

ORIGINAL

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21  
BURO STAIRÉ MILICÉTA 1913-21  
NO. W.S. 615

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COSANTA.

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21.

STATEMENT BY WITNESS

DOCUMENT NO. W.S. 615

Witness

Frank Thornton,  
115 St. Helen's Road,  
Boosterstown,  
Dublin.

Identity.

Deputy Assistant Director of Intelligence, 1919 -;  
Director New Ireland Assurance Company Ltd. 1951.

Subject.

G.H.Q. Intelligence I.R.A. 1919-1921.

Conditions, if any, Stipulated by Witness.

N11

File No. 9.89

Form B.S.M. 2

Continuation Statement of Frank Thornton  
covering the period July 1919 to July 1921.

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The previous statement closes with Thornton's arrival in Dublin from Longford where he had been engaged as a Volunteer Organiser, while at the same time employed as an Organiser for the New Ireland Assurance Company in that area.

On arrival in Dublin in July 1919, he was instructed by Mick Collins to report to Liam Tobin for full-time duty with the newly-formed G.H.Q. Intelligence Branch, and the second part of his statement takes up from this point.

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July 1919 to July 1921.

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# ORIGINAL

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On receiving notification that I was transferred to G.H.Q. Intelligence, I informed Mr. M. W. O'Reilly, then General Manager & Secretary of the New Ireland Assurance Company, that I required indefinite leave without pay from that Society as I was going whole-time on Army work. This leave was readily granted and, although acting in a whole-time capacity in the Army I still kept in constant touch with the developments of the New Ireland Assurance Society.

I was very happy about this transfer to Intelligence as I liked Michael Collins. I was a great admirer of him. I recognised at an early stage, even as far back as my first contact with him in Liverpool that he was a dynamic type of individual and, although at that period he was not in any directive position, still he was an outstanding individual on that famous day in Liverpool in 1915. Later on, working with him on organisation, I had a very quiet admiration for him which developed as the years went on. Michael Collins was a man with a determination to make a complete success of everything he put his hands to. He had a marvellous memory, and as I saw repeatedly happen in later years, he would deal with men from all parts of the country at night in our headquarters in Devlin's of Parnell Square, he would make a very casual note about the things which would have to be attended to on the following day or, as often as not, take no note of them at all, but never to my knowledge was anything left unattended to the next day. He was full of the exuberance of life and full of vitality. He had no time for half measures and expected from those who were serving under him the same amount of enthusiasm and constructive energy that he himself was putting into the job.

Michael Collins took a lively interest in the private affairs of each and every individual with whom he came in

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contact and was always ready to lend a helping hand to assist them to meet their private responsibilities. During the height of the War he travelled from post to post and office on his old Raleigh bicycle and, as often as not did not leave Devlin's in Parnell Square until just on curfew. I think it is only right to say here, in view of the many and varied accounts given by various writers, who claim to have known Collins and his activities, that he never carried a gun during these journeys, neither was he accompanied by a bodyguard.

In the various activities carried out by the Dublin Squads, A. S. U. and members of the Dublin Brigade, naturally from time to time men got either killed or wounded, but invariably Mick Collins was the first man to visit the relatives of these particular men, to either console them in their adversity or to see in what way he could help them to carry on their home affairs during the absence of their loved ones. Mick Collins was the ideal soldier to lead men during a revolution such as we were going through and, I think all and sundry, whether they subsequently fought against him in the Civil War or not, who had close contact with him, must admit that he was the one bright star that all the fighting men looked to for guidance and advice during those great days, particularly during 1920 and 1921. In some of the criticisms that have appeared from time to time about Mick Collins it has been suggested that he drunk to excess. These statements are lies. As one who was very closely associated with him during those strenuous days, I can say that Collins rarely took anything and when he did it was a small sherry. Drinking was naturally discouraged everywhere those days because of the necessity of keeping a cool head under the very strenuous circumstances.

In singling out Collins I am doing so only because of

the fact that I had such close association with him and knew what the officers and men of the Volunteers thought of him generally, but in singling him out in this fashion I am in no way taking away from the activities of the other members of the staff, Cathal Brugha, Dick Mulcahy or Gearóid O'Sullivan.

*see later additions on page 27*

The first office opened by G.H.Q. Intelligence in the city was over Fowler's in Crow Street, off Dame Street, which was right bang up against Dublin Castle. Here, Liam Tobin, Tom Cullen, myself, together with Frank Saurin, Charlie Dalton, Charlie Byrne, Joe Gullfoyle, started off our operations. One of the first things that was undertaken was the organisation of Intelligence in the various Brigades throughout the country and, being so closely associated with the Dublin Brigade we gave considerable help in the selection of right men for the right jobs in the various Companies, Battalions and on Brigade Staffs. The following was the general lay-out of the organisation within the Brigades.

Each Company appointed an Intelligence Officer for its own area. This Intelligence Officer was responsible for setting up a system for the collection of information of all sorts through the medium of agents acting within, and outside, the ranks of the enemy forces. He employed people in all walks of life, special attention being paid to movements of troops and location of enemy spies, and the securing of positions in enemy centres for our own agents where possible.

The next step was the appointment of the Battalion Intelligence Officer. He was responsible for all the Company Intelligence Officers in his area. He received continuous reports from all his Company I.Os. and sifted all the information as it came through. He passed on what was useful to his Brigade I.O. In this way every area was covered by a net-work of agents. The system proved extremely useful as

the war developed. If information on any particular point was required by Brigade Headquarters or G.H.Q. it was easy to secure, so many and varied were these agents. The Brigade Intelligence Officer was always in touch with both his own Intelligence Staff and the G.H.Q. Intelligence Branch.

Every area tried to secure some individual who was in a fairly high walk of life and who openly boasted of his British connection. It is amazing the number of this type of people who, when it was put up to them, eventually agreed to work for us and did tremendous work afterwards, whilst at the same time keeping their connection with the British Forces.

This point is brought out fairly clearly in a film which was produced by a local Irish Company down in Kerry called "The Dawn".

The information collected by all agents was carefully sifted, checked up and it was only when the responsible authority in the area was satisfied that it was reliable and of value to Headquarters that it was sent on.

Intelligence was divided into two branches. First of all, the ordinary Intelligence of the movement of British Forces to and from areas, the arrivals, departures, etc., and secondly, the activities of British Agents, whether they were S.S. men, Military Intelligence Officers, Auxiliary Intelligence Officers or Black and Tan Intelligence Officers. To check up on all suspects within the area of those who were favourably disposed towards the British and who were known to be constantly in their company. In every area this organisation soon became perfected, and information of all kinds and sorts was coming into Brigade Headquarters, Divisional and G.H.Q. However, the wheat was soon sifted from the chaff and our Intelligence Staff soon got down to procuring only information that was of real value and thereby eliminating a lot of unnecessary work both as far as they themselves were concerned and as far as their different Headquarters were concerned.

One of the earlier jobs given to G.H.Q. Intelligence



Staff at Dublin was to ascertain the possibilities of getting at least one individual in every Government Department who was prepared to work quietly and secretly for our Army. In this respect we were fairly lucky in having one individual who was working with us from the very commencement in records, who secured for us photographs and the names and addresses and history of practically all the typists and all the clerical workers in the most important departments of the enemy. These photographs and descriptions were handed out to the various Intelligence Officers throughout the areas in which these people lived and in a very short space of time we had a complete and full history of the sympathies and activities of each and every one of these individuals, resulting in quite a number of them, when contacted, agreeing to work for us inside the enemy lines.

One of the contacts referred to, who was invaluable to us, was a girl named Miss Lillie Mernin. She was employed as Typist in Command Headquarters of Dublin District, the intelligence branch of which was under the control of Colonel Hill Dillon, Chief Intelligence Officer. This girl put us in touch with other members of the different staffs working for the British Military in Dublin. This girl worked mainly with Frank Saurin, and is one to whom a large amount of the credit for the success of Intelligence must go. She is at present employed at G.H.Q., Irish Army, Parkgate Street.

In the same way contacts were made in G. Division. Colonel Brooy and Jim McNamara were contacted early in 1919 and with two or three more G. men were actually working for Collins from that date. These men continued to work in this capacity right up to the Truce and I will refer to these men at a later stage.

By all sorts of divers means contacts were made with Army Officers, Auxiliary Officers and Black and Tan Officers, Sergeants and Privates, and before long quite a formidable array of this type of person was on the pay roll of our Intelligence Department. It should be borne in mind, however, that all the way through these men were never fully

trusted, as they were working for pay we assumed they would just as readily sell our side as they were selling their own. One of the means adopted and, as far as possible, carried out, was to always secure two such people in the particular Unit or Office that they were operating in, and the first job that each of these Agents would get was to submit a complete report on the other. In that way whilst working for us for pay we had them continually watching each other, although they were unaware of the fact that they were doing so. As a matter of fact in any such case one Agent did not know of the existence of the other. Early in 1920 the British decided to send over a special Investigator to inquire into every account in every Bank in Ireland with the object of tracing or trying to seize the Dáil Funds, as these Funds were distributed over quite a considerable number of names. This man's name was Allan Ball and he was subsequently shot while boarding a tramcar at Ballsbridge in March, 1920.

The War was now at its full height. Barracks were being attacked and captured all over the country. Military patrols were being ambushed and generally the enemy was bewildered as the Army of the city and towns hit hard and then suddenly disappeared. In the country they formed themselves into flying columns which were so elusive that that they could never be contacted by the strong enemy forces which tried to track them down. Intelligence was intensified everywhere and practically every move of the British was known in advance.

The British tried big round-ups of all suspects and prepared very elaborate lists, but it is rather amusing to know that the Intelligence Organisation was so good that it usually was aware of the fact that these lists were being prepared, and had a large number of cyclists standing by

here in Dublin City, ready to rush out the individuals on the list as soon as we secured a copy of it. In the same manner lists of suspects to be rounded up in the country were forwarded by special messengers to the country. Invariably we received a copy of the list about an hour before the Officer in Charge of the raiding party got his copy.

One of the most important branches of the Intelligence Service was organised about the middle of 1920. It was confined to the Post Office Workers throughout the country. Sorters and Telegraphists in the Post Office were organised to collect copies of all enemy messages which went through in code. Letters addressed to certain people who were on the suspect lists which were supplied to these men were collected and handed to G.H.Q. to be examined and subsequently posted on to the addressee. The Telephone Exchanges made it possible even to tap certain numbers. Early on in our Intelligence activities we secured the Police and Military codes and it was an easy matter to follow up all changes in the codes because they were all done by wire in the original codes and we were able thereby to get the following month's code - these codes were invariably changed about once a month. The amount of information gleaned through deciphering these messages was amazing. The British never suspected that we were in possession of their codes and sent the majority of their instructions by this means. Hotel workers, waiters, chamber-maids, hall porters and railway officials were organised. Porters and checkers on railway stations and on the platforms of the cross-channel boats were also in our service; even in the British Civil Service and in Scotland Yard we had Intelligence Agents.

In the Post Office itself a regular staff was set up, each man getting a number and on all messages sent to and from these individuals their number only was quoted. They were

instructed to look out for certain types of correspondence and when any particular letters, of which we were aware from various other Agents, were passing through the post these were seized by our men inside and sent on to G. H. Q.

Another method of securing information through the medium of the Post Office was the seizure of ordinary mails. It is amazing the amount of information which was secured by this method as enemy soldiers and agents were most indiscreet in the type of letters they wrote home to England.

The following is an extract from an article by Piaras Beaslai in "Dublin's Fighting Story" :-

"The first step towards creating a Volunteer, or (to use the later term) I. R. A. Intelligence Service came from within this very 'political section' of the 'G' Division. Some young men in that body were in secret sympathy with those they were required to spy upon, and made cautious overtures to Sinn Féiners of their acquaintance early in 1918. Through Mr. Michael Foley, Éamonn Brody, afterwards Chief Commissioner of the Garda Síochána, came into touch with Michael Collins and arranged a system of sending him information. About the same time another patriotic detective, Joe Kavanagh, and later another, James McNamara (both since dead) got into touch with Thomas Gay, Chief Librarian of Capel Street Corporation Library, and through him established a system of communication with Michael Collins. Seán Duffy, a volunteer, also acted as 'liaison officer' with Kavanagh and himself did Intelligence work. This was the beginning of the systematic undermining of the British machinery of espionage in Ireland. Subsequently Michael Collins got in touch with another detective, David Meligan, who later was sworn in as a member of the British Secret Service!

"Apart from the value of the information conveyed to him, Michael Collins was greatly interested in the knowledge he acquired of the methods and system of working the political Detective Department, and the idea of establishing a counter Intelligence Service, which should take leaves from the work of the enemy, had already begun to dawn on him.

"Collins, Harry Boland and others received warning of the 'German Plot' round-up of May 17th, 1918, and escaped the net. Immediately after this an Intelligence Department was set up by G. H. Q. The late Éamonn Duggan was the first Director, and his first Intelligence Officer was Christopher Carbery. But Michael Collins still continued working in the

same direction; though he was at the time Adjutant-General and Director of Organisation - two most exacting positions. Finally, in 1919, Michael Collins became officially Director of Intelligence and commenced to organise a department on a considerable scale, later resigning from his other positions in order to give it his full attention. He had decided that Intelligence was of so much importance in countering enemy activities, that he must concentrate his energies on that branch of the work.

"Prior to this, in April 1919, Collins made a daring midnight visit to the headquarters of the 'G' Division in Brunswick Street, now Pearse Street. Broy was alone on duty, and had locked the door of the dormitory in which the other detectives were sleeping. A number of secret documents and confidential reports were locked up in a small room on the upper floor, which Broy unlocked with a skeleton key, and Collins spent several of the small hours of the morning studying these papers and making notes. He was particularly amused by a report on himself, which began with the words: "He comes of a brainy Cork family".

"Two days later the house of one detective was raided by the I.R.A. and a second detective was tied up with ropes in the street and left there. This was intended merely as a demonstration to warn them against being too zealous in their duties, and it had a marked effect on the men concerned and on the detectives generally. But some continued to show special energy and animus in their work against the I.R.A., and, later, after repeated warnings, more drastic action had to be taken. After some casualties, the once-dreaded 'G' Division had ceased to function effectually. It was undermined and all its information was being 'tapped' by the I.R.A. through those detectives who were working for us; those who had shown special animus against us were known and unable to perform detective duties without risking their lives; and the majority of the force found it prudent never to go beyond the strict letter of their duties.

"It was, as I say, early in 1919, that Collins began to create a regular Intelligence Department. He was fortunate in getting the services of Liam Tobin as Chief Intelligence Officer. Tobin had been previously doing Intelligence work for the Dublin Brigade. Later the Assistant Quartermaster-General, the late Tom Cullen, was drafted into Intelligence. Next in command came Frank Thornton. The Intelligence Staff was built up slowly, as suitable men were not easily found. A good Intelligence Officer is born, not made, but even the man with a great deal of natural instinct for detective work requires to be taught a great deal of the technique of the business.

"The knowledge of exactly what information is required, and how to set about obtaining it, the

skill in worming information from confiding enemies, the power to perceive the importance of seemingly trivial and irrelevant matters - there were only a portion of the qualifications required.

"Office work was almost as important as outside work. The co-ordination of the information obtained, the systematic and carefully planned filing of information, documents, photographs, the accumulation of a mass of information, readily accessible when required, with regard to any person or thing, which was likely to be of value to the I.R.A. in their struggle with their enemies - this indoor work was as essential in its way as the more picturesque work out of doors.

"In July, 1919, 'The Squad' was formed, a body that played a big part in the subsequent fighting in Dublin. The Squad consisted of a small band of Volunteers attached to the Intelligence Department, specially selected for dangerous and difficult jobs. The first commanding officer was Michael McDonnell. The second in command was Patrick Daly, who afterwards succeeded him as O/C.

"The activities of the Intelligence Department continued to expand. The keys to police, official and military cipher codes were obtained, and gradually a system was established by which English official messages were tapped at various postal centres and decoded. Copies of the necessary codes were sent to Intelligence Officers in the country to enable them to deal at once with matters urgently concerning their own units.

"By the end of 1920, Battalion Intelligence Officers were appointed in every active area in Ireland. These reported to their Brigade Intelligence Officer who, in turn reported to Intelligence Headquarters in Dublin, the letters and reports being, of course, conveyed by 'secret post'. Michael Collins was in regular communication with every active Brigade Intelligence Officer in Ireland, and his files show in what an elaborate manner he entered into every detail of their work.

"Some of the Intelligence Officers in the country were selected because they were not known, even to the I.R.A. themselves generally, to be in sympathy with the national cause; and, as their work caused them to seek the society of military officers, and even Black and Tans, they came in for general opprobrium and suspicion from those not in the know. I have encountered some amusing instances of this. That fine Killarney film, "The Dawn", created a moving and dramatic story out of such a situation.

"Postal employees, as I have hinted, came to play a very big part in Intelligence work. In London, the late Sam Maguire and his helpers organised an elaborate system of communication with the I.R.A., and of

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intercepting enemy communications. In Dublin - and even on the mail boats - there was a body of workers operating in collaboration with the Intelligence Department. In various parts of the country, also, postal employees gave valuable assistance.

"Besides the interception of letters more direct methods were employed. In February, 1920, the mail car containing the day's official correspondence for Dublin Castle was held up in Parnell Square, Dublin, by armed men, and all the letters were seized. All the cross-channel correspondence for fourteen departments, including those of the Lord Lieutenant, Chief Secretary, Under Secretary, Military and R. I. C. were captured.

"Shortly after this the very G. P. O. itself (then situated in the Rotunda Rink, after the destruction of the O'Connell Street building in 1916) was invaded by armed men and the Dublin Castle official correspondence was again seized. Of course, the fact was facilitated by inside information from those employed in the G. P. O.

"After this 'raids for mails' became increasingly frequent, and ultimately the holding up of mail trains and the seizure of official correspondence became a frequent activity in various Brigade areas throughout the country. The local Brigade Intelligence Officer inspected the seized correspondence and forwarded to Dublin any documents which he regarded of sufficient importance.

"Big bundles of letters of Black and Tans and Auxiliaries to their friends in England were captured from time to time. By this means the home addresses of many of these men were ascertained and the local I. R. A. or I. R. B. men in the district notified.

By the end of 1919 the English authorities had realised the ineffectiveness of the once-dreaded 'G' Division and resorted to other methods. Secret Service men and spies were brought over from England. One of their ablest Secret Service men, Jameson, actually succeeded in imposing on Michael Collins for a time and came within an ace of securing his capture. Ultimately Jameson was shot dead on the Ballymun Road.

"By 1920 Dublin was full of British Intelligence Officers - but these men were heavily handicapped in their work. Unlike the 'G' men, they had no personal knowledge of who was who, they had never seen any of the men who were wanted, they were, for the most part, woefully ignorant of Dublin; and their English accents were hardly calculated to allay Irish suspicions. And now began another activity of the Intelligence Department.

"The arrival of certain British Intelligence Officers in Ireland in March 1920, was followed by the

murder of Lord Mayor Thomas MacGurtain of Cork, and later by the murders of other prominent Sinn Féiners in the country and in Dublin. Michael Collins intercepted letters from these British Officers which clearly proved the existence of a 'murder plot', for which they had been 'given a free hand'.

"In May, 1920, a number of members of Dáil Éireann and other prominent Sinn Féiners received typewritten 'death notices' through the post.

"By a wonderful piece of detective work, worthy of a Sherlock Holmes, the Director of Intelligence, I.R.A., was able to prove that these notices were typed by the Intelligence Department of the Dublin District of the English Army in Ireland. He ascertained what officers were responsible. He even ascertained the typewriter with which the notices were typed.

"Each new discovery opened up new avenues of information. Gradually our Intelligence Department learned all the personnel of the English Intelligence Staff, their appearance, hours, habits and haunts. Later a number of English officers living outside barracks as civilians under disguised names were traced, and some of the murders of Irish citizens were definitely traced to these men, a number of whom met their end on November 21st, 1920, the day popularly known as 'Bloody Sunday'."

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Early in March, 1920, I was sent to Limerick to investigate the shooting of Jim Dalton. I was accompanied by Joe Dolan. It appeared that Dalton, who was a Volunteer attached to the 1st City Battalion, Limerick, had been shot by Volunteers of the 2nd City Battalion, Limerick, on the assumption that he was working as an enemy agent. Dolan and I got down to our investigations and after a week's careful survey we were able to establish the fact that Dalton, as an Intelligence Officer of the 1st City Battalion, Limerick, was only doing his duty as such and had contacted certain enemy agents, i.e. 'G' men, and had met them fairly frequently and had secured some very valuable information from them. Unfortunately at that time in Limerick some estrangement existed between the two Battalions, brought about, I understand, by the failure of Limerick to fight during 1916, the Second Battalion being a new Battalion,



formed after 1916, while the First Battalion was composed chiefly of those who had been Volunteers at the time of the Rising. However, we were able to prove conclusively and submit sufficient definite evidence to G.H.Q. that Dalton's name was completely clear.

We had just completed our investigations when the Black and Tans arrived in Limerick for the first time. I remember the evening well. It was some time towards the end of March. They arrived in a string of lorries and heralded their arrival by proceeding to shoot up the city, left, right and centre. Both Dolan and I were staying in the Glentworth Hotel, which is on the main road to the Railway Station. Just past the Glentworth stands Tate's Clock, standing at least 120 ft. high and brilliantly illuminated at night. We were awakened by shooting at about 12.30 to 1 a.m. and on looking through the window we saw thirty or forty Black and Tans all lying on the road and having a cockshot at Tate's Clock with their rifles. After a bit they were organised by someone in control and they proceeded to shoot in regular relays at the clock. Getting tired of this after a bit, they then forced their way into the Glentworth and insisted on the Management opening up the Bar. By this time Dolan and I had arrived at the top of the house and had succeeded in getting the skylight opened ready to make a break across the roofs should these gentlemen decide to come upstairs. However, after carousing downstairs for about an hour they made their departure. Dolan and I were successful in getting out of Limerick the following day with a crowd going to the Junction Race Meeting. This was the only way of getting out of Limerick as the engine drivers, firemen and guards on the railway refused to move any trains on which British Military or Black and Tans travelled. As a result the British marched up a crowd every day to the

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station but the same thing happened, the train crew walking off on every occasion.

About the middle of 1920 a man arrived in Dublin, a Mr. Liam Devlin, with his family, and purchased a licensed vintner's establishment right opposite the Rotunda Hospital in Parnell Street. This man had been actively associated with the Sinn Féin Movement and the Volunteers in Scotland and through some friends of his contacted Mr. Seán Ó Muirthuille who was then Secretary of the Gaelic League.

Seán Ó, Muirthuille at that time was closely associated with the Supreme Council of the I.R.B. and also the Volunteer Executive and was a close friend of Michael Collins.

He introduced Liam Devlin to Mick Collins and after discussing the general situation Liam offered the full use of his establishment to the I.R.A. This offer Mick readily accepted and at the end of a short period it became Mick's unofficial headquarters.

We used Devlin's extensively and every night Mick, Gearóid O'Sullivan, Liam Tobin, Dermot O'Hegarty, Piaras Beaslaf, Frank Thornton, Tom Cullen and Joe O'Reilly met there, the events of the day were discussed and plans were made for the following day. Any particular Column leader or Brigade Officer arriving in town was generally instructed to report to Devlin's.

From this period onwards Devlin's not alone became our meeting place but Mrs. Devlin acted in the capacity of a very generous hostess. Visitors from the country never left without getting a meal and in quite a large number of instances a bed for the night. It can be readily understood that a headquarters of this kind in the heart of the city was valuable to the movement generally and particularly to the Intelligence end of things, for, being a publichouse, no notice was taken of people continually going in and out.

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I think the Devlin family deserve the very best thanks of the nation for their contribution to the fight for freedom.

As I mentioned in a previous paragraph, Mick Collins left this headquarters practically every night bordering on curfew on his old Raleigh bicycle and on many an occasion Tom Cullen, Liam Tobin and myself left about the same time and started on our journey across town to Rathmines where we had a flat in Grosvenor Road, but on numerous occasions it was found necessary to stay the night, sometimes because of enemy activity in the immediate vicinity or because it was necessary to remain in town for an early morning operation the following day.

On a couple of occasions we had exciting experiences. One night the British decided to raid Parnell Square, house by house. Needless to remark, none of us went to bed in Devlin's on that particular night. We kept a sharp look out and about an hour after they started the raid one of our party reported that they could hear the movements of men on our own roof. This was too near to be healthy but the raid continued and without any attempt on the part of the enemy to search the houses on our side of Parnell Square. From what we discovered afterwards, it would appear that the party on the roof were a covering off party for the raiding party in the Square. Little they knew that what they were looking for was right underneath them all the time.

On another occasion we woke up to find that the area from the corner of Parnell Square going westward towards Capel Street was cordoned off with barbed wire barricades - we were just outside the cordon. This particular barricade extended right down to the Quay and right up to Broadstone. Everyone within that area was held and the houses thoroughly searched but on this occasion as well the British were as

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lucky as they had been on previous occasions and they succeeded in finding what the Connaught man shot at - "nothing".

On another occasion while we were upstairs in the Diningroom a British military patrol entered the publichouse underneath and searched all the customers and then left without going upstairs.

While it would appear to have been a very risky business on our part to occupy a premises like this in an area which was receiving such special attention from the enemy, one has got to remember that we had always an escape through the kitchen over the flat roofs at the rear.

To Liam Devlin and his family must go the best thanks of the nation for their contribution, and it is pleasant to record that Liam is still enjoying perfect health and is a successful business man in the city. One of his sons is at present our Minister in Italy.

#### Organisation of Intelligence within the D.M.P.

About the middle of 1920 I was instructed by Mick Collins to report to a house in Rathgar Avenue and meet Sergeant Matt Byrne of the Rathmines Station and Constable Mannix of Donnybrook Station. I think the name of the people who lived in the house was Donovan. I had a very lengthy discussion with these two D.M.P. Officers, who had already met and discussed the matter with Michael Collins, and together we elaborated a scheme of organising the D.M.P. in such a way that it could be a useful asset to the I.R.A. in compiling Intelligence reports on enemy activities, particularly at night time. We finally succeeded in enrolling the following D.M.P. men:-

Two Culhane brothers of College Street, one of whom was a Station Sergeant there.

Maurice Ahern, Constable at Donnybrook.

Sergt. Mannix at Donnybrook.

Sergt. Matt Byrne at Rathmines.

Constable Neary at Kevin Street.

Constable Peter Feely then Kingstown.

Constable Paddy McEvoy at Donnybrook.

Sergt. P. O'Sullivan at Fitzgibbon Street.

Constable Mick O'Dea at Donnybrook.

In addition there were one or two constables in various other Stations whose names I cannot remember, but in the main they were working under the control of the men I have mentioned here.

When one understands the tactics adopted by the enemy during that period one can readily realise the importance of having contacted such men as I have described. On every occasion when enemy forces went on raids they invariably brought along a D.M.P. man with them or, as happened in quite a lot of cases, the D.M.P. were advised in advance that raids were to take place that night in a certain area and as a result the information was passed on to us in advance. Even when they went on these raids without having time to give us warning, they were able to cover up for I.R.A. men if they happened to recognise them, or if they happened to think that there was anything to be covered up. One of these men, Sergeant Mannix, describes in a communication which I quote hereunder his general experience during that period, and I give it as an indication of the value that these men were to us during the whole period :-

"I secured names and addresses of British Secret Service Officers who were shot on 'Bloody Sunday'. I secured information as to where raids were to take place when stationed in Donnybrook. I was on several

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occasions detailed for duty at the Show Grounds, Ballsbridge, and, subsequently, had to accompany British Officers from the Show Grounds who were engaged in searching houses in Donnybrook area. On a few occasions while accompanying the search parties, I saved the lives of men who were found in the houses that were being searched, as I informed the officers in charge that those men were law abiding citizens, although in each case they were much wanted men. The officer, relying on my information, then withdrew and the men got safely away. On one occasion I was with a search party, the officer in charge being Lieutenant Bröokbank, who was attached to the Royal Irish Rifles. He knocked at the door of a certain house and when the door was opened I saw a number of men playing cards, one of whom I knew to be a very much wanted man. I informed the officer that they were all friends of my own and we retired, leaving the men to escape. He also knocked at the door of another house where a much wanted man was residing. He escaped before we entered and went to stay with a friend of his. On the following day he was observed by a Secret Service Agent who immediately informed Donnybrook Station and instructed a police officer attached to Donnybrook Station as to where this wanted man could be found. Everything was in readiness for the raid to take place that night. In the meantime I got in touch with some friends of this wanted man and got him to quit the place that night. The house was searched very minutely but they found nothing although the officer commented when leaving Donnybrook - "This man escaped last night but he wont escape to-night", which indicated their intention of shooting him on the spot.

"On another occasion while accompanying a British Officer on a lorry during curfew he stopped the lorry and questioned two men who were walking along the footpath at Ballsbridge and ordered them into the lorry. When getting in I saw these men drop some books and papers intentionally. I immediately, and unknown to the officer, picked them up and put them inside my tunic. Having them examined later I found they were important documents relating to the I.R.A. Movement. I immediately had them returned to the owners through the medium of Mr. Seán McGlynn.

"I also attended a number of meetings at Williamstown, Booterstown, and at Rathgar Avenue, which were convened for the purpose of passing the death sentence on a number of spies. The death sentence was passed on 9 or 10 informers for a date not fixed. The following are the names of those who sat at that meeting:- The late Michael Collins and Frank Thornton, Mr. M. Byrne, Mr. James Sullivan and myself. At this particular meeting Michael Collins informed us that should the struggle for freedom be a success we would be compensated in some way for our activities. I also secured information pertaining to a cheque which was being received from the British Secret Service by "Andrew Knight" who was employed as a Tram Inspector on the Dalkey line. As a result of

National Archives Act, 1986, Regulations, 1988

**ABSTRACTION OF PART(S) PURSUANT TO REGULATION 8**

**Form to be completed and inserted in the original record  
in place of each part abstracted**

- (i) Reference number of the separate cover under which the abstracted part has been filed: WS 615 /A
- (ii) How many documents have been abstracted: 1P.
- (iii) The date of each such document: 26 November 1951

- (iv) The description of each document:  
WS 615 Frank Thornton p19.  
name of individual

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

- (v) Reason(s) why the part has been abstracted for retention:  
(c) **Would or might cause distress or danger to living persons on the ground that they contain information about individuals, or would or might be likely to lead to an action for damages for defamation.**

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

Name: (J. Moloney.)

Grade: Col.

Department/Office/Court:

Date: 7 March 2003.

this information he was taken off a tram car, taken out to Killiney Golf Links and shot. I also wish to state that I was associated with Mr. Frank Saurin whilst trying to apprehend \_\_\_\_\_ who was known to the I.R.A. as being an informer, she having given information to the Black and Tans, as to where the late Austin Stack could be captured. I might also add that during the early stages of the struggle I was in close touch with I.R.A. Officers of my native Kerry, including Patrick Guerin, Denis Guerin, and my cousin Patrick Mannix and the late Commandant Daniel Alman, who was killed in an engagement with British troops on 21st March, 1921. On one occasion I wrote to Commandant Daniel Alman signifying my intention of resigning from the force, and also stated that I was in close touch with the I.R.A. Officers in the Metropolis. On receipt of my letter Alman got in touch with my mother and explained the contents of my letter in detail. Alman then instructed her to advise me to remain in the force as, in his opinion, it would be a far greater asset to the Movement by remaining in it. Consequently, I remained and continued by allegiance to the Movement until the cease fire order".

In February, 1921, an order was issued from G.H.Q. instructing all our Officers, Intelligence and otherwise, in the city to have at hand a tin of paraffin oil and a supply of Engineer's waste. The instructions issued were that at all costs the offices must be held by the occupants until the contents could be set on fire, thus preventing useful information from falling into enemy hands.

Some time about the end of that month, I was over in our office in Crowe Street - Liam Tobin, Frank Saurin, Charlie Byrne, Joe Dolan, Charlie Dalton, Joe Guilfoyle and myself were present. Suddenly one of the party rushed in and informed us that a large convoy of auxiliaries had drawn up in the street and that they were all getting out of the lorries. On looking out of the window we discovered that about ten lorries full of auxiliaries were stretched from Dame Street down to the corner of Cecilia Street. The occupants had all got out of the lorries and were standing in groups on the footpath. We immediately prepared to set fire to everything in the office and sent Dolan, Charlie Byrne and Guilfoyle down to the first landing with grenades;



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Charlie Dalton was posted at the upper window ready to drop grenades down on the auxiliaries if they attempted to come in. However, the order to set fire was not given until some move was made by the enemy - a sort of armed truce appeared to exist for about a half an hour - then to our amazement the auxiliaries all got back into the lorries again and drove away.

We were completely at a loss to understand what all this meant and proceeded to investigate the situation, when to our amazement we discovered that the only reason the auxiliaries came down Crowe Street on that particular day was so that one of their Majors could secure a watch which had been left in at a jewellery repair shop two doors away from us.

On another occasion about two months later, I think it would have been about April, Military and Auxiliaries again raided the area, but this time it was the University Hall in ~~Cecilia~~ Cecilia Street that was raided as they had been watching the students going in and out of that hall for some time and had become suspicious that they must be Volunteers. However, there were no arrests made on that particular day and they decamped after holding up the area for about an hour.

I think it is only right to say here that the men working on the railways were one of our most valuable assets. They reported regularly on the movements of individual enemy officers and Secret Service agents moving up and down the country and also assisted the transport of arms and ammunition from place to place.

It would not be possible to go into minute detailed explanations of all the methods employed by our various branches of Intelligence and Secret Service and a story like this can only aim at giving a general resumé of the whole position. I think that at this stage it would be well to

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give an insight into some of the actual happenings which took place, particularly around Dublin. You will remember that earlier on I referred to the fact that we had succeeded in getting a few of our men into the British Secret Service. One of these, Dave Neligan, was actually serving in the British Forces in the 'G' Division (Detective) and had on numerous occasions intimated his intention to friends of his resigning, but was urged on to take a different course and to cultivate certain leading Secret Service and Intelligence Officers in the British Army, resulting in his eventually being appointed an S.S. man in Dublin, attached to Dublin Castle. The system adopted by British Secret Service men in the city of Dublin was to surround themselves with a number of touts, these invariably also were English, and at different periods these touts were brought together for consultation, with some amusing results. On one occasion I was asked by this S.S. man (Dave Neligan) to have the late Major General Tom Cullen and myself meet him and some friends of his at Rabbiaatti Saloon, Marlboro' Street, and as you know there are high-backed seats with a table in the middle, and Tom and I found ourselves with three of these touts sitting around a table having fish and chips. A general discussion was taking place when one of these fellows, who was an English man, turned round to me and said - "Gor blimey, how did you learn the Irish brogue? We're here in Dublin for the last twelve months and we can't pick up any of it, yet you fellows seem to have perfected it". Of course, naturally we told them that there was an art in these matters, and just passed it over. Naturally men of this kind were very little use in the British but they didn't realise that until it was too late.

Another man who succeeded in getting himself into the British Secret Service was an ex-British Officer who had

retained his old associations with officers of the British Army who were still in Ireland, a Dublin born man of a very good family. His name is Beaumont - (a brother of Seán Beaumont). This man knew very little about the National Movement and was heard boasting in public on at least half a dozen occasions that he was going all out to earn £20,000. reward for the capture of Michael Collins. In actual fact he meant it and I believe if at that time he had an opportunity of handing over Collins he probably might have done so. However, Collins heard the story and knowing this man's brother very well, who happened to be a good Irish Irelander, he arranged with the brother to have the Ex-Officer brother at a certain rendezvous. Tom Cullen and I were present at the interview and after a long discussion, Collins of course revealed himself and said, "I am the fellow that is worth £20,000". So impressed was this man with his interview with Collins that he subsequently came and offered his services to us. Now in all these matters one has to take a chance, and Collins again showed his good judgment by taking a chance with this man, resulting in the man's application to his friends in the British Army being not alone seriously considered, but he was actually accepted into the Secret Service.

At that time most of the British Secret Service Agents, and British Intelligence Officers and Auxiliary Intelligence Officers met at a place which was well known in Dublin as Kidds Buffet - Kidds Back it was known - in Grafton Street, and presently Jammets Back. Now here is where a lot of our information was picked up, and again it had to be picked up by taking a very big risk. Tom Cullen, Frank Saurin and myself were deputed to act with our two Secret Service friends who then frequented Kidds Buffet with the Secret Service. We were introduced in the ordinary way as touts and eventually became great friends of men like Major Bennett, Colonel Aimes

and a number of other prominent Secret Service Officers. Naturally Collins and all his staff and the whole activities of the organisation were discussed there daily. On one day, one of these officers turned suddenly to Tom Cullen and said, "Surely you fellows know these men - Liam Tobin, Tom Cullen and Frank Thornton, these are Collins' three officers and if you can get these fellows we would locate Collins himself". Needless to remark, if the ground opened and swallowed us we could not have been more surprised, and for the moment we felt that we had walked into a trap, but that wasn't so at all. It was a genuine query to the three Irishmen whom they believed should know all about the particular fellows they mentioned. The fact remains that although they knew of the existence of the three of us and they knew of the existence of Collins, they actually had no photograph of any of us, and had a very poor description of either Collins or the three of us.

However, the British at this time, realising that the terrorism of the Black an' Tans burning and looting was not going to succeed unless they could actually put their finger on our Headquarters Staff and eliminate us in that way. With that end in view they decided to set up a full time Secret Service outside of the Army, working on proper continental lines with a Central Headquarters and other houses forming minor centres scattered all throughout the city in which they operated. In this way they built up quite a formidable organisation and were without doubt securing quite a lot of very valuable information.

Information was gleaned in a lot of instances through the carelessness or idle talk of individuals, but I am rather proud to say not from informers on our side, because there is one thing we can boast of in the Movement from 1916 to 1921 and that is that we bred no informers.

G. H. Q. Intelligence got down to the job of tracking down and checking up on the activities of this new Secret Service Organisation almost at once and it was not long until we knew their Headquarters and their two Sub-Headquarters, and in actual fact we discovered that the caretaker of one of the houses from which they operated in Lower Pembroke Street was the sister of an old I. R. A. man. You can imagine the rest, contact was made. It was soon managed to get an I. R. A. man appointed as hall porter and gradually others were placed on the various staffs in the houses, resulting in very valuable information being collected from British Secret Service. In actual fact we had a key for the hall-door and keys of all the doors of all the rooms in these houses. We tracked down and got a complete detailed report on every individual. In this respect I would like to pay a very high tribute to the Intelligence Officers of the Dublin Brigade who rendered such very valuable service to G. H. Q. in compiling that information. I had the honour to be in charge of that particular job of compiling all that information and got the very unenviable job of presenting my full report to a joint meeting of the Dáil Cabinet and Army Council, at which meeting I had to prove that each and every man on my list was an accredited Secret Service man of the British Government. This, as everybody can realise, was not an easy task, but proves one thing, that is that our Government and our Army were not going to allow any man to be shot without the fullest possible proof being produced of his guilt. Our men have been referred to as the "murder gang" from time to time by our enemy, but I can assure you that whether in the Brigades throughout the country or here in Dublin, no man was ever shot during the Tan War except in an open fight and a fair fight, unless he had first received the benefit of a full court-martial.

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Very often as you know it was not possible to have the man present at his own courtmartial, but what I mean to convey is that the proof had to be absolutely a full 100% watertight before any action could be taken.

Our history tells the result of our efforts on that occasion. The British Secret Service was wiped out on the 21st November 1920. That morning was one of the most critical ones in the history of our Movement. Men were asked to do something on that day which was outside the ordinary scope of the soldier, but realising their duty to their country and always being ready to obey orders, all jobs were executed. In some instances the I.R.A. parties were actually surprised and running fights took place with superior forces of auxiliaries along the streets, but in the words of the Enemy Press and of the Enemy Officers who witnessed it, "no greater deeds of heroism were ever seen than those which took place on the streets around Mount Street and Pembroke Street, in these open running fights" where our men in actual fact defeated an overwhelming and superior force and then safely got away with their wounded. What happened that day (recorded in history as Bloody Sunday) is well known to everybody. Revenging themselves on the ordinary citizens the enemy let armoured cars loose in O'Connell Street and in other streets in Dublin. Armoured cars flew up and down O'Connell Street on the footpaths shooting left, right and centre, and then the climax, Croke Park. Tens of thousands of people were in Croke Park to witness the match between Tipperary and Dublin. Our Intelligence got the information (but it was then too late to do anything) that the British were going to mow down the crowd at Croke Park. To attempt to do anything would have caused a greater massacre than what actually happened, but the information was given privately to the officials, and an attempt was made to quietly file the people out, but

before anything serious could be done the Auxiliaries arrived and with machine-guns proceeded to mow down that thickly congregated mass of people. Players and spectators alike were killed, wounded or maimed, and the British were so anxious to score another brilliant victory that they kept shooting until every man was out of the ground.

Dick McKee and Peadar Clancy who had been captured the night before were identified and brutally murdered in Exchange Court on the Sunday night. Our Intelligence was busy all that day trying to locate them and finally when they did it was an impossibility to take them out of the strongest enemy position in the city.

In various statements made by English writers dealing with this particular incident, i.e. Bloody Sunday, it has been suggested that the officers shot on that particular morning were court-martial officers. This is completely inaccurate. As I have already intimated in the foregoing paragraphs, great care was exercised in checking up on the activities of all these men and the Cabinet and Army Council had to be satisfied that they were actually employed on Secret Service work here in Ireland before they would agree to their execution. These men were a very definite Secret Service organisation operating outside the various Barracks or Headquarters in Dublin and were established with the main object of destroying our Headquarters and Army organisation and the fact that we, who became aware of their activities earlier on, and smashed them by one military operation on Bloody Sunday, is sufficient answer I think to those who would try to confuse the issue by suggesting that they were shot purely because they had acted in the capacity of court-martial officers on some of our comrades. There is no doubt whatsoever but that they were active members of a very active Secret Service Organisation and were dealt with accordingly.

For some months before Bloody Sunday our Intelligence Organisation underwent a change. We took on additional men - Ned Kellegher, Joe Kavanagh, Con O'Neill, Bob O'Neill and Joe Dolan. I took up my new Headquarters in the old Ancient Concert Rooms in Pearse Street with a sign on the outside of the hall-door "O'Donoghue & Smith, Manufacturers Agents". We actually had certain samples there if anybody called in to investigate. The main body of our Agents occupied the big room in the front. As is well known, all the jobs carried out by G.H.Q. in Dublin at that time were carried out by the G.H.Q. Squad which was, at the period of which I am speaking, under the control of Mick McDonnell. Mick McDonnell was the first O/C. of the Dublin Squad and remained O/C. until some time after Bloody Sunday, when his health collapsed and he was sent to California by Mick Collins. About this period Paddy Daly took over control of the Squad. The procedure adopted on all jobs, however, was this : The Intelligence Officer having carried out his investigations to the satisfaction of G.H.Q., the operation was then ordered by Mick Collins, but the Intelligence Officer or Officers who had carried out that investigation always accompanied the Squad for the carrying out of the operation to ensure correct identification of the individual.

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List of Secret Service Men Killed or Wounded on  
Bloody Sunday, 21st November, 1920.

2 Earlsfort Terrace.

Captain Fitzpatrick      Defence Officer, Co. Clare.      K.

117 Morehampton Road.

Mr. Smith      K.  
Captain McClean      K.  
Mr. Caldron      W.

22 Lr. Mount Street.

Mr. Mahon      K.  
Mr. Peel escaped      E.  
A. Morris      Auxie      K.  
Frank Furniss      Auxie      K.

92 Lr. Baggot Street.

Captain Newbury      Court Martial Officer.      K.

38 Upper Mount Street.

Lt. Aimes      Grenadier Guards      K.  
Lt. Bennett      Motor Transport      K.

28 Upper Pembroke Street.

Major Dowling      Grenadier Guards      K.  
Capt. Price      Royal Engineers      K.  
Capt. Keeslyside      Lancashire Fusiliers      W.  
Colonel Woodcock           W.  
Colonel Montgomery died of wounds      K.  
Lt. Murray      Royal Scots      W.

Gresham Hotel.

Capt. McCormack      K.  
Lt. Wilde      K.

119 Lower Baggot Street.

Capt. Baggallay      Court Martial Officer      K.

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Admitted by British:

K.	2 Court Martial Officers.
K.	2 Auxies.
K.	11 Other Officers.
W.	4 Wounded

= 13 Officers killed, 2 Auxies killed.

The activities of the Intelligence Department were not confined to this country. They were entrusted with the carrying out of a very big and important job in the city of London about the end of 1920. At that period the Auxiliaries patrolled the streets of Dublin city in caged Lancia cars, the object of the cage being to prevent our ambushing troops from throwing grenades into the lorries. This, however, did not deter our troops as some very ingenious methods were employed to get over that difficulty with great success. Further precautions were then taken by the enemy to ensure their safe conduct throughout the city, these precautions were of a nature that no honourable enemy ever employed no matter what the circumstances. A wooden post was erected in the middle of the Lancia car and to this post one of our T.D's. who was a prisoner at the time was handcuffed, and they then proceeded to tour the city with the invitation "Now bomb us", knowing quite well that any attempt to ambush that lorry would result in the death of our own Dáil member. It was with the object of countering this move that the operation in London was ordered, and although it only takes a short time to tell, the job was colossal. How colossal I am fully aware, as I was one of the principal Intelligence Officers in London on its organisation. We were instructed to be ready on a suitable date within any one week to arrest twelve members of the then British Government. This number was to include Cabinet Ministers if possible. Now to ensure that the job would be successful, it was necessary to check up on the movements of practically every member of the British House of Commons who was on the Government Benches, so as to arrive at a

number who did a regular thing on the same night every week. After a month's check-up, during which some very interesting side-lights were disclosed on the private lives of members of the British Government, we arrived at the stage where we had a definite list of twenty-five members of Parliament who did a regular thing on the same night every week.

Our next job was to make these men known to the members of our Army who were in London, so that when the time came to arrest them they would be identified easily. Then through our London Organisation we procured lists of houses where they could be kept in different parts of England and everything was set - men, transport and Intelligence were all ready to carry out the job and we reported our readiness to our own G.H.Q. in Dublin and awaited instructions.

In the meantime, however, the British for some reason changed their tactics in Ireland and ceased to endanger the lives of our own T.D's. by carrying them around on their lorries, and as a result our own Government called off the London operation. Although the job was called off I cannot say that I was sorry as it would have been a very very difficult job and, if we failed, the reputation of our whole department was at stake, but we had built up our plans so well that we were all very confident that we would make a huge success of it.

The three of us who went to London in connection with the carrying out of the kidnapping job (myself, Seán Flood and George Fitzgerald) were, of course, in constant touch with Reggie Dunne and Sam Maguire of the London I.R.A. Unit, and the whole Intelligence organisation of the London area was at our disposal. One day when Seán Flood and I were going out to Acton on a routine check-up on the Underground

HOB. 28.

Metropolitan Railway, we ran into Westminster Station to find the lift gates just closing. Seán Flood turned round to me and said, "I'll race you to the bottom down the runway". It was a long winding passage with about three bends on it. Seán raced off in front and disappeared around the second last bend about a few feet in front of me. I heard a terrific crash and on coming around the corner I fell over two men on the ground, one of whom was Seán Flood. We picked ourselves up and both assisted in helping to his feet the man whom Seán Flood had knocked down. To our amazement two other men who were with him ordered us to put our hands up. We more or less ignored them and started to brush down the man and apologise to him when to our amazement we discovered that the man we had knocked down was Lloyd George, the Prime Minister of England. The first act of Lloyd George was to tell his two guards to put their guns away, which they <sup>were/</sup>very reluctant to do, pointing out that from our speech we were evidently Irishmen - Lloyd George's answer to this was, "Well, Irishmen or no Irishmen, if they were out to shoot me I was shot long ago". Little he knew the people he was dealing with on that particular occasion but after a few muttered apologies on our part we went on our way towards the Station, but I can tell you that we did not go to Acton. We got a train in the opposite direction and got out at the next Station and made sure that we weren't being followed.

October 1920.

As the War developed so did the activities of the Intelligence Organisation right throughout the whole country. Very valuable information was collected on the movement of troops, resulting in successful ambushes in almost every part of the country. During all this period it must be remembered that the enemy Intelligence and activity was also very active, resulting in very serious losses to our side

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in the death of men like Seán Treacy, who was killed in Talbot Street in October 1920, after he and Dan Breen had successfully resisted an attempt by the British Secret Service Officers to capture them at Professor Carolan's house, Drumcondra, 11th October, 1920. It was well known that these men made a heroic fight and succeeded in fighting their way clear of the British Forces, killing two officers and wounding quite a number of others. However, the fates were against Seán Treacy, a British spy recognised him in Talbot Street as a convoy was passing and he was riddled by machine-gun fire.

This was rather an unfortunate day in Dublin because on the morning of 12th October our 1st Battalion tried to capture an armoured car at the Bank at Ribsboro' corner. This attempt failed, one man being killed. Later on that day we had organised part of the A.S.U. and Dublin Squads to stand-by at various vantage points awaiting instructions. In the meantime our Intelligence Officers were scattered along the Quays on the route of the funeral procession of those who were killed the day before in the attempt to capture Dan Breen and Seán Treacy at Professor Carolan's house. Our information was that Hamar Greenwood, General Tudor and other prominent officers would take part in the funeral procession, and it was decided that an attempt would be made to shoot them en route. With this purpose in mind Liam Tobin, Tom Cullen, Dick McKee, Frank Henderson, Leo Henderson, Peadar Clancy and I met at the back of Peadar Clancy's shop. Receiving information that none of those whom we sought were taking part in the funeral, the job was called off. I was one of the last to leave Peadar Clancy's on that morning with Tom Cullen and we left Dick McKee behind us. As we left, Seán Treacy arrived, and on informing him of what had happened he went on towards the shop while we went on towards the Pillar. We had very

nearly arrived at the Pillar when the shooting started lower down the street, but to all intents and purposes it looked to us like one of the ordinary incidents which were happening every day in the streets of Dublin. However, we hadn't much time to investigate because at that moment Joe O'Reilly pulled up beside us on the footpath and told us to get as many men as we could, the Squad, Intelligence or anyone else in the Brigade and to get up to the Mater Hospital, as it was surrounded and Dan Breen was inside. We went off to the Mater in ignorance of the fact that poor Seán Treacy had been killed and after bringing as many men as we could to the Mater Hospital and patrolling around in the hope of being able to re-capture Breen in the event of his being discovered by the enemy, to our relief the British withdrew, having failed to locate Dan.

Our Intelligence from the Tipperary Brigade reported that a Sergeant Roche was on his way to Dublin to identify Seán Treacy's body and at the same time to visit all the hospitals with the object of trying to identify Breen. It was decided that he could not be allowed to carry out his investigations and, by arrangement with one of our Agents, who was a very prominent Agent in the R. I. C., a signal was given to the Squad at the corner of Capel Street and the Quay on the following Sunday afternoon and Sergeant Roche was shot. This was one of the things that had to be done to ensure the continuity of our effort and also to ensure the safety of our soldiers.

January 1921. Dublin at this time was anything but a peaceful city. The Dublin Brigade were carrying out ambushes practically every day, despite the fact that the British military were patrolling the streets in armoured cars, lancia cars and also a foot patrol extended across the roads. To add to this concentration of forces a new menace

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appeared on the scene. These were gangs of R. I. C. drawn from different parts of the country under the leadership of Chief Constable Igoe. They wore civilian clothes, were heavily armed and moved along the footpaths on both sides of the road looking out for either city men whom they might know or Volunteers up from the country. They were not easy to deal with because they suddenly appeared at most unexpected places and, despite several attempts, our men never got really into action against the gang proper.

We received orders to concentrate on locating Igoe's gang. On several occasions our Intelligence Officers would pick them up and, leaving one to keep on trailing them, the other reported back to our Headquarters, when we got in touch with our Squad which then tried to intercept the gang. Their tactics, however, defeated our efforts on numerous occasions as they redoubled on their tracks and we lost contact before we could actually bring our Squad into action with them. One particular day we had actually contacted them up in Thomas Street, our Squad coming down with Intelligence Officers on one side of the road going towards James's Street while they were coming down on the other side, when all of a sudden a military patrol of about twenty-five men came up a side street and started to come down in our direction in extended order across the road. We had no option but to disperse as quickly as possible as we would have found ourselves between two fires and would have been completely out-numbered. I remember on that particular occasion Vinnie Byrne, one of the Squad, started to sing to us that old song "Do I want to see my Mammie anymore? Do I? Yes, I do". However, he saw his Mammie, because we cleared out quickly. On another occasion we established contact with them in the morning and on this occasion we had the G. H. Q. Squad standing to in Stephen's Green. They went in the direction of Grafton Street with our scouts following, one of which went on

in front to warn the Squad, but again they redoubled on their tracks and turned into Dame Street where they passed two of our Intelligence Officers, one of whom was Charlie Dalton and the other Sweeney Newell of Galway. They suddenly held up our two men, who had no guns on them or identification, and apparently one of their party recognised Newell because he was held, and after a short space of time Dalton was let go. They went along Dame Street towards the Castle, bringing Newell Newell with them. They were just going in through the Castle Gates when the Squad came down George's Street but just too late. They held Newell in the Castle until some time in the afternoon and then brought him by car to the Bridewell. He was held in the Bridewell for about a half an hour and then told that he could go. He came out to find the street completely deserted and started to walk down towards the Quays when all of a sudden from all quarters fire was opened on him by Igoe's gang. He fell, very badly wounded and was immediately picked up by the gang, put into a car, and brought to George V Hospital, now St. Ebric's. He remained in George V. Hospital (a prisoner) until after the signing of the Treaty, when he was brought to the Mater Hospital where he was X-Rayed and it was found that the wound in his leg had some foreign matter in it. He was operated on and a large safety pin was taken out which evidently had accidentally or otherwise been sewn up in the wound following his original operation in George V. Sweeney Newell is still alive and working away in Galway City but he has a lame leg as a result of his experience. The only real clash that took place between the Squad and Igoe's gang was some months later at Parliament Street, where a running fight took place in which three of the gang were shot, the rest running away. For some reason or another, after this incident at Parliament Street we saw less of Igoe's gang on the streets. I think, however, that it would be well to check up with the members:



of the Active Service Unit on other actions against this gang.

Shooting of Chief Detective Inspector Redmond.      January 1920.

This man was shot early in January, 1920, in Harcourt Street. He had been transferred from Belfast to take over the organisation of Intelligence within and without the Police Force here in Dublin City and although we knew of his arrival from one of our Agents in Belfast we still had no description nor had we anyone to identify him here in Dublin. As a result, I was sent to Belfast. I met Seán Heuston who introduced me to a Sergeant McCarthy from Kerry who was stationed at Chichester Street Police Barracks of the R. I. C. in Belfast. By arrangement, I went to the Barracks the following evening as a cousin of his from the country and stayed the night in the Barracks with him. The object of the visit was to secure a photograph of Redmond. On this particular night the Police Amateur Boxing Championships were taking place at the Ulster Hall and practically all the Police Force off duty were in attendance, including the District Inspector, in whose office was a photograph of Redmond. Getting my direction from McCarthy I had no trouble in slipping into the D. I.'s. office and annexing the photograph, which I brought back to Dublin the following day.

Sergeant McCarthy worked for us right throughout the Tan War and from time to time was responsible for sending us on very useful information. At a later stage he arrived in Dublin to meet Mick Collins towards the end of 1920. I met him by arrangement on a Saturday afternoon. My instructions were to bring him to Kirwan's Public House in Parnell Street. The Proprietor, Jim Kirwan, was one of our best Agents in the city and a close confidant of Michael Collins. We were at

Kirwan's for a little while in a snug at the end of the shop when Collins rushed in and said to me, "Get out quick and see what the Auxiliaries are doing, there is a crowd of them coming up the road in extended order". I would like to point out that I was not carrying a gun and neither was Michael Collins. I went out the backway and down the lane into Parnell Street, and as I got to the end of the lane I was held up by the Auxiliaries, demanding where I was going and so forth, and after searching me for a gun I was let go. I turned to the right and walked into Kirwan's by the front entrance and walked down towards the rear of the shop to find that Collins had left the snug and was standing at the counter in one of the partitions and I stood in the next. We both called for drinks, but didn't recognise one another. The Auxiliaries had come into the snug where we had left Sergeant McCarthy and had proceeded to search him. He produced his identity and his gun. On finding out that he was one of their own they ordered a drink for McCarthy and gave him a lecture on the danger of carrying a gun in Dublin, telling him that some of these "Shinners" would come along and probably disarm him if he wasn't careful, or if they found out that he was an R. L. C. man in civies, they might shoot him as a spy. This was all rather amusing to McCarthy and ourselves as McCarthy was still working for us. However, after having a few drinks with McCarthy they proceeded out of the shop, casually searched Collins for a gun, searched myself and others. All this time, behind the bar was an I. R. A. man who had a 45 fully loaded and was ready to use it in the event of any attempt being made to take Collins away. They passed out of the shop and we carried on the business that originally brought us there.

Jameson (alias Byrne).

March 1920.

This was a very interesting individual. He came to Dublin with the highest recommendations from the late Seán McGrath and Art O'Brien in London. It would appear from information which we got afterwards that his technique was rather good. He posed as one of these fiery communistic speakers who appeared on the platform in Hyde Park every Sunday morning and at that time the communistic platform was erected next to the Irish Self-Determination League platform at the same venue. All the speakers on the communistic platform, including Jameson, made it a point to support the Irish Self-Determination League's policy, and possibly as a result of this technique they gradually wormed their way into the confidence of a number of the Irish Self-Determination League Leaders. On numerous occasions they handed over arms and ammunition to Seán McGrath and Art O'Brien and then early in January, 1920, came forward with a proposition to create mutiny in the English Army and Navy in different parts of both Ireland and England. I am not fully aware of what the proposition was in detail that was put up, but it evidently impressed the London leaders because they contacted Mick Collins, who agreed to meet Jameson in Dublin. He actually met Mick Collins in Dublin. I was not present at this first meeting but perhaps Liam Tobin would be in a position to throw further light on it. Following the meeting, at any rate, he was handed over to Tobin, Cullen and myself. It would appear that his chief activity as far as we were concerned was to procure arms and ammunition on this side of the water.

It is rather a peculiar thing that sometimes the cleverest of men are caught out because somebody on the opposite side takes a dislike to them but that is actually

what happened in the case of Jameson. Tom Cullen had forcibly expressed his dislike of the man from the beginning, and possibly this had reactions on myself. In any case there were none of us impressed. It was decided to start laying traps for him. He fell into the first trap laid. He arrived with Liam Tobin outside New Ireland Assurance Society's building at 56 Bachelor's Walk. These premises were situated over Kapp & Petersons at the corner of Bachelor's Walk and O'Connell Street, the New Ireland Assurance Society occupying the second floor. Jameson handed over a portmanteau full of webley revolvers to me in the hall of Kapp & Petersons, which he stated he had smuggled into the country. His story was that he got them in through communistic channels. They were handed over to me in the hall door of Kapp & Peterson's, Bachelor's Walk. I immediately walked straight through the hall and down the steps into Kapp & Peterson's basement, and Tobin took Jameson away. When the coast was clear, I handed the portmanteau of revolvers over to Tom Cullen who was waiting at 32 Bachelor's Walk which was Quartermaster General's stores. Before all these things happened we had contacted Jim McNamara of the Detective Division, who was working for us, to keep his ears open for any unusual occurrence on that day, particularly if he heard of any raids to try and give us the information in advance. About mid-day I got a message from McNamara telling me that the New Ireland Assurance Society's premises at Bachelor's Walk would be raided at about 3 o'clock. I naturally had a good look around the premises to make sure that no papers or any documents or guns or any description were left around. I joined Tobin and Cullen at McBirney's on the far side of the river at 3 o'clock to await developments. On the stroke of 3 o'clock a large force of military and police arrived and surrounded the building. They immediately went

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down into the basement and ransacked it upside down but naturally didn't find any revolvers. They then ransacked the whole building from cellar to garret but by a strange coincidence they found an old Irish Volunteer cap, which evidently belonged to one of the staff, hidden in the basement. The finding of this cap of course convinced them that they were on the right track and that this must be some sort of a Headquarters of the I.R.A. However, the raid was abortive and they went away, but at about 1 o'clock the following morning they arrived back again and they smashed in the door, and, with picks and shovels, proceeded to dig up the basement looking for secret passages. I am leaving the Jameson story at this stage as I would prefer to go into the matter more fully with Liam Tobin. Suffice to say that following other incidents which happened it was finally decided that Jameson was a spy and as such would have to be shot. He met Paddy Daly and Joe <sup>Daly</sup> ~~Dawling~~ by appointment; making sure that no accomplice was shadowing the party he was brought out by tram to meet Mick Collins at Ballymun Road. Naturally Collins wasn't there but Jameson was told that he was going to be shot. He violently protested to the very last that we were shooting one of the best friends that Ireland ever had. I think it is sufficient to say that Sir Basil Thompson clinched the matter when he described Jameson (alias Byrne) as one of the best and cleverest Secret Service men that England ever had. I think that this ~~can be~~ <sup>is</sup> found in Sir Basil Thompson's memoirs. This man had been in service in India before the last Great War and subsequently served right throughout the First World War, served in Germany where he eluded detection and eventually arrived in Ireland.

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Molloy.

Shortly afterwards another gentleman came along named Molloy. This man was working for Colonel Hill Dillon who was Chief Intelligence Officer for the Dublin Command and evidently his job was to contact us with the object of trying to get some information from us about Collins or Collins' whereabouts and if possible to inveigle us into the Castle where a hot reception would probably be awaiting us had we been foolish enough to accept the invitation. However, again I suggest that this is a matter for discussion with Liam Tobin.

After the collapse of the police Intelligence the chief concern of the British authorities in Ireland was the re-establishment of an effective Intelligence system. Our job was, therefore, to keep an alert watch through our own Intelligence network for the appearance of new enemy agents, and to deal with these promptly as they were identified.

The following incidents give some idea of how relentless the war had become at this time.

William Doran.

Night porter at the Wicklow Hotel. Was shot dead in the hall of the Wicklow Hotel on the morning of the 28th January, 1921. This man had been discovered some time previously to have been an enemy agent and to have been continually sending on information to British Intelligence about residents in the Wicklow Hotel. The Wicklow Hotel at that particular time had been frequented in the day time by Mick Collins, Tom Cullen, Gearóid O'Sullivan, Dermot O'Hegarty, Liam Tobin and myself. Doran was warned

repeatedly that if he continued to act in the capacity of enemy agent he would have to take the consequences. He ignored all warnings and was shot on the above date.

Vincent Fourwargue.

This man was a member of a company of the Third Battalion, I.R.A. He was captured by the British and gave information to them of the names and addresses of members of his Unit and Battalion. It is not clear whether this was done under torture or not, but the enemy staged an alleged ambush on the South Circular Road on the 31st January, 1921, during which Fourwargue was allowed to escape. He went to London and subsequently worked his way into I.R.A. circles there. He was shot in London on the 3rd April, 1921.

John Ryan.

I think this was the man who was an employee of Dublin Castle and was shot dead in Gloucester Place on the 5th February, 1921. I believe this is the man who gave away Dick McKee and Peadar Clancy in November, 1920.

9th February, 1921.

Thomas Halpin and John Moran, I.R.A., taken from their homes in Drogheda and shot dead. This was the night of Faddy Thornton's funeral which had been broken up by Igoe's Gang earlier in the day. Tom Halpin was O/C. Drogheda, and his sister states that before he was taken away he was interrogated as to Frank Thornton and Hugh Thornton's whereabouts. John Moran it is believed, was shot because he was suspected of having been at the shooting of Lee Wilson in Gorey earlier on. Moran had nothing to do with this particular job.

The shooting of Captain Lee Wilson was carried out by G.H.Q. Intelligence personnel from Dublin, and Wilson was shot because of brutal treatment of I.R.A. leaders during 1916, the treatment of Cumann na mBan prisoners whom he herded with the men like sheep up on the Rotunda Gardens, and finally because of his renewed activity in the Gorey district in 1920.

29th March, 1921.

Captain Cecil Lees, a member of Hill Dillon's staff (Intelligence) who had been very active in the Dublin area, was shot dead by G.H.Q. Squad Intelligence on 29th March, 1921, in Exchequer Street.

8th April, 1921.

On this date "An tÓglach", the official organ of the Irish Republican Army, stated: "It must be clearly understood that this is a War between the forces of Ireland and England and that no Irishman has a right to a position of neutrality. It must be all or nothing. Money, time, goods, houses, lives, must be placed freely at the services of the Republican State". Here in Dublin this request was carried out to the letter by the ordinary man and woman in the street. The spirit of co-operation and enthusiasm shown by what I would call the ordinary "five-eighth" citizen was marvellous. Time after time when our men were watching houses, watching individuals or waiting for ambushes, men and women came along and quietly told them to look out that there was somebody watching them from a door or a street corner, and even after ambushes, we had women who were out shopping virtually grabbing grenades and revolvers from men who were in danger of being captured and coolly walking through the enemy lines. This spirit prevailed



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right throughout the country, but here in this citadel of British Imperialism the assistance given by the ordinary man and woman was simply marvellous and was responsible in the main for the success of our fighting services.

Very shortly after the arrival of the Auxiliaries in Dublin, Dick Foley contacted Michael Collins and suggested that it would be possible to get an auxilliary named Reynolds who was a Major in F. Company to work for us. It was arranged, therefore, that I would meet Reynolds with Foley and as a result Reynolds decided to act as one of our agents. I met Reynolds regularly in different publichouses and gave him certain jobs to do, which he did successfully. At the beginning, however, we were not too satisfied about his trustworthiness, and on every occasion that I met Reynolds either Joe Dolan or Joe Guilfoyle was conveniently nearby and were armed. However, as the time went on, Reynolds became more useful and secured quite a lot of very valuable information in the form of photographs of the Murder Gang - F. Company, Q. Company and other Companies of the Auxiliaries. He continued to work for us right up to the Truce but some time before the Truce he was transferred to Q. Company Auxiliaires in Clare where he was put in touch with Mick Brennan and continued to supply information of a similar nature to the Truce.

We were put in touch with another Auxiliary named McCarthy, also of F. Company. This man was introduced to Paddy Morrissey by one of the brother Healy's of A. Company, Fourth Battalion, who was a distant relation of McCarthy's. Paddy Morrissey brought him to Liam Tobin at Hannan's publichouse in Abbey Street, and McCarthy agreed to work for us. He passed over to Liam Tobin and myself documents that he was able to lay his hands on inside, and on a few occasions he brought out files which we were able to copy

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and hand back to him. All went well for some time until about May, 1921, when an incident occurred which shook our confidence in McCarthy, and, as a matter of fact, rather convinced us that he had started to double-cross us. However, proof was hard to get and in the interests of safety McCarthy was dropped. This is what happened: Every other day for a few weeks, Liam Tobin, Tom Cullen and I went to the La Scala Restaurant which was then attached to the old La Scala Cinema, now the Capitol Theatre. We went there for lunch every day and we went to the one waitress - I cannot remember her name at the moment but I know that she is married to Tommy McCarthy, a brother of Dan McCarthy. On a Friday we went as usual to the La Scala for our lunch and on that particular day Liam Tobin had a new brown suit on him. Sitting across the room from us was McCarthy, the Auxiliary, with two other fellows whom we didn't know. McCarthy made no attempt to recognise us, which didn't create any suspicion on our minds at the time. On the following day, Saturday, the three of us were in Crowe Street along with Frank Saurin and Charlie Dalton discussing an operation which had been entrusted to us, when Liam Tobin was called away to meet Mick Collins. Shortly after 1 o'clock a message came for Tom Cullen, who also went away. I arranged with the two of them to meet them at Devlin's that evening at 5 o'clock and then went on to my lunch at the La Scala.

On crossing the "halfpenny bridge" I met an old friend of mine and we stopped to have a few words conversation when I noticed a very large enemy convoy crossing O'Connell Bridge, going up O'Connell Street. Neither of us took particular notice of this occurrence as it was one of the things we had got quite used to. After about a quarter of an hour I went on towards the La Scala,

crossed over towards the old Independent Office and went up on the left-hand side of Middle Abbey Street going towards O'Connell Street. When I reached the narrow laneway running between Middle Abbey Street and Prince's Street two Auxiliaries stepped out and held me up, demanding to know where I was going. I was searched, and on informing them that I was on my way home, was propelled by their boots out on to the road. Needless to remark I went across the road as quickly as possible. I went up towards O'Connell Street to find the whole street occupied by military and auxiliaries. People in Manfield's shop on the corner and in Easons and all those in the Theatre and Restaurants were all held - and from what I found out afterwards, I believe they were held there for at least two hours. When the raiding party entered the Restaurant they immediately went to the table that we had been at for the previous week and demanded of the waitress the names of the three men, giving a very accurate description of the three of us, and particularly describing the tall thin man wearing a new brown suit. They insisted that we must have come into the building and that we must be hiding somewhere. However, they ransacked the place from cellar to garret, but needless to remark they didn't get us because we weren't there. Afterwards I discussed this matter with Paddy Morrissey and he told me that he himself had got an uneasy feeling about McCarthy just before he was transferred to Leitrim because he mentioned to McCarthy on one occasion that he was going to Leitrim and McCarthy became very anxious to know who he was meeting there, where he was going and where would his headquarters be, and for some reason, although at the time he believed he was alright, he gave him no information. These, however, were the chances which had to be taken and when dealing with men of the McCarthy type, who after all were only working for the pay they received, well, one possibly couldn't expect anything else to happen, and we can only

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congratulate ourselves that we escaped so luckily on occasions like this.

Major-General Percival.

This man was the Officer Commanding Singapore during the Second World War when he surrendered to an inferior Japanese force practically without firing a shot. During the fight for independence this man was in charge of the British Forces in West Cork. He had a long list of torturings and shootings to his credit during the period he operated there, and in one particular case he tortured Tom Hales so severely that at one stage it was feared that he was going to lose his reason. In this particular case he drove splintered matches up underneath the nails but he failed to get any information out of Tom. One of his favourite pastimes was to drive around the country in the morning in an open touring car and have cockshots at farmers working in the fields. In March, 1921, our Intelligence Officer in Cork reported that Percival had gone to London on holidays and was going on to Dovercourt which is on the south-east coast. On a Sunday night I attended a conference in Kirwan's in Parnell Street with Mick Collins, Bill Ahearne, Pa Murray and Tadhg Sullivan of Cork, and we left the following day for England to shoot Percival. When we arrived in London we contacted Sam Maguire and Reggie Dunne and Intelligence was set in motion to contact Percival. At this particular period the countryside around London and in fact around Manchester and Liverpool was particularly unhealthy because of the activity of the Irish Republican Army in Great Britain. At that time a campaign was being carried out in England of counter-reprisals. Every time that houses, villages or towns were burned in Ireland our men burned farms around the areas mentioned.

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We finally located Percival but it was an impossibility to get at him because he was staying in the Military Barracks at Dovercourt. However, our contact man succeeded in getting the information that Percival was returning to Ireland on the 16th March and would arrive at Liverpool Street Station, London, at about 3 o'clock in the afternoon. We made our plans and our party, augmented with a few more from London, took up our positions in Liverpool Street Station. The fates, however, were against us. At a quarter to three we were amazed to see Sam Maguire standing by the side of the News Kiosk beckoning one of us to come over to him. Now Sam had never shown his hand in London before for very good reasons as he was our principal Intelligence Officer there, but on this occasion his hand was forced because one of his contacts in Scotland Yard had given him the tip that the C.I.D. had spotted some of our party and that all preparations were made to surround the Station. Needless to remark, we got out as quickly as possible and made for different rendezvous. We learned afterwards that at about five minutes to three a cordon of military and police was thrown round the station and every passenger had to pass through this cordon, some of them being held there for hours, but "the birds had flown". The unfortunate part about it was that Percival was able to get back to Cork safely.

On the day following Patrick's Day I brought Tadhg Sullivan to Liverpool, the other members of the party remaining behind in London. I contacted Neil Kerr and Steve Lannigan and succeeded on getting Tadhg on board a coal boat going direct to Cork. I came back the following day on a coal boat from Garson and arrived at the South Wall late the following night.

I bought the "Herald" on my way up to O'Connell

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Bridge, and to my amazement saw right across the top of the paper "Tadhg Sullivan shot dead in Cork", and the irony of it is that he was shot dead in a raid carried out by Percival on a house in Cork. This was on 19th April, 1921. It appears from what I found out afterwards that a meeting of one of the City Battalion Councils was being held and Tadhg on arrival at the house, spotted the raiding party before he went in, and so as to draw them away from the meeting made a dash across the road into another building and was shot dead in attempting to escape through the back window of a house.

100 Seville Place.

No. 100 Seville Place was the headquarters of the O'Toole Gaelic Football Club and a well-known meeting place for Gaels in that part of the city. One of our Intelligence Officers reported to us that an enemy agent was constantly watching this house. He was instructed to take no action in the matter, but just keep him under cover. We reported the matter to Mick Collins, who suggested that here was an opportunity of actually giving this particular agent something to work on and at the same time give us an opportunity of bringing off an operation against the enemy. The O'Toole's were asked to co-operate in one way and that was to arrange for a fairly continuous flow of people to and from the building over a couple of days. This was done and our Intelligence Officer reported that every now and again the enemy agent went to a telephone kiosk which was near the corner of Amiens Street and Seville Place, and rang up. In the meantime arrangements were made to mobilise every available man in the 2nd Battalion, the .A.S.U. and the Squads, and arrangements were made to take over Amiens Street Station, holding Portland Row and all the strategic positions around that area on 7th February, 1921. In the meantime we

quietly arrested the agent, and without going into any details, we extracted from him certain information which was vulnerable to us and which included his number, his contact man inside and the telephone number he was using. At about 5 o'clock Tom Cullen and I rang the contact man in the Castle, and imitating as far as possible the enemy agent's voice, gave him the information that some very special meeting must be taking place in Seville Place as quite a number of men had gone in there inside the previous half-hour. In any event we told him a good story and in the meantime the 2nd Battalion had taken over Amiens Street Station, had occupied the telephone exchange there, the signal boxes, Portland Row, and went under cover. Cullen and I came down Talbot Street after ringing up and we were approaching Amiens Street when a large convoy of troops, at least ten lorries, passed us by. We continued on towards Seville Place but there was no sign of the enemy when we arrived there. It appears that when the head of the column arrived at the corner of Seville Place and Amiens Street it halted, stopped there for about five or ten minutes and then went on down the Strand, coming back again about half an hour afterwards and went back to Barracks. Whether they smelt a rat or not is something which is very hard to ascertain, but certainly it looked as if they left their own Headquarters with the definite intention of raiding 100 Seville Place. The only thing which may have upset the plan was the fact that their chief man inside may have been looking for his contact man, who was a prisoner of ours at the time, and not finding him, may have smelt a rat, but there it is, one of the biggest operations which would have taken place in Dublin fell through because the enemy just failed to come into the trap.

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Dublin Brigade Activities.

From the middle of 1920 up to the Truce the Dublin Brigade, in addition to the major operations, such as, Bloody Sunday, the attack on the Four Courts, the raid for arms on the Kings Inn, the elimination of enemy 'G' men and the murder gang, carried out continuous ambushes on the enemy forces in the city. In addition to the Active Service Unit, which was drawn solely from the Dublin Brigade and which ambushed lorry after lorry, the ordinary units of the Brigade carried out consistent patrol work in their own areas every night. Armed with revolvers and grenades, these men, whose names never appeared anywhere, carried on heroic work. With the penalty of death for being caught with a revolver or a grenade, these men night after night patrolled their areas and ambushed any enemy force that happened to come along. In addition to the menace of Igoe's gang and Secret Service Agents, another new menace appeared on the scene, and that was British patrols in extended order marching along silently and quietly, coming out of the most unexpected quarters and making it a most hazardous job for the Unit patrols.

22 Mary Street, Dublin.

22 Mary Street was the Finance Headquarters of Michael Collins and in his capacity as Minister for Finance of the Dáil he frequently visited that establishment. As in all other cases, of course, offices such as 22 Mary Street were used for other purposes as well, and on one occasion the premises were actually visited in mistake by the enemy, who left without carrying out any search. This was some time early in 1921.

In May 1921 I was sent to Belfast on an urgent intelligence enquiry and whilst there the attack on the Custom House took place on the 25th May. Being fully aware that this operation was going to take place, I was particularly



interested in watching out for some news of it in the Belfast papers. The Belfast Evening Telegraph of the 25th May came out with double headed captions, "ANOTHER INSURRECTION IN DUBLIN".

I returned to Dublin on the following morning, the 26th or 27th - I wouldn't be too positive about this particular date - and arrived at Amiens Street Station at approximately 1 o'clock, did the usual roundabout to make sure I wasn't being followed and eventually arrived at 22 Mary Street. I expected to meet Mick Collins there but Alice Lyons, who was his Private Secretary in the Finance Office, informed me that he had not yet arrived and that she wasn't expecting him for some time. I went off to Woolworth's Café in Henry Street for my lunch, and about an hour and a half afterwards I went back in the direction of the office. I found, however, that from Liffey Street was cordoned off as a raid was in progress on some building and it wasn't until I got very close to the place that I discovered that it was 22 Mary Street which was being raided. I immediately got busy to see if I could locate anybody. I contacted the late Joe O'Reilly, and Joe went off to contact Mick Collins and prevent him from coming along towards Mary Street. He eventually found him and brought him to Bannon's Publichouse in Abbey Street, where I subsequently met him. I remained around to see what would happen, and eventually the military left with one prisoner, Bob Conlon, one of Mick Collins' finance dispatch riders. Bob, of course, was used in other directions as well.

On contacting the staff after the raid, we found that the British were very uneasy about an incident which happened inside during the raid. It appears that when they came in they just counted each member of the staff and rushed through the different offices, and then proceeded to interrogate each

member of the staff individually. The Officer in charge of the raid stated, "I distinctly remember meeting a lady in the inner office when we first entered. Where is she now?" The other members of the staff didn't give him any information but started to smile, and after a while somebody suggested in an undertone, "That must be Mick Collins who escaped disguised as a lady". In actual fact, what happened was this: The lady in question was Alice Lyons and, being a very cool individual, she calmly walked over to the hat rack, took off her hat and coat, put them on her and quietly walked out past the British before they realised what was happening. The British to this day I believe think that Mick Collins really escaped from that building that day disguised as a woman. Nothing of vital importance was captured on the raid.

#### Phil Sheerin's Premises.

One of the places in Dublin which was being continually used by both I.R.A. Intelligence and the Q.M.G's. Department was Phil Sheerin's "The Coolevin Dairies" in Amiens Street which was situated right under the Loopline Bridge in Amiens Street. He had a private room at the back of the shop. This room was often used by Mick Collins to meet one or other of our dispatch riders who were continually travelling up and down on the Great Northern Railway to Belfast. These dispatch riders were invariably members of the staff of the Great Northern Railway and as such were able to get through with the dispatches fairly easily. As well as that, Phil Sheerin's was used as a receiving station for sailors leaving in small parcels of firearms which they brought over on the boats. I often visited these premises with Tom Cullen and Mick Collins during the Black and Tan War. Although this premises was raided on one occasion, nothing was ever caught nor was Sheerin ever arrested.

In every revolutionary movement certain men's names come to the front because they have been assigned to some specialised work or have been brought into prominence by being arrested or court-martialled or for various other reasons, but the names of the men who really do the work, and they really did their work in this city of ours, have rarely been heard, and I would like to take this opportunity of paying my praise to them to say that in my opinion the work of these men together with the Active Service Unit, the Squads and Intelligence, if properly written up and recorded, would shine out as one of the most outstanding achievements in the fight for independence.

I have tried, fighting against a very bad memory, to give in this story of mine as true a record of the happenings from before 1916 to the Truce, but I have only been able to refer to a number of the outstanding events, and will, at a later stage, try to fill in the various things I have omitted.

The end came with dramatic suddenness. We on our part were struggling hard to maintain our position but were continually up against it through scarcity of arms and ammunition, mostly ammunition. We lost one of our bomb factories - this was a bad blow at the particular time it happened. In those fateful days before July 1921, plans were prepared to carry out one of the biggest operations which would have taken place in the city. It was a job to wipe out with one blow every Enemy Agent, Secret Service Agent, Intelligence Officer, Auxiliary and Black and Tan. For this purpose the Brigade was mobilised together with the Active Service Unit, the Squads and Intelligence. Different positions were taken up all over the city but, about a half an hour before the job was due to start, orders were received from the Cabinet to cancel the operation because on that very day definite approaches had been made by the enemy for a

truce. Whether that truce was a good thing or not remains for historians to record, but in my humble opinion had it not taken place we would have found ourselves very hard set to continue the fight with any degree of intensity owing to that very serious shortage of ammunition, because men, no matter how determined they may be or how courageous they may be, cannot fight with their bare hands.

SIGNED: Frank Thornton  
(Frank Thornton.)

DATE: 26th November 1951  
26th November 1951.

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1013-21  
BURO STAIRE MILENTA 1013-21  
NO. W.S. 615

WITNESS: J.V. Lawless Col.  
(J.V. Lawless, Col.)