

W.S. 908

ORIGINAL

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21
BURO STAIRE MILITAIRA 1913-21
No. W.S. 908

ROINN  COSANTA.

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21.

STATEMENT BY WITNESS.

DOCUMENT NO. **W.S.**.....908

Witness

Michael O'Flanagan,
 19 Ratoath Road,
 Cabra West,
 Dublin.

Identity.

Member of 'A' Company 1st Glasgow Brigade, 1913 - ;
 Section Commander 'C' Company, 1st Battalion,
 Dublin Brigade, 1915 - .

Subject.

Reorganisation of 'C' Company, 1st Batt'n.
 Dublin Brigade, 1917, and national
 events up to 1923.

Conditions, if any, Stipulated by Witness.

Nil

File No. **S.315**.....

Form B.S.M. 2

ORIGINAL

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21

BURO STAIRS-MILENTA 1913-21

NO. W.S. 908

STATEMENT BY Mr. MICHAEL O'FLANAGAN,
19 Ratoath Road, Cabra,
DUBLIN.

P A R T I I .

A few days following my return to Dublin after my release I went to my former employers, Cullens', Fishmongers of Leeson Street, to see if I could get my job back. I saw Mr. Willie Cullen, the proprietor, and explained the position to him. He stated he had employed a man in my place and that I had lost my job with him, by reason of the fact that I had failed to turn in on the Saturday prior to the Rising, and that even if he was in a position to offer me a job he could not do so, as the hostility of his customers in that particular area, who were mostly of the pro-British element, would make it impossible for me to carry on. I then went to the National Aid Association Headquarters in Exchequer Street and told them what had happened. I was brought before a Committee and, strange to relate, the gentleman presiding at the Committee meeting was a brother of my former employer. He subsequently became a prominent figure in the Sinn Fein and Volunteer Movements. The National Aid Association, having heard my case, proposed that a Black List should be published of all employers who had refused to re-employ men who had been out in Easter Week. As far as I am aware this list was never published due to the fact that Cullen, who was one of the Secretaries of the National Aid Association, may have used his influence to stop its publication.

Some short time afterwards I got a postcard from my former employer, Willie Cullen, informing me of a job then going at McCabes', the Fishmongers in Rathgar. I went up to this place and saw Mr. Nathan, the Manager, who started the discussion by abusing me and telling me that my brother Patrick, who had been killed in the Rising, had left his job and that, having regard to the association of my family with the Insurrection,

he would - under no circumstances - give me employment. Nathan, who held a big position in the A.O.H., was particularly hostile to the revolutionary movement and saw fit to vent his spleen on me on this occasion.

I then tried several Fish and Poultry establishments in the city and met with the same result. At this time things were becoming a bit difficult with me. I had a wife and two children to support and the Unemployment Benefit which I received was very small and insufficient to maintain us. I reported my case to the National Aid Association and was again brought before a Committee who, having heard my circumstances, made me a grant of £20. As there was a shop in Wexford Street which was vacant and could be had for a small rent of about 22/- a week, I used the £20 grant to set up in business. The business, while not flourishing, gave me a living and I held it for 18 years.

About the third week in November, 1916, Paddy McGrath and Joe Larkin (the latter had a shop in Wexford Street) called on me and told me that my name was on a list which they had got from the I.R.B. Headquarters in Dublin and asked me to report the following Sunday to Room No. 9, 41 Parnell Square, where I would receive further instructions.

I reported as ordered and met there the new Centre of the reorganised Brothers Sheares Circle of the I.R.B., Martin Conlon, who addressed us. There were about 26 to 30 at the meeting whom were, as far as I can recollect, Oscar Traynor, Sean Prendergast, Sean Kennedy, Michael O'Flanagan (Ruadh), a printer, my brother Frank O'Flanagan and James Stritch who was Treasurer of the Circle and Treasurer of the Wolfe Tone Commemoration Fund. Conlon, in the course of his address, told us that it was the intention to keep the organisation 'up to scratch' and to reorganise the Volunteer Movement with a view to continuing the fight for Independence. He told us that we would be informed of the date on

which we would report back to our units, and that we should hold ourselves in readiness for this purpose. He added that the monthly meetings of the Circle would be held as heretofore.

About the end of January, 1917, the surviving and available officers and N.C.Os of "C" Company of the 1st Battalion, who had taken part in the Rising, were called to 41 Parnell Square where we were addressed by Sean Flood who was Acting O/C. of the Company for the time being. He told us that he had called us on instructions from G.H.Q. with a view to getting the Company reorganised. This meeting was attended solely by old members of the I.R.B., its purpose being to establish contact with other members of the unit who might not have been made aware of the intention to reorganise the different Companies. We were told by Seán Flood that it was our duty to get in touch with all old comrades and ask them to re-join their Company. As soon as this had been done he would arrange to call a further meeting.

There was very little doing from January until May when Joe McGuinness was elected M.P. for South Longford while still a prisoner in one of the English gaols. The Company was engaged at this time in furthering McGuinness' election by propaganda and by policing and canvassing South Longford during the election. The Redmondite Party were holding several recruiting meetings for the British Army through the city, many of which I and other members of my Company attended for the purpose of obstructing the proceedings and making it difficult for the speakers to put their views before the people. The attitude of the D.M.P. during those meetings to interrupters like ourselves was particularly hostile and on several occasions the meetings broke up in confusion and baton charges by the police.

The introduction of the Conscription Bill by the British House of Commons in April, 1918 and the hostility of the Irish people generally to the imposition of Conscription resulted in an intake of recruits to the Volunteer Movement. I and other members of my Company were engaged in

obtaining signatures to the Plebiscite against Conscription organised by the Anti-Conscription Committee. As the strength of my Company had increased very considerably, it was found necessary to form another Company to which we gave the designation "H" Company. The members of this Company subsequently took part in an engagement in North King Street in which Kevin Barry was captured, afterwards courtmartialled and executed by the British.

The large intake of recruits to the various Companies of the 1st Battalion necessitated the appointment of an instructor to "H" Company, which Company had its headquarters in the O'Flanagan Sinn Fein Club in Ryder's Row, off Capel Street. I was appointed to the job to give instruction in the use of arms, grenades and street fighting of which I had some considerable knowledge acquired during the fight in the Four Courts area in Easter Week.

We were given to understand that in the event of the British attempting to enforce Conscription on the manhood of the country, groups would be formed to resist any such attempt by force of arms. The Volunteers had not then reached that degree of organisation which they subsequently attained and their direction and control by Dáil Éireann was not fully understood and recognised. It was proposed that if the British attempted to impress/^{men}into the British Army we would resort to guerilla tactics. Redmond, Dillon and company were engaged practically whole time on recruiting for the British Army and in some cases were instrumental in getting former members of the old Volunteer organisation to speak from their platforms. I remember one man in particular named Page, an old member of the I.R.B., who changed his allegiance and appeared at several recruiting meetings throughout the city.

From April to October 1918 I was engaged practically wholetime as an instructor to "H" Company, but on the appointment of some of its members as officers I was returned to "C" Company of the Battalion. To the

best of my recollection Seamus Kavanagh was elected to the position of Company Captain and Sean O'Neill was elected to the position of 1st. Lieutenant.

On my return to "C" Company I resumed the duties of instructor and on a number of occasions I gave instruction to members of the Company in grenade throwing and rifle shooting in the vicinity of St. James' Castle, near Finglas, County Dublin.

I with other members of my Company were engaged from October to the middle of December in propaganda work for the General Election which took place in that month. Our work consisted mainly of distributing and addressing election literature on behalf of the Sinn Fein candidates who were contesting the Dublin City and County constituencies. We also assisted in policing the polling booths and in the protection of the ballot boxes at the various counting centres.

The overwhelming victory of the Sinn Fein candidates in the General Election of December, 1918 resulted in the establishment of Dáil Eireann which met for the first time in the Mansion House on the 21st January, 1919.

By reason of my membership of the I.R.B. and the fact that I had a business premises in Wexford Street, General Headquarters felt that I could be of more use to the Volunteer organisation by permitting my premises to be used as an arms dump for the reception of arms and explosives which would be transported by various means from the Glasgow and Liverpool centres of the Irish Republican Brotherhood. In this connection I was visited by Paddy McGurk who was at that time, as far as I know, the Quartermaster for the Dublin Brigade. He told me that I would be responsible for the receipt of arms and explosives, for the storage of same on my business premises and for the distribution on written instructions from him which would contain details of the

quantity to be issued and the men who would call for them. As I owned a pony and van for the running of my business this means of transportation was utilised to the utmost in taking delivery of and distributing such arms as came into my possession from across the water. This was primarily the work on which I was engaged during the period from January, 1919 to the middle of 1920. As my business premises were situated in the 3rd Battalion area, it was decided by G.H.Q. with the concurrence of my Battalion Commander that I should transfer from the 1st Battalion to the Quartermaster's staff of G.H.Q. where I would be of more use.

My business premises were of the 'open' type, as most fish shops were in these days, that is, there were no windows, but the tables for the display of fish and poultry were so constructed that the rear portion of the table was higher than the front so that potential customers could view the commodities displayed without entering the shop. In order to find a safe place for the storage of arms and explosives the Engineers of the Dublin Brigade visited my premises at night and, having examined it, they decided that in their view the safest place to keep arms would be beneath the tables on which the fish and poultry was displayed daily. Having come to this decision they constructed false tops for the tables which were fitted underneath in such a way as to give the appearance to the curious that they formed part of the original construction. I was visited on several occasions by the detectives of the Dublin Metropolitan Police, principally Sergeants Bruton and Barton. The latter was executed later in the Tan War by the I.R.A. Despite a thorough search of my premises the hiding place of the arms in my possession was never discovered.

During the period from January, 1919 to the middle of 1920, I was responsible to a great extent on orders from General Headquarters for procuring safe accommodation for men of the Active Service Unit and other important people in the I.R.A. Among these were Dan Breen, Seamus Robinson, Sean Treacy and J.J. Hogan. Among the houses where I

found safe refuge were those of Joseph Delaney, a well known Dublin book-maker, who had his private residence in 71, Heytesbury Street; the residence of Mrs. Malone ("Carrighdhu"), Grantham Street; Micheál Ó Maláin of 66 or 67 Heytesbury Street. Incidentally I might mention that Dan Breen married one of the Malone girls and Seamus Robinson married a step-daughter of Joseph Delaney - Bridget Keating.

In or about July or August, 1920, I was sent for by Mick Collins whom I met in the Prince's Bar in Prince's Street. He told me that he was fully aware of my association and that of my family with the Movement and that he appreciated fully the good work which I was doing. He told me that it had been decided to select certain reliable business premises in the city for the reception of correspondence from country units which it would be unsafe to transmit through the ordinary postal channels and that my business premises in Wexford Street had been one of those selected. He informed me that certain people would call on me from time to time and having satisfied themselves that I was Michael O'Flanagan they would give me letters and parcels for delivery to his office at Vaughan's Hotel, Parnell Square, or as might be notified to me from time to time. From that date until my arrest on the 2nd December, 1920, I received several letters and parcels for Collins which I delivered to him as arranged. In addition couriers from the Dublin units collected correspondence including copies of the Bulletin for distribution throughout the city. It will, of course, be understood that the Bulletin could not be distributed through the ordinary postal channels and the underground method of delivery had to be adopted.

Sometime in August, 1920, I was visited by a British Army Sergeant from Portobello Barracks who asked me if I would tender for the supply of fish and poultry to the Sergeants' Mess. As I was somewhat suspicious of this approach by a member of the British Garrison I contacted Collins and by arrangement I met him at 41 Parnell Square on the following Sunday. I informed him of the position and asked for directions as to what action I would take. He told me to write to the Sergeants' Mess

concerned and give them an estimate of my prices and if I was successful in obtaining the contract I was to accept it. This I did and my estimate was accepted. Collins told me that once I had gained access to the Barracks I should use every opportunity to pick up information with particular reference to the layout, the location of the different guards and any other information which I felt might be of use. I continued to supply fish and poultry to the Sergeants' Mess until my arrest in December, 1920, and any information which came into my possession which I felt might be of use I transmitted to Collins.

At this particular time British Military and Police activity became intensified and resulted in the discovery of a number of I.R.A. dumps throughout the city. As a result of this activity General Headquarters decided to change the location of all dumps and in consequence my business became the storage dump for the arms and munitions of the 3rd Battalion area. The Quartermaster of the 3rd Battalion was James Murray. Murray was a carter contractor to the Dublin Corporation and owned a number of horse-drawn vans which he used for the transport of arms and munitions between my premises and units of the 3rd Battalion. Wexford Street and Camden Street were at that time known as "The Dardanelles", since the streets were narrow and British Military parties passing to and from were subjected to almost continuous attack. In consequence the demands upon my time in the issuing and receipt of arms for the attacking units of the I.R.A. were frequent. I had many visits from the Battalion Commandant of the 3rd Battalion, Joe O'Connor, his Vice-Commandant Sean Guilfoyle, his Adjutant Larry Ledwith and the Quartermaster Jimmy Murray. I was also visited from time to time by the Company Captains of the Battalion and other officers among whom were Christy Farrell, Leo O'Brien, Mick Ryan, Simon Donnelly and others.

With the intensification of the war against the British military Forces and Black & Tans, my premises in Wexford Street was under constant observation by Secret Service agents and Detectives of the

Dublin Metropolitan Police. In consequence General Headquarters felt that my continued occupation of the premises and its usefulness as a dump and accommodation address was over, and in November of that year I was told to go 'on the run' and hand over the running of my business to my wife. This I did.

About four doors down (No. 10 Wexford Street) was occupied by a publican named Cole who was a particular friend of mine and whose premises had also been used as a dump and safe lodging for men 'on the run'. I stopped in Cole's for about a fortnight. Curfew was from 10 p.m. until dawn and as my eldest son had contracted pneumonia I could only get to see him during curfew hours. This was not very difficult as the distance between my business premises and Cole's where I stayed was only a few yards and I could cross from one backyard into another and thereby gain access to my home.

On the night of the 1st December while paying one of my many visits to my home the house was surrounded, raided, searched and I was arrested and conveyed to the Castle. During the course of the search the Officer in charge, who was a very courteous type, told me that if I wished to have a private conversation with my wife before being taken away he would raise no objection and would see that we would not be disturbed by any member of his party. I had four letters on me which I had received for delivery to Collins and I took the opportunity while the military had withdrawn from the room to give the letters into my wife's possession. Nurse Treston, a sister-in-law of Sean McGarry and also a member of the Cumann na mBan who had been engaged in nursing my son during his illness, undertook to deliver the letters to Collins. The raid lasted for about one hour during which the house was thoroughly searched. At the conclusion of the raid the Officer i/c. invited me to inspect the premises and tell him if the military had done any damage or taken anything away. When we examined the shop I found that a number of boxes of kippers, cured fish, chickens and eggs had been stolen. The Officer had his men called into the shop, questioned and searched and a number of items was discovered in their possession.

He then searched the lorry and found some boxes of kippers, chickens, cured fish and eggs which he had returned to the shop. He told the Sergeant i/c. of the party to take the Army numbers and the names of the offenders and have them reported on their return to barracks. I never heard anything further about the matter. I was then placed in the lorry, conveyed to Dublin Castle and placed in confinement in a cell under military supervision.

On the following morning I was told to take up my belongings as I was being taken away, but later on this order was countermanded. Sometime after I was escorted across the Castle yard area to a room adjacent to the Ship Street entrance where I was brought before three Military Officers and a number of gentlemen in civilian attire. They told me that my premises in Wexford Street had been under observation for some considerable time and that they were aware that I was in communication with certain important "wanted" men and that it was in my personal interests that I should give them every assistance by way of information which would lead to the arrest of these men. They emphasised the fact that if I did not co-operate with them in this matter the severest punishment would be dealt out to me in accordance with the law which made it incumbent on His Majesty's subjects to co-operate to the fullest extent in the crushing of sedition.

As the Castle at the time had an evil reputation where atrocity was the order of the day, I felt I was up against it and while being interrogated I was thinking up answers which would not contain information which might be of use to them and which at the time would bluff them into the belief that I was not a member of the Republican Army. In taking this course I was acting in accordance with a recent instruction which had been issued by G.H.Q. to the effect that if arrested it was the duty of a member of the Republican Army not to admit membership. I did not recognise any of the Officers or Civilians but I believe from their accents that the Officers were Englishmen. After

a cross-examination which lasted some two hours I was hustled from the room and returned to confinement in the cell in which I was placed on my arrest.

At about 1.30 I was served with a dinner consisting of roast meat and potatoes which, in the circumstances, I regarded as a fairly decent meal. While I was eating, two civilians were placed in the cell with me and as I was rather suspicious of them I kept to myself. They questioned me and asked me where I was picked up and what I was charged with. I told them I was arrested in my home but that I did not know what I was wanted for. They then mentioned the names of a number of prominent men in the Volunteer Movement whom I knew and whom they suggested they knew very well. I was not at all satisfied that they were what they purported to be and I kept my mouth shut. At about 5 o'clock they were taken out, as I was led to believe, for interrogation but I did not see them anymore. As I was intimate with a large number of men of the Dublin Brigade of the I.R.A. whom I met from time to time in the course of my business I did not recognise the two men who were placed in the cell with me and I formed the impression that they were planted there by the British Authorities for intelligence purposes.

At about 8.30 or 9 o'clock that evening I was resting on a mattress on the floor when a soldier entered the room and told me to pack up as I was being transferred elsewhere. At about 10 o'clock I was taken from the room and placed in a lorry with an escort of about 8 soldiers. I noted when getting into the lorry that the driver was dressed in civilian attire and was accompanied by a member of the Dublin Metropolitan Police and a military officer. The lorry left the Castle by the Lower Castle Yard gate and proceeded into Dame Street, up Georges Street and into Grantham Street where it halted, and the policeman and the escort with the officer raided a house in the street. They brought one man out of the house with them and placed him in the lorry.

We then went to Lennox Street where another house was raided and a civilian arrested who was also placed in the lorry.

We next went to a house in Bride Street where a similar raid was carried out and another civilian arrested. The lorry then proceeded to Portobello Barracks where I and the three civilians who had been arrested were placed in a 'cage' in the gymnasium. This would have been the night of the 3rd and the morning of the 4th December, 1920.

To my surprise I recognised a number of men confined in the 'cage' who had been picked up by British military raiding parties in the night. Amongst these I recognised Thomas Cuffe, Kevin Halpin and Jim Lynch. I was kept in the 'cage' in the gymnasium for four days and one night. In the meantime a number of other inmates had been removed. On this particular night the balance of us remaining in the 'cage' were ordered to pack up as we were being shifted. This we did and at about 10.30 we were taken out, placed in lorries and removed to Arbour Hill Detention Barracks where we were put in cells. I was confined in a cell on the ground floor which contained two other prisoners who were sleeping on mattresses when I entered. We had very little discussion that night as I was rather suspicious of them as they spoke with a northern accent. They were suspicious of me as by this time I had grown a beard and they took me to be a Jew. I subsequently learned that both of these inmates came from Baillieboro', County Cavan. One was a 'big farmer from that district named Michael MacElroy and the other was a solicitor from the town of Baillieboro' named Justin Macarten. Both had been arrested some time previously.

The following morning we became friendly I having in the meantime satisfied myself that they were 'alright'. They remarked that there were three other 'Flanagans - all brothers - confined in the Detention Barracks in Arbour Hill'. I told them I had three brothers and that it was quite probable they were the O'Flanagans concerned.

Sometime that morning I was removed to what was then known as "the condemned cell" on the ground floor, and confined in the cell with me was Paddy Moran who had been arrested on suspicion of being concerned in the Mount Street shootings on Bloody Sunday. There were also in the cell two others whom I knew - Kevin Halpin and Jim Lynch. After about ten days or a fortnight we were brought out on an identification parade within the Quadrangle of the prison. When we got there we found that the windows of the wash-house had been covered with Army blankets in which slits had been cut. The passage-way leading to the wash-house was covered in a similar manner and the civilians who were being brought in to identify us used this passage-way to the wash-house so that they could not be observed by us. We were paraded round in front of the windows and kept facing them for about twenty minutes after which period we were returned to the hall of the prison. All four of us were wearing beards at the time of four days' growth and the Commandant addressed us in the hallway and told us that we would have to remove our beards adding that he would supply us with the facilities to enable us to do so. I refused to do so, informing him that I came in with a beard and that I proposed to leave in that manner. In fact I never shaved during the twelve months of my detention. Lynch and Halpin also refused to shave but Moran said to me that he had nothing to fear and that as far as he was concerned he would avail of the opportunity to do so. I advised Paddy Moran under no circumstances to shave as by doing so he would only make it easier for them to pin something on him, but despite my advice he shaved off his beard. I knew Paddy Moran for a considerable period and I knew of his association with the Movement. I was also aware that they had been after him for some time.

There was a bit of a rumpus created by the military authorities in regard to our refusal to carry out their orders but this simmered down and three of us - Halpin, Lynch and myself - were allowed to associate with our fellow-prisoners. Moran, however, having gone into the cell to shave was not^{allowed} to join us and I did not see him again.

Following on our permission to associate with the remainder of our fellow-prisoners I went immediately to Joe McGrath who was then the Prisoners' Commandant in Arbour Hill. I told him what had happened. I said I had advised Paddy Moran not to shave, adding that ^{we} ~~we~~ had refused to do so. He told me we acted correctly and that it was a pity Paddy Moran had complied with the military request in this matter. I am satisfied that if Moran had refused to shave off his beard he would not have been identified and subsequently sentenced to death for his activities.

From that date until the 16th January we occupied the same cell to which we were committed on our entry to Arbour Hill, Moran meanwhile having been removed.

Arbour Hill at this time was used as a Clearing House for those picked up in the various raids and whom the British regarded as fit subjects for internment. On the night of the 16th January we were paraded by the Prison Commandant and told to pack up our belongings as we were being moved to Ballykinlar. We did so and at about 7 o'clock we were assembled in the main hall and as each man's name was called out he stepped forward and was handed an internment order under the Defence of The Realm Act with the usual statement to the effect that he could, if he so desired, appeal against the decision of internment. None of the men present availed of this doubtful privilege and we were, therefore, placed in lorries and as soon as the convoy was complete and numbered approximately 100 men were taken to the Alexandra Basin at the North Wall. Here we were checked and placed on board a British War Department Sloop. After a lapse of about an hour or thereabout the vessel moved out to sea in a very heavy gale. As we were all congregated on deck we were exposed to great discomfort. The vessel was pitching heavily owing to the high seas with the result that every man on board was suffering from sea-sickness. The journey from Dublin to Belfast by sea took approximately 12 hours and we reached Belfast

Harbour at about 7.30 or 8 o'clock. Prior to disembarking we noted a number of lorries at the quayside and also a number of officers with a large quantity of handcuffs piled beside them on the dock. We had no food during the journey except for a few sandwiches each, with which we were supplied before leaving Arbour Hill. As each of us was very sick, food was the last thing we were able to relish.

We received a very hostile reception from the Orange element who were allowed by the British authorities to congregate in large numbers on the Quayside and who were, unfortunately for us, well supplied with ammunition in the way of nuts and bolts. With these they pelted us during disembarkation and while loading on to lorries. The moment we reached the Quayside we were handcuffed in pairs and consequently we were unable to take any action to protect ourselves from the ruffianly conduct of the Orange mob.

As soon as the convoy was complete it moved off through the streets of Belfast to the County Down Railway Station. Here we again came under a hostile demonstration from the local Orange elements who had gathered there. We were placed in carriages, 10 to 12 men in each carriage, with an armed soldier of the King's Rifles (an English regiment) and conveyed to Ballykinlar which was about three miles from the camp proper.

We were marched from the Railway Halt to the camp, still handcuffed, in pairs and under a heavy escort of armed troops.

On arrival at the camp, which would have been about 10 o'clock, we were placed in a shed which had apparently been used for stabling horses. After about an hour there a number of Officers entered the building and asked for men who had some knowledge of cooking. Leo Henderson, who was one of the prisoners and who was in charge of us, stepped forward and said that he was acting as spokesman for the prisoners. He was pushed back into the ranks and told that there was no such thing as a spokesman ^{and} as far as they were concerned we were all prisoners and subject to camp

regulations. As no man stepped forward to offer his services as a cook there was a bit of a rumpus and we were told that if we could not find men to do the job we would have to go hungry. After some short delay Henderson was allowed to select 14 or 15 men to do the cooking. They were taken out to a separate building, searched and interrogated. As each man was searched his money was taken from him and he was asked to furnish particulars of his name, home address and next-of-kin and any identification marks on the body. The military interrogating party were hostile and made it quite clear to the selected men that in future when they were addressing military officers of the camp staff they would stand to attention and address them as "Sir".

Henderson, Lynch, Halpin and myself who formed four of the selected men were marched to the cook-house. Here we found a quantity of meat, potatoes and other vegetables and several loaves of bread. The military party withdrew and we were left in charge of a Sergeant Cook of the Garrison named Lee. Lee was a pretty decent sort and was anxious to help us in every possible way. Lynch, who was a butcher by trade, got down to the job of cutting up the meat and I, by reason of my business training and having a knowledge of cooking, was able to help to prepare the meal. I might mention that when we entered the cookhouse the fires were burning and the ovens were ready for the job. In the meantime Henderson went to the Camp Orderly Room of the Garrison and the prisoners were allotted to the different huts, provided with three blankets and an empty paillasse-case which they filled with straw. They were placed 25 to a hut. The cook-house staff, of which I was a member, was however allotted a special hut convenient to the cook-house, our comrades having in the meantime drawn our allotment of blankets and paillasse-cases. The meal which consisted of stew was ready at about 3 o'clock in the afternoon and was served to the remaining prisoners in a hut set aside for dining purposes.

At this time Ballykinlar was divided into two camps - Nos. 1 and 2.

No. 1 was already full and we were the first prisoners to go into No. 2. We, therefore, had to organise our party for the running of the camp on semi-military lines. The following morning we were 'fallen in' and told by our Camp Commandant, Leo Henderson, that the Camp regulations, of which we had a copy, laid down that under no circumstances were prisoners to go near the barbed wire surrounding the compound as the sentries on duty in elevated look-out posts had orders to fire on any prisoners contravening the regulation. The two camps were divided by a barbed-wire barrier 12' in height by 4' in width which was commanded by twelve elevated and occupied look-out posts manned by armed soldiers and machine guns. As was natural in the circumstances a number of the prisoners in No. 1 Camp attempted to establish contact with the new-comers to No. 2 and little attention was paid to the British Military regulation prohibiting the congregation of prisoners at the barrier. As my three brothers, George, Frank and Cormick, were prisoners in No. 1 Camp, having been transferred there from Arbour Hill in December, they were anxious to contact me. They did so even at the risk of being fired on by the sentries. At this time No. 2 camp was filling up rapidly with the arrival of prisoners from all parts of Ireland and it became apparent that we would have to organise a Camp Council similar to that charged with the running of No. 1 Camp. It was also necessary having regard to the fact that men were from all parts of Ireland that representation by the County from which they came would be an ideal solution of our difficulties. The men from the Counties selected their own representative. Accordingly, Leo Henderson, who was one of the first in No. 2 Camp, was elected the Prisoners' Camp Commandant and his Vice-Commandant was Frank O'Duffy from Louth who subsequently became Secretary to the Department of Education on the setting up of the State in 1922. Paddy Daly, later a General in the National Army, was also elected to the Camp Council. These are all the names I can recollect at the moment.

At this time Joe McGrath was Camp Commandant of the Prisoners in No. 1 Camp, having been transferred from Arbour Hill to Ballykinlar prior to the transfer of our party. The British Military Authorities who were always on the alert for useful information were using members of their Garrison to infiltrate among the prisoners. The Camp Council, to counteract any move on the part of the British Military Authorities, issued strict orders to all prisoners to refrain from discussing any matters connected with the Movement with particular reference to the military activities of our comrades in the I.R.A. outside prison. This was very necessary as a number of our men when confined to the huts at night-time, thinking themselves safe from eavesdroppers, discussed matters which would be useful to our gaolers. It was known that soldiers wearing rubber-soled shoes used patrol between the huts in the camp for the purpose of eavesdropping. As the warning by our Camp Council had not the desired effect a meeting of all known officers of the I.R.A. confined as prisoners in No. 2 Camp was called and it was decided to form a police section. A member of this section would be placed in each hut to enforce the order in regard to loose talk and at the same time keep under observation such of the prisoners as were known to have had no connection with the Movement outside or who might be regarded as being hostile and pro-British in their outlook. It will be understood that as the Camp now contained approximately 1,000 prisoners, a doubtful element would be found in that number. For example, we had one man named Pilkington from Sligo - an ex-British soldier. He had only been demobilised from the British Army a few months previously and he had been picked up by the British Military Authorities in mistake for his brother, Sean Pilkington who was a well-known I.R.A. Officer in the West. This man was a very boastful type and was always talking about the wonderful things he did during the 1914-1918 war in France. In fact, he was decorated with his war decorations while a prisoner with us in Ballykinlar.

Ballykinlar Camp is situated in a very isolated position, so much so that it got the name of "World End Camp". It is surrounded by countryside made up mostly of sand dunes and the possibility of a successful escape from internment from it was very remote. However, our people had the matter of escape from Camp continually under review and on one occasion a number of our comrades succeeded in tunnelling under the Camp barrier and gaining access to freedom. Among them was Colm Lawless from Swords who, with another, managed to make his escape and succeeded in getting as far as Newcastle about $1\frac{1}{2}$ miles from the Camp where they were recognised by a British Officer from the Camp Staff, re-arrested and brought back to internment.

At this time I was working in the cook-house with Jim McCauley who was later a Captain in the National Army and who died some years ago. It was always our intention to work out ways and means whereby we could effect our escape from confinement. McCauley and myself struck on the idea that we could use the large bread hampers, which delivered the bread to the cook-house, for this purpose. I had a few pounds in my possession and having obtained the co-operation of a British soldier-driver of the breadvan, he agreed to help us in our attempt. We were to conceal ourselves in the large bread hampers which he would close, load up on the lorry and drive out from the Camp in the usual manner. The lack of supervision by the gate attendants would undoubtedly have facilitated us and we would probably have made good our escape. Had we made the attempt we had already established contacts with sympathisers outside who would help us on our way, it being our intention to get as far as Belfast. It was, however, a rule laid down by our Camp Staff that any man having the intention of escaping should make his intention known to the Camp Council so that it could be examined in detail. This we did and after some days McCauley and myself were called before the Council and interrogated. Having put our plan before them we were told to go back to our jobs and that we

would be informed of the decision later. After some days we were again called before the Council and told that our plan had been fully examined but that as there were more important men interned whom it was desirable should be got out we would not be allowed to make the attempt.

We were now coming on to the summer months and a lot of discontent arose among the prisoners due to the fact that water was in short supply and strictly rationed out by the military authorities to the prisoners. A further case of discontent arose when the British in their efforts to get us away from all contact with the outside world placed canvas sheeting on all the barriers so as to prevent us observing the movement of visitors to and from the camp. We, therefore, had nothing to look at except the hutments, the sky and a small space surrounding our hutments. Life became so monotonous that men's tempers became frayed and spirits very depressed.

In an effort to alleviate the hardship caused by the lack of sufficient water one of our prisoner comrades, who was an Engineer by profession but whose name I cannot at the moment remember, was of opinion that water could be found within the camp precincts and with this object in view boring was started to locate it. About 150 men were selected to carry out the excavation and the fact that there was work to do gave a great filip to the morale of the camp generally. After considerable work had been carried out water was found but it was then discovered that it was not a spring but surface water which had seeped through and was unfit for cooking or drinking purposes. Our medical adviser, Dr. Dick Hayes, decided that it could be used for washing and ablution purposes. Sometime afterwards it was found the prisoners became infected with a skin disease and unfortunately I was one of the number who contacted the infection. This infection necessitated my removal from my job as a cook.

As there was no hospital in No. 2 Camp for the treatment of its internees I had to be transferred to the hospital in No. 1 Camp.

Here I remained for some time. Before I left No. 2 Camp for No. 1 Camp I was used to convey information and dispatches from Leo Henderson to Joe McGrath. On the day of my transfer I was called out by Leo Henderson who gave me certain dispatches for Joe McGrath. These I concealed in the sweat band of my hat.

After Henderson had given me the dispatches I was escorted to the exit gate of No. 2 Compound by two armed soldiers and handed over to the sentries in No. 1 Compound who took me to a hut where an officer searched me. The skin complaint affected my head which was shaved and heavily bandaged and when the officer came to my head gear and knowing that I was suffering from a skin complaint he refrained from handling my head fortunately for me and for the Camp Commandants of Nos. 1 and 2 Camps. I was, therefore, lucky and was able to hand over the messages to Joe McGrath when I reached his office in No. 2 Compound.

During the course of the search the officer took possession of some silver coins which I had in my possession. These were in the process of being manufactured into rings and trinkets of various sorts, a hobby which was common among us at that time. The officer pointed out to me that I was committing a very serious offence in defacing coins of the Realm and that the punishment attaching to such offences involved substantial fines and imprisonment. I told him I was not aware of the British Law in this regard, but he, however, confiscated any coins that I had on my person.

As soon as I had been searched I was allowed to go, and I duly reported to the hut where Joe McGrath had established his office. I gave him the message from Commandant Leo Henderson and he then questioned me regarding the running of No. 2 Camp. While he was fairly conversant with the plan of administration there, he expressed the wish for a picture of it, from one who had been there from the commencement, and who had experience of the running of other camps

especially Frongoch. I gave him an outline of conditions in No. 1 Camp pointing out that we experienced some dissension by reason of the fact that a certain amount of provincialism had entered into the everyday life of the camp. He told me that they had also encountered these difficulties but that they had got over them by appointing County representatives to the Camp Council in proportion to the number of internees from each county and that this arrangement contributed in great measure to overcoming county prejudice. I informed him we had adopted this procedure some short time before my transfer and that it seemed to be working satisfactorily. Joe McGrath then sent me for medical examination to the prisoners' Camp Medical Officer, Dr. T. O'Higgins, who was subsequently Minister for Defence and Industry & Commerce in the Inter-Party Government of 1948-51. He gave me a thorough examination and satisfied himself that I was not suffering from a contagious skin disease. He gave me an ointment to use and I was then posted to "A" hut in No. 1 Camp. The hut to which I was posted together with the adjacent hut were occupied solely by Dublin men and in like manner the remainder of the huts were allocated to men from different counties. In this way the Council of Camp No. 1 solved the matter of local county prejudices, and while the men from each County kept their County association alive, there was an all-round air of good comradeship and a complete absence of ill-feeling or prejudice. Sporting activities of various kinds were organised on a county basis and this led to keen rivalry. The success or failure of the participants could not, in the circumstances, lead to rowdyism since the men, being accommodated by counties, had nothing to argue about. This would have been some time before the Truce in the middle of July, 1921.

As I was on the 'sick list' I was excused drills and camp fatigues for a period. At the time I was in possession of the only set of bed-boards and trestles in the hut and I was approached by the hut orderly, who was George Ashton later an Officer in the National Army, and told

that I would have to give up my bedboards. Originally each man was provided with a set of three bedboards and two trestles, but during the course of their internment the handy men amongst the prisoners used the timber for fretwork and making different articles of furniture. Knowing this I was reluctant to hand over the bedboards in my possession and I told Ashton that I wanted them myself for the making of some articles of utility. He told me that they were required for a more important purpose, hinting that they would be useful in an operation which was at the time in progress. I subsequently learned that a tunnel was in the course of construction and that my bed together with any other timber that could be acquired was wanted for the construction of the tunnel. Although the prisoners mixed freely and were, to all intents and purposes, in possession of information of various sorts, very few were aware that a tunnel was in the course of construction. While the tunnel was under construction two of the prisoners managed to escape, one of whom I remember was P. J. Coughlan who lived in Rathfarnham and who was subsequently a Captain in the National Army. They managed to get as far as Balbriggan where they were recaptured by the British Military Authorities. They were brought back to Ballykinlar and placed in solitary confinement in the camp prison. The escape of these two prisoners led to intense military activity within the confines of the two camps, and an exhaustive search was carried out by the British Military Authorities with a view to ascertaining how these two men escaped. The tunnel had at this time progressed well beyond the limits of the camp boundary, it being the intention that as soon as the prisoner engineer officers were satisfied that it was of sufficient length and stability, a mass escape would be attempted. It was the boast of the British that no prisoners had ever escaped from Ballykinlar and the escape of Coughlan and his comrade had given a jolt to their boast. The tunnel was only discovered when a lorry crossing over it sunk to its axles, the buttress underneath apparently not having stood up to the weight of the vehicle. The collapse of the tunnel and

the sinking of the lorry into the cavity resulted in six of our men being entombed on the wrong side of the camp compound. When the lorry was removed and a thorough search made by the British Engineers, these men were rescued and brought away for interrogation. It will, of course, be appreciated that a tunnel of this length entailed the removal of a huge quantity of sand which could only be disposed of by spreading it round the camp and under the foundations of the hutments. This, of course, raised the level of the ground considerably and must have been noticed by the British Military Authorities. But they, apparently, were allowing the tunnel to proceed with a view to taking action at the appropriate moment. The collapse of the tunnel by the sinking of one of their lorries precipitated matters and they then used their Band Boys, who of course were only lads of 14 to 15 years, for the purpose of investigating its range and construction and the entrance to it.

The six men who were captured in the tunnel together with the two captured at Balbriggan were subjected to a lengthy interrogation but they refused to give any information. The British Military Authorities, therefore, placed the Prisoners' Camp Council under 'open arrest' and attempted to run the Camp with their own personnel. The prisoners, however, refused to co-operate and demanded the release of the Camp Council and also the prisoners whom they held in 'close arrest'.

The Truce of the 11th July, 1921, between the British Army of Occupation and the I.R.A. intervened and matters returned more or less to normal, prison Camp routine and regulations being relaxed considerably. Parcels and letters were restored and the canteen was allowed to reopen and Camp routine re-established.

On the coming into operation of the Truce between the British and the Irish Forces, a number of prisoners were released on compassionate grounds. These prisoners, on their return home, reported the

conditions obtaining in Ballykinlar and as a result a Liaison Officer was appointed by Dáil Éireann to act in conjunction with a British representative. These representatives visited Ballykinlar and, as a result of their findings and report, Camp restrictions were eased considerably. The Irish representative was Michael Staines who was a member of Dáil Éireann and also a member of the Volunteer Executive and subsequently Chief Commissioner of the Garda Síochána on its formation. It was during the visit of Staines and his British counterpart that Tadgh Barry, one of the prisoners, was shot dead by a sentry on duty at one of the look-out posts. It appears that Barry was standing on a bucket waving to some of his friends from Cork who were being released on parole. The sentry ordered the crowd of prisoners away from the boundary but they did not go quickly enough for him, so he opened fire during the course of which Barry was fatally wounded. This incident led to intense indignation on the part of the prisoners present who were all for rushing the sentry with a view to retaliation. They felt that the shooting of Barry, who was a most lovable type and a Labour leader of repute from Cork County, was uncalled for. The Camp Officers had a good deal of trouble in restraining the outraged feelings of his comrades. Our Officers pointed out to Barry's comrades that precipitate action at this stage was undesirable in view of the fact that the Dáil representative Mr. Staines was in the Camp and it was best that the investigation of the shooting should be left to him and his British counterpart. I am aware that the matter was investigated by Staines and the British representative but I did not hear the outcome of this investigation. Nothing further of an untold ^{word} nature happened during the remainder of my internment in Ballykinlar from which I was released in December of 1921.

Prior to my release sometime around August of 1921 Joe McGrath, who was the Commandant of Camp No. 1, was released presumably at the

request of the Dáil. McGrath, who was a prominent Labour leader at one time and also a high-ranking official in the I.R.A., was required to form part of the team carrying out the negotiations between the Irish and British Governments.

On the evening of the 13th or 14th December, 1921, we were all 'fallen in' by our Camp Officers and addressed by the British Adjutant of the Camp who told us that he had received instructions from the British War Office to release all internees unconditionally. This announcement was received in absolute silence. During the course of his address he stated that it was their intention to release us that night but owing to the fact that hostile elements had assembled in Belfast and that we would undoubtedly be subjected to hostile demonstration from the Orange element it was agreed between his authorities and the Camp officers to hold over the release until the following morning. He further added that the train arrangements would be such as would ensure that prisoners scheduled to travel through Belfast would be detoured to by-pass Belfast and there avoid contact with any of the hostile elements referred to. The Camp gates were then thrown open and we were allowed to go out for walks around the country if we so desired.

On the following morning the occupants of each line of huts were brought out on parade, numbered and checked and marched to Ballykinlar Railway Halt some half mile from the Camp proper. The men were fully provided for in the way of eatables and refreshments. The Camp supply of food was exhausted in view of the fact that it was closing down. After a delay of an hour or thereabout at Ballykinlar Railway Halt we entrained for Banbridge. The men were very jubilant and were singing and enjoying their new-found liberty. Just as the train was steaming into Banbridge, fire was opened on us from both sides of the railway embankment, presumably by elements of the Orange Order who, apparently, had received advance information of our arrival and

who were out to create as much disturbance as possible. Three of the occupants of the train were seriously wounded, one of whom, as a result of his wounds, was crippled for life and died in September 1953. This man whose name was Tracey subsequently took an action against the Northern Government and was awarded £1,000 compensation for his injury. There was no further incident on the journey from Banbridge where we had a tumultuous reception from the local townspeople and various representatives of the local bodies and organisations. After a delay of about an hour we proceeded on our journey and arrived at Amiens Street at about 6.30 that evening where we were further acclaimed by thousands of the population.

I was met by my father who was accompanied by a Mr. William McMahon, a hackney owner, who lived in Granby Lane off Dominick Street. He had all his hackney cars there which he used to take the released prisoners to their homes or other destinations in the city. I was driven on one of his cars to my home in Wexford Street. I took things easy for a while as return from prison to civilian life requires adjustment.

While I was in internment in Ballykinlar my wife, to her great credit, managed to carry on our fish and poultry business in Wexford Street, so after resting for a day or so I took up where I left off before my internment. With the near approach of the Christmas season we were kept fairly busy. Peace negotiations were going on at the time and I felt that a settlement would be reached. My wife and I discussed our future and she advised me that I had done enough for Ireland and should now devote myself to the welfare of my family. We have five children at the time and we were finding it difficult enough to make ends meet, to rear and educate them. In these circumstances I was somewhat inclined to share my wife's opinion.

However, sometime in January, 1922, Paddy McGrath, Secretary of the Sheares' Circle of the I.R.B., called on me to mobilise me for a meeting of the Circle which was about to take place. I told him of the discussion I had with my wife and the heavy responsibilities which I carried and he advised me to attend the meeting of the Circle and explain the position to them. He had no doubt that they would understand my outlook on the matter and would readily agree to whatever course of action I might decide. As arranged I attended the meeting of the Circle on the second or third Sunday in January, 1922, in Room 9 of 41 Parnell Square. There was a full attendance at the meeting. Among those present were Oscar Traynor, Paddy McGrath, the Secretary, myself and my brother Frank, Martin Conlon who was the Centre, Seán Kennedy, Miceál Ruadh O'Flanagan, Seán Prendergast. There was also a visitor there in the person of Fintan Murphy who, I understood, was on the Supreme Council of the I.R.B. at the time. The object of the meeting was to explain the position arising out of the negotiations at the time being carried out between representatives of the British Government and the Irish Leaders and to bring us up to date especially the men who had been interned or in gaol during the previous twelve months. Fintan Murphy, who was explaining the position, was subjected to several interruptions and as the meeting progressed it was evident that a split was obvious and that no useful purpose would be served in continuing the discussions and the meeting adjourned to a date to be named and of which we would get timely notice. I, therefore, had no opportunity to put my case to the Circle at that particular meeting.

Nothing further happened as far as I was concerned until about the second or third week in April when I was again mobilised by Paddy McGrath to attend a meeting of the Sheares' Circle at the same venue as before. This meeting was important in that it was put to the Circle that the Treaty should be accepted as a stepping stone to a Republic. Paddy Sweeney, who was O/C. of the 2nd Battalion, stated publicly that

he was prepared to accept the Treaty between the British and Irish Leaders but subsequently when the Civil War broke out Sweeney took the Republican side and went out with his unit. The Four Courts had been occupied by Republican troops under the command of Seán Lemass and relations between the Republican Forces and the Army of the Provisional Government were somewhat strained. Christy O'Malley who attended the meeting and who was in intimate contact with Collins was very emphatic in stating it would be difficult to carry on the Fight owing to the shortage of essential fighting material, particularly ammunition, and for that reason he personally was prepared to accept and work the Treaty. He urged us to do likewise. Martin Conlon who was Centre of the Circle did not attend this meeting but he sent a letter recommending that the Treaty should be accepted. His absence from the meeting, which was unexplained and his sending of the letter, gave rise to a good deal of comment among those attending.

I might mention that at the outset it would appear that the forces in favour of and against were divided even in the room as those taking the side of the Provisional Government kept to themselves and those taking the side of the Republican Forces, many of whom were from the Four Courts garrison, also kept to themselves. I, among some others, who had spent the previous 6 to 12 months in English gaols and internment Camps, felt that as we did not know the position as clearly as those who had been actively engaged in the fight against the British, held ourselves aloof from the discussions. There was a good deal of deliberation and argument between one side and the other and finally when the matter was put to a vote it was found that roughly 16 voted for continuing the fight against the British and 22 voted for accepting the Treaty. I may mention that I voted with the minority. I felt at the time that the Treaty had been accepted by the Supreme Council of the Irish Republican Brotherhood. I was influenced in this impression by reason of the fact that those of the Supreme Council of the I.R.B. who were present at the

meeting were better enlightened in regard to matters than we who were more or less outsiders. In discussion with some of my comrades subsequent to the meeting we came to the conclusion that Collins who was au fait with all matters relating to the fighting strength and equipment of the Army under his command was accepting the Treaty, not as a final settlement, but something to be used when the opportune moment came to better the position.

The debate on the Treaty in Dáil Éireann was in full swing and the I.R.B. and I.R.A. of the Dublin Brigade were very anxious as to the outcome. Training Camps had been established throughout the country and the Training Camp where my Battalion was located was at Mulhuddard. A large number of men attended these Camps including men from my own unit. I also attended a week-end camp at Mulhuddard which catered for the battalions on the north side of the city.

At this time I had a dump of arms and explosives stored in my premises in Wexford Street which had been there prior to my arrest in December, 1920. The only members of the I.R.A. in Dublin who were aware of its existence were Paddy McGurk who was Brigade Quartermaster, and Jimmy Murray, the Quartermaster of the 3rd Battalion. The material was all in good condition and serviceable for immediate use. I told Murray of the quantity of material which I held and pointed out to him that I was anxious to get rid of it as soon as possible. He told me to hold it for the time being and I would eventually receive instructions as to its disposal. In the meantime the Dáil debates on the acceptance or non-acceptance of the Treaty had concluded with a vote in favour of its acceptance. Beggars Bush Barracks was taken over in or about this time by Sean Guilloyle, Sean Quinn, Brian Holohan, Simon Donnelly, Leo Duffy, Frank Carney, Pearse Beaslai and other officers of the General and Quartermaster General's Staff. I remember that on the occasion of my attendance we took over a number of lorries from the Black & Tans who had been for some years previously stationed in

Beggars Bush Barracks, it being their Headquarters for the Dublin district.

Michael Collins came later to the barracks and was also present at the take-over. It was on that occasion that he asked me if I was going to come into the Army. I told him that I had made up my mind to devote the remainder of my life to the welfare of my family as I felt I had given a good deal of service to the Cause of Independence in the past.

Brian Holohan, who was an officer on the Q.M.S.'s staff, approached me and asked me would I contract for the supply of fish and poultry to the Barracks, pointing out that as a number of other stations would in due course be taken over the contracts for each would undoubtedly come to me, meaning that in the long run I would be able to place my business on a sound footing. I agreed and undertook to supply whatever was required in the way of fish and poultry.

I continued to supply fish and poultry to Beggars Bush, Portobello Barracks which was subsequently taken over, Marlboro' Hall now Colaiste Caoimhin, and Celbridge where the units of the Forces of the Provisional Government were stationed at the time.

I continued to contract until the morning of the 28th June, 1922 when the Forces of the Provisional Government attacked the Four Courts with a view to ejecting the Republican garrison stationed therein. For the four weeks previous to the 28th June I, like others of the Dublin Brigade, was aware that relations between the opposing parties were becoming more strained day by day and that despite the efforts of the well-intentioned on both sides, a fight between old comrades was inevitable.

Early on the morning of the 28th June my wife wakened me and told me that there had been a heavy explosion in the centre of the city.

I then realised, of course, that the Four Courts had been attacked. At about 6.30 that morning George Donnelly, a brother of Simon Donnelly previously referred to who lived opposite me in Wexford Street, came to my house and told me that Simon had reported for duty to the Four Courts the previous evening. He left word with his brother George to contact me and instruct me to get in touch with Southern Volunteer Officers whose whereabouts I was aware of. I had a car at the time which I brought out and made calls at houses in Heytesbury Street and Arnold Street where I collected five Officers and took them to Naas. They told me that if they could get as far as Naas they were quite competent to make their own arrangements for continuation of the journey to their unit headquarters in the South. Having done this job I returned home and found that now, that I had involved myself in the fight I had no option but to continue the course of action I had taken. I stayed at home for some time giving the matter serious consideration and during the course of the day Joe O'Connor who was O/C. of the 3rd Battalion and a veteran of the 1916 Insurrection, and Joe Clarke who was prominent in the Movement, called to my home and asked me if I would place myself and my car at their disposal. I agreed to do so and with O'Connor, Clarke and some other Officers of the Dublin Brigade we carried out a reconnaissance of the South side of the city with a view to ascertaining the position and strength of the Forces of the Provisional Government. Having done this job which took us the greater part of the day O'Connor told me not to identify myself with the fight too openly but to hold myself in readiness to render such service as might be required of me from time to time. The 3rd Battalion had its headquarters in 41 York Street adjacent to which the garage for my car was situated. The unit also held posts in Davy's Public house, Portobello Bridge, commanding the approaches to and from Portobello Barracks and also a Public house known as 'The Swan', Aungler Street.

On the 30th June, to the best of my recollection, I was told by Joe O'Connor to take my car and go to the Exchange Hotel in Parliament Street where I would receive orders from Volunteer Officers in a position

to identify me and my car. When I got there I was taken to a lounge at the back of the Hotel and each side having been satisfied as to the credentials of the other I was informed by a gentleman whom I recognised as General Liam Lynch that they had a quantity of arms and explosives in their possession which they wished moved. What surprised me was the fact that some of the Officers whom I met there were dressed in the uniform of the Forces of the Provisional Government. While there they changed into civilian clothes and gave me the uniforms for dumping. I collected the uniforms and brought them back to 41 York Street where I handed them over to the 3rd Battalion Headquarters' Staff. There were about four or five others with Liam Lynch all of whom I was aware were from units in Cork, Limerick and Tipperary with possibly a representative of Kerry. I got the impression that even while the fight was on between the two Forces, negotiations were even at that time being conducted.

Having garaged my car I went home and found that my shop had been raided and that the complete stock of fish, poultry and eggs had been seized. I asked my wife what had happened and she informed me that some time previously a lorryload of armed men had drawn up outside the shop door, entered the shop and proceeded to load up its contents on to the lorry. I was very annoyed as the seizure meant the loss of considerable business to me since the centre of the city was closed to shopping which meant that I was likely to receive an increased number of customers. I went to 41 York Street, the headquarters of the 3rd Battalion, and informed Joe O'Connor of what had happened. He told me that it was his men had raided my shop and taken the commodities. In doing so they were actuated by the fact that they believed that what they had seized had been intended for the use of the Forces of the Provisional Government in Portobello Barracks for which post I at the time held the contract for the supply of these commodities. I told him I was very displeased at this method of requisitioning, pointing out that I held no receipt for the commodities seized. We checked the items and O'Connor gave me a receipt for the entire quantity informing me at the same time that I would be paid in due

course. On the conclusion of hostilities in April, 1923, we were informed by the Free State Government that all property seized would be paid for and to submit our claims. This I did and was ultimately paid the sum of £73 the value of the foodstuff taken on the occasion referred to.

On the 29th June I received orders from the 3rd Battalion to close my shop. This did not involve me in any hardship as my stock had been completely cleared out and it was impossible to replenish it, the markets having been closed. So I complied with the order.

On the 30th June at about 9.30 a.m. I heard a knock on my front door and having opened it I found Seamus Reader, an old comrade of mine from the Scottish Brigade together with some other Glasgow Irishmen, outside. Reader informed me that they had just managed to escape from the Hammam Hotel in O'Connell Street which was occupied by Republican Forces and which was at the time under attack by Forces of the Provisional Government. Reader and his party looked very dishevelled and unkempt and I invited them in. They asked me to fix them up with some breakfast and facilities for a shave and a wash, which I did. Each of them was armed with a revolver and ammunition which they asked me to take possession of and which I did. I dumped the guns and ammunition in a safe place. Reader and his party remained with me until late that evening when they took their departure. I subsequently learned that they managed to get through to the Quays, board a boat and succeeded in reaching Glasgow.

On Saturday the fighting died down and Republican Forces commenced to withdraw from the city in the direction of Blessington and fighting generally died down in the city centre and surrounding districts until late in the following week.

Signed:

Michael O'Flanagan

Date:

24th December 1953

Witness:

Mr F. Ryan Comd't.

(Michael O'Flanagan)

24th December 1953.

(M.F. Ryan) Comd't.

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21
BURO STAIRE MILEATA 1913-21
No. W.S. 908