on the certificate under Section 8(4).)



Name: (J. Moloney.)

Grade: Col.

Department/Office/Court:

Date: 7 March 2003.

removed that I should try the sacks method for a start, and that he would get the first consignment of the sacks made to the agreed specifications in Dublin and have them sent on to James McHabb's Corn Stores, Queen's Bridge, Belfast, who had agreed to deal with the corn end of the arrangement. During the following week I notified Collins that I was prepared to start transferring the ammunition in the corn sacks on the following Sunday and to let me know immediately as to whom McHabb would consign the stuff in Dublin. I was notified to have the stuff consigned to Dodd & Co., Smithfield.

On Sunday the stuff was carefully packed in the sacks and ready for dispatch on Monday. On Monday the full 5,000 rounds were sent on as arranged. On Tuesday I got the pre-arranged message from Collins that the stuff had arrived safely in Dublin. The success of the corn sacks method pleased the men at G.H.Q. and the question of purchasing a lorry was dropped. In all, there were about 80,000 rounds of ammunition sent safely in this way to Dublin until almost at the last consignment of the .303, the British Authorities raided the station at Portadown on information received by them and seized a consignment of stuff in the sacks. The information the British Authorities got was about a small consignment of stuff which was being sent to Six Mile Cross, Co. Tyrone, to a man named Slevin. This consignment was sent to Co. Tyrone as a result of Michael Collins' instructions to me to supply 5,000 rounds to

, by the corn sack method. After the seizure of the ammunition at Portadown Station, Dodd & Co.'s premises, Smithfield, Dublin, were raided by British military and all that last consignment of ammunition seized.

This affair was sensational news at the time it happened. The discovery was not due to any haphazard accident on the part of the British nor was it due to any carelessness in the arrangements in Belfast or the handling of the stuff there. Some time after this affair Michael Collins showed me a Dublin Castle Intelligence file on the matter in which it was shown that R
 gave an R. I. C. Constable in Beragh the information about the dispatch of the ammunition to him. The Constable informed his Sergeant and the matter became one for official police action.

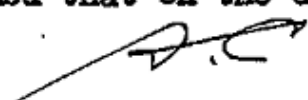
As the result of this discovery at Portadown and Dublin, McNabb's stores was taken over by the police authorities and they found the stores packed with a lot of empty ammunition cases and in addition three or four full cases of ammunition which was retained in the Belfast Brigade area for local use. This ammunition was retained on Collins' instructions as a swap for two machine guns which the Belfast Volunteers had captured in a raid from the National Volunteers and had then been sent by me to Dublin. As a result of this affair Mr. James McNabb who owned the stores, went "on the run" and so evaded capture.

After the General Election in December, 1918, the Government of the Republic was set up in January, 1919. The Volunteers were asked to make a declaration of allegiance to the Government of the Republic. On St. Patrick's night 1919, Mr. E. de Valera was invited to Belfast to address a public meeting under the auspices of Sinn Féin in an effort to strengthen this political organisation in the city. I was invited to attend that meeting as, I believe, the O/C. of Belfast Battalion,

I think the Brigade was not formed then. The question of providing stewards for the street where the meeting was being held, was discussed with me at the meeting where arrangements were made for Mr. de Valera's reception. It was suggested that the Volunteers were the proper organisation to take over the duties of stewarding the meeting. I had strong objection to the use of Volunteers for stewarding purposes as the Volunteers were a military organisation and the matter of politics should be the concern of Sinn Féin. It was pointed out to me that the Volunteers would be only subject to the authority of their own officers and that outside influences would not be allowed to interfere with the Volunteers in their stewarding duties.

I was aware that the meeting had to be concluded at midnight on the evening it was held as the British Authorities would not allow the meeting to continue after that hour. I was also aware that no trouble might be anticipated from the Orange crowd as the meeting was being held in a predominantly nationalist quarter, and the only trouble would be likely to come from the civilian population would be from the A.O.H. and the old Irish Parliamentary Party's supporters who were very strong in the area. I agreed that the Volunteers would attend the meeting in full strength and individually take part in preserving orderly conduct at the meeting but would not take action as an organised military force as such action would entail the carrying of arms which I did not feel would be justified and I would not agree to it.

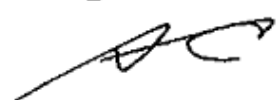
Some time previous to this Belfast meeting, I was in Dublin and was there informed that on the day following



the Belfast meeting, a meeting was to be held in Downpatrick which Mr. De Valera would also address. Collins instructed me that for the Downpatrick meeting I was to pick a guard of honour of reliable men to do duty and I was to take full command myself, guarding the speakers and all other arrangements for the meeting. Collins told me that they feared in Dublin that an attempt would be made to break up the Downpatrick meeting by the Irish Party supporters who were very strong there, and he understood that the Hibernians were holding a meeting in Downpatrick on the same day. Mr. Collins informed me that he was led to believe that the holding of this meeting in Downpatrick would mean a great increase in the strength of the Sinn Féin organisation in County Down.


In consequence of my instructions from Collins I selected forty men from the Belfast units of the Volunteers. These men were selected from "C" Company, Belfast Battalion, as the men of this Company were mostly shipyard workers and were strangers to Belfast, whereas the other companies were mostly recruited from natives of Belfast. I gave Paddy Byrne, O/C. "C" Company, instructions that the members of his Company could attend De Valera's meeting in Belfast but were not to take part in any activities at this meeting as their duties were to travel to Downpatrick the next morning to do duty as I had arranged in Dublin.

I attended De Valera's meeting in Belfast. The meeting provided one of the largest crowds seen in Belfast for years. The meeting was carried out in a most orderly manner and Mr. De Valera was speaking a short time at 12 midnight when the police authorities



made a concerted attack on the meeting. The meeting broke up in disorder and there were many injured by police baton attacks.


I heard on Friday or Saturday that the British Authorities were likely to proclaim the meeting in Downpatrick, so I gave instructions that tickets to Downpatrick were to be purchased on Saturday for the members of "C" Company travelling on Sunday morning and that those men were to proceed to the train individually and make no demonstration either in Belfast or on arrival in Downpatrick. I met the men at the station on Sunday morning and we all arrived in Downpatrick, where I had arranged that members of the organising committee were to meet us, which they did, and we went with them to a place where we were entertained to refreshment and given facilities to rest until it was necessary to take part in the business of the meeting. When in those rooms it was conveyed to me that the local P.P. had reserved accommodation for those travelling from Belfast to attend the meeting, in the church at 11. a.m. Mass. We marched the short distance to the church in military formation to the seats reserved for us. Around 2.30 p.m. a procession was formed on the street to march to the place arranged for our meeting. The Hibernian contingents were in the opposite side of the town forming up in processional order to march to their place of meeting. The arrangements made by both parties entailed that the processionalists marching to both meetings were bound to clash on the streets as both meetings were timed for the same hour and their routes crossed. A conveyance was provided for Mr. de Valera to head our procession, but Mr. de Valera decided on marching with the procession.



Accordingly I distributed my Belfast guard of honour on each side of Mr. de Valera. On our march to the place of the meeting an incident characteristic of Mr. de Valera took place when we met the Hibernian contingent at a corner of a street. The Hibernian procession was headed by a large banner bearing a representation of Robert Emmet in his green coat, white pants and white cockade hat in uplifted right hand. Mr. de Valera gave the order "eyes right" as a salute to this banner and so gained much respect from members of the Hibernian processionists. This incident seemed to have the effect of relieving all the tension which was likely to lead to trouble and both meetings passed off quietly and without incident. I noticed a large number of young men came to our meeting during its progress from the Hibernian meeting. This influx of young men made our meeting which started on a small scale, become a large crowd who listened attentively to what De Valera had to say. This meeting assured the success of Sinn Féin in County Down.

Early in 1919 the Belfast area and East Down were organised into a Brigade area. At first the organisation of the Brigade area was of somewhat skeleton form especially in East Down where the numbers in the organisation were small and scattered.

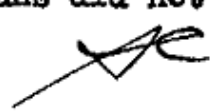
Mr. Collins instructed me to preside in East Down at the appointment of Battalion officers. At this time the Volunteers in East Down would not number 100 men. At the time the Battalion was formed in East Down there were only two Companies in existence with a number of other scattered groups distributed over a wide area.



Of the two larger Companies, one recognised the authority of Seán Doran, Loughlinisland, as O/C., and the other recognised Hugh Halpenny as O/C. When the meeting to elect Battalion officers assembled I found that a certain amount of personal feelings existed between the followers of John Doran and Hugh Halpenny. I got some hint of this state of affairs previous to the meeting being called. When I stated the objects for which the meeting was being held I found that considerable opposition to the appointment of John Doran as Battalion O/C. came from the followers of Hugh Halpenny and vice versa, when the proposal to appoint Halpenny as O/C. came from the Doran element. As I saw no hope of agreement between the parties I put the proposal to appoint John Doran as O/C. to the meeting and it got the majority of votes to carry his election. Those who supported Halpenny took no further part in the meeting after Doran was appointed. Before the meeting terminated and when I realised the impossibility of getting any sort of agreement between the Doran and Halpenny factions, I told the meeting that I would not proceed to elect either a Battalion Quartermaster or a Battalion Adjutant, that in any case the appointments when made were subject to sanction by G.H.Q.

At this meeting I saw clearly that there was no hope of co-operation between the Volunteers who supported Halpenny and those who favoured Doran. As this fact was likely to have a serious effect on the successful organisation of the Volunteers in East Down, I made a report of the position as I saw it to G.H.Q.

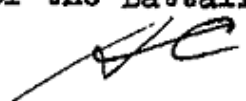
This friction in East Down between two fine Irishmen and sincere republicans did not enter to any



great extent in relations between the Volunteers who supported each of those men. It was a case of loyalty to a person whom the Volunteers had a great personal attachment to and did not produce any ill feelings towards others with different loyalties.

I gave a full account of this meeting to Michael Collins and some time later a meeting was called of Volunteer senior officers from many different parts of the country, where Brigade officers met under the supervision of a member of G.H.Q. staff. A number of those Brigade meetings were going on simultaneously in the same room, and the purpose was to define individual Brigade areas and to enable officers from other Brigades to take part in discussions on the areas to be included into particular Brigades neighbouring theirs.

Each of the H.Q. Presiding Officers had a map of the areas covered by the established Battalions in each proposed Brigade area. On the map for our area the only two Battalion units shown were the Belfast Battalion and East Down Battalion. I had to point out to Dermot O'Hegarty who presided at our table that the appointment of a Battalion officer for East Down had not yet been ratified by G.H.Q. I was rather surprised at this stage to find that Hugh Halpenny had appeared at our table. When I pointed out that there was no Battalion O/C. ratified for East Down, Halpenny objected and stated he was Battalion O/C. and that he claimed the rank on his seniority. I pointed out to Mr. O'Hegarty that I had taken a vote of the delegates at the meeting in East Down and that the majority voted for Doran, and that subject to Doran's ratification by G.H.Q. I would look on Doran as O/C. of the Battalion.



As Halpenny seemed to be in an argumentative mood I suggested to O'Hegarty that he should consult Michael Collins on the matter as Collins was informed as to the position which existed at the meeting where Doran was elected. Collins came along and after I made a statement of the position as I saw it, Collins inquired from Halpenny if he (Halpenny) was intending to defy the authority of G.H.Q. to hold elections and make appointments and if so, Halpenny should clear out as he (Collins) would not stand for such conduct.

Collins then informed O'Hegarty that he was confirming the appointment of Seán Doran as Battalion O/C. and that Doran should arrange the appointment of his own Battalion staff in due course, that the matter was now ended.


The new Brigade area to be known as the Antrim and East Down Brigade was to include the city of Belfast, all County Antrim and East County Down. I was appointed O/C. of the Brigade. At the time of my appointment as Brigade O/C. the greater part of the Brigade area in Co. Antrim and East Down was practically unorganised and no appointments were made in the Brigade staff pending organisation of the whole area. The only Battalion Officer I can be certain of in Belfast was Joe McKelvey, Battalion O/C.

Later in 1919 Collins asked me to take up the organisation of East Down myself. At that time I was also engaged under Collins' directions on intelligence work which brought me closely in touch with the R. I. C. in Belfast city area. From the time I was appointed organiser for East Down I was to devote all my time to

organising and intelligence activities. I formed three new Companies in East Down area which brought the Battalion strength up to five Companies. It was then that J. Doran, Battalion O/C., appointed his Battalion staff on my instructions. I supervised the training of the new Companies, usually adopting the policy of selecting a number of suitable N.C.Os. for classes to enable them to later instruct the rank and file. Prior to my taking up the organisation work in Down I had made contact through Michael Collins with Matthew McCarthy, an R.I.C. Constable, then serving in Glenravel Street Police Station. This Constable McCarthy was closely related to Finnon Lynch and was well known to Michael Collins whom he met in Mrs. McCarthy's, of Mountjoy Square, who was also related to Finnon Lynch.

McCarthy informed me that he was in touch with two other R.I.C. men, one who worked in the District Inspector's Office in Lisburn - Sergeant Gumna, and the other Constable Thomas Derrig serving in Belfast. Both these men were handling confidential documents during the course of their police duties. My duties included the keeping in close contact with those men so that they could supply me immediately with the movements of police officers from Head Constable upwards to and from Belfast to the south of Ireland

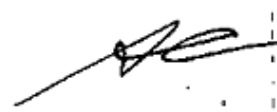
In view of the increasing volume of work entailed for me on Intelligence, together with the work in East Down, I informed Collins that I desired to give up the Brigade O/C. ship. Collins told me to consider the appointment of a deputy to replace me.



I postponed making any change until some time in the winter of 1919. About that time Collins was calling meetings of his Intelligence workers in Ireland and in Britain. These meetings were held regularly every few weeks and had no connection with his own H.Q. Intelligence organisation in Dublin. The requirements in time for this work on Intelligence with frequent attendance at those meetings with Collins in addition to the supervision of the organisation of East Down left my time fully employed and I found that I could not give the time I considered essential to my duties of Brigade O/C. I had a private discussion with the late Joseph McKelvey whom I knew well, and had absolute confidence in, and I told him I intended to resign as Brigade Commandant and that I would recommend him to replace me in that rank. I recommended McKelvey's appointment to Collins and he was ratified as Brigade O/C. by G.H.Q.

The organisation for the purchase of arms in Great Britain and their transport to Ireland was being organised at this time. A lot of the stuff coming from Glasgow came to Belfast port and I had the responsibility of making arrangements to meet the agents carrying the stuff across and have suitable provisions made for safe accommodation for the agents prior to their departure to their home areas. The premises of Mr. Seamus Keaveney, Publican, Corporation Street, Belfast, was extensively used to put up those agents when in Belfast.

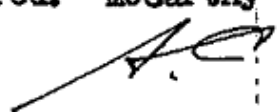
In the late winter of 1919, Mr. Frank Thornton of G.H.Q. Intelligence Staff, called at Seamus Keaveney's and stated that he wanted to see me. I happened to be in County Down that day - it was a Sunday - I returned



to Belfast in the early afternoon. My wife had informed Mr. Keaveney where I was and a message was left with her for me to call to Keaveney's as soon as I returned. In the meantime Mr. Keaveney got in touch with Constable McCarthy at the police station, Glenravel Street, whom he informed that a messenger from Michael Collins desired to see him. McCarthy was on duty when he got the message with the result that McCarthy got to Keaveney's only a short time before I arrived there and was in consultation with Thornton when I arrived.


On my arrival Thornton met me and informed me that his business to Belfast was to get a photograph of Commissioner Redmond of the R.I.C., who, as far as we knew, was then serving in Dublin. Thornton, McCarthy and myself discussed ways of getting a photograph and McCarthy suggested that the only certain way of getting Redmond's photograph was from Redmond's private residence in Belfast. I pointed out to Thornton the difficulty of getting into the private residence to obtain a photograph as Mrs. Redmond was not likely to admit any stranger into the house. I pointed out that there were several Volunteers in Belfast who could identify Redmond. Thornton then informed me that there was no time for that as he was to have the photograph in Dublin that evening if possible. It was difficult for us to know at short notice if Redmond had returned to Belfast for the week end.

His presence in Belfast was a consideration when planning to get his photograph from his home. It was finally decided that McCarthy should visit Redmond's home in uniform on the pretext of an official call and try to get what Thornton required. McCarthy went off on




this mission and he returned with the photograph in a short time. Thornton took the photograph with him that evening to Dublin and Commissioner Redmond was shot on the 21 January, 1920, in Harcourt Street, on the Wednesday following Thornton's visit to Belfast.

At this stage both military and Intelligence activities were developing at an accelerated pace and the G.P.O. in Belfast was intensely used for the transmission of coded messages to and from the British Authorities in London and Dublin. Information as to the volume of those coded messages was conveyed to me by Mr. Art McGahon who worked in the Telegraph Department in Belfast G.P.O. and was introduced to me by Mr. Edmond Cooney. McGahon informed me that he was in a position to give, in whole or in part, all the messages passing through his hands which I considered valuable or important. McGahon wished to be informed as to what was important and he would concentrate on the important matters. I immediately reported to Collins, giving full details of what McGahon was prepared to do. Collins informed me that McGahon could be a most important Intelligence link and he gave me instructions for McGahon, detailing the type of message that was important. He asked me to make arrangements for the despatch of McGahon's messages to Dublin as soon as possible. I got in touch with McGahon again, gave him the instructions and arranged with him that his messages for Collins could be handed immediately to Mr. Eamon Cooney, who was then in a business premises only a short distance from the G.P.O. I kept Cooney always informed as to my whereabouts. McGahon insisted that only Cooney, himself and myself should be aware of the work he was doing as the danger involved of messages being traced to their source would prove a serious, perhaps fatal, matter to him



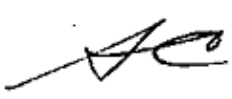
I again saw Collins as to the quickest method of getting McGahon's messages to him. He told me that he would put me in touch with a young fellow named Paddy McKeivitt, a native of Dundalk, who worked on the refreshment car on the G.N.R. train between Belfast and Dublin. This man was already working between Dundalk and Dublin on G.H.Q. messages and was a trusted young man. On account of the arrangements with McGahon, I did not allow McKeivitt to contact Cooney. I handed all McGahon's messages to McKeivitt myself. This arrangement worked smoothly as each day any messages handed over to Cooney in the forenoon were delivered in Dublin that evening.

Also in early 1920, Collins informed me that Sergeant P. Casey, R.I.C., stationed at Annacarthy, County Tipperary, one of Collins' most useful men in that part of the country, was suddenly transferred to Downpatrick, as Casey was suspected in his work of dealing with code documents, of handing out information or documents. Collins asked me to make a report to him as to the safest means of making contact with Sergeant Casey in Downpatrick. Collins sent on to Sergeant Casey a description of me and he gave me a description of Casey and in addition he gave me a code word to be used by me when I accosted Casey, which would prove my credentials to Casey. It was easy for me to make contact with Casey as I knew all the usual police force there. Collins had arranged with Casey that I would contact him on a certain date and time outside a Catholic Repository in Downpatrick, where I would identify myself by using the code word. The code word was "Annacarthy" and the contact was made. Sergeant Casey was too well watched in Downpatrick to be of much further use to us.



About this time also in consequence of the alarm caused by the British Authorities concerning the leakage of secret information to I.R.A. Intelligence, Constable T. Gunne and Constable Derrig became particularly useful. The British Authorities had taken what they thought was a complete safety device to prevent future leakages. I don't remember now what those precautions were, but I do know that Gunne was particularly active in passing out information. Very few days would pass that Gunne did not pass out matter to me direct or to me through Constable McCarthy. Collins informed me that the information he got through these men in Belfast was most useful although some time it might appear on the surface to be useless.


In the summer of 1920 I had an interview with Collins in Dublin and he informed me that a D.I. named Swanzy who had "dirtied his bib" in Cork City, had been transferred to Lisburn. Collins told me that he had no photograph of Swanzy but he gave me a description of the man and told me to have Swanzy kept under observation so that the right man could be clearly identified when action against him might be taken. One of the outstanding portions of the description was the devotion which Swanzy gave to his mother and sister, accompanying them on walks in the afternoon and invariably accompanying them to church on Sundays. I considered that the latter part was most important as the afternoon walks were a matter for Swanzy's availability. Collins impressed on me the danger of putting a stranger or a person who would draw attention on keeping track on Swanzy. He suggested that if I could get a youth with intelligence and proper discretion on the job, he would probably be more suitable than a grown person.



I consulted with Joe McKelvey on whom I should select for this job. We agreed on a young fellow who had been serving in the Fianna and was most intelligent and suitable in every way for our purpose and I put him on watching Swanzy. This youth lived in Belfast and I gave him instructions to report nightly in Belfast on his return from Lisburn.

The weather at this time was particularly fine. After a few days our scout was able to report that a man answering the descriptions given to him was seen each evening going for a short walk with two ladies. I told the scout to watch the man's movements in the early morning and he reported that the man went each morning at the same time towards the Police Barracks. When I found that our scout had got in touch with the right man I told him to ease off but to be prepared on Sunday to watch his movements, if he went to church and if so, who accompanied him. The scout reported that the man went to church accompanied by the same two ladies, he was seen with in the evening, and that he and they walked slowly along the street. On the scout reporting on Sunday evening McKelvey and I had a consultation and McKelvey was satisfied that the scout had definitely identified Swanzy.

Acting on Collins' instructions that I should travel to Dublin and report to him when I was definitely satisfied as to Swanzy's identity and his movements in Durgan, I travelled to Dublin and made my report. Collins now told me that it was his intention, first that the Belfast men would carry out Swanzy's execution, but that the Cork men were insisting that they should do it and that he had agreed to their doing it.




Collins asked me to remain in Dublin for a few days as he had sent to Cork for Seán Culhane who was to take charge of the operation and he would like the three of us to go over the ground and make the plans for carrying out the operation. Culhane turned up in Dublin, and Collins, Culhane and I made arrangements for the reception of the Cork men in Belfast and their safety whilst in the city. It was decided that the operation could best be carried out on a Sunday when Swanzy was going to church. Before I left Dublin I made arrangements to meet Culhane and his men when they arrived in Belfast.

I had to consider what would be the best way of providing accommodation for the Cork men when staying in Belfast and I decided that the Catholic Seamen's Institute would be a suitable place, and I made arrangements for them to stay there. I had already made provisional arrangements through Eamon Cooney for a car to be available for use on Sunday morning to convey the Cork men to Lisburn.

Culhane and five others arrived on an afternoon train from Dublin. I met them at the station. I took them off to where I had arrangements made for a substantial lunch for hungry men.

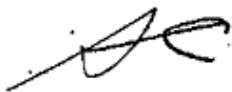
Culhane fixed the hour he required the car for Sunday morning. It was decided, however, that the car would not call to pick up the men at the Catholic Seamen's Institute for obvious reasons. I fixed with Culhane the point where the car would pick up the men and I travelled with the car. When the six men proceeded to enter the car it became very apparent



that the car was not large enough to properly accommodate the men and driver, seven in all, and the driver drew my attention to the overloading of the car. At this stage I drew Culhane aside and told him I had been worrying over the overcrowding of the car during the previous night. Culhane informed me that he could not help it now as each man of his was determined to be on the job and all must go on the car.

The car started with its full load and proceeded by the Glen Road, which was a secondary road, to Eisburn. This route entailed a severe strain on the car as the district was hilly until the road passed Hannahstown. When the car was about half way on its journey to Eisburn it broke down and was not in a condition to complete its journey and the driver failed to put it right so that the operation had to be called off for that day. I was waiting in Joe McKelvey's house when we were told of the calling off of the operation and the Cork men returned by train to Cork on that Sunday evening. Before leaving Belfast, Culhane told me that he did not then know for certain when the operation would again be attempted - on the following Sunday or on the Sunday two weeks hence. We, however, agreed that the same plans would hold for the next attempt when it took place.

On the Wednesday, 18th August, I got intimation that my wife's youngest sister was dangerously ill and that she requested my wife's attendance on her. In consequence my wife and I proceeded to Downpatrick area to visit my sister-in-law. In view of the condition in which we found her we decided that my wife would remain with her sister and that I would also remain until




Friday evening at latest. I told Cooney before leaving that if any message came relating to the Cork men that he was to send an arranged wire which I would get. This wire came on Friday afternoon. I sent a reply to Cooney stating I was returning to Belfast on that evening. Before it was time to take my departure on the train the sick girl took a serious turn for the worst and the doctor expressed the opinion that she had only a short time to live. I decided to remain over until Saturday morning as I knew that Gulhane was not due in Belfast until that evening. Late on Friday night or early on Saturday morning the patient died. I was aware that if I would be away in Belfast from Saturday morning until Monday morning the funeral would have taken place before I could return. I decided on sending a wire to Cooney, worded as follows :-

"Wife's sister dead. Tell Joe and proceed with arrangements already made. Wire me again after seeing Joe".

Later I received a reply from Cooney - "do not worry about job. Return at convenience".

On Sunday, 22nd August, in Downpatrick during the making of arrangements for the funeral, we were told that some very serious trouble had taken place in Lisburn, that some people had been killed and that the police were stopping all cars in an area around Belfast.

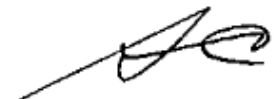
Later that evening I returned again to Downpatrick to find out if there were any more details of the trouble in Lisburn. I was able to gather that the only death in Lisburn was a Police Sergeant. This confirmed my belief that the Swanzy operation had taken place. The Belfast papers on Monday morning confirmed that Swanzy had been shot.



As soon as the funeral was over on Monday I returned to Belfast. There I learned the full details and was relieved to know that the Cork men had returned south by train shortly after the shooting took place. As far as I remember very few, if any, arrests took place before Monday evening. Éamon Cooney was arrested by Tuesday morning and was taken to Lisburn for an identification parade. This was the first arrest I heard about. Later I heard of the arrest of a number of others, including Seán Leonard, who drove the car conveying the men who carried out the shooting. Leonard was the only one detained and charged with the murder.


Immediately after the shooting in Lisburn a number of catholic houses were burned in the town and many catholic families had to clear out of the town. One of the first to be cleared out was the family of Ned Gilmore who was a leading Sinn Féiner and a Volunteer from the start of the Volunteers in Belfast.

From July, 1920, a pogrom had been in existence in Belfast and was developing in intensity gradually as time went on. The first phase of the pogrom was the effort to clear out all catholic workers from Queen's Island Shipbuilding Yards and all other large industrial undertakings. The next phase was in early autumn when catholic public houses on the border line of catholic and unionist districts were burned down. After the burning of the first public houses a campaign of reprisals was carried out. Catholics attacked shipyard workers on trams and an organised effort was made to protect catholic districts. The Unionists made a wholesale attack in York Street area on all small catholic communities living convenient to York Street. This state



of hostilities - burnings, shootings, reprisals and counter reprisals - was carried out in increasing tempo from July 1920 for at least two years. The city was reduced to a shambles on many occasions and large numbers of the catholic population had to leave Belfast and seek refuge in areas in the south. The casualty toll amongst the catholic population was high, in dead and wounded.

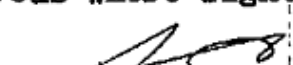
In early 1921, I had occasion to travel to Dublin by train from Belfast to keep an appointment with Michael Collins, on the train on which I travelled I found at a halt at Dundalk Station that there were four Belfast publicans, one whom I knew to be identified with Sinn Féin in Belfast. At least three of those men's houses had been burned and the man I knew asked me if I was going to Dublin and I told him I was. The four men came into my carriage and told me what their business in Dublin was. In short, they were travelling to Dublin in a desperate effort to contact De Valera and find out if he could promise any help to protect them, their houses and properties from the wholesale burnings and shootings which were designed to clear out all catholic licence holders out of the city of Belfast. I was asked if I could make any helpful suggestions as to how they could get in contact with De Valera. I expressed the opinion that it would be a most difficult project to get in touch with De Valera in a short time and that certainly they would not be able to see him and get back to Belfast that day. They informed me that they would not return for a few days. I told them to try and get in contact if they could by other means and that I would on arrival in Dublin make an effort to make contact for them and I got an address from them where I could pick them up.



I met Collins at the place appointed and soon after I arrived I saw Mr. de Valera on the premises. I told Collins of my meeting with the four men on the train and their reasons for travelling to Dublin and their desire to see Mr. de Valera and that I was anxious before Collins and I started our talks to meet De Valera and find out if he would be willing to meet the four Belfast men. Collins went to Mr. de Valera and Mr. de Valera interviewed me on the subject. One of the men's suggestion to me was that the Volunteers should come out and deal in a more drastic way with the unionist mobs who were carrying out all the destruction of catholic property. I explained all this to Mr. de Valera and he told me that he was not in favour of the employment of the Volunteers as such at that stage in Belfast affairs as he looked on the unionist population in Belfast as citizens of the Republic, and that the Volunteers could not be used in a sectarian issue like what was then existing in Belfast on one particular side. I had to agree that De Valera was right, but I held that Volunteers should have absolute freedom of action as individuals in protecting catholic interests.


Mr. de Valera told me that he could not meet the Belfast men that evening, but he told me to get their address for him and he would try and see them before they returned to Belfast. I gave Mr. de Valera their address and I am not aware if Mr. de Valera saw them.

I am not aware that the Volunteers were allowed to act as an army against the unionist mobs. I do know that there was a well organised system of exchange of arms and ammunition between areas where fighting was taking place.



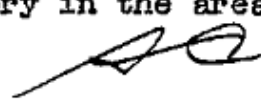
I would like to record one incident which occurred during the heat of the pogrom as an illustration of the savagery with which attacks were carried out against or in catholic quarters. It came to the knowledge of some of our catholic people in the Wall Street area which is convenient to the Shankill Road unionist district, that their area was likely to be attacked and the catholics were on the alert. On a particular evening I made provisions that whatever arms were at our disposal in York Street and Corporation Street were put into the Wall Street area in readiness for defending that area. The numbers of catholics were small in Wall Street and were concentrated in a small portion of the street. This catholic portion of the street controlled at least two narrow streets leading off it which contained entire catholic populations. If the unionists had control of the catholic portion of Wall Street they would be able to dominate the smaller catholic streets leading off it and be able to attack those streets at their leisure.

The expected attack on Wall Street came and immediately a body of British troops were rushed to the area. Before the troops arrived we had met the attack and were putting up a stiff resistance. The arrival of the British troops did not relieve the situation as the troops allowed the Orange mob to come forward and continue in their work of destruction to such an extent that I saw soldiers looking on whilst a catholic house was being burned and from which one of the mob came out carrying a picture of the Sacred Heart which he displayed in the direction of the catholic quarter which we were defending, and then he dropped it on the street and trampled on it. This man was actually shot during his sacrilegious display and the troops then opened fire on



the catholic positions. When I saw the action of the British troops I sent word to the Catholic Presbytery nearby and one of the priests came up immediately. I told him of the position that we were being attacked under the protection of British troops. A short experience in the position convinced the priest that what I told him was true and he left immediately and got in touch with Victoria Military Barracks and as a result the troops in Wall Street were replaced by another contingent from a Scottish Regiment, who proved that the Orange crowd could be controlled very easily by military detachments desiring to give a fair show to all sides.

At the end of that week a brutal action was carried out by a murder gang organised amongst the police force. This gang entered the home of an aged man and his wife and shot the man in bed and a few doors away entered another catholic house in which a young man and his son were in bed. They shot both dead. The apartments in those houses being small, the walls in both these rooms were bespattered with blood. When I got word of those shootings I was in bed and immediately dressed and went to the scene of the shooting. I found the street in alarm and uproar. No further shooting took place in that area that night as such shooting only took place when the murder gang was able to slip into an area undetected. About the time of my arrival a priest came on the scene and he and I in conversation came to the opinion that something would have to be done to prevent such happenings. The priest told me that he would report the matter to Dr. McRory, his Bishop. The priest got in touch with Dr. McRory and made an appointment with me to meet Dr. McRory in the area where shooting

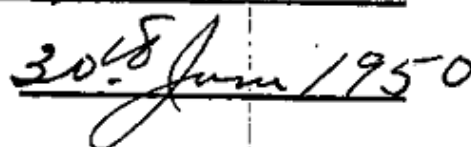


took place. When Dr. McRory viewed the scene of the two shootings he ejaculated, "My God, My God, what can we do to stop this?". After some discussion with locals who were near the happenings, Dr. McRory told us that he would travel at once to Dublin and interview the Lord Mayor of Dublin and other influential people and place the whole matter before them and solicit their help. What steps the Bishop took later I can't say. I do know that there was little further disturbance in that area.

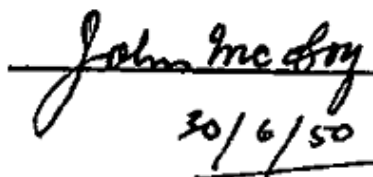
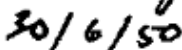
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