

ORIGINAL

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21

BURO STAIRE MILEATA 1913-21

No. W.S. 424

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BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21.

STATEMENT BY WITNESS

DOCUMENT NO. W.S. 424.....

**Witness**

Mrs. Geraldine Dillon,  
Ten, New Line,  
Galway.  
Identity

Sister of Joseph M. Plunkett,  
executed 1916.

**Subject**

Co. Galway  
1920.

**Conditions, if any, stipulated by Witness**

Nil

File No. S.60.....

Form B.S.M. 2.

ORIGINAL

W.S. 424

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21

BURO STAIRE MILEATA 1913-21

No. W.S. 424

SECOND STATEMENT OF

MRS. GERALDINE DILLON (PLUNKETT)

10, NEW LINE, GALWAY.

BLACK AND TAN PERIOD:

Beginning of the terror in Galway;

During the summer of 1920 Black and Tan recruits to the R.I.C. came into Galway in increasing numbers, more and more soldiers arrived, the Cadets (Auxiliaries) took over Lenaboy Castle with its extensive grounds, the property of the O'Hara family, and the R.I.C. in all the villages and small towns were brought into the bigger ones. At last there were more armed soldiers and police than civilians, twenty thousand of them to the fourteen thousand men, women and children of Galway.

The Auxies were supposed to be officers and gentlemen, and as such were welcomed by the friends of the old Garrison. They were not accepted by "high" society and thought themselves insulted by the discrimination, with amusing results.

The R.I.C. were sharply divided into those who wanted to get out of it as quickly as they could, and those who had always hated rebels and were going to get their opportunity at last. The first section had already resigned in large numbers, with or without pensions, and this left the Castle without the means of identification of suspects and without the reports they depended on so much. Resignations were now stopped and those who tried to get out on the plea of ill-health or the like, were beaten-up to teach them to know better.

This left us with a lot of friends in the police barracks and they gave us all the information they could. For instance, a constable would slip across to the Abbey as if for Confession and a few minutes afterwards Father Fidelis would stroll along and warn someone that they had better go on the run. Michael Allen's brother-in-law, Paddy MacAvinue, was clerk to the C.I. for a short time and was asked to stay in it in order to get information, but he could not bear it and managed to leave. This made him a mark for murder when the trouble started. Black and 'Tans usually lived in the barracks with the R.I.C. Promotion among both sections was rapid, every constable could hope to be a D.I. and every sergeant a C.I., provided he showed his loyalty to England and his willingness to kill, maim and torture. After a while the worst of the two lots were indistinguishable, except that the old R.I.C. knew who we were as a rule and took a good deal of pleasure in being insolent.

The Auxies who were married, or supposed to be married, lived in lodgings in the town. Twenty-six sets of divorce papers were served on them in one day! Some brought their children with them and some left them behind when they left. They seemed to us to be a set of lunatics and by the time they left, their lives were as silly and fantastic as any film scenario. Their Colonel, Col. Guard brought his wife with him and a great point was made of his being a Catholic, but this only made it more amusing when he got engaged to the sister of a Black and 'Tan. The poor man could not get a divorce because he was a Catholic! He was afterwards in Palestine police and died of T.B. They said that the brassy-haired sixfooter who was married to another of them belonged to a good family who had offered her any money if she would leave him. They spent their money on drink and lived on

loot, pigs, hens and ducks stolen from country people. They drank anything, mixtures of Bovril and whiskey, gin and rum. They stole everything, down to the old lady's red petticoat, and sent them to their friends in England as souvenirs. We heard from people in England of the wonderful things their friends were getting and did not realise they were stolen. Nine extra train-loads of parcels of poultry were sent by them from the Galway Post Office at Christmas. They fought amongst themselves, sometimes with guns. Some were even dismissed for conduct unbecoming to an officer and a gentleman. Some of them took one of their friends out of bed one night, after a row about a box of matches in a pub, threw him in the tide and riddled him with bullets. When Dr. Michael O'Malley was trying to save his life, the house was raided, apparently in order to pretend that the man had been shot by Sinn Féiners. The Official Murder Gang were stationed in the Retreat, Rockbarton, which had been commandeered also during their visits to Galway.

The Cadets and Black and Tans settled down happily with their lady friends, bought new clothes with their pound a day and waited for the fun to start. It was known that when it did start they would be allowed to loot freely. They had been told this when they were engaged. This was all they were interested in and, except for the official murder gang, they did the looting and the old R.I.C. did the killing. Those who knew the old crowd were not surprised at this, they knew how bitter they were, but it surprised many people. Up to this, they had thought them decent enough and they never really thought they handed on all the information they gathered from their neighbours. All the information did not come from them, however; a certain amount was due to wicked spite and insane jealousy between neighbours.

After the sack of Balbriggan, the terror was expected in all small towns in Ireland and we in Galway expected it too. The logical sequence of Lloyd George's speech was flogging, pitch-caps and torture. We did not realise how much murder we were to expect also.

D. I. Hildebrand was a kindly man who had lived a long time in Galway. He took the decent official's view that maladministration and injustice were the cause of all the trouble in Ireland. He did not know why so many troops had been sent into Galway and was very worried by it. It was, no doubt, due to the almost complete break-down of civil government in the West, more than any other part, the daily resignations from the list of J. P.s and other essential parts of the system, the empty law courts and the full Sinn Féin arbitration courts, the "missing" minute books and account books which the L.G.B. looked for in vain. Some time previously Dr. Tom Walsh had asked MacGloin of the R.I.C. to form a police Union and to refuse to do political work for police and promised to get him a big position with pay on the republican side. MacGloin consented and resigned. Tom Walsh did nothing. MacGloin was at home for about a year and then went to England to join Black and Tans and was given a roving commission to come back to Ireland. He worked with Igoe the man who marked Joe Howley at Broadstone for the sniper.

All these things made the Government think of Galway as a hotbed of rebellion, which was very far from being the case. The Commandant of the Galway Volunteers, Seamus Murphy had been ill for some time and had asked headquarters to replace him, but they had no one to spare. In any case, the town was a garrison town and with more troops than people, nothing could be done in it anyway. Liam Mellows told me in June 1921 that it was on Seamus Murphy's unfavourable report about Galway

that he was not allowed to go back and take command, as he had wanted to do, during the Black and Tan time. Murphy was, at the time, very severely criticised by other members of the I.R.A.

Some Republicans met Hildebrand after the sack of Balbriggan and asked him if it was Galway's turn yet, and he told them that a man had been sent to make such trouble as would lead to the sack of the town, but that as long as he was in control he would not allow this to happen. He had already had to refuse in such a way as to mark him as a non-collaborator. He expected to be transferred and when we heard he was gone we were to look out for squalls. Hildebrand was moved to the North and was replaced by Cruise who came here from Cork.

Cruise was accepted as a gentleman by the "Highs" of Galway. He slept in Eglinton St. Barrack with steel shutters round his bed. He used to lead all the raids and seemed to us to be possessed of a devil. I often saw him in the Crossley tenders full of screaming police which tore along the roads, his head always muffled in a waterproof.

A few days after Hildebrand left a Black and Tan lorry driver named Krumm, who had spent the evening drinking in the house of "one" friend after another, -(he was not in uniform and was accompanied by an unarmed man) came into a pub. He boasted about his aim and insisted on setting up a row of bottles as targets to show his skill. Tom Hynes, the Intelligence Officer, heard of this and sent his brother, Michael, to warn any Volunteers who went to the railway station that an armed man seemed to be preparing to create trouble.

On this night the Volunteers were going to the station to collect arms which Volunteer Tom Redington was bringing from the Longford area. There was a story afterwards that they intended to disarm any troops, soldiers or police, who were at the station that night, but it was not true. They had been collecting arms in the town on that night from friends and foes alike. Friends could not afford to give them without some display of force, to protect them from the the police, but there was nothing on that night in the Railway Station except the collecting of the Longford guns. They were in the habit of going to the station every night at 11.30 to meet the incoming train, to watch the movements of troops, to collect dispatches and to meet Volunteers from other districts. The Volunteers present were Seán Turke, Mulvoy, Johnny Broderick, Frank Dowd, Tommy Fahy and Michael Hynes. Some of them were not on duty. Krumm and his companion went on to the platform by the gate on the arrival side, where the bus station now is. Volunteers warned the men with the Longford guns and they went out by the signal-box with the guns. As the crowd started to go out the gate, Krumm drew his gun and made as if to shoot into the crowd. Turke jumped on his back and pulled him to the ground, trying to get his gun from him. Mulvoy went to help him. Krumm managed to fire all the rounds in his gun in the struggle, killing Mulvoy and wounding another man. Frank Dowd then shot Krumm just as Fahy and Hynes came to help. They took the gun. Krumm's companion was still with him but seems to have taken no part in the business. Mulvoy was carried to his lodgings but was dead on arrival. The incident seemed to be closed except to those who knew that this was what the the police were waiting for. Half-an-hour afterwards the lorries full of armed men tore down the road from Renmore and the shooting began. Volunteer Quirke was taken from his bed

in his lodgings at the New Docks and shot through the stomach eleven times. He crawled on his hands and knees from the lamp-post on the quay where he was shot to the door of the house. Father Griffin was sent for and stayed with him till he died. This was five hours later and he screamed continuously during that time. It was thought that the police thought that Quirke had shot Krumm and that this was a mistake for Turke.

Troops then took Johnny Broderick from his home and Commins from his lodgings and put them up against the big door at the railway station and shot them. Commins was wounded in the leg and fell, Broderick's head was grazed by a bullet and he cleverly fell also, pretending to be dead. Seeing him covered with blood, the police left him. His mother was locked in her house and it was set on fire. Her screams mixed with poor Quirke's. The neighbours rushed to put the fire out and were threatened with guns. When the police left, the fire was put out.

The "Galway Express" office was completely wrecked. *SD,*  
This was supposed to be the only "Sinn Féin" newspaper *in Ireland*  
Commandant Seamus Murphy was the manager, Tom Nix the editor and Dr. Tom Walsh the managing director.

A party of R.I.C. lead by Sergeant Fox of Eglinton St. police barracks ranged the town looking for Volunteers, who had nearly all got away at the sound of the first shots. They searched for Tom Fahy, who was gone, and Paddy MacAvinue got up on the roof of his mother-in-law's house. He could hear Sergeant Fox howling for his blood in the street. One after another the lorries went back to the barracks, leaving the R.I.C. alone in the streets, quite mad with blood.



The next day some of the type of the Galway Express was got together and a leaflet was printed, giving the main facts of the previous night's "orgy of murder and wreckage". It formally accused the police, the R.I.C. of the murders and advised the people to keep cool. (I am giving one to the Bureau to copy (Appendix A). Louis E. O'Dea was the chairman of the town council. He attempted to hold an inquiry but the D.I. Cruise, stopped it and it was made quite plain to him that he would be murdered also. Louis had to go on the run.

Reports of burnings and shootings all over Ireland began to reach the English papers. The hard work of the propaganda department of Dáil Eireann began to have effect. A steady stream of English journalists had been sent all over Ireland, many of them had been in Galway and had attended Republican Courts, etc. They had been told the history of recent years in Ireland and had seen the condition of the country. The Irish Bulletin was sent to them every week. For the first time they knew something about us and reports given to them by their own government were recognised to be untrue. The Manchester Guardian published an article by Ivor Browne, saying that the police were being permitted to run amok. The New Statesman pointed out that Sir Henry Wilson was trying to "explode rebellion", in the manner of Castlereagh. They said that the military and police were acting on direct orders from Downing St, over the heads of Dublin Castle.

This idea of provoking us into disorganised and senseless action, as they had done so many times before, and so working us out of our hard-won position as rulers of the country through our elected representatives, was out of date and did not allow for the speed of modern communications.

The news was carried to the furthest corners of the earth and all men of good will, including all decent Englishmen, helped us to put an end to it.

While anxious that we should be terrified and so willing that we should know what was happening in other parts of the country, the authorities did not want the news to get abroad and were in a dilemma as to whether the news should be published or not. It was extraordinary that they allowed some reports, and still more extraordinary that they suppressed others. The Tribune was allowed to say that the police broke out, that they killed Vol. Quirke, etc. but later they began to threaten reprisals if information was given.

The "military authorities", meaning that curious mixture of old and new R.I.C., Auxiliaries and regular army, did not always work well together. The police had orders, through their weekly gazette, the "Weekly Summary", to "make Ireland an appropriate hell for those whose trade is agitation and whose method is murder". Some regiments took these orders and some did not. The 17th Lancers were quartered in the old distillery building, Earls Island, now the metal Industries factory. They had semi-circular huts full of prisoners in their "care". A prisoner told me that when one of the men wanted to give them blankets in the cold weather, an officer stopped him, saying that he never heard of swine wanting blankets.

While a raid was going on in Josie Lydon's house in Spiddal, a soldier who was guarding the back of the house told me that he was from Tipperary, that he had seen what the 'Tans had done to his own place and that he would be glad of a chance to kill them. Later, the Sherwood Foresters, soldiers of the guard on the Town Hall internment camp saved Liam O'Briain's life when 'Tans wanted to kill him "while attempting to escape".

For a month after the first break-out in Galway the Terror rose higher and higher. Louis E. O'Dea, chairman of the Town Council, courageously had a little handbill printed saying he was to hold a public inquiry into the deaths of Quirke and Mulvoy. Dean Considine was present. D. I. Cruise stopped it, saying that he would use force if necessary. No statements of any kind were allowed. Coroners' inquests had been abolished by military law. A farcical military inquiry was held and adjourned. Requiem Mass was celebrated for Quirke and Mulvoy, the Bishop presiding. The Last Post was sounded. Except for Fr. Griffin, no public funerals were allowed after this.

Certain houses had practically daily raids, Joe Grehan's, Donnelly's and Fegan's in Barna. Paddy MacAvinue's and Harry Shields' houses were commandeered. Four girls had their hair cut off, which was more of a tragedy then than it would be now.

Tuam had a horrible night of raids and shootings. A young man named Harry Burke was made crawl on his hands and knees up and down the Square in his night-shirt and when his knees were cut to pieces a 'Tan took him by the heels and made him finish it on his hands. The Archbishop said that the destruction of life and property took on the hideous colours of Hell. There were lorries going about all night in Galway, firing rifles; Louis O'Dea's office was bombed, Pat Moylette's shop looted, the "Bal" (Ballinasloe House in Salthill, owned by Joe Grehan) was looted while the 'Tans beat a shop boy, played the melodeon, and spat on the crucifix. The Old Malt House was searched for Michael Walsh. The Republican Outfitters was looted. George Nicholls and Costello were arrested, also Reynolds, foreman porter at the station. University College was raided and MacClelland, the clerk, was arrested and later released. The Volunteers put a guard on Fr. O Meehan, who had just got a death notice.

LR  
Charlie

On October 2nd the Tribune had reports of men being stripped and beaten in Tuam, one being an ex-R.I.C. man. Men were usually stripped in front of crowds of women before being beaten with buckled belts or with specially made scourges. Humiliation and indignity were recognised as the objects of the whippings, and it was understood by most people that <sup>only</sup> slaves need fear them. In Ardrahan four houses and haggards were burned. In Labane the parochial hall was burned. Athenry and Moycullen were shot up. Louis O'Dea's was looted again. He had to go on the run or he would have been shot. Powell's was looted. J. J. Ward was ordered to provide drivers for looters' cars and refused to do so. He had to drive Black and Tans about all night, with a gun pressed to his back, as they looted his friends houses. The Tribune's leader was headed "The darkest hour". A warning paragraph by the Editor in the Connaught Tribune told of loose and spiteful talk and said it was not Christian.

A man was shot during a raid in Turloughmore. The town of Gort was burned by soldiers. Fr. Morley of Headford was arrested for having a shot-gun, but later released. Moylette's was raided again, and M. J. Lydon's Castle Bar and the Town Hall, Mountbellew was shot up. There was terror in Clifden, Donnelly's and Fegan's in Barna had raids nearly every night. Donnelly's was set on fire three times in one night, but each time the local Volunteers put out the fires. Houses were daubed with filth and parlours used as lavatories. The printers of the Galway EXPRESS were courtmartialled. While Dean Macken was conducting stations in his parish, armed men raided the Mass house. There was more shooting in Oranmore, and Keane's shop (Joe Howley's mother's) was looted again. Men were scourged in Corofin.

All this time the Volunteers in the county continued to burn abandoned barracks and to attack occupied ones, to hold Arbitration Courts and to make Castle government impossible by taking possession of the account-books of public bodies. Railway workers refused to carry arms or armed soldiers. Arbitration courts were declared to be illegal, but they went on all the time.

There were several rather silly attempts to cook up accusations of theft and damage against the Republican Guards of these courts. In a case in Caltra, Seán Forde and George Nicholls defended and George was arrested as he left the court. He was released but had to go on the run or he would have been shot.

The Execution of Joyce as a spy;

During the summer of 1920 advertisements appeared in all the Irish newspapers offering rewards and protection to loyalists who wrote giving information to the authorities about persons engaged in illegal activities. The Volunteer Intelligence officer in Galway G.P.O., Vol. Joe Togher, was instructed to take possession of all letters etc. of this character and he did so. *Joe Togher was D.C.P.O.* Other P.O. workers were on duty when Togher was absent. Letters and information were also collected and forwarded to the English government by a prominent Galway business man Joe Young O.B.E. Prison Justice etc. and these were posted by him in the mail-van of the limited mail. These were stopped and censored also. *was at least one* Among the letters stopped in the G.P.O. were ~~three~~ from Joyce, the school-master of Barna Boys' school. This man had always been a "loyalist". He was said to be "too fond of the big house" - a snob. Old acquaintances were not surprised when he was shot by the I.R.A. as a spy. The letters gave the names of the officers and men of the *newly formed* East Connemara *Unit*

Brigade, said that they were hostile to the British Government and were actively engaged in working against it. He gave information as to where they were to be found and their meeting place in O'Donnell's house in Cappagh.

Vol. Togher gave the letters to Miceál O Droighneáin, who gave them to I.O. Tom Hynes, of the Galway City Company. Hynes gave them to the Rev. Fr. O Meehan, who brought them with him to Dublin on his next journey, and gave them to the proper persons in the Irish Government. <sup>They considered the</sup> The matter was investigated. Joyce had to be identified as the person who had written the letters. This was done by sending a Volunteer disguised as a blind man, collecting from door to door the price of a mythical cow which had died. He had a note-book in which he asked Joyce to write his name and the amount he had subscribed. The signatures were identical. An order for Joyce's execution was sent to Galway. At the last minute there was a hitch. Another letter from Joyce came into the G.P.O. Togher was not on duty, so it was brought against instructions to Michael Walsh, of the Old Malt House, High St. <sup>It should have been brought to Togher. Ed</sup> It denounced Michael Walsh, Tom O'Connor N.T., Tom Hynes, Miceál O Droighneáin and Fr. Griffin, as persons who should be shot by the English. Michael Walsh brought it to a priest, Fr. Mansfield O.S.A. who, though he was friendly to the Volunteers, was not in communication with the officers. There was a delay and some information seems to have leaked out. - (O'Connor, paper shop, Mainguard St. was a spy. He haunted Walsh's pub. There was too much drinking there and Tom O'Connor and Michael Walsh talked too much). The execution was postponed for a week.

<sup>at 2.30 a.m. Ed</sup>  
The execution was carried out. A priest attended Joyce. This was Fr. Tom Burke, later P.P. of Ahascragh but Fr. Griffin was suspected. It was necessary to let it be known

that a priest had attended him. His body was buried and has never been found. ~~Joyce's son noticed that the side-car on which his father was driven away had bells on the horse.~~

*GD*  
When Paddy O'Flaherty was shot <sup>later</sup> it was thought that the police suspected that the <sup>side</sup> car <sup>on which Joyce was taken away</sup> belonged to him. ~~About half-an-hour after the men had gone~~ Joyce's son went for the police and Black and Tans. <sup>in the morning</sup> This son was a small dark man, aged about twenty. He was pointed out to me on a police lorry soon afterwards, but he went away about Christmastime. I saw him escorted by two police to the station. He was reported to be joining the Black and Tans and to be in the Palestine police later.

*GD* The newspapers reported Joyce's disappearance

It was presumed, of course, that the police would take action at once about Joyce and all concerned were on their guard. They thought it best to stay at their usual work as far as possible but the police had very precise information about the East Connemara Brigade and it is likely that all Joyce's information got to them in spite of the letters being stopped. They acted apparently on the presumption that Joyce had not been killed but was being held as a hostage. It was said that they could not believe that the Volunteers would have the impudence to shoot him.

The way they behaved was complete circumstantial evidence that Joyce was guilty of treason and espionage. They rushed out along the roads next day in lorries and Crossley tenders and whenever they saw a few men together, or even singly, they stopped and beat them up. They horse-whipped a group of boys in Killanin, stripping them first. They had a very strong man with them and he picked up Tom MacDonagh of Cappagh and threw him on the ground, breaking his leg. Then he smashed his bicycle. They arrived in

Spiddal without warning by the bog-road and caught Eamonn Breathnach in the Co-op., where he worked. They beat him on the head with the butts of their rifles and fired them off beside his ears and all the time they shouted that Joyce must be brought back by next day or they would come back and shoot everyone in the village. This terrified the people but was not likely to happen as there were a good number of retired R.I.C. living there.

*l.v.*  
We already knew what had happened to Joyce. We were riding <sup>on bicycles</sup> to Spiddal that day as we were staying there, on the run, more or less, although the police seemed to have very little information about us at that time. We met the howling gangsters in the lorries on their way back. We had just parted from Miceál O Droighneáin a few moments before and as they passed they caught sight of him backing through the hedge. They jumped off the lorry but he got away. It is practically impossible to catch a Connemara man on his own land. When we reached Spiddal we found Eamonn Breathnach with a great cut over his eye, and <sup>the</sup> whole place in an uproar. The police had ordered Fr. Mac<sup>B</sup>hinney to denounce the kidnapping of Joyce and to tell the people at next Sunday's Mass that they must bring him back, but he refused in spite of their threats. D.I. Cruise was in command of the lorries. We could see him when the waterproof coat blew off his head.

Most of the murders in Galway from this to the end, were reprisals for Joyce.

Immediately after these incidents, Dr. O'Dea, Bishop of Galway, asked my husband if Joyce had been executed with proper authority, as if not, he would have to denounce it as murder. My husband told him that he knew it had been



authorised but that he would obtain formal assurance if it was necessary and he did so within a few days. Dublin Castle had expected denunciation and waited for it. When Dr. O'Dea said nothing, they knew that he accepted the Irish Government as the "de jure" government of Ireland. Priests of Galway diocese were now marked for murder. Dr. O'Dea got a threatening letter.

Dr. O'Dea, Bishop of Galway, denounced the conduct of the troops; The town of Loughrea was shot-up. Burnings of houses and farms continued. Claremorris had a night of terror. Mary Malone, Mary Horan and Mrs. MacNamee were arrested. Hugh Martin of the DAILY NEWS wrote an article on the KNOOUT IN IRELAND. On the 15th October matters took a new turn.

The execution of Joyce is followed by reprisals;

The first reprisal for Joyce was the shooting of Michael Walsh, of the Old Malt House, High St. on 19th October 1920. The motives for this were; his assistance to the Volunteers, the use of his farm in the country as a prison for prisoners of the Republican courts, of which two former prisoners had told the police; and Joyce's letter, of which a copy in full must have got to the police in the end. The most shocking thing about his death was the way his murderers made him walk to the quay to be shot. The masked men had entered his shop and told him that they would kill him in half-an-hour. This was heard by the people who were cleared out of the shop, but no-one went to get help. Maybe they did not know where to go. The men got nervous and did not wait the full time. After about twenty minutes

they took him away through a crowd of people who could do nothing to stop it, to the fish-market. They shot him there and threw his body in the tide.

The military authorities said that only immediate relatives would be allowed to follow the hearse, thus taking responsibility for the killing. A great many people of the town, who were sincerely affected, attempted to follow also. When the hearse reached the Square it was stopped by Capt. Harrison, liason officer between Auxies and police, who was threatening the people with a revolver, dancing about and making himself ridiculous. He had some 17th Lancers on horseback with him. They were riding beside the hearse with him and he ordered them to charge the crowd with the result that the crowd had to give up the attempt to follow the funeral. The scene went on for what seemed a long time. From this time, loyalists drew a sharp line between military and police.

After Michael Walsh's death;

The peculiar censorship allowed the Editor of the TRIBUNE to publish the killing of Thomas Egan by armed men in uniform but at the same time he said that the whole affair was shrouded in mystery. Egan's house was used as a meeting place for the Carnmore and Athenry Volunteers. This was another case of an individual man being picked off at the same time as the general terror aimed at the whole population. Mrs. Quinn, a pregnant woman, was shot as she sat alone at the side of the road, waiting for her husband to come home.

On the same date there was an ambush of police and military reported at Castledaly, where they had gone to play tennis! The report gives the casualties as one dead

*Each time this happened we knew G.D. that information had been given G.D.*

and one wounded, but there were at least three dead. Stanford and Fahy of Gort were the Volunteer officers in charge of the ambush.

The resistance to the English civil government continued, returns were not made to the Registrar General, Income Tax could not be collected etc. At the same time, the Government cut down the contributions from the central fund to the fearful economy level laid down in the Home Rule Bill and there was no money for Mental Hospitals, Poor Relief, Workhouses or indeed anything else.

The Archbishop of Tuam, Dr. Gilmartin, with the best of intentions started his campaign for a "Truce of God". Any sign of the Irish asking for a truce was hailed by England as meaning that we were beaten and was the direct cause of prolonging the Terror beyond the original six months asked for by Lloyd George. This was not understood by some of our people, who thought that they should be more Christian than our enemies. Neither Dr. Gilmartin, nor Mrs. Sheehy-Skeffington, nor the originators of the Galway Co. Council resolution intended to do more than to point out that the Terror was wrong, and to ask the English to put an end to it. Galway was terribly isolated during this time and the implications of these efforts were not obvious in it.

The murder of Fr. Griffin;

On November 20th the TRIBUNE asked "Where is Father Griffin?".

Father Michael Griffin was 26 years old when he was killed. He had been three years in Galway as a curate in Rahoon parish. He knew little or no Irish when he came to Galway first and during those three years he learnt enough to converse fluently with native speakers and to preach an

excellent sermon. Rahoon is a very big parish stretching from the city to the "Liberty stream" near Furbough and from there over to Tonabrocky and on to Bushy Park. Father Griffin knew every hole and corner in it and made friends with every person in it. There was no house where he was not welcome, thieves and blackguards as well as honest men loved him. He advised people with dumb children where to send them to school, he wrote the letters to the schools for them; he advised hard old women to let their sons get married; he got men who had not seen the inside of the Church for years to go to Mass; he was invited into thieves' houses, houses with tight-shut doors, houses where the people were ashamed to let their poverty be seen. He got money from the well-off and gave it to the poor; he gave it away as if it was burning a hole in his pocket, he never had a penny for himself. Every small boy with a clean face got a penny from him. Two little lads ran up to him in Dominick St. one day, shouting "I've a clean face, Father!" and Father Griffin turned his two trouser pockets inside out to show them he had not a penny, laughing and telling them he might have pennies tomorrow. The day before he was shot Mrs. Tomás Concannon gave him a cheque she had just got as royalties on one of her books, for twenty pounds. He cashed it that day and gave it away before evening.

He was very wise for so young a priest, his advice was sound and moderate. I never saw him lose his temper or even get really annoyed except once, when a Galway girl married an English soldier, a 17th Lancer, but even then he allowed for her bad bringing-up. He spent himself in the service of others as if he knew he only had a short time.

He was young, strong and high-spirited and would have liked to have shouldered his rifle with a flying column but he did not regret his clerical uniform. He was big and fair, fresh-coloured and neither thin nor fat. His eyes were grey, his nose was big and his face was rather long. His face was reminiscent of the Leonardo composite head of Christ. He was cheerful and happy and busy. He acted on the Republican Court, which always had a priest on it - Fr. O Meehan, Fr. Tom Burke, Dean Considine and Fr. T. O'Kelly. He knew all the Volunteers and was in their counsels. There was very little doing in Galway city, the place was just a barrack. It was an achievement to manage to live in the place at all if you were not on the English side.

Father O'Meehan got a death notice with skull and cross bones, so he went on the run. ( He was the most important of the clergy and was fully in the I.R.A. confidence. Between 35-40 he was heavily built, fresh complexioned, fair brown hair - a born soldier.) This left the parish short-handed and Father Griffin had to do most of the country sick-calls. He had a motor-bike, but it was thought that this exposed him too much, so he put it away and got people to send side cars to fetch him. This was the only precaution he took, as he did not think he was very important. He went round on all the Stations with Father Davis, who had been recently been made P.P. of Rahoon. Fr. Davis, though a pro-British, was very fond of Fr. Griffin. He was also very considerate to Michael O Droighneáin and would close the school on the slightest hint of an epidemic, to allow him to go on the run.

On the night of November 14th, which was a wild night of storm and rain, Dr. Michael O'Malley and his wife and Dr. Bartly O'Beirne and his wife, were playing cards with Michael Kennedy and his first wife in the Kennedy's house in Salthill. There was a loud knock at the hall-door and three smallish men, not in uniform came in waving revolvers and shouting for "the Professor". There was no Professor there and it was only next day that it was remembered that Prof. Tomás O'Máille was always called so by the townspeople. He had been sleeping in Kennedy's, on the run, because of the activities of his brother, Pádraig, who had a camp of Volunteers and refugees in Connemara. It was only by chance that he was not there that night. After searching the house, they allowed the O'Malleys and the O'Beirnes to go. The O'Malleys came in as they passed us and told us what had happened, so my husband went on the run, and warned others, among them Liam O'Brien, as he went. The men stayed a long time, talking to the Kennedys and to each other, calling each other by the names of Barker and Smith and Ward. The Kennedys were terrified that they would start shooting, as they were still waving their guns and the babies were in their cots just overhead, but they got a bit quieter after a time. They said that this was quite a nice raid but that they had a terrible job to do that night, later on. They were quite upset about it. Earlier that same evening three smallish men had a meal in a Galway hotel and spoke of an unpleasant job they had to do that night. This was heard by Miss Norah O'Donnell, a visitor at the hotel. At about half-past ten I saw them passing along the front at Salthill. We lived

opposite. They knocked at Finan's public-house door for some time, hoping to get a drink, but no one answered, and they went on. Near the "Bal" they met an English Protestant clergyman named Batley, an archaeologist, who was going home. They stopped him and searched him, quite politely, and then said; "We searched this gentleman yesterday". He had been searched by men in Black and Tan uniform the day before. Quarter of an hour later three men in civilian clothes knocked on Fr. Griffin's door and told him he was wanted. He went with them, walking up to Lenaboy Castle, and was shot on the tennis-court, through the head. He must have died at once. The shot went through the Dominican Convent window. The nuns complained and Auxiliaries searched and found the bullet the next day.

The house-keeper and a teacher named Naughton who lived next door, heard him - (Fr. Griffin) say; "I would do more than that for you" proving that he thought he was going as a priest". If he had known he would be shot, he would have gone all the same, on the chance that he was required by someone in need of a priest. He had told me that he would do so in such circumstances. He must have had an idea of it, as he took the wrong hat and a coat he never wore on night-calls.

*20 minutes*  
After he had gone, a side-car driven by a man named Quirke drove past the house and went towards Lenaboy. It must have picked up the three men as they drove on it to the "Retreat" house in Salthill, commandeered by B. & T.s shortly afterwards.

A lorry took his body from Lenaboy. It came out the main gate on Taylor's Hill, down the hill to Nile Lodge corner, out to the Retreat by Sea Road and Salthill, up Threadneedle Road and across down to the road which goes to Ragoon cemetery, up past the cemetery and then turned to the left towards the bog. They buried him there in a shallow grave, where his monument now stands. This information was obtained by Tom Hynes who questioned the people living in houses along the route, finishing with the Barna men who found the body.

The military and police suggested that Fr. Griffin had threatened to go to them with information if Joyce was not brought back at once, and had therefore been executed by I.R.A. He was, of course, aware of the execution of Joyce and had no qualms of conscience about it to my knowledge. Silly stories like this went about for a time, but the ordinary man had no doubts. Another story was that he had threatened the congregation in a sermon in Barna. This was a lie.

A girl swore an affidavit that she heard a Black and Tan say, in a bar, that "the parson was in the bog". After the Barna men found his body, they washed it and wrapped it in a sheet and brought it on an ass-cart into the town. They brought his clothes in separately. The little ass and cart was left forgotten till evening, in the street. The whole town lamented him and would not be comforted.

Fr. James O'Dea P.P. Clarenbridge (or Claregalway) is compiling the official diocesan history of Fr. Griffin for the Bishop. Fr. Griffin is buried in Loughrea in the Bishop's own grave.



The Terror continues;-

The floggings, burnings and lootings continued week after week. A student in U.C.G., who was an ex-soldier holding what was called a Kitchener scholarship, told the police that some engineering students were larking about the drawing-office during the "two minutes silence" on armistice day, November 11th, and so a company of soldiers arrived up at the College and forced the men students to stand while "God save the king" was played. The student was dealt with by his fellows later in an appropriate manner. At the Four Corners in Galway police enforced the "two minutes" with ashplants on country-men who had never heard of it. I saw an old man stagger down the street pouring blood from a savage blow across the face. *His son shot the man who did it a year afterwards.*

The news-papers were now allowed to give a heavily censored account of the Connaught Rangers' mutiny in India the previous summer. In Galway a hand-picked lot of ex-soldiers were used to mark their fellow-citizens for arrest and ill-treatment, at the Christmas fair. I saw a tender full of these prisoners being brought along the front at Salthill. They were brought to Barna and thrown into the river, taken out and thrown into a "dog-kennel" hut in Earl's Island. The Corrib Club was now commandeered and a plank bridge thrown over to it from Earl's Island. Prisoners were brought out to the plank with a rope round their neck and, half hanged, half drowned, thrown back into the huts in their wet clothes. Michael Moran of Tuam, was taken by Lancers after being released from gaol, and shot here, at the back of U.C.G. ball alley. The Town Hall was filled with men prisoners, 134 of them, night and day without exercise or air, means of washing or getting rid of vermin, without enough to eat or any quiet or privacy. There was a dictaphone in it. One officer used to let them out once a week as far as the river-bank to shake the lice out of their blankets, but this was stopped on account of an

epidemic of mumps. After two men had died without warning, of pneumonia, a better officer took over the Protestant Parochial Hall also and they had a little more room. Food was provided by a shilling a week contribution from every shop-assistant in Galway and cooked and prepared by Bridget McHugh R.I.P. sister-in-law of George Nicholls. The soldiers guarding the Town Hall were Sherwood Foresters quartered in the workhouse, decent poor men and kindly. They would do anything for half-a-crown or even without it. They sold their rifles to the Volunteers for £2 10 0 apiece.

The gaol was full to bursting. The Governor and warders, except for one man and woman, were Irish republicans and the prisoners in it were safe from ill-treatment. The governor was threatened by Black and Tans because he would not let his prisoners be beaten. The unlucky man who was brought to Eglinton St. police barracks was beaten and abused without a chance of escape. An account of what happened there filled three numbers of the "IRISH BULLETIN" and landed me in gaol for being found with copies of it. The Connaught Tribune reported that the Loughnane brothers, Patrick and Henry, mere boys, were dragged after lorries, their heads blown off with gelignite placed in their mouths, petrol poured over them and set alight and they were then thrown into a pool of water.

The TRIBUNE of the same date reported the death of Joe Howley "shot while attempting to escape from arrest". He was a son of the Mrs. Keane of Oranmore who had her shop raided and looted so often on his account. He had been on the run near home for a long time and it was getting a bit too hot, so he decided to go to Dublin for a

while. When he got off the train at the Broadstone station, he was greeted by an R.I.C. man formerly stationed in Galway, who shook hands with him in a friendly manner. A police (or soldier) marksman was waiting for the signal and shot Joe Howley dead. He had not been arrested and had walked quietly away from the R.I.C. man. There had been an attempt to identify this R.I.C. man in order to remove him but the man (Tom Newell (Sweeney))<sup>SD</sup> sent to do so from Galway was caught and badly wounded before he could do it.

Paddy O'Flaherty was now shot at the top of Barna Hill. It will be remembered that he had been put down as the driver of the car which removed Joyce. The Black and Tans threatened his family that the same would be done to them if they said he was shot. It had to be reported as accidental.

A large force invaded Aran and spent a day searching and terrifying people there. They killed three men. It was thought at the time that this was to get the Volunteers who were there on the run, but we heard afterwards that it was due to reports of men drilling night and day, which were not true. They were sent in by people who lived on ascendancy rule.

So we got to Christmas. The Archbishop of Tuam was still calling for a Truce of God. The ill-advised resolution from the Galway County Council was being circulated to the Rural Councils for their approval. Mr. Kennedy, Chairman of the Tuam Council, said that only

*This was Joe. He changed his name by deed-poll to Johnston & is now living in Belfast G.R.*

people of the British garrison wanted peace, meaning the kind of peace we were likely to get then. The Volunteers continued to seize County Council documents and generally make Castle government impossible.

SIGNED

Genevieve Dillon,

DATE

14. 9. 1950

WITNESS

*Smiloway*

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