

ROINN  COSANTA.

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21.

STATEMENT BY WITNESS

DOCUMENT NO. W.S.481.....

Witness

Simon Donnelly,
16 Arnott Street,
South Circular Road,
Dublin.

Identity

Vice-Commandant 3rd Battalion
Dublin Brigade, 1917-1921;
Staff Officer G.H.Q. 1921;
Chief of Republican Police 1921.

Subject

- (a) National activities 1916 - date of Truce;
- (b) Arrival of Black and Tans, Dublin;
- (c) Death of McKee, Glancy, and Clune;
- (d) Bloody Sunday, November 1920.

Conditions, if any, stipulated by Witness

Nil

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Form B.S.M. 2.

Statement by Mr. Simon Donnelly,

16, Arnott Street, South Circular Road, Dublin.

On the way to North Wall from Richmond Barracks, we crossed O'Connell Bridge and saw for the first time the ruins of the city. Our party, which was heavily guarded by British troops, gave a great cheer and burst into patriotic songs, the morale of all being very high and not in any way despondent after the failure of the Rising.

When we arrived at the North Wall (i.e. The Port of Dublin), we were herded like cattle in the hold of the ship and kept below all the time during the voyage. The men were tired and worn out after the week's fighting and most of them slept on the journey. We arrived at Wakefield gaol, Yorkshire, and were thoroughly searched and relieved of all our personal belongings. While this was taking place, we were selecting our pals and little groups that would stay together, but we were very soon disillusioned on this point as we were put into separate cells and kept in close confinement, being allowed only a short period of exercise each day.

After a few days we were all paraded in one of the corridors and addressed by a British Officer from the War Office. Amongst other things he asked was had we any complaints and he certainly got them in an avalanche. Some of our spokesmen demanded prisoners-of-war treatment and not that of criminals awaiting trial. It was, I think, also suggested by the British Officer that we work. This we refused to do as we believed we would be helping England's

/War

War effort. We did, however, do light fatigue work, solely in connection with our own quarters.

After the visit of the War Office official, things changed for the better and we had prolonged exercise. Visitors were admitted freely and brought in large supplies of food, cigarettes and so forth. Some of the prisoners' relatives travelled over from Ireland and were allowed in daily. Others came from Manchester, Liverpool and other parts of England.

There was also in this prison a number of conscientious objectors doing prison sentences. They had a very hard time and must have felt very sore at seeing us, Irish rebels, eating the best, smoking and generally having a good time. We felt genuinely sorry for them and when given a chance slipped them cigarettes, sweets and so forth and got some letters smuggled out for them by the visitors. In our misguided kindness, however, we got them into trouble, as the authorities raided all the cells one day and those found in possession of the cigarettes and sweets we had given them were severely punished.

One morning about twenty of us were told to get ready to travel. We packed our belongings and were given back the property taken from us on entering the prison. We were taken under a Scotch Army escort by train to an internment Camp at Frongoch, North Wales. In my opinion the British War Office have always found Scotch troops willing to do their dirty work. They used them to shoot down unarmed Dublin Citizens the day of the Howth gun running. They used them extensively in England during their own general strike. We had them again in charge of the Irish prisoners after 1916 and now in the Korean campaign they are on the job again.

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However, it is consoling to know that they are not drawn from the Scottish Gaels, who, like ourselves, are striving to rid their country of English tyranny. Frongoch was not a bad place and we got full prisoner-of-war treatment. Of course, we were all untried prisoners and had been served with notices that we were to be interned. There were two camps, North and South. The North, in which I was interned, was a disused distillery. The South, I believe, was composed solely of huts. There were no visitors or parcels allowed into camp. A dry canteen in which one could purchase extra food was set up in the camp and run by the British. A prisoner had to have money to his credit to avail of this arrangement. All monies were taken off prisoners on entering, but credit given for it. After some months there, another party of which I was one, was told to pack up and get ready to travel. Again a Scotch escort and we found ourselves in Wormwood Scrubbs prison, London, where all the rigours of our first days in Wakefield were re-imposed, close confinement, no smoking and only prison food. One day I was brought out and sent in front of three very dignified, rather old men. They were three Judges who questioned me at length on my part in the Rising. Their motive appeared to be to get the men to repudiate the Leaders and admit to the fact that they were misguided and did not know what was to take place. Naturally, most of the men did not fall for this. I did not and told them I was a junior officer and had no regrets for my part in the Rising. They also knew I was in uniform when I surrendered and wanted to know where it had gone. I was wearing at this time my own civilian suit which my people brought over to Wakefield and it was they who smuggled out my uniform and got it back to Ireland.

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After five or six days we again got marching orders and were landed back in Frongoch. This procedure was adopted with the vast majority of the interned prisoners, with the exception of a small number of notable people, such as the late Arthur Griffith, 'Ginger' O'Connell and others who were removed to another prison^{or}/camp.

We had a number of Galway men with us and their favourite recreation was the old Irish game of Leap Frog. They played it rather vigorously. Bruises and broken bones were a common occurrence. The British Sergeant-Major watching them one day said to me, "Blimey, if that is playing I would not like to see those blokes fighting". He was right, for they were fine hardy muscular men, as we all know.

Released. Back in Dublin. First re-arming

I was amazed some time in August when I was again told to pack up, that I was being released, in spite of the fact that it was known I was an officer. This was done in a number of cases deliberately, I believe, to cause a cleavage between officers and men. However, a large number of men were released at the time and the remainder were not released until a day or two before Christmas 1916.

When I got home I started to get the released men of my old Company together and started reorganising. We knew that the Rising was not the end, but the beginning of another effort in the National Struggle.

All officers who had been released were summoned to a meeting in the home of the late Cathal Brugha, where we received instructions on the lines we were to adopt. We held regular meetings, formed Irish classes and organised

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participants became national heroes overnight and were welcomed, feted and honoured by the nation.

During the time Commandant de Valera was in prison, I received a number of despatches from him which had been smuggled out of Lewes Convict Prison where he was serving his sentence. The smuggling out of these despatches, neatly timed and dated as if from a Field G.H.Q., was no mean achievement as the prisoners were under the most rigorous penal servitude code. The despatches or copies of same are already in the possession of the Military Bureau. The undaunted spirit of the nation's future leader and his anxiety for the future are fully portrayed in the wording of those despatches.

Rumours of the release of the sentenced men were afloat early in May 1917. Then the great event happened. The unconditional release of all the prisoners took place and their arrival at Westland Row railway station in Dublin on a bright May morning will be forever remembered. Never, in our long and glorious history, was there a welcome of such magnitude and sincerity. Tens of thousands of the citizens lined all the main streets and it was with the greatest difficulty that their earlier released comrades got them through to their hotel where an official reception awaited them. Truly, this demonstration must have appeased the many heart-aches they had endured during their imprisonment and brought tears of joy to the relatives of men who had died in the fight. They had not died in vain; a resurgent Ireland was on the march. The time had now come for the reorganisation of the Volunteers or I.R.A. to get under way at full pressure. Recruiting was proceeded with. Companies and Battalions were put on a firm foundation and

thought throughout Ireland.

The General Election in 1918 gave both bodies their chance. The I.R.A. took practically complete control of the running of the Election, such as policing meetings, manning election booths, distributing literature, etc., and numerous other jobs, all in a perfectly organised and disciplined manner; the I.R.A., at this stage, being a well organised military machine. Cumann na mBan also played a big part. The Republican candidates won the day with an overwhelming victory. There was no mistaking their policy for the Election, - A Republic for all Ireland. This verdict of the Irish people was surely a vindication of the martyrs of Easter Week.

As a result of the Election, Dail Eireann met in the Mansion House, Dublin, and from there issued its now famous Declaration of Independence to the world. It was my duty as Adjutant of the local Battalion to take charge of all the police arrangements in connection with this famous session of Dail Eireann. We ignored the existence of the British controlled D.M.P. I think it was at this session that the Dail decided that the I.R.A. be now under the jurisdiction and subject to Dail Eireann. The Oath of Allegiance was subsequently administered to all ranks of the I.R.A. by a senior officer after any men who had any scruples about taking it, were allowed to resign. Resignations were very rare. In my own Battalion I don't think there were any.

Conscription Period.

The threat of Conscription stirred the country to fever pitch. Recruits joined by the thousand to resist conscription. The full resources of every area was brought into action to resist this threat. All existing units were

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in most cases quadrupled in strength. An exhaustive survey of Company areas was carried out and everything of military value was recorded. Complete lists of all types of factories, supply stores, motor cars, tool shops and blacksmiths' forges to make pikes if necessary, were compiled. It was our intention to arm every man prepared to defend his liberty with some kind of weapon, even to the above mentioned primitive pike, to say nothing of the thousands of pitchforks, axes and so forth which were to hand in the factories and shops.

A military plan of defence was also arranged after careful study of each area. The British studied the task that confronted them. Conscript Irish soldiers would not be a paying proposition. They capitulated. Conscription for Ireland was dead. Ireland had won and called their bluff. The dead of Easter Week inspired the nation to defend its birthright.

Armistice Day.

All during Armistice Day, British supporters were parading the city celebrating. Coming towards evening I received information that a mob of the above crowd were planning to attack SinnFein Headquarters at 6 Harcourt Street. Without waiting to contact senior officers or receive orders, I mobilised a number of men of my own Company and put a guard on No. 6, arming them with sticks, hurleys and so forth. We were not at this time allowed to carry or use fire-arms. About 7 o'clock in the evening word came through that the mob were attacking well known houses of Republican supporters, including the Mansion House, residence of the Lord Mayor, and were on their way to attack No. 6. (I had despatched a few of my own men to get among the crowd and learn of their plans.) They also wrecked a

a number of shops owned by Germans, such as pork butchers. We were ready for them when they arrived at No. 6. I had extinguished the lights, left the hall-door open and had men ready in the hall. I also had a party some distance away, ordered to attack the mob from the rere. A volley of stones through the windows heralded their arrival. Some of the bolder elements included in which were soldiers of the Regular British Army armed with handles of trench tools, stormed into the hall. This was what I had planned and hoped for. Our men attacked with hurleys and sticks, and skull-cracking was the order of the day. On a given signal the outer group of our men attacked and soon the street was strewn with casualties. Word of the attack had got round and Volunteers were coming along in large numbers to take part in the fray. The late Harry Boland, who was a man of fine physique, did trogan work, as everytime he hit an enemy went down. The late Mrs. Joe Clarke, wife of the caretaker of No. 6, did her part in no uncertain manner by operating from an upper window with her stock of coal and crowning her efforts with pitching out on the mob vessels of boiling water. This was primitive warfare at its best. The mob eventually retired, sadder but wiser people. Our casualties were about three men slightly wounded. The British troops who were knocking about the city were rounded up by their own armed patrols and brought back to barracks.

Some time after Armistice Day, the then English Viceroy, Lord Ffrench, arranged for a victory march through Dublin, of the British Forces. He was to take the Salute outside the Bank of Ireland. I visited a large British camp in the Phoenix Park some time before the day of the parade. It was to get an idea of the number of troops that would take part,

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as G.H.Q. had decided that the I.R.A. attack this column on the march. The mode of attack was as follows. As the parade in close formation marched past the saluting base, it was to be bombed by small parties along its entire length. Our men were almost in position when the operation was cancelled owing to the estimated heavy casualties that would have been inflicted on the civilians watching the parade, most of whom, if not all, were British Fifth Columnists. G.H.Q.'s decision to my mind, while very humane, was wrong. Similar decisions later on in our campaign also hampered us in our activities. We know now in 1950 the harm that can be done in countries by such people and how drastically present-day Governments and Army Authorities deal with them. It is a pity that the I.R.A. did not show the way in this matter as we did in many other phases of guerilla warfare.

The I.R.A. seized a few cameras taking pictures and dumped them in the Liffey. These pictures were to be shown abroad and would not have been good propaganda for Ireland.

Ashe Funeral.

The funeral of the late Commandant T. Ashe who had died in gaol from the affects of forcible feeding while on hunger strike was an occasion for the Dublin Brigade of the I.R.A. to show its efficiency as a well-organised, trained and disciplined Volunteer force. The marshalling of the funeral parade, lying-in-state and the direction of tens of thousands of sympathisers, control of traffic and so on, created a deep impression on the populace and many anxious moments, I feel sure, to Dublin Castle.

Two incidents in connection with this funeral are worth recording. When the removal of the remains was taking place

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from the Mater Hospital to the Pro-Cathedral, a horse took fright and somebody shouted, "Cavalry! Cavalry!", believing it was British horse soldiers breaking up the procession. A lot of the people got panicky and Volunteers in the parade began to look back, lose their military formation, and so forth. I ordered my Company to keep marching and look to their front, warning the men not to break rank under any circumstances. I had a revolver drawn at this stage. It was a false alarm. Order was soon restored and the procession continued on its way.

It was decided that the remains should lie-in-state in the City Hall. At this time the British had a guard on it as it was an outpost to defend Dublin Castle in its rear. Anxiety was felt by our people as to whether the British would let in the remains or not, but G.H.Q. had made up its mind that in they were being brought for the lying-in-state. I got orders to parade at Parnell Square with a number of other men, most of whom, I would say, were members of the I.R.B. to which I was attached and still attending the meetings. We were ordered to get over to the City Hall, discard our head-gear beforehand, have our revolvers and ammunition in our pockets, walk into the City Hall as if we were some of the ordinary Corporation clerical staff. If the British guard made any attempt to prevent the remains being brought in, we were to rush and disarm them and hold the position. Lucky for us, wiser counsels prevailed and the British guard retreated to rear of building and kept out of sight of the public during the lying-in-state. They did now, however, evacuate the building.

Guerilla War develops.

The I.R.A. in the city were getting very active, attacking and disarming British patrols, raiding for arms, tracking down, warning and in some cases shooting informers

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and spies. Throughout the country attacks on R.I.C. were numerous, patrols being constantly attacked and disarmed. Their barracks were constantly being attacked but only at this stage in the nature of sniping and many feint attacks, aimed at chiefly to lower the morale. Their lines of communications and supplies were also continually being disrupted. This wearing down process succeeded after a few months and great numbers of the smaller barracks were evacuated and the larger type barracks strongly fortified and garrisoned. As a result of this evacuation, large tracts of country were not policed. To guard against lawless elements availing of this position for their own benefit, Dail Eireann set up Republican Law Courts, the I.R.A. taking on the normal duties of a police force. The development of this situation resulted in the people generally boycotting British Courts and institutions and relying for the settling of their disputes on the Republican Courts and its emergency police force. The British had by this time lost all control of civil and military matters in a great many areas.

For a number of years the British took elaborate precautions around the Easter period against a possible recurrence of 1916, that is, a General Rising by the I.R.A. Roads leading to cities and towns were barricaded, all traffic halted and questioned, strategical points manned and garrisons on the alert. Nothing happened.

Burning of R.I.C. barracks, Income Tax Offices
and Customs Posts.

G.H.Q. were planning ahead for the development of the War. An order was issued for the demolition of all vacated R.I.C. barracks, the raiding and destruction of deeds in Income Tax Offices and the destruction of a number of Customs offices. The destruction of R.I.C. barracks was to prevent

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their re-occupation by British Forces, the others - Income Tax and Customs - a blow at the civil arm. Both operations were entirely successful and some hundreds of former British posts were destroyed. We had a small number of casualties, a few men being killed by exploding petrol tins. Two men lost their lives at Ballybrack, County Dublin. Not being known to the British at this time, I attended the subsequent inquest on one of these men. It was important to our policy at this juncture that Crown Juries would not bring in a verdict which might be hostile to the I.R.A. The British, of course, were very anxious to secure verdicts in their favour and tried packing their Juries with their Fifth Column clients, but it was of no avail. The I.R.A. also had a chat with members of the Jury and a non-committal verdict was the result.

German Plot.

The British, in their anxiety to deal with Republican leaders, discovered a mythical German plot and arrested scores of the most prominent men, De Valera being amongst them. I cannot say if he was brought to trial, but he was interned in Lincoln gaol.

The holding of the leader of the Irish people in an English gaol on a false charge was a challenge to be met and G.H.Q. decided to accept the challenge. I was sent for by some officers of G.H.Q. and there met Peadar Clancy, a senior officer at the time. I was asked if I had time to take on some work in conjunction with a few other men. I agreed and was informed that G.H.Q. were planning the kidnapping of the English Viceroy, Lord Ffrench, to hold as a hostage against De Valera. We were instructed to keep a close watch on such places as Dublin Castle, Viceregal Lodge,

/Kildare

Colonels and so forth in their ranks and known as Auxiliaries or Auxies. Usually this force operated on its own and had strong posts in areas where the I.R.A. were overcoming the British forces. They were a very fine, mobile fighting force and caused the I.R.A. great anxiety. Dublin, Cork, Kerry, Clare, Tipperary and Galway were some of the counties in which they operated. I often compared them to the French Foreign Legion. Once in a fight they gave no quarter and asked for none. On occasions all four British forces operated together, that is, Regular Troops, Auxies, Black & Tans and R.I.C. The total strength at its peak must have touched the hundred thousand mark, a very formidable force. Confronting them in the main were the peasant Volunteer soldiers of the I.R.A., small in numbers and poorly armed. I would say that the I.R.A. at this stage had only about 4,000 effectively armed men, that is men with modern rifles or revolvers, a limited number of machine guns and a moderate supply of grenades made in our own factories. This force of our shock or front-line soldiers were organised in Flying Columns, seldom exceeding 50 or 60 men. They had, however, as reserves and in support about 30,000 men, a large number armed with some kind of weapon, but thousands not armed at all. I might mention here that we had also under the command of the late General M. Collins an Intelligence Service, now well organised, that penetrated, undermined and eventually smashed the British Secret Service - more about this later on. We also had in many parts of Great Britain well organised units of the I.R.A. These outposts of the Home Forces struck many a severe blow at the enemy in his own stronghold - Burning of supply stores, raids on mails and lines of communication, raids for arms and explosives for shipment to Ireland and the

/destruction

British Posts and those going in or out of same were put under observation and their movements reported on.

While the Dublin Brigade were intensifying their War on the enemy, the I.R.A. throughout the country were also in constant pursuit and attack of the British. The carrying of hostages by the British when moving through the city was intended to slow up I.R.A. attacks, but it did not succeed. The ambushing of troops in open lorries forced the British to wire in the lorries and form a kind of cage. This was to prevent bombs hurled by the I.R.A. ambushing parties from landing in the lorries. They were also forced to wire in sentries and guards on buildings and barracks. The I.R.A. had the initiative and were grimly fighting to hold on to it. Reprisals by the British became the order of the day and it is beyond doubt they had been adopted as part of the official policy of Dublin Castle. Wholesale burning, shooting of captured prisoners and defenceless citizens became very numerous.

I believe the 3rd Battalion, Dublin Brigade, was the first unit to carry out a planned attack against the Auxies. A Company of this force stationed at Beggars Bush Barracks brought their mails for transmission to England to the Post Office at Ballsbridge. Our orders were to capture the mails at all costs. This operation was successfully carried out and the mails handed over to G.H.Q. Intelligence Department. I learned afterwards that the purpose behind this raid was to secure the home addresses of the Auxies in order that the I.R.A. in Great Britain would retaliate by the destruction of their homes as our answer to the burning of Irish homesteads.

/The

Sunday morning" did not appeal very much to our men who preferred to meet the enemy in the open. It was explained to them very fully the absolute necessity of dealing once and for all with this gang: their existence was a serious menace to the I.R.A. and G.H.Q. had ordered the operation to be carried out and was taking full responsibility for it, moral and otherwise. I had an appointment with the late Brigadier McKee, O/C., Dublin Brigade, for whom I was doing all sorts of odd jobs in connection with the I.R.A. This was some hours after the 3rd Battalion officer asked to be relieved of his part in the operation. I reported to the O/C., Dublin Brigade, that we were having a little difficulty in detailing units for the work. He understood and realised it was not our usual mode of warfare. (We were very close friends). "Well, Simon", said he, "do your best. If we don't get them, they will get us". For him, his prophecy came true. That night himself, Peadar Clancy and Clune were arrested, brought to Dublin Castle and murdered, and their bodies hacked with bayonets. The late Michael Collins thought so highly of these men that he attended their funerals although there was a price on his head and he was the most sought after man in Ireland at the time. Their loss was a very severe blow to the I.R.A., but inspired by the very high standard they had set for us all, we increased our efforts to avenge the loss of our beloved colleagues.

Dublin Castle was dumbfounded and panic-stricken and they decided on severe reprisals. They dashed all over the city, firing on all and sundry. Numerous raids and arrests took place. A football match was in progress at the National Stadium, Croke Park, at which there were about 20,000 people. I went to the match much against my better judgment. It had only started when the air was rent with rifle and machine-gun fire. Regular troops and Black & Tans swarmed into the ground, firing as they advanced. They also manned the railway

/embankment

in the capture of a number of those very much wanted men. They organised a section of the most notorious and blood-thirsty members of the R.I.C. from a large number of counties under the command of a Sergeant Igoe believed to be from Galway. Their task was to patrol the streets of Dublin and keep a look-out for officers from the country. The men selected knew I.R.A. officers by sight and they hoped to locate them as they walked the streets of Dublin. They kept a close eye on all incoming trains to the city. It is to be regretted that the I.R.A. in Dublin City never got a favourable opportunity of attacking this murder gang, for that was their sole mission. The formation they adopted when patrolling was somewhat as follows. They paraded in twos on both sides of the street, being following by other pairs at intervals of 15 and 20 yards. They covered a depth of about 100 yards. The I.R.A. made many efforts to engage this gang in a position favourable to themselves, as to have attacked when and where seen would have entailed considerable casualties on the civilian population in the street at time of attack.

The main purpose of the gang failed, however, as once they became known to the I.R.A. they were easily avoided and our colleagues from the country went about their work in peace. They did, however, on one occasion capture a few officers getting off a western train and, as expected, shot them on the spot. It is to be regretted that we were unable to bring about the extermination of this notorious gang. Some of their colleagues, however, who were operating in their local areas doing the same dirty work and who were responsible for the murder of the Lord Mayors of Cork and Limerick and other prominent Republican leaders were brought to justice and executed by the I.R.A. G.H.Q. Intelligence
/officers

Instructions were issued that street attacks and ambushes would have to be more carefully planned and the points selected to be such as would cause the least casualties or inconvenience to the civil community.

The Dublin Brigade and A.S.U. had hundreds of brilliant operations to their credit all during the reign of terror. Casualties were many; a number of men were captured and executed. Many were shot on being captured. Hundreds were imprisoned or interned. Their ranks were rapidly filled. All honour to the men of the Dublin Brigade: they kept the enemy at bay and retained the initiative.

In the country.

The I.R.A. throughout the country were now a highly organised force, covering the entire territory. Like Dublin, the now famous Flying Columns were getting into their stride. Those columns operating very intensively in Munster (now a martial law area) and to a lesser extent in the other provinces carried out numerous very successful operations against overwhelming British Forces. Their many captures after stiff fighting of strongly fortified barracks, their engaging and routing huge enemy forces, their large capture of arms from defeated forces and their very humane treatment of numerous prisoners captured, all testify to the magnificent gallantry and fighting qualities of the men concerned.

The I.R.A. did not keep prisoners; they were disarmed and allowed to return to their quarters. There were a few exceptions, however, to this rule. A few senior British Officers were held as hostages against some of our men awaiting execution. When our men were executed, they were also executed. Some of the more notorious members of the Crown Forces known to have shot or ill-treated prisoners were also executed, as were also some of the enemy who, after surrendering,

convoys were out for days and to use a common expression at the time, "got nowhere". The I.R.A. also employed another method, to dig a trench and cover it lightly with bushes and a slight covering of earth. This was done on roads deliberately left open for the enemy. Many lorries were crashed and heavy casualties inflicted by this method, as the I.R.A. were always near at hand to complete the job. Another method employed was the sawing through of large trees by the roadside, not sufficient to fell them but in such a manner that a pull would bring them down. A strong wire rope was then fastened about it and another tree on the far side of the road, the wire rope being gauged at a height to catch a lorry. There were a few cases in which this method succeeded, the tree falling on lorry and its occupants. The operation, as usual, was completed by the local armed men of the I.R.A.

All this supplementary work was kept up continuously by the helpers and supports of the front line Flying Columns.

The continuous blocking of roads caused some hardship to our own people, particularly the farming community, as it prevented them getting to markets and fairs. The I.R.A. came to their assistance and, where roads were kept continuously blocked, a breach was made in ditch or hedge lining the road at a place before the road block and another one at the other end. These were wide enough to permit farmers get into the adjoining fields with their horses and carts, donkey-carts in some cases, and get out on the road again after clearing the block. The farming community suffered many inconveniences and hardships, but they did not complain. Why! were not their own sons with the boys, meaning the I.R.A.

well known. They were relentless in pursuit of enemy agents, spies and informers.

From within Dublin Castle, some of its most guarded secrets were known to our Director and many a contemplated coup by the enemy on the I.R.A. was forestalled. Forewarned is fore-armed. Our intelligence service saw to that. The elaborate organisation which was built up from its small beginnings owes its success to the magnificent loyalty and devotion to duty of the men who served in the Secret Corps of the I.R.A. It was a perfect machine and had its agents in such places as factories, offices, theatres, hotels and all places where enemy agents were likely to frequent and talk loosely. Each one of the twelve whole-time officers had a group of these working under him with the result that every source of information was under control. Our men in the Post Office kept the mails under observation, noted the contents of suspected mail and forwarded them to H.Q. Intelligence. This was before we found it necessary to seize certain consignments of mail in their entirety. Great numbers of the civilian population also did their part by transmitting to us information which they believed would be useful. English papers and periodicals were also scanned and much information and photographs of members of the Crown Forces serving in Ireland was procured this way. These referred, of course, to members with a dirty record of service here whom we were anxious to deal with.

I will say, however, the greatest achievement of our Intelligence Service was the getting behind the scenes of Dublin Castle and its agents and undermining their morale and confidence in themselves.

/Members

"You are Simon Donnelly, Vice-Commandant of the 3rd Battalion". I believed the game was up and my chances of surviving very small. Here was the end and why not pretend to be brave, and without thinking of the consequences I replied, "That's right, I am". Let me say, at this stage, that I believe most men, when they feel that death is upon them, develop a courage not in accord with their everyday worry about death. It is hard to explain; perhaps it is our religious belief and that silent prayer we offer to The Almighty in such circumstances that gives us strength and courage - in our case to die for Ireland. I was asked what I knew about the men whose photographs were on the wall. I denied knowing them. One of the Auxiliaries drew his gun. Threats followed and I was told, "You are a prominent officer; you know where we can get them. Speak up now and you will be alright". I replied, "I am only a junior officer and you say these men are the leaders. Leaders don't operate direct with Junior officers. Surely", I continued, "you people here don't suggest you are all familiar with the Generals in the War Office". One of the Auxiliaries smiled. I was feeling much more at ease now. I was now determined to try and uphold the dignity becoming an officer of the I.R.A. and I thank God for the strength He gave me during my interrogation and shall always remember this short period of my life as the noblest of all. I was seated at a table and the Auxiliaries around it. I was asked had I anything to say. I complained in bitter terms that the Auxiliaries, all officers with distinguished war service, should stoop so low as to torture prisoners. They denied this. I quoted Kevin Barry and Father Dominic and what he had said on the subject. One Auxiliary replied, "That is the curse of Ireland. It is priest-ridden". He continued, "We are going to shoot you, Donnelly". I asked for a priest: it was denied. Later on

where McKee, Clancy and Clune had been murdered. I was now feeling the end was near. There were two other prisoners in the guard room. I knew one of them. He was an Intelligence Officer in my own Battalion. He was almost unrecognisable from a beating he had got. His face and head were in a terrible state. I had been very lucky so far.

Next morning I was brought back to the Intelligence Office. A high-ranking officer was present dressed in khaki. A few Auxiliaries in their familiar black uniforms were also in the room. This officer produced from his pocket an indexed pocket book full of names. He opened it at D, covered the names over and above mine which read - I remember it very well :- "Simon Donnelly, Brigade O/C., Gun man. Dangerous". I replied, "That is very flattering, I am only a Battalion Vice-Commandant". This officer was arrogant, a bully and abusive. I learned afterwards that he was the Chief Intelligence and Liaison officer between Dublin Castle and London. He next produced an Ordnance Map of Dublin City, which was fairly correctly marked out to represent our own battalion areas. He pointed out to me the 3rd Battalion area, which was also marked out in numerous places with red ink. Other areas were also marked but not so extensively. Knowing as I did that the vast majority of British Secret Service agents had been executed in the 3rd Battalion area, I began to feel very uncomfortable. He produced a second book from his pocket. He proceeded to read out the names, one by one, of the British agents shot in the 3rd Battalion area, and after each one he looked at me and said very slowly and deliberately, "3rd Battalion area and you are Vice-Commandant". When he had completed the list of whom I think there were about

/twelve

Secret Service agents were executed. It proved a failure as I did not hear of any prisoners being identified.

Following my escape from gaol, it was decided by G.H.Q. that I be sent down the country. I attended a meeting of G.H.Q. staff and was appointed as Staff Officer. I was ordered to carry out inspection of Battalion and Brigade staffs and discuss the general situation, give lectures and reprimand officers and staffs who were not producing results. The road blocking, cutting lines of communication, harassing the enemy generally and the importance of well planned attacks and ambushes were also considered. In some of the areas I visited, the number of men available for the above operations was not justified by results. This I pointed out and severely criticised, with the necessary warnings of removal from office of the men responsible, if there were not big improvements. There was, however, a change for the better after a short time.

I visited the following Brigade areas - Meath, Athlone, Mullingar, Offaly West, Offaly South, Leix, Kildare, Mid Limerick, Clare Mid, East and West.

Before leaving G.H.Q. meeting, the late Colonel O'Connell, ('Ginger' to his pals) at that time Director of Operations, called me one side and in a personal chat, asked me to stress the importance of increased activity and the continuous blocking of roads, etc., etc. The excuse of shortage of arms was to be brushed aside, as road blocking, trenching and so on could be done by unarmed men with a few protecting armed scouts. Before I left him he made a statement that amazed me. "If we keep up the pressure, boys", said he, "we will force the British to terms (or words to that effect) in three months". That was about March 20th.

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large sections of the community being hostile to the Republican ideal. This was due solely to British influence which we had not been able to overcome. The police, like their colleagues of the I.R.A., were working as it were in secret. Their duties were many. Decrees given in Republican Courts had to be enforced. In some cases this entailed seizing of goods for non-payment of fines and so forth. Many decrees of Dail Eireann also had to be enforced, as also many English laws retained for expediency. Illegal fishing, making of poteen, seizing of illegal stills, control of emigration, school attendance and cattle driving, all of which had got somewhat out of hand - had to be attended to and the general situation improved.

We suffered a great deal from not being able to detain prisoners. It would have imposed too heavy a burden on our man-power and finances. In the case, however, of incorrigible criminals of whom we handled quite a few, we adopted the practice of deporting them and issuing a warning that if they returned they would be shot. This had a salutary affect. They stayed away. It is interesting to record that I applied once for permission to flog such types. My request was turned down, as it was considered a barbarous form of punishment. The control of emigration put a lot of work on the police. The Dail decree on this matter laid down that no able-bodied man could leave Ireland unless he held a permit to do so from Dail Eireann. This was a sub-office: of the Home Affair's Office.

All shipping agents throughout the country were approached by the Republican Police to sign an undertaking that they would not issue travelling tickets to any man to go abroad unless he had a Dáil permit. The vast majority signed. In Dublin city a very well known tourist agency (Messrs. Cooks) with its headquarters

Even, as an emergency Police Force, they were very successful in keeping crime in check and upholding the authority of Dáil Eireann. They continued to operate until the coming into existence of the Garda Síochána.

The Truce and ratification of Treaty.

The coming into operation of the Truce was known a few days previously. Special couriers from G.H.Q. were sent all over the country to contact Brigade Staffs and Officers Commanding Flying Columns to deliver the 'Cease Fire' Order. Liaison officers were also appointed by G.H.Q. to see that the terms of the truce were honoured by the I.R.A. as well as enemy forces. There were, however, many breaches of the Truce, such as provocative displays, openly carrying arms, unofficial raids and so forth.

The I.R.A. continued training and many camps were set up throughout the country. Nobody was optimistic about the results of the Truce. There were many anxious moments. Early in the Truce a crux occurred. All T.Ds. held prisoners by the enemy were released except Column leader - Seán MacEoin, also O/C., Longford Brigade. The Dáil was determined. Negotiations could only proceed when all T.Ds. were released. They won and MacEoin was set free.

The I.R.A. strengthened its position and increased its armament. They would be ready and willing to resume the War. Plans were prepared to meet any sudden break down of the negotiations. The Republican Police Force operated more freely. They, in co-operation with their comrades of the Army, saw to it that the terms of the Truce were upheld. They also had their normal duties to attend to, as already defined. The abatement of the British Terror gave certain lawless
/elements

verdicts of District Courts, they had the right of appeal to a Supreme Court presided over by a fully qualified Senior Counsel and ranked as Judge. The Law Society of Ireland, or whatever is the correct title, were forced to recognise the Republican Courts and grant permission to its members to practise in same.

The Home Affairs Office in which I was installed was working at full pressure all during the Truce, as were also all other Government Departments. Fearing a break-down of negotiations, arrangements were made to evacuate the office and move elsewhere - in other words - go underground again. Most of the Dail offices, which were all over the city and unknown to the enemy, had now been revealed to them by the hundreds of callers who came to them during the Truce.

Another precaution taken in most offices during the Terror campaign and continued during the Truce was to type, in triplicate, all correspondence, two copies for routine administration and the third to be sent out to a secret dump. This was to guard against an office being raided and records captured and continuing administration being interfered with.

The London negotiations proceeded and while on duty at the Mansion House, Dublin, where a celebration was being held under the Department of Fine Arts the Minister being the late Count Plunkett, the terms of the Treaty arrived.

The Dail met and discussed the terms. I think they first met in the Mansion House and later moved to the National University. I was present all the time during the Debates and the Dublin Section of the Republican police were on duty. Credentials of deputies were examined when necessary, as also those of pressmen and a small number of privileged visitors.

A report was brought to me one day that several

of the former Dail Cabinet, now rent asunder, I arranged a mixed escort of police and members of the Army A.S.U. of the Dublin Brigade to accompany each Minister home. Ireland had reached its darkest hour.

Looking back on events, I believe we made a major mistake in the 1918 election. I refer to the selection at that time of prominent I.R.A. officers to contest the elections. Undoubtedly, they were strong candidates and had a very popular appeal, but it is difficult for an Army man to fill the role of a politician, at least I believe so. The Army man understands only the straight, blunt words - orders and such like that do not permit of any misunderstanding. How different with the politician, whose utterances so often require a lawyer to interpret their meaning.

I believe that any candidate put forward at the time who had the support of the Republican movement, civil and military, would have won.

Had the Dáil in discussing the Treaty been composed mainly of civilians, excluding certain Ministers, the I.R.A. might have survived the Split and exercised their power over the politicians to prevent it.

What might have been the outcome, I cannot say. The immediate and terrible war, as forecast by English statesmen, might not have materialised and if it had, a united I.R.A., which had improved its position during the Truce, would have accepted the challenge.

Signed:

P. Donnelly

Date:

24th January 1951

Witness:

Seán Brennan condit.

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