

W.S. 915

**ORIGINAL**

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21

BURO STAIRE MILEATA 1913-21

NO. W.S. 915

ROINN



COSANTA

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21.

STATEMENT BY WITNESS.

DOCUMENT NO. W.S. 915

**Witness**

Denis McCullough,  
12 Oakley Road,  
Ranelagh,  
Dublin.

**Identity.**

Member of I.R.B., 1901 -  
" of Supreme Council of I.R.B. 1909 - .

**Subject.**

The Dungannon Clubs and events of  
national interest in the North, 1900-1916.

**Conditions, if any, Stipulated by Witness.**

Nil

File No. S.62

Form B.S.M. 2

# ORIGINAL

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21

BURO STAIRA MILEATA 1913-21

No. W.S. 915

STATEMENT OF Mr. DENIS McCULLOUGH.

"Lithgow", 12 Oakley Road, Ranelagh, Dublin.

A short statement on the work of the Dungannon Clubs might be of interest. They were founded by Bulmer Hobson and myself, subsequent to the publication of Arthur Griffith's articles in the "United Irishman", entitled "The Resurrection of Hungary", which generally set the Parliament of 1782, and the Declaration of the Irish Volunteer Convention, held in Dungannon, as to its status, as the basis for a new Constitutional Movement, using passive resistance to English rule and English institutions in this country, as a means to achieve full freedom. I was most anxious for the development of this policy, which I felt must eventually lead to armed action, while the Movement itself would be an excellent cover for the continued activities of the I.R.B., which organisation, I felt, was the true custodian of the fundamental principles of Irish Nationality, and was in true succession to the men and movements of '98, '48 and '67.

The Dungannon Clubs were launched at a meeting in St. Mary's Hall, Belfast, presided over by Robert Johnston (father of Ethna Carberry and one of the men responsible for the re-organisation of the I.R.B. in the middle eighties). We had invited the Rev. Richard Lyttle, Unitarian Rector at Moneyrea, a few miles outside Belfast. He promised to attend and speak for us, but was prevented by illness from doing so. (He died the following year, I believe). Robert Johnson made a long opening speech, in which he reiterated again and again, that the only hope for Irish freedom was "a strong physical force movement" - so we got off on the wrong foot for a "passive resistance" organisation!

Sometime afterwards we published a Manifesto, setting out our aims and policy. This was written by Bulmer Hobson, and despite long and heated argument between us, he set out as our first and final objective "The establishment of a 'Free and Independent Republic' for

DURE

Ireland". I felt that it was in contradiction to our title "Dungannon Clubs" and that in addition it would destroy the value of the movement as a cover for the I.R.B. in which the real work for a Republic could be done. However, Hobson wore me down in argument and I eventually agreed to its publication in the terms in which he prepared it, with minor alterations.

It is interesting to record that at this time I was a member of the I.R.B. and Hobson was not a member. Before this time Hobson had organised a small group called the "Young Protestant Nationalist Society". Some of the members of this society later organised "The Ulster Literary Theatre" and published the literary monthly journal called "Uladh"; both of which kept a good national tone. Some became members and supporters of the Dungannon Clubs.

The main activity of the Dungannon Club was the publication of pamphlets on various national matters, the holding of weekly meetings outdoor, mostly on Tuesday nights near the Churches where the Confraternities met, and indoor meetings at which we got various types of people to speak, usually Labour or United Irish League members, followed by debates, which were usually lively. A charge was made for admission, which helped to pay our rent and finance our other activities. We also published weekly "The Republic", which ran for nearly a year. It contained articles by Hobson, P.S. O'Hegarty, Robert Lynd, Jimmie Good and George Gavan Duffy. It contained a weekly cartoon supplied by one of the Morrow brothers. <sup>Albert & George mostly</sup> These cartoons were subsequently re-printed as postcards and sold, mostly to small national groups throughout the country. A number of the articles were also re-printed and sold as pamphlets in the same way. The profits from these sales also helped to finance our other activities.

The Dungannon Clubs concerned themselves particularly with an anti-recruiting campaign which they carried on by means of our outdoor meetings, the postcards and particularly the pamphlets.

Duff

One of these had special value for our purpose. It was written by Mrs. Stopford Green and edited for our use by Roger Casement. It caused great offence to the British Authorities, who finally, acted, by arresting Mr. Stephen Clarke of "An Tuirne Beag", Ballycastle, County Antrim, who distributed some of these pamphlets at a fair in that town. A charge of Sedition was preferred against him. He was given a kind of State trial in Belfast. The British made every possible effort to get a conviction so as to make an example of him, but through the efforts of friends on our side, they failed in this. Roger Casement, Mrs. Stopford Green, Francis Joseph Bigger, Miss Ida McNeill of Cushendun and some others got up a fund for his defence, and Chambers, K.C. was briefed. Steps were also taken to go through the Jury panel to prevent the packing of the Jury. All Catholics likely to be called were instructed not to take the Oath on the Bible, but to "affirm", with uplifted hand, as was common practice with Presbyterian Jurors. In the event, a few Jurors were called, including two Presbyterian descendants of '98 men, who were determined that a verdict of "Guilty" would not be obtained. They succeeded in this and Stephen Clarke was released. Before the trial several attempts were made to induce him to tell the source from which he got the pamphlet. He was promised a withdrawal of the charge and instant release for this information. But all inducements failed and he stood his trial with the result stated. As I had sent him the pamphlets and had determined to say so, if he was found guilty, I remained in the Court all day for this purpose. I was greatly relieved at the result. I believe this was the first prosecution for Sedition in our time. Several other minor prosecutions followed, at later periods, mostly for sedition. One against Pat Lagan, a Dungannon Club member and one against an elderly newsagent named Butler, for selling our pamphlets. A man named, Michael Dwyer, a monumental stone-cutter in Kilkenny, was prosecuted for anti-enlisting activities about this time also.

Branches of the Dungannon Club were formed in several parts of Ireland, several in County Tyrone and in County Derry, also in

*Muse*

London and Glasgow. They were of considerable value in keeping the nationalist-separatist spirit alive in the centres where they existed and made no small contribution to the independence movement of that important time.

About this time Dr. Patrick McCartan returned from America. He had worked in Philadelphia with Joe McGarrity and had saved up enough money to complete his studies and obtain his degree in Medicine. He also obtained a Fellowship of the College of Surgeons. He had met in the Clan na Gael in Philadelphia an uncle of mine <sup>John M. Bullough</sup> who gave him an introduction to me. He came to Belfast to see me. We became close friends and from then onwards he worked in co-operation with Seán McDermott, Bulmer Hobson, Diarmuid Lynch and Tom Clarke in Dublin and was one of the men responsible through the I.R.B. and its organ "Irish Freedom", of which he was editor with Bulmer Hobson, for raising the spirit of the country to what it was on the advent of the Volunteers, by which time he had returned to his native County Tyrone <sup>as Dispensary Dr. for the Greenacastle Area</sup> where he also gave trojan service.

The Dungannon Clubs took advantage of local celebrations in rural centres to hold public propagandist meetings like "Blaeberry Sunday" which was held each year on a Sunday in August on the top of Sleive Bloom in the Dromara Mountains, Manchester Martyrs Anniversary in centres like Coalisland, County Tyrone and Toomebridge, at the junction of Counties Antrim and Derry. George Gavan Duffy used come over from London to speak with me at the Sleive Bloom meetings, while Hobson went on to the annual meeting at the Bridge of Finae, which was held on the same Sunday.

For some reason Hobson never got on with Arthur Griffith. Probably because of this the Dungannon Clubs never got in step with the National Council which had meantime been established in Dublin to carry out the Sinn Fein policy. Owing to our previous activity in Cumann na Gael, Hobson and myself were in touch with the leaders of this organisation in Dublin, who were mostly I.R.B. men. It became evident to me that there was a great waste of effort and

Duff

dissipation of energy by having the three organisations working on similar lines, but without unity of effort. Accordingly, I induced my Executive of the Dungannon Clubs, <sup>with Hobson's Agreement</sup> to make approaches for an amalgamation to both the National Council and the Cumann na Gael leaders. Alderman Walter Cole came up to Belfast from the National Council to discuss the matter with us, but apparently did not report favourably as no action was taken by them at that time. However, the Executive of Cumann na Gael proved more receptive and - I think - three conferences were held between delegates from their body and those from the Dungannon Clubs. The conferences were held in Dundalk and it took three meetings to arrive at an agreement, largely because the delegates from the Dungannon Clubs, who were somewhat puritanical in their outlook, wanted a pledge of total abstinence from alcohol from every member of the united body. We didn't succeed in getting our way but a compromise was reached with which we had to be satisfied. I was one of the delegates to these conferences and it will indicate the strength of our finances when I say that I had to cycle from Belfast to Dundalk to attend them. The foundation of "The Sinn Fein League" was the outcome of the amalgamation.

The Cumann na Gael had adopted "The Peasant", edited by W.P. Ryan, as their mouthpiece in the weekly press, while we had "The Republic". It was agreed that the latter journal would cease publication and that Hobson, who had acted as editor of it, would transfer to Dublin and be taken on as Sub-Editor of "The Peasant". The new body was also to take on Sean McDermott as organiser. He also was to make Dublin his centre and so I lost my two closest colleagues and afterwards had to carry on largely on my own, as there were no others of my vintage left with whom I could co-operate.

I have no recollection of the dates of these events, they happened so many years ago, and I have not the opportunity of looking them up, but I would put the dates around 1909/12.

I carried on as best I could through various organisations in the following years, but always with the I.R.B. as the core of all

*W. J. J.*

my activities. I held regular meetings of the few centres in Belfast, revived moribund ones in odd places throughout the province such as Dungannon, Coalisland, Ardboe and Strabane in County Tyrone, Derry City which was never/<sup>very</sup> much use; Toomebridge; Staffordstown in County Antrim and one or two centres in County Derry. It took constant and regular visits to keep them alive, and even then they were not very active. We couldn't get the proper type of young men to take charge of them and without this real leadership they soon became semi-stagnant again. However, they provided contacts and that was the most we got from them.

I attended meetings of the Supreme Council regularly and carried out various functions assigned to me, such as attending at occasional meetings, carrying out elections for the Supreme Council in Glasgow, London and other centres. I also went to Glasgow and other centres in Scotland to speak at meetings organised by the local bodies. And so time moved on with little to show for our work (all this time I had my business in the centre of Belfast) except that we kept the national spirit alive and active, here and there, until the advent of the Ulster Volunteers under Carson to oppose the promised Home Rule Bill. The rise of the Irish Volunteers soon followed and then real things began to happen, when young, intelligent men commenced to take an interest in the country's affairs and give us the co-operation we had so long lacked.

The initiation of the Irish Volunteers was largely inspired by the I.R.B. leaders in Dublin. They took great care to see that control was kept in the right hands and in every area where the organisation existed or had contacts, their men were instructed to be active in organising and controlling the local forces. Accordingly, I immediately proceeded to organise the Irish Volunteers in Belfast, getting my own men, mostly trained in the Fianna, into key positions in the various districts in the City. I had the assistance of a few men also who had been in the British Army, such as Seán Cusack, Seán O'Neill, Rory Haskins (an ex-Orangeman, who had come over completely to our movement and who had been sworn into the I.R.B.)

*AWC*

and others. With these men, the Irish Volunteers swept nationalist Belfast into its ranks and by the time war broke out, in 1914, we had over 4,000 men in the ranks.

I was elected chairman of the Volunteer Committee in Belfast and the surrounding districts, like Greencastle, Ligonell etc., and was given the rank of Commandant by Headquarters in Dublin. I was also elected a member of the Executive of the Volunteers but cannot now say for certain whether this was before or after the split - possibly after. The job of organising this large force was an extremely busy one, especially as I had to contend, all the time, with the efforts of the Devlinites, through the medium of the Ancient Order of Hibernians, to prevent ~~us~~ getting control and to seize control themselves. It was only through the co-operation of Sean Cusack and Sean O'Neill, both of whom were well versed in military affairs, that I was able to retain my position as titular head of the organisation. As time went on, however, ex-military men joined up and their knowledge and experience made it more and more difficult for me to maintain control. Headquarters sent me a Captain Berkeley to assist in the military organisation, as well as Colonel Cotter, an ex-Indian Army Officer who only remained with us a very short time. I understand that Captain Berkeley was a direct descendant of Bishop Berkeley who was prominent in Ireland in the seventeenth century. Captain Berkeley was apparently a wealthy man, a supporter of the Home Rule movement, who gave us what help he could from his very limited capacity. He disappeared from the scene, like most of the other ex-British officers who came to help us, when war broke out in September, 1914.

Subsequently we were left to our own resources, which were limited enough, to meet the organised efforts of the Parliamentary Party, in our case through the Ancient Order of Hibernians (A.O.H.) of which Joe Devlin was President, to seize control of the Irish Volunteers. In Belfast it started with a special mobilisation of the Volunteers in Seán an Díomas Park (A.G.A.A. ground) at which

*DWRC*



Joe Devlin insisted on taking the salute, having previously had himself elected by the Belfast Executive of the Irish Volunteers to the position of Hon. Colonel. I was forced to agree to this appointment and procedure, as the A.O.H. now had a majority on the Belfast Executive and I was, of course, anxious to avoid a split, the occurrence of which, however, with the pressure of events, was inevitable. It came at a monster meeting held in St. Mary's Hall some weeks later, the events at which I have described elsewhere. The hall was filled to capacity and well laced with Devlin's infamous "Baton Men", and as indeed we had only our own few active Volunteers and no great following of sympathisers, the result was a foregone conclusion. The Volunteers were split and of the four thousand enrolled men who paraded in Sean's park a few weeks earlier, we were left with less than one hundred and fifty all told, of all ages and capacities, but all very loyal men. A great number of the younger men who remained with Devlin and most of the ex-British Army men in his party joined up in the 16th Division, when it was formed, went to France "to fight for small nations" and a great many of them left their bones there. They didn't lack courage nor perhaps national feeling, but they were wrongly led. I suppose a story similar to the above would apply to various parts of Ireland where the Volunteers were strong.

Sometime after we started the Volunteers in Belfast I got instructions to organise a branch of the Cumann na mBan. I had great difficulty in finding any young women with organising capacity to undertake this job for me, but eventually Una Ní Riain, who was teaching in the Dominican High School on the Fall Road, undertook the job and did it very successfully. My mother was elected chairman and Una Ní Riain remained secretary until just before Easter, 1916, when she had to return to her home in Wexford. Afterwards the Cumann na mBan was carried on by Ina Connolly (Mrs. Archie Heron), *the Misses* her sister Nora, and some others whose names I do not remember.

*WMC*

During the interregnum between the big Volunteer parade and the monster meeting recorded above, when there was an uneasy truce between Devlin and myself, an incident occurred which may be worth recording. I learned from some source that Joe Devlin had secured a quota of the arms brought in by the Parliamentary Party supporters, including some Hotchkiss machine guns. I thought that we should get some of these for Belfast and accordingly asked Dr. H. Russell McNabb, a strong supporter of ours, to drive me to Dublin, having first extracted a promise from Devlin to give us two of the machine guns. When we got to Dublin I had some difficulty in getting him to honour his promise, as representations had been made to him, meantime, by some of his supporters in Belfast. However, we eventually got the guns and brought them back to Belfast where we kept them cached for some time. The A.O.H. people, however, in some way traced their hiding place and one night seized the guns and hid them in the pavilion in Celtic Association Football Club grounds. They remained there for a long time, but sometime about 1919/20, the I.R.A. traced their hiding place, raided Celtic Park, recovered the guns and sent them back to Dublin. I gather from Frank Thornton that they eventually were brought to Cork and were in use at the famous ambush in Kilmichael and other engagements in the West Cork area, where they were used to good effect.

After the split in the Volunteers, we carried on with the remnant of men we had left. They were divided into sections and drilled regularly in a British Army hut we were able to rent. Parades were held weekly on the side of Divis Mountain where rifle practise was also given, in a disused quarry. On special occasions, such as the visit of Padraig Pearse to lecture in St. Mary's Hall on the Emmet anniversary and a lecture by Fr. Michael O'Flanagan in the same hall on the Manchester Martyrs anniversary, we mobilised our full force of about one hundred and thirty men (of all ages) and marched from our hut at the top of the Falls Road to St. Mary's Hall, armed with rifles. At one of these parades, I received an order from the Commissioner of the R.I.C. prohibiting the carrying

*Done*

of arms on our march. The hut was surrounded by police and I put it to the men, whether or not they wished to obey the order received. With one or two exceptions they all agreed to carry on with the rifles and I marched them down to the meeting, armed, as arranged.

These two meetings, which were very successful and very well attended, gained us greatly increased sympathy, if no increase in number, in the city, which was helpful anyhow, when we were trying to raise money for the purchase of arms. As elsewhere throughout the country, each man was subscribing weekly towards the purchase of some kind of weapon and equipment for himself. We raised funds by various methods to help those who were not in a position to make such weekly contributions.

During this period I had been called upon to attend meetings in such places as Dungannon, where I spoke from the platform with (I think) Roger Casement, Captain White and others, and at Dundalk where a big recruiting rally was held. I also, with Herbert Moore Pim, negotiated the purchase of a case of Martini-Enfield rifles from a man in Letterkenny, Co. Donegal, and conveyed them to Dublin to The O'Rahilly who was Quartermaster-General of the Irish Volunteers. On another occasion I was able to secure two dozen revolvers for delivery to the same centre. My sorrow was that we had not the funds to purchase these arms for our own men in Belfast where they were badly required. I mention these incidents merely to indicate the position of affairs at the period and to show how closely knit the Irish Volunteers were all over Ireland.

I had one especially sincere man in my command in Belfast named Alf Cotton. Alf was reared in the sect of the Plymouth Brethern and I cannot say what influence brought him into contact with our movement. But having come in, there was no more sincere or loyal man in the movement. He was employed in one of the Labour Exchanges and was dismissed on account of his nationalist activities. We got him employed eventually - I think through Ernest Blythe - as a Volunteer organiser in Kerry, where he worked effectively until he

Dunn

got an order, from the "competent Military Authority" in Kerry to leave the area and to live in one of several areas nominated by them, one of which, strange to say, was in Belfast. I will mention his name later in this narrative when I come to the period preceding 1916.

About the middle of 1915 I received a Deportation Order from the "competent Military Authority" in Belfast. Similar orders were served on Herbert Moore Pim and Ernest Blythe about the same time. Pim and myself reported the receipt of these Orders to General Headquarters and were instructed to report there a few days later. We accordingly proceeded to Dublin where a long drawn out conference was held, with Eoin McNeill presiding. Joseph Mary Plunkett, Eamon Ceannt, Bulmer Hobson and I think Thomas McDonagh and a few other members of the Executive of the Irish Volunteers were present. Ceannt urged very strongly that we should be put into some building in Dublin with a picked garrison and the British invited to come and take us. This proposal was not favourably received as it was stated that it would precipitate a fight for which we were not ready. A counter proposal was made - I think by ~~Sean~~ Eoin McNeill - that one of us should be sent to America to do propaganda work on the basis of these orders and I was nominated as the one to go. I did not like this proposal and demurred at it, but I was told that it was given as an order and that I was in duty bound to obey. Plunkett was definitely behind this plan and in retrospect I frequently wonder if he had not some other motive or plan behind it of which nothing was mentioned. At any rate, I didn't like it and, order or no order, decided to consult Tom Clarke about it. I went straight to his home and explained the position to him. He agreed heartily with my view and advised me to go straight to McNeill's house and tell him that I categorically refused to leave the country. When I reached McNeill's house in Herbert Park I found him closeted with Plunkett, making out papers etc. for me. I arrived very late at night and Mrs. McNeill opened the door for me. When I told her the purpose of

Duce

my late call, she applauded my decision heartily, which encouraged me greatly in meeting her husband. Both he and Plunkett were taken aback when I announced my decision, but when they saw that it was unalterable they agreed to accept it. With the others I returned to my base and was arrested in due course and tried and sentenced to four months' imprisonment. Pim and Blythe, for some reason or other, got shorter sentences of three months and two months, which we served in Belfast gaol. I was released in November, 1915, and was ill for a few weeks subsequently, which prevented me taking part in any activity. On my recovery, I believe it was in December, 1915, I was summoned to a special meeting of the Supreme Council of the I.R.B. for the purpose of electing a new executive. This election took place every two years. I cannot remember who succeeded Seamus Deakin as Chairman of the Supreme Council, but when the meeting assembled and I had looked around those present I told Sean McDermott, who was seated beside me, that I intended to propose Pearse as Chairman for the coming term. He asked me "for God's sake" to do nothing of the kind, as "we don't know Pearse well enough, and couldn't control him" - an important factor then. He told me that they - I presumed Tom Clarke and himself, in whom I had absolute trust - would propose a name in due course. When the matter came up, McDermott proposed and Tom Clarke seconded my name for the position. I protested that I did not think I was a suitable man for the position; I did not wish the responsibility and in any event I resided in Belfast, whereas the time and the circumstances required a man resident in Dublin who would be available for consultation at any time and in any emergency. My protests were overborne and, despite them, I was elected unanimously as Chairman and occupied the position up to the Rising.

I believe that it was at that meeting, or certainly the subsequent one held sometime in January 1916, that the question of

*AKB*

a Rising out was discussed and decided. I know that I was in the chair and when Dr. Patrick McCartan pointed out that we were taking a great responsibility in committing the country to war, without having, at least, a considerable section of the population behind us. I had to quieten the protests of at least two of those present and enthusiastically in favour of a fight, by pointing out that McCartan's contention was a very just and reasonable one and must be considered calmly. <sup>Since And in accordance with the IRB Constitution</sup> Against that I stated that we had been organising and planning for years for the purpose of a protest in arms, when an opportunity occurred and if ever such an opportunity was to arrive, I didn't think any better time would present itself in our day. The whole matter was then discussed calmly and seriously and the unanimous decision arrived at was that preparations for a Rising were to be pushed forward and a date arranged in any of the three following contingencies, viz. (1). Any attempt at a general arrest of Volunteers, especially the leaders. (2). Any attempt to enforce conscription on our people and (3). If an early termination of the war appeared likely. The above are the three contingencies, as far as I remember them now, and I believe that they are correct.

I think it was at the same meeting, after the above decision, that it was decided to set up a Military Committee to take charge of the preparations and plans. McDermott, Pearse, Ceannt, Plunkett and Connolly were appointed to this Military Committee, there and then, and I think that they were given limited powers of co-option, which brought on McDonough, subsequently. However, I am not certain of these latter details about the Military Committee and if any person with more intimate knowledge of these events than mine (if there is any such person) sets them out differently, I would not contradict them.

I now come to a matter which has caused great discussion, that is the question of James Connolly's disappearance, sometime before the Rising. William O'Brien, of the Irish Transport & General Workers' Union - a sound man, with an exceptionally good memory - and others,

*Done*

have stated that Connolly was kidnapped by the I.R.B. to prevent him forcing their hands before they were ready. I do not agree with this statement at all and for the following reason. On the Sunday, during the period of Connolly's disappearance, a meeting of the Supreme Council was held in Clontarf Town Hall, at which I was present. McDermott arrived a few minutes late and explained that his lateness was due to Connolly's disappearance. He had learned that Connolly had an agreement with Madame Markievicz and Mallon of the Citizen Army, that if any of the three of them was arrested or disappeared the remaining two would call out the Citizen Army and start the fight. Seán said that when he learned of this agreement, he had spent the morning with Madame and Mallon, persuading them to hold their hands, as our preparations were well advanced, and had got from them a provisional agreement to do nothing for a few days. After the position had been fully considered the meeting was adjourned for a short while, to enable McDermott to go to Liberty Hall and inform Madame and Mallon that the Supreme Council had decided that, if they brought out the Citizen Army, we would prevent any of the Dublin Volunteers joining them. I may have been credulous in believing McDermott's statements in the case, but I knew Seán better than most people and I was convinced then and am convinced now, despite all that happened subsequently, that he was telling us the truth and that the position was as he set it out for us.

I think that the meeting mentioned above was the last meeting of the Supreme Council I attended. At it or at a previous meeting, I pointed out to Sean McDermott, who had been elected as Secretary to the Supreme Council, and to Tom Clarke, who had been elected Treasurer, that it would be necessary to appoint some person, with military knowledge, as a whole-time organiser and military leader, for the scattered units in Ulster; that I had no military knowledge or experience to handle and lead men and that in any event, my movements were restricted by the exigencies of my own

*Done*

business and family demands and that I could take responsibility *only* for the men in my own district and that I had no authority outside it. They agreed with this and got the Supreme Council to appoint a man named Burke from Carrickmacross (afterwards Dr. Burke) who convinced Tom Clarke that he had a thorough knowledge of military matters and was willing and anxious to take the position and its responsibilities. He demanded and got a new Sunbeam Motor Cycle to enable him to keep in contact with the various centres. He also asked for and got a reasonably generous salary or allowance, with the office of O.C., Ulster Forces of the Irish Republic. I only saw him three times between his appointment and the Rising. The first time was when I was summoned to Dublin, to meet him, with Pearse and Connolly in the rooms of Craobh Cheiting. There Pearse made the following arrangements. When the date for the Rising was decided, we were to receive a code message, the date given in which was to be read as seven days earlier, as the date set for the Rising. I was to mobilise my men, with all arms and ammunition and equipment available, to convey them to Tyrone, join the Tyrone men mobilised there and "proceed with all possible haste, to join Mellows in Connaught and act under his command there". Burke was to join us with his men from Carrickmacross and, I presume, take command of the joint forces. I pointed out the length of the journey we had to take, the type of country and population we had to pass through and how sparsely armed my men were for such an undertaking. I suggested that we would have to attack the R.I.C. barracks on our way through, to secure the arms we required. Connolly got quite cross at this suggestion and almost shouted at me "You will fire no shot in Ulster: you will proceed with all possible speed to join Mellows in Connaught," and, he added, "if we win through, we will then deal with Ulster". He added further, to both Burke and myself "You will observe that as an order and obey it strictly". I looked at Pearse, to ascertain if he agreed with this and he nodded assent, with some remark like "Yes, that's an order". That interview is perfectly clear in my mind, and was exactly as I set it down.

*WMC*



The second time I saw Burke was when he appeared at my house, all hot and bothered, the night of Pearse's lecture, to inform me that he had been picked up by the police and that they were "trailing" him. He was very excited and disturbed, but as I had been followed by a policeman everywhere I went outside Belfast (like every other man who was known to be an active I.R.B. man) since I was eighteen years of age, I was impatient with him and had no time for his worries.

The third and last time I met Burke was in Dr. McCartan's house in Eskerbuoy, near Carrickmore, County Tyrone, on Good Friday, 1916, where I had been summoned to meet the Tyrone leaders, to discuss some news they had got (I don't know how) of the Rising. The Tyrone leaders were very much upset at the news and believed that it was a Citizen Army move and not an I.R.B. or Volunteer move. In addition to Dr. McCartan, Burke had arrived and also Father Daly and Father Coyle. After long discussion and when I explained that, in accordance with my orders, I had arranged to bring my men to Tyrone, Burke started back for Carrickmacross, stating that he had something like 300 men and about 100 rifles that he would bring along to join us. Father Daly, whose brother or cousin was County Engineer in Monaghan district, said that Burke hadn't ten men or ten rifles to bring us and that nobody would follow him. We never saw or heard of him again until I saw him in Richmond barracks after the Rising making a fool of himself.

In the meantime in Belfast, I was endeavouring to get my business together again after my imprisonment and illness and at the same time keeping the national activities going, meetings of the open organisation and the I.R.B. with intensive drilling of the Volunteers, awaiting the code message giving me the date of the Rising. I want to emphasise here that I had to keep my own council all this time and could share my confidence with no contemporary. Cathal O'Shannon has stated in public lectures here in Dublin on one or two occasions lately that "at the time of Connolly's disappearance" he had a message from Seán McDermott in Dublin about the Citizen

*AKC*

Army's intention of taking immediate action. "Shortly after that the date had been fixed" and "later, at Tom Clarke's request, he brought from Connolly, in Liberty Hall, the plan of operations for the Volunteers in Belfast and in the North". I don't know about the message from McDermott about the Citizen Army, though I think it unlikely, but I can say specifically that there is no truth whatever in the other statements. As I have set out previously, I had already got my orders for Belfast, direct from Pearse and Connolly. And Burke, I presume, had got his for the rest of Ulster, with which he was supposed to be in touch and for which he was responsible. Tom Clarke and Sean McDermott and myself had our own lines of communication and Cahal O'Shannon was not one of them and I would have resented getting orders direct from Connolly and through him. His statements can be written off as historically inaccurate.

After Pearse's visit to Belfast, though he said nothing positive to me, I felt that things were coming to a head and I was making all preparations possible to carry out my orders. In case something happened, that would prevent me getting my men out of Belfast by rail or road, I sent a man down to Coalisland, to contact one or two men there and to arrange with them, in case of a crisis, that on receipt of an agreed worded telegram, they would seize two motor boats that I knew to be at Maghery ferry, on the Tyrone side of Lough Neagh and bring them over to Crumlin, on the Antrim side where I believed I could bring my men over Divis Mountain and so get them into Tyrone. But no message whatever reached me from Pearse and I never got any further message, notification of date or instructions from Pearse or the Military Committee or any authority in Dublin.

In the meantime, Alf Cotton, to whom I have previously referred, had been ordered out of Kerry by the military and given choice of two or three areas in which to live, one of which - strange to say - was his native Belfast. On the instructions of Pearse, he chose this area, with further instructions to report to me each day, in case I got any orders for him. Accordingly he dropped in to see me every

Duce

day and as I had nothing to report to him, he usually left without an exchange of words between us, other than a salutation. However, on the Friday preceding Holy Week, he came in, looking very serious. He asked me had I any instructions for him and when I replied in the negative, he seemed concerned and informed me that he had received a dispatch direct from Pearse, ordering him to proceed to Kerry the following week, bringing with him his equipment and arms and to report to whoever was in charge there - I think Austin Stack. Two five-pound notes were enclosed to cover his expenses. When Cotton heard that I had received no word, he was greatly worried, as he thought that something must have gone astray with the arrangements. He asked me for my advice as to whether or not he should go to Kerry, in the circumstances, or wait until I got instructions, which might include him. Truth to tell, I was very concerned myself that no instructions had reached me and could not understand it. After the fullest thought and consideration and in the light of subsequent events, I have come to the conclusion and am fully convinced, that it was not intended that any action should be taken by the Belfast group. Sean McDermott, at least, knew the situation in Belfast, and indeed in Ulster generally and understood the difficulties and obstacles we were likely to encounter and to have to overcome. At all events I did not wish to show my doubts and puzzlement to Alf Cotton and told him that he must, of course, carry out the orders he had received and proceed to Kerry, as instructed. I believe he did make a start for Kerry, late in Holy Week, but either got turned back or turned back and returned to Belfast.

I immediately proceeded to get in touch with Dublin, through Una Ni Riain, who was returning home for the holidays. I asked her to contact Sean McDermott and inform him that I was going to Dublin on Saturday and must see him as soon as possible after my arrival there, and instructed him to contact me at Tom Clarke's, where I proposed to stay for the week-end. She duly conveyed my

*Alf*

message, after a great deal of trouble in getting in touch with Sean. In the meantime, I sent a man down to Coalisland to deliver a message to my correspondent there - as far as I can remember, his name was James Torney - to be prepared to seize the motor-boats at Maghery Ferry and bring them across Lough Neagh to Crumlin, on the Antrim side, where I hoped to be able to bring my men, in case we were prevented leaving Belfast to get to Tyrone by rail, and made what other arrangements were possible, to get the Volunteers mobilised in sections, ready to carry out any instructions I might have received, on my return from Dublin.

I proceeded to Dublin on Saturday (preceding Holy Week) and went to Tom Clarke's, but though I sent various messages to Sean McDermott, he did not appear. I endeavoured to get some information from Tom Clarke - I think that this is worthy of note - but Tom told me, on his solemn word, that he knew nothing whatever about the arrangements or plans, that all he knew was that he was to report to Captain Ned Daly (his brother-in-law) on Easter Sunday morning and carry on under him. I am convinced that Tom was telling me the truth and that he had no detailed knowledge of the arrangement for the Rising. He knew that the Rising was timed for Easter Sunday morning, but that was the total extent of his knowledge. He told me that Sean McDermott had control of all matters connected with the Rising, together - I think he said - with Pearse and Connolly, and I must get any information I required from him.

I made every endeavour to contact Sean McDermott throughout Saturday and on Sunday forenoon, going to his lodgings and other places where I might find him without result. I returned to Tom Clarke's house and sometime during the afternoon of Sunday, Seán arrived in a cab. He was evidently surprised and very much upset at finding me there. I immediately informed him of the purpose of my visit to Dublin and of my efforts to meet him. He admitted having received my message from Una Ni Riain, but said that he had

*DMC*

had too many things on hand to arrange to see me. He refused to talk to me then and left almost immediately, stating that he had yet to see McNeill and had an appointment with him, which he must keep. I am of the opinion that he had intended to spend some time at Tom Clarke's, but changed his mind when he found me there. I tried to extract a promise from him that he would see me the following day, but only succeeded in getting a half promise from him. However, I was determined to see and have it out with him and I did succeed in doing so, as I will relate later.

On that Sunday evening a Volunteer function had been arranged in a hall - I believe in the premises of the Irish National Teachers' Organisation - in Parnell Square. A one-act Play was to be produced by Jack Morrow, but for some reason this part of the proceedings fell through and someone suggested that Bulmer Hobson, Secretary of the Irish Volunteers, who was present, should be asked to give a short address to fill this interval. I came into town to attend this function, as I knew I would meet some friends there. I arrived just as Hobson was speaking and to my amazement I heard him advocating a policy of waiting; "that this was not Ireland's opportunity and that a more favourable time would come later". I forget the reasons he gave for this policy, but no doubt he thought that they were sound ones. To me it sounded like bedlam. I had just left Tom Clarke, who told me the Rising was fixed for the following Sunday and here was the Secretary of the Irish Volunteers advocating publicly, a policy of delay. I feared that divided councils would be fatal to any attempt at an armed Rising and only partially informed as I was, I was very distressed. I left the hall and on my way out met Sean McDermott limping in. I told him what Hobson was saying inside and with a good, round oath Sean said that we would "damned soon deal with that fellow". I presume that the arrest and detention of Hobson the following week, stemmed from that speech, together with the fact that, I understand, he was filling some of the organisers of the Irish Volunteers like Ginger O'Connell, Eimir O'Duffy and others like Padraic Ó Riain, who were strong

*Duce*

adherents of himself personally, with similar doctrine. It ended Hobson's usefulness in Irish public life, which, I consider a great pity, as he was a most sincere nationalist, with a clear mind and great strength of character.

On the following morning (Monday) I found Sean McDermott at the office in D'Olier Street. He tried to avoid me and to put me off, but eventually I got him into a room, locked the door and told him that he must talk to me. Sean laughed and said all right, he would tell me all I wanted to know, which was everything. He told me of the plans for Dublin and of the coming of the German arms to Clare or Kerry. He also said that they expected a ship to Dublin, with German officers to lead the Rising. I put little faith in this latter statement and I don't think that Seán did either. I can't decide, in my own mind even yet, whether or not he was trying to deceive me or was deceiving himself. He asked me what I thought of it all and what I proposed to do myself. I told him that I found it hard to believe all he had told me, but that if the Rising was coming off on Easter Sunday, I couldn't be out of it, that I would bring my men out to Tyrone, if possible, and carry out the orders I had already received from Pearse and Connolly. Sean expressed some surprise at this intention, in view of what had happened, but I told him that I would call him to account for his actions in this regard, if we both lived through the events to follow. He laughed and said that there wasn't much chance of that, if the Rising came off, so he wasn't worried about answering for his actions. I mention this to show Sean's attitude of mind to the Rising and what he expected would follow from it. I next met him for a moment, in Richmond Barracks, on his way out to Kilmainham Gaol, to be executed. He put his arms around me and bade me good-bye. I lay awake all night and heard the shots in the early morning that finished his gallant career.

It may be appropriate at this stage to record my view, that from my talks with Tom Clarke and Sean McDermott, earlier and those I have recorded above and from all I have been able to glean since,

*AWCC*

all details of the Rising and all its plans and preparations, were in the hands of Sean McDermott and Joseph Mary Plunkett and that the Military Committee, the Supreme Council, the Executive of the Volunteers, and all of us were used by them to bring the Rising about. I have heard them criticised for their actions in this regard, but I have no complaint for what they did and the way they did it. A rising had been decided on. The fewer who were aware of the arrangements, the less chance there was of any leakage of information. Too much had been lost in previous attempts by too many people knowing and hearing too much. They had the courage to take the immense responsibility and to face the results for themselves personally and for their friends. To them firstly and largely is due the freedom we now enjoy in our part of Ireland and those who enjoy it owe them a debt of gratitude - not criticism.

I returned to Belfast on Tuesday of Holy Week and proceeded with my arrangements to get my men mobilised; to get them equipped, as far as our money would go and to make arrangements to get them out of Belfast, for the manoeuvres, as quietly as possible. I called a meeting of the Section Leaders at the Volunteer premises on Divis Street and gave them full instructions about the preparations to be made. I told no men of what was coming off, but when a senior man - Peter Burns - asked me did it mean action, I told them that I had no information for them, but that it was likely that the manoeuvres might be interfered with by the British, in which event we would likely have to fight. He and the others said that that was good enough for them and that they would make their arrangements accordingly. We bought a lot of light equipment from the Ulster Volunteer stores which was distributed amongst the men who we instructed to bring two days' rations and any small arms and ammunition they had with them. The forty odd rifles we had, of mixed age and vintage and the ammunition for them, Peter Burns and his helpers brought out of the city to the house of a man named Stewart, at Hannahstown, on the side of Divis Mountain, where they

*Burns*

would be available for transport to Tyrone, either by road or over the mountain, to the Lough shore, as events would dictate.

As Holy Week proceeded, I made various personal arrangements, such as getting an Attorney to complete a Deed of Assignment of my business to my mother, certain arrangements for its continuance, the payment of creditors and members of the staff. I had arranged for the Volunteers to leave the city by rail, in groups of sections, for mobilisation at Coalisland, County Tyrone. I had practically everything arranged on Good Friday morning, when a man named <sup>or Hassett</sup> Hassett, arrived at my place of business in a Ford car, with a message from Father Daly in Clogher, where he was curate, asking me to meet him and some others at Dr. Patrick McCartan's parents' home at Eskerbuoy near Carrickmore, County Tyrone. I went straight to my home, arranged for some final messages and instructions to some of the Section leaders, packed my uniform and a large parabellum pistol I had purchased and started for Tyrone with Hassett. On my arrival at Carrickmore, I found gathered in the McCartan home, Dr. Patrick McCartan, Father Daly, C.C., Father Coyle, C.C. and Burke the organiser. Word had reached them somehow - I don't remember how, probably through Dr. McCartan, of the arrangements for Easter Sunday in Dublin. They expressed the opinion - particularly the priests and also Burke - that the whole thing was engineered and inspired by Connolly; that it was not a Volunteer, but a Socialist Rising; that it had no sanction etc. from McNeill. I informed them of all I knew and of what I had learned from Sean McDermott on my visit to Dublin. I made Burke give them particulars of his and my visit to Dublin, to meet Pearse and Connolly and the orders and instructions we had received from them. I stated specifically that my allegiance was to the I.R.B. first and last; that I was satisfied that the proposed Rising was inspired and would be directed by the I.R.B. through its leaders in the Volunteers, with Connolly and the Irish Citizen Army, an integral part of any fighting force that would turn out; that I was taking my orders from the I.R.B. through its Military Committee and that accordingly I was in Tyrone and was bringing my men to Tyrone, to carry out the orders I had received

*Burke*



from Pearse and Connolly. I urged them to mobilise the men in the various districts where we had Volunteer units, and get them prepared to march on Sunday morning. They ridiculed the idea of a march to Connaught, pointing out the difficulties, almost the impossibility of such a march, mostly through very hostile territory. I agreed that I was aware of these difficulties, but orders were orders and that perhaps the whole plans depended on our carrying our share of them. McCartan agreed generally with me, but he was greatly swayed by the arguments of the priests, who were both sincere and loyal men. The argument went on through the evening without any definite conclusion as to action being arrived at. Sometime in the afternoon, Burke declared that he must return to Carrickmacross to get his men ready to turn out. I asked him how many men he had available and he said about ~~one~~<sup>three</sup> hundred, partially armed. Immediately he left us, Father Daly seized on Burke's statement about his men and told us that his (Father Daly's) cousin or brother - I forget which - was Engineer to the local Authority at Carrickmacross and he had informed him (Father Daly) that Burke had no men who would follow him in the district, that he hadn't ten men, not to speak of ~~three~~ hundred and no arms, even for the lesser number. Father Daly used this as an argument to prove the weakness and confusion of the whole movement, in its then phase. It was finally decided, as they wouldn't take my assurances for the fact, that it was an I.R.B. not a Connolly Rising, to send Miss Mary McCartan (Dr. P. McCartan's sister) accompanied by a Miss Owens of Pomeroy, to Dublin, to see Pearse and Tom Clarke and verify the position. When this had been arranged, the two priests left for their homes and were to return the following forenoon, when the messengers had returned from Dublin. I stayed that night with Dr. McCartan.

On easter Saturday morning, the two priests returned and the messengers having also got back and reported that the position was substantially as I had outlined it, the discussions and arguments began all over again and though they carried on to the afternoon, no

*Muse*

progress was made towards a decision. The priests left towards evening, to attend their Stations of Confessions, with a promise to return when they were finished. It was also decided that Dr. McCartan himself should go to Dublin, see Tom Clarke and get the position clarified by him. Dr. McCartan went to Dublin and returned sometime late that evening. In the meantime, I got to Coalisland, as I had arranged with Hugh Rodgers of Beragh, to bring his Ford car to Belfast, get in touch with Peter Burns there and bring the rifles, ammunition and some small arms, parked at Stewarts at Hannahstown, down to Coalisland, where I also arranged through one of the local men, to get the use of a small hall at the outskirts of the town, to caché the arms and ammunition and shelter my men when they should arrive. In due course Rodgers reached Coalisland and we put the arms etc. in the care of the local men, in the hall, as arranged. I took out one small Belgian automatic, with a clip or two of ammunition, for my own use, as the Parabellum was large and somewhat unhandy. I returned to Carrickmore with Rodgers. He left me off at the end of the road leading up to McCartan's house. On the way up, I took out the small automatic to examine it. I was fool enough to pull the trigger to ascertain if it was loaded - it was, and the bullet went through my left hand, breaking no bones, but leaving a large gap where it passed out. I don't remember what happened then. I suppose I must have passed out, because I came to, sometime later, lying on the side of the ditch. I made my way somehow to Dr. McCartan's house, where Miss McCartan cleaned and bandaged the wound and I lay down on the bed for a while, where I slept until Dr. McCartan returned and fixed up the hand for me.

The priests returned later and again the discussions and arguments were resumed, with no better results, despite Dr. McCartan's report of his interview with Tom Clarke, in which he was informed that the Rising was to take place on Sunday. By this time I was worn out and getting into despair. Word had reached me that most of my men had arrived at Coalisland - indeed some had come on to Carrickmore, including Herbert Moore Pim, who had practically retired from the

*Duce*

movement after his release from Belfast Prison in late 1915. When I was leaving Belfast, it occurred to me that he would be in a bad position in Belfast, if the Rising took place. I accordingly sent him a note to join me on Saturday evening at McCartan's in Tyrone and enclosed the money necessary for his expenses. He duly arrived there on Saturday evening and McCartan got him put up at a cousin's house. I had been to various centres during some of the intervals in the discussions, but nowhere did I find any sign of activity or awareness that anything was in the air. I visited Pomeroy, Beragh, Sixmilecross and Omagh, where I met Kevin O'Sheil, who had no idea that anything was likely to happen. Beragh was the only place where I thought men were likely to turn out. Hugh Rodgers and a few of his men had raided the A.O.H. hall and seized some twelve rifles and some ammunition they found there; consequently I thought that that group anyhow would be likely to join in any action taken. At all events, at the end of a further period of argument, which was going round in circles, in Dr. McCartan's home, I issued an ultimatum to the three Tyrone leaders present, viz. Dr. McCartan, Fathers Daly and Coyle. I stated that I had made up my mind that if they would not undertake to get their men moving and ready to start with mine for Connaught in the morning, I would order my men back to Belfast and disband them there. The Tyrone leaders stated that they would bring their men out, but would remain in their own districts. I could see no usefulness in action of that kind and as it made no provision for the hundred or so odd men and boys that I had brought to Tyrone, in accordance with my orders, with only two days' rations each, I could not face the responsibility of keeping them in Tyrone, in country and amongst people of whom I had no knowledge so that my only alternative was to bring them back to Belfast. I had been informed that McCormick, the representative for Scotland on the Supreme Council, who had been instructed to join me in Tyrone, had arrived and was staying in a house in Beragh, I think. I went to see him and

*Dunn*

explained the position as I found it in Tyrone, the decision of the local men not to move out of their own districts and my ultimatum. He agreed that he found no sign of activity since he reached the area and agreed that I had no alternative but to carry out my declared intention. All this took place after midnight, but I was able somehow to get a messenger to go to Coalisland and order the men through the Section leaders to be ready to march to Cookstown early the following morning. I returned to McCartan's where some attempt was made to resume the fruitless discussions, but I announced that my decision to bring my men back to Belfast, unless I got a definite undertaking that the orders we had received "to join Mellows in Connaught" were put in train. As no promise to alter their decision was forthcoming, I went to bed, worn out in mind and body. On Easter Sunday morning, I was joined at Dr. McCartan's house, by Herbert Moore Pim to whom I explained the position as I found it in Tyrone. He agreed with my decision to get the men back to Belfast, but suggested that if the Rising materialised, my position and his in Belfast would be parlous. I answered that my only concern at the moment was to get my men safely back to Belfast and that only after I had arranged for that would I be free to consider my own position. I state here that throughout the days I was in Tyrone, the responsibility for the lives of those I had with me, weighed heavily on me. A number of them were married men with families and the greater number were young men and boys, for whose lives and liberty I would be held responsible. I can say truthfully that I felt that my own life was only of secondary consideration, though I had real fear of a long term of imprisonment. When we reached Coalisland, I had a conference with the Section leaders and explained the position, as I saw it, to them and my decision to get the men back to Belfast. Some of them demurred, but I insisted on my authority and ordered them to get their men on the road to Cookstown, the only station in Tyrone from which a train left for Belfast, on that day. I provided the money for their train fares and got them all started

*AMCC*

back for their homes, with orders to demobilise there and be ready in case any further orders came for them. The arms and ammunition I left in care of the men in Coalisland. After the men had started, Pim renewed his statement about our personal positions and though loath to leave my men, I finally agreed that we should make an attempt to get to Dublin. I induced Dr. Patrick McCartan, who had brought us in his car to Coalisland, to run us to Portadown, where we would be in time to intercept the morning train from Belfast to Dublin. We started on our journey, but hadn't got far out of Coalisland, until the steering gear of the car went wrong and it ran into a ditch. As it was evident that the car couldn't be repaired in time to enable us to get the train at Portadown, I decided immediately to follow the men and try to overtake them on their march to Cookstown. I hired a side-car in Coalisland and came up with the Column about a couple or three miles beyond Coalisland. The side-car came in handy to give a lift to two or three stragglers, who were unable to keep up with the pace the Column had to make to reach Cookstown in time, which they eventually did and entrained for Belfast.

An incident happened on the journey which will illustrate the type of population we had to contend with in Tyrone. A man named Butler, who was a kind of hanger-on to the Volunteers before the split, but had no connection with us afterwards, apparently came from or his wife came from Coalisland and was there for the Easter holidays, when our men arrived. He was a drunkard and took up with the few men of our body who took intoxicating liquor and was a very bad influence with them generally. On Sunday morning he was the worse of drink and tailed on to the Column, on its march to Cookstown. Between Coalisland and Cookstown is the village of Stewartstown, a hotbed of Orangeism. Passing through Stewartstown, a crowd of the inhabitants attacked the Column and it took all my efforts to keep them steady and from retaliating. I got them safely through Stewartstown, but Butler, who was in the rear, turned back and fired a shot or two at the Orange crowd, from an old revolver he

*Allee*

carried. Immediately the R.I.C. who were, of course, accompanying the Volunteers, closed in and arrested him. A number of the Volunteers broke ranks and proceeded to stage a rescue. I got between them and the police and with the help of one or two of the Volunteer officers, got them to re-form ranks and continue their march. I had no hesitation whatever in leaving him to his fate (though some of our men bailed him out the following morning). He didn't belong to our body and disobeyed the order which he heard me give, firmly and vehemently, to our men. If I had permitted a fracas to develop, undoubtedly some of our men would have used the revolvers or automatics they still had and the whole affair would have developed into a sectarian riot, to the disadvantage and disgrace of the whole movement. If we had been able to get the Volunteers started on the march on Connaught, as ordered by Pearse and Connolly, I have no doubt now that scenes similar to that at Stewartstown would have developed at every Protestant village or townland we passed through, in Tyrone and Fermanagh, before we got to the Connaught border and that we could not have avoided a fight, somewhere on the way.

When we reached Belfast, the men dispersed to their homes and I went with Archie Heron to his Aunt's house at Sydenham, where I remained until, I think, Tuesday evening, when I returned to my own home, bringing Sam Heron with me. Sam acted as Secretary for the Volunteers and lived in the premises we used as headquarters. When I took Sam with me, I closed these premises and we never used them again. I remained at home until arrested, with a number of the other Volunteers. We were lodged in Belfast gaol where we were joined by a number of other Volunteers from Dundalk, who told us that they were arrested, one by one, as they arrived home, after disbandment at Slane. After some days we were sent by train to Dublin, under guard of a half-Company of the Staffordshire Regiment, marched through Dublin where every second house, coming in, seemed to have a Union Jack flying and where I only saw about half-a-dozen friendly looks.

Duce

We were lodged in Richmond Barracks and remained there until deported to Knutsford Prison. When in Richmond Barracks, I was in the room opposite the one in which Sean McDermott was lodged. I met him on the landing, being brought out after his courtmartial. He embraced me, said "his number was up" and bade me good-bye. We heard the shots that killed him the following morning and on the other mornings, when the other men were shot.

When we reached Knutsford, we were turned loose amongst the other prisoners who enjoyed free intercourse. A few nights later, however (the night of the day on which Lord Kitchener was drowned), the Governor and a military guard took me out of my cell, brought me to another wing of the prison, from which all other prisoners had been cleared out and put me in a cell, with an old Sergeant on duty at the door, all the time. I understand Pearse McCann was also taken from his cell and put in the same wing. The following day was Saturday and I demanded to see a priest. After considerable demur, a mild little English priest was allowed to see me. He started off by admonishing me for the evil and unwise things we had done. I promptly refused to have any further communication with him and asked him to leave the cell. Eventually a fine priest - from Tipperary - came in and heard my confession. There was a lot of trouble the following morning about allowing us to attend Mass. Pierce and myself kicked up such a row about it that we were permitted to attend, with a soldier on either side of us with rifle and fixed bayonet. These marched up with us to the Alter rails and stood over us while we received Communion and marched us back again to our benches at the end of the Church. The following day, a few others, including Sean Milroy and an Irish-American named Healy, were brought to our wing. Conditions were relaxed and we were allowed to mix freely with each other during exercise period only. The preceding days Pierce and myself were confined to our cells all the time, only being allowed out to go to the toilet, always under guard.

AWAC

I understand that a number of men in other prisons, such as P.T. Daly, Padraic Ó Maille etc., were segregated about the same time and underwent the same conditions. Some one of these told me afterwards that his prison Governor gave himself and his companion in segregation, tickets for their transport to Dublin or in some other way intimated that they were to be returned to Dublin and were to undergo trial there. No such intimation of any kind was given to us in Knutsford. After about a further week, I was brought out and notified that I was being sent to a prison camp (which turned out to be Frongoch). A large number of the other prisoners in Knutsford were also being transferred, but for some reason, I was put under a special guard. I travelled in a separate coach in the train and when we came to Frongoch I was put by myself in the North Camp, while the other prisoners went to the South Camp, to join the large number of Irish prisoners already there from other centres. I remained alone in the North Camp, with a military guard of my own, for about a week, being allowed no communication with the other Camp, though my rations were sent from the cook-house there. I was then joined by Terence McSweeney and Tom McCurtain. After about a further week, we were suddenly marched down and turned loose in the South Camp. At an election of officers for the Camp, I was made Vice-Commandant under Ginger O'Connell and held that office until I was transferred, with a number of others, to Reading Gaol. It may be well to record - if not already recorded - some of the parting address of the British Commandant of the Camp, in addressing us before our departure. He said that he had always heard and believed that the Irish were a dirty and undisciplined people. He had been in charge of a number of prisoner-of-war camps and could speak with knowledge. From his experience, he had never seen a camp so well disciplined or kept so clean as the camp we had just left. And further, he had considered it his duty and only fair and just, to so inform the Home Office and his superiors at the War Office.

Duce



I really believe he meant it. After a further period in Reading Gaol, I was suddenly released about the 8th of August, 1916.

During my period in Reading, a number of us, including Herbert Moore Pim, were brought to Wormwood Scrubbs, to appear before the Sankey Commission. In the British Parliament, the Home Secretary, in appointing the Commission, had promised Parliament that any person recommended for release by this Commission, would be released.

When the Commission was first appointed, forms of application for appeal were circulated to each prisoner. In Frongoch our staff got hold of these appeal forms and ordered that no one should fill them up or hand them in. This order was practically unanimously obeyed, and as a similar order was conveyed to the remaining prisoners in other centres, hardly any appeals reached the Commission. The British then decided that every prisoner would be taken as having appealed and all would be brought before the Commission. When this appeared inevitable, we mobilised the men, warned them that this might be used as a means of getting information about various leaders throughout the country, who had so far slipped through their fingers. They were instructed, therefore, that each man could say what he liked about his own actions and movements, but under no circumstances was he to mention any other man's name or give any information whatever about any other person's actions or movements, before or during Easter Week, in particular. I understand this instruction was generally obeyed in the letter and in the spirit.

When we arrived at Wormwood Scrubbs, Herbert Moore Pim was called before the Commission just before I was called. I met him coming out, just as I was going in and asked him what questions were put to him. He avoided answering and seemed embarrassed. There was an Irish M.P., <sup>Mr. Mooney, M.P. for St. Davon, I think</sup> on the Commission and when I entered the room, he was standing at the window and seemed in an angry mood. He interrupted Judge Sankey's interrogation of me, several times, in my favour. They asked me particularly about my visits to Tyrone and I told them my business took me there regularly, and gave the best answers I

*Mooney*

could, on other matters. I was informed subsequently that when Pim was asked about his journey to Tyrone at Easter, he told them about receiving the message from me to meet him in Tyrone, about meeting me there etc. etc. As he was the first man to involve others this made the Irish M.P. very cross and so he was strong in my defence when I appeared next. I do not know whether there is any truth in this statement about Pim, as I am loath to believe it, but at any rate, the Commission, I believe, recommended my release and I am again informed that the M.P. <sup>Mooney</sup> insisted on the recommendation being implemented, in accordance with the promise of the Home Secretary, whether all or any of this is true, I don't know, but I was released, as stated, about 8th/10th August.

*M. F. Ryan Comd't.*

(M.F. Ryan) Comd't.

*D. McCullough*  
11<sup>th</sup> Dec. 1953

(D. McCullough)

11th Dec. 1953.

