

ORIGINAL

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21
BURO STAIRE MILEATA 1913-21
No. W.S. 544

ROINN  COSANTA.

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21.

STATEMENT BY WITNESS

DOCUMENT NO. W.S. 544

Witness

Joseph O'Connor,
152 Rathfarnham Road,
Dublin.

Identity.

Member of I.R.A. Executive, 1922-23.

Subject.

Events of national importance
from date of the Truce, 11th July 1921, up to 1926,
including "The Civil War, 1922".

Conditions, if any, Stipulated by Witness.

Nil

File No. S.425

Form B.S.M. 2

ORIGINAL

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21

BURO STAIRE MILEATA 1913-21

No. W.S. 544

THIRD STATEMENT BY JOSEPH O'CONNOR,

152 Rathfarnham Road, Dublin.

The Truce was signed at 11 a.m. on the 11th July, 1921. Liaison officers were appointed and we were free to use all the drill grounds already in use. Needless to say we were badly in need of a breathing space. For the officers, however, there was no respite - a huge amount of lee way had to be made up, and to add to our troubles an order was issued to accept recruits. During the Tan War the only recruits we accepted were young men from Fianna Éireann, Irish Citizen Army and a very few specially recommended.

The number of recruits was very great and the N.C.Os. were not used to handling them. Nevertheless we worked wonders with them and soon each Battalion held a display parade. Ours took place at Byrne's Field, Stillorgan Road, Donnybrook. Over fifteen hundred were on parade and the special services were well represented. The entire display was reviewed by President De Valera, and I am sure he, like myself, thought of the day of surrender in 1916 when our less than one hundred heroes marched out of Bolands.

The Treaty was signed on the 6th December, 1921, and those who had accepted the settlement set about organising a regular army. This action brought a split in our ranks, for a large number of our men refused to accept the Treaty. At the beginning only

men transferred from the pre-Truce Volunteers were accepted in the new army, but this soon passed, and the number of our officers and men who joined up was large.

The Nation suffered a great loss during this period through the death of Archbishop Walsh, a lifelong patriot, and, as Archbishop of Dublin, a man of great power in the country. I was given the task of marshalling the great concourse inside Glasnevin cemetery. When the burial service was completed Father Fitzgibbon introduced me to the future Archbishop, Doctor Byrne, and he was most gracious and complimentary in his words of thanks for the fine job the I.R.A. had done.

Tempers were getting angry, and moves made by both sides added to the confusion until in March a convention of anti-Treaty Volunteers was called at which I represented the 3rd Battalion. A temporary Executive was appointed to draft and submit a constitution. The attendance was very good; the whole I.R.A. was represented by about two hundred and fifty officers. I was elected to the Executive, and with the other members entered on the work full of enthusiasm. We met the following day at 6 Gardiner's Row to begin our work. Liam Mellows was elected Chairman; Liam Lynch, Chief of Staff; and others to various posts. With three others I was put on the Constitution Drafting Sub-Committee. The representatives from the First Southern Division were absent but no one was anxious as word was sent that they were meeting all

the delegates from that Division prior to their departure from home.

After some time Lynch and the other members of the Executive from that Division attended, and threw the first bombshell amongst us by stating they were dissatisfied with their number of representatives and adding that the Dublin units had too many seats on the Executive. This was a most unfortunate thing, and I am convinced we never got over the shock. Oscar Traynor and I withdrew from the meeting. After a day or two we returned and took our full part in the work for the remaining two weeks until the entire matter was thrashed out at the resumed convention. I was again elected and the Constitution was adopted. We set to work but without that harmony which is the prelude to success. There were many strong men on the Executive but we failed to produce one extra-strong man to rule the others. The result was endless talk and growing bitterness between us and the Treaty-ites. The latter were in a much stronger position. They had the reins of Government and were building up an army: above all they had Griffith to rule them. It must be remembered that we had no member of the Government on the Executive, as all members had to be active army officers.

The second Executive, that is the result of the April 1922 Election, were a really fine team, representing North, South, East and West of the country. They were of the finest type of Irishmen and it was an honour to have known and worked with them.

The following were the members of the second Executive who faced the great task of stopping the maddening rush of the Nation to self-destruction :

Liam Lynch:	Liam Mellows:
Rory O'Connor:	Joe McKelvie:
Liam Deasy:	Peadar O'Donnell:
Ernie O'Malley:	Paddy Rutledge:
Michael Kilroy:	Seán Moylan:
Frank Barrett:	Seumas Robinson:
Seán Hegarty:	Florrie O'Donoghue:
Tom Hales	and myself.

.....

I mentioned earlier that De Valera had decided to take the political side of the work when he returned from prison, and how we missed him now ! He certainly would have done great work on that Executive, and it is sad to think how frequently he was blamed for the things we did or failed to do. Great efforts were made by both sides to get a working arrangement between the two forces and as things were very bad in the North we did reach agreement on sending assistance up there, but the effort was short-lived and our forces were getting very restless with many unfortunate things happening.

Feelings were getting so bitter between our two forces that some of the Executive could see the cloud of civil war gathering and getting blacker every day. To avoid so terrible a calamity and to continue the fight for the whole thirty-two counties, it was proposed

and passed (but without the necessary two-thirds majority) to give England 72 hours' notice of our intention to break the Truce. A convention was thereupon summoned and I was elected its Chairman. After debating the question for a considerable time a vote was taken and the motion was lost. Now Lynch led the opposition and the First Southern Division and others followed him. I was one of the war party but I had to do my duty as chairman. Certainly an attempt was made to give a wrong return, but I ordered each delegate to approach and cast his vote in the presence of a representative of each side, with the result as stated. No sooner had the declaration been made than the pro-war party left the Mansion House and proceeded to the Four Courts where we were then established.

The convention went on to consider a motion demanding the post of Minister for Defence in the new Government; the motion was passed and referred to the Executive for their consideration and action. I reached home that night a physically sick and disgusted man.

The following morning I went to the Courts to have the Executive called to consider the motion referred to them by the convention. When I entered, the sentry showed me a photograph of the officers of the First Southern Division, and stated he was instructed to refuse entry to any of those in the picture.

I tried to get the person responsible for this, but failed. After some trouble I got the necessary two signatures, with my own, to have a meeting called. Lynch refused to enter the Courts because of the scandalous order to which I have referred. The meeting

was held at Gardiner's Row. The atmosphere of the meeting was frigid and it was decided to take no action.

When leaving the meeting place Mellows pressed me to return to the Courts, stating it was most urgent. After some persuasion I went with him. On arriving there we found those who had left the convention the previous day, holding what they called a "convention". I protested and told them that the convention had finished its business the previous day.

They proposed to set up a war council of seven with Oscar Traynor as Chief of Staff. I pointed out that if this happened we would have three armies in this part of Ireland. I talked and argued until Oscar got in touch with Cathal Brugha. With his assistance we got them to accept a proposal to refer the matter to another convention to be held in the Courts.

In the meantime Lynch and the officers of the First Southern Division attended meetings at the Courts, but the duties of Chief of Staff were carried out by MacKelvie.

The pact election was held. Labour interfered, capturing some republican seats. When the Cabinet was being formed I and Oscar Traynor were sent to De Valera to get his consent to act as Minister for Defence. He consented and we were delighted as our men had great faith in him, and we were sure he would have re-united the two armies. Our hopes were soon dashed to the ground for Collins had been summoned to London where he saw Churchill. On his return he was told that De Valera had agreed to join the Cabinet, but Collins said De Valera

would never sit in the Cabinet, and he never did, nor was he invited. Hence the demand from the convention to which I have referred.

During the period of our occupation of the Four Courts, Lynch had ordered the taking over of outside posts. I was ordered to occupy the Ballast Office in Westmoreland Street, which was done by "C" Company. Later I was ordered to take over the Kildare Street Club, and this was very near being the starting of the civil war. "K" Company was in charge. Some members of the Club requested permission to remain overnight. The Vice-Regal Lodge people thought that one of their staff was held there by us and got in touch with the Treaty-ites to get their man out. When it was explained he was free to leave they withdrew their forces.

The pogroms in the North were very bad at this time and some of the refugees from Belfast took over the Freemason Hall in Molesworth Street. I was ordered by Lynch to put a party of men in there to prevent the refugees from damaging the place. This I did, and had a lot of trouble before a more suitable place was found for them. On handing over the place to the Deputy Grand Master when tempers had quietened down, he told me that Collins had offered to remove us, but they would not agree. They knew that we had gone in to protect their property. Unfortunately during our occupation and my absence from the place, Rory O'Connor had the safe burnt open, to get, I was told, "papers". I don't know what they got but I was very annoyed it should have happened. It was folly to think there were important papers there for some of the Freemason officers used the place freely for some

days after our occupation and certainly would have removed anything of importance.

During the Tan War a boycott of Belfast goods was imposed, but during the Truce the Government had removed the boycott. This was re-imposed by the Executive, and myself and Joe McKelvie were appointed to direct it. We appointed Leo Henderson as full-time officer in charge of the boycott. He had a staff working under him and they made many seizures of Belfast goods. Some of these were disposed of by sale and the proceeds of sales and subscriptions to the boycott fund were banked by McKelvie and me in the Munster and Leinster Bank, Dame Street. I assumed the name of Byrne for the transactions.

There were many actions taken by our forces with which I did not hold, such as the bank raids; whether Lynch or Mellows ordered these actions I cannot remember, and I certainly did not agree with the occupation of the Ballast Office or Kildare Street Club, either of which could be taken very easily, and at least I should have been consulted before such action was taken as both were in my area of command. Still I was a soldier and obeyed orders, and I presume a great many others found themselves in the same position.

During this time and in fact from the formation of the Army Executive, discussions were going on between the two sides. It seemed impossible to our side that the others could have made such a complete change over, but so it was.

The British Army was leaving and I happened to be in Dame Street when the Irish troops arrived to take over the Castle. I saw them march in feeling very lonely and

disappointed that I had no part in the taking over of this centre of England's power - I who had planned and scouted the place for so long in the hope that it, rather than the Custom House, would be the point selected for a major attack on the British forces.

The meetings of the Army Executive were often far from satisfactory and we seemed to be unable to reach decisions. Thus the Rory O'Connor element was doing one thing and the Lynch party something different. Mellows, unfortunately, was not the kind of Chairman to force a decision.

The garrison in the Courts were roughly one hundred men and they had to be fed. A raiding party held up a delivery cart and commandeered some sides of bacon; it was reported in the Press and was adversely commented on. Collins had just returned from one of his London talks and rumour had it that he had been reprovved for not clearing the Courts. A consignment of motors and parts arrived at Baggot Street from Belfast. Leo Henderson took some of his staff to remove the goods, but Free State troops came along and stopped the seizure, taking Henderson into custody. This much I knew. An Executive meeting was summoned for the Courts at 5 o'clock p.m. No mention was made in my presence at the meeting of the matter. When the meeting ended and as I was leaving my Adjutant informed me that all Free State troops were confined to Barracks. I told Lynch the news. His reply was: "I suppose it is in connection with the arrest of Ginger O'Connell". (Ginger had been taken as a reprisal for Henderson), adding "you had better tell McKelvie". McKelvie was Assistant Chief of Staff - and I expect it was he who ordered O'Connell's arrest. I reported the fact that the Free State troops were confined to Barracks to

McKelvie and he issued an order to the Dublin Brigade to stand-to until midnight. Just then Mellows asked me to have tea with him as he was anxious to tell me of I.R.B. activities in having the Treaty accepted. I told him that I had not been home since morning and that I would be on duty till midnight. He agreed that I should go home and we arranged to meet the following evening when he would tell me the story.

At four o'clock the following morning the attack on the Courts started and I never saw Mellows again. What a pity, for of all the men on the Executive, he was the one I most loved. During the previous four months of trouble and anxiety we had become very close friends, in complete sympathy with each other's national outlook, and I certainly would have liked to have got that story.

The worst had happened and the cloud we had seen approaching had opened its floodgates to deluge our country in blood. Let me try in retrospect to mark out the salient issues of that period of our history and how events influenced my course of action.

To me the Republic was proclaimed by the reading of the Proclamation on Easter Monday, 1916, and to it I owed absolute allegiance. May I remind the reader of my declaration to my men before entering on our pre-arranged positions that Easter Monday morning "To challenge the strength of the mighty British Empire, and to free our country from the enslavement inflicted on her for seven centuries by the cruelest misgovernment any country on earth endured". I knew the odds were enormous, but I was willing then to stake my life and liberty for this ideal, and how could I accept less six years later.

When the 1918 Elections were held, and the Dáil met in January, 1919, I was present for the acceptance of the Republic by the great majority of the elected representatives of the whole country. To me that was final. I could not afterwards concede to any man or group of men to alter that solemn declaration and its equally solemn confirmation. It was because of this that I continued, with a perfectly clear conscience, to act as a soldier of that Republic, and to urge others to do likewise. I felt that it was wrong to accept any settlement with England for less than the absolute freedom of our whole country. Now that the Dáil had accepted the new position I deemed that they had exceeded their powers, and that it was my duty to continue striving until England withdrew all her forces and we had complete control of our affairs.

I awoke on the morning of the attack on the Courts about 7 o'clock and hearing the guns bombarding the Courts, knew that the fight was on. I mobilised and my Battalion was in the fight by 8 o'clock, less than one hour after issuing the order. Hearing that some of our forces from the South had reached Blessington, I sent officers to guide them into what I thought were the best positions in Dublin. I had explained to those officers for advice to the commander of the relief force that in my opinion if we failed to hold Dublin, we would lose the fight. Very little happened in Blessington and the relief force withdrew.

Our plan in Dublin was to establish posts to intercept supplies reaching the forces attacking the Courts. This was the reason for the occupation of many houses on the various routes from Portobello and

Beggars Bush and working towards a fight with the actual attackers. The Fourth were late in mobilising and the Brigadier, Oscar Traynor, gave me command of all forces on the south side of the city. This included the Fourth Battalion. My Headquarters were in 41 York Street, and my first endeavour was to get the Fourth moving. De Valera reported to me for duty and he was accompanied by a goodly number of prominent people. Few, however, had military training, and I was sorely pressed for officers. The over-crowding in 41 York Street made for difficulties in its proper functioning as Headquarters. The Vice-Commandant, Larry Ledwidge, soon put the many willing helpers to work on various tasks. I had left him in charge of 41, and took over Jack Baird's shop and rooms in Mercer Street, where with De Valera I was better able to concentrate on the many problems facing us. De Valera made it very clear that he was volunteering for any duty allotted to him. Maggie Fagan, a niece of Baird, was my well-tryed assistant and runner. The new place was only fifty yards from Headquarters.

The Courts went up, and Oscar took over the Hammam Hotel in Upper O'Connell Street. The fight still raged in all parts of the city. The Fourth got moving, and Cathal Brugha reported at Baird's that they, that is the Fourth Battalion, were going into action and that they had been in touch with Oscar who wanted their assistance. I agreed, although certainly I could have used them. When Cathal was leaving De Valera said: "Mind yourself, Cathal!". His reply was: "I am alright", at the same time slapping his revolver, and one could see there and then, the same man who had sat in a welter of

his own blood in the South Union six years previously, singing songs of defiance to the British Army who were attacking all around him. A few days later he was to make a final gesture of defiance in O'Connell Street when alone he left the front door of the Hammam Hotel and with his revolver blazing was riddled with bullets - Oh! the pity of it!

Knowing that Austin Stack was in the Hammam, and that Brugha was now going in, I thought if De Valera would join them they could set up a Republican Committee to take the benefit of the Army successes and force them on the attention of the ordinary people. This, I was sure, would be good for the Nation and the fighting men.

De Valera and I discussed the matter at great length. He was not sure that he could take responsibility for such a step, for, as I have stated, the Executive controlled the Army, and they were all active officers, with their commands. Eventually De Valera consented to give the idea a trial, at least to consult the others. That settled, we got talking. He gave me a word-picture of his session with Lloyd George - how he was received, offered spirits to drink and cigars to smoke, refusing both, how the discussion developed, and how, as things got hot, Lloyd George walked across the Cabinet Room, and drawing De Valera's attention to all the red markings on the map, put the end of his fountain pen on the spot representing Ireland, which was completely covered by the pen, saying: "This is Ireland, Mr. De Valera". He went on to tell De Valera that the Empire mobilised ten million men during the Great War.

Bob Brennan was active with the Battalion, and I knew, if it were at all possible, Bob would find an

open road for De Valera. I gave him the job, and he after scouting the route, returned and brought De Valera safely through the enemy lines to the Hammam. I never heard what happened to the proposal, nor how it was received.

When my scouts reported enemy forces forming a ring around me, I decided to shift my Headquarters. Outside the ring, but yet close enough to the fighting men, "E" Company had a house in Harcourt Terrace, and I went there. I had hopes for our forces, I had heard so much about the thirty-six thousand in the First Southern Division alone, not to mention the Second, Third and Fourth Divisions, that I really thought that if we exploited our successes, those who were forcing us back into the Empire, would stop, and with our reunited strength tell the British to get out, and what a chance they had to scrap partition and the Crown. The world knew now that it was these two things we would not accept, and that we were prepared to chance another round "to win or lose", and there were good prospects of our being victorious.

When the Hammam Hotel was lost it was decided to vacate all our posts and adopt guerilla tactics in the city. When evacuating the Swan post, Seán Budds was carrying a machine gun to my Headquarters at Baird's. A Free State armoured car drove up Mercer Street from South King Street and seemed to be about to attack us. Thereupon I saw Seán mount the gun in the centre of the road and open fire on the car not fifty yards away. The car turned into York Street and proceeded towards St. Stephen's Green. This was a very brave action of Budds and prevented a highly dangerous situation from developing.

I got a message from De Valera stating he was going South and asking me to go to Limerick and get the fight going; one of those confounded truces had been operating there. I set off, and got to within thirteen miles of the city when I was informed that fighting had re-started in Limerick. As it was unnecessary to proceed further, I returned to Dublin but De Valera remained in the South.

Before leaving for Limerick on that occasion I called a Battalion Council to arrange the succession to Battalion Commander in case I did not return. This was done but during the meeting a fight developed between our protection party and a raiding party of Free State troops. We definitely got the better of it, and captured two rifles from them before they withdrew. I slept on the floor of Ledwidge's kitchen that night and started off the following morning for Limerick.

Lynch had resumed as Chief of Staff and got the I.R.A. moving. They were doing well, but what a pity it was that we lost those few first days in Dublin! Oscar was captured quite early and Frank Henderson was given charge of the Brigade.

I was now "on the run" again, but had to resume my work in the Corporation. Fortunately my work was mainly outdoor so I was able with the help of my bicycle to carry on. I want to make it clear that at no time from beginning to end of my military duties did I receive one penny for my personal use. Therefore, as can be easily understood, I had to earn my living and keep my wife and family. The Nallys of Rathmines took me in, and they certainly did their duty to their country and to me for quite a long time. They were only too anxious to

help in every way they could. We did everything we could to make the Staters keep their troops in Dublin, but after some time the line fighting ceased and the whole I.R.A. was on guerilla tactics. The Free State was winning and I knew that the Republic was lost unless we could awaken the country to the danger. It was now October and the Staters announced that they would shoot any of our men captured with firearms after the 15th of the month.

Lynch called a meeting of the Army Executive for Tipperary town. About this time I had been endeavouring to persuade De Valera (who had returned to Dublin) to take over the political part of the work; so with two others, I think Derrig and O'Malley, saw him in a house in Stillorgan. We spent five hours together but failed to find a formula. The others had left, going one at a time, and he and I were in the hall. While I was putting on my overcoat, I asked him for the sake of Ireland to give the matter further thought. This, he promised to do, and the day before I started for the meeting in Tipperary we met again in Upper Mount Street when he handed me his proposals. These followed the original lines: - the political party accepting responsibility for all matters outside the actual direction of the fighting forces in the field; the Army Authorities to work in conjunction with the elected republican representatives and to give them full co-operation in maintaining the freedom of our whole country. I promised to recommend their adoption to the Executive. This, I later did and they were accepted.

Before leaving the city I was told the name of the place where I was to pick up my contact. I had to travel by train. I knew the only way was the bold way, so I made up as a commercial traveller, took a hackney car to Kingsbridge, bought a ticket for Limerick Junction and

succeeded in getting there on Friday night. I started the three miles walk to Tipperary town, but as the lights of the town appeared I discovered that I had forgotten the name I had been given. Of course, I had not dared to put it in writing, and had had to depend on my memory which had never failed me before. Now I prayed as I walked along that country road. I decided to speak to the first man I met. I stopped the man and said: "I was given the name of someone to seek in Tipperary and I have forgotten the name". He replied: "Could it be Agnes Kate O'Ryan? See the second lamp on your right, start reading the names when you reach that". The road was pitch dark so I couldn't be sure whether it was a man or an angel I had met. I learned in O'Ryan's that there had been fighting in the vicinity and that the meeting was postponed. I was to remain until I was called for. I was within a stone's throw of the barracks and spent some time looking into the barrack square.

Saturday night at 7 o'clock, Packey Cahill and another man called for me and we started out for Natty Burke's in the Glen of Aherlow. We reached there at midnight, but during that five hours' tramp I can safely say that we didn't walk two miles by road. It was a revelation to me as I followed their unerring footsteps to gap, gate or stile. About ten o'clock we reached a river but found the bridge was blown up. They said there was a footbridge and we proceeded along the river. I was to stand while one went right, and the other - left. In less than a minute they returned. I was actually standing within six feet of a tree-trunk spanning the river with a wire for hand-rail. One of the men left when we reached Burke's.

At 7 o'clock on Sunday morning, Cahill picked up another man who brought us to O'Donnell's farm on the Galtee Mountains. O'Donnell was at Mass and would not be back for three hours. We started to cross the mountain but were caught in a cloud. However, we were so anxious to get along that we kept walking, but after an hour and a half we found ourselves in the exact spot from which we had started. We then lay down in a farm cart to await O'Donnell. He gave us food, and with his dog guided us to Mrs. Tobin's of Tincurry where we parted with him. O'Donnell told me that he would not cross the mountain at that time of the year without his dog. The mountain was swarming with sheep, and he told me that he, like the other farmers, would know the appearance of his own sheep, and that when the sheep were brought together for sale or branding his dog could pick his sheep from the flock. When the cloud lifted we got a beautiful view of the Golden Vale. It was surely a land worth fighting for. Mrs. Tobin got a neighbour to drive us the remaining six miles to Goatenbridge where I stayed with Mr. Meskell.

The Executive met the following morning, with all present except the Western members, who were unable to cross the Shannon. The whole national situation was considered and important decisions taken, but the most important was the acceptance of De Valera's proposals. The meeting lasted three days, starting each morning at ten and continuing until one or two the following morning. At the final session, Derrig, myself and I think O'Donnell were instructed to prepare a manifesto for publication. I know that we were quite exhausted by this time and I think we did not shine as propaganidsts but the effort was published.

The following morning we were told that a lightning strike on the railways had occurred and the problem was to get back to Dublin. Pax Whelan suggested my travelling with him to Dungarvan and getting a boat to Dublin, but fortunately Ernie O'Malley had driven from Monaghan and was going back to Dublin, so I travelled with him and reached the city safely. There I inspected the munitions centres, and I must give the highest praise to Seán Russell for his energy in overcoming great difficulties and for the quality and number of grenades he produced. If only half his energy and enthusiasm had been shown by other officers, the Republican Army might still have won the war.

The publication of the manifesto and my part in it intensified the hunt for me and my officers, but we were able to give as good as we got. Oriel House in Westland Row was headquarters for the new Free State force known as the C.I.D. They were very active and were causing a lot of trouble. I issued instructions that this post was to be destroyed. The Engineers got on the job but after all the risks when the bomb was placed in position it failed to explode. Shortly after, I gave the task to that splendid officer, Bob Moore, O/C. "G" Company. There was a machine-gun posted on the first stair landing, immediately covering the front door. This had been made the only entrance as a result of our previous effort. A trained gunner was on duty day and night sitting behind this gun. Our plan was to send two men into the hall; after one minute they were to shoot or bomb the gunner; the attacking party would then rush in and finish the job. This plan was put into action, but the first shots failed to get the gunner, and as the remainder of us reached the hall the machine-gun

was in full action. Our twenty men, four of whom were to remain outside to prevent a surprise attack, were armed with revolvers and hand-grenades whilst the defenders had the prepared position, the machine-gun, and an abundance of small arms. We had to beat a hasty retreat, followed immediately by strong Free State forces. They captured four of our men, who were, I think, the first prisoners to be shot under the new order for carrying firearms.

An order was issued by the Chief of Staff for the destruction of all bridges in South County Dublin. The Free State evidently knew as much about this as we did, and it was a hopeless failure. We lost very many men on that one night. Meanwhile every opportunity was taken to attack Free State forces and harass them in every way, but they like us, had the experience of the Tan War and were very careful to avoid giving an opening for attack. Prisons, and internment camps were filling with our best officers and men.

The Free State had Jury's Hotel in College Green, and an order came from Brigade Headquarters to burn the place. To know what details would be required, a personal inspection of this very big and strong building was necessary. After my reconnaissance I issued the necessary instructions for men and materials and ordered the operation to take place at 9 a.m. on the 1st of November.

On the morning of the 31st October as I was signing the Attendance Book in the City Rates Office where I was employed, I felt a gun being stuck in my back and I instantly knew that the game was up. I was brought to the Free State post at the City Hall and searched.

During the search I saw a very small piece of paper with "Jury's" on it. I tried to grab it but failed. The name alone being found on me would I knew give the Staters warning, so it is easy to imagine my anxiety of mind at the dangers I was unwittingly sending my men into - I knew for certain that job would be attempted the following morning.

Later that day I was brought to Griffith Barracks' guardroom where some of our men were being detained. Among them was one of my own Company Commanders - Paddy Millar. I told Paddy of my concern about the next day's raid and how anxious I was to get word to O/C. Brigade. Millar said: "Write a note and I will get it out". I addressed the note to "Miss Maggie Fagan" and Paddy persuaded a Free State soldier to deliver it, telling him one of the fellows was letting his girl-friend know of his capture. Henderson received the message and called off the job. It was a narrow escape, but thank God, everything was saved.

After some days in the guardroom where were also Pat Sweeney, Michael Price and the four men captured at Oriel House, I was sent to the gymnasium, which had been wired off and made into a collecting cage. Whilst there an attack on the barracks took place. It was a good sharp fight, but when it was ended our turn came. We were crowded into the Gymnasium and the door locked. Some Staters got outside the north door with sub-machine guns and fired through the wooden door, but "God directs the bullets". A strong inside iron bolt deflected the bullets. Only for this the casualties amongst the 250 prisoners would have been very great, but as it was, not more than half a dozen were wounded. Seán Forde was the prisoners' Commandant, and handled the situation well.

Pat Sweeney was one of those hit. This was the most brutal and cowardly act that I ever knew Irishmen to be guilty of.

I got into communication with Henderson and arranged for the escape of four or five others with myself. The plan was to cross the iron railings and barbed wire entanglements and swim the canal. The outside help was merely to extinguish a street lamp, and thus put the point of crossing the wires in darkness. When all was arranged and bedding placed on the wires, word came that eight of our comrades had been sentenced, so we decided to stay and give them the chance to escape. When the outside help arrived instead of climbing the lamp to extinguish the light the men threw stones at it and created such noise as to warn the sentry. Our eight men had actually got over the wire when they were halted by the guard. The facts were explained to him and appeals made to let them go. He refused, but promised to say nothing if they returned to the Gym and removed all traces of the attempt. The father of one of the eight had been courtmartialled and shot after the 1916 Rising.

The conditions in the Gym were awful, particularly in the mornings after the place had been locked up for twelve hours. The doctors when appealed to, stated the place should house fifty men and not more. While a prisoner in Griffith I got my last sight of my father. He was looking through the main gate, hoping to catch a glimpse of me. We saw each other then for the last time on earth. When I was a boy he had pointed out to me the cell in the same building he occupied during Fenian times, and then he would show me where he was posted when James Stephens, the Fenian Leader, escaped from the same prison. As in Frongoch, so also in Griffith, all

prisoners joined in saying the Rosary every night before going to sleep.

When the news of the shooting of Rory, Liam, Joe and Dick was known, our very first action was to offer up the Rosary for the repose of their souls. Their execution was a very sad blow to me. It was the second group of ardent patriots in whose council I shared to be cut down. The first had been - Terry McSwiney, Tomás MacCurtain, and Cathal Brugha: now, Rory O'Connor, Liam Mellows and Joe McKelvie were no more. Well, God be praised, I was left to carry on and I have honestly done my very best to do so.

Before Christmas we were removed to Hare Park Internment Camp at the Curragh. I was put into hut 23, of which I was elected O/C. I was also on the Camp Council and in charge of Education. This was a big job. We had twelve hundred men in the Camp and it was my job to see how we could help everyone of them. Classes of all grades were begun, especially ^{for} the Irish language, and continued with varying degrees of success. The Gaelic League appointed some of the prisoners (well known to them) as examiners for the Fáinne. This was, of course, long after our arrival. I was fortunate myself to pass the examination. Every day some of us would speak only Irish for one hour, and, later, on the first Sunday in each month spoke only Irish. To get the classes started at noon we had Joe Clarke ^{to} blow three blasts on his whistle (which was well known for its calls to prayer). I wonder if this was the beginning of that beautiful custom of blowing the Angelus every day at twelve o'clock in our Army Barracks. As a matter of fact all the men in Camp got into the habit of halting and uncovering on

the blasts from Joe's whistle, and after some time the Staters did likewise.

The Bishops' pastoral letter was having a very grave effect on our men and the attendance at Mass on Sundays was not as good as one might have expected. This was a very delicate situation to handle. The men simply refused to parade, and the Dining Hall which was used as a chapel, was not half filled, and this continued for a long time. When Lent came we arranged to say the Rosary each evening at four o'clock in the Dining Hall, and by Easter a very great improvement in the numbers joining in the Rosary, and in attendance at Mass was seen.

Larry Raul was in my hut and I got him to start a dry canteen. One day he was ordering goods and included in the list some 5/- fretwork sets of tools. The Governor struck the item out, remarking "they won't dig any tunnels here". Little did the unfortunate man know that there were two such in construction. During one of their searches for tunnels the guard had removed all the tables and forms out of the Dining Hall to put us in at two o'clock in the morning. When the raid was over they would not put the articles back and neither would we, so we carried the food to each hut. Gradually the timber left the pile and found its way into the tunnels as props. The two men I would particularly like to mention as organisers and workmen for the tunnels are - Mick Price and Seán Russell.

I got a request from P. Rutledge through our own "special" post for permission to withdraw the boycott money in the bank in McKelvie's and my name. I sent him my signature. The money was to be used by I. R. A.

Through our underground channel I also got a letter from De Valera asking if I agreed with his proposed order to the I.R.A. to cease fire and dump arms. I replied in the affirmative. This consent was necessary due to my being a member of the Army Executive with whom the decision for peace and war lay.

In conjunction with our educational work, we had lectures for farmers, Army Officers and business men, and for those interested in civil administration, together with debating classes. One day I was giving the officers' lecture when the class was suddenly raided. Fortunately, I was facing the entrance and I am sure the class wondered what had happened when I proceeded to speak on camp hygiene. They soon found out and an awkward situation was avoided.

Camp Intelligence thought there was a steel pigeon amongst us. They rushed a man but he escaped to the guard house, and soon after another tunnel raid was made and they discovered the tunnel which by that time had gone about seventy feet or more than half way to liberty. They took six or seven men away to the glass house, a prison in the Curragh Camp. The military ordered our men to dig a trench, eight feet deep, inside the barbed wire in the whole circuit of the Camp. We refused and the men were locked into their huts. The occupants of one hut were then taken out and told to begin work; they refused. The military brought more soldiers in to the Camp with fixed bayonets, lined our men where the work was to be done and stationed the soldiers behind them and ordered our men to start work. They again refused, and then the soldiers were ordered to charge. Our men threw themselves on the ground to avoid the bayonets. The

officer then fired on them with his revolver. When one man was shot in the neck and others had bullet holes in their clothing, the remainder started to dig. There followed a discussion at the Camp Council as to future action. I put forward that to continue the protest would be to brand our comrades, and this I was unwilling to do, so in turn we dug the trench. Another consideration was that fighting outside had ceased and the urgency of getting out was not so great.

We had many nocturnal raids and searches. During one such raid one of the officers handling his revolver menacingly repeated "there will be bad blood spilled in this Camp". The following day one of their sentries was shot by his comrade. There were many rows between the Free Staters and us. When we refused to do what they wanted they stopped all letters and parcels in and out. I was never opposed to this trouble for I found that the discipline amongst our own men was better when we were in active hostility to our guards. However, in comparison to Griffith Barracks, Hare Park was not bad. The food was good, indeed plentiful, with the parcels from our friends, and each man had a bed. We founded a library by having all the men hand in the book or books they had read, and the librarian took particulars and loaned the books to others. We encouraged the hobbies of the men and they were many and varied. We had a competition and display of the things made in the Camp, and some of them were excellent in design and workmanship. We had bridge, whist, draughts and chess tournaments, and I do think that not all the time we spent in the Camp was lost. We had a fine organiser of entertainments in Jack O'Sheehan and when he wrote the "Legion of the Rearguard", Liam Kavanagh sang it at our Emmet Commemoration concert.

To all the men interned with me in Hare Park I would like to say, thank you for your splendid comradeship.

In October, 1923, I was transferred to Mountjoy Prison and put in a wing where there were few others. I got in touch with our comrades in B and C Wings and learned that a hunger strike was being considered. I opposed this proposal with all my strength pointing out that most of our men were more than a year locked up, not overfed, and their physical condition bad. In addition I felt that the hunger strike for freedom was a spent force since Terry McSweeney's death. The strike began and I felt then that I couldn't stand by and let others fight for my freedom without standing by them and so I joined in the strike. After a week or so of the strike the Staters collected about thirty of us whom they considered the leaders, and brought us to Kilmainham Prison, where we were put into solitary confinement. In the meantime the strike had spread to all the Internment Camps but fortunately it stopped after about a fortnight for most of those in the Camps, and the main struggle was continued in Mountjoy and Kilmainham.

A couple of hours after our arrival in Kilmainham four priests arrived and visited each cell, asking every man if he wished to go to confession. I asked my priest about the Encyclical, but he merely repeated "Do you want to go to confession?". What a joy it was to me to kneel before him! The following morning we were allowed out of our cells to attend Mass and receive Holy Communion from Father Troy (one of the students I trained in 1918).

After Mass we were forced back into our cells which were again locked. Frequently during these early days tempting food was offered, and bottled stout poured out to show a creamy head, but I think the most tempting I remember was cocoa and smoked herrings.

After the first Sunday most of us were unable to get up for Mass, but Father Troy had the doors left open and brought the Blessed Sacrament into the cell to us. This was a great consolation to me, and I am sure to my comrades. After Mass Father Troy used to visit me for a chat. He remembered me from our connection in 1918. This was a very welcome break for the thoughts which came thronging my brain during those early days of the strike were not pleasant, and would need the pen of Frank Gallagher (of "Days of Fear") to describe them. Locked up, day and night in a cell 11' by 8', with only the occasional flap of the spy hole to remind you that there was someone alive in the prison, it was inevitable that one's spirit was oppressed by phantasmagoria of solitude and fear. What a consolation to have the True Faith and trust in God which alone could have sustained me !

On the twenty-fifth day I became unconscious for I don't know how long. I remember hearing someone calling my name and when I awoke there were five or six Staters in the cell and they were very anxious. It was the Governor's voice I had heard and he begged of me to take some food. I can recall telling him I would if he guaranteed my release. An order was issued to unlock all the doors, and in my case a soldier entered the cell every hour, by doctor's orders. This was worse in a way than solitary confinement, but from then onwards the doctors

seemed to be in control. They could do little to help but they did keep us clean and warm.

Coming towards the end Frank Henderson and Seán Lehane came into my cell to ask if I would sign a promise to stop the strike. I agreed, but told them that if I signed, I would cease on the fortieth day. They agreed and I signed. About this time I got a letter from my wife. She was very brave and did not try to get me to stop. Her words were, well I can remember : "Joe, do what you think is right". I had done so, but I was, and am, very proud of getting that letter, and needless to say it came through our underground post.

I informed the Governor on the fortieth day that I would take food and thus ended this horrible nightmare. The Staters announced the fact in the papers as "One of Dublin's best-known Irregulars has gone off strike". The strike was over the next day and it was then a much bigger job to get back on food; in fact, for years after I never knew the wish for food.

The doctors and nurses were very kind. They gave us some form of nourishment every two hours from seven in the morning till eleven at night, and for my first solid food I got one and a half arrowroot biscuits. Gradually some of the others got on their feet and would visit my cell, particularly Eamon Donnelly and Peadar O'Donnell. The latter let me read the manuscript of his story - "The Storm" - soon I got on my own feet, and Doctor O'Connor, shaking a reproofing finger at me, said: "Never again". I smiled and thanked him and his staff.

The hearthunger of wanting to see my wife and children was with me from the moment of my capture. I had decided to take the risk of being with them for Halloween, 1922, but the fates had decided against me. Now that I was on my feet and my home being quite near the prison, it was constantly in my thoughts. Photographs that my wife sent me only intensified my longing. I wrote through our own postal channel to my wife asking her to pass along the Islandbridge road at a stated time each day and to bring the children that I might see them from an upper and unused cell. What a joy it was to see my loved ones again! This upper cell, by the way, had a slogan painted over the outside, which read: "Up Joe O'Connor and the fighting Third".

As Christmas approached, our friends remembered us with many gifts of food. I got a parcel from Bob Barton who had been a comrade in Hare Park and later released. The food was so plentiful that a special cell was used to store it. I asked and got permission to send my parcel home to my family for I knew their Christmas fare would be very scant. We got the Little Sisters from Saint Patrick's Home to call for all the food and good things we could not use.

On Christmas Eve the Governor came into my cell and offered me a guarantee of release for Christmas if I would put the request in writing. This I could not do in loyalty to my comrades. It was a very great temptation, I need scarcely add.

On Christmas Day we fitted out the condemned cell by putting the small cell tables end to end and we all dined together in wonderful style. Before the dinner we asked that De Valera, a prisoner in another wing, should be

allowed to join us, but this request was refused. I responded to the toast of Fianna Éireann and was pleased with my little effort. There were many toasts and speeches of high order, followed by songs and recitations. We had excellent music on David Robinson's gramophone. In all we had a unique and very pleasant Christmas except for the thoughts of our loved ones at home, and of course as was patent in all the speeches, the pitiable condition of our country.

Very early in January we were moved to the Curragh, some to Hare Park, others to Tintown. I was sent to Tintown. On the morning of our departure we were lined up outside our cells handcuffed in pairs, loaded on lorries and entrained at Kingsbridge for Kildare. We were marched, still manacled, to Tintown. Needless to state, we were utterly unfit to do the march, and to make matters worse the handcuff gashed my wrist. I suffered in my health for five years as a consequence of that dreadful journey, during which my comrade and I staggered along the road like drunken men, whilst our guards kept bellowing at us to "carry on".

When we reached Tintown we were given a mattress and four blankets and I was put into a large shed where there were at least a hundred men. I placed the mattress on the floor and stood on it, the water spouting from the sodden thing. The blankets proved very little better. So bad were the conditions that I had to sleep fully clothed even to my overcoat until the bedding dried out. Needless to state all the time I was in very low health, but "God fits the back for the burden", and it is remarkable that I did not get even a sneeze out of the whole affair. The Camp was not so well organised as Hare Park, but my comrades did

all in their power to help me and the others who came with me. I would particularly like to thank Tony Brack for his many kindnesses. Releases were frequent and helped to frustrate our attempts to organise "camp life".

One morning I was called out to the Camp office, to be faced by a Free State Intelligence Officer in uniform. I did not know his name and he did not tell me. He came straight to the point by asking what my attitude would be to a march on the North. Without a moment's hesitation, I told him that I would be heart and soul with it and that I would use all my influence and energy to get the co-operation of my comrades. I don't know what was happening, but I felt sure that he was acting on orders. I heard nothing further about the matter, and in February I was released. It is a strange thing but I could not believe that I was indeed free until I left the Kingsbridge Railway Station.

I reported for duty to O/C. Brigade, Jeff Keatinge, and was appointed Director of Organisation. I was told to proceed along the Swords road at 5 o'clock on a particular evening soon afterwards when I would be picked up and brought to the new Chief of Staff, Frank Aiken, then known as Mr. Johnston. I was there but was not contacted. I was annoyed because of the trouble I had had in shaking off the detective who was constantly on my heels. I saw Aiken later and had a long discussion. I put forward that new blood would be needed on the Executive as those of us still living were likely to favour old ways of doing things. A great stir was caused about this time by the shooting of English soldiers in Cobh.

A proclamation, with reward, was issued, and I am of the opinion that the names of those suspected were mentioned.

A convention was held in Dublin, which I attended, and someone brought up the matter of the shooting, which was very unpopular, but the question was hushed up. Owing to my poor state of health I had to get permission to leave and I was not elected on the new Executive.

During my stay in Hare Park instructions were received to form branches of Sinn Féin. This was my introduction to that organisation. In June I was asked by De Valera to organise the Wolfe Tone pilgrimage to Bodenstown. I had Éamon Donnelly as Secretary, and we made the occasion a great success. Then the Staters decided to give up the bodies of our comrades whom they had shot, by way of reprisal and after trial, and I was appointed by the Army to take charge of the re-burial of those interred inside the Dublin Barracks. This was a difficult undertaking. There was no money and the cost ran to £600. My first trouble was to get the £150 demanded by the Glasnevin Authorities, before they would even open the common grave in the republican plot, but Austin Stack came to my help by a guarantee in the bank. The next problem was to get some place where the remains could lie in state before going to the church. We eventually got the theatre in Hardwicke Street, and although it was small we were able to get in the eighteen coffins with a clear passage for the great numbers who came to pay their respects. We consulted the relatives and, where necessary, sent the remains to their local place for re-burial after one night in the Carmelite Church, Whitefriar Street. Childers' body remained in Hardwicke Street with a guard of honour. His coffin was brought to join his comrades at Whitefriar Street for the mass funeral to Glasnevin cemetery.

That night I reached home about midnight. About 12.15 a.m. my home was invaded by detectives and I was arrested without any charge being made. It was alleged that they were acting on information supplied by one of our Volunteers, but they did not produce the man; and I didn't believe it.

I spent a miserably cold night in the Bridewell, and in the morning I was charged with murder. They were concocting something so as to pin the C6bh shootings on me. I did know through our Intelligence Department that arising out of the shooting of Stack in Egypt, the British were demanding vengeance for the shooting at C6bh and Egypt. I was remanded to Mountjoy for a week. I had a visit from my wife and explained to her that I could not understand their move as both of us knew that I was being continuously followed by detectives since my release from the Curragh. She was very brave.

When I came before the court again I found four of my Battalion Officers and two ex-Free State soldiers were held on a similar charge. I was told that they knew I was not out of the city but that they were charging me with organising the shooting. They had nine witnesses from C6bh, but they could not identify any of the men charged and it was decided to drop the proceedings. I was in fine form until I heard that they were entering a noli prosequi and then something snapped inside me. I knew something serious had happened but what it was I could not understand. My wife was in court and when I was released we went home together passing the Friars' Church on Merchant's Quay. We went into thank God for His great deliverance. When I reached home I collapsed, just for a moment, on the stairs to the bedroom. I had

barely strength enough to hold on to the banister and avoid falling. My nerves were completely gone. For the next eighteen months I had the awful experience of being afraid, and it was my first acquaintance with fear. I wanted to get away to the country but my doctor told me I would have to fight the thing in my ordinary surroundings. I remember one day I was crossing Dame Street when I took a seizure and when I came to I was standing in front of a tramcar with the driver jumping on the bell and bellowing at me. I had just time to get out of the way.

Frequently I had to ask my wife to accompany me home from the office in the evening. At night when asleep if a motor car stopped within hearing distance I would spring on to the floor. All in all I had a rotten time. I often since wondered was it caused by the fear of being hanged, or the horror of the shameful crime with which I had been unjustly charged, or perhaps just the cumulative effect of eleven years of hazardous living. I don't know.

The task of paying off the six hundred pounds had to be accomplished. While I was under arrest Tom O'Reilly had arranged a concert in the Mansion House for the benefit of the fund. Having first announced that De Valera would be there, he asked me to see De Valera to arrange for his reception. When I saw him he was annoyed that his attendance at the concert should be announced without his consent. He described it as another "fait accompli". I explained the situation and he agreed to attend but refused to speak or take any part in the affair. I thought his attitude was very petty considering the job before us and the object for which we were working. The concert was not a great success and was an early indication of the

worry our committee would experience in getting the debt cleared, but we succeeded after all.

At the final Committee meeting I was handed ten pounds, the last of the money, as a present for Very Reverend Father Devlin, Prior of Whitefriar Street Church, where the remains had been received. When we saw Father Devlin he would not accept the money but asked me to help the relatives of the deceased or others in need. This I did.

Throughout the re-interment ceremonies the Fathers in Whitefriar Street had been most helpful, and at this time our friends were few and far between. With this accomplished Aiken was keen on marking places where some of our men had met their deaths. I spoke at many of these ceremonies. Then I was ordered by the Army not to attend one arranged to commemorate a man killed in my own area. I kept the promise I had made to unveil the memorial before receiving the Army order, and thus was ended my connection with the I.R.A.

I continued my activities with Sinn Féin and when De Valera proposed starting Fianna Fáil I found I could not agree with him. I thought that with hard work we could get life into the Sinn Féin organisation again. Seán Lemass was using all his great talents to put the new organisation on foot. He was a member of my Company before the Easter Rising. Owing to an accident in his family he was ordered to cease parading for some time, and was not mobilised by me, but when the fight started he joined the G.P.O. garrison. Noel, his elder brother, went to bring Seán home, and instead of doing so joined in himself. He was wounded in the fight in O'Connell Street and by the bravery of Frank Thornton was saved from what must have been certain death. There was a lot of talk

about the two brothers after the Rising. Seán remained with the Second Battalion with which he had fought, and Noel came to me, later becoming an officer. During the Civil War Noel was captured and escaped. Later he was recaptured and his badly mutilated body was found on the Featherbed Mountain. After Seán's release when an election came on he was returned as a Sinn Féin deputy.

De Valera sent for me and we spent three hours debating the issue, he trying to get me into the proposed new party and I endeavouring to save him for Sinn Féin. Nothing decisive happened. We tried another time for two hours with a like result. One of the difficulties I foresaw was what would happen if we became a government and the men we had left in the I.R.A. attempted to carry out the things we had been preaching for years. I think that what really frightened me was that any party entering the Dáil would be forced to accept the Treaty with partition and the King. Thus I found myself out in the cold, but found work to my liking on the National Graves Committee.

During the term of office of the Cosgrave Government I took an active part in all efforts to keep the republican ideal before the people, but on the whole I was very downhearted, particularly so during the Free State Army Mutiny. I knew that many of the I.R.A. would join in if fighting began, and although I had no love for the Government I was opposed to the elected government being set aside by a band of discontented Army Officers and of the dangerous precedent it would establish, for these people had accepted and fought for the Treaty.

A strange thing happened to me during the centenary celebration of Catholic Emancipation in 1929. I was in

the procession from Phoenix Park to Watling Street Bridge and feeling very discontented was passing along the Quays when I glanced up and saw our flag flying proudly over Collins Barracks. The thought suddenly came to me that all our efforts were not in vain, and I was much happier in mind thereafter. I had, of course, seen the flag many times in similar station but until then it had never struck me in that same light.

I remained friendly with De Valera and his co-workers, and when Fianna Fáil formed a Government a great change for the better came over the national outlook. On the twenty-first anniversary of the Rising they decided to erect a memorial inside the G.P.O. The "Irish Press" which De Valera had founded, and to which I subscribed, was writing up the event, but no mention was made of participation in the ceremonies by the men who had fought in 1916. According to the Press it was to be a demonstration of the armed forces of the Government. I did not like this and I went to De Valera and told him so. He immediately rang Aiken to enquire and it was then settled that the survivors of the Rising should participate. Aiken called a meeting of representatives of the various organisations and Traynor and I were sent by the Dublin Brigade Council of the Old I.R.A. Aiken explained the Government's intentions and asked us to form a committee to co-operate with the Army in making this a great national tribute. I was elected chairman of the Committee. We organised by garrison and thus eliminated the possibility of outsiders participating, as those who fought together would always know if a man was genuine.

At De Valera's request each man filled in a form giving particulars of his service. If everything was in

order, he got an official armlet and his form endorsed by another member of the unit was sent to De Valera for safe keeping. These were the first records of the Rising. We formed the guard inside the G. P. O. and when the memorial was unveiled our men on top of the building raised the Flag and fired three volleys from our old Howth rifles as a salute to our fallen comrades. We then formed up in front of the platform from which De Valera took the salute of the marching Army. The active I. R. A. wanted to take part, but the conditions they put up were unacceptable to my Committee, and, of course, I suffered the usual abuse; some very hard things being said about me. The job was well done and I felt proud of our achievement. Later a Roll of Honour was compiled by Garrison, and each man had to be accepted by his Garrison committee. When completed, the Rolls were presented to De Valera who in turn handed them to an official of the National Museum where they are still to be seen.

Efforts were made to compile a history of the 1916 Rising by the Committee, but this failed. It was a pity for we had all the participants organised and it was a great opportunity to get the facts from officers and men. Later another committee of Old I. R. A. moved in the same matter but they were to do the entire history. The old Brigade Council discussed the subject and decided not to co-operate. I had been invited to help in the work of compiling the history, but this decision prevented me from doing so. I was very surprised when the book was eventually published to read a foreword by Oscar Traynor and to see other officers of the Brigade Council included in a photograph. This is the explanation why the Third Battalion and other units got so little notice in the publication.

When De Valera published his Draft Constitution I read it with great joy. The King was to go and the Constitution would embrace the thirty-two counties. It was all that I could hope for in my lifetime, so I joined Fianna Fáil and did my bit to get the country to accept it. After a short time I was put on the National Executive of the organisation and worked on it for six or seven years. During that time I did all in my power to keep the removal of partition in the foreground. I don't mean by this that the Executive was not as anxious as I was to remove this last barrier to a united Ireland, but a Government Party has many matters to consider.

I was invited to Spike Island for the taking over of the Ports and this was one of the great days in my life. We were brought to the Island by tender from Cóbh (of dreaded memory for me). When we reached the Island, De Valera walked forward and raised the Flag. Not one word was spoken, but, oh, the joy of seeing it!

When World War II started, De Valera and I were discussing it and he spoke of the dangers of being involved. I told him the danger I saw was that Irishmen would get "soft". The country was contented, well-governed and prosperous, and the young men not over-patriotic. I suppose at the back of my mind was that this Emergency might give us an opportunity to get back the six counties.

When Churchill made his demand for the Ports, and before the news was published, I got a 'phone message that De Valera wanted to see me urgently. When I saw

him his first words were, "We will not get soft". I stiffened and said "From either side", meaning from Germans or British. He replied, "Yes". We then fell to discussing ways and means. He asked me to put my suggestions in writing and let him have them. I did so and sent the sheets to him by special messenger. Briefly, my proposals were that the Old I.R.A. be called on to form the backbone of the resistance to invasion. They would have their own officers, non-commissioned officers and men. They would know their own part of the country. The younger men could join with them and get some training. They would make their own grenades and mines. They would harass the enemy whilst making their way to points of mobilisation and when they had reached the National Army they would be under the command of the regular army. This I elaborated and sent to De Valera as I have already stated.

The invasion did not occur, but the Government did act by forming the Local Security Force attached to and trained by the Gárda, the Local Defence Force attached to and trained by the Army, the Coastal Defence Force attached to the Marine Service, and in Dublin by the establishment of the 26th Battalion composed of the Old Dublin Brigade five Battalions. The First Battalion became "A" Company, Second "B", Third "C", Fourth "D". The Company Commanders were Paddy Houlihan "A", Frank Henderson "B", myself "C", and Paddy Rigney "D". The Fifth (Engineers) were a separate command under Liam O'Doherty. Thus the Old Dublin Brigade was specially honoured. Later the older members of Fianna Éireann and I.C.A. were included. After preliminary training by the Army the Battalion was formed with Paddy Houlihan, Commandant; myself, second in

command; Alf White, Adjutant; and Seán Mooney, Quartermaster.

After an extensive course of officers' lectures we were allocated positions to defend if the necessity arose. I was given Government Buildings in Merrion Street, and we were allowed every opportunity to become acquainted with our posts. Later when the men had been well trained by their own officers and N.C.Os., the Battalion was given a section of the line defence of Dublin, and over this line we had many exercises.

Each August we went to Gormanston Camp for a week's intensive training, the men sacrificing their annual holiday for this gruelling work, and they enjoyed every moment of it. On our last visit to the Camp the men expressed a wish to make a present to the new church. We made enquiries and found out that the beautiful silver Crucifix over the Altar was on loan from a Dublin shop. We took up subscriptions and bought the Crucifix for the Church. A beautiful Battalion Flag was presented to us by Volunteer Patsy Kehoe; emblazoned on it were the symbols of the three sections of which the Battalion was formed - I.R.A., I.C.A. and Fianna, and it was with great pride and splendid ceremony that on the stand-down in December, 1945, we handed it over to the young men who would continue to serve after the emergency had passed. I was very proud of the fact that my four sons served their country during this time of crisis, and an honoured picture in each of our homes is a photograph of the five of us in uniform.

Thus ended my thirty-two years of service with the armed forces of the Nation, 1913 - 1945. I am very

43.

thankful to Almighty God for the many graces
bestowed on me, and for His wonderful protection of
myself, my wife and my children.

.....
SIGNED

Joseph Flannery

DATE

28/6/51

WITNESS

Sean Brennan. Comdt.

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21
BURO STAIRÉ MILEATA, 1913-21
No. W.S. 544