

ORIGINAL

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21

BURO STAIRÉ MILEATA 1913-21

No. W.S. 819

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BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21.

STATEMENT BY WITNESS

DOCUMENT NO. W.S. 819

Witness

Lieut.-Gen. Liam Archer,
31 Victoria Road,
Rathgar,
Dublin.

Identity.

Member of 'F' Company, 1st Battalion,
Dublin Brigade, 1915 - ;

Member of G.H.Q. Intelligence Section, 1920.

Subject.

- (a) Church St., Dublin, Easter Week 1916;
- (b) G.H.Q. Intelligence, 1920-1921.

Conditions, if any, Stipulated by Witness.

Nil

File No. S.308

Form B.S.M. 2

Statement by Lieut. General Liam Archer

31, Victoria Road,
Rathgar.

I attended the public meeting in the Rotunda Rink November 1913 but I did not join the I.V. then. I joined about a month after the Howth Gun-Running.

At this time I was a member of a "Division" of the A.O.H. and it may be of interest to record the attitude of that organisation. When the I.Vs. was started members of the A.O.H. organisation were told to hold back from joining because the new body was not under the control of the Irish Party. This ban held to some extent until the Party acquired representation on the executive of the I.V. Members of the A.O.H. were then told to join the new movement and, accordingly, I joined a Company which met in the A.O.H. Hall on Claude Road, Glasnevin. I think it was "C" Company II Battalion. Officers were - O.C. Linehan (of Capel Street), Feely (Comdt. L.O.), O'Neill (Later Librarian U.C.D. I think).

The Division of the A.O.H. to which I belonged was composed mainly of Civil Servants and professional men. At one of its meetings I asked if the A.O.H. intended to take steps to arm its members who were Volunteers. My query was supported by a senior Civil Servant, but the answer was that it was not intended the movement should be armed but that the "Daily Sketch" "side" would be taken care of. Sometime later a consignment of Italian rifles reached the Company. They were pronounced to be "duds" by some members of the Company who had British Army experience.

"The "split" came and the Company divided, the greater number being members of the A.O.H. joined the National Volunteers. A number remained with the Irish Volunteers, and a number, confused and disappointed, ceased membership. I was amongst the latter group and I severed my connection with the A.O.H. at the same time. The situation rapidly clarified, and early in 1915 I joined "F" Company, 1st Battalion. A few weeks before I joined, Piaras Beaslaoi, who had been Company Commander, became Vice Commandant of the Battalion. He was succeeded by Fionan Lynch and the Lieutenants were John F. Shouldice and D. Hegarty.

Beaslaoi, Lynch, Hegarty and many members of the Company were also active members of the Keating Branch of the Gaelic League and I also became a member. During later years the Company and the Branch were closely linked.

In the Company were a number of Civil Servants and, as surveillance of Volunteer Parades by the police intensified, it was deemed desirable to form them into a Special Section parading on Sunday morning in 25, Parnell Square. I was made Section Commander. I think this took place early in 1916 or late 1915.

I acquired a Lee Enfield cavalry carbine, (quite modern but minus the orthodox safety catch and "cut off". It was not made to carry a bayonet but I made a crude adaption to enable it to do so), a .25 Harrington and Richardson auto, and a large hunting knife. My uniform was complete but I adopted leather buttons, and a soft hat instead of a peaked cap.

I was inducted into the I.R.B. a short time prior to Easter Week, and about a week beforehand I was told the Rising would take place. I think this information was.

restricted to members of the I. R. B.

In Holy Week my Company mounted an armed guard each night in the Keating Branch, 18, North Frederick Street. One member stood in the hall, the remainder were in a small room overlooking the flight of stairs leading from the hall.

We soon learned that this guard was for the protection of some of the members of the Volunteer Executive who were "on the run" in the house, and that others were in residence in Tobins in Hardwicke Street.

Late on Saturday we (this guard) learned that the "rising" fixed for Sunday would not take place. As far as I recollect, this intimation followed the countermanding order issued by Eoin McNeill.

On Easter Sunday I was on duty all day in the Keating Branch. That night we were passing the time playing cards in the small "guard" room and were joined by Michael Collins. I had not met him before but he was apparently well known to others of the party. His entrance was characteristic of him as I later knew him. He forced his way to a seat at the table, produced two revolvers and announced he would ensure there would be nothing crooked about this game. Not to be outdone, we all produced our weapons.

Shortly before midnight Fionan Lynch was called from the room and in a few minutes a comrade and I were called out by him. With him on the landing was Diarmuid Lynch who gave me a despatch to deliver to James Tyrrell, George's Street, Dunlaoghaire, and my comrade was given one for an address in Francis Street vicinity. While we were with D. Lynch he was joined by Seán McDermott who held a

short whispered conversation with him, and then limped back upstairs. We were ordered to report back on completion of our task.

Collins generously gave me his bicycle for my journey. I had some difficulty in finding Tyrrells house and greater difficulty in getting an answer.

Having delivered my despatch, I started for the Keating Branch but got a skid on the tram tracks and fell in front of two policemen. They took no notice, and I got back to the Keating Branch between 3 and 4 a.m. but found I could get no reply to my repeated knocking. I therefore went home, arriving there about 4 a.m.

At 10 a.m. on Easter Monday D. O'Hegarty delivered to me an order to have my Section mobilised at Columcille Hall, Blackhall Place, at 10 a.m. The members were scattered over a wide area as far apart as Oxmantown Road, and Vernon Avenue, Clontarf. I enlisted the aid of my brother who had a Motor Cycle combination. My first two calls at Jones Road and Clonliffe Road drew blanks, both members had gone out for the day. At this point the Motor Cycle combination broke down for the second time and, telling my brother to go home, I set off on foot for Blackhall place, giving up the idea of mobilising my Section. Most of them reported to some post and gave service during the week.

Carrying 150 rounds of .303 and 100 rounds of shotgun ammo. I reached Columcille Hall and "fell in". At this time Lieut. Shouldice had not reported and I was ordered by F. Lynch to take his place. As I knew this area very well, I was ordered to move the Company into Church Street. This I did, via Queen's Street -

Thundercut Alley - Smithfield (at the double) - Carter's Lane - Bow Street - Mary's Lane. By this time Lieut. Shouldice had reported and I was detailed as escort to V. Comdt. Beaslaoi with whom I proceeded down Mary's Lane. The people were hostile and there was some excitement. V.C. Beaslaoi ordered me to fix my bayonet. This I did and immediately a very fat dame in spotless white apron and voluminous shawl leapt in front of us and beating her ample bosom with clenched fists called on me to "put it through me now for me son who's out in France". We steered past her and proceeded to Walter Cole's Fruit Stores in Greek Street, where we met a couple of Officers, one of whom was I think Eamonn Duggan. The Store was full of tin canister bombs. After a short stay we moved to another store, also in Greek Street and by this time our party was increased by a few Volunteers. This was a two-storey building, the windows of which on the first floor were small and low. I went to the back of the house and found myself in a small yard surrounded by buildings. There was no exit. It seemed foolish to me to stay there and I think I suggested this to Beaslaoi.

We may have entered this building because of the fact that when we were at Coles there was a sudden excitement in Greek Street and a rush of people towards Mary's Lane. At that time I did not know the cause.

On this trip in some building we visited, but I forget which, there were a number of new auto pistols - painters or parabellums - and a good supply of ammunition, but my recollection is that no one knew how to use them. After some short time we left Greek Street and on our way a plain clothes policeman was picked up and brought to Church Street but, being found from papers on him to be a

clerk, he was, I think, released. As he had had a rifle muzzle a few feet from his head for some ten minutes he was very relieved when released.

After this tour I found myself free and joined Lieut. D. O'Hegarty who was erecting a barricade outside the Franciscan Church in Church Street. He was much concerned that a passage led through the Church grounds from Bow Lane to Church Street just where this barricade was sited and through which he could be outflanked. We examined this passage and considered blocking it with seats taken from the Church. A couple of the friars became very perturbed at this but the Superior drew them away, saying it was better they should be ignorant of what we did. We did nothing in fact, and I do not think the passage was blocked during the week. It was, of course, closed by high iron gates at each end.

I then received orders to erect a barricade at the junction of Church Street, May Lane and Mary's Lane, being given a few Volunteers to do this. We used rubble and old timber from the ruins in some old houses. Later I erected one in May Lane near the entrance to the yard of Jamesons Distillery. This we made of carts taken from the distillery. Another I erected at the narrow point of Mary's Lane before it broadened out for the Corporation Market. This was made of material taken from a local "junk" yard. Later I erected a fourth in Cuckoo Lane off Beresford Street. I cannot say that these were all up on Monday, but I think they were all up by Tuesday. These four barricades covered a derelict and open area which had been created some years previously by the demolition of old tenements, and all barricades faced outwards. I had ultimately about twenty men, I think, under my command with John O'Connor (Solicitor) as Sergeant. Presumably because of the number of barricades,

and that the position was the link between Upper Church Street and Brunswick Street and the Four Courts, I was ordered by Fionan Lynch to retain the rank and position of Lieutenant given by him on Monday morning, when there seemed a danger that Lieut. Shouldice might not be able to reach the Company. (He lived in Clontarf).

The armament of my group was a miscellaneous collection of Martinis, Enfields and Mausers. I do not remember any shotguns.

During Monday we were visited by two priests from nearby parishes who, though at first annoyed with us, nevertheless spoke kindly and gave us conditional absolution.

People passed freely through our position but as the day advanced numbers fell and as our barricades grew we refused passage to those who were merely sightseers. By late evening only holidaymakers on their way home, and looters, sought to pass through. The former we passed through in convoyed groups; the latter we stripped of all their loot and tried to frighten with dire threats. All night and until daylight came, the returning holidaymakers reached our barricades.

The people in the area were generally hostile for the first couple of days but later their attitude changed completely.

I cannot at this lapse of time give a coherent detailed account of what happened during the week. I can only try now and treat of matters I remember.

Food: When the first mobilisation was ordered we were told to bring sandwiches and a few small pieces of firewood. I assumed from this we were going to the country. For Monday, therefore, I had some sandwiches. I entered the

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Richmond Hospital on Thursday about midday with a G. S. W. and up to that time I had had some mugs of strong tea and some very fresh bread daily. The only extra I had was a bowl of stewed figs which I found in some residential apartments in the offices in Jameson's Distillery. We were fortunate that Monks Bakery was in our area and that it was kept going or we would not have had any bread. Supply as well as first aid was, I think, supposed to come from the H. Q. at Fr. Matthew Hall and we got what we did get from there. The personnel there were probably not much better off than were we in our isolated posts. In retrospect, however, there would seem to have been little, if any, effort made to organise food supply. A distribution of bread to all residents in the area was made daily. This had the effect of helping to mellow the attitude of those who were hostile.

First Aid. Subject to the limitations of knowledge and numbers this was good, as far as I know, and some members of Cumann na mBan were outstanding in their courage and devotion. An invaluable asset was the near vicinity of the Richmond Hospital from which students and doctors, aided by the Friars, were continuously in operation, rendering first aid and acting as stretcher bearers. We were fortunate in having speedy hospitalisation for the wounded and the entire staff of the Richmond gave continuous and unstinted service.

From the residential quarters in Jamesons Distillery we drew a good supply of blankets etc. for the first aid centre. I do not think there was any other supply.

Armament: As far as I can recollect my Company was quite well equipped with Martinis, Enfields and Mausers. As I have stated, there was a store in the area with some

automatic weapons but I think we were all ignorant of their mechanism and I doubt if they were used.

Tin canister bombs with a three seconds fuse seemed to only produce accidents.

I was given one weighing at least seven pounds with orders to destroy a covered footbridge crossing Bow Street and joining the Upper Stories of two separate buildings of the distillery. We brought it to the roof parapet, lit the fuse, counted three, and dropped it on to the bridge. It rolled off on to the ground some forty feet below but did not explode. Later from the ground J.S. O'Connor put three rounds of .303 into the tin without result. On Thursday I was sent two tins of petrol (4 gallons) with orders to burn down this footbridge if the British got access to the portion of the distillery fronting on Smithfield.

Discipline: I had a mixed collection on my barricades, many of whom I did not know. Only the minimum could be relied on to remain at their posts. Others wandered round the area seeking food, or their "pals". This was particularly bad at night and called for frequent inspections. Sleep being impossible during the day I do not recollect getting more than about four hours sleep between Monday and Thursday. In retrospect I realise that we should have organised sentries' tours of duty, rest points, etc. But we were very ignorant. Much of this wandering was dictated by a search for food.

Barricades: Mine were rather open and of light material. They would not have been bullet proof. There were no houses that could be occupied. I didn't realise that if I couldn't go up, I ought to go down. Though paved with setts we could, perhaps, have trenched the streets. There

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would probably have been difficulty in getting my group to undertake the labour.

In the long run, however, I was told to build barricades and I did so.

Rumours: Rumours of various kinds were fairly current, mainly of good results in the rest of the country. On Wednesday evening an official statement was circulated that help was at hand as two German warships had arrived in Dublin Bay. We were all enthused and I went to share mine with D. O'Hegarty. He quickly deflated me by opining they were British vessels. It was questionable if the circulation of this rumour served any useful purpose.

Inspections: I do not remember any visits from Company or Battalion Officers to my posts. Commandant Daly and Captains Duggan and Morkan on Wednesday passed through my barricade at junction of Church Street and Mary's Lane on a visit to St. Michan's Church, and Captain F. Fahy once passed through from the Four Courts to Fr. Matthew Hall. Seán T. O'Kelly also passed through from the G.P.O.

Post 1916.

About mid-summer 1916 steps were taken to reorganise the Volunteers. D. O'Hegarty had been released from gaol. Liam Clarke, who had been with me in the Richmond Hospital, was particularly active and though he seemed to have been badly wanted by the police he did quite an amount of travelling through the country. Others who were active in this work were Greg Murphy and Séamus O'Doherty whose house was much used. Contact was

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established with Volunteers who had escaped from the general round-up and with the trickle coming from internment. By the time of the general release from Frongoch at Christmas 1914 "F" Company was fairly well on the way to being reorganised.

Late in 1916 (perhaps October), a Convention which I attended as a Dublin representative was held in Flemings Hotel, Gardiner's Row. I would say there were probably fifty delegates, one of whom was Seán Ó Murthuile. A second convention was held on the Sunday of the "black frost" in, I think, March, 1917, at the Plaza Hotel, Gardiner's Row. As Liam Clarke was ill I was nominated to attend as a Dublin delegate in his stead. Clarke, however, attended and though I remained present I took no part in the proceedings. Collins had been appointed Adjutant or Assistant Adjutant, 1st Battalion, Dublin Brigade, a very short while before in order that he might attend as a Dublin delegate. Cathal Brugha also was present. He was on crutches. Antagonism between these two men, I believe, developed from this convention. The cause of this I understood to be - Collins had drafted a scheme of organisation for the Volunteers which he intended to submit to the convention. The evening before, he met delegates who were members of the I.R.B. and secured their support for his proposals. Brugha, who had been a member of the I.R.B. before the Rising, had become convinced that organisation had failed to justify itself because a minority of its members had taken part in the Rising. He heard of Collins' caucus meeting and, with Clarke's support, opposed Collins' proposals, but they were accepted. A Headquarters Staff was appointed and arrangements were made for holding a more representative convention later in the year. It was held at Croke Park, but I was not a delegate on that occasion. (I have a copy of an Organisation which may be

the one submitted to that Convention).

At the time of the Convention in the Plaza Hotel D. O'Hegarty was Commandant 1st Battalion and I was O.C. "F" Company which paraded 70 strong for Fionan Lynch's inspection on his release from Lewis Gaol in 1917.

Dick Mulcahy was Brigade O.C. and in the autumn of 1917 I was appointed Brigade Signal Officer. On my staff as an instructor I found James Tyrrell to whom I had delivered a despatch in Dun Laoghaire on Easter Sunday night. I also had Andy Fitzpatrick to whom a despatch had also been delivered on the same occasion. Seán Byrne of "F" Company 1st Battalion was a third. These three were P.O. Linesmen. We had classes in each Battalion to which we tried to teach the Morse code and the elements of telephony and telegraphy but not, I think, with much success.

When conscription was threatened in 1918 I was transferred to the staff of Rory O'Connor who had, I think, shortly before been made Director of Engineering. It was decided to organise a Company of Engineers under direct control of G.H.Q. with the special mission of carrying out extensive sabotage of communications, in the event of conscription being imposed. Four platoons were formed, one in each Battalion area of 25 men drawn from each Battalion. The officers initially were the three men I have mentioned and another P.O. Linesman M. Twamley. The expert knowledge of these men was most valuable in teaching the most efficient methods of disrupting telephones and telegraph communications. George and Jack Plunkett were also attached to Rory O'Connor's staff. The latter was also a kind of an assistant to me. He was a charming and lovable character but rather unpractical and had many extraneous interests.

In time, we developed training in the use of explosives and demolition of rails and bridges and the mining of roads. Officer personnel changed and when in time the unit expanded to a Battalion which was, I think, late in 1919 or early in 1920 they included or had included:-

L. O'Doherty	(Adj. later O.C.)
M. Cremin	E. Kelly
G. Holohan	J. Daly
P. McGrath	T. Keegan
M. McEvoy	T. McMahon
J. Ryan	

There were others whose names I cannot now recollect nor can I recollect the appointments of the above-named. McEvoy transferred to the A.S.U. I think it is desirable to record at this stage an important decision bearing on the activities of what was known as the 5th (Engineer) Battalion. When the armed activities of the Dublin Brigade intensified, the men of the Battalion were keen to do their share of raids and ambushes, etc. Rory O'Connor gave me a positive order prohibiting any unit, or personnel, from undertaking any such activities. He ruled that the unit was a specialist unit being trained for specialist tasks and the men must not be wasted on operations for the carrying out of which there were in the Brigade four "infantry" battalions. I was at this time both his deputy and a member of the Brigade Council. The Council, or at any rate, the other Battalion Commandants were also opposed to the 5th Battalion undertaking such activities. They considered, first, that the opportunities for such should be the preserve of their units and, second, that it would be impossible for them to know that the 5th Battalion was carrying out, or had carried out, an operation in their areas, and that this fact could gravely endanger the success of their own operations, and

the safety of their personnel. Hence until 1921, after I became full deputy to Rory O'Connor and L. O'Doherty became O.C. Battalion when this prohibition was withdrawn, the unit was only engaged on tasks in which their training was of especial value. Samples of these were the raid on the Irish Independent 21st December, 1919, in which G. Holohan was in charge. The destruction of Maynooth Town Hall (I forget date) by a party under J. Ryan. Information had been received that the British Forces intended to put a post there. The burning of evacuated police barracks. Participation in the Custom House destruction. The mining of the Lucan Road to intercept the party bringing Seán MacEoin to Dublin after his capture. Picked men were mobilised to breach with explosives the wall of Mountjoy gaol to enable MacEoin to be rescued, but this attempt had to be abandoned. Raids for engineering tools (e.g. on the P.O. Stores, Aldboro' House) were carried out by the Unit. Much work was done by survey to pin-point the vital places on all forms of communication, the demolition of which would create the greatest destruction. In this, through the help of an Inspector of P.O. Linesmen - F. Scannel - put in touch with me by M. Collins, I obtained tracings of all underground telephone cables in Dublin and also "route diagrams" of all main overhead telegraph and telephone routes in the country. These latter enabled us to identify on any pole on a route a particular telephone circuit. M. E. O'Connor, a P.O. Engineer, co-operated with Scannel in this and they rigged up an instrument to enable us to "tap" telephone lines. We tried this many times on the 'phone line from British Military Headquarters, Dublin, to Headquarters, Cork, but without success. We "tied in" on the line from the railway embankment at Inchicore. J. O'Donohoe and M. Cremin did most of this but O'Doherty and I took part, and when Scannel and O'Connor found we were

not successful they came along too, but could not perfect the instrument. We could, of course, only do this after dark and before curfew.

This is a small digression. After such a lapse of time I find I have no clear coherent recollection of the Unit's activities which would enable me to write a chronological narrative and I can only refer to isolated incidents.

On 19th February, 1920, an abortive raid to (I think) destroy a consignment of motor tyres for British Forces which were lying at the B. & I. Stores, North Wall. Pat McGrath and his brother, Gabriel, were returning home going south through Westmoreland Street and at the Bank of Ireland were challenged by two armed D.M.P. men who almost simultaneously opened fire and wounded Pat in the shoulder. Gabriel backed up College Green, firing as he ran and killed one of the policemen. Pat, after his release, told me that whilst very ill in King George V. Hospital (now St. Brigid's) he was visited by a man dressed as a priest who tried hard to get him to make his Confession. Some instinct made him refuse, even though his life was in danger from his wound and he was very weak. He was later convinced the "priest" was J.C. Byrne who was shot as a spy at Ballymun on 2nd March, 1920.

Sometime in 1920 it was decided to run an engineering course for engineer officers from country Units. This lasted about two weeks, and the class were lectured by R. O'Connor, J. Plunkett and myself. (Comdt. M. Hanlon, A.M.S., was one of the students). After this we compiled two engineering manuals - one on railway demolition and the other on demolition of P.O. routes. I have a copy of the first.

Towards the end of 1920, or else early in 1921, we (I refer now to the Engineering Staff - O'Connor, Plunkett and self) procured a British Aircraft W/T receiver and set up a listening station in a house in Nelson St., the residence of one R. McAuley employed in the College of Science as (I think) an electrician. We engaged full time on this a trained wireless operator - Delargy - but I do not recollect that we secured any tangible results. Later we secured a transmitter and receiver which we took one day to R. Barton's in Wicklow and experimented with it, but again I recollect no tangible results.

In September of 1920 we got the task of testing an explosive later called "War flour". M. McEvoy took some - if not all - of his Company to camp over the weekend at Kilmashogue. We received a warning from the Rathfarnham Company that British Forces were in the grounds of St. Columbas College. McEvoy derided this and Doherty, J. Plunkett and I went out on Sunday morning (19.9.'20), joined McEvoy, and were joined by R. Mulcahy and a Christian Brother. We climbed to the top of the mountain and there tested the explosive, which was in glass jam jars. We used electric detonators. The results were very effective and some of us had narrow escapes from flying rock as we stood too near. While this was going on we saw two of those we left in camp climbing hurriedly to us. We then learned a body of armed men dressed in black had surrounded the camp, shot Seán Doyle and captured the others. We dispersed, crossed country to Rathfarnham and Doherty and I returned to Dalkey where we were staying. It was a lesson never to discount local knowledge. I was under the impression the Christian Brother had invented the explosive.

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Early in 1921 R. O'Connor was appointed O/C Britain, the idea, I think, being to carry the war into England. The fires which broke out in London, Liverpool and Manchester were, I think, an outcome of his activities. I recollect he and I sent G. Holohan to Manchester on a job but its nature I do not now remember.

Apart from my activity in the Battalion I became involved in Intelligence. I was a P.O. Telegraphist but by 'bluff' I was reinstated following a period of suspension from duty after Easter Week. On 21st August, 1918, two sisters and a brother were prosecuted in Glasgow for attempting to carry arms to Ireland. I took a copy of a cipher message from R.I.C. Dublin to Police Glasgow and brought it to Collins. He was very interested and asked could I get more. I said I thought so. By degrees I organised a group of about a dozen men and women who worked for the next four years on this task. Because duties in the telegraph office changed every three weeks results fluctuated, and because of the anti-national outlook of some of the staff, we had to be very careful. Supervision of staff was very close. I think my most profitable period was when curfew began at 8 p.m. I was on night duty and each morning for three weeks I took out in my socks copies of every police cipher message that had passed through the office the previous day. This was November, 1920. One night I took a 'phone call from Auxiliary H.Q., Beggars Bush. The Auxie who spoke led off with "Oh hell". I said "what's up". He answered "My nerves are bad - we are all in a bad way", and he then gave me the story of Kilmichael. I duly sympathised and then took a spare copy for myself of each of several cipher messages he sent.

Some time before I got on this work Collins had made contact with members of the detective division and he soon

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was able to supply me with the key to the cipher. The cipher was very elementary, being a simple transposition. The key was a word in which no letter was repeated and having 10 or 11 letters but not more than 13. The word being written out was followed by the first letters of the alphabet which were not in it to bring the number of letters to 13 and the remaining letters of the alphabet written underneath, viz:-

SWITZERLANDBC
FGHJKMOPQUVXY

thus F = S or vice versa. As the new key word was sent out in the old cipher on the 1st of each month, we were automatically supplied. The cipher was so simple it could be broken without a key. Later a double transposition cipher using two key words was adopted. They operated as in the case of the single word, the first key giving another cipher message, and the second converting this into plain language. Later, a complicated figure cipher was adopted. This provided for each letter from two to six double figures. Thus A could be represented by any of the following - 16, 34, 23, 87: E by 41, 53, 69, 24, 76, 91: Z by 12, 29. The number of alternatives depended upon the frequency with which each letter is used in the English language - thus E had six and Z two. I have a copy of one supplied to me by Collins.

Collins had several "post offices" in the city into which we could drop messages and one, a dairy, was in Amiens Street, a short distance from the telegraph office.

A second small group operated in the telegraph office at Kingsbridge through Seán O'Connell. One day early in February, 1920, I abstracted a copy of a lengthy cipher message from Inspector General R.I.C. to Co. Inspector, Cork. On leaving the office, I went to the Keating Branch

and there started to decipher it. While at this Seán Ó Muirthuille joined me. The message informed the Co. Inspector that Collins would be in a hotel in Cork the following night, that he would probably be armed, was dangerous, and should be captured dead or alive. When Ó Muirthuille saw this he got very excited and then told me that a man named Quinlisk had got in touch with Collins and had almost convinced him of his sincerity. Ó Muirthuille was not convinced and induced Collins to set a trap for him by telling him he was going to Cork and where he would stay. I think, in fact, he told Quinlisk he would meet him there. Later that night Collins came to the Keating Branch and when he read the message he commented: "That.....has signed his death warrant". I cannot remember if Quinlisk was mentioned by name in the police message, but I think the message did say that the person who gave the information as to Collins whereabouts would call at the barracks before the raid ordered would take place. Quinlisk was shot shortly afterwards.

The "Chronology" of events lists three raids on the Rotunda Rink for "State" mails. My recollection is that early in 1920 (February - March), acting on information I furnished, the mail van which collected the "State" mails and brought them to the Rotunda Rink was held up and the mails seized. After this, the mails were carried by armoured car but in mid-Summer (June - July) it was decided to seize them from the Rotunda Rink. I drew a detailed plan of the building and pin-pointed the location of the wanted mails and of the alarm signal. I went over this plan with McKee and advised as to how the raid should be carried out within the building. The result was that Oscar Traynor found the task a simple one.

I think there may only have been two raids on the actual Rink itself. In this connection, however, a note I made several years ago says that, as a second raid on the Rink was out of the question, one evening Pat Moynihan parcelled up the mails after arrival by armoured car, got the door porter to call a cab and put the parcels in it, and then calmly drove away. Now Moynihan told me this himself, and whilst he could tell a tall story he was equally capable of this act. The real point of the tale is - how many raids on the actual Rink itself were made?

Sometime about early October 1920 Collins asked me if I could arrange for the interception of letters for certain persons living in Lower Mount Street. I did this through a couple of postmen who made the delivery. He also asked me to try and get from a civilian telephone operator employed in the Viceregal Lodge information about French's movements, and I got a half promise of such but no results.

From about October 1920 until the Truce I was "on the run" as far as not being able to sleep at home was concerned. In the daytime I was, of course, on duty in the Central Telegraph Office. I suffered two raids, one early in 1918 by four detectives. I was not at home when they called, and though they made a close search of my room they did not open a locked drawer which, besides two revolvers, contained a lot of very incriminating papers. From the description I concluded the "Dog" Smyth, Hoey and Coffey were in the party.

One Sunday early November 1920 I decided to sleep at home. At 4 a.m. a party of military with a D.M.P. man arrived. The search was not very intense. They behaved politely and accepted us as peaceful citizens. They missed a larger cache of mine, papers of my sisters who worked in

the office of the D. Organisation, and papers of D. O'Hegarty, who, being in the house till curfew, watched the raid from his temporary lodging opposite.

They wanted a man whose surname was "Lyam" spelt "Liam". I think this was L. Tobin whose home was near. When Collins sent messages to Tobin they were addressed to "Liam", to me "Liam A" and we signed ours in the same way. Whatever was the cause of the raid I think our identities got mixed.

Signed *Liam Archer*
(Liam Archer)
Date *5th March 1953.*
5th March, 1953.

Witness *J. Kearns Comdt.*
(J. Kearns) Comd't.

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21
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