

ROINN  COSANTA.

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21

STATEMENT BY WITNESS

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Witness
John McCoy,
Greenhills,
Kill, Co. Kildare.

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ORIGINAL

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21

BURO STAIRE MILEATA 1913-21

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Statement by John McCoy,

Greenhills, Kill, Co. Kildare.

I was born on a farm of, about 70 acres in a howl shaped valley surrounded with mountains in South Armagh. My mother who died when I was 15 years of age was an O'Hanlon. Her family claimed direct descent from the Princes of Orior who before the plantation of Ulster were the traditional standard bearers to the O'Neills, Princes of Tyrone. The last chieftain of the O'Hanlon clan was Redmond O'Hanlon who at the time of the plantation of Ulster in or about 1670 was serving as an officer in the French Army and had been awarded the title of Count by the French Government. My earliest recollection of my mother was her recounting to me the successes and adventures of her famous forebearer who returned to Ulster to drive the Sassanagh out and deal in particular with the undertakers who had murdered his Ulster kith and kin and taken possession of his family lands in the neighbourhood of Tanderagee, Co. Armagh. I was told how this same Redmond O'Hanlon gathered together a body of men who were prepared to take up the hazardous endeavour of an Irish Rapparee in order to harass and dispossess the planters who had taken over all the rich lands of the area. O'Hanlon's leadership, with the splendid material who served under him, succeeded in imposing his will on, it is related, at least five Ulster Counties. He imposed a tribute on the planters which they were compelled to pay or suffer the direst consequences. His base and the centre of his military organisation was situated in the mountains of South Armagh, and there he controlled the main military road and merchants highway passing through the Gap of the North on the road then used connecting Dundalk and Newry. This road passed a few miles west of the present Dublin-Belfast road and crossed the present six-county frontier at Moira

Castle. The remains of a stronghold is still standing which was erected and garrisoned to protect this road and the Frontiers of the English Pale in Co. Louth. Those tales told to me by my mother have been handed down from mouth to mouth from one generation to the next to cover a period of over 200 years. In my later days I have heard the exact same stories of Redmond Count O'Hanlon from many other old men and women in different districts in South Armagh and South Down. Tales of the daring successes of O'Hanlon in the early days of his activities against Sassenagh, and later when his successes became a danger to the powers of the invaders of the North and a real menace, concentration of forces was put into the field against him which gradually wore down his forces with losses and desertion and in the end after about eight years of unbelievable success he was finally captured as a result of treachery by one of his trusted officers, a cousin of his own. British gold succeeded to finish this chapter of our history.

My grandfather who was alive when I was a small boy was habitually telling us stories around the kitchen fire on winter nights, of Redmond Count O'Hanlon, Johnston of the Fewes, a famous Priest hunter, his own recollections of the 1848 rising and the local activities of the Fenian Days. He delighted to recount the history of a rising which took place as far as I can since find out in 1797 when the men from my home area attacked a stronghold, the residence of a Colonel Ogle, then in charge of the Yeomanry in Co. Louth, destroying the house and capturing much gold and valuables which provided a long narrative in itself. I was also told of the attempt made in the last decade of the seventeenth-hundreds to plant the valley covered by our parish with men redundant in areas further north which had been exclusively planted during the previous one hundred and fifty years. When the natives of the parish became conscious of what was

contemplated they decided to deal with the matter in a most determined way and prevent the attempt to take away their lands. The methods that were used to prevent the acquisition of the land were brutal. Several prospective planters who came into the valley to view particular holdings were intercepted and killed, while others who were installed in holdings by force of arms and were being guarded by soldiers were watched and when opportunity offered they killed and, in some cases, mutilated the new settlers, their wives and families. One family in the centre of the valley were overpowered and their tongues cut out. The husband was a School Teacher and the fear that he would be able to write the names of his attackers, several of whom he knew, prompted the cutting off of his hands. This man lived to later write the names of the men he knew amongst his assailants with a pen between his toes and several of them were captured and hanged from the shafts of a cart. Such methods broke the efforts to plant the area and in my day the mountain districts stretching from Newry to Crossmaglen near the Monaghan border contained a concentrated area composed of the old Gaelic people unmixed with foreign blood. The horrors of those happenings give a good idea of the brutality of the times and created the background from which even present day Unionists view a government in the North over which they have not complete control. My grandfather often recounted to us his experiences as a member of one of the Secret Societies then common in Southern Ulster, about rival Societies meeting at fairs and markets and fighting pitched battles with sticks. He met during his Secret Society days a man he knew as No. 1. He was not sure of this man's name. He often told us youngsters of the Crossmaglen Conspiracy case when a number of local men, one of whom I knew as an old man, joined a Secret Society which was organised by an Agent Provocator. Many of the Society members were arrested and were sentenced to long terms of imprisonment on the evidence

of one of their comrades who, at the trial of the men, refused to give open evidence in Court and as a result was sentenced similarly with the other men. I am giving this history of my childhood days as its influence must have had unpredictable results and helped to mould my later actions.

In the early days of the present century when I was a school boy the influence of the Irish Parliamentary party had a predominant effect on the outlook of the Nationalist population in my home area. My father was Chairman of the local Branch of the United Irish League which in those days was the official organisation of the parliamentarians. Membership Cards were issued each year to all affiliated members at a yearly subscription of 1/- each. In our townland my father sent me around from house to house with the cards and I remember that I got more promises to pay than money. As a boy I sometimes waited for my father in a store near the chapel where meetings were held after last Mass on some Sundays. My grandfather was not in favour of the United Irish League as he was a great admirer of Parnell and he felt that some of the Parliamentary Party members had let Parnell down. He could never forgive the Catholic Church for its readiness in supporting Gladstone's hypocritical attitude towards the Irish leader and some of the local priests who took a prominent part in the efforts "to down Parnell" were great supporters of the Irish Parliamentary Party in later years. I remember elections held for Members of Parliament in those days in the north and the only slight chance a Unionist had in South Armagh was that two Nationalists would stand and so split the Nationalist vote. There was no division in my early days amongst Nationalists in the constituency and the Unionists never got a fighting chance of succeeding in capturing the Seat.

Up to 1908 or thereabouts, I never heard any great disagreement expressed on the policy of the Irish Parliamentary Party. When Sinn Féin started in South Armagh about this time I read their periodicals and books such as Griffith's - 'The Resurrection of Hungary' and Connolly's 'Labour in Ireland'. The active propagandists for Sinn Féin were few in number. In fact I do not think there was one person in our parish trying to propagate the new movement. In the towns of Dundalk and Newry there might be to my knowledge about a dozen in each trying hard to make an impression on the lukewarm supporters of the Parliamentarians. The Gaelic League at this time was very active and had classes organised in almost every parish and their influence had much more effect than the strange new departure which Sinn Féin advocated. It did not appear to me then that anything could be achieved worth while by starting a policy of passive resistance as Sinn Féin advocated. There was no future to my mind in such a policy. The Land Leaguers had a definite active policy which enabled those who desired vigorous action to participate and by its violence was bound to create a crisis which at the least would arouse world attention. I could see the British complacently enduring a policy of passive resistance, putting men in prison when they believed it suited their purpose and carrying on patiently until the people got fed up with such unspectacular methods.

About this time also a new force in Irish politics arose in the Ancient Order of Hibernians. This organisation rapidly spread over all areas in Northern Ireland and in a short time it replaced the morbidness of the United Irish League as the official organisation of the Parliamentary Party. The Hibernian organisation was definitely sectarian and anti-Protestant in its policy and it has no doubt played a most sinister part in all the Northern Counties. A

split of tolerance was growing in those days amongst Catholics and non-Catholics in the North. Joe Devlin with his great ability as an orator and his records as a friend of the working classes in Belfast should have been careful to avoid doing anything that would cause a resurrection of religious bitterness amongst the people in the North. In Belfast and other Northern towns many intellectual non-Catholics had cut adrift from the Orange Order and were meeting and discussing economic and cultural questions with certain elements of extreme Nationalists. It is easy to see the effect of a sectarian movement led by a man of Devlin's ability sweeping in large numbers of Catholics into his organisation and in many cases the Catholic priests showing unmistakable approval. This encouragement by an official political organisation to foment Sectarianism could have only bad results. It caused Unionists who had Liberal or Nationalist tendencies to get suspicious or alarmed, and amongst the Orange Order it was a God-send as it enabled the "Diehards" to come out with their war cries of "No surrender", "No Popery", "No Home Rule". The Hibernians became known by those who did not agree with them amongst the Nationalists as "Molly Maguires", and "Molly Maguire" to an Orangeman meant throwing his mind back at least 150 years when the "Molly Maguires", a Secret Society of those days carried out a campaign of liquidating the new planter stock. Unfortunately the Hibernians became a Catholic edition of the Orange order and the Nationalists papers when giving reports of A.O.H. division meetings detailed how many men were at each meeting initiated; prayers said for the Pope and periodical announcements of Church parades where the members were all advised to parade wearing their regalia - thus the Orange order were imitated in every respect by a Catholic organisation. On the 12th July each year the Orangemen held huge parades in selected places not

necessarily in an Orange district, wearing orange sashes, carrying orange banners and accompanied by bands and drumming parties. On the 15th August each year the A.O.H. would turn out in large numbers in specially appointed places wearing green sashes, their banners bearing the pictures of men such as Wolfe Tone, Patrick Sarsfield and Robert Emmett. There was no difference in the conduct of either party, each adopted exactly the same tactics. The cry "To Hell with the Pope" from the Orangemen on each 12th July was echoed by "To Hell with King William" by the Hibernians on the 15th August. Both parties seemed satisfied when their particular celebration was over if a few blackthorn sticks were broken and a few heads required mending. The extraordinary result of such antics was that except on and around the 12th July and on and around the 15th August both parties in the North seemed to get on very well together. Those periodical clashes had a traditional background and were part of a routine that had to be carried out at particular times and could be profitably forgotten until near the next 12th July or the next 15th August when preparations for the big day were being made.

In trying to give a picture of the people in South Armagh and their historical background as I see it, I feel that the organisation and Sectarian activities of the Ancient Order of Hibernians when they came into prominence in Ulster political circles created the incentive for the Orange organisation to go a step further and when the agitation in connection with the Home Rule Bill became a question of urgent action the Unionist leaders decided that the adoption of a physical force policy was a practical reply to Asquith's Home Rule Bill. The serious implications of such a policy did not trouble the leader, Sir Edward Carson, who had promises of support from wealthy Unionist interests and the guarantee of immunity from high-ranking officers in

the British Army if the British Government took a serious view of this new brand of "Rebels".

The first steps the Unionists took in the implementation of their departure from the then accepted tactics of political activities was the organisation of a mass signing of a solemn covenant pledging all the horrors of Civil War if the proposed Home Rule Bill was attempted to be enforced by the British Government. This signing of the covenant was carried out with all the facilities that the Unionist political machine could provide. As nine-tenths of the British Press was enthusiastically behind the covenanters, the new movement got a splendid world publicity. The arguments used were that the Unionists in Ireland were up against such real dangers not alone to their prospects in life and their important business interests when the Home Rule Bill became law but that their personal security was even at stake and that their future if such a measure was put into force would be so desperate that the most drastic and desperate remedies had to be used to defeat it.

Volunteers were asked to join a new military force which was named the Ulster Volunteers. Recruiting offices were opened in Belfast and all other Northern towns to enrol recruits. This campaign was responded to enthusiastically by large numbers of the young Unionists. Officers were appointed; a Staff set up; High ranking officers on the retired lists of the British Army were appointed to executive positions and immediate preparations were made for drill and training the recruits joining the force.

The Nationalists who formed a minority in Unionist districts naturally became alarmed by this new and real menace to their future safety. In my own district where we had no real Unionist opposition and where the few Unionists who lived there were accepted as part of ourselves we looked

on the formation of the Ulster Volunteers at the start of that organisation in a somewhat different light. The prevailing idea was that the organisation of the Ulster Volunteers was a game of political bluff. The Hibernian organisation did not seem to have much anxiety about the dangers of such a movement. Nationalists outside that organisation were not in any organised condition to take effective action. I myself was much more interested in physical culture and athletics than in politics. All my chums and associates were young men of athletic tendencies. I think we all felt that if, which to us appeared doubtful, the Ulster Volunteers took any positive action to upset our happy-go-lucky way of life we would then take drastic action. Our insular position, as far as a local Unionist problem affected us, makes this view-point understandable.

The passage of the Home Rule Bill through the British House of Commons was watched with interest as was the drilling of the Ulster Volunteers and their open importation of arms. The British Government's mild acceptance of the position caused by the setting up of a provisional Government for Ulster by the Ulster Volunteers and their Unionist leaders did not give Northern Nationalists much hope that a Home Rule Act would ever become effective. In the other parts of Ireland the impotency of the Irish Parliamentary Party to provide any leadership in the position of stalemate concerning the future of Home Rule seemed to be accepted by the people generally.

Formation of Irish Volunteers 1913-1914;

The first ray of hope was the formation of the National Volunteers in Dublin in October, 1913. In a short space of time the lead given in Dublin was followed and companies were formed in all Nationalist districts in the North. We had a local Company organised which I joined. We had no

rifles or other military equipment. We did not possess in our ranks even a competent military instructor. We had a preponderance of man-power from men of advanced years who wished to give the Movement their approval down to boys just after leaving school. Arms drill was carried out with pitchfork and shovel handles. There did not seem to be much efficient direction either in the local organisation of the Volunteers or in their efforts to set up a progressive drilling and training scheme. Our absolute deficiency in arms made our efforts at training seem unreal and not worth the effort. Some time about July or early August of 1914 we heard that rifles were to be distributed to a number of South Armagh Companies and that we would get our share. As I was not an officer of the Company at the time all I knew was the rumour that the rifles were arriving very soon. This feeling of the possible acquisition of rifles made on my mind a different and more realistic appeal on the question of the Volunteer organisation. I remember waiting up through all a summer's night when I heard that the rifles were actually on their way to us in the hope that if the supply was limited that I at least would get one. I had no clear idea in my mind at this time, if arms were made available, against whom we should use them. I could not then visualise their use against the Ulster Volunteers as I had many good friends amongst young Unionists in Newry and district. The rumours of war were in the air and events might develop which would change the whole political outlook. The British attitude towards the application or otherwise of Home Rule to Ireland was most unsatisfactory from both Nationalist and Unionist points of view. What would be John E. Redmond's attitude in the event of war coming? Would the Ulster Volunteers in the event of war rally to help the Empire? Events moved rapidly. Declaration of War by Britain. Redmond's speech promising the National

Volunteers for the defence of Ireland in conjunction with the Unionist Volunteers. The Howth Gun-running. The shooting at Bachelor's Walk. The Hold-up of the Home Rule Bill. The uncertainty of the terms of the proposed Amendment Bill which visualised the possibility of partition for Ulster. The general dissatisfaction in the North with Redmond's attitude towards England's war plans and his participation in the Buckingham Palace conference on areas in Ulster to be partitioned, out of the Southern parliament to be set up under Home Rule. The whole situation was confusing.

Redmond's speech at Woodenbridge in September was the first definite intimation he gave in a public pronouncement in Ireland of his attitude towards the War and was looked on as a statement of policy to be implemented by his followers. A split immediately took place in each local Company of the Volunteers and the whole organisation such as it was broke asunder. The majority of Mullaghbawn Company were then followers of the Redmondite party but they did not like the idea of taking part in England's war effort. Drilling ceased at this period. I must confess I was not enthusiastic enough about a volunteer organisation without arms, equipment or training to feel disappointed. I was so little in touch with the men who directed the organisation in say our South Armagh area that I had no idea of what was being done behind the scenes. Co. Armagh in those days was a hot bed of Hibernianism and for all I knew the A.O.H. had local control of the Volunteers. My father's antipathy to the A.O.H. may have influenced me against them. I knew at the time that Joseph Devlin tried in the early days of the Volunteers to discourage his followers from making any efforts to obtain arms for the Volunteers.

Some time about late September or perhaps October, 1914, the local Company got orders to attend a parade on a Sunday evening in Crossmaglen. I was mobilised and marched there with about fifty others. A large number of Volunteers paraded in Crossmaglen from South Armagh and neighbouring districts in Co. Louth and Co. Monaghan. We were addressed by several speakers from a platform erected on the Square in the town. I have no definite recollection as to who the speakers were or to which Party in Volunteer Split they belonged. This vagueness has often since puzzled me. As far as I can remember I must have gone there to get some idea of developments in the Volunteering sphere. I came home from this mobilisation with nothing new. None of the speeches gave me any indication as to what side in the split the speakers were on or what their policy was in regard to the war. This was my last mobilisation as a Volunteer until the year 1918.

Position in 1915;

During the year 1915, the British propaganda machine in favour of recruiting was in full swing. Recruiting meetings were held in all large towns at which prominent local politicians took a prominent part. Recruits who had joined the Army generally made their first appearance in uniform at these meetings and were introduced as soldiers from the platform. In Unionist districts the recruiting was for the Ulster Division, the majority of which were composed of Ulster Volunteers. A good percentage of Nationalists also joined the Ulster Division in Belfast and other Northern towns. In Dundalk and other Nationalist districts recruits were sought for the 16th Irish Division which men like Captain Willie Redmond, Tom Kettle, and many other prominent Southern Irishmen joined. A large number of Nationalists joined up in Newry and other Northern towns with large percentage of

Nationalists in the population. This recruiting campaign was vigorously urged by Mr. Redmond and other prominent members of the Parliamentary Party. The fact that the Home Rule act was on the Statute Book was used as an argument to encourage young Nationalists to join up and do their part in fighting for small nations on the European Continent. I attended recruiting meetings and got a certain amount of thrill listening to a good military band playing traditional Irish war marches. I was not enthusiastic about the war. I was not against it. I had no feeling of resentment against acquaintances who joined the Army or Navy. I resented the British Government's attitude towards the antics of the Ulster Volunteers in 1912-1914 and their quibbling on the question of Home Rule. I looked on John Redmond as weak when England was in her hour of difficulty at the outbreak of the war and I distrusted his promises to have Home Rule put into operation at the end of the War. I knew nothing at this time about the I.R.B. (Irish Republican Brotherhood). I did not know that the Irish Volunteers had any worthwhile organisation in the country from the end of 1914. I saw no evidence of any local volunteer organisation or activities. During the Winter of 1914 and the Spring of 1915 I was a member of a Boxing Club in Dundalk and was devoting all my energies to training. Amongst the members of the Club were several Irish Volunteers including a first class boxer named Richard Jameson. This boy in Easter Week 1916 took part in the Rising with the Dundalk Corps. Although Jameson and I were good pals he never mentioned volunteering to me. This is not surprising as I was a stranger to all the Club members when I joined. The "father" of this Club was a very old man named Christy McGarritty who was a very fine character and ruled his club with an iron hand. He was a Fenian in 1865 and joined the British Army to recruit Irish soldiers in the Army into the

ranks of the Fenians. He was drafted to India and was there when the Fenian Rising took place. He did not return again to Ireland until he had done his twenty-one years in the British Army. He was a great friend of mine and often discussed his connection with Fenianism but he never mentioned to me any Volunteer activities in Dundalk. He probably was not in "the know" or if he was he did not trust me.

In the Summer of 1915 a particular pal of mine came and told me he was contemplating asking for a commission in the British Army. He asked me to also apply for a commission. I told him I had no great objections to people joining the Army but I didn't fancy taking such a step myself. I told him my reasons for this; firstly that my father required my help on the farm and secondly that I would not feel proud of wearing British uniform. He pointed out that this was not England's war, that for the first time in her history she was fighting for high ideals. He seemed so very keen and pressed me so urgently that I told him I would also apply for a commission and that if I got a commission in the Royal Irish Fusiliers whose Depot was in Armagh City I would join that Regiment. I told him I would not join an English Regiment. He agreed that he would also specify a commission in the R.I.F. We both that evening sent a letter to the War Office informing them of each of our intentions. About a week afterwards we both got letters informing us that enquiries were being made and our applications were being reviewed. Some time later I got a communication from the War Office enclosing a form to be filled in giving particulars of my parentage, age, education, trade or profession, games and sports I played and proficiency in same. After I forwarded the completed form to the War Office I got a reply that I was being granted a commission in the Lancashire and Yorkshire Light Infantry.

The War Office regretted that no vacancies for officers existed in the R.I.F. My chum got a similar letter by the same post. We were advised to report for medical tests. A paying order for £50 was enclosed to each for provision of uniform and kit and could be cashed when an officer in the Depot signed it after passing the medical tests. We both informed the War Office that we refused to join an English Regiment and returned papers to them. Thus ended my first and last effort to join the British Army.

During the Winter of 1915 and the Spring of 1916 I continued going to the Boxing Club in Dundalk. By then I knew that efforts were made to organise the Irish Volunteers. I knew several chums in various districts who told me that they were members. I was not particularly interested as I didn't anticipate that the Volunteers would attempt a rising. I was judging the Irish Volunteers by my experiences as a member of the National Volunteers in 1914. No person asked me to join up again in 1915 or 1916 and I would probably have refused if I was asked. I could see no hope for a successful Rising. I had read Padraig Pearse's Oration at the grave of O'Donovan Rossa in 1915. I considered it a wonderful piece of Oratory. I could not see how he was going to get a following in sufficient numbers to make a worth-while impression on British power in Ireland and the people generally were so apathetic to anything national that little help or sacrifice could be expected from them. In our locality and, I may say, all over South Armagh a spirit of at least tolerance of the British war effort was everywhere apparent. Dances and entertainments were frequently held for the British Red Cross and a lot of "Nationalists" attended. Announcements were frequently made of locals killed in action or missing at the war fronts. There was generally a feeling of disinterestedness in every phase of political life at this time. Prices for all

classes of farm produce were high and the farmers were making money. Any person who worked had piles of money to spend and many were spending it freely. I really thought that the number of people with any interests outside making money out of the war situation were few. At the same time although the people themselves did not know it there was a rebel tradition lying dormant in the breasts of most of our people which only required rousing. I place myself with this large majority of our people who did not worry about things national and remained insensible to any "call" of National duty.

1916.

On Easter Sunday 1916 a chum of mine who worked about six miles from Mullaghbawn came up to help at a Bazaar which the Priests were running for Church funds. This chum told me that a Rising was taking place in Dublin on that day and that he should have gone to Dublin to take part in it as he was a Volunteer. I didn't believe him and I told him so. He gave me a lot of details which convinced me that he was speaking the truth and that a Rising was being planned. Later that evening I saw a copy of the "Sunday Independent" in which Eoin MacNeill called off the parade for Easter Sunday. This chum's name was Frank McCoy. He was subsequently killed in Belfast in the fighting there early in 1922. May his Soul rest in peace! This was the first intimation I got that the Rising in Easter Week was to take place and I could not then understand the mentality of the leaders who planned it.

On Easter Monday I heard nothing of the Rising and began to feel that what I heard on Sunday was a false alarm. On Tuesday of Easter Week I heard from a Newry bread server who generally took me a daily paper from town that fighting was going on in Dublin, that Newry men who had been in Dublin

on Easter Monday on an excursion had reported when they came home on Monday night that terrific fighting was taking place and that the Volunteers had captured the centre of the city, that a part of Dublin was on fire, that dead men and women were lying about on the streets! He also told me that there was trouble in Dundalk and other places; no trains running, no papers, etc. etc. He had Monday's paper with him. There was no indication in it of a Rising having broken out.

On Tuesday evening the chum who applied with me for a commission in the British Army in 1915 came along to me. He was a student in Dublin at the time and was at home for the Easter holidays. He asked me did I hear the news and then what I thought of it all. I told him I didn't know what to think of it, that I thought the people who started in Dublin were foolish as they had little hopes of success. He then said that they were worse than foolish that they were doing a dis-service to the country and betraying the Irish men who volunteered for the British Army and that the Rising was a fatal stab in the back to the cause of Home Rule. I replied that I didn't look on it at all in that way. My feelings were different; that I had admiration for their courage; that I believed the Cause was facing certain defeat. I told him that, "Blood being thicker than water", if I was in Dublin I would go to them and offer them my services; that the men in Dublin were engaging in the same old fight that so many previous generations of Irishmen had engaged in with as little prospects of success. My chum seemed sorry for his outburst and told me that he did not consider the matter in that light. We discussed the whole ramifications of what we imagined to be the situation and he finally asked me was I sincere in my intention to help the Volunteers if I was in Dublin. I told him undoubtedly I was. He then suggested

that we should get ready and go to Dublin and that he would offer his services with mine. We parted to get ready for the journey of cycling to Dublin and agreed to meet later at an appointed time. We started off cycling for Dundalk equipped with some sandwiches in two small parcels. When we arrived at the Big Bridge going into the town we saw barricades on the road and R.I.C. men questioning all persons passing. We were stopped and asked where we were going and we told the police that we were going into town to the Pictures. They asked what was in the parcels and we told them sandwiches. We were told we could not get through and that all other roads were held by police and military and they advised us to have sense and go home. We tried our best to bluff our way through to no avail so we turned back and went home again! And so Easter week passed into history as far as I am concerned.

After Easter Week the people generally were discussing the matter. The prevailing opinion was the unbelievable madness of the whole affair. The Press put the worst possible complexion on the whole business. The looting, the burnings and the loss of life were all put down to the "Rebels". I heard a great many people saying "Weren't they great men, it's a pity there were not more of them" - others saying, - "Of course they were mad to attempt such a thing - if they were so keen on fighting why did they not join the Army" etc.

When the executions started and continued intermittently day after day, people got a shocked sense of the inhumanity of executing brave men who might have been foolish in what they had done. It appeared that Rebellion entailed the extreme punishment in Dublin and was a means of preferment and elevation in Belfast. In a short space of time a

complete revolution of feelings about the Rebellion took place amongst all decent intelligent Nationalists in the North. I also heard liberal minded Unionists speak with admiration for the courage of those who took part in the Rising. The impact on the minds of the older people with their attention focussed on the Great War, the Rising in Dublin portrayed the existence of new forces which might upset all their previous conceptions of what was likely to happen next. This uncertainty of outlook was not confined to the older Nationalists; it was common to the older people of all political outlook.

Year 1917 and early 1918.

As far as I can remember there were little political or National activities of the pre 1914 days evident amongst the people after 1916. All hopes of the implementation of the Home Rule Act were past. The Rising had achieved at least one of the objects which its leaders desired. It discredited the pretensions of the Parliamentarians to speak for or represent Nationalist Ireland. They had lost touch with the people and a younger generation was rising in Ireland whose minds were eagerly absorbing the doctrine of physical force as an essential part of any future effort to achieve the freedom of the country from British dominance. The threat of force used by the Ulster Volunteers in 1912-1914 had achieved its object of defeating the British Government's intentions re granting us Home Rule. This lesson was not lost on young Ulster Nationalists. The gospel of force, as a means of attaining certain objectives had proved so effective to the Unionists, that it has been retained as an important part of their political armoury up to the present time. It looked that any future effort to achieve our independence on one hand or defeat this effort on the other hand must

be backed up by force of arms. The days of debate, arguments, fair dealing, justice, fair play, etc., were gone!

A small body of enthusiasts in the interests of Sinn Féin and the Irish Volunteers started to organise in Newry and neighbouring districts in South Armagh and South Down. The people generally were listening and perhaps sympathetic but did not yet give much evidence of excitement for the new policy. All this area of South Armagh and South Down was a stronghold of Hibernianism and that organisation remained intact in all districts. The Hibernians from 1914 did not show much signs of activities but their organisation was there. Up to the end of 1917 Sinn Féin and the Irish Volunteer organisation had not advanced much more than the embryo stage, a good healthy embryo as it showed up later. The position in the districts I know in the North in 1917 showed a marked contrast in the matter of organising and recruiting for Sinn Féin and the Irish Volunteers to all districts in the South and West. With us the Republican effort to organise was so limited in scope and making such slow headway that no particular notice was taken of it by the British Authorities or the Hibernians and Unionists who should be strongly opposed to it.

At this time I had taken up the business of auctioneering and was favoured with a great measure of support and was succeeding in laying the foundations of what I hoped to be a profitable undertaking. In order to illustrate my point of view on current politics about mid 1917, I can do no better than relate a conversation I had at this time. I attended a meeting of the Armagh County Board of the G.A.A. in Newtownhamilton as a delegate for the Mullaghbawn O'Rahilly G.F.C. My cousin Michael O'Hanlon then a

student in Dublin accompanied me to the meeting. On our journey home our bikes got punctured and we had to walk part of the way over mountainous roads. We sat down for a rest and Michael started to tell me all he knew and heard of the efforts being made in Dublin to reorganise the Volunteers and the great success the new recruiting effort was achieving. He was able to give first hand information of the doings of the leaders. I asked him did he think that the Volunteer leaders were planning another resort to arms. He told me that he was not actually a volunteer himself but that he was intimate with boys who were, (O'Hanlon was little more than 17 years at the time), and that he believed that the idea of another fight against England was part of the Volunteers' plans. He asked me if I was in favour of the Volunteers or prepared to join the Volunteers in the event of another scrap. I told him that I was in favour of the Volunteers; that in my opinion any future movement to free the country must be backed up and supported with the menace of a resort to arms to hope for success, that other methods had been tried over a long period of years and had proved abortive. I also told him that my business prospects would be seriously affected by becoming prominent in the new movements, but I was prepared to give the Volunteers and Sinn Féin all the assistance I could short of active participation. I also said that in the event of war breaking out I would then take an active part in it. O'Hanlon told me that he was in a similar position, that his mother was spending a lot of money on his education; that it would be unfair to her to devote his time in Dublin to Volunteer work and miss his lectures; that he would join up as soon as the fight started. Both of us at the time of this conversation had no doubt as to the righteousness of the Republican cause but we did not then intend to get involved in an early effort to

make that cause a success. Our reasons for not giving immediate help was to say the least, rather selfish. No cause could prosper if all the people in favour of the Cause refused to make sacrifices. As a matter of fact, both of us later forgot our sage ideas.

South Armagh Election 1918;

Dr. Chas. O'Neill represented South Armagh in the British Parliament. He was a Nationalist and a member of the Irish Parliamentary Party. He died about the end of 1917.

Immediately the death of Dr. O'Neill took place the political parties of the time got ready to contest a bye-election in the constituency to replace the deceased member. The Irish Parliamentary Party, anxious to nominate a candidate with local influence who would draw by his contacts with the people of the area, a percentage of a personal vote, selected a Newry Solicitor, Mr. Patrick Donnelly. Sinn Féin selected as their candidate Dr. Patrick McCartan, a native of Carrickmore, Co. Tyrone. Dr. McCartan had been active as a Volunteer prior to 1916, and took a prominent part for years in the early Revolutionary Movements in the North that preceded the formation of the Irish Volunteers. The death of Dr. O'Neill and the immediate frantic preparation for the Bye-Election seemed to put all the parties in the area on their mettle. Sinn Féin's entry into the political field in South Armagh seemed to have the effect of causing the Parliamentary Party to have grave doubts as to their ability to retain the seat. The Parliamentarians' defeat in the Clare and Longford elections had undermined their morale to a great extent but their misgiving about the result in South Armagh did not appear to be justified as Sinn Féin had no organisation to fall back on at the start of the election

campaign. The Hibernians were well organised for years in the constituency and it was regarded as one of their safest strongholds in the country. The question of the Unionists party putting up a candidate was a possibility that might give them some chance of capturing the seat with the Nationalist vote divided. The Unionists however, did not nominate a candidate. It was agreed that all the Unionist voters should be asked to support the candidature of Mr. Patrick Donnelly. This unanimity of the Orange Lodges and the Ancient Order of Hibernians seemed a most unnatural combination. Its purpose, however, was to put a halt to the great victories won by Sinn Féin in the political field since 1916. To the Orangemen it was not now a question of Home Rule. It was a question of a Republic. A Republic for which men cheerfully made the supreme sacrifice in 1916 and whose policy since 1916 had been sweeping the Conservative Irish Parliamentary Party out of existence at each by-election.

When the election campaign was about to open I was approached by a young local enthusiast of the Sinn Féin cause to give my open support and to work whole-heartedly in the interests of Sinn Féin. As I did not think that business and politics would mix successfully as far as I was concerned, I was slow to agree. I did, however, promise to give all the help that I could outside the time that it was essential to carry on the business of land lettings which was then - late January, 1918 - in full swing. Immediately the campaign started all the Republican leaders in Dublin came into the area. As Dundalk was only four miles from the nearest point in the Constituency, it was made the Election Headquarters. The decision to make Dundalk the centre of the administration for the election was probably based on the fact that both Sinn Féin and the Volunteers were much better organised in Dundalk area than

in Co. Armagh and more workers were available there than in centres further North. One of the first of the Dublin leaders who came to me when the campaign got under way was Seán O'Mahoney - Big Seán as he became known locally. Seán enquired from me who he should convert first. I told him to tackle my father who was not disposed to give up his allegiance to the Irish Parliamentary Party. I introduced Seán to my father as one of the men who fought for the Republic in Dublin in 1916, and my father told Seán that the British must have been rotten shots to miss such a large target. Seán succeeded so well that he made our house his Headquarters during the election. Amongst the others who came and worked from our house was Peadar Clancy, Seán O'Muirthile, Joe MacGuinness, T.D., Longford and a Mr. Nugent from Sligo. Some days during the election I had a few small land lettings and on one or two of these days Dublin workers would come to the auctions and address the fifty to sixty people present. This procedure was not good practice to get successful biddings for the lots offered but it at least helped to introduce the various speakers in an intimate way which did not always produce agreement with the policy advocated by my new friends. Day after day those small meetings were held and the arguments undecided or unfinished were taken up next day or the day following at another auction. A thorough canvass of all names on the Register was made and we were able to get sufficient local workers to do this work. Not along the young men who supported Sinn Féin took part in this work but the young girls were mobilised and worked on the Register and on the canvass of the voters enthusiastically.

Shortly after the campaign started a meeting was called in the village of Mullaghbawn to start a company of Volunteers. Mick Brennan from Clare and George Plunkett, Dublin, attended in Volunteer uniform accompanied by James

McGuill, Dundalk. About forty or fifty young men joined the new Company. A captain was appointed and we were told that we would get drilled and that our particular job during the election was to protect our meetings and our speakers in hostile areas. We were only to go to the places to which we were ordered and that we were to obey our officers implicitly. We were not to recognise the authority of the Royal Irish Constabulary and, when necessary, to deal with them as our officers directed. The Volunteers got a lot of drill under what nearly approached active service conditions during the election. Nearly every night there was a meeting to be protected. The local company was marched there and divided up into positions to deal with attempts to break up the meeting. The Hibernians adopted a violent attitude and made various attempts to break up our meetings. On several occasions one of the outside Volunteer officers visiting the area would take charge of the local Company at small meetings or at a big meeting in some of the towns would take charge of several Companies. The effort to make a good show when under the charge of a stranger was a great incentive to our men's keenness to be good Volunteers and be able to obey the words of command in a soldier-like manner. On the Sunday before the Election which was held on the 1st February, 1918, we had a meeting after 11 o'clock Mass at Mullaghbawn. After this meeting we got orders to go home and to mobilise that evening again and march to Silverbridge where a meeting was called for at 4 p.m. Silverbridge was then considered a Hibernian stronghold and the local Company was accompanied there by a good number of our Sinn Féin supporters who feared that the attendance at the meeting in Silverbridge would be small.

When we arrived in Silverbridge there did not appear to be any person there for the Meeting. We learned that all

the local enthusiasts had gone to Crossmaglen a few hours earlier for a monster meeting called by both Sinn Féin and the Parliamentarians at the same hour. That meant that our local friends and our local enemies had left the area. Some considerable time after 4 p.m. two cars drove up to our meeting place. The windscreens on both cars were broken and suffered other damage. Mr. de Valera was in one of the cars. He appeared to have traces of being in a fight. He addressed us and said that there had been a series of fights in Crossmaglen when the Hibernians attempted to break up the Sinn Féin meeting. He told us that the future of the country depended on an efficient Volunteer force, out for the establishment of an Irish Republic. That the getting of the Republic would rest with the manhood of the Volunteers and that the efficiency of the Volunteers depended on their training. That after the Election all should give their whole energies to Military training so that we should become efficient soldiers. This was the first time I had seen Mr. de Valera and his demeanour and his words made a deep impression on my mind, as I expect it did on the great majority of my comrades.

This election was unique in the tactics employed by the contesting parties. A large number of Volunteers from other parts of the country, principally Clare and Dublin - and some from Dundalk - came into the area, many of their officers in Volunteer uniform and all armed with hurley sticks. These Volunteers marched from place to place in Military formation and in hostile areas they were called on to protect Republican voters going to the poll. In many instances they had to repel attacks made on them by Hibernians or Orange crowds. In a few cases Hibernians and Orangemen joined up to attack them. The R.I.C. were hostile to the Volunteers but seemed incapable of dealing with the situation created by strong determined parties of

of young Volunteers whose demeanour denoted no inclination to avoid trouble if trouble was forced on them.

On the polling day I was in a polling booth in Forkhill in charge of the Register and seeing that all our voters came in to record their votes. I was about twelve hours on duty. When the time of closing the poll came I went out on the street of the village and a most unusual sight met my eyes. There were two large bonfires on the street about sixty yards apart. At one of them a large crowd of Clare Volunteers were grouped singing Republican songs. At the other fire an equally large crowd of Hibernians, principally from Dundalk area, were surrounding their fire. They were singing such songs as a "Nation once again", "Deep in Canadian Woods", "God Save Ireland" interspersed now and again by operatic pieces. There was no disorder in the village. The songs were sung alternatively from each fire and when a really good effort was produced from either party it was applauded by both parties.

I was only a short time on the street when Peadar Clancy came over to me. He had previously been speaking to Dick McKee. Clancy said that as a Volunteer Officer he was giving me an order to carry out which might entail some personal risk. He told me that he knew I was working all that day in the Polling Booth. I had probably met the Under-Sherriff for Co. Armagh who had to do with all the official end of the Election. I told him I had been speaking to that official a few times during the day. He then said "I want you to go into the Polling Booth and insist on seeing the Under-Sherriff and ask him when the Ballot Boxes are being removed to Newry. The street door was locked with an R.I.C. Constable guarding it on the inside and at the top of the stairs leading into where the Ballot Boxes were, another R.I.C. is placed. You must get past both of these men to see the Under-Sherriff and as soon as you interview the Under-Sherriff return with his message to me." Clancy

then handed me a revolver saying "you will probably require this." I refused to take it saying that I would not feel justified in using a revolver under such circumstances. That in fact I would not use it and that it would be foolish for me to take it with me. Clancy then said my orders are that you take the revolver as I want you to return to me to report if you contacted the Under Sherriff and his reply, if you get a reply from him. I went to the street door and knocked loudly. The policeman inside ordered me away. I shouted that I was Dr. McCartan's Election agent and that I had business with the Under Sherriff. He then opened the door for me. Being one of the local policemen he recognised me after I got inside the door and he got a grip on me to put me out again. I got the better of him and sprang up the stairway. The other policeman intercepted me as I was reaching the top of the stairs and we engaged in a bit of a scuffle. I told him that I had an important message for the Under-Sherriff and that I must see him. The policeman was most determined that I would not get past him. The Under-Sherriff came on the scene when he heard the noise. He enquired what all the rumpus was about and I complained to him about the trouble I had in getting to see him. I then asked him when the Ballot Boxes were being removed - that Dr. McCartan's agent was most anxious to know. He looked at his watch and said, "The cars for the Boxes and their escort are due in about ten minutes and are leaving here as soon as possible afterwards." I thanked him and returned down the stairs. When I came to the street door the policeman on duty there again attacked me. It was almost pitch dark behind the door and I expect that he had some hard feelings about the manner I dealt with his efforts to prevent me getting in. He was a big powerful man and he took me at a disadvantage as I was not expecting any trouble with him going out so he proceeded to get a hold on me and

to give me a thorough good hiding. I was completely taken by surprise and the darkness was also a disadvantage to me so I had to take some punishment from him before I got into a position to retaliate and I then proceeded to give him the best I had got until he was glad to call off the affair. I opened the door without any further molestation and passed outside. There I found Clancy with his ear to the door listening to it all. He seemed to enjoy the matter immensely and I handed him back his revolver and gave him the message from the Under-Sherriff. I could not see the point in his forcing me to go in armed and I later asked him for an explanation. He told me that he was trying me out to see how I would re-act and that he was perfectly satisfied with my conduct. He had been a constant companion of mine for at least ten days before polling day and we had become great pals. He was a very fine type of a high-spirited young man who impressed me with his whole-hearted devotion to the Republican cause. His attitude in forcing me to carry a gun in this instance seemed to shake some of my confidence in him as I considered it a most dangerous experiment as if I had used the gun with serious results there would have been no reasonable justification. It must have been at least eighteen months before I again met Peadar Clancy. He was then Vice Officer Commanding Dublin Brigade and from then up to the time of his death I met him on numerous occasions - every time I had I.R.A. business to do in Dublin. He always went to great trouble to help me out. No matter how busy he was on his own work he always made time to see that I would get satisfactory results to the business I was engaged on. He always saw to it that I got to where I wanted to go and that I succeeded in getting anything I required without any delay or trouble. His death was a great blow to the I.R.A. organisation and to me the loss of a great personal friend.

Aftermath of the South Armagh Election.

We were not expecting to win the Election. The results when declared the next day, 2nd February, 1918, showed that Sinn Fein had made a marvellous showing. The want of any Sinn Féin organisation when the campaign started did not indicate that there was any hope of even putting up any appearance of a show. The figures, Donnelly : 2,324 and McCartan: 1,305, on the face does not indicate that in the North Sinn Féin had much of a chance. It must, however, be remembered that the Unionists must have polled around 1,200 to 1,400 votes for the Hibernian Candidate so that Sinn Féin must have got at least a majority of the Nationalist vote. However, the loss of the election was well worth the trouble involved as the constituency and many other constituencies in the present six counties Government area were organised through contacts made during the South Armagh election. There was little Volunteer organisation in evidence in the Constituency before the election and after it Companies were functioning in almost every parish area. The warlike conditions which these new Volunteers had to face during the election campaign and the sacrifices and physical strain demanded from them - and cheerfully undertaken - produced a splendid morale which was a most valuable asset later on in the Tan war. Our strength in numbers were not great but the material we recruited was excellent. The only ill effects that became apparent after the election was caused by a deep feeling of resentment amongst many of the official members of the Ancient Order of Hibernians. Many of those men had taken part in some of the election fights which was a daily feature of the campaign and bad blood was stirred up which was not soon forgotten. The first appearance of this antagonism was the almost complete break up of the G.A.A. organisation in Co. Armagh and in Co. Louth, and

other places in the North. In most teams the Hibernians and the Sinn Feiners were pretty evenly divided and neither party wanted to play together on the same team after the election. This meant that new teams had to be organised, all local Hibernians in one and all the Sinn Feiners in another. Our parish team before the election was the Forkhill Rovers. After the election we organised a team from the local Volunteer Company and called it the Mullaghbawn O'Rahillys and the Forkhill Rovers ceased to exist. In practically all other districts similar things happened.

The Volunteer Organisation during 1918 and 1919.

When the excitement of the election had died down the principal work waiting to be done was the perfecting of the Volunteer organisation. The first steps taken were a few route marches to mobilisation centres where three or four companies met. Such activities had little training value but tended to help recruiting. I was on one of these mobilisations when we marched about six miles to Whitecross and were reviewed by Harry Boland and Art O'Connor - later Judge O'Connor, R.I.P. Immediately after the election we had a number of Companies in South Armagh and the idea was to get a Battalion organisation set up. A number of those companies, such as Camlough, Bessbrook, Corrinshigo, Killen and Meigh, were situated near Newry town and before the Camlough Battalion was formed they were loosely linked up with the Newry Volunteers. Further south in such areas as Mullaghbawn, Dromintee, Crossmeglen and Cullyhanna were linked up with Dundalk Battalion. When the Mullaghbawn Company was formed I was an ordinary Volunteer as I did not then desire to take a prominent part in the work of the Company. The system of electing officers was by popular vote of the members of each Company. Our

first Capt. was selected for his fine physique, football ability and his decency of character. He was a local farmer without the organising ability or sense for discipline to make a successful officer. After a short time I was asked to take over the Company by some of the local members and some of the officers of other units, which I did - I must admit with some misgivings and reluctance. I first procured some British Army text books on field drill and musketry and we proceeded to learn the rudiments of Military science. I had a Service Rifle, Lee Enfield, in my possession from some time in 1917. A chum of mine who was serving with the Irish Guards came home on leave from Flanders and arrived with the rifle and about 200 rounds of ammunition for it. I "collared it" before he went back again to the war front. We had the use of this rifle for musketry instruction and I saw that each Volunteer had a good grounding in the safe handling and mechanism of the rifle and proper methods of aiming. The majority, in fact all, of our men had been well practised in the use of a shotgun and the majority were excellent shots with that weapon so it was not difficult to get them in on the use of a Service Rifle. The next requisite for training as a soldier was a question of physical fitness. We had little trouble in this matter as all our men were farmers or farmers' sons and the majority played Gaelic Football so that they were all very fit. After I became Captain I went into Dundalk and reported to the Dundalk Battalion Officers. As we had no British Ex-Servicemen available I enquired if they could lend us a man with past military experience to give us a grounding in open order work in the field and the tactical exercises involved in advancing and retreating by signal. I was told by Seamus McGuill who was then in charge in Dundalk that he had a most efficient military instructor engaged for such work and

that he would send him perhaps two nights per week to Dromintee to train the officers and N.C.Os. of a few local companies, and that the Dundalk Battalion was giving him a weekly salary for the work. I made arrangements with Seamus and the man came along. I found this man a revelation; in his control over the men; his methods of instruction; his eye for mistakes made. His language however when mistakes were made - and they were many - was shocking. I had never heard anything like it before then. His obscenity was however leavened with a sly humour which in the absence of the obscenity would have been most amusing. I attempted to make him control his language and he gave me a lecture in front of a large parade. He told me that he had service as an officer in the New Zealand forces. He deserted them and had made his way to one of the South American Republics where a revolution was about to break out. He trained a large number of the Revolutionaries and fought with them through the Revolution. He suggested that to make good soldiers a drill instructor had to descend to crude modes of expression and that if we would suffer his mode of imparting his instructions he would soon make us first class soldiers. His language made a bad impression on a lot of our men. I had little doubts as to his ability as an instructor. I have never since seen anything better. On his own showing to say the least, he was a mystery man and I did not feel happy about his association with us. At a subsequent drill instruction given by this man, I returned to the Hall sometime after I and my comrades from the Mullaghbawn Company had left to find him making a collection of 3d. per head of the members of the Dromintee Company present in the Hall. I ordered him to stop the collection and informed the men present that he was being paid a good weekly wage for his work by the Dundalk Battalion. The next day I reported

the man's conduct in Dundalk and as far as I know his services were dispensed with by the Dundalk Battalion.

Some time about the end of 1918 a Camlough Battalion was being organised. When I heard of this I felt that all the South Armagh Companies should join that Battalion. I went to the organisers and told them of my feelings. It was agreed that the Mullaghbawn Company should link up with Camlough. At a subsequent election of officers for this Battalion, Frank Aiken was appointed Battalion O.C. and I was appointed Battalion Adjutant. My association with Frank Aiken as his Adjutant, which then commenced, continued when he went to the Newry Brigade as O.C. and later in March, 1921, when he was appointed by G.H.Q. as O.C., 4th Northern Division. At the formation of the Camlough Battalion, all the existing South Armagh Companies joined the Battalion with the exception of Dromintee and Crossmaglen.

Shortly after the formation of the Camlough Battalion, a Newry Brigade was formed. Paddy Rankin was appointed Brigade O.C., Frank Aiken Vice O.C., and I Brigade Adjutant. The new O.C. of the Camlough Battalion to replace F. Aiken was Tommie O'Neill. Paddy Rankin's appointment as Brigade O.C. was a well deserved compliment to him for his services in Easter Week, 1916. The small band of men in Newry who were members of the Irish Volunteers in 1916 were also members of the Irish Republican Brotherhood. Through their connection with the I.R.B. they got orders to mobilise with the Belfast men at Coalisland in Co. Tyrone for Easter Week and as Volunteers they had orders to mobilise with the Co. Louth men in Dundalk for the same time. Difference arose as to which orders they should obey and they could agree on nothing. On Easter Monday, Paddy Rankin - who had been in America and returned to Ireland about the time the 1914-18 war broke out when

he heard, through the Clann na nGael in America that a rising was contemplated - commandeered a bike and rode to Dublin, made his way to the G.P.O. on Wednesday and fought there until the Surrender. As far as my knowledge goes, he was the only man then living in the present Six County area, who travelled to Dublin on his own and took part in the Rising.

In or about the end of 1918 an order was issued by G.H.Q. to all Volunteer Companies to take part in open drilling in public places, and to resist the police authorities if they attempted to stop such work. All our local Companies carried out this order in their respective districts on a Sunday. The parades were generally held after a mass at a local chapel. I paraded the Mullaghbawn Company on the road opposite the Chapel after last mass. There were about sixty men on parade and the whole congregation from the mass acted as onlookers. The local sergeant of the R.I.C., who was a Protestant, was present and about four or five of his men. When the men were ordered to fall in in two ranks, the Sergeant approached me and warned me that the drilling was illegal. I paid no attention to him and numbered off the men on parade and gave them the order "Form Fours". At this point the police attempted to break up the men on parade. I then gave the men the order "Left Turn" and "Quick March", the police were still vainly endeavouring to break up the parade. I then ordered the men "Double Quick March" and off we went at a sharp canter. The police started after us and could only keep along side of our men, when we gave them about 200 yards of this pace we had left them a little distance to our rear. I then halted the men, about turn and double quick march again. The police got across the road in an attempt to stop us and we crashed into them and put them reeling. After about ten minutes of such tactics the police gave up all attempt to break us up and

adopted the role of Spectators. Shortly afterwards the local R.I.C. Sergeant sent me word that a warrant had been issued for my arrest, and that I was being raided for on a certain night. The raid for me took place and I was not at home. My home was raided for me on many occasions after this, the latter raids were generally carried out in day time. In all these raids military took part accompanied by a few local R.I.C. As I always got previous information of these raids, I never was in much danger of being captured.

On the Sunday all this open drilling took place, Frank Aiken drilled his Local Company in Camlough and was subsequently arrested. He was tried in Newry before a Resident Magistrate and got sentenced to a term of imprisonment. On the day he was tried in Newry the local Volunteers attended at the Court in military formation and Jack McElhaw who was in charge of the Volunteers was subsequently arrested and also received a sentence when tried.

During the anti-conscription campaign in early 1918 the Volunteers took a prominent part in swelling the attendance at various demonstrations that were held in all the districts in South Armagh. The conscription danger tended to help recruiting for the Volunteers and all companies then showed an increase in membership. When the danger of conscription had passed the majority of the conscription recruits dropped away again. The conscription scare did more real service to Sinn Fein than to the Volunteers. A lot of former sympathisers of the Parliamentarians identified themselves with the Sinn Fein lead against conscription and remained on with Sinn Fein afterwards.

During the year 1919, the activities carried out were principally in the sphere of training. Efforts

were being made to spread the Volunteer organisation to areas in North Armagh where the organisation had to contend with large Unionists majorities in the population. We were able to get Volunteers together in a lot of these Unionist areas and these Volunteers and their officers were all of a good type and proved most useful later on.

In May 1919 a raid for arms was carried out on a large mansion occupied by a Captain Nugent at a place named Ballyedmond situated on the coast between Rostrevor and Kilkeel in Co. Down. This raid was to get possession of a large quantity of Ulster Volunteer rifles which at one time were stored in this mansion. The plans for the carrying out of the raid had been prepared and were captured on an I.R.A. officer in Dundalk about twelve months before the raid actually took place. This premature leakage of information to the British reduced the chances of a large quantity of arms being got when the place was eventually raided. This raid on Ballyedmond "Castle" was planned in an elaborate and detailed manner. It was the first military operation to be carried out by us and the idea behind the planning of the operation was to get as many men as was required to converge on the scene of the operation by different routes from various mobilisation points. Men were detailed for this operation from North Louth, South Down and South Armagh. The Louth men travelled to Ballyedmond by sea and in the event of the raid being very successful the Louth men would have removed some of the captured arms, etc. by boat.

The different groups taking part in the raid carried out their orders efficiently and this operation showed that the training the Volunteers had been receiving was beginning to produce results. This operation had usefulness as a training test but the amount of arms captured was negligible.

Military Equipment, Engineering Munitions, etc.

In 1919, as far as I can remember, we had very few serviceable rifles. I would say that in the Newry Brigade area, embracing all South Down and South Armagh, there was not more than half a dozen rifles to fire .303 ammunition. In revolvers and automatic pistols we had not much that could be classed as serviceable in a military sense. We had, of course, a collection of small bore .22 and .25 weapons and other antiquated pin fire pieces that should be more appropriate to a museum than an armoury. At this time we had been collecting all the 12 bore Shotgun cartridges we could get our hands on. We casted slugs or buckshot for use in these cartridges and loaded the cases for future use. No matter how carefully these reloaded cases were stored we found that after a time the cardboard of which they were made expanded from contact with the air and it proved most difficult later on to use them as they could not be ejected from the shotguns. Stoppages from this cause generally immobilised the shotgun for the time being. About 1919 we had no hand-grenades or bombs. In 1920 we attempted to make and did make a crude type of hand-grenade out of a gun barrel gas piping by cutting the piping in four or five inch lengths and making hacksaw cuts on the length of the piping and also across to ensure fragmentation when exploded. The ends of the hand-grenade were two circular washers with a bolt through the centre tightening them on the length of tubing. A circular hole about $\frac{1}{8}$ inch diameter was put in one end for the fuse. In this hand-grenade the fuse had to be lighted with a match before throwing. Later on we were able to purchase from G.H.Q. automatic firing sets which could be fitted to those gas pipe grenades and would also fit the G.H.Q. version of the Mills hand-grenade which were made in workshops in Dublin. From May, 1920, onwards, we

were getting a fair number of .45 revolvers of various makes. To get ammunition for these weapons presented a serious problem. There seemed to be a famine in .45 ammunition. I remember we got several hundred rounds of Winchester rifle ammunition 44/47 stuff. We attempted and succeeded in dressing the cases down to fit .45, Colts and Smith and Weston, Revolvers. The cases had to be shortened and the ridge on the firing end of the case had to be filed down or turned in a lathe so that it would exactly fit the revolvers. I am afraid that we never asked for advice on those matters. The question of safety was generally solved by tying the revolver to a stake and trying out the first of the adaptations at a safe distance. If all went well in such tests the O.K. was given, and production went ahead. We had a little knowledge of blasting operations and the use of explosives with the ordinary time fuses. We had not in early 1920 any knowledge or training in the use of electric detonators. It was well on in the year 1920 when we got the first electric detonators and the coil and battery type of exploders. In the early days of 1920 electric exploders and detonators, land mines, gun cotton, signalling lamps, rifle grenades, etc. were all a strange unexplored field to us. It was later, when we tried out what we learned about musketry - in operations - that we realised the important help that other weapons could be in their own sphere; that field engineering was as important as musketry and each was a complement of the other; that signalling in all its branches had great military value to all properly equipped armies but to us it should have a greater value. With proper organisation and the training of say 30% of our men and Cumann na mBan in signalling, we could improvise a safety zone where our active servicemen could rest and recuperate after fatiguing work. Looking back now I fail to realise why we did not give signalling

in morse code more attention when we commenced a training schedule. We did give much attention to first aid and most Volunteers and members of Cuman na mBan could safely be given over a case of serious gunshot wound for first aid treatment and could later on help at the nursing of the patient under medical supervision.

General Election of 1918 in the North, and the
setting up of Dáil Éireann.

As soon as the 1914-18 war ended in November, 1918, preparations were made for the holding of a General Election for the Westminster Parliament. The date for polling was fixed for the 14th December. Sinn Fein had the machinery in order for the contesting of all seats in Irish constituencies where a possibility of winning a seat existed. Sinn Fein was now dealing with a demoralised organisation in the Irish Parliamentary Party and the result of the Election could be easily forecast. The political position in the Ulster constituencies at the end of 1918 was that Sinn Fein could easily win the Election in any constituency where there did not exist a big Unionist vote. In the Cavan Election in June, 1918, Griffith polled one and a half times the vote recorded by his opponent, O'Hanlon. However, in some non-Unionist constituencies, the Unionist vote was large enough to enable them to get their candidate in where the Nationalist vote was divided between Sinn Féin and the Parliamentary Party. In eight Ulster constituencies, the possibility of a Unionist winning a Seat, owing to the divided Nationalist vote, was discussed and the Catholic bishops suggested an agreement between Sinn Féin and the Irish Parliamentary Party. This meeting of the Bishops took place in mid-November and John Dillon accepted the idea of an agreement on the 29th November, 1918. On the 3rd December, 1918, Cardinal Logue allotted four seats to Sinn Féin and four seats to the Irish Parliamentary Party in

eight constituencies and his action was agreed to by Sinn Féin.

The interference by a Catholic Churchman, of Cardinal Logue's prominence, in political affairs in the North of Ireland had most unfortunate effects. The agreement of Sinn Féin to such an allocation of seats was bad policy as it gave the Parliamentarians a representation which they could not otherwise obtain. The worst aspect, however, was the effect it had on a considerable volume of opinion - non Nationalist - in the North, who did not see eye to eye with the official Unionist crowd. In 1918 there was a considerable section of what was looked on as Unionists not enthusiastic about the official Unionist programme. For a number of years a small band of non-Catholics in Belfast and some other Ulster centres had shown unmistakable signs of adopting a policy of extreme Nationalism. Some of these men were very prominent in the cultural societies which were in existence in the North before Sinn Féin was thought of. Many non-Catholics were members of Dungannon Clubs and Liberty Clubs, also members of such organisations as the Gaelic League and literary Societies, where matters of historical and cultural interest were debated. This small band of intellectuals had a following some of whom would go the whole gamut of working for a Republic for all Ireland and others were interested in the labour movement. All those early Rebels to the traditional Unionist outlook of their class, had no use for the Irish Parliamentary party as they saw that the Parliamentarians were steeped in sectarianism which all lovers of Freedom detest and which had been the bane of Northern Ireland politics for over a hundred years. These Northern "pioneers" looked on Sinn Féin as the inheritors of the spirit of the leaders of Easter Week with the ideals of the 1916 proclamation and the Irish Volunteers of 1782, as their political guide.

It is easy to understand the shock that the Irish Catholic Bishop's suggestion and Cardinal Logue's interference in the allocation of seats in the North caused with this class of sincere non-Catholic Republicans that I have above described. That the Catholic Churchmen would interfere was expected, as it was their traditional policy to prevent Nationalist division where the Unionist or Protestant elements might gain advantages; that Sinn Féin would agree to any such Sectarian policy seemed to knock the bottom out of all the castles in the air which advanced thinking of the Protestant/Presbyterian Republicans were building up. The result of the Church's action was that many of those former Unionists with Republican inclinations got such a revulsion of feeling that some reverted back to Unionism and others became so suspicious of Republicans in general that they could not be got to take any further interest in our politics. The pity was that those men who had gone so far and by their activities and the sincerity of their opposition to the traditional unionism of their Class, should have been disheartened by this stupid blunder on the part of Sinn Féin. I do not believe that any responsible Northern Republican who then knew the real situation in the Orange districts in the North, would have agreed to such an arrangement about Nationalist seats. I am giving a lot of space to the matter as it was one of the first blunders in the North made by the leaders of Sinn Féin.

~~Other mistakes would be dealt with in their order later on.~~

The result of the General Election proved that Sinn Féin got a mandate to act for Nationalist Ireland. In the South and West of Ireland a clean sweep of the Parliamentarians was almost accomplished.

One of the first decrees of Dáil Éireann when set up in January, 1919, was the floating of the Dáil Éireann loan. About June, 1919, I was asked to have a meeting called to organise the selling of the Loan Bonds. Dáil Éireann was then declared an illegal organisation and the selling of

Dáil Éireann loan bonds was also an illegal act under British Law. I could not advertise the calling of a meeting in the usual way by poster or public announcement. Messengers were sent around in each townland to notify all our supporters and sympathisers that a meeting was being held in the local hall at a certain time for the purpose of taking subscriptions for the Dáil Éireann Loan. The night of the meeting I got the surprise of my life to find that the Hall was nearly full with people from all parts of the parish. An organiser named O'Doherty, who I think was a native of Donegal, attended and addressed the meeting. When we started to take in the subscriptions money was actually thrown at us. It was not a question of soliciting but a question of restraining men, who I knew could ill afford buying the Bonds, from over-subscribing. As far as I can remember we took in about £150. 0. 0. that night. This was a very big sum of money, the most of which was subscribed by small farmers and farm labourers.

In 1919 we had the Newry Brigade organised, with Battalion organisation in the following areas, Newry, Kilkeel, Camlough, Newtownhamilton, Ballymoyer, Armagh and Lurgan. I think I was Brigade Adjutant from mid 1919. Shortly after I was appointed Brigade Adjutant, the Brigade O.C. Paddy Rankin asked me to meet him in Newry. I met him in the Sinn Fein Hall there. He told me that he had a communication from G.H.Q. to the effect that as I was not a member of the I.R.B. and as I held an important rank in the I.R.A. I should be asked to join the I.R.B. Rankin explained the aims and objects of the I.R.B., read over to me the oath which all members should take and explained the scheme of the organisation. He also told me that he was afraid that if I refused to join the I.R.B., Headquarters might not sanction my appointment as Brigade Adjutant. He also suggested that I should give this matter my serious attention and to give

him an answer later on. After a few minutes consideration I told him I could not see my way to agree to join the I.R.B. and that for two reasons - (a) that it was a secret oath bound society and as such I had certain moral scruples about joining it; and (b) that there was no necessity for a secret society then seeing that the I.R.A. had a well organised army in existence from Headquarters down to the Companies. I had heard so much about the dangers of secret societies from my grandfather that I would not be happy in any of them. I also told the Brigade O.C. that I would not feel any disappointment in losing my Brigade Adjutant's position if I was not considered suitable for the job; that in fact I would be more happy as an ordinary ranker. I never heard anything more about this matter.

The Start of the Black and Tan War.

In the summer and autumn of 1919 - after Dáil Eireann was set up as the Government of the Republic, and later when the Dáil was declared an illegal organisation by the British - drilling and training was carried out by all active I.R.A. men. It was felt that now when the country had a republican government to implement the wishes of the Irish people, the army of the Republic - the I.R.A. - would take steps to defend the Republican Government by force of arms and make sure that arms were made available. The waiting from month to month for some indication of a lead from G.H.Q. on the question of arms supplies and the plans for starting hostilities against the British aggressors, caused many officers and men to doubt the intentions of the G.H.Q. staff in reference to a resort to arms. G.H.Q. had encouraged the training programme and fostered the idea that a call for action would be given at the appropriate time, officers were giving a lot of time to study and training and the provision of the munitions of war. This

preparation for war could not go on indefinitely; men would get tired and discouraged and drop all hopes of action or take the law into their own hands and carry on operations without G.H.Q. approval. This is what actually happened. Solohead Beg and Knocklong are examples of men watched by the British and in danger of arrest and imprisonment, taking the logical action that their training and plans visualised. In all areas where the I.R.A. were well organised and in training, the feeling existed that action should commence. The majority of senior officers all over the country had - perhaps - a too well developed sense of discipline and depended on G.H.Q. for the initiative in all things.

Attack on Newtownhamilton Barracks.

12th May, 1920.

The town of Newtownhamilton is situated in South Armagh. The population in 1920 was some 600 or 700, and of those at least 50% were Unionists. The districts North-East and North-West of the town were at least 70% Unionist. From Newtownhamilton to Armagh City the population was predominantly Unionist, except a few small nests of Catholics in places like Ballymacnab and Clady, Miltown.

Early in 1920 the Unionists were well organised politically and had their military organisation - the Ulster Volunteers. The rank and file of this organisation had received considerable military training. They were fairly well armed with rifles, of the type taken into the country during Sir Edward Carson's gun-running campaign. Those rifles were not up to date at the time, but were serviceable and dangerous weapons. It was estimated that in early 1920 there were at least seventy-five Ulster Volunteers in Newtownhamilton, and immediate neighbourhood, armed with these rifles, and each with sufficient ammunition to last out a small engagement. Their morale was fairly good, and

a percentage of them had fighting experience in the Great War.

The Nationalists on the other hand were divided politically. Sinn Fein was only introduced - during the South Armagh Election in early 1918 - and the Nationalists were sharply divided, with approximately 50% each way, and in their fever of seeking for political advantage were to some extent ignoring the Unionist majority. This fact may have given the Unionists some false sense of security, which may have caused slackness from the military point of view. Let that be as it may, the Unionist party in South Armagh had apparently not much to fear, and, I am sure, felt very happy to live so far North as to think they had the ball at their own feet.

In the Newry Brigade at the start of 1920 there were only about a dozen rifles suitable for military purposes, including Lee Enfields, Mausers, and some of the older type of Snyder rifles. For the latter type of rifle the ammunition was limited and difficult to procure. Revolvers were in fair supply. A lot of these were of small bore, and of little use for military purposes. Shotguns were in good supply, and buckshot was being manufactured in small quantities for use in these.

At the end of 1919 plans were being made all over the country for attacks on British held posts. The Newry Brigade had been giving attention to this matter, and decided to start off with an attack on Newtownhamilton R.I.C. Barracks.

The decision in respect of this particular Barracks was prompted by three considerations:

- (a) it was in an Orange district;
- (b) the Unionists there during the South Armagh Election, in 1918, had adopted such an aggressive attitude towards Sinn Féin that it was considered advisable to give them a chance of showing their mettle when up against a serious local attack on what they had sworn to defend.

and

- (c) that the R.I.C. in such surroundings might not have tightened up the Barrack defence owing to a sense of false security.

The Barrack was manned by a Sergeant and five or six men. It was situated about forty yards from a cross-roads in the town where the roads to Dundalk, Newry and Armagh join. The road on both sides of the Barrack is a built-up area. On the Eastern side of the Barracks a public-house adjoined. There was a yard at the back of the Barracks, and on the Western side was the entrance to the yard, secured by a large iron gate. Immediately in front of the Barracks, about twenty yards on the opposite side of the street, was a ruin - the walls of a fairly large house without roof - and the doors and windows facing the Barracks were boarded up and used as a hoarding by the local billposter. The yard at the back of the Barracks extended into rising ground and the back wall was about ten feet high and the top of the wall only level with the surface of the field at the rear. The Barrack was a substantial stone-built building with a hall door and fanlight over the door in the centre of the building facing the street. There were two large rooms in the front of the Barrack, one each side of the hall door, on the ground floor, and the same number of rooms facing the street upstairs. The public-house next door was also a two-storey building, but not nearly as high a building as the Barrack. This fact had an unfortunate effect, as will be seen when I come to the attack.

After the Brigade Staff discussed various plans in connection with the attack on the Barracks, it was decided that an effort would be made to capture the Barracks by a ruse. The plan adopted was to have a small party of Volunteers, about twelve in all, approach the Barrack, and, being dressed in military uniform and equipment, the officer in charge would try to gain admittance, and when the

door was opened to rush the post. It was well known that round about 9 p.m. some of the garrison would be out of the Barracks. This plan was so simple that there were only about eighteen men in all required for its execution, twelve for the rushing party and six for protecting their rear and to act as supports. In this attempt only the men engaged knew of the plans.

The danger of leakage of the plans was thus minimised. The men engaged had got instructions not to attack individual members of the R.I.C. if they encountered them on the street as in the event of a failure in gaining admittance to the Barracks the British Authorities might look on the matter as a hare-brained idea of a small number of individuals who had no proper organisation behind them and that they would not get unduly alarmed over the affair.

The ruse failed as the Constable who answered the door refused to open it and the I.R.A. retired. It was afterwards learned that there was only one Constable in the Barracks when the attempt to gain admittance was made. It was also learned that similar ruses were tried on other Barracks in the South before the Newtownhamilton affair and that all Barracks had been warned against falling a victim to such tactics.

The local Unionist Press after this affair came out with sensational headlines about the matter. They assumed that it was organised and carried out by a band of southern gunmen and gave warning that if any more attempts were made on the Barracks the large unit of Ulster Volunteers in the locality would come to the assistance of the garrison in the Barracks and give the rebels such a lesson that they would never forget it.

After this episode preparations were completed for a real attack on the Barracks. The idea was to capture the Barracks by assault if possible, and if not possible, to

destroy it as far as rendering it unfit for use as an enemy stronghold.

The plan adopted was to gain an entrance to the publichouse next door, mine the wall and blow a breach in it with explosives and through the breach attempt to capture the Barracks. All the roads leading from Newry, Armagh, Castleblayney, Dundalk, Market Hill and Keady had to be blocked by tree felling within at least a mile radius of the Barracks. The I.R.A. were posted at each of the road blocks to prevent by their fire, enemy forces penetrating the blockades. A section of I.R.A. men were kept in reserve in the vicinity of the Barracks to deal with attempts by Ulster Volunteers to assist the R.I.C. in the Barracks. These men were placed at three points - the northern, eastern and southern parts of the town. The nearest of these reserve groups was about 100 yards behind the Barracks on the Northern end.

On the night of the 12th May, 1920, about 11 p.m. the I.R.A. moved into the town to attack the Barracks. The pub was entered by six men including F. Aiken who was in charge. I and three others took over the ruins opposite the Barracks. The rear of the Barracks was covered from the field behind by about twenty men. All the outposts were occupied.

The six men of the mining party operating from the Barrack gable moved into the pub without causing any alarm in the Barracks. When they arrived in the pub they found a stairway leading upstairs along the Barrack gable. When it came to be decided where mining operations should commence, the question of the level of the upstairs floor in the Barracks became important as an entrance to the Barracks was to be attempted into the upstairs room. No measurements or calculations could be made previously owing to the hostility of the publican and the possibility that careful scouting to ascertain levels on the outside would arouse suspicion in a

small insular population such as lived in the town. So guess work had to replace exactitude. The explosives available for the job were a few sticks of dynamite and the wall had to be bored with a "jumper" (iron drill) worked by a sledge hammer. This task took time. The light available was candles. As soon as the mining of the Barracks started the police concentrated a heavy barrage of rifle fire on to the street in front of the Barracks and on the ruins opposite and also threw out hand-grenades. The four men in the ruins had to control this fire with the least wastage of ammunition as the supply of .303 was very limited. When the hole for the explosives was drilled in the wall the police were told the charge was ready for exploding and asked to surrender. They refused. The charge of explosives was fired by a time fuse. When the men got back to the hole they found that the aperture made was not as big as anticipated. A man could not get through it into the Barracks. The explosion, however, shook the masonry of the wall and made it easy to enlarge the hole. The men eventually got a larger opening made under difficult conditions caused by the smoke and dust of the explosion and the impossibility of getting a light to burn owing to these conditions and a draught of air caused by the small breach. However, the job had to be done and was done. Frank Aiken crawled through the breach into the Barrack room and found that the air in the Barracks was stifling, that that room was in complete darkness. He found when he started to grope his way about that there was a policeman in the room. He did not like to fire as he knew the policeman's reply would be directed at the flash of his gun. He decided to get back again through the breach. In the darkness he found considerable difficulty in finding the breach and eventually succeeded. The policeman had apparently also made his exit from the room. Afterwards a few hand-grenades were put in through the breach. When the

first grenade was put through the policemen were again asked to surrender and refused. Some paraffin oil was then thrown in and that side of the Barracks was soon a raging inferno. The police evacuated the Barracks and got into the yard at the rere. The noise at this period was terrific. The roof was soon falling in portions; the slates were cracking with intense heat; hand-grenades, which the police had left behind when evacuating the post, were exploding, and the police were maintaining a sustained fire from their rifles through the gateway of the yard. They were again asked to surrender but again refused. As the few grenades available for the attackers had been used on the Barracks there was no possible means available to force the police to evacuate the yard. The police controlled by their fire all the approaches to the yard and they had excellent and safe cover. It was now daylight about 4.30 a.m. and the Officer-in-charge decided to call the attack off. The Barracks could not be saved as it was then more than half consumed with fire and only small portions of the roof remained which had not fallen into the flames. The police had put up a fine defence which was deplored by their attackers whilst getting their admiration. The signal for calling off the attacks was to be three blasts on a policeman's whistle which was procured for this purpose owing to its distinctive sound. In the mining of the wall and its aftermath the whistle was lost and the Officer-in-charge had to use his mouth to give the signal. The men in the ruins could only make a surmise as to the course of events on the other side of the road and we were not sure if the signal heard was really intended for calling off the engagement. We waited for a while and as the shooting seemed to have died down, decided that the signal must have been given.

We had to evacuate our positions across yards and gardens at the rere of the line of houses opposite the

Barracks. If any of the police had seen us evacuating they could have picked us off quite easily one by one as there was now plenty of light for accurate shooting. It took us about twenty minutes to reach the ground where we had cover from the police at the Barracks and open country where we could travel at a pace that would satisfy the exigencies of the time. At this particular point, however, noise of activities broke out afresh at the Barracks. Several explosions of grenades were heard and heavy rifle fire again started. This new development gave us the idea that we had left our posts before the others and that the whistle we heard was not intended to call off the fight. We then hurriedly crossed some meadows until we got into the town, at Dundalk Street, about six hundred yards from the Barracks. We proceeded to the street corner about 40 yards from the Barracks. When we looked round the corner the Barracks seemed to be completely gutted; the roof had then all fallen in and the windows and doors were gaping openings. A terrific fire was burning inside the walls. The sergeant was standing opposite the Barracks in his shirt sleeves. He was challenged by me to put up his hands and he did so after enquiry as to who was challenging him. A Constable came from the Barrack yard with a rifle in his hands apparently to ascertain who the Sergeant was speaking to. He was also challenged and obeyed the order to move up to the sergeant and drop his rifle. Constables appeared in the gateway. They were also told to move over and drop their rifles and were apparently starting to do so when one of our I.R.A. party opened fire on them with his revolver. Immediately the shots were fired the two Constables who next came out changed direction and made for the cover of the gateway and from the corner of the gateway opened fire on my party at the corner. The policeman on the street regained his rifle and with the Sergeant started to shoot. The

position up to this moment was that it was possible to get the police to surrender their arms. In fact it looked that only for one of our men opening fire, the police would all have surrendered.

When I first saw the Sergeant on the street and realised that there was a chance even then of getting the police to surrender I warned my men on no account to open fire without orders from me as the whole success in obtaining a surrender was to get them all into the open and give the impression that the town was still strongly held by the I.R.A. The man who fired on the police stated that he saw a policeman at the yard gate attempting to use his rifle from that position when he opened fire. This is possible as my attention was mainly concentrated on the last men who had come on to the street. The start of the shooting finished the possibility of us getting the police to surrender.

We quickly evacuated our position at the corner and left the town via Dundalk Street. The police made no effort to hinder our retreat.

This attack on Newtownhamilton Barracks was made by men who had no previous experience of warfare. This was the first time they were under fire. They had not even the advantage of being drilled, lectured or briefed for such an operation by a man who had gone through the mill himself. They had all to gain experience by the mistakes they made and in this attack there were plenty of lessons to be learned. Some of these can be summarised as follows:-

(a) Insufficient explosives for mining the Barrack wall.

(b) Want of anticipation in not providing for the possibility of the police evacuating into the strong position of the Barrack yard afforded them, and the necessity of having available a few hand-grenades for use on the yard to compel surrender of the police.

(c) The provision of contacts between the different positions of attack on the Barracks. The Officer-in-charge should have constant contact between his post and the position in the ruins opposite the Barracks and with the party engaged

at the rear of the Barracks. This contact especially with the post opposite the Barracks would be difficult and dangerous to maintain but it could have been operated.

- (d) Operating the calling off of the engagement should not have been left to a matter of blasts on a whistle. In an operation of this kind where visual signals are not possible, a courier should have been sent to each post or a code message vocally used. In those types of operations it would be simple to make up a series of code sentences that could be used between posts to convey messages unintelligible to the enemy.
- (e) When the police evacuated the Barracks and took up position in the yard, it might have been possible to advance on the gateway to get fire control of the police and compel surrender. This might be asked too much from raw levies engaged in their first scrap and the police by using hand-grenades would likely break up the attempt had it been made.

I arrived home from Newtownhamilton about 6 a.m. I decided to go to an early Mass in Carricknagavra School. I was returning from Mass walking with 2 or 3 other Volunteers when I noticed 2 R.I.C. men approaching us walking with bicycles in their hands. When those men got near us I saw both were carrying revolvers and one was Sergeant Stewart. When we met them the Sergeant spoke to me saying "I want to speak to you Mr. McCoy". I told him that I didn't desire any conversation with any member of the police force. He said then "I have an explanation to give you and please listen to it." He seemed very excited and proceeded to inform me "I have called this morning at your place and I have inspected your motor bike and I can now guarantee that it was not out of the shed last night. The tyres are dry as a bone and the roads were wet last night. You can feel satisfied that I can vouch that the bike was not used." I then assumed a hurt attitude and said "What reason have you to come along and inspect my motor bike? Why pick on mine!! and why are you interested in last night in particular," He then replied "When serious riots or disturbances take place it's our duty to investigate." I then replied "No serious riots or disturbances have taken place in this locality. If you were in the South of

Ireland matters might be different." He then informed me that Newtownhamilton Barracks had been attacked that "it had been blown up and raised to the ground" to use his own words. He assured me that he was not enquiring where I was "last night" but that he could clear any suggestion that my motor bike had been used.

The surprising aftermath of this attack was the casual manner in which the affair was allowed to blow over. On the Sunday of 9th May, Mullaghbawn G.F. Club was playing Carnlough in the Gaelic Grounds at Carnlough. There were a company of British soldiers from the Newry Garrison in the village before the match started. The soldiers were armed and wearing full war equipment. There was some banter going on between Civilians and Soldiers and all parties seemed to be in high good humour. The attack on the Barracks was treated as a good joke. When the crowd moved to the football grounds for the game some of the armed soldiers came along. During the match when anything special occurred on the playing field it was not a cheer for Carnlough or Mullaghbawn that was given but the call of "Up Newtownhamilton". The soldiers took up the chant of "Up Newtownhamilton" until the repetition became monotonous. At least 70% of the players at the match had been at the attack on the Barracks the previous night and had, as a result, got little or no sleep.

This attitude of the British Authorities to this serious attack on one of their police outposts in an area considered safe is difficult to understand. The official view was, apparently, that the attack had been carried out by southern gunmen as they were called at the time, and that locals were not much involved. I was not questioned on the matter except as I have described above and I don't know of any other members of the Mullaghbawn Company who were questioned by police or military.

After the attack on Newtownhamilton our stock-taking

revealed that we had expended nearly all our reserve of .303 ammunition and the few hand grenades we had were used. We could not attempt anything serious again until we made up by some means a reserve of .303 rifle ammunition. The amount .303 available for purchase locally was a mere trickle. Rumours and intelligence reports came to us to the effect that British munitions were being transferred by train on the main railway line passing through our area between Dundalk and Gorrageewood. We made several efforts to hold up the midnight goods train which it was reported carried munitions and arms. I remember one night in particular when I and about thirty of our local company went to a place named Adavoyle in order to hold up and search this train. We closed the crossing gates against the train at a level crossing and went down the line with lamps showing red lights and swung the lights in what was the recognised manner to get a train to make an emergency stop. Our efforts proved abortive as the drivers on the train - there were two engines on the train - accelerated to gain speed and crashed through both the crossing gates and past men now trying to intimidate the drivers with revolver fire. I and a few others succeeded in climbing up on to the moving train which in itself was no mean gymnastic feat. Our idea was to get along the line of carriages until we came to the engine and to compel the engine crew to stop the train. The train was so long and as it increased speed it was difficult to travel along the top of the carriages in order to get to the engines. We soon realised that we would be carried at least ten miles before we got to one of the engine cabins and then the question of the second engine arose, so we had to give up the attempt and we got off the train about half a mile from where we boarded it.

In June 1920 we were making plans to attack Forkhill R.I.C. Barracks. This Barrack was an easy enough place to attack with the means at our disposal. There was high ground

at the back of the building on a level with the top floor. We could get on the roof of the Barrack from this high ground without much equipment. The Sergeant in charge of the Barrack, Sergeant Stewart, called on me and showed me a letter he had received that morning. The letter was addressed to the Sergeant informing him that if the Barrack was not evacuated within twenty-four hours from the time and date on the letter the Barrack was to be attacked and all the defenders killed. The letter was signed O.C., I.R.A. The Sergeant asked me to arrange not to have the Barrack attacked for forty-eight hours and that it would then be evacuated. I told him that the letter he received was not official; that it was a mischievous act and that there was no intention on the I.R.A. part to attack the Barrack within forty-eight hours and that he could rest content as there was no immediate danger of the Barrack being attacked. The Sergeant before leaving me assured me that the evacuation of the Barrack had been decided on and that it could not be done inside twenty-four hours. We decided to attack the Barracks if it was not evacuated within a few days. As it turned out the Barrack was evacuated that evening and the busybody who wrote the anonymous letter to the Sergeant hurried up the evacuation. The night following the evacuation we burned down the Barrack building. We found that some defence safeguards had been taken before the evacuation. The walls between rooms had been loop-holed and sand had been spread on wooden floors to minimise the danger of fire.

A few times per week a patrol of military left the military barracks in Newry and escorted two R.I.C. men who had charge of a quantity of explosives for use in Gorragee Quarry outside Newry. The procedure was that the two R.I.C. men carried the explosives in bags in the centre of two lines of military, armed with rifles and fixed bayonets. They boarded the 8 a.m. train at Newry station

for Gorragehwood, where the explosives were used in the quarries there.

We made plans for an attack on this escort party. If successful we hoped to get about twelve rifles and about three service revolvers and perhaps fifty-six lbs. of explosives. Our plans for this operation was an attacking party composed of at least one man for each soldier and police man forming the party and a few extra to help where required. The operation required perfect timing in attack and getting rid of the captured material. Once the alarm caused by the attack got to the military barracks the military could throw a cordon all around the town of Newry which would make it impossible to use any of the road in the neighbourhood of the town. A few hours before the raid I and five others commandeered a Ford car about four miles from the town and travelled into Newry and parked it near the proposed scene of the operation. We were to be joined there by about thirty of the Newry companies, who were mostly to act as outposts and some to bring our attacking force up to sufficient strength for the job. The Newry Company men did not turn up. We were impatiently awaiting them when the soldiers and police arrived. Frank Aiken, who was i/c of the operation was inclined to use a few Mills handgrenades on the military and the six of us to do our best in disarming the survivors after the bombs exploded. This idea was dropped when it was realised that we might detonate the explosives with the hand grenades and cause such destruction that all arms and equipment would be lost and considerable material damage done to the town and endangering our own safety. In trying to make up our minds as to what we should do, the military passed about thirty feet from where we were posted behind a garden wall about four feet high. There is little doubt that both police and military saw us. We let them go and decided to wait for another occasion and ensure the next

time that there was no slip up on the plans. We never got another chance at disarming the escort party as from that morning on, the explosives were conveyed to the quarries by an escort of military in lorries which presented a different operational problem which we never tackled.

On the 6th June, 1920, sports were held near the village of Cullyhanna, Co. Armagh. I was not at the sports. A clash took place after the Sports in the village of Cullyhanna in which two R.I.C. received wounds one of which proved fatal and a Volunteer of the Mullaghbawn Company was killed and a Volunteer officer from Dundalk was seriously wounded. I got the following facts about the operation on that evening the operation took place. Sergt. Holland, in charge of two R.I.C. attended at the Sports, each carrying revolvers. An officer of the Volunteers and a few of the Mullaghbawn Company decided to attempt disarming the three R.I.C. Amongst the attacking party there was only one small automatic carried by the officer and two small .22 pin fire revolvers of antique pattern. The plan of the operation was to call on the police to put up their hands and if they refused to attempt forcibly disarming them. The attempt was made in the village of Cullyhanna, opposite a public house, where a large crowd of people had assembled listening to bands playing. When the order "Hands Up" was given, Sergt. Holland drew his revolver and opened fire on the attackers. The other two police were grappled with and one of them disarmed and wounded. Sergeant Holland wounded the Volunteer Officer in the foot and he received three or four bullets in his body. The Sergt. succeeded in driving off all his attackers with revolver fire, killing Peter McCreesh instantly. He was removed to hospital himself and died the next day.

At the funeral of Peter McCreesh the volunteers marched in military formation and gave full military

honours at the burial in Mullaghbawn cemetery. A large force of R.I.C. were present at the funeral and did not interfere in any way with the funeral arrangements.

In July, 1920, Frank Aiken and I met in Newry as we had to travel to Lurgan, Co. Armagh, and attend a Battalion meeting which was being held there. I had a new motor bike and side-car and we were travelling by it. We heard in Newry about 2 p.m. that trouble had broken out in the town of Banbridge. Divisional Commissioner Smyth, R.I.C. had been shot a few days previously in the County Club in Cork City. He was a native of Banbridge and his funeral to Banbridge was on that day. Banbridge was on the direct line to Lurgan so we bye-passed Banbridge on our journey to Lurgan. We arrived in Lurgan without incident and held our Battalion meeting. In Lurgan we heard that serious trouble had broken out in Banbridge and that Catholic houses were being burned by the Orange mob, so we decided to again bye-pass Banbridge on our return journey to Newry. We left Lurgan with the intention of crossing the Main Belfast Banbridge road north of Banbridge and getting into Newry by the Rathfriland Road. The first place we got to was Gilford and on the square we saw about ten or twelve R.I.C. men armed with rifles. As we did not know where we were we decided to ask the police for directions and also perhaps get some information of the position in Banbridge. The police told us that we should avoid passing through Banbridge as several houses there had been burned and that the military were in possession of the town in which serious rioting was taking place. We got some directions from the police and proceeded on our journey. We eventually arrived on a main road which we knew to be the main Belfast Banbridge Road and we decided to travel on it for some short distance and take the first turn off on our left in order to bye-pass the town. We misjudged the distance we were from Banbridge

and arrived at the outskirts of the town where we were held up by a party of Military under a Lieut. Watson. He enquired from us as to where we were coming from and where we were going to and asked us our names. We gave him "satisfactory" answers to his questions. He told us to go ahead, through Banbridge. He said that the Orangemen were out and that if we were stopped or interfered with by civilians in passing through the town we were to return to him for an escort to see us through. We went on and at a place called "the Cut" in the centre of the town we were ordered to halt. A Civilian - an Orangeman - came over to us. He had a revolver in his hand. He enquired who we were and where we were going. I told him that we had been stopped by the military, back the road, and that they had passed us through as O.K. and that if he was contemplating stopping us on our journey we would go back and report the matter to the military. He did not reply to this but continued to stare into my eyes. He then went across to the side-car and stared into Frank Aiken's eyes. During all this time I was enquiring if he was really intending to detain us. He never spoke. I let in the clutch and told him we were moving off. I accelerated the engine and moved slowly off again. When we got some little speed up we found that missiles were being thrown at us as we proceeded to run the gauntlet through the town, where 10,000 Orangemen lined the streets. We got safely through and so home. This I look on as a close call for both Frank and me. I heard afterwards that the man who stopped us actually recognised me or at least he said he did. I recognised him as a man I had seen often but did not know his name or where he lived.

The trouble in Banbridge started when a small number of Catholics in the town refused to close their houses or put on the window blinds as a mark of respect to the funeral of Major Smyth. The Orange mob started to burn the houses involved including amongst others the house of Daniel

Monaghan. Daniel and his two sons - Seamus and young Daniel - decided to defend their house against any attempt at burning it. When the mob approached the house the Monaghans opened fire on them and shot a few of the attackers. The situation then became somewhat like a minor battle with the Monaghans keeping the attackers at bay. The military from Newry came on the scene and demanded the surrender of the Monaghan family. This surrender was refused and after some parleying the surrender was agreed to. The three Monaghans were subsequently removed to Belfast prison and tried for murder.

In August, 1920, orders were given for a general raid for arms all over the Brigade area. The raid had to be carried out simultaneously all over the area, so that all available volunteers had to be called out to cover each Company area. I was engaged that night in an area where a number of Unionists houses had to be raided. I had five or six volunteers with me. One of the houses raided belonged to a great personal friend of mine, a man whom I knew well and respected. I wore no disguise on these raids. This man - and the others we raided - knew me. He told me how he resented my raiding his place. I explained that I knew he had a shotgun of his own and that I heard he was quartermaster of the local company of the Ulster Volunteers and that it was my duty to raid his house for those arms. He assured me that there were no arms in the house. We gave the place a very thorough search but found no arms. This man did not speak to me for about ten years after this raid although he had still retained as great a regard for me as I had for him.

In another part of the Company area a house was raided in which there were a father, mother and two sons who had served in the British Army in 1914-18 war. One of our officers and a few Fianna boys attempted to raid this house and were attacked by all the inmates as soon as they entered.

The Officer-in-charge had to use vigorous methods to prevent his being disarmed. He was carrying a .45 revolver. He showed most praiseworthy coolness in the dilemma and used the revolver on the heads of his assailants instead of shooting them. The old man got a rather nasty knock and was unconscious when the raiders retired. Information of the raid and injuries to this man were sent to the British Authorities. When I returned from my part of the night's activities I heard of this affair. The following night I got information from Newry that a number of houses were to be raided for the participants on the raid on the house where the man was injured. I sent word to all the men concerned and late that night I went home to my own house. I was a few hours in bed when the military arrived and demanded admittance. I opened the door for them. In the room where I was sleeping that night a small box of .22 Morris tube ammunition was found by a Constable Harvey. When this stuff was found I was placed under arrest and questioned. I was charged with possession of the ammunition. I did not know anything about the ammunition being there and told the police and military so. My father and my brother Michael were then arrested and questioned. My father, brother and myself were taken to the military barracks Newry and were kept there for about two weeks. My father was released from Newry and my brother and I were transferred to Crumlin Road Prison, Belfast, where we remained to about the 1st November.

The Officer-in-charge of the Military party who arrested us was a Captain Murphy of the Royal Garrison Artillery, Newry. This officer had served in Dundalk before going to Newry and in both towns he received much publicity for his outspoken antagonism to the Republic movement. He adopted a most unfriendly attitude towards us during the raid on our house. When we arrived in Newry

Barracks about 8 a.m. we were put into the guard room. That evening I asked for an interview with Captain Murphy. He came along. I told him that I expected more proper accommodation for my father who was an aged man than the facilities for sleeping provided in the Guard Room. Murphy informed me that he was having proper provisions made for all us, prisoners, in Cells in the detention part of the Barracks. I then asked that we be allowed to get our meals in from the outside and I also raised the question of visits and open air recreation. Captain Murphy agreed to grant all my requests and I was agreeably surprised at his friendly response to all my suggestions for our comfort whilst under his care. He informed me that he had no illusions as to what I was engaged in and that I would receive the best possible treatment from him provided I did not attempt to plan treason in his Majesty's Barracks in Newry. Our treatment whilst in Newry was first-class. Captain Murphy had a custom of each morning going into the yard of the detention cells and firing six rounds from his service revolver at targets painted on the walls. One morning in passing me on the square he invited me to accompany him so that I should see an exhibition of his marksmanship. He told me that if I was released I would probably be inclined to attempt to shoot him in the back and that if I missed the first shot I should know what I was in for. I assured him that if I was going to shoot him I would not take an unfair advantage of him and would give him an even break.

Captain Murphy then informed me that he was somewhat impressed by me since I became his prisoner and he asked me if I would give him a candid answer to a question he wished to put to me. I told him I might refuse to answer the question but if I did answer it I would be very candid. He told me that some short time previous when stationed in Dundalk there was a big raid on the post offices in which

all letters in post in the Dundalk area were captured by the I.R.A. and censored. Amongst the letters censored were three addressed to him, one from his wife living in England, and two letters from two individual girls with whom he was friendly. The I.R.A. censors put his three letters into an envelope and sent them to his wife. The result of this action was that a serious domestic situation had arisen between his wife and himself. His question to me was first had I anything to do with this raid and the disposal of his letters, and secondly if I had nothing to do with the raid would I be in favour of treating his letters in a similar manner as had been done. I told him I had nothing whatever to do with the raid in question and that if I had I would not treat his letters in such a way as the interests of the Republic were not effected by damaging the domestic relationship existing between him and his wife. The conversation seemed to put Captain Murphy and myself in proper perspective with each other. I realised that his expressed attitude towards the I.R.A. was coloured by his experience and what he considered as "not cricket" and he came to the point of thinking that the I.R.A. were not all such a bad lot. He told me, as a matter of fact, that he would do his best for me when my courtmartial came about.

When we arrived in the prison in Belfast the pogrom was in full swing. The area around the prison every night was a battle ground judging by the sounds of musketry and machine gunfire. Each night a few arrests were made and the prisoners were on view the next morning. Some nights the majority of prisoners were Catholics and perhaps the next night they were Protestants. If the relations between the contestants when outside were hostile, their attitude when prisoners showed nothing antagonistic. Both parties, when they met in the prison seemed to look on the business outside as a bit of "devilment" which could be treated as

a matter for banter and joking. In addition to these orange and green elements in the prison which were, I should say, about equally divided, there were a number of I.R.A. prisoners, mostly from Belfast on remand. Amongst them I met Seán Leonard who was being charged with the shooting of D.I. Swanzey in Lisburn and was subsequently sentenced to death, the sentence being later commuted to penal servitude.

At the taking of the summary of evidence for our Courtmartial, Constable Harvey of the R.I.C. gave evidence and proved the finding of the .22 ammunition in my bedroom. There was another R.I.C. Constable on the raid when we were arrested and he did not appear at our courtmartial. Constable Harvey was questioned about why this man did not turn up. He admitted that this man, a Constable Crilly, had deserted from the R.I.C. after the raid on our house. When Captain Murphy's turn came to give evidence he stated that he could not agree that the "stuff" Constable Harvey showed him, during the raid was ammunition in the military sense. He maintained it had no military value and could be classed as loaded percussion caps. He stated that Harvey was drunk during the raid and that the box produced with the "stuff" on the summary of evidence was not that shown to him during the raid. Harvey was recalled and asked to explain how the change of boxes took place and he would not admit that any change took place. Captain Murphy's evidence, which was correct, was that the finding of the ammunition was by Harvey who was drunk and that he showed signs of aggression against me. That in his opinion the ammunition produced at the Summary was not the same as that which the Constable alleged he found in my bedroom.

A few days after the Summary was taken, my brother and I got notice of our release and returned home. This was a most pleasant surprise to us and it seemed that the British Authorities had no knowledge of my rank in the I.R.A.

The Special Constabulary.

The Ulster Volunteers, in existence since 1912, had been reorganised in 1919 as a counter blast to the growing strength of I.R.A. and the Sinn Féin organisation. A big percentage of the members of the Ulster Volunteers were ex-servicemen, who had joined up in 1914. The large stocks of arms which had been imported into Ulster in 1912 and 1913 by the Ulster provisional Government were mostly intact and available for use in many Ulster areas. In 1919 and up to mid 1920 there was considerable activity amongst the Ulster Volunteer organisation, the idea being then that this voluntary force should be used as an auxiliary to the regular R.I.C. forces in the event of an attack being made on Police Barracks or on individual policemen or military personnel. This idea of supplementing the regular armed forces from the Ulster Volunteer force looked feasible at the start of the year 1920. Any hopes of obtaining such voluntary help was blasted when the I.R.A. commenced military activities in areas in Ulster where an Ulster Volunteer organisation existed and when the Ulster Volunteers made no effort to render assistance. An example in South Armagh was the attack on Newtownhamilton Barrack. There was a considerable force of Ulster Volunteers in the immediate vicinity of this town which could have played a vital part in helping to defend the Police Barrack. In planning the attack cognisance had to be taken of the possibility of Ulster Volunteer interference.

The presence of Ulster Volunteers in an area where an I.R.A. attack was being planned was an embarrassment to the attackers as provisions had to be made to deal with the operational danger of their possible interference.

In Newtownhamilton and in other Northern areas when such a danger existed the Ulster Volunteers remained inactive, this notwithstanding the time available during a

Barrack attack for mobilisation. In Crossgar in North Down the Ulster Volunteers were organised and active at the time that Crossgar Barracks was attacked. They made no effort to help the R.I.C. garrison during the attack.

This inactivity of the Ulster Volunteer force when action was expected from them was most providential from the Republican point of view as their participation in Military action against the I.R.A. would give the resultant action the appearance of a Sectarian struggle which the I.R.A. were most anxious to avoid.

When the realisation that the Ulster Volunteer force were not going to get involved in Military action against the I.R.A. on a voluntary basis the British Authorities decided to get them into uniform as full time paid soldiers disguised as policemen or as part-time men under pay who would help out as patrols and do intelligence work. The Scheme of organisation was well thought out and well planned and this force did effective work.

When the Special Constabulary were first organised in Belfast City they were sent out on the streets to do duty wearing armlets as a distinguishing mark and were unaccompanied by any members of the Regular R.I.C. It was soon apparent to the British Authorities that this scheme would not work as the Specials could openly identify themselves with the Orange mobs in their burnings and lootings by simply removing their armlets. This state of affairs demanded a change and the Specials were re-organised on a different basis and divided into 3 classes "A", "B", "C". This re-organisation took effect about the time that Divisional Commissioner Smith was shot in Cork.

"A" Class were recruited for full time duty. They were mostly ex-servicemen and were trained as soldiers armed with rifles, machine guns, revolvers and supplied with Crossley Tenders and Armoured Lorries. In large towns they

were sometimes found in their own barracks. Their organisation was on a County basis and the officer in charge in each County area was known as County Commandant. The officers in "A" Class were all ex-British Army Military Officers. The officers and men wore full police (R.I.C.) uniform.

"B" Class were organised on local parish areas. They were armed with rifles and revolvers when on duty and they generally kept their arms in their dwelling-houses; they wore police caps and police greatcoats. Their services were on a part-time basis and they undertook to do a certain minimum number of patrols per month. There was no limit to the number of patrols done in practice. They were paid for the time spent on duty. The "A" and "B" Classes had the same power to question and arrest as the Regular R.I.C.

"C" Class were organised on local parish areas; were liable to be called out and armed during an emergency. I understand that their main object was to do intelligence work. They wore police caps and belts and were armed with revolvers when on duty. They were paid a small weekly salary of about 5/-.

Attack on Camlough R.I.C. Barrack and Ambush
at Egyptian Arch.

Immediately after my release I was consulted on plans that were being considered for an attack on Camlough R.I.C. Barracks. Various methods of attack were being considered. The attack on Camlough Barrack was to provide the opportunity for an ambush at the Egyptian Arch about 1½ miles on the Camlough side of Newry. It eventually boiled down to two feasible lines of attack - one the explosion of a large land mine on the entrance of the Barrack to be followed by a small rushing party to obtain control of the ground floor and thus make possible the capture of the position. The other plan was to provide the means of

pumping an inflammatory mixture of petrol and paraffin oil into the Barrack by an upstairs window and thus start a fire which, with a vigorous rifle attack from the outside would compel the surrender of the garrison.

In making plans for the attack on Camlough Barracks it was also contemplated to lay an ambush at the Egyptian Arch about $\frac{1}{2}$ mile from Newry on the Camlough Road.

At this time G.H.Q. had an order to the effect that prior sanction should be obtained from G.H.Q. for all operations of a major nature by those carrying out the operation. I was sent up to G.H.Q. to discuss with them the plans for the attack and have their advice on which plan should be operated. On arrival in Dublin Peadar Clancy put me in touch with Dick McKee at an office in Bachelors' Walk. I explained to McKee the purpose of my visit and he gave me a sheet of paper and told me to draw a sketch of Camlough village and the R.I.C. Barrack, giving special attention to the details of the Barrack. When I had this sketch completed, McKee came in and I told him of the alternative plans which we put forward for consideration, i.e. direct assault on the Barrack after the explosion of land mine to destroy the strong entrance or the setting fire to the Barracks by the pumping in of inflammable liquid and simultaneous attack in order to compel surrender of Garrison. After discussing the plans for attack by land mine and direct assault, McKee told me that we could not, in his opinion, succeed, as one land mine would not be sufficient to do all the material damage to the building which would give us a chance to effect a quick subjection of the garrison. He informed me that he knew the inside layout of the Barracks and that the inside defences would be planned to enable resistance, room by room and that admission say at the entrance was only a start at a long and dangerous operation. He believed the second alternative was more likely to achieve results. Not that

he had any great hopes that we would succeed in setting the place on fire and destroying it. He believed, however, that the attack on the Barrack could be justified as part of a combined operation with the ambush of Crown Forces at the Egyptian Arch, as our best chance of inflicting losses on the enemy.

The Barracks in Camlough is situated in the village in its own grounds about 30 yards from the main Newry road. It was a double storey Georgian type of house and was garrisoned by about forty R.I.C. and Specials. All round the Barrack on its front and rear sides was a considerable depth of barbed wire entanglements. The entrance was particularly well protected as there were extra barbed wire barriers on the approach to the Barrack on trestles which could be put in place and chained in position during the night and so prevent approach except by removing the trestles. Camlough is about $2\frac{1}{2}$ miles from Newry on the main Crossmeglen Road. In the matter of time this distance was only five minutes from the military barracks.

The Egyptian Arch is a bridge over which the Great North Railway line crosses the Camlough - Newry Road. The road is considerably sunken at this point with sloping banks reaching up to the fields on the sides of the road for about 100 yards on the Newry side of the Arch. The Arch itself is a high elevation about 40 feet above the roadway. The Arch and the Banks on the Newry side of the road provided a fine position to attack enemy forces passing, and if the road was properly blocked on the Camlough side of the position, excellent chances of inflicting serious losses on the enemy would exist.

When I returned and reported the results of my interview and the granting of sanction for the operations, we went into the question of detailed planning for the attack on the Barrack. We procured a large barrel and a force pump with sufficient garden hose to reach the Barrack from a position forty to sixty yards distant. For the Barrack end of the hose we got some gas piping long enough to enable the piping to be put into an upstairs window by a man standing on the ground. This pipe had a right angle bend and about a 4 ft. of a tube pipe forming an inverted "L" to the longer length which was attached to the garden hose. Around this 4 feet of the "L" were drilled a lot of holes and over the length was loosely wrapped tow, a bye product of flax scutching, something resembling cotton waste but more inflammable. The idea was that when it was necessary to insert the piping through a barrack window some of the mixture in the barrel would be pumped into the tube to saturate the tow which when lit, would burn fiercely and when put through a window and the full force of the pump could be used. The resulting effect was something like molten fire dropping from the tube and creating a conflagration most difficult to control.

Three of four small houses on the opposite side of the road from the Barrack were to be commandeered and the windows used as position for riflemen to control the police fire at the front of the Barracks. On the southern side of the Barrack about eight men were to take up positions. Those men were to be armed with rifles and also one bomber with G.H.Q. handgrenades which were made to explode on contact and which it was hoped, would demolish by a direct hit the sand-bags and steel shutters on the windows. On the northern side of the barracks, 3 men were to take charge of the gas piping and attempt to insert it through an upstairs window. This appeared to be and was the most dangerous part of the operation. The men engaged here were Frank Aiken, Jack McElhaw and Tommie

O'Neill, O.C. Camlough Battalion. On the western side or back of the Barracks there were no windows and it was not necessary to have any men covering this position. The barrel of incendiary fluid and the pump were located about 60 yards from the back of the Barrack on this side and two men were placed in responsibility here to pump the fluid.

All the roads leading into Camlough were blockaded. A few men were posted at each barricade to prevent persons attempting to pass or remove blockades. These blockades generally took the form of fallen trees across the road; in one instance a steam traction engine and thrashing mill made an efficient blockade.

For the ambush at the Egyptian Arch, the Newry and South Down Battn. were to take up position along the sides of the road and on the parapet of the Bridge overlooking the road on the Newry side of the arch. The road on the Camlough side of the arch was to be properly blockaded to prevent motor transport passing. Enemy forces travelling to the relief of Camlough Barrack by this road would be thus held up at the barricade and be then within effective handgrenade and musketry fire from the Volunteers lining the sides of the road and from the strong position of the parapets of the bridge facing the road on both sides. This position it was hoped would present a veritable death trap for enemy forces caught within the position and immobilised by getting entangled with a proper road blockade.

The danger in the carrying out of this operation for our men lay in the proximity of the ambush position to the town of Newry, being only $\frac{1}{2}$ mile or so outside the town's suburbs and the blockading of the road so near the town presented some difficulty. It was felt, however, that owing to the inclement weather and the time which this part of the operation should commence around 11 p.m. would give a decent chance of getting the road blockaded without arousing enemy attention. Another important consideration, which played a

big part in the failure of this operation, was the fact that all the arms of the Newry Battn. were in dumps in South Down. The crossing of Carlingford Lough provided a great danger to the successful transport of munitions and the arms were to have been removed to the Co. Armagh side of Newry town, in ample time before the night of the operation. I had occasion to go into Newry on the Thursday previous to the attack to satisfy myself that the arms were available on the Co. Armagh side. I was convinced by the Brigade Quartermaster that all the equipment was in Co. Armagh and readily available for the operation. The Brigade Quartermaster was himself misinformed as to the position as on Sunday evening the arms and other essential equipment was still on the Co. Down side of the town.

On the night of the 12th December, 1920, we moved into the village of Camlough to attack the Barracks. The night was very cold and showers of sleet and snow was falling. My position was in charge of men in front of the Barracks and I personally took charge of about six men who took up a position on the southern side of the Barracks. We had to negotiate some barbed wire entanglements in order to get behind a wall which ran parallel to the Barrack. This wall was about four feet high and was cut about eight feet from the Barrack wall. One of my squad had a number of handgrenades which were specially manufactured in I.R.A. workshops in Dublin for use against sandbagged windows. Those Bombs were percussion type and were designed to explode on contact. They were at least four times as big and weighty as the regulation Mills handgrenade and had streamers attached to their base to ensure that the percussion pins which were situated in their nose would first hit their target. I looked on these grenades as a dangerous weapon for the user and when we were arranging ourselves into position for the attack I tried to ensure that the man using these grenades would be a reasonable distance away from my position. This man sensed the danger as much as I did and when I pointed out his position to him he suggested that I should share his danger as he did not relish going aloft

on his own. I was compelled to subordinate my fears, and stay beside him.

The attack commenced with the Officer-in-charge - Frank Aiken - on the Northern side of the Barrack attempting to put the end of the gas pipe tube into the Barrack window. This part of the operation necessitated the lighting of the tow on the end of the gas tubing which lighted up that side of the Barrack and immediately alerted the garrison inside. The fight was now on as shooting started from all the Barrack windows. Verrey lights were sent up which lit up all the surroundings. Handgrenades were thrown out from the windows. Our safety on the southern side of the Barrack, confined as we were by barbed wire entanglements in our rear, depended on our maintaining a heavy sustained fire on the windows on that side of the Barrack. We could not, however, prevent handgrenades being thrown out. It was lucky for us that those grenades were apparently got out through some kind of a chute and fell close to the Barrack wall and did not clear the wall we were protected by. The front of the Barrack was vigorously attacked from the houses opposite. The attempt to insert the gas tubing into a Barrack window proved, as was anticipated, a most difficult operation. The Officer-in-charge of the operation was attempting to find a loop-hole in the sandbags in the window. He was accompanied by three other officers who tried to assist him by directions as well as firing on the windows on that side of the Barrack. The end of the gas piping was burning like an immense phosphorous match and some of the fluid pumped into the tube was falling aflame from the tubing. The efforts to get the tube into the Barracks was an exhausting and nerve wracking ordeal as a heavy fire was maintained from that side by the garrison and grenades were being thrown out. Eventually the torch was got in and the room apparently went on fire. When the tube was got in the officers on that side withdrew a distance of about twenty yards and took cover under a culvert running underneath the road opposite the Barrack. From this position they were able to see that the Garden Hose (Rubber

Tube) had been cut by the explosion of a handgrenade and that the inflammable mixture pumped into the tube was on fire on the ground and lighting up all that side of the Barrack. The fire, started in the barrack, was got under control when the tube was cut. The Officer-in-charge waited until he was satisfied that the attempt to set fire to the Barrack had failed and he then gave the signal calling off the attack. During the operation on this side of the Barrack, one of the officers was seriously wounded in the leg.

When I heard the signal calling off the attack, I found considerable difficulty in getting my men away. We had to retreat under a heavy fire from rifles and handgrenades. The fire-work display provided by the verey lights was a sight that could be admired under different circumstances. At times our location was lighted up so brightly that a person would think pins could be picked up from the ground. I remember I was getting somewhat alarmed that the re-inforcements might arrive to the Barracks before we got clear from our positions. We returned home without any further incident.

The next day, 13th December, was so stormy that there was little possibility of moving about. Anxious to hear the latest from Camlough and Newry districts, I contacted a breadserver who came out from Newry early that morning. He told me that the military from Newry were holding all roads in the Camlough district and searching and interrogating all people passing. He informed me that there was a fight at the Egyptian Arch and that a squad of soldiers were on duty at the arch and that a young man was lying dead on the public road underneath the parapet of the arch, having, apparently, fallen from the top. He gave me a lot of other wild rumours which he had heard. I gathered from this man that the military were not allowing any person to pass through their cordons except those on urgent or important business and that they were holding suspicious young men passing through for identification

I then sent my sister Bridget and my cousin, Mary A. Muckian to attempt getting into Camlough to locate the Brigade O.C. and to get the latest authoritative information about the previous night's activities.

The two girls proceeded towards Camlough and were stopped at Camlough Lake about a mile from Camlough village by a squad of soldiers. They were told that they could not pass through except on urgent business. They gave what was accepted as a proper reason for passing and were allowed on. They found that for at least a mile radius around the Barrack there was a concentration of soldiers and uniformed police. A person could not travel more than 400 or 500 yards without being stopped and questioned.

When they returned they were able to give me a fairly accurate story of the sequel of the attack on the Barracks and a general description of the fight at the Egyptian Arch. At the Egyptian Arch the road was not blockaded. The arms had not been removed from South Down during the week previous to the attack and when an attempt was made to shift the ammunition out to the Egyptian Arch on Sunday evening the Volunteers attempted to commandeer a car on the street. The driver resisted the effort to commandeer his car and got away with it. He gave the alarm and the military and police got out on the streets. They started to hold up and search all suspected persons in the street and on Sunday night they burned the Sinn Féin Hall. All this excitement and the failure to have the arms and equipment on the Co. Armagh side of the town, produced such a critical situation that it is surprising that the Newry Volunteers were able to muster any forces to attempt an ambush. The Volunteers were able to steal out of the town in ones, and twos, and mobilize at the Egyptian Arch. They were not out there in time or in sufficient numbers to blockade the road. The military came along and fire was opened on them from the parapet of the arch. This fire was returned and the arch was raked by machine gun and rifle fire. A number of our

men were wounded and a bomb exploded amongst them on the bridge. The casualties on this point were, one killed, two mortally wounded, two others badly wounded, both, however, eventually recovered.

The Volunteers had to hastily evacuate the position under heavy fire. The military had by now got into the fields on each side of the ambush position and our men had a hazardous time in getting clear of the immediate surroundings. That they were able to do so and remove all their seriously wounded comrades was an achievement. Some of those wounded had to be carried at least eight to ten miles before a safe retreat was found for them at the Priory of the Charity Fathers, Omeath, Co. Louth.

When the military got out to Camlough we had evacuated the village. The first thing the military did was to burn the three houses opposite the barracks which our men had taken over for the attack. They then went to Frank Aiken's residence about $\frac{1}{2}$ mile from the Barrack and set it on fire. Our men, who were holding the Northern approaches to the village and who were on the attack on the northern and western side of the barrack retreated towards Killeavey in an eastern direction. All the roads leading into Camlough, except the Newry Road, which was left open as far as the Egyptian Arch, were so securely blockaded that it was found most difficult to get the Camlough Battn. O.C., who was severely wounded in the leg, away. He was a young man of about fourteen stone in weight, and to get him transported across country it was necessary to commandeer a donkey to carry him. When a road barricade was encountered the donkey had to be lifted across it and then the wounded man. This man was transported safely to Omeath, Co. Louth. He was eventually got across to England and received hospital treatment there.

The attack on Camlough Barracks and the ambush at the Egyptian Arch caused intense British activities in the Louth, Armagh and South Down areas. Military and police activities

were initiated; raids, round-ups and heavy military patrols in lorries and armoured cars were daily carried out. There was now little doubt that the ^British Authorities had made up their minds to deal with the I.R.A. activities in the Northern Counties area in a drastic and terror-inspiring manner. At this period the British had a good idea of who were behind the local I.R.A. activities. Raids and roundups were of daily occurrence and every effort was made by them to round up all active I.R.A. men. There were most compelling reasons for the British Authorities in the present six northern counties to subjugate the men who were active against them, seeing that the establishment of the Northern Government was only a few months' distant - King George V opened the Northern Parliament in June 1921. The process of quenching the military activities of the I.R.A. was not to be inconvenienced by an acceptance of the general recognised rules of warfare. Stark terrorism must be introduced to supplement other drastic methods. The minor success of our efforts at the Camlough attack and the fight at the Egyptian Arch lay in the fact that such elaborate plans should be attempted in an area where ^British propaganda claimed that loyalty to the Empire was an undeniable fact. That the men who engaged in these operations were all natives of the area in which they operated was well known to the British Authorities and their Northern friends. All the elaborate machinery which had been so painstakingly built up such as the A. B. and C. Special Constabulary - was got into motion. The area over which we operated was one of the most heavily garrisoned in the whole country. In addition to all the military barracks being occupied to their full complement, there were military camps set up in various localities, mostly garrisoned by 'A' Special Constabulary. In our area such camps existed at Markethill, Balleeks, Heathhall, Forkhill and Urcher. All those camps were spaced about five or six miles apart, and each could co-operate in the defence of another, in the case of attack, and all could spread out to cover a large area when a round-up was necessary, or where our

men were getting away after an offensive operation. This plan of strong military garrison in the large towns and the country districts held by numerous strongly held blockhouses, was cleverly and efficiently designed to eventually hold the area and by constant pressure to break down the morale of our men. A campaign of murder, in the form of reprisals or counter reprisals, was designed to terrorise our civilian population. From the start of the year 1921 the story of our, and our enemies' efforts, will be frequently punctuated with happenings which could profitably be forgotten.

For the few days after the attack on Camlough we, in Mullaghbawn, found ourselves isolated from Camlough area. About the 16th December I decided to go to Camlough in an effort to contact the Brigade O.C. I started off about 3.30 p.m. and arrived near Camlough village as darkness fell. I picked up an I.R.A. guide to take me to where the O.C. and his men were holding out. We started off by going mostly across fields to the last known place - a farmer's house - where Frank Aiken was staying. When we arrived there we were informed that he and a few others had left for another house some miles distant a few hours previously. We then went to this other house to find that the men had left there a short time before our arrival. The people in this house did not know where the boys had gone to. My guide took me along to another house where he thought I might succeed in making contact. I think in all we must have walked about ten miles that night, mostly across fields. I decided to give up my quest. I instructed my guide to try the next day and get in touch and to tell Frank Aiken to come up to Mullaghbawn areas I wanted to see him and also that I thought our area would provide much safer billets than around Camlough district.

A few days afterwards, Frank Aiken, Jack McElhaw and Peter Boyle came up to my father's place and I met them there. I then got the full history of the operations in Camlough, the Egyptian Arch and the aftermath. Mr. Aiken's residence was partially burned on the night of the 12th December. The

British came again on the 14th December and completed the burning of the dwelling house and burned the farm buildings and out offices near the dwelling house. We reviewed the position created by the attacks and discussed plans for future operations. I recommended that Frank and his companions should stay around Mullaghbawn and make it our base. The population around Mullaghbawn was alright politically and could be relied on not to give men away to the British. It was practically impossible to get a district further north where the population were so national in political outlook. Elsewhere a Unionist element in the population provided a danger to our men. Frank would not agree that he and others should evacuate Camlough area. He was planning to carry out further operations around the vicinity of that village. He and his two comrades returned to Camlough area and arranged with me where I could get in early touch. I went to them a few days later. They were then staying in an unoccupied farm house where the owners had a number of cattle being stalled. There was a boiler in the farm yard for the preparation of cattle food. This activity around the place to some extent camouflaged the presence of strangers about the place. This house was in a very mixed district with a fairly big Unionist population which necessitated some safety provisions, one of which was that none of us should be seen outside the house during daylight. I remained with the boys for about a week, during which we were planning future operations and receiving reports of enemy activities, and getting things pulled together. We felt that we should carry out another operation as soon as possible to help the morale of our own men and to give the English a jolt as it appeared that the Military and police forces were having unrestricted freedom in their incessant raids and holdups. I soon felt most uncomfortable about our safety. We could be surrounded at any time during the day time and saw little hopes of breaking through and no hope whatever of getting assistance. About

the week before Xmas, 1920, we changed our quarters from this house to a vacant house on the mountain side overlooking Camlough, about $\frac{1}{2}$ mile from Camlough. We made this change principally owing to our decision to ambush a patrol of R.I.C. which usually passed from Camlough Barracks to Bessbrooke and back each day. A few local volunteers' houses supplied us with some bed clothes and food was taken to us each night by two Volunteers, Jack Doran and Jimmie O'Hara. In this house we could not light a fire for cooking during the day, as the smoke could be seen from the Barracks and it also could be seen by many other unfriendly persons. This house also presented a most unsafe abode. If we were surrounded in it we had, I should say, a worse chance of getting away than in the former place. The house was situated on the bare side of the mountain without any cover whatever. We remained here all during the week proceeding Xmas. One night Jimmie O'Hara was leaving us around about twelve midnight when he was held up by about twenty R.I.C. armed with rifles who questioned him about who was in this vacant house. He denied all knowledge. He was told who was in the house. He was threatened about his association with us and told to go into his own house and that he would be shot if he attempted to leave it and that the R.I.C. were coming to get us. They did not come and Jimmie came to us the next morning and told us about his experience the previous night. We got a scare some time later that day when a person made an attempt to break in the door. We were all in bed at the time and after the alarming report we got from O'Hara we felt that now we were for it. We scrambled into our clothes and prepared to make a break for it. We took the fastenings from the door to find that our visitor was an imbecile tramp well-known in the locality who, apparently, was proceeding to investigate the occupation by strangers of one of his regular domiciles. We took the poor fellow in and gave him a good feed and

kept him with us until we evacuated the house that evening - which I think was Xmas eve.

Frank and I went to Dromintee and spent Xmas day with the late James McGuill and his wife. A few days after Xmas Frank went back again to Camlough area and I returned to Mullaghbawn. On the night of the 6th January, I and a few others travelled to Camlough and met Frank and about three others. We went into the ruins of his old farm buildings about 7 a.m. to await and ambush the R.I.C. foot patrol. We had to take up our position before daylight. We expected the patrol before mid-day. The patrol did not turn up until about 3.30 p.m. At this time we were absolutely frozen with the cold and exposure waiting in the ruins for about eight hours. We were also famishingly hungry. We could not move about to keep ourselves warm, nor look for food as we were so close to the Barracks, about 800 yards, and to be seen by the garrison there was courting disaster. About 3 p.m. we sent a man to a shop about 60 yards from our position for some bread or buns. When he was returning to us he saw the patrol coming our way and just only arrived when it was time to get into action. There were about six to eight R.I.C. walking in extended order and armed with rifles. We opened fire on them and then immediately retreated or got across the fence off the road. All our men were so stiff with the extreme cold that it was impossible to aim with our weapons. I had the only rifle in the party. The others were armed with shotguns or revolvers. The R.I.C. made their escape and as far as we could find out, only suffered two casualties, both wounded. No better results could be expected as the condition of the weather was arctic.

This operation achieved its object. The idea was to ambush Crown Forces at the site of one of their burnings and within hailing distance of their blockhouse.

We had to get going as soon as this operation ceased. We went for the hills east of Camlough and from

there travelled the high ground in the direction of Mullaghbawn and keeping from the main roads as much as possible. We arrived in Mullaghbawn around about 5.30 p.m. and were sitting down to a much wanted meal when a scout warned us that lorries of Crown Forces were converging on where we were. We had to get out and I remember this was the first occasion that we doped our shoes in order to upset the scent of bloodhounds which we heard were being used against us. We went to another house and a feed was being prepared there when we again got the alarm and had to make for the road again. It was about ten that night when we got to a house where we felt safe to partake of a good feed and we remained there that night and I partook of the first sleep I had for forty-eight hours.

This operation was followed immediately by great military and police activities. Lorries of heavily armed police and military came into our area. They had no idea where to raid for us. They halted and questioned people on the road or the people in the houses they called at. This was the evening of Crossmaglen fair and a large party of military and police raided O'Hanlon's public house in Mullaghbawn. They held up all in the pub including men coming from the fair and took any money they found in men's pockets. They looted the till in the pub for cash and took away nearly all the intoxicants in the place. This was the only results that these activities produced.

In early January a number of roundups took place in south Armagh area. One round up in particular embraced a wide area including most districts in south Armagh and must have employed thousands of troops and police to carry out. At this time in Mullaghbawn was located the Brigade Headquarters. The Brigade O.C., myself and another member of the Brigade Staff were stopping in our usual billets in a local farmhouse when we were roused by a Cumann na mBan girl at about daylight on the morning that a round-up was in operation. We got out just in time and were able to

secretly get around the enveloping forces and get on the outside of the area around where the cordon was drawn. Every house in the valley was raided, some houses were raided more than once in a few hours. My father's house was raided about four times that day. The mountains were searched by military for wanted men. There was telephonic communications to the valley at the time and the post office in Mullaghbawn was available for I.R.A. use. This British Government facility used by our people and our men were by it able to get to know what was taking place in other parts of the round up area. This round up produced no worth while results for the British. We did not loose one active man. There were many arrests made, including a local protestant - Charles Carlyne. We came to the conclusion after this raid that the British did not know anything about where the Brigade Headquarters was situated or that the Mullaghbawn area was our operational base.

At a brigade meeting held in December, 1920, it was decided that each battalion in the brigade would carry out an operation against Crown forces. The attack on Camlough Barracks was carried out by the Camlough Battalion and the ambush at the Egyptian Arch was done by the Newry Battalion. The operation selected for the Newtownhamilton Battalion was to ambush a police escort which accompanied a postman carrying old age pension monies each Thursday from Crossmaglen to Cullyhanna Post Office. This operation had been delayed for a few weeks for various reasons which did not seem justified to the Brigade Staff and on the night previous to the 13th January the Brigade O.C., myself and two other Brigade Officers travelled to the Newtownhamilton Battalion area and got some of the officers of that Battalion to accompany us into the position they had selected for the ambush. We moved into the position, which was a substantial residence known as Ballyfannahan Lodge, a vacant house about 20 yards from the County Road before daylight on the 13th January. The population around this position was mixed with a percentage

of Unionists and it would not be advisable for us to be observed in the locality. When daylight arrived and we viewed our surroundings, we found that the position was not as favourable as we would wish for our purpose. The house was surrounded on three sides by a swamp, waterlogged and apparently not passable on foot. On the fourth side was the County Road which ran straight and level for some hundred yards in the direction from which the police escort was expected; on the other side of the house the road turned slightly and went up a little hill. This inspection of the position showed that we had only one line of retreat from the position of attack and that was across the Country Road. If the police were able to maintain superiority of fire on our position, it would make a retreat for us both dangerous and difficult. We were assured by the local Battalion Officers that the usual escort was five or six men. Our force numbered eight men and we had three service rifles and the remainder armed with shotguns. About 3 p.m. our scout reported the approach of the Escort. We ran into position along side the road and waited the arrival of the police. The Brigade O.C. was in charge of the operation and he was to open the attack and strict instructions were given to insure the safety of the postman. Amongst our number was a young fellow about seventeen years of age. This boy pressed us very much to allow him to take part in the operation and we reluctantly agreed. When the first of the police came opposite our position this boy opened fire with a shotgun and his first shot mortally wounded the unfortunate postman. The only police who were up near the position were two constables who accompanied the postman. The other police were extended over nearly 100 yards of the road. The two constables who came opposite us disappeared across the road fence and the others opened fire on our position. The rifle I had would not fire a shot owing to a weakness in the striker spring. Another of our rifles jammed. The only rifle we had effective was the one used by the Brigade O.C. I found out the defect in my

rifle in a most disconcerting manner after the shooting started. I saw a policeman standing on a fence about 50 yards from me and his rifle in his hand. When he saw me he proceeded to take aim. I took a bead on him and pressed the trigger, nothing happened. I suddenly ejected the case which I believed was a dud, reloaded and again pressed the trigger - nothing happened. The policeman then fired, his bullet struck the stone wall alongside which I was lying and spattered my face with chips of stone and molten lead. He was proceeding to fire again when I took up a Webley revolver which I had on the ground beside me and opened rapid fire on him. He immediately ran for cover. I could not make up my mind if I was really hit. My face was bleeding from a lot of small scratches. It noticed then that there was only one rifle in action on our side. The police had all got back out of shotgun range. The O.C. was now engaged as fast as he could fire, in an effort to drive the police off. The police had taken up a position behind a hog-backed bridge about 150 yards from our position and were maintaining a terrific fire on our position. I had 25 rds. of .303 and I feared that the O.C. would run out of ammunition so I had to get back to him over an area which was subject to constant heavy fire. I got back by taking advantage of hollows in the ground. I got the 25 rds. that the other rifle man had and gave the O.C. most of those rds. I then started to get the men over across the road whilst the O.C. kept up a sustained fire to cover our evacuation. When I got across the road and got the others across I was able to get my rifle to work again by taking out the coiled striker spring and stretching it. I started to fire on the police position and enabled the O.C. to cross to our side of the road. Both of us then concentrated on the position held by the R.I.C. and in a few minutes we forced them to evacuate. We saw them cycling hell for leather across a road in the direction of Crossmeaglen.

As far as we could estimate the police there were about fourteen, all armed with rifles. The fact that we had

only one serviceable rifle at the start of this engagement and that our shotguns never became effective would show that we were most fortunate in being able to extricate ourselves from an ugly trap. We had the tables turned on us and found that we were forced on the defensive with our line of retreat practically cut. We suffered no casualties. I got a bullet wound which passed through about two inches of flesh of my upper arm muscle which I did not notice at the time. The newspapers reported that there was one policeman killed and a few wounded in this affair. The newspapers also reported that a lorry of police was attacked during this engagement and one policeman killed - I don't remember this happening.

After this operation about half of the attacking party (I.R.A.) had to travel about six miles across swamp and mountain country to get to our base in Mullaghbawn. When we came near the valley we had to wait on the mountains until dark so that we would not be seen returning from the scene of the ambush. Patrols of lorries passed and repassed on the main roads. The lorries never stopped. This activity in our opinion served no effective purpose.

During the month of February we devoted a good portion of our time to the work of organisation. I remember, for instance, going with the Brigade O.C. to Armagh Battalion area, where there had been a number of arrests amongst the Battalion officers. We spent some days in a friendly house near Armagh. In this house we interviewed Battalion officers; held a Battalion meeting and discussed plans for operations suitable for the area. In the district where this house was situated the population was predominantly Catholic and national but about half a mile distant was a district where the population was predominantly Unionist. At this period both parties, Nationalists and Unionists maintained a strict condition of armed neutrality. When we arrived in the locality an armed guard was placed on where we were staying, night and day. This was to prevent the Unionists making a sudden attack on us. Our guards were armed

with old rifles which had been imported into the North during the 1912-14 period. We knew that the Unionists were all armed, some of them as members of the "B" Specials and others possibly having some of the Ulster Volunteer guns. Although both sides were always ready and on the alert, nothing of importance took place. This particular Nationalist district was situated in and surrounded by an area mainly Unionist. Their attitude was defensive and I might add, defiant. In the Unionist district the men felt that as having so long the upper hand they were determined to maintain the status quo, but from past experience they knew that aggression did not pay, especially that in those days the emphasis was on the use of fire arms to settle all difference. I had an uncomfortable feeling whilst staying in this locality that we might become involved in what would have all the appearances of a sectarian fight which I did not relish. It looked different to the locals as for a few generations all differences which cropped up between the people developed into a question of what church a person attended to decide the side he or she would take when a crisis arose.

We had most successful results to our visit to this Battalion area. We found the officers keen and intelligent and willing to undertake any orders that could be reasonably carried out in the area.

About February, 1921, we were asked by G.H.Q. to take over the North Louth area. This area, which after 1916, was an example for most of the country as far as volunteer re-organisation and political activities were concerned, had got into a somewhat disorganised condition. We held a meeting at Dungooley in Co. Louth of all the Camp and Battalion Officers of what was later two North Louth Battalions. We found perfect agreement amongst these officers to work in with our Brigade. From about 1919 G.H.Q. intended that all Co. Louth should be organised as a Brigade area. The Brigade, however, did not function. James McGuill, Dundalk, was appointed as acting Brigade O.C. McGuill spent most of his time in and out of

gaols on hunger strikes and on the run. He was not available much in 1920 to get going on the work of the Brigade. When we took over North Louth area as the Dundalk Battalion, South Louth was to be organised as a Brigade to embrace all South Louth and some neighbouring areas in Co. Meath.

One good feature of the amalgamation of North Louth with Armagh and South Down was that we got control of a number of rifles which the Louth men had from 1916 and others which had been seized by them from Carlingford Railway Station. This increased armament was a God send and would enable us to attempt more elaborate military operations.

It was also about this time that we were able to get an organisation going to procure arms in England. Some rifles were procured in Liverpool and shipped to Newry by the Dundalk and Newry Steampacket Company. So that from March, 1921, onwards we were not so embarrassed by the scarcity of rifles as was the case before, this.

In March, 1921, we got instructions to form a Division - 4th Northern Division. A meeting to put this instruction from G.H.Q. into operation took place in Kileavey, Co. Armagh. All the officers of the Newry Brigade and as far as I remember, Battalion Staff Officers from each Battalion attended. A rough scheme of division into Brigade areas was drawn up and a Divisional Staff appointed, as follows:-

Appointed Div. O.C.

O.C.	Frank Aiken.
Adjt.	John McCoy.
Q.M.	Sean Quinn.

The rough division into Brigade areas was as follows:-

1st Brigade	- North Louth and South Armagh.
2nd "	- Newry and South Down.
3rd "	- North Armagh, including Armagh City and Lurgan and small portion of Co. Tyrone eventually came into the 3rd Brigade.

The next item of importance which we directed our attention to was an operation in North Louth to get that Battalion into action. The operation eventually decided on was an attack on a tender load of military which went from the Military Barracks in

Dundalk each morning at about 8 a.m. to relieve and charge a military garrison which was engaged in guarding the dwelling house of a local Unionist at a place named Plaster near Faughart, about three miles from the Military Barracks. The tender usually took the same road each morning and contained about thirty soldiers under a Commissioned Officer. We made preparations and plans to carry out this operation on the 17th April, 1921; about twenty to thirty officers and men from the old Newry Brigade were to take part. The majority of these men had had combat experience. The remainder of our force were drawn from the Dundalk Battalion. The plan adopted for the operation was that an ambush position at a place named Monascribe about a mile from the occupied house at Plaster was to be taken up along the road on which the military were to pass. At this point a land mine was laid in the road to blow up the lorry. One side of the road, at this mine, was lined with our men armed with rifles and shotguns. The house where the military were in at Plaster was covered by about four to six men whose duty was to prevent the military there coming to the assistance of their comrades when ambushed.

In addition to the local preparations for the ambush the Dundalk Battalion had the job of barricading the road after the lorry load of military passed out of the town to prevent re-inforcement of military or police participating in the fight. All the different sections taking part moved into their positions about daylight on the morning of Sunday, 17th April, 1921. In the vicinity of the ambush position a big farm house, the property of a man named McAllister, was commandeered and the inmates of several local houses, which would come within range of fire near the ambush position, were removed for their own safety to McAllister's house, where a guard was placed on them until the affair was over. At the same time the land mine was placed on the road and the attacking party on the side of the road placed in position. The men who were detailed to contain the military in the house guarded by them, were sent to

the position. It was stressed on those men the importance of getting within effective distance of the house without alarming the military.

We had all preparations made before the zero hour, 8 a.m. The ambush position was on a height overlooking the town of Dundalk and a large extent of country surrounding the town. We had also an observation post at Faughart Mount, a position which overlooked a large area of several miles in all directions. This observation post was only about 400 yards from the ambush position. Eight o'clock came and so far no military tender made its appearance leaving town. Some short time after 8 a.m. we heard shooting from the direction of the occupied house at Plaster which indicated that a sharp engagement had broken out there. We next got a report that a number of military lorries were coming towards our direction out of town. We never saw them from the ambushing position and when about $\frac{1}{2}$ mile from our position at the crossroads leading to it, they proceeded by another road in the direction of the occupied house. We then got further reports that other military forces in many military tenders were travelling by various roads in our direction. There was now a serious danger that we would get surrounded and cut off. The military, tans and auxiliary strength in Dundalk must have been at least 1,000 men at this time and north of our position the roads had not been blockaded so the motor tenders could travel unrestricted to cut off our retreat northwards. We were forced to evacuate the position rather hurriedly, in fact we had not time to remove the land mine which was sunk about two feet under the surface of the road. During the early part of our retreat from the position the enemy forces were only a matter of a few hundred yards in our rear. We had mountain country to cross and I think this terrain and our intimate knowledge of the country enabled our men to get away safely. There was some little isolated fire at a few points. We suffered no casualties and I don't think the enemy did either.

If there was much wrong with the plans for the

operation it was our attempting to do too much and expecting so many men who could be classed as raw recruits to act as seasoned soldiers. The idea behind the plan was to get as many of the Duúndalk I.R.A. as possible to participate in a major operation in their own area and to capture, if possible, say thirty rifles and possibly a machine gun, and other military stores. It would have been a simple matter to take a small number of experienced men into a position such as we occupied that morning and carry out an ambush which would inflict casualties. Our absolute poverty in arms, ammunition and equipment made the idea of capturing equipment and arms a prime consideration in operational plans. We may have been too ambitious and the probability was that if a fight had taken place at the ambush position we would not have the time to push it to a conclusion before the reinforcements from town got on to our flanks. The failure of this operation was apparently due to our men firing on the military who were occupying the house at Plaster. This fact was sufficient to alert the military barracks in town. It does not, however, explain why some of the military lorries from town did not come on their usual route on which we had the ambush laid. It may have been intelligent anticipation on the military's part to first attempt to throw a screen of troops around their usual route to the occupied house before sending a tender up that road. We heard that a tender of troops did travel up this road shortly after we had to evacuate our position.

We all divided up into twos and threes and scattered over a wide area travelling to our own northern country. At a point on the journey home, when a party of our men got completely clear of pursuing troops, they decided to dump their rifles and thus reach their destination in a more open and unsuspecting manner. The rifles were dumped in a secluded spot and were left under the supervision of an officer of the Dromintee Company area.

A few days later when we got to hear of these boys' action and fearing that the rifles would be found by Crown forces or stolen, I decided to go and get them down to our own central dumps in Mullaghbawn. I gave orders to two of our Company Officers and two other men to meet me at Dromintee at dark on a mid week night. I travelled to Dromintee by cycle and on my journey there I had to traverse a road between Forkhill and Dromintee over which a police patrol passed to and fro each day. As I was travelling about 2 p.m. in the evening I was hoping to get to Dromintee before the patrol came on the road. When I got to half way on this road I was cycling around a bend on the road keeping a watch out for the patrol. I saw them coming and I cycled round on the road and returned back the direction I came from looking for an opening into a field on the south side of the road so that I could ride the cycle in the field and get up some distance from the road into a mountain where I had a good chance of getting clear of pursuers. I had to return much further down the road than I expected before I came to an iron gate. I jumped from the bicycle and looked back at this gate, and I saw some of the patrol standing on the road about sixty to eighty yards from me. The patrol was walking and in extended order armed with rifles. I expect my appearance created for them a problem. Was I trying to lead them into an ambush or was it safe to follow me on the chance I was alone.

I dumped the bicycle about 20 yards up the field in a clump of furze bushes and raced up a steep hill until I got near the start of the mountain about 90 to 100 yards from the road when I took up position behind a stone boulder and about ten yards from a whitetorn hedge which ran to the road at right angles. After being a few minutes behind the boulder I was expecting the police to come into view at the road but they did not. After some little time I began to fear that all or some of them had gone into the field outside the hedge near

which I was lying and that they could, from the cover of the hedge, get a good view of me and have a shot at a "sitting" target. If I attempted to evacuate my position I would incur the risk that the police had taken up position on the road and that if I exposed myself to view I would draw their fire.

About four or five policemen came to the gate at the road and had a discussion which I overheard clearly as to whether I went into the field and if so where had I left the bicycle. Two of them came into the field to look for the bike. When they were getting near where the bike was I had to open fire on them. I had a para-bellum automatic pistol and I opened a rapid fire on the few men I could see. They and the other in the patrol immediately ran in the direction of Forkhill, I could see them from my elevated position for 600 to 700 yards and I continued firing on them. When they had gone into the village of Forkhill I got down on the road and continued on to Dromintee. I called at James McGuill's place and was speaking to him for some time and telling him about what had happened when he invited me into the house. I told him it would be dangerous as the house might be surrounded. I went over to a house in the mountain where I had stayed a few times. I was not there very long when McGuill's shop assistant came to me and told me that McGuill's was being raided by military and police and that there was great enemy activity all over the roads in the area. I then went to the Company Officer who had charge of the dumped rifles and I made arrangements with him to have them taken to some old outbuildings near McGuill's premises. Late that evening four men from Mullaghbawn Company arrived and we took up the rifles and started for Mullaghbawn. Each man carried two rifles and about 100 rds. of ammunition. We passed through the village of Forkhill believing that the great military and police activities of the evening had ceased. We saw nothing alarming in the village. I heard the next day, however, that a company of soldiers had spent the night there and that

it was miraculous that we got safely through.

About Thursday of that week the Divisional O.C. decided to visit the Lurgan and Armagh Battalions and he advised me to remain at Divisional H.Q., G.H.Q. were sending us on an Engineer Officer who was a stranger in the area and I was to pick him up and take him into Dundalk where Seamus McGauran, the man who later became Divisional Engineer, was living and where we intended to run Engineering classes under McGauran's guidance. This meant that I would have to remain at our Headquarters until after Sunday, 24th April. On Saturday night I had planned an operation in Camlough village. The specials and police there had started to visit and drink in some of the public houses at night and we decided to make an attempt to attack and disarm them in the pubs. Orders were given to have the Camlough pubs scouted from dark on the night planned for the attack. This work was entrusted to Camlough Fianna Eireann. Orders were also given to have men and arms available in Camlough at 9.30 p.m. to help in the operation. I had about six members of the Mullaghbawn Company mobilised for the same time to screen the Barracks and prevent police leaving or entering. That evening I was in Newry and I met the Vice O.C. of Newry Battalion. I told him of our plans for the Camlough affairs and he volunteered to come on it with me. He did so. When we arrived at the mobilisation centre at about 9 p.m. we met the officer and his men who were mobilised for the operation but they had not come provided with the necessary equipment to carry out the operation. We also found that the pubs were not scouted that night and no person could tell me if any police were out of the Barrack and if so, where they were. I decided reluctantly that I should call off the operation as to raid the public houses would cause alarm if no police were out of Barracks and would make a subsequent attempt at a similar operation more difficult.

I don't now remember if what subsequently took

place occurred whilst I was in Camlough or if I was present when it happened. Some police were standing outside the Barrack Gate and some of the men mobilized opened fire on them. The police ran for the Barrack. The idea behind such tactics was twofold - (a) to force the police to remain within the Barrack strongholds and by so doing prevent them making contacts with friendly passersbys; and (b) such harassing activities tended to upset the morale of the police force which at this period was not particularly high.

I and the six men from the Mullaghbawn Company returned home and arrived in the village of Mullaghbawn about 12 midnight. In Mullaghbawn I met a few I.R.A. men whom I had engaged on special scouting intelligence jobs and they reported to me. These reports decided that a local operation which we intended to carry out that night would have to be postponed, so around about 1 a.m. on the 24th April I went home to my father's house. My sisters Bridget and Minnie were at home. I told them that I was staying that night at the house of John Grant, Tullymacrieve, about $\frac{3}{4}$ of a mile from my father's house. I had a haversack with me in which I had about six revolvers and automatic pistols and I told the girls that I would dump the haversack and its contents in a fence not far from the house, but that I would lift them the next morning. I then went to Grant's house. In Grant's house I found three members of the Mullaghbawn Company, one of those men was a regular inmate as he was Grant's servant man. The other two men were on the run. I went to bed. I had an automatic pistol and two handgrenades with me and I left them on a chair near the bed. I was soon fast asleep and remembered nothing until I was awakened by the loud knocking on the kitchen door and men demanding admittance in the King's name. I jumped out of the bed and looked out of the window into the street opposite the kitchen door and I found

that the street was filled with police in uniform. It appeared to be just after daylight. My first impulse was to open the door and throw out a handgrenade and then try to make a break for it after the explosion. I then realised that to do so would endanger the lives of all the inmates of the house, especially Mr. and Mrs. Grant who had been most kind and hospitable to us for many months. These two elderly people would have been shot as a reprisal and the house burned if I had taken action as my first impulse prompted. As we had been sleeping in this house for some months we had the walls of the dwellinghouse and out offices loopholed so that a person could travel from one end of the building to the other end. The out offices were a continuation of the kitchen part of the premises and as some of the outhouses doors opened on both sides of the house, a person could escape from the premises at several points, front and rear.

When I realized the house was surrounded I decided on trying a "get away" on the rear side of the premises. The police at the front door were now attacking it with their rifle butts and it might break down at any moment. I ran into the kitchen and through a loopholed cupboard from the kitchen into a barn at the gable of the kitchen. This barn had doors front and rear and at the rear the doors were divided in, top and bottom, half doors. I listened at the back door for sounds and heard voices at the rear. I opened the bottom half door quietly, careful to make not the slightest noise and again looked out and listened. I found that there were a number of men talking and joking at the gable of the barn, that was round the corner from the back door and near the back door. On the opposite side from where the men's voices came from stood an auxiliary cadet with his back to me. He was standing at ease with his rifle at his side. I got out of the door and charged the Auxiliary.

I had about twenty feet to go and I tackled him with a low rugby tackle. I heaved him on his face and he struck the ground violently, his rifle making an awful clatter. I went down on top of him. I scrambled up and vaulted a gate into a haggard. In the haggard there were a few stacks of hay, the remains of the farm's winter store of cattle feed. One of these stacks was near a fence and it was cut down the middle and half of it used. When I was running across the haggard I heard the sound of a person running meeting me. It had rained heavily during the night and the haggard was wet and waterlogged and the sound I heard was the "gluck" of boots moving in wet soil. I ran to the side of the stack of hay nearest the fence so that the person coming across the haggard would pass me, unnoticed. By some peculiar mental promptings the man decided to pass between the fence and the stack and I suddenly met him face to face. He was in police uniform. We were both very close when we saw each other and I let him have a right hook on the jaw which carried my whole power and I jumped across him when he fell and ran for a fence to get out of the haggard. I had now two men at my rear with reason for a personal grievance against me and both armed with rifles. Getting through the whitethorn hedge was a difficult and painful process as I had no clothes on me except my shirt. I looked back to see how the policeman I had hit on the jaw was progressing and remember getting some amusement from seeing him trying to get up on his feet and only succeeding in creeping around with his head still resting on the ground. I got through the hedge and got into a large open field with no cover from view. As soon as I started across the field I was fired on from several directions. I started to run zig zag and made about 100 yards at top speed when I realised that the firing was now being directed in volleys and that a machine gun had started to operate. I was coming

to a stone fence and I realised that I was likely to get "mine" crossing it. I changed directions several times nearing this fence but when I was apparently on the top of the fence I received a gunshot wound in the head and I remembered no more. The bullet entered on the back of my neck alongside the spinal column and came out on the right side of my face, fracturing my lower jaw. I have since a faint recollection of trying to spit out my teeth when I was hit.

I was taken to a local farmer's house and I was attended by both military and civilian doctors. My sister, Minnie, was at home on leave from the Mater Hospital, Belfast, where she was nursing and she came along to attend me. She was first refused permission to see me and after she appealed to a military officer she was admitted to where I was lying. She succeeded in quenching the flow of blood. She had, at that time, about nine months' intensive work in the Mater Hospital, Belfast, on the treatment of gunshot wounds and I expect she was competent to look after the most serious cases.

I was taken in, that evening, to Newry - Rathfriland Hill Hospital - and a guard of 'A' Specials was posted at my bedside. I remained there until Wednesday evening when I was removed to the hospital in the Military Barracks in Newry. On Thursday I was removed under strong military escort to the Military Hospital in Victoria Barracks, Belfast. I remained in the Victoria Barracks Hospital until my release about the 1st August, 1921.

I was about a week in hospital in Belfast when I regained full consciousness and I found that I was getting regular morphia injections to kill the pain. When I realised this I refused the morphia and I was able to endure the pain. I was about two weeks there when the doctors began to have hopes of my recovery. I was told later that at the start they had no hopes.

When I started to improve I mended very rapidly

and in about three weeks I was able to get up and move around the ward. I soon realised that I was receiving the best medical treatment and in every way was well looked after. I was particularly fortunate in the feeling of interest that Lieut.-Col. J. Duggan, R.A.M.C., O.C., Military Hospital, took in my medical treatment. This officer and I became most friendly and I had as great a regard for him as I expect he had for me. I told him on one occasion how I appreciated what the Hospital Staff had done for me and were doing. He smiled and said "I don't know if you will appreciate our attitude when I explain that whilst you are receiving the best treatment possible in the Military Hospital, our chief purpose is to get you well as soon as medical care can do so. The IRONICAL feature in our attitude is that when you are considered fit to stand your trial you will be courtmartialled and as far as I can ascertain your chances of avoiding the death penalty are slim." He asked me if I was surprised at his summing up of the situation and I told him that I was not; that I was expecting to be tried and found guilty. He shook my hand then and said "Mac I will be much grieved if such a fate is yours. You have been a grand patient and I feel proud that your mental attitude and our skill and care has pulled you out of what we all considered a hopeless chance of recovery. You have all the medical staff's good wishes. I can guarantee you have mine."

Shortly after this I was able to get out of bed for a few hours per day. I then got a relapse in the form of a serious attack of pleurisy in my left lung caused by septic infection from my broken jaw getting down into the lung. This complication coming along just as I had practically recovered from the shock affects of the wound was considered the last straw. My doctors took a most serious view of the matter and sent for my father and other relatives to come and see me. My father, my aunt and my sister Susan came down to the hospital. I told them to keep up their hearts that I was

fully intending to live. It was I think, the next day that I passed the crisis and from this on I started to make steady if slow recovery.

In the early afternoon of the 24th June I noticed a scene of excitement and bustle in the Military Hospital. Where I was confined in the isolation part of the General Hospital, It was detached and, on the opposite side of a large square, across from the rear of the Hospital proper. This square between our ward and the main hospital was used as Army Service Corps Depot where motor ambulances, motor cars and motor bikes were parked when not in use. On this particular evening all the available motor vehicles were taken out of the Barracks and a scene of great excitement was being enacted. It was evident that an event of some magnitude had taken place, of which I was anxious to find out. Our only contact that day with the outside world was our medical orderly and I asked him to find out what all the fuss was about. Some time later the Orderly came back and informed me that a train, containing troops and cavalry horses, had been derailed on the Great Northern Railway Line and that there were many soldier casualties. He could give no details of where the derailment took place. My bed was at a window with the head of the bed alongside the window in such a way that a person looking into the ward would see my bed in a diagonal direction. About twelve midnight I heard men outside the window. I was practically asleep at the time. The men outside were discussing if I was from the district where the train smash had taken place. I heard the place names Adavoyle and Newry mentioned. Some of the men outside were apparently armed and some were suggesting that I should be shot through the window. I first thought that this was a crude idea of a practical joke and that it was only intended to scare me. I later realised that there were some men outside who were anxious to shoot me as a reprisal and that there were others who were restraining them. We had a police guard inside in the ward with us and I

drew their attention the people outside. The police went to the window and order them away and threatened to report the matter.

Whilst in the Military Hospital I saw, I am sure, nearly all the line officers of the Norfolk regiment who were in occupation of the Barracks at the time. It was the duty of the orderly officer for the day to visit us prisoners and inquire if we had any complaints. In this way nearly all the officers up to and including the rank of Captain visited us. There was one officer who came along one night - I can't say if he was on orderly duty or not - this officers had one good eye and wore a cover on the other eye. He was very tall and had an Irish wolfhound at his side. I was asleep when he came into our ward. He was standing over me at the side of the bed when his dog sniffing at my face on the pillow wakened me. When I looked up I saw the officer and his dog. The officer's one good eye was boring into mine and as I had been roused so suddenly and looking into this one piercing eye, I got a scare. My nerves must have been in a bad way and I had to make a great effort not to show my fear. I recognised him as a man I had met on two occasions. The first was when I was arrested in August, 1920, and taken to Belfast for imprisonment, I was first taken into the Military Barracks and it was this officer that asked me some questions before I was taken to the prison. The second occasion I saw him was in Belfast about March, 1921. I was going down North Street in the evening near dark and some shooting had broken out in my rear in Old Lodge Road area. I saw a platoon of military coming up North Street meeting me and an officer walking about twenty yards in front of them with an Irish wolfhound at his side. I recognised him as the officer with one eye who interviewed me in Victoria Barrack. He had a revolver in his hand. When I recognised him I saw that he was looking keenly towards me and started across the street in my direction. I met a man on the street who was smoking a cigarette and I asked him for a light. I was hoping

that this action of mine would put the officer off interrogating me. When I got the light I moved on and didn't look back until I had travelled about twenty yards. I then glanced back and saw that the officer was walking back diagonally towards his own side of the street.

In the hospital ward he looked at me for some time and then he asked me where I met him last. I said "I met you in Victoria Barracks in August last". He then said "I saw you since then and you know it". I then told him that I was in North Street and saw him in March. He then remarked "I intended questioning you that evening and changed my mind when I saw you lighting a cigarette, thinking as I did that you would not be thinking about cigarettes if you were the bloke I took you for. He then said "you had a narrow escape that night as I should have shot you had you resisted".

Some time early in July, 1921, a young man came in to see me one morning. He introduced himself as a person who had been in my part of South Armagh for some time and said he would like to have a chat about people and places there. This young man was of fine physique and appearance and looked about twenty-five years of age. He commenced to tell me of districts he was in and the people he met there - principally publicans. He made some slight mistakes in describing places and in a few instances put people he mentioned living in the wrong district. He showed such a detailed knowledge of a big part of the south end of our county that I concluded that his mistakes were made intentionally and that for some purpose - unintelligible to me - my correcting him would give him some required information. After some time discussing those topics he complained that I was not treating him with the candour that our discussion of such innocent matter demanded. He impressed on me that he called on me in a friendly way as he might be back again in South Armagh and would like to be able to tell the people who might enquire about me that he had a long conversation with me; that I was very well, et. etc. I told him that I looked on him

as an Intelligence Officer and that I felt that holding any conversation with him on the most trifling subjects might give him some information. He called again to see me later and we had a long and interesting conversation. He told me of countries he had visited abroad, principally about Italy and did not mention anything about South Armagh.

Some months afterwards when I was released and returned home I was telling the local boys about this young man and gave a description of his appearance. They told me that a young tramp answering this man's description had been in the district and that he was treated with suspicion. On one occasion he was seen very early one morning in June, 1921, having a swim in a mill dam and that when he dried himself and before moving away from the dam he produced a heavy revolver and cleaned it carefully. This was reported to the I.R.A. and they were looking for him up to the time of the Truce. He was seen often but never by men looking for him with arms. This man was brave and took considerable risks. Speaking to him on the two occasions he called on me and from what I heard about him locally when I returned home, I concluded that he came into our area looking for information if you like, but his main purpose I believe, would be to liquidate badly wanted I.R.A. men of whom he had descriptions.

About the 5th or 6th July, 1921, Lieut.-Col. Duggan came into our ward and came to me and told me that he had heard on the best of authority that a Truce was being arranged and that there was a possibility that when the truce came I would be released. I told him that notwithstanding all the peace talk in the papers, I did not believe that a truce would be called until the British agreed to evacuate the whole country. He told me then that the I.R.A. were beaten and it was only a question of getting terms and that the British would never agree to evacuate. That Southern Ireland would be offered a government similar to Northern Ireland's. He came across again in a few days and told me that the truce was to be arranged in a day or two and he again said that he believed I would be soon

released.

On the morning when the news of the truce was published the Lieut.-Col. again came to me. He expressed his delight that a truce was arranged and stated that the fighting was now all over; that the differences between both countries would be fixed up amicably. His delight, I felt, was based on the fact that as a soldier he would in future be freed of the stigma which recent events in Ireland attached to the British Army due to their association with Black and Tans and Auxiliaries.

Around about 1st August approximately I sent word through our military orderly to my sister Minnie who was nursing in the Mater Hospital to send me in a suit of clothes. I was wearing the hospital uniform - blue. In getting the orderly to take in civilian clothes I was asking him to break the hospital rules. When I got the clothes in I put them on. The morning I put the civilian clothes on the Colonel came in and said "Mac you are going home to-day". I thought his remark was a polite way to get an explanation for my wearing civilian clothes, so I said "I don't think so". He said then "you are going to-day". "This information is not official but I expect I can inform you officially in a few hours time. You can take it as definite that you are leaving here to-day". Later he came and officially informed me that I could leave that evening. After we got our lunch the Colonel and another officer in uniform came with two others in civilian clothes and interviewed me in the ward. One of the men in civies told me that I was being released and that an ambulance would be sent out with me to leave me at my father's place, if I remained in hospital until the next day as no ambulance was available that day. I told him that I would prefer to go out at once if my doctor thought I was fit enough to leave for a friend's house in Springfield Road. When this was decided on the man in civies said "You are now going home a free man for the simple reason that our medical advisors inform us that your present condition of health and your anticipated physical condition in the future is such that it is unlikely that you shall, for some time, be a

military danger to his Majesty's Government. In order to save you any annoyance or inconveniences I have this morning informed your local District Inspector of the R.I.C. in Bessbrook that you are being released from military custody unconditionally and that you are not to be interfered with in future if you conduct yourself as a law-abiding person should". I then thanked him for his consideration. He then continued by saying "that I have travelled in and served as an Army Officer many parts of the world and my period of service in Belfast is my only experience of Ireland. I have become a lover of this country and its people and have decided when my term of military service ends to spend the remaining years of my life amongst the Irish people." He expressed his belief that as a result of the truce the Irish would see that fighting Britain was not a paying proposition and without any reasonable hope of success. He pointed out the case of Scotland where the English were fought as bitterly as ever the Irish had fought them. But the Scottish learned their lesson early that they were not able to conquer the English and they accepted English dominance. The result proved that the Scots were able to procure some of the best jobs and highest positions in the British service. He stressed the point that the Irish could do likewise if we accepted the Union Jack as the Scots had done. He paid a compliment to the fighting capabilities of the Irish regiments in the British army. I asked him what he thought of the I.R.A. He said he had not previously met any of the I.R.A. That in fact he was satisfying his curiosity in meeting me before I left the hospital. He expressed his keen interest in the doings of the I.R.A. He said that from what he had heard from others and from reports of activities by the I.R.A. which he had to deal with, he formed a high opinion of their soldierly qualities but a very poor opinion of their political sense. As I was somewhat concerned to know who this man was I asked him who I had to thank for all this kind consideration for my comforts and he replied that he was General Carter Campbell, O.C. of the military forces in Northern Ireland.

He shook hands with me and wished me luck. I left the hospital that evening and stayed in a friend's house and returned home the next morning by train to Newry.

After my long confinement to a hospital ward I found when I returned home that I was much worse than I imagined I was before I left the hospital. I had to go through about six weeks' convalescence before I was able to endure much physical activities. About the middle of August a training camp was established at Killeavey, Co. Armagh, for the training of all Divisional Brigade and Battalion Officers in the Division. When this camp was first started I was not fit to go to it. About the end of August I announced to my aunt - Mary Muckian - may she rest in peace, that I was going to the camp. She took a serious view of this decision as she had been looking after me since I came from hospital and was feeding me on concoctions of nourishing foods and treating me as an invalid generally. I got away by promising that I would return if I felt the least indisposed. I arrived at the camp and remained there for about a month. I did not take part in the routine of the camp. I listened in at all the lectures and I received the best of attention from all especially the Quartermastering Department under the late Sean Quinn who did everything to produce the best that could be found for me in the food line. In the open mountain air of the camp I made rapid progress and about the end of September I was able to endure a fair amount of physical effort without undue fatigue. When the weather started to get bad about the end of September I returned again to my aunt's place.

About the first week in October, 1921 - Frank Aiken came to me and told me that I was being appointed as Liaison Officer for Co. Armagh. He told me to proceed to the Gresham Hotel in Dublin and to call on the Chief Liaison Officer who would fix up my appointment.

I travelled to Dublin as arranged and I met a Captain Charles McAllester of the Chief Liaison Officer's staff who

took me in hands and obtained from the Chief Liaison Officers an official document which I was to produce when I called on the County Inspector of the R.I.C. at his office in Armagh city. Armagh city was to be my headquarters. I did not get any instruction as to my duties and when I questioned Captain McAllester all that he could advise was to apply for instructions when I found myself in difficulties. My salary was £5. 0. 0. per week with all hotel and travelling expenses paid.

I called down to Armagh and fixed up my office in the Charlemont Hotel. I then called on the County Inspector and produced for his inspection my credentials as Liaison Officer. The County Inspector then was, I think, a Major Olton. He was then about sixty years of age. When I introduced myself and produced my credentials the County Inspector seemed to be in an undecided frame of mind as to his reactions to my appearance on the scene. He studied the papers I carried which, as far as I can remember, were a most informal notification to all and sundry that I was appointed Liaison Officer for Co. Armagh and that my rank whilst holding that appointment was Temporary Captain. The other document, as far as I can now remember, was addressed to the County Inspector for Co. Armagh informing him that I had the authority of the Chief Liaison Officer to represent him in all matters concerning liaison work within the county.

The County Inspector told me that he did not know how he and I could engage usefully in liaison work; that he would have to find out if he should recognise me officially. He stated that in his opinion the position in Co. Armagh and the other five counties within the area controlled by the Northern Government was different from the twenty-six counties. In the six counties there was then in existence an established government elected by the votes of the six county electorate. In the south the position was in a state of flux in which liaison work was necessary until such time as an agreed government was set up. He told me that, whilst he was in

doubt about his own official position in the matter, he was for the time being recognising my presence in Armagh and would deal with me; as far as he was allowed to do so, in all matters concerning peace and good order within the county. He expressed the hope that our association and friendly co-operation should prevent many unpleasantnesses that might likely arise from time to time. This first interview was so unsatisfactory from my official point of view that I sent on a full report of it to the Chief Liaison Officer and asked for instructions. I got by return the stereotyped reply that the contents of my communication had been noted.

On the next day, the daily papers carried a report that I had been appointed liaison officer for Co. Armagh and that my headquarters was the Charlemont Hotel, Armagh. About mid-day a gentleman called on me. He appeared to be between sixty and seventy years of age. He introduced himself as a Colonel Terris and stated that his calling on me was purely a courtesy matter intended to show his admiration for the fighting qualities of the Irish Republican Army. I thought at first that this gentleman was a British officer but later I found he was a French army officer who owned a property outside Armagh city.

On about the 2nd day after I took up duty in Armagh I got notification that six or seven republicans from Keady district in Co. Armagh had been arrested and were then prisoners in the Military Barracks, Armagh. I called to the Military Barrack, produced my credentials and asked to see the prisoners in my official capacity. I was admitted to the guardroom where the prisoners were. The prisoners were all unknown to me and they seemed delighted that I called as they believed that I had the power to effect their immediate release. I got the following story from them. A man of the tramp class had been operating around Keady district. He had committed a number of petty thefts some of which were reported to the R.I.C. who took no notice or at least took no action. This man went into a trader's shop in Keady and took away with him a suit

length of cloth which was later seen in his possession. The theft was reported to the Republican Police and they went after the tramp and arrested him. He was taken before a Republican Court, and after evidence being taken was convicted and sentenced to imprisonment. The Republican police took charge of the prisoner and took him to a vacant house in the district where it was intended that the prisoner should serve his sentence. After some time the prisoner escaped and at once proceeded to the nearest R.I.C. Barracks and gave all the details of his arrest, trial and imprisonment to the police. The police lost no time in making arrests and the men I interviewed were connected with the arrest and trial of the tramp, either as Republican Justices, Republican police or witnesses at the tramp's trial. All I could do for those men was to report the whole business to my Dublin H.Q. asking them to at least provide the prisoners with legal defence at their trials and to do any other thing within their power to obtain their release. I then called on the County Inspector. He informed me that he could not tolerate the existence of Republican Courts or Republican Police and would do all in his power to prevent our Courts and Police operating within his jurisdiction.

I pointed out that my information was that previous to the tramps arrest by the Republican Police he had committed a number of petty larcenies which were all reported to the R.I.C. and no action was taken. I pointed out that all over the county a wave of lawlessness existed and that the Republican Police and Republican Courts in some districts were more likely to succeed in dealing with it. He informed me that the only way that he could allow the Republican Police to co-operate in dealing with crime was to report to the R.I.C. and to attend at British Courts and give their evidence there. He expressed his keen desire to get the Republican Police to help in this way. I told him that no such co-operation could take place and

that the arrest and prosecution of the Keady men was a bar to any friendly agreement between the British Authorities and the Republican Authorities in Co. Armagh in the prevention of crime and the protection of persons and property.

Some time later a District Inspector Conran came to me and suggested that I should get the Republican Police to assist the R.I.C. in dealing with a certain young man operating in Armagh who was engaged in robbery on a large scale. He had a gang of young fellows under his control and they were specialising in raiding lock-up shops in the city of Armagh taking cash and removing non-perishable expensive foodstuffs. He informed me that the amount of foodstuffs removed from the shops ran into large quantities which pointed to an efficient organisation to dispose of the stuff. He stated that their trouble was to get evidence to convict. This gang inspired fear and none were inclined to come forward and give evidence against them. I told him that if the Republican Police were to deal with the matter they would do so independently of all British Authority and that they would have little difficulty in obtaining people to come forward and give evidence in prosecutions. I told him that since the Keady case there was little prospect of the R.I.C. getting any republican help in dealing with criminals.

After this interview with the District Inspector I asked the Brigade O.C. in the Armagh city area to make enquiries about the subjects of the District Inspector's visit to me. He informed me that the Republic Police had been engaged on collecting evidence in connection with the activities of the gang in question; that a pile of evidence was available including the location of several dumps in which stolen goods were stored. Some of the dumps used were burial vaults in local cemeteries. I then got in touch with the District Inspector and told him that we had sufficient evidence available to ensure convictions and the witnesses to prove it which we would make available if the Keady prisoners, who were sentenced to six

months' hard labour were released and the Republican Police existence as partners with the R.I.C. in the preservation of law and order recognised. This matter was not further pursued as the Republican Police and Courts were so badly let down by G.H.Q. that similar activities were abandoned. This decision is understandable when it is clear that in the Armagh city area the population contained at least 45% Unionists and outside the city in rural areas within five miles radius the percentage of Unionists in some districts was up to 75%. The so-called Nationalist population all over the northern counties contained a big percentage of Hibernians who did not subscribe to the Republican doctrine and were not enthusiastic about the Republican activities of the time.

In connection with the attitude of the Ancient Order of Hibernians towards the I.R.A. in County Armagh, there was an incident which I think is of sufficient interest to mention. Some time about November, 1921, the County Inspector sent for me and told me that an ambush had taken place on two motor tenders of Special Constabulary the previous evening at a place named Lathbirget. He pointed out that this action was a most serious breach of the truce regulations. Lathbirget was about a mile from my father's home and I knew the district intimately. I told the County Inspector that I was inclined to doubt the accuracy of his report. He said there was not the slightest doubt about the accuracy of the matter; that the tenders bore bullet marks and that it was providential that none of the Special Constabulary were hit. I got immediately on to the job of investigating the matter. It was soon shown to me that an ambush had taken place much as the County Inspector had told me. Several persons who were in the vicinity when the firing took place confirmed that the motor tenders had been fired on. I was satisfied that none of the I.R.A. were involved in the affair. The difficulty in getting to know who the perpetrators were, was not easily solved. Some time before the truce a few of the local

company's revolvers had been stolen from a temporary dump used for placing guns in after operations. It was known that at least two young Hibernians might have got to know about those guns. They were questioned and denied all knowledge at the time. It now appeared that those stolen guns were probably used in the ambush, as they were the only weapons that we knew of that were available for use. It was decided to arrest two or three of those suspects. This was done and they were questioned separately and kept apart. One of them admitted taking part in the ambush and gave the names of the others - five in all. We arrested all those involved and tried them by courtmartial. Those involved in the affair were fined various sums, the amount of each based on the financial ability to pay of their people. The guns used in the affair were all handed over to the I.R.A. I returned to Armagh and called on the County Inspector and told him that the boys, as they were boys, who were involved in the ambush, had been punished by the I.R.A. and that no further incident of a similar nature was likely to take place in that area.

At the time this affair took place I was inclined to think we had not tapped all the potential fighting material available; that those Hibernian young men might have proved worth while recruits. I have since heard of similar incidents which took place in Belfast city and the officer in charge there got proof that those Belfast incidents were part of a plan to break up the truce. The Hibernian organisation was much concerned by the world wide, favourable, publicity which the Republican cause received when the British Army Authorities met the I.R.A. leaders to arrange the terms of a truce between combatants. This in itself appeared as a recognition of the I.R.A. as the army of the Irish Republic. The Hibernians could not look any further than the narrow advantages which were possible in the political game and they adopted this plan of attack on Crown Forces in the hope that the British would break the truce agreement and charge the I.R.A. with

flagrant breaches of truce terms.

The most common form of complaints made by the County Inspector to me concerned I.R.A. officers and men being seen carrying arms. This type of offence was easily fixed by an assurance that a severe reprimand had been given and that the offence would not be repeated. There was one amusing sequel to a complaint made to me by the County Inspector. He informed me that it was reported to him that a B Special who lived outside Armagh city was going home one night from Armagh market when he was attacked and fired on by several I.R.A. men. He gave the names of at least two of his assailants and he produced a cap which he claimed had been pierced by a bullet which just missed his head. I investigated the complaint and found that the B Special was drunk going home on this night; that he was using filthy expressions towards all Catholics in general, that he was armed with a revolver and challenged all and sundry I.R.A. men to come and have it out with him. He fired many shots from his revolver and in the end put his cap on a bush on the roadside and fired at it. I made my report to the County Inspector and he there and then asked for the production of the man's cap. When it was produced it was examined and it was found that the bullet marks could not have been made when the cap was on the Man's head without fatal results. The County Inspector informed me that he would prosecute the Special and have him up on several charges if my witnesses would come forward and give evidence. I told him that our witnesses would not do so and the matter dropped.

I got a complaint from the town of Newry about the conduct of an Auxiliary who was stationed there. This man was in the habit of getting intoxicated and as he always carried two guns he occasionally stopped young men on the street at the revolver point and questioned them as to their membership of the I.R.A. A few signed statements from young men held up by this man were sent on to me and the complaint was that this Auxiliary had held up several people at different times and on

different dates which were all noted in the complaint. When I discussed this matter with the County Inspector he told me that he had no authority or jurisdiction over members of the Auxiliary Forces and that he would not take any action as a police officer in the matter. I pressed him on the point that this man's conduct was likely to lead to a serious breach of the peace and that if such happened he would be certain to have to take action. He told me then to make a careful personal investigation of the complaints and to give him a report in detail of all the incidents which took place and that he would send my report on to the Auxiliaries' Headquarters and there his responsibility ended. I then travelled to Newry and met the late Sean Quinn who was senior I.R.A. Officer in Newry district. Sean told me all he knew about the Auxiliary. He was known locally as "the Yank". He had an American accent and always wore two guns - one on each leg. When he got drunk, which appeared to be frequent, he stopped and threatened any I.R.A. man he knew on the street. I told Sean all about the C.I.'s attitude towards Auxiliaries and that I was intending to make a thorough investigation of the entire matter. Sean then said that it was then about the time each evening when this Auxiliary usually took the war-path and that we should go out on the street and see if we could meet him. We both got into Hill Street and near the G.P.O. Sean drew my attention to an Auxiliary who was approaching, saying "This is the Yank meeting us". The Auxiliary was wearing two guns and appeared to be slightly under the influence of drink. When he met us he stopped and said "Hellow Folks". "Are you blokes two I.R.A. men". Sean answered "Well if we are what about it". The "Yank" then addressed Sean saying "I know you now. You're young Quinn, I know all about you, who is your chum?" I had a dressing on the right side of my face, over the wound on my jaw and when I faced the "Yank" he saw the dressing and recognised me saying, "You are McCoy who was wounded some time ago outside town". You are both I.R.A. men. I would like to shake your hands and you

both have a drink at my expense." We both shook hands with him and Seán told him then that I was liaison officer for Co. Armagh and that I came to Newry to investigate breaches of the truce which he had committed in the Co. Armagh side of Newry town; that the breaches of the truce were carrying arms and holding up and threatening I.R.A. men with guns. The "Yank" then informed us that he was not recognising the truce; that he was a soldier of fortune and came to Ireland to find excitement and adventure and that the truce was not to his idea of things. He informed us that he only abused men whom he knew to be members of the I.R.A. when they denied membership. He said that as the Auxiliaries had a bad reputation in Ireland he was not taking the risk during the truce of being fired on and not having the means of returning the fire. I advised him to cease threatening and abusing people on the street as such conduct might have a tragic result. He agreed that it was a dangerous practice and that he would stop it but that he would always carry his guns whilst a member of the Auxiliaries. When I discussed the whole matter with Sean later he advised me not to make a report to the County Inspector as the "Yank" was not quite as black as he was painted. His weaknesses were a liking for strong drink and the desire to appear tough. After our conversation with the "Yank" there were no further complaints.

I remained in Armagh as Liaison Officer up to about the end of January, 1922. When I was recalled back to the Division, I was then re-appointed Divisional Adjutant and took up duty as such.

At the time I relinquished the post of Liaison Officer there was little political or military activities taking place in Norther Ireland. The terms of the articles of agreement for a treaty signed by the Irish plenipotentiaries in London had been debated in Dáil Éireann and accepted by a majority of seven. The position this acceptance of the agreement signed in London on the majority of the Republican opinion in the six

northern counties was disappointing. It accepted the idea of partition and re-inforced the authority of the Northern Ireland Government and prompted them in taking immediate action to curtail any or all republican activities in the Six County area. The first indication that a change was taking place in the tactics of those in authority was the establishment of heavy patrols of lorries and armoured cars on Northern Irish roads. A system of curfew was imposed after twelve midnight from about February, 1922, onwards. The Special Constabulary became active in all areas where they could operate, and a well-thought out system of psychological warfare was put into operation which tended to impress on all and sundry the fact that the Government's writ must run and that all who opposed would be outlawed. It soon became evident that all the old well-tried measures of repression and oppression were to be re-introduced. The I.R.A. leaders could see the writing on the wall - that they would have to assert themselves soon or allow the Government machine to gain such ascendancy as to make military action by the I.R.A. almost futile. In our divisional area we debated the new position with all its political and military implications, on the Republican position in the Six County area and we decided to meet the Government's intensification of military and psychological measures by a campaign of preparation for warfare; the provision of arms and munitions; safety measures to safeguard against arrests and imprisonment of officers and men and on the political side intense propaganda and the intensification of the Boycott which was continuing to cause great embarrassment to Northern business houses. Our idea in the military side of things was to let the Government take the initiative in any extreme measures; that the I.R.A. should carry on their activities in organisation in a fairly open manner which would give the Government forces the idea that their "cold warfare" had not its desired psychological affect.

Divisional Headquarters were at this time set up in Newry town in a small boarding house in the centre of the town and aroused most unusual activities; men coming and going

day and night. The callers at Divisional Headquarters were not alone the officers from the different brigade units in the Division but also from other Northern Divisional areas. The business of the Divisional Headquarters was conducted in an apparently open manner which seemed to be known to so many that the local police should have full knowledge. If any person came into Newry and inquired for myself or the Divisional O.C. I am sure that they would have little trouble in getting a person to direct them to Mrs. Bailey's of Mill Street. If the police knew that we were in Mrs. Bailey's it is difficult to understand why we were not raided for. Perhaps they expected us to put up a fight if they raided for us and that it didn't suit their purposes at the time to have sensational headlines in the newspapers.

I was myself particularly worried about the danger of continuing our work at Mrs. Bailey's and as a concession to my anxiety the Divisional O.C. had all our divisional papers transferred to Co. Louth. ~~Some time later it was decided that we should transfer to Co. Louth.~~ Some time later it was decided that we should transfer our Divisional Headquarters to Co. Louth. The most important reason of staying so long in Newry and with the danger of an attack by the British police and military forces was the moral effect it had on the rank and file of our men in Northern Ireland territory. There was no justification amongst our officers or men to think that they were asked to take risks by us whilst we were enjoying the security of Southern Ireland territory. In fact, our danger in Newry was much greater than any of our subordinates were asked to take in carrying out their orders.

When the Military Barracks in Dundalk were handed over by the British in Early March, 1922, the Divisional Staff moved into the Barracks. Our presence in Dundalk Military Barracks was in accordance with the wishes of G.H.Q. and as the divisional services were constantly expanding and being divided up into sections for efficient administration, it was essential to have ample room for offices and the storage of munitions, etc.

About this time the British forces in Northern Ireland had shown definite signs of taking the offensive. Raids on prominent republicans became common. In order to blast the idea that the situation in the North was similar to the conditions in the South, the Northern Government arrested a few liaison officers including Seamus Connolly who replaced me in Co. Armagh. Men were frequently halted and questioned when moving on the roads at night. We decided to put an end to lorry patrols at night and we started to lie in ambush to attack them as early as February, 1922. We also took steps to discourage the activities of B Special constabulary in Nationalist areas where they attempted to operate. We gave orders that in all our Northern Ireland company areas, a company protection scheme should be introduced in which the active men in each Company would sleep together in a house or houses under arms with guards posted. This scheme was designed to prevent surprise and individual arrests and would give each group of armed men a fighting chance of getting away if surrounded. We introduced a training scheme by which all Battalion and Company Officers from each Battalion in Northern Ireland got two weeks' intensive training in the Military Barracks. We established independent lines of communications by flag and lamp signalling from Divisional Headquarters to each of the Northern Brigades in our Division and internal lines to link up the Units in each Brigade area. Whilst all these military preparations were proceeding, the political situation in both North and South was producing surprises and changes which had far-reaching effects on the military situation in Northern Ireland. The political split in the South on the question of the acceptance or otherwise of the treaty terms was widening each day and eventually the I.R.A. was completely split up when the Army Executive was formed and a Republican G.H.Q. set up in the Four Courts. Normally this should not have a great effect on the Republican position in the Six County area. The Northern Government was an established entity with a very serious job on

hands to get the rule of law and order established in such a way as to make the future of the Unionist ascendancy unassailable. In order to do this it became necessary to inspire such a wholesome terror in the hearts of the Nationalist population that not alone military action but even purely political action against the people in power should appear hopeless. At the same time as those plans were being projected, it was necessary for the Northern Unionist politicians to repair the economic ravages that the pogrom in Belfast and other northern areas produced and to try and have Belfast boycott called off. The Belfast trade boycott was having a strangling affect on Northern business and was the strongest weapons which the Republican party in Ireland had used against British interests in Ireland. The bargaining effect of this weapon when dealing with the Northern Unionist interests was enormous and could only be appreciated by the people living on the spot in Northern Ireland. I have heard myself of instances of Unionist traders in local Northern towns who had been found guilty of selling Belfast goods, and their names put on a black list, going to the Boycott Committee and paying substantial fines and giving undertakings, which they honourably kept, not to deal with boycotted firms during the Boycott Campaign. Up to April, 1922, the effects of the Boycott were being felt whilst both sections of the Republican movement in the South agreed on the continuation of the Boycott. When the Collins-Craig pact was arranged in which the Boycott was officially called off by Michael Collins, Sir James Craig, the Ulster Premier promised to give the Catholics of the North equal status in matters of employment etc. and to see that an end was put to the Belfast pogrom and the attacks on the Catholic population in Unionist areas. This pact virtually put an end to the Belfast Boycott. The organisation to enforce it which had its headquarters in Dublin, ceased to exist and the whole machinery of the boycott broke up.

About March, 1922, discussions had been taking place

between the pro Treaty and anti Treaty leaders in the South in connection with the North of Ireland problem. It was evident that the Articles of Agreement which had been approved of by Dáil Éireann, gave the Northern Government a status by recognising its existence which it otherwise had lacked. The anti-Treaty party could see that an agreed effort to prevent the Northern Government from functioning could unite all the former Republican elements in the country. Leaders on both sides were meeting and proposals of various kinds were discussed. On the question of providing the I.R.A. in the Northern counties with a sufficiency of arms it was agreed that all the old I.R.A. arms which had been used during the Tan Campaign should be collected all over the south and handed over to the men in the North. An issue of arms which were handed over by the British under the terms of the treaty were to be handed out to replace the arms sent to the North.

It was considered inadvisable in the Spring of 1922 for the pro-Treaty party to allow arms under their control to be used in attacks on British Forces in Northern Ireland. This exchange of arms was made in many Southern Brigades and a dump of stuff was got together in Dublin for despatch to Northern Ireland.

There is little doubt that at a particular time there was unanimity amongst the two Sections of the I.R.A. in Southern Ireland to attack the British Forces operating in the Six County area. When the details of the plan to attack came to be worked out it was found that difference of opinion became evident. Who was to take command when the fight commenced? What help, if any was to be sent into Northern Ireland? It was plain that the Northern I.R.A. could not succeed in dealing with the forces opposed to them. They were prepared to initiate the attack and would possibly be capable of a fair amount of success in early stages of the campaign.

If the element of surprise was present any initial success that the campaign could have in the employment of all

the available forces in the first onslaught and there would be no reserves to throw later into the fight. Those reserves should have to come from Southern Ireland. Would they? After first enthusiastically approving the idea of the Northern operations the pro-Treaty party seemed to suddenly realise that operations in the North might and possibly would, cause a complete smash up of all the treaty plans with the British. The anti-Treaty party were anxious to encourage an attack on the North as the only evident means of getting the pro-Treaty forces to take a line of action that would smash up the Treaty position. The Northern I.R.A. were naturally keen on having a united military effort in Northern Ireland to recover the ground lost during the truce in Southern Ireland when all the British resources in this country were concentrated on the Republicans of the Six Northern counties. It was very clear to most Northern Republicans that the Treaty was the last straw as far as they were concerned and any rumpus that might break up the Treaty position was good policy for them.

Although there was little agreement on the details of how operations were to be carried out in the North, there was a certain amount of work done. Arms which had been collected for use in Northern Ireland were made available at both Beggars' Bush, Headquarters of the pro-Treaty section of the Army and at the Four Courts where the anti-Treaty forces had their Headquarters. At this time our Division was attached to the Beggar's Bush Headquarters and all the arms there which were allotted to the 3rd Northern Division - Belfast, Co. Antrim, or part of Co. Down - were sent on to our Headquarters at the military barracks, Dundalk. The arms intended for Co. Armagh and South Down areas in our Division were also sent to us at Dundalk. Those arms in considerable quantities were sent to Northern areas by road in oil tankers and in a few instances were shipped by motor boat in to coastal areas. As far as I have learned all the large quantities of war material were safely transferred and safely dumped in the areas for which it

was allotted.

This preparation for the rising in the North had been successfully accomplished without arousing any excitement amongst the British army authorities there. The date for the rising was fixed for the 19th May and all the plans which were made for each area were completed and the men allotted to their different assignments. At the last moment the rising on 19th May was cancelled. Orders to the effect came to us with only sufficient time to enable the operations to be called off. In some other areas, notably Tyrone, Derry and Belfast, Co. Antrim and East Down the cancellation did not reach the men in time and the operations commenced. I am not in a position to define exactly how this muddle of the orders cancelling the rising occurred. I believe that in the case of the 3rd Northern Division the fault lay with the pro-Treaty headquarters in not providing alternative means of notification which would ensure the order arriving by at least one route.

In areas where a rising took place the I.R.A. were soon overwhelmed. A number of wounded men were passed on through our area and sent on for hospital treatment to Dublin. About the end of May, 1922, a big round up of Republicans took place simultaneously all over the six-county area. The gaols were all soon filled and internment camps were started. After this round-up in areas where fighting took place, many of the active I.R.A. men from Unionist areas were forced to evacuate their areas and come into the Free State. In Dundalk Military Barracks at the end of May and in early June, 1922, there must have been about 400 I.R.A. men accommodated from Northern areas. About the same time there were so many Nationalist civilian evacuees from Northern areas in Dundalk that several large vacant houses had to be used to try and accommodate the. Some of this was taking place at the time that the Collins-Craig pact was made and the aftermath of the pact did not give much hope that the Nationalist population in the North were to gain any advantage from the pact and the mass evacuation continued. All the border

towns in the twenty-six counties area were packed with refugees and the flood over-flowed to Dublin and other centres. It was estimated that about twenty-six to thirty thousand people had evacuated from Northern Ireland during the period March to June, 1922.

When the proposal that the I.R.A. in the North should attack the British forces there with the assurance that they would have the active support of both the pro and anti-Treaty Headquarters in Southern Ireland fell through, and when the ferocity of the Orange mob was unleashed without any restraint in the areas where the British forces were in occupation in Northern Ireland, it seemed that the rape of Republicanism in Northern Ireland was consummated. Amongst the vast throngs of evacuees who came into Southern Ireland were a number of prominent I.R.A. officers who had evaded capture in the general round up of May, 1922. Some of those men either because of the disillusionment or the disappointments of the treaty disputes and the concentration of the minds of the great majority of the best of the Southern Republicans - military and civil - on the local problems involved in the treaty controversy, ignoring the greater and more urgent problem of the dismemberment of the country, joined the pro-Treaty forces and many got commissions in that Army. Others, smaller in numbers, became associated with the anti-Treaty forces. All those men when they went on the run had to pay the price of failure in all wars - clear out or surrender. When they left Northern Ireland they burned their boats and as they had to do something to live, they took sides in a dispute that had already destroyed all hopes and aspirations of Republicans in the North.

The unfortunate split in the I.R.A. in Southern Ireland did not affect us so much as it did some of the other Divisional areas. The Divisional O.C. decided as early as January, 1922, that the proposal to hold an Army convention would cause a split in the Army inevitably and that no

convention should be held until the Constitution resulting from the Treaty was published. When the Convention was eventually called in March, 1922, none of our divisional staff attended. We all agreed with the Divisional O.C. that the holding of this convention would cause a split which might do incalculable harm. Our 1st Brigade Staff, however, sent delegates to the Convention and decided to go over to the Army Executive formed at the Army Convention.

In the first Brigade it was found that only two Co. Louth Battalions would go with the Brigade Staff. The other two Co. Armagh Battalions in the 1st Brigade remained under the Divisional Staff. The two "Executive" battalions held two police barracks in Dundalk - Anne Street and Bridge Street. In order to prevent any possibility of friction or unpleasantness developing in Dundalk after the split a liaison existed between the Division and the 1st Brigade. It was agreed that any Battalion in the Division who desired to change their allegiance as between the Divisional Staff and the 1st Brigade were at liberty to do so without any undue influences being exerted to prevent them. We were able to preserve in Dundalk the friendly relations which prevented any acts of aggression occurring.

When the plans for a general uprising in the North had collapsed, we in the 4th Northern Divisional Staff decided that any national advances that could be made would involve an attack on the British forces in the six counties area. Three-quarters of our Division lay in the area comprising all Co. Armagh and a large portion of South Co. Down and we had in our area an opportunity to test our ideas.

We had also a large number of well-trained men with practical fighting experience to use as a spear head force in Six-County operations. A column of about sixty men was got together for operations in the North. This column was as far as it was possible to do so, made self-contained. It carried its own food and commissariat, contained engineering, signalling and first-aid sections. It was armed and equipped better than

any British army unit. Each man was armed with a rifle, ammunition and two handgrenades. The column had two machine gun units and as it was to be used tactically as an attacking force which would avail of the element of surprise by taking up ambush positions and await the heavy armoured car and lorry patrols which the British then used, land mines equipped for electrical detonation were carried. The men were all selected for their known fighting qualities and their physical fitness.

It was decided that as far as possible it would not be advisable to indulge in a campaign of border fighting. The British at this time were travelling about day and night in heavy patrols composed generally of armoured cars, armoured lorries and open tenders. We had been making observations and receiving reports as to the frequency of those patrols on certain main roads and we found out that some roads were used much more frequently than others. That those mechanised patrols were generally composed of a mixed force of British military and special constabulary. Over a period of weeks we found that on certain roads there were always patrols at least once in a twelve hour period. Those were the routes we decided to concentrate on.

One of the first position that the column moved into was near the Mountain House in South Armagh about five miles from the Co. Louth border. Two roads mines were fixed into the road at about fifty yards apart and the column took up position and remained there for about eighteen hours. Nothing came and although there was patrol activities on other roads, none approached the position of the Column. The Column evacuated the position and removed the land mines and some time later on a few lorries came to the ambush position and halted there. When they went away some of the local people visited the spot and found two dead men, one on each mine hole on the road. Those men were all well-known Republicans who had no connection whatever with the I.R.A. They were taken out of their homes, shot and placed over the mine holes. This was a challenge that reprisals would follow any military activities against British

forces. We were fearing this as we knew from our intelligence sources that a number of men who were member of British murder gangs in Cork and Dublin during the Tan war had transferred to our border districts. Some of those men had been recognised. It was their approved purpose to watch out for prominent I.R.A. officers and shoot them at sight. After those two murders the civilian population all over South Armagh got into a state of alarm and were evacuating the districts. It was a common practice for men working on their farms during the end of May and early in June, 1922, to travel four or five miles in the evening and camp out in the fields in Co. Louth.

It was evident that if we were to have any pretence to exercise control and to maintain morale in the Northern districts in our Divisional area, we must take steps to prevent those murderous reprisals. The form that we decided to employ as countermeasures to the shooting of our people, was the capture of hostages who were men of influence and undoubted imperialistic outlook who would be held as guarantors for the good conduct of the Unionist elements in their respective districts and would be also held responsible for the strict observance of the rules of warfare by the British forces - military and police - in the hostages' area. This plan was carefully organised and in each local district prospective hostages were carefully selected - care being exercised that no non-Catholic who minded his own business and against whom no sins of bigotry or worse could be preferred, was not to be touched. When the selections were made, a date was fixed where all the selected hostages were to be simultaneously arrested and conveyed to selected places of internment.

On 31st May, 1922, the operation of capturing all those hostages was successfully carried out and a bag of about 75% of the selected list was placed in secure confinement. In the first big round up it was not planned to capture any of the officers of the A Special Constabulary or military officers, but following the success of the round up our men were

instructed that it would be desirable to capture some of those men if the opportunity offered. Shortly afterwards a Company Lieutenant and three men waited outside the town of Newtownhamilton for a Captain McMurrin who was Commandant of the B Special Constabulary in the Southern part of Co. Armagh. This officer moved about freely and always had two Crossley tenders manned with armed Specials accompanying the T. Model Ford, Car he used. On this occasion the two tenders of the escort were about 100 yards in front of the Ford Car and the waiting men were placed near a bend on the road and they jumped on to the road and covered Captain McMurrin and his driver with their revolvers and called on them to halt. The driver immediately pulled up the car and both men surrendered. The escort tenders did not see what had happened and proceeded some distance without noticing that the Captain's car was not following them. The escort then returned to investigate and could not locate the O.C.'s car. They, however, got information that the car was held up and the direction or road that it subsequently had taken. As the escort started after the Captain's car and was actually within hailing distance when Captain McMurrin's car and his captors crossed the frontier into Co. Louth.

When Capt. McMurrin was later taken into Dundalk Military Barracks I interviewed him and informed him that he was to be held as a hostage for the good conduct of the Crown Forces in South Armagh area. That if any murders or outrages were perpetrated by the Crown Forces there that he would be shot as a reprisal. I told him that whilst he was a prisoner he would be treated as a prisoner of war should, with all the respect due to his rank. I told him to write to his authorities explaining the conditions attached to his imprisonment. This officer remained a prisoner with us until the 16th July, 1922, when the Barracks were captured by Provisional Government troops

Capt. McMurrain was released a few days after the 16th July by Provisional Government troops and handed over at the Frontier to Northern Government Forces.

From the end of May, 1922, when the plans for an attack on the British Forces in Northern Ireland were called off, the 4th Northern Division adopted a policy of active military opposition to the British Forces occupying Northern Ireland. Columns of men were sent into South Armagh and on a few occasions into South Down to lie in ambush for Crown Forces and to attack them when the opportunity offered.

The Column generally planned to remain in Northern Ireland for a period of three days or less if an operation ensued. After a few periods of column duty in the North it soon became evident that the Northern forces - British Army and Special Constabulary - were not anxious to engage our columns. It was always possible for the British, with the knowledge that a column was lying in a particular ambush position, to throw a cordon of a thousand men, if necessary, around the locality and thus contain the column within this cordon and deal with it at their leisure. This danger was ever present and the risk had to be taken if any operation were to be carried out.

On one occasion the column travelled to near Lislea, Co. Armagh, and took up an ambush position on the main Market Hill and Forkhill road. A land mine was put down in the road and a position on each side of the land mine was taken up by about thirty men - half of the column. The other half of the column went up to a vacant house on the side of Slievegullion Mountain for a sleep and were to return to the ambush position on the approach of night to relieve the men who did day duty there.

The ambush position extended for about 100 yards along the road and at a point on the northern side of the position there was a rocky projection higher than the

surrounding land, bordering the road, at which there was a slight bend. At this point on the side of this rock was placed a Lewis machine gun which was fixed in a trench in a position to create a field of fire on the road which should prove fatal for the passengers of cars or tenders passing through it. Opposite this rock was also placed the land mine and the switch to explode it was taken on to the rock. The position had been occupied from about 5 a.m. and nothing of interest took place at the position until about 5 p.m. when a private car with six men dressed in trench coats and hats approached the position from the South. At the same time as we got the information that this car was approaching us we also got information that a strong force in motor tenders and armoured cars were approaching from the North or Markethill direction. The car, first sighted, passed slowly through the position and was subjected to a careful examination to see if the occupants were carrying arms. Such a car and men dressed in trench coats had been active for some time in South Armagh districts and were considered by us as dangerous enemies. When the private car was passing our position, the convoy of tenders were within view of our position and if we stopped the private car and it contained civilians, halting it would give away our ambush position. We took a chance and let the car through. It proceeded for about 200 to 300 yards past our position and stopped when the cars travelling from the North met it. The cars travelling from the North comprised the following double two/turreted armoured cars, two armoured plated lorries and two open tenders. The occupants of those vehicles were a mixed force of military and R.U.C. or Special Constabulary. The occupants of the private car and some of the others got together on the road and shook hands and then commenced to view our position with binoculars. There was apparently a consultation going on and after a few minutes

an armoured car started to reverse up a side road which flanked our position and as it ran up rising ground a few hundred yards would enable it to infilade the rear of our ambush position. Whilst all this was going on near our position on the road, it was decided that we should call the part of the column resting on the mountain down to us. This was done by semaphore and we prepared to evacuate the position. The enemy forces were not apparently anxious to attack us and on our part with the element of surprise missing and the superior armament and mobility of the enemy forces, our role should be a defensive one. I mentioned previously that our Lewis gun was placed on the side of the rock in our position. When we attempted to evacuate the machine gun and its crew of three men we found that they had no cover from the armoured cars on the road so the gunners had to cut furze bushes which were growing on the rock and creep slowly up the side of the rock carrying the bushes with them as camouflage and so to safe cover. After about ten minutes of waiting the part of our column from the mountain joined up with us and we all got into extended order and moved in a westerly direction across the main road and evacuated the position. We were only across the road when a number of military tenders came down the road from the south and joined up with the other forces already in the vicinity. We moved in the direction of Mullaghbawn village across very broken country with small fields interspread with rocks and swamps. We knew the topography of the district very well and although followed by the British forces, at a respectable distance, we had no difficulty in getting away. After we crossed the main road at Mullaghbawn village, we heard motor tenders approaching and some of our rearguard actually saw some eight or ten military tenders travelling south at a great pace. Those tenders were evidently sent to cut off our

retreat and had they got to this road before we crossed it would have succeeded in probably surrounding us. When they came to the vicinity of the village, they opened a heavy fire with rifles and machine guns on the sides of the road and on houses in the village in their mad race through. There was no reply to this fire from any of our men. The next day the Belfast papers came out with a sensational report of a heavy engagement between a large force of "Rebels" and some British troops in which the Rebels suffered heavy casualties and succeeded in removing all their dead and wounded across the Southern frontier.

Around about the same time the column took up an ambush position at a place named Ummeracam on the main Crossmaglen - Newry road. We went into this position about daybreak and our Engineers put down the usual land mines on the road. We waited the whole day and nothing came our way. This appeared unusual as this road was one of the roads most frequently used in South Armagh by crown forces as it connected several large Barracks and Camps where military and special constabulary were garrisoned. After night fall we got information that British forces were probably in our neighbourhood. We sent out some scouts but they failed to locate the British. Several times we heard motor lorries moving within a few miles of us. This district was not one of our safe places where the population would all be friendly. So we feared and believed that after twelve hours there the enemy should get to know of our position and that the noises we were hearing were troops moving into position to surround our location. About 2 a.m. the next morning we decided to evacuate. We took up our land mines and marched off in the direction of Co. Louth making careful provisions against surprise. The last of our men to leave the position were three or four officers who were to protect the columns rear on the march. After

those men had moved about 100 yards off the main road near the ambush position they heard motor tenders on the road and actually saw two tenders passing in the direction of Crossmaglen. The next day we got the information that two of our civilian population had been shot that evening and left lying on where land mines had been placed on a road by us a few days previously. We also got information which led us to believe that the men in those two motor tenders going in Crossmaglen direction did the shooting. Such is the fortunes of war, had we waited for another half hour in our position we should have got the men who were probably responsible for those murders.

On another occasion the column were lying in almost the same location and about midday we got information that British Forces were waiting near us and that they must have knowledge of our exact position. We waited awhile to see if they should come into our position and after a short time we decided to evacuate to prevent our being surrounded. We moved off taking all necessary military precautions against surprise and when we had travelled about one mile in the direction of the Co. Louth frontier our rearguard Scouts reported that a large force of Special Constabulary were following us in our rear. They had dismounted from their motor tenders and were following us on foot. We took up a position and waited for them and they, when they found that we had halted, got down into a defensive position and remained static until we started to move away from them. They then recommenced a cautious advance in our wake.

When those events, like the foregoing, were taking place, we had a most distressing feeling that all the efforts we had made to train and equip a column of men for active service against the British Forces in the North were to become abortive if we could not get into action against them. The fear was also present after each fruitless

visit to Northern territory that even our own people might think that we were a bit too careful of our skins to risk an engagement. Members of the column knew that it was not a question of bad luck all the time. In the end we knew that the British did not seek to engage us even when they found us six or seven miles within their supposed territory. We were not foolish enough to think that the Forces in the North, British, Military or Special Constabulary, were afraid or disinclined to attack for safety reasons. We were inclined to think that the Northern Government did not desire any large scale military engagement to be fought out in their territory. Ireland was news in those days and the worst thing that could happen to the Northern Government was a condition of open warfare over a considerable portion of their area, as this was certain to receive all the publicity that world interest in Irish affairs then demanded.

In addition to the above column activities the following operations were carried out - an ambush in the village of Mullaghbawn in which the column was engaged against a mixed force of British Military and Special Constabulary. The force comprised two armoured cars and several motor tenders. The Column had been lying the previous day in Carriff mountain and about 2 p.m. a convoy of Specials in motor tenders passed over a mountain road from Silverbridge area and proceeded on in the direction of Mullaghbawn village. From the position the column was in when this force was noticed it was impossible to intercept them except they halted for some time near where the column was. They, however, proceeded into the village of Mullaghbawn and went on towards Forkhill. On the road there we lost trace of them. We decided to lie in ambush for them in the village of Mullaghbawn and to remain in position as long as there was a possibility of surprising enemy forces passing through

the village. Positions were taken up at the old Protestant Schools which faces the main road and extend for about 60 yards. This building was occupied and a number of riflemen placed in position at the windows. Near the northern end of the school building on rising ground about 30 yards from the road a trench was dug and a Lewis gun set in a fixed position in the trench in such an alignment that when the gun was used it would produce a field of fire that would catch anything passing on the road so as to liquidate troops passing in motor tenders or motor cars. On the south side of the school building a fairly large section of men were placed. Those men were armed with a Thompson sub machine gun and rifle. At the back of the school another section of men were placed as a reserve. This position was one of a hundred percent security as every person in the village and within at least a mile of the ambush position were our enthusiastic friends and supporters. The column remained in position all that evening and up to dark still there was no sign of enemy movements. The column decided to remain in position until something turned up which would justify all our waiting. About 2 a.m. information from our scouts-signallers came to the effect that a large mechanised force were coming from the direction of Forkhill village and that the two leading vehicles were armoured cars. The alert was given and the first of the two armoured cars arrived and were allowed to pass our position. The first open tender was fired on from the Lewis gun position and it lost speed and apparently ran into a fence about 100 yards further up the road. After this, firing broke out all the way along the ambush position. A number of cars came under fire and others which did not actually come into the range of our fire stopped and the crews got into the fields on the flank of our position. A lot of firing was now taking place which apparently came from the fields flanking our position. An attempt to get to the

position, where the tender which was machine gunned had stopped was frustrated by one of the armoured cars which had previously passed reversing back and enfilading the road with machine gun fire assisted by the glare of searchlights. Owing to the danger of the column being surrounded by enemy troops penetrating to our rear from the flank of our position the column made a hasty withdrawal from the position under most confusing conditions. The enemy had some sections which had penetrated into our rear and an exchange of fire in the darkness made the question of friends or foes uncertain.

It is not possible to know what casualties resulted on the enemy side from this operation. The crew of the tender which was fired on at the start of the operation must have suffered severe casualties. The subsequent firing, especially during the columns retreat, was spasmodic and confusing and, like all night operations, possibly ineffective. The column suffered no casualties.

The position in June, 1922, was that in Southern Ireland there existed two Army Headquarters, one pro treaty and the other anti Treaty. We in the 4th Northern Division remained associated with the pro Treaty Headquarters. We did not agree with the holding of the Army Convention in March, 1922, as it would inevitably mean the setting up of an anti-Treaty headquarters and so dividing the army. To be consistent afterwards we remained under the old G.H.Q. which after the Convention was looked on, and did in effect, represent the pro Treaty section of the former I.R.A. Our Divisional O.C., Frank Aiken, did use all his powers of persuasion and his undoubted popularity with the leaders of both sections of the army in an effort to fix up the breach that was every day widening. On the morning of the 29th June, 1922, when we heard of the attack on the Four Courts Executive H.Q. by the pro-Treaty forces we knew that the inevitable Civil War had broken out and that it was liable

to rapidly spread to all areas where the original I.R.A. organisation had divided on the question of the Treaty. As our First Brigade Staff and two Battalions of the 1st Brigade had gone "Executive" in March, 1922, we had an immediate problem to face in Dundalk and those two Battalions held two of the former R.I.C. Barracks in town. We approached the officers in control in Anne Street Barracks with the suggestion that we should come together and discuss this new crisis and if possible agree to some line of action that would endeavour to stop hostilities and again, at least, re-unite the 4th Northern Division on a policy of neutrality. We made this approach about midday on the 29th June and we were informed that the 1st Brigade O.C. Patrick McKenna and the Vice O.C. Michael Donnelly, John McGuill, Brigade Q.M. who were accompanied from Dundalk by a Republican non Volunteer, were arrested that morning by pro Treaty forces in Drogheda when on their way to Dublin. This was bad news for us as it complicated an already critical situation. We assured the people in Anne Street of our desire to prevent any trouble developing in our area in Co. Louth and we told them that we would do everything possible to get their three Brigade Officers released. Frank Aiken and I started for Drogheda and when we arrived there we met Eamonn Rooney who was then, we understood, in charge of the pro Treaty forces there. We asked for the release of the three Brigade Officers and we guaranteed that if the Brigade Officers were released that all the Division would adopt a neutral attitude. Commandant Rooney informed us that he authorised the arrest of the two officers knowing that both were taking orders from the Four Court's Executive and that they were apparently on their journey to Dublin when "lifted" in Drogheda and that he could not very well order their release seeing that he had notified his Divisional Staff of their arrests. He agreed to get in touch with his Divisional Officers and as a result

Pat Clinton, Divisional Adjutant, 1st Eastern Division, came from Dunboyne to Drogheda and after some talk on this matter ordered the release of our three officers. It was when we had all this business amicably concluded we found that the officers had escaped from custody about the time that we first arrived in Drogheda. We returned to Dundalk and found both McKenna and Donnelly already in town. That night we held a Divisional Council Meeting in the Military Barrack, Dundalk, in which all Divisional and Brigade Officers attended, including those who had gone Executive. At this meeting it was decided that the Division as a whole would adopt a neutral attitude towards the Civil War, and that efforts should be made to bring about an immediate cessation of hostilities. It was also decided at that meeting that all military offensive action against British forces in the North should be called off. As all hopes of a united Ireland effort against the British Forces in the North was smashed for the time being by the outbreak of the Civil War.

From the 29th June up to the 15th-16th July our Division was united on a policy of strict neutrality, Numbers of men from Northern Ireland were passing through Dundalk some going South to join the pro-Treaty forces and others to join up with the anti Treaty forces. There was no obstacles put in the way of any person going to join either sides if we were satisfied that they were genuinely following the dictates of their consciences and not out for looting or robbery.

After the outbreak of the Civil War a spirit of indecipline and lawlessness became manifest. A young man from Belfast appeared in Dundalk area in charge of thirty or forty other youths. Those boys claimed to be, soldiers of the Republic, on their journey to Dublin to fight on the anti Treaty side. Their presence in Dundalk was not at first noticed very much. A series of hold ups took place on the roads leading out of town and a few country houses were broken into and robbed near Dundalk. This situation

was worrying us as we did not know where to look for the culprits. The town was full of refugees and others who claimed to be refugees. There were so many refugees and others coming into town that it was impossible to go into the bonafides of particular persons and wrong doers had all the advantages.

I and a few other officers from the Military Barracks were returning unarmed to Dundalk from Blackrock by car when we were suddenly confronted by men armed with revolvers who held us up. When we arrived on the scene of the holdup there were about twenty men and women herded together against a wall and a number of armed men were up on a telegraph pole and were cutting all the telephone and telegraph wires on the main road leading from Belfast to Dublin. The man in charge of this party, whose name was Byrne, known as "Chuck" came to us after we had stopped our car and he told me that as he knew me, I and the others in the car could proceed on our journey. I asked him why he was cutting communications in our area and he replied that he was a soldier of the Republic and that he was engaged in a war against enemies of the Republic. I told him that we were not enemies of the Republic and that we were neutral and that we could not allow him or others to carry out acts of war in our divisional area. He then told me and the others to clear off or that he might change his mind and make us prisoners. I told him then that we would go but that we would return and that it were better that he and his men were outside our divisional area when we returned, as we would deal in a drastic manner with them if within the area. He said then "you will get a hot reception from us if you come back".

We went into town and I got a small force together to deal with the wire cutters. I and four others took a Ford car and we got a party together to man a Crossley tender. We were ready for the road first and started in the Ford car in

in the direction of the scene of the wire cutting. When we came to Haggardstown we found that the place was deserted and we heard that "Chuck" Byrne and his men had left there and proceeded in the direction of Drogheda. We then proceeded in the Drogheda direction and when about a half mile from a place named Mullins Cross near Dunleer we got sight of the Belfast men. They were again up on the poles cutting wires and had a barricade across the road near where they were operating. We drove the car at the barricade in the hope that it would crash through but it stuck. The Byrne crowd had a large motor lorry with them and when we crashed into the barricade they opened fire on us. I told my men to fire on their lorry and so prevent them getting on it and so escaping. About half of the crowd got away on the lorry in Dunleer direction. Our Crossley tender then arrived and was sent on to follow the men on the lorry. Of the men who did not get away on the lorry, we captured fifteen and the Crossley tender overtook the lorry going into the town of Dunleer and a running fight ensued in which "Chuck" Byrne got shot through the body and was taken by our men to Ardee hospital.

On the 6th July, 1922, Frank Aiken started for the South of Ireland on a mission of peace or to have, at least, a truce called. He called with the Minister for Defence of the Pro Treaty forces, Richard Mulcahy, in Dublin and he failed to make any progress with him. He then proceeded to the south and met Commdt. General Liam Lynch. He endeavoured to get Liam Lynch to agree to drop the idea of fighting as fighting against men of the old I.R.A. was bad tactics as many of those men were even then out for a Republic Constitution. He failed to make any impression on the leaders in the south and he returned to Dundalk on the 14th July.

During F. Aiken's absence and about the 7th July, I received a communication from Eoin O'Duffy, Asst. Chief of

Staff, Portobello Barracks, Dublin, in which he ordered me to proceed at once to the two police barracks in Dundalk which were held by what he described as "Executive Forces", and demand their immediate surrender and if the troops holding those Barracks refused to surrender they were to be attacked and when captured their defenders be put in prison. My reply to General O'Duffy was that there was no Executive forces in Dundalk or in our divisional area, that the division was united as constituted prior to the 26th March, 1922, and that the policy of the division was one of strict neutrality towards the contestants in the Civil War.

To this reply I got a further communication to the effect that he - General O'Duffy - was not recognising our neutrality and that if we refused to obey his orders that he would send in other troops from a neighbouring area to attack the two Barracks in question. My reply to this second communication was to the effect that any outside troops coming into our area would be treated as hostile to us and that we would attack them as violaters of our declared policy of strict neutrality. From the 7th July onwards there was a period of strain in which the pro Treaty Headquarters were issuing threats as to the dire consequence of our refusing to carry out their orders. It looked to me at the time that an effort was being made to force us to depart from our neutral attitude whilst F. Aiken was absent from his division. I don't think that we knew where F. Aiken was during this time. We knew that he would attempt to contact the Southern anti Treaty leaders but we were not so sure that he would get to them or get back to Dundalk again.

About this time a few of our officers in the Military Barracks, Dundalk, gave unmistakable proof that they were attempting to sabotage our efforts to remain neutral. An attempted mutiny was organised and this went so far as some

men refused to take up the duties assigned to them, such as guard duties and cookhouse routine. The reason given for the refusal of duty was the fact that they were not getting paid the weekly rates set out for soldiers serving in the regular Army. We had the entire garrison paraded on the Barrack Square and informed them that they would get all the perquisites they then enjoyed such as free clothing, boots, cigarettes, etc. That they were not to expect pay as we had no funds available to pay them and if they did not accept those conditions they were to signify their non acceptance by marching out of the ranks. Only about four men marched out and the remainder expressed their agreement to remain and obey orders.

About the 12th July the garage in the Military Barracks was broken into and a car taken, an arms store was also broken into and a Lewis gun and four or five rifles were taken. The men who did this were led by an officer who was second in charge of the Military Barracks and he and four or five others left the Barracks about 4 a.m. in the stolen car and equipped with the stolen arms. When this matter was reported to me about 8 a.m. I found that the O.C. of the Barrack had got a report of the breaking into the garage and the arms store at the time the events were taking place and it was also reported to him when the car and the men in it had left the Barracks. He had taken no action on the receipt of those reports.

We immediately proceeded to have a search made for the officer and men who deserted. We soon learned that they had gone in the direction of Dublin. We followed them and found some of them in the Barracks in West Gate Street, Drogheda. I interviewed the officer in charge of this Barrack and requested him to hand us over the men. He told me that the men told him that they left Dundalk Barracks as they did not agree with our policy and they desired to join the Regular

Army. I explained that if they had expressed to me a wish to join the Regular Army I would have issued each a Railway voucher to Dublin. This was later verified by the officer who deserted from us. I got permission to remove the men back to Dundalk under escort which was done. A Courtmartial was held that evening on the men who broke into stores and removed the motor car and the arms and also on the Barrack O.C. for his apparent connivance in the action of the others. ~~At the same time the Barrack O.C. was dismissed from the armed forces of the 4th Northern Division and ordered to leave the divisional area within a short specified time. The others were imprisoned.~~ The Barrack O.C. was dismissed from the armed forces of the 4th Northern Division and ordered to leave the divisional area within a short specified time. The others were imprisoned.

On Friday, 14th July, the Divisional Quartermaster came and told me that he had been that day in Dublin and that he was informed that the sands were running out as far as our efforts at remaining neutral were concerned. He urged that all proper provisions should be immediately made to repel an attack which he believed would soon be made on us. He also informed me that the Divisional O.C. was then in Dublin and that he would return to Dundalk that evening. Various suggestions were made as to what should be done. Many of our officers appeared to favour the idea that we should depart from our neutral attitude and join the Executive forces. In fact one or two on that particular Friday put much pressure on me to take immediate action on the Executive side. I could not agree to a sudden change of policy which was not preceded by a properly convened Divisional Council meeting to rescind the declaration of policy adopted at the outbreak of the Civil War and maintained under severe pressure since the fighting started.

One suggestion made to me was that we should immediately release Capt. McMurrin and all the other Unionist prisoners whom we held in the Military Barracks. I sent for Capt. McMurrin and I informed him that we were prepared to let him

escape that evening. Capt. McMurrin seemed much surprised at my suggestion. He enquired what had changed our attitude towards him so quickly. He stated that he could not understand why we captured him and kept him a prisoner in a provisional Government Barrack. That his only offence seemed to be the carrying out of his duty as a British Military officer and that the idea of treating him as a hostage seemed to be inexplicable. I enquired if he was reading the daily papers and he said he was. I told him that he then knew that a state of war existed over practically all southern Ireland that it was likely to involve us in Dundalk and that was the reason we were prepared to let him and all the other hostages from Northern Ireland held by us go home.

Captain McMurrin then informed me that he would not risk leaving Dundalk and that he would prefer to take his chance inside as prisoner than leaving us with the uncertainty of his fate before he should reach Northern Ireland territory. In fact he said "put yourself in my position and imagine what my suspicions are when such a suggestion is made." I told him that I could see the logic of his fears and that I would not press him to agree to go. I told him that he could send a wire that evening to his wife and get her to call to Dundalk and meet him in the Barracks and that a room would be placed at their disposal if he desired a visit under those conditions. Capt. McMurrin then broke down and as an explanation told me that he was after going through such a period of worry not alone on his own account but also on account of his wife and young baby. I pointed out to him that many of our officers and men when taken prisoner had to undergo much more physical suffering and mental worry than he had gone through with us and I asked him if he had been subjected to any indignities since his capture. He said that his treatment as a prisoner was proper and correct and all

our officers and men were courteous and gentlemanly in their attitude to him. He sent a wire for his wife and kiddy to come to Dundalk Barracks the next day for the arranged visit.

Frank Aiken returned to Dundalk that evening and informed us of his failure to make any impression on the contestants in the Civil War. The impression I got from him was that the situation was hopeless, both parties determined that the war should go on and no strength of opinion on either side to favour even a truce to try to fix things up. He told us that he had arranged that the Divisional Staff and Brigade O.Cs. from the 4th Northern Division were to travel to Portobello Barracks, Dublin, on the next day - Saturday 15th July, 1922 - to meet the Chief of Staff. General R. Mulcahy to discuss our position with him. Frank called some of the 1st Brigade Officers that evening to the Military Barracks and they were told the position as far as Frank could see it. It was arranged that we should go to Dublin the next morning to keep the appointment with General Mulcahy.

We proceeded to Portobello the next day and had about a two hours' talk with General Mulcahy. Frank Aiken put our position to him especially with reference to our special interests in Northern Ireland affairs and the detrimental effect that the continuance of the Civil War would have on the Republican position in the North. Mulcahy listened to Frank and took notes of what was said in shorthand. When Frank had finished Mulcahy asked each of us individually what we had to say on the matter. We each informed him that General Aiken had expressed our points of view. General Mulcahy then told us that the points raised by General Aiken should be presented in the form of a memo to the Commander in Chief of the Army (Pro-Treaty) and also to the President of the Provisional Government and that as our position was creating a critical situation for him and his associates

that the memo should be prepared and submitted as soon as possible. General Mulcahy's attitude during this interview did not give me any optimistic feelings about the usefulness of our discussion with him. I took away from the interview the impression that a decision had already been taken in connection with the problem our neutrality presented.

After leaving Portobello we went to a hotel to get a feed and it was decided that all should go home to Dundalk and that Frank would get to work on his submission to the Commander in Chief and the President of the Provisional Government. I told Frank that I would not return to Dundalk that evening. I intended to have an evening off duty in Dublin and that I would travel first train on the next, Sunday, morning. Malachy Quinn, Adjutant 2nd Brigade, agreed to stay in Dublin with me. As far as I can remember we went to a show that night and the next morning we took an early train for Dundalk. When we arrived in Dundalk Station we saw on the platform a platoon of pro Treaty soldiers in uniform. We avoided them and got on to the exit of the station where more soldiers were placed. We sauntered past them without arousing any interest and proceeded in the direction of the centre of the town. We soon realised that the town had been captured by pro-Treaty forces. We met one of our 4th Northern Division officers in Park Street and he told us that the town was in pro Treaty hands; that Comdt. General Aiken, and all the staff officers in the Barracks the previous night were prisoners; that all the other officers and men who did not express a desire to join the pro Treaty forces were made prisoners. This officer was not put into prison as he expressed a wish to join up with the pro Treaty people. He heard that we were expected from Dublin on the train just in and that soldiers were sent to the station to arrest us. He advised us to clear off the street as we should be picked up if recognised. We cleared

off the streets and proceeded through the demesne to Tommie Rogers place in Bridge Street. We then got a fairly accurate story of the night's happenings. Some time later Malachy and I left Dundalk and proceeded to one of our camps at Dungooley where there were about 150 of our men.

At this stage I could not think what way was the best way to meet the main crisis which was thrust on the officers who had evaded capture and on myself in particular. It was easily seen that the men who were prisoners had their responsibilities ended. The officers and men who were at liberty had to make decisions and the possibility of taking serious decisive action would be soon an urgent necessity.

When I reached Dungooley camp I found the officers and men there in a most indignant frame of mind. All those men had been engaged for months past in active service against the British forces in the North and now to be attacked by the provincial government forces was an act of treachery which they could not understand. Their minds were so much centered on their traditional enemy in occupation in the North that the possibility of an attack from the South did not register in their minds as a near possibility. They expressed the opinion forcibly to me that those new enemies were the worst as they attacked without warning when we were fully employed in protecting our people from the outrages and ravages daily carried out against them by the British forces in Northern Ireland. I told them that I would have to call a meeting of all the Brigade and Battalion Officers of the Divisional Area to discuss the situation and to make a decision as to what should be done. I told them to carry on as best they could until I got in touch with them again. I then proceeded to Ravensdale Camp where the O.C. and staff of the 3rd Battalion, 1st Brigade, had their Headquarters and where about one hundred men were also stationed. I found those men had somewhat a similar point of view on the new

crises as the men at Dungooley Camp. I got the O.C., 3rd Battalion to send a number of dispatches out for me to all our Brigades asking for the Brigade O.Cs. and their staffs, if possible, to call to Omeath where I intended to set up our headquarters for consultation. I then proceeded to Omeath and got in touch there with Sean Quinn, Ned Fitzpatrick, Ivor Monaghan and some others who had escaped the net at the Military Barracks. We set up a headquarters and took military precautions to prevent the surprise capture of any of our men.

On Monday, 17th July, the most urgent problem facing our men was the question of food supplies. In all our camps I advised the officers to carry on as usual to go to their former sources of supplies for their daily rations. In all cases the men were able to get their usual supplies and a real worry was removed from our minds.

I found that the main concensus of opinion amongst our officers was the desire to attack and drive the forces who captured Dundalk outside the divisional area and to release our officers and men held prisoners in Dundalk. In a few instances I met officers who were fed up with the whole position and were resigning and taking no further part in any further military operations. I could see clearly before a divisional meeting was held that the almost unanimous decision of the meeting would be a declaration of war against the pro Treaty forces.

We held our divisional meeting on Sunday, 23rd July, in Faughart graveyard using as a desk the flat tombstone which tradition holds covers the grave of Edward Bruce who fell in the Battle of Faughart in the year 1318.

The meeting was completely representative. No time was lost in formalities. We got down at once to the serious question of policy. It was plainly evident that there was no inclination by any of the representatives at the meeting

to favour taking the pro Treaty side. I gave a brief resume of what had led up to the capture of Dundalk by the pro Treaty forces and I informed the meeting that if a decision to take part in the Civil war was decided on, it should be supported by the unanimous voice of the meeting as otherwise I personally would not take any part in carrying out a policy that had only sectional support. The unanimous verdict of the meeting was to attack the pro Treaty forces who invaded Dundalk and the urgent desire was to start the attack at once. I disagreed with starting an immediate attack. I pointed out that the Divisional Staff had been taking orders from the pro Treaty section of the army up to the outbreak of the Civil War that from the 29th June we had emphatically and publicly declared a policy of neutrality and although we had been attacked some of our men killed and wounded and many of our most important officers held as prisoners, I felt that if I was to take part in the new policy of attack on pro Treaty forces the air should be cleared of any vagueness as to our intentions by issuing an ultimatum to the pro Treaty G.H.Q. before we commenced official armed attack on them. The issue of an ultimatum was not received with favour by some of the delegates. I pointed out that the issue of an ultimatum would prevent our actions being the subject of unscrupulous propoganda which had early on become a feature of the pro Treaty policy in the Civil War. It was agreed that an ultimatum should be issued before armed action started. An election of officers to fill up the vacancies on the divisional and some of the Brigade staffs was held. I was appointed divisional O.C. and all the other vacant positions were filled. This meeting ended with a feeling of satisfaction that the new situation forced on us was being met in the only honourable way which gave attention to the scruples of some and expression to the desire of all to punish those who had outraged all our ideals when they

attacked us.

The first job that the reorganised divisional staff undertook was to draft an ultimatum to the Pro Treaty G.H.Q. demanding the evacuation of the area occupied by their troops in 4th Northern Division territory in Co. Louth, the release of all our prisoners held by them and an undertaking to respect our neutrality. This ultimatum gave the pro Treaty headquarters a period of 48 hours to implement our demands and their failure to do so at the end of that time meant that we should enter into a state of open warfare with them. The issue of the ultimatum ensured that there could be no vagueness in the minds of the pro Treaty people and especially the general public as to our intentions. It could not be held later that we switched from neutrality to attack without properly declaring our intentions.

Whilst the ultimatum was being drafted and after it was sent on when we were awaiting the expiration of the 48 hours notice we were making and perfecting the plans for our first operation which was an attack on Dundalk prison and the release of all the anti-Treaty prisoners held there which included Comdt. General Frank Aiken and many of our officers and men. This ultimatum was timed to expire on Thursday morning the 27th July previous to the time we arranged to attack Dundalk prison.

In planning the attack on Dundalk prison we made use of a friendly warder who took messages in and out of the prison. It was decided that the attack was to take the form of a mining operation on the outside wall of the prison opposite the end of one of the prison wings. The prisoners were let out of their cells for exercise at 7 a.m. each morning and the gate at the end of the wing of the prison was opposite where we planned to place our land mine and was opened about the same time. In order to allow for an overlap of time in the opening of the end gate of the prison

we arranged to have our land mine in position at 7.10 and we would explode it on a signal from the prisoners inside.

The signal was given soon after we had placed the mine in position and it was exploded. The explosion blew about four square feet of an opening at the base of the wall. We had about forty men on this operation including covering parties on the military barrack and on Anne Street Barracks which is about 100 yards from the prison. As soon as the mine exploded a number of hand grenades were thrown across the wall at various points in order to demoralise any effort the military guard on the inside of the prison walls should make to prevent all the prisoners reaching the opening blown in the opposite wall.

The operation turned out exactly as planned. All the prisoners who desired to escape got away about one hundred and twelve in all. I and about twenty of the attacking party on the prison were acting as rear guard to the escaping prisoners. We were followed by a few motor tenders containing troops who made no attempt to close in on us. A few motor cars had been provided at a spot about a mile distant from the prison for the use of Commandant Gen. Aiken and some of the other divisional officers to get them away quickly from the vicinity of Dundalk. I noticed that those cars had been deserted by their drivers and were not available at the location where the officers could be picked up. I took two of our officers with me to take charge of the cars. We had some initial difficulty in starting the cars which caused delay and when we did get them going we were intercepted by a large force of pro Treaty troops. We evacuated the cars and took to the fields. When we realised that we were surrounded on all sides and that an attempt to force our way out would certainly mean loss of life without any material gain we surrendered.

I had planned this attack on the prison with the idea of avoiding, as far as it was possible to do so in warfare, the possibility of loss of life. I looked on those opposed to us as men of decent upbringing, all country lads like ourselves, who some few months previously had the same national outlook as we had. I had genuine regrets that the course of events had projected our opponents and ourselves into open warfare and did not relish the possibility that some of our antagonists should get killed any more than I would feel indifferent about our own men or my own fate.

After our surrender my two comrades and myself were removed into the Military Barracks, Dundalk. Shortly after our arrival there I was pained to learn that a few of the pro Treaty troops got killed at a road junction on the Castleblaney road outside Dundalk where they were attempting to force a passage through a position defended by our men in order to cut off some of the escaping prisoners. Those, as far as I heard, were the only casualties in this operation.

After a few days as a prisoner in Dundalk, I was removed to Dublin and eventually sent on to Maryborough prison in Leix. I was removed from Maryborough Prison to Tintown Camp, the Curragh, Co. Kildare. In April, 1923, I escaped from Tintown Camp by means of a tunnel. I was recaptured about two weeks afterwards. I was not finally released until June, 1924.

My internment in prisons and prison camps during the Civil War period, which lasted for almost two years, provided some of the most interesting experiences of my life. I met men from all parts of Ireland and from all walks of life and with those men experienced all the disabilities that a military defeat can entail for prisoners belonging to the defeated side.

No quarter.

Before finishing these memoirs I am giving a list of happenings in our area in Northern Ireland from which all men of good will, on both sides, who are not inflamed or excited with the fever of sectarian interests during periods of conflict, can in times of peace, by thinking over, learn a lesson from, forgive, and then forget.

That such happenings did take place, at different times and in various places, even amongst a decent community, can in some cases be attributed to the vicious "Black Sheep" that turn up in such communities in periods of upheaval, to prosecute a vendetta on personal enemies or for private gain. The political and, I regret to state, the religious feelings of the people were also used to produce results which similar situations had produced at different times in the World's history. Very few countries in the Old World are free of examples of savage happenings, when feelings were excited and ran high. In the New World too, in North America, the Indian Wars, after the arrival of the White-man, produced examples of inhuman savagery on both sides, which when inflamed by selfish interests have been recurring up to even recent times.

Those happenings are part of American history. What happened in Co. Armagh and Co. Down in 1921 and 1922 are, in mild contrast, a part of our Irish history. One useful result of the perusal of a candid history of any country is to take steps to safeguard against undesirable traits in a country's past influencing the present and to provide against a recurrence of such happenings. The history of Northern Ireland from the Plantations down to 1921-1922 and even much later is an example of how far the fears and the traditions of the past can manufacture the material for future conflict amongst two sections who

have lived together in comparative harmony except when the politicians have made trouble for political ends.

The record I am to give of happenings in the months of June 1921 and of May and June, 1922, should be an object lesson to the people in the North who are led to take offensive action against their fellow countrymen who have a different political outlook or who worship at a different church. The resort to force is a two-edged weapon which had a persistent habit of recoiling on the user and which in the last analysis seldom achieves anything that could not be obtained by reason and peaceful means. The only people who have thrived on discord in the North are a select number of the trouble-making politicians who have climbed to office and are today engaged in the old device of creating the canard that men of a certain religious persuasion are ipso facto "disloyal." This attitude of theirs is ridiculous when it is remembered that their own "loyalty" has always depended on how far they were able to dictate British policy here. When their power was in danger they preached sedition and sowed the seed of rebellion which blossomed with uncomfortable results. The power that made those Northern Unionists' activities feasible and effective was the British Imperial Government who continued to implement a policy which had been in effective operation in the North since the days of Lord Castlereagh - the policy of putting Catholic and non-Catholics at each others throats - so that there should not be a repetition of the situation in the North which prevailed when the Irish volunteers under Grattan showed Britain what a United Ireland could do. Any person conversant with the history of the North of Ireland for the last 100 years can recall numerous incidents of where the inclination for Orange and Green to co-operate for mutual benefits were smashed by British Government interests which

had no compunction in using the armed forces of the British Crown - the Army and police force - to inflame sectarianism. The property losses and the sacrifices in human life resulting from clashes initiated by sectarian bitterness did not seem to trouble the powers behind the forces "of law and order" who habitually stood by except when their friends were getting manhandled.

This whole set up is so mischievous in its conception and so crude in its implementation that it could only succeed with a people blinded by prejudices. That those prejudices still exist is due only to the fact that it is expedient that they should be inflamed so frequently and that their appeal is directed to the most ignorant sections of the people. With this preamble I will now give a digest of happenings as reported in the local press in the vicinity of Newry, Co. Down and Dundalk, Co. Louth, for the months of June and July, 1921.

3rd June, 1921.

General Election for Northern Ireland Parliament.

11/6/21. Hugh O'Hanlon, Eshwary, and James Smyth, Keggal, shot dead. O'Hanlon had permission from the British Authorities to carry arms. Both shootings took place on 6th June.

18/6/21. John Cosgrave, Eshwary, farmer, taken from his house and shot in the early hours of 12th June. Cosgrave was a well-known Sinn Feiner. On the same night John O'Callaghan's house at Eshway was raided for him.

18/6/21. Two brothers named McGill's, Corrigs, were shot dead. (This shooting followed an ambush on a patrol of B Specials at Grinan in which a Constable Gibson was wounded and later when reinforcements of Specials arrived from Newry by lorries a second fight took place in which Constable Lynas was killed).

25/6/21. Constable Wm. Campbell shot dead on the Newry

road near Dundalk on the night of 17th-18th June.

25/6/21. John and Patrick Watters, brothers, taken from their beds in their house in Seatown, Dundalk and shot dead by armed men.

25/6/21. Examiner Printing Works, Dundalk destroyed on 20th June.

25/6/21. Derailment of a troop train reported at a place named Adavoyle, Co. Armagh, on 24/6/21.

9/7/21. Wm. Hickey - Catholic - Manager of a furniture store taken from his lodgings in Newry at 1.45 a.m. by masked men. His dead body found in a cattle shed near Newry.

9/7/21. Mrs. Isobella Fegan, Breemlough, Rathfriland, was seriously wounded by shots fired through her window.

9/7/21. About the same time a young man named Carr escaped from his house in Water Street, Newry by rushing out in his shirt and trousers.

9/7/21 Dublin Castle issues the following:-

Peter Quint and two young men named Reilly and a young man named McGinnety were taken from their homes at Altnaveigh near Bessbrooke district in South Armagh and shot last night. Crown Forces are proceeding to the scene of the murders.

" House of Mr. Carr, Water Street, Newry was visited for the second time within a month by armed and masked men. Young Thomas Carr was hauled out of his bed in a room at top of house. He threw his coat over the head of the man in charge of the raiders and escaped by jumping out of a window and crossing over the wall of a backyard.

" Constable Hugh Gabbie shot dead whilst walking past market Gate in Newry at 3.30 p.m. Various houses in Newry raided next morning.

The following are extracts from the files of local papers of happenings in Co. Armagh and Co. Down from March, 1922 to end of June, 1922.

- 11/3/22. Roads barricaded and trenched over wide areas in the six Northern counties in border districts. Northern police prevent farmers removing barricades.
- 1/4/22. On Wednesday, 29th March, a police patrol from Crossmaglen was attacked at Coloville, Co. Armagh. Head Constable James Harper was shot dead. Sergeant Earley, R.I.C. mortally wounded and Constable Dougall seriously wounded.
- 1/4/22. Shortly after 2 a.m. on the 31st March six Special Constables were ambushed in Hill Street, Newry, opposite Hyde Market. An order was given to the Specials to put up their hands which was disobeyed and then fire was opened on them. Constable Allen was mortally wounded and Constable Waring was seriously wounded in the shoulder. The Mile Stone stores were later broken into. Whiskey barrels were turned on and allowed to waste. Goods and liquor were taken and an attempt made to burn the place.
- 8/4/22. A supposed reprisal for the shooting of Constable Allen was the shooting of Joseph Garvey, Aughnagun, Armagh, on the 1st April. The deceased was returning from his work through an orange district when shot.
- 27/5/22. Notice issued on 25th May, imposing curfew on the whole Six Counties from 11 p.m. to 5 a.m. as from the 31st May, 1922.
- 3/6/22. Two barracks occupied by Special Constabulary, both within two mile radius, were attacked by rifle parties at 3.30 a.m. on 1st June, 1922, one at Crossmaglen, Co. Armagh, and the other

at Jacksons House, Drumack. Firing lasted about thirty minutes.

3/6/22.

Jonesboro, Co. Armagh. A fight started on 26th May by Specials raiding Paul Gallagher's Public House at Flurry Bridge. The fight which started subsequently lasted for 30 hours. Several Specials were wounded. Five girls from Bessbrooke district were arrested by Specials on the Free State side of the Border. The allegations were that they were wearing Cumann na mBan uniform; were carrying explosives. On Saturday evening when the Specials opened communications with the Military Barracks, Dundalk for a cessation of the fight General F. Aiken would only consent to calling off operations on the condition that the imprisoned girls would be released forthwith. The girls were released and the fighting ceased at about 7 p.m.

"

On the 1st instant Specials and I.R.A. came into contact at Dungooley on the Louth-Armagh border. The I.R.A. occupied Barracks at the Border edge at Dungooley Cross. Specials got to within 500 yards of this Barracks by divesting themselves of their coats and slinging their rifles behind them running down a hill and taking up firing positions before the I.R.A. recognised them. There was brisk shooting and the line of fight gradually extended until it reached about a mile. The R.U.C. police at Forkhill Barracks sent for re-inforcements and seven lorries of British Military arrived from Newry. The fight was still progressing at midnight.

- 3/6/22. Several brisk exchanges of fire took place on Saturday and Sunday, 28th-29th May on the Armagh-Monaghan Border near Newtownhamilton.
- 10/6/22. Mr. James Wolf Flanagan R.M., was shot dead leaving the Newry Cathedral after 11 a.m. Mass on Sunday, 4th instant.
- 17/6/22. The bodies of Patrick Creegan (50), Derrymore, Bessbrooke, and James Crowley (40), Lissadian, Whitecross, all of Co. Armagh, were found shot dead on the road leading from Lislea to Whitecross on Wednesday, 14th instant. It is also reported that an attempt was made to arrest a man named Gartland near Whitecross who escaped having sustained a bullet wound.
- 24/6/22. In the early hours of Saturday, 17th instant, a series of terrible incidents took place in the townlands of Altnaveigh and Lisdrumliska, South Armagh, within a mile of Newry when seven or eight farm houses belonging to Unionists were attacked with bomb and rifle fire and five of the inhabitants slain, two others dangerously wounded and the residences of some burned.
- The dead are:-
- Thomas Crozier and his wife.
 James Heaslip, farmer (50).
 Robert Heaslip, his son (17).
 James Lockart, farmer, single (21).
 James Gray (17).
- Badly wounded includes:-
- John T. Gray, William Lockart, Joseph and Edward Little.
- The houses of Thomas Crozier, John Heaslip and William McCullagh were partly burned. The district where the above incidents took place is almost entirely Unionist.

24/6/22.

Peter Murray, a Catholic worker, was found shot dead at Longbridge, Goraghwood. Another Catholic workman named Kieley had a narrow escape as he was fired on and received a bullet wound in the hand.

" Michael O'Keane, a Catholic small farmer, was found shot dead in his house at Cloughenramer, an Orange district.

" The premises of Mr. James McGuill, Dromintee, Co. Armagh, were raided on Wednesday morning, the 14th June, by armed men wearing masks. The raiders terrorised and beat Mrs. McGuill, her mother, a visitor named Mrs. McKnight and a servant girl. Those were the only occupants of the premises. The house was completely looted.

24/6/22.

On Saturday, 17th June, the premises of Mr. James McGuill at Dromintin were burned to the ground by armed men.

" An ambush took place at the ruins of James McGuill's premises at Dromintin on a patrol of Specials in which Constable Russell was killed and a Constable Hughes injured.

Signature _____

John Mc Coy

Date _____

16. March 1951.

Witness _____

M. J. Brennan
Secretary of the Bureau.

Date _____

16th March, 1951.

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