ORIGINAL

ROINN COSANTA.

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21.

STATEMENT BY WITNESS.

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Witness

Michael Staines,
8 Castle Road,
Clontarf,
Dublin.

Identity.

Quartermaster Dublin Brigade, Irish Volunteers, 1913-1916;

First Commissioner of Garda Siochana.

Subject.

(a) National activities, 1916-1922;

(b) Election work 1917;

(c) Mayo-Galway, 1920-1921.

Conditions, if any, Stipulated by Witness.

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ORIGINAL

Statement by Mr. Michael Staines.

8, Castle Road, Clontarf, Dublin.

I arrived in Dublin on Christmas Eve 1916, on my release from Frongoch. While in Frongoch I was not approached about joining in any re-organisation of the I.R.B., possibly because I had openly expressed my views about the failure of a number of prominent members of that organisation to take part in the Rising.

Shortly after my return from internment I became associated with Seamus and Mrs. O'Doherty who had apparently been working diligently since the Rising. I got a temporary post with the National Aid Association and was employed touring the country investigating claims for assistance for the dependants of Volunteers who had been killed in the Rising or were unemployed. While engaged on this work I assisted in the re-organisation of Volunteer Companies throughout the country.

When the vacancy in the representation of North Roscommon in the British Parliament arose I went down to Roscommon at the suggestion of the O'Dohertys and P.T. Keohane to organise the constituency for Count Plunkett. On arrival I was informed that Jasper Tully was a possible candidate and was being supported by Michael Judge. I went to Bowles' Hotel where I had arranged to meet Michael Judge, but he failed to put in an appearance and I was informed that he had gone to Ballaghaderreen which was at that time in the East Mayo constituency. I decided that I would see Ml. Judge to dissuade him from taking any action to advance the candidature of Jasper Tully.

Next day I saw Fr. O'Flanagan and I wrote to Larry Ginnell to come down to assist in the election, and also to the four attorneys who were principals in the Nation League which had been formed. They all came and assisted the Count's candidature. The Count was at this time interned at Oxford and after his nomination he was released. There was no formal convention held to select a candidate.

I went to Ballaghaderreen to endeavour to contact Michael Judge. At the railway station I met Fr. Gildea who greeted me with the words "We are seven, just as when you left". He was referring to the fact that I had lived in the district and had not returned there since I had left it thirteen years before, and to the fact that we had few sympathisers in Ballaghaderreen. I found that Michael Judge had left for Carracastle. Next day being "Fair Day" we decided to hold a meeting in the town although it was not in the constituency of North Roscommon. We held the meeting opposite John Dillon's house in the square and it was very successful. Martin Conlon and his brother, a priest, who happened to be passing through, came on the platform and also addressed the meeting. The word "Sinn Féin" was not mentioned in any of the speeches. The Sinn Féin party was practically non-existent at this time, and the terms "Sinn Féiners" and "Sinn Féin Rebellion" were first used by the British to describe the Volunteers and the Rising. No one at this time could give any reasonable estimate as to the number of the electors who sympathised with the Volunteers who took part in the Rising. The appeal was made to vote for Count Plunkett, the father of three sons who had taken part in the Rising and one of whom had been executed.

I returned to Dublin and reported progress at a

meeting in O'Doherty's house. I returned to Roscommon by taxi, driven, I think, by Joe Hyland, and I remember we had to use shovels to dig a clear way through the roads which were snow bound. I made another visit to Dublin and saw Joe McGrath, Dan MacCarthy and Tom Farren, who were labour sympathisers and they consented to come to Roscommon to assist.

The first time I saw Michael Collins during the election was in Frenchpark on the actual day of the election. He had charge of one of the booths there and I had charge of the other one - there were two in the town. Count Plunkett, if elected, was quite prepared to do anything we wanted him to do and he told us so. I was not present at the declaration of the poll and I did not hear the Count's speech declaring his future.

After the election I was kept busy with the National Aid Association. I remember being present at a Volunteer Convention in Barry's Hotel in March 1917, but I did not take much interest in the proceedings and do not remember any decisions reached.

I was present at the Mansion House, Dublin, on 19th April 1917 when a number of delegates from various national organisations met under the Presidency of Count Plunkett to discuss future policy. I remember Count Plunkett proposing the formation of Liberty Clubs. I was aware that a number of people were endeavouring to "run" Count Plunkett. I distinctly remember Griffith opposing the formation of such clubs and stating that any future organisation should be based on "Sinn Féin". In the end a committee, which included Michael Collins, was set up to endeavour to compose the differences of views expressed.

Towards the end of May it was decided that the prisoners in Lewes Jail should demand treatment as prisoners of war and refuse to work and, if necessary, to break up the jail with a view to their release. I was sent to Lewes where I spent seventeen days. My arrival was to be the signal for the commencement of the scheme and a message to that effect had been sent to them. I did not want to stay at an hotel so I went and saw the Parish Priest and got accommodation with an Irish catholic family.

I went up the Downs which were beside the prison and I heard the prisoners speaking to each other through the windows of their cells. I recognised two of the voices - Jim Lawless shouting to Phil McMahon; "What will you drink, Phil"? and Phil's reply; "Waw-thur". I shouted back; "Good man, Phil". After that the prisoners knew I was in Lewes.

The following morning I went to the Racing Stables where the man of the house was employed. In one of the paddocks there was a windmill from the top of which I could see into the yard where the prisoners were at exercise.

On the second day I went and saw Fr. O'Loughlin, the prison chaplain. He told me he was bringing in messages. As soon as the prison strike started I had to report before 3 p.m. daily to Larry Ginnell in London, giving him details of the treatment I saw meted out to the prisoners. Ginnell was thus enabled to have first hand information before even the Home Secretary received it, especially about the prisoners being manacled. He asked a number of questions in the House of Commons which were very embarrassing for the Government. However, instead of the prisoners being released they were segregated and sent to various prisons. I watched the trains every day in an

effort to discover their destinations.

The prisoners were sent usually by train to their various destinations. De Valera and Tom Hunter were, however, sent by road. I generally went to the waiting room at Lewes Railway station and awaited the arrival of the prisoners from the gaol. I was known to most of them but I could not show any sign of recognition. I then travelled to Brighton on the same train as the prisoners to endeavour to find out their destinations. In all cases I succeeded in getting the information I wanted - although on occasions I had to travel as far as Hove. The prisoners were manacled together with heavy chains like cart chains. At Brighton they usually sang National Songs and thus attracted much attention. One day at Brighton a "cockney" came over to me and asked "Who are these men. Are they criminals?", to which I replied "No, they are men who fought for a small nationality, Ireland". He became very loud in his protestations at the treatment being meted out to the prisoners and actually protested to the warder in charge of them. When all the prisoners had left Lewes I returned to Dublin.

Before the Longford Election in May 1917 I was sent down to Longford to interview Frank McGuinness, brother of Joe. There was a fear that Frank being a supporter of the Parliamentary Party might oppose his brother. I obtained Frank's consent to the nomination of his brother as a candidate. The election was fought on the "Sinn Féin" ticket. I still have the banner used during the election with the words : "Put him in to get him out". We had a good deal of opposition in Longford town as it was a military station. McGuinness won the election by thirty-seven votes. His opponent was at first declared elected, but on a recount being demanded it was discovered that a

bundle of fifty votes had been credited in error to McGuinness's opponent. On the day of the polling I was in charge of the Volunteers in Longford town and District Inspector Walsh, who later became Assistant Commissioner of the Gárda Siochána, was in charge of the R.I.C. and we worked amicably together and kept order in the town where the excitement was intense.

In connection with the Clare Election I remember attending a Convention in Fleming's Hotel, Gardiner's Row, Dublin, to select a candidate. We got de Valera's consent to stand as a candidate. There was some opposition expressed to Eoin McNeill going to Clare to address meetings but de Valera insisted he should go and the opposition subsided. I went to Clare on several occasions to address meetings. I was down also on the polling day, and I remember Countess Markievicz and myself endeavouring to sing "The Soldier's Song" and teaching it to the crowd to enable them to join in. De Valera was declared elected with a substantial majority.

I did not take part in the Kilkenny Election as by that time we had a number of good organisers, led by Dan MacCarthy, available.

Michael Collins sent me down to Clare to interview Dr. Fogarty, Bishop of Killaloe, with a view to getting a letter from him condemning the British Government for allowing Tom Ashe to die on hunger-strike. I booked for Ennis at Kingsbridge, and when the train arrived at Killaloe station the station-master shouted along the platform "Staines", "Staines". I thought that I was caught, and was very doubtful about answering him. He had a telegram for me from Collins telling me to proceed to Ennis, not Killaloe. Collins had evidently thought that the Bishop

lived in Killaloe, but I knew he lived in Ennis.

On arrival at Ennis I met Father Kennedy, Secretary to His Lordship, and he introduced us. When I told the Bishop my mission he asked me why I had come to him. Dr. Dwyer of Limerick had recently died, and Dr. Fogarty had preached the panegyric. I told Dr. Fogarty that a number of his flock, as well as Tom Ashe, were on hunger-strike in Mountjoy, and that the people of Ireland considered that the mantle of Dr. Dwyer had fallen on his shoulders. I told him that if Dr. Dwyer were alive he would give me the letter. Dr. Fogarty gave me the letter, and I travelled on the night mail to Dublin, arriving at about four or five o'clock in the morning. When I got home I discovered that Tom Ashe was dead.

Only one paper published that letter. I am not quite sure which paper published it, but I think it was the "Independent". When I went to the paper with the letter it was, on account of Tom's death, out of date, and in the presence of the editor I 'phoned Dr. Fogarty who gave authority to the paper to alter the letter, according to my instructions, to suit the new conditions. The publication of this letter created a bit of a stir. Many people had thought that the Bishop was antagonistic, especially to the hunger-strikers. I was never very keen on hunger-strike myself.

I attended the Convention in Croke Park in October, 1917. I was elected Treasurer of the Executive on that day. That carried with it the functions and responsibilities of the Q.M.G. to the Volunteer Force. They actually appointed me Q.M.G. at the first meeting of the Executive.

The filling of G.H.Q. staff appointments was left to the resident Executive of the Volunteers.

As far as I can recollect the following were elected to the Executive at that Convention; Seán McGarry, Diarmuid Lynch, Piaras Beaslai, Mick Collins, Eamon Duggan, Dick Mulcahy, Diarmuid O'Hegarty, Pierce McCann (who subsequently died in Gloucester Jail in March 1919) and myself. Gearóid O'Sullivan was appointed to the Executive at a later date. To the best of my recollection members were elected on a Provincial basis, amongst whom were the following : Larry Lardner, Galway, Dick Walsh, Mayo, I think Keaveney for Sligo, and I have an idea that Paul Galligan was elected on that day, if he was not he could tell who represented Ulster. I know that Terry MacSwiney and MacCurtain were both definitely on the Executive at one time or another, but I cannot say for certain if they were elected on that particular day. There was somebody from Wexford on it. I know Joe Doherty was on the Executive, but I cannot say if he was elected on that Convention. Seán MacEntee was on it I know, but I do not know whether he was elected on that day or not. Mick Collins and Seán McGarry were I.R.B. Cathal Brugha was on it; he must have been elected that day. He was not an I.R.B. man, and if he were not elected that day how did he come into it afterwards?

After the Convention we set to work to organise and all the Companies in Dublin city and county came to life again. The organisation was extended to the country. Companies, Battalions and Brigades were formed where circumstances and numbers permitted. There was no hard and fast rule laid down in regard to organisation. We continued where we left off. We started getting arms as we had done in 1916. We got them from America and England, and we bought rifles from individual soldiers. We raided private houses and military outposts for arms.

Regarding buying arms from abroad, we had Neil Kerr in Liverpool and Johnny O'Connor and my brother in New York. Our principal line of supply was really New York and Liverpool. At this time it was impossible to buy stuff from the gunsmiths in Dublin as we had done in 1916.

We got a big consignment of ammunition through Dr. McNabb in Belfast, which was for general use throughout the country, but one lot of it was seized at Dodds of Smithfield (J.J. Keane's) on the 23rd June 1918. The ammunition was packed in oats bags and was consigned as oats. I was down the country at that time and when I came back to Dublin the stuff had arrived. I had known it was coming. I wanted to go straight to Blackhall Street and get the lads to shift it immediately, but it was decided to wait until the following day, and the place was raided that night and the ammunition taken.

Dr. McNabb's brother was a corn merchant in Belfast, and we got Keane to buy oats from him in order to get the ammunition to Dublin. An ordinary Volunteer Company in County Tyrone decided that they should get some of the ammunition from Belfast, and they got somebody to persuade Dr. McNabb's brother to send them a few hundred rounds in a bag of oats. It was all right to see bags of oats going from Belfast to the city of Dublin, but a bag of oats going to County Tyrone was a different matter, and the ammunition was captured. Then they looked up every consignment of oats that McNabb sent out, they searched the one at Smithfield and got the stuff in it.

Before the Executive was formed at all, Devoy was keen on landing arms on the west coast of Ireland. It was really being done through the I.R.B. I was not in the I.R.B., but they trusted me. I was against the idea

because I did not see how it could be done, but I was told it was going to happen near Kinvara, Co. Galway. About a week before the landing was to take place I was in Galway and I found that there was great police and military activity around Kinvara. I begged of them if they were going to land arms not to land them there but somewhere else. I was not aware of any proposal to land arms from German sources, and I am satisfied that Collins would have informed me if any such arrangements were in hand.

The Hierarchy backed us up in the Conscription crisis. As a matter of fact they decided to oppose conscription themselves. The attitude of the Church was such that when the holidays were given at Maynooth College that year, practically every clerical student arrived at my office looking for a gun to bring home. I had the hardest two days I ever had explaining that they would have to get guns from their own Quartermasters at home. They were from all parts of the country.

Any equipment, apart from revolvers and rifles, wanted in the country could be got as handy as in Dublin from the local retail shops.

In regard to the distribution of arms, it was decided to send them to where there was a good Commandant who would fight. A good man naturally got more guns than the man we could not depend on to fight. Cork, Clare, Mayo and places where the fighting was done afterwards were where we sent the arms.

At the time of the alleged German Plot in May 1918 a lot of members of the Executive of Sinn Féin were arrested and a substitute Executive was elected. I was a member of the new Executive, Dr. Lynn was another, Father O'Flanagan was another and Darrell Figgis was probably

elected at that time. I cannot remember the others.

I went over to visit Countess Markievicz and Mrs. Clarke in Holloway Jail in February, 1919. I brought Mrs. Clarke home with me; she was in bad health.

I was the first Director appointed for the carrying out of the Belfast Boycott, which I had to organise all over Ireland. This was originally started as a form of reprisal following the Pogroms in Belfast. The people generally obeyed but I had a lot of extra trouble. For instance, somebody would come and say to me, "I have my account in the Belfast Bank. Can you help me get it into one of the other Banks?" Sometimes it was an overdraft. I was generally able to arrange matters, principally through Mr. Dawson in the Munster and Leinster Bank. This had the effect of extending Munster and Leinster Bank business through the six counties.

I had many complaints from Catholics in Belfast who would not be allowed by their fellow-workers to work in the factories. In all these cases I approached the employers, whom I found always reasonable, but they pointed out that it was not their fault, that it was between the two sections of workers, the Catholics and the Orange crowd.

In one case a girl who had been employed in the V.C.L. Hosiery Factory in Limestone Road wrote and complained to me about the loss of her employment. I called at her house to see her and the first thing I noticed was an R.I.C. man's cap hanging on the hall-stand. I did not like it, but after a few minutes the girl introduced me to the R.I.C. man who happened to be her brother-in-law. He was a Catholic and was just as much opposed to the Pogroms as I was.

One of the Directors of the V.C.L. Hosiery Company, Mr. Craig, told me that they were quite willing to take this girl back, just as in other similar cases, but that they could not guarantee her safety.

We had an organisation all through the country watching goods at all the railway stations and we found that there was very little traffic in Belfast goods. We found that in any case where they did get through that a reprimand was sufficient to stop the business.

After I went to gaol the late Joe McDonagh was appointed Director. That was in November, 1920. Evidently the goods started to come through in greater volume. Joe fined the culprits large sums, sometimes as large as £500.

I acted as Q.M.G. up to the very end. I continued to act as Q.M.G. up to my arrest in 1920 and after my release just before the Truce I resumed as Q.M.G.

I was arrested in the Corporation on the 6th December 1920. Alderman Beatty had a Notice of Motion in; it was, in effect, a vote of loyalty to the British Government. I was an Alderman at the time and I was instructed by Mick Collins to go and oppose it. What happened then was that Captain King, British Intelligence Officer, and his party came into the Corporation and asked for me, but I did not answer. Really how they found me out was that everybody there looked at me when Captain King asked for me. In the beginning that had no effect on the British party, but then they started to call the roll and as my name was first on the roll it was called out first. I did not answer, but again everybody looked at me so Captain King came over to me. He had two very good photographs of me, a front view and a side view.

I do not know where they came from but I suppose they had been snapped on the street. He said to me, "Aren't you Staines?" but I did not answer him. I just sang dumb all the time. He then said, "Come on. You are Staines". They continued with the roll call and picked out five or six of the other men, including P.T. Daly, Michael Lynch and Tommy Lawlor. I then told King that I wanted to leave my watch with the Lord Mayor, Larry O'Neill. I really wanted to pass to Larry O'Neill a letter that I had in my pocket addressed to the Earl of Marr, a Scottish Earl who was running a sort of Scottish freedom paper. I did not want the letter found in my possession. King asked me why I wanted to give my watch to the Lord Mayor, did I not trust him. It was a lady's watch and I told him that it was a keepsake which had belonged to my grandmother and that I did not want to lose it or to have it in jail with me because it would probably be put in store. He would not let me go over to the Lord Mayor, and I had only drawn attention to the fact that I wanted to say something to him.

We were brought down the back stairs, and I was delighted we were going that way because I thought I might get a chance of escaping but they held on to me and I got no opportunity.

Some members of the Corporation staff were on the steps of the City Hall and I said "Good-bye lads", or "Good-bye until I see you again" or something like that but they took it seriously and thought it was a final good-bye. One of them went to the Lord Mayor and told him that I was going to be shot. Larry O'Neill, the Lord Mayor, wired to Lloyd George and told him that he would hold him personally responsible for my safety. The result was that that night, about five hours after we

were arrested, the Auxiliaries told us that anybody who wanted a drink could go into the canteen. I should mention that they picked up Seán Lemass on the way out but I do not think he was with us afterwards in the room. Myself and one other stayed behind and did not go for the drink. I would have loved a drink then, but thought there was something behind it and did not go with them. While the others were having their drinks a sergeant and six men arrived down with an order to Captain King to hand me over, "hand over my body" was the way it was worded. King kicked up holy murder and told the sergeant to go back and tell his Colonel that if he wanted Staines's body he would have to come for it himself. I heard all this talk and thought I was going to be finished before the Colonel came.

The Colonel marched a Company of soldiers down, demanded me and I was handed over. There was a little formality first. King said that I had to be interrogated, so I was taken into a room on the far side of the Castle yard, which is now the Detective Division, and questioned about where I had slept the night before. Their whole object seemed to be to find out where I had slept the previous night, and I found out afterwards that they thought if they found out where I had slept that night they would get Mick Collins. They persisted so much in their questioning that eventually I told them that I had slept in a hay-stack. Actually I had slept in my own room in Portrane Mental Hospital. Being Chairman of the Asylum, as it was then, there was a room available for me at any time. I could not tell them I had slept there because they would have raided it and upset the patients and everybody else in it.

I was confined to Mountjoy from December, 1920, to June, 1921, without trial, charge or internment order. When some Irish Member questioned the Home Secretary in the House of Commons and asked him under what charge I was held, he was told that I was a dangerous man and that I had slept in a hay-stack.

Arthur Griffith, Eoin MacNeill and Eamon Duggan were in Mountjoy while I was there; they had been arrested two or three days before me. At first we were in separate cells on the same landing, but the Auxiliaries came in one evening with a prisoner and they went along all the cells looking through the spy-holes at the prisoners inside. When I saw what was happening I started to ring my bell and kept on ringing it until the Deputy Governor arrived. I then demanded an interview with the Prison Board, as I had a right to do, and it was eventually agreed that The McDermott, Vice-Chairman of the Prison Board, would interview us.

The four of us were brought to the Governor's office where the Deputy-Governor started to introduce us. He introduced me as "Convict" Staines. I exploded and said to The McDermott, "That is what we have to put up with in this prison. I am not a convict. Legally I am not a prisoner. We want our freedom". The McDermott told off the Deputy-Governor and said to him, "It will be 'Mr.' during this interview". Of course, he should have called me "Prisoner".

The McDermott told us that the job of the Prison Board was to keep us inside the walls of Mountjoy, and that he did not see why we could not have all the freedom we wanted inside the walls. The Deputy-Governor said that was impossible unless we were sent to the hospital, and unless the Medical Officer certified that we were

cases for hospital he could not do anything. The Medical Officer, Dr. Cooke - he was a Protestant - was sent for, gave us all a thorough examination and certified we were hospital cases. The result was that we got a cell each - better cells - our cell doors were closed only when the lights were being put off at night, I think that was ten o'clock, and opened first thing in the morning. On fine days we could walk round the exercise ground as we pleased. On wet days we sat in the corridor and played bridge.

As I was leader of the prisoners I claimed the right to visit any prisoner and I was allowed to do so except those directly under the control of the Auxiliaries. The Auxiliaries did allow me to pass food and cigarettes to their prisoners. Although I was not allowed into the landing they were on, I could throw a parcel down from the top landing if I saw any of them. They did not keep the prisoners' rules strictly like the others.

We got newspapers in from outside. The others got their meals brought in, but I took the ordinary meals in the prison. I did not want to have my mother carrying food down to me. I did get ham from her and made sandwiches with it.

Dr. Clune, the Archbishop of Perth, Australia, visited us twice in jail. There was a good long time between the two visits. The first time he came was in December 1920. I had got a note from Collins saying that the Archbishop would be calling. There was a lot of talk when it became known that he was coming. The Governor sent for the four of us, and as we were going along the passage Dessy O'Reilly shouted to us, "Don't let us down, Micheál". Griffith pulled his tie and said to me, "What I want to know is what the fighting men will think about this". I told him

that the fighting men would be quite happy with negotiations for a Truce, provided there was no surrender of arms.

We were introduced to Dr. Clune, and I reminded him that I had known him years before and had actually served Mass for him which made him feel at home. We had a long discussion and when we thought the Archbishop was quite finished he said, "By the way, there is one thing that Lloyd George will insist on". Griffith asked, "What is that?", and the Archbishop said "The surrender of arms". "Tell Lloyd George it is all off", said Griffith, and did not speak another word. That finished it for him.

Dr. Clune was in touch with Lloyd George; I do not know who put him in touch with him. I would not be a bit surprised if he called on Lloyd George himself to see could he do anything to settle the trouble. He was a Redemptorist and had given Missions all over Ireland.

After that interview everything fell through and nothing happened.

Some time afterwards the Archbishop was on the job again and visited us a second time, but most of the business was done outside this time. Lloyd George was not then insisting on the surrender of arms.

The first visit lasted for about an hour and the talk was all to the point. The object of the visit was to arrange a Truce so that negotiations could be opened.

The six lads, Frank Flood and the others, were executed between the first and second visit of Dr. Clune. They were executed on 14th March, 1921.

The evening that those six men were brought in, I dropped a note down from the third landing on the outside to find out who had come in late that night. I had the cord measured so that the note on the end of it would dangle at the window underneath. I had my name signed to the note and lowered the cord. After a few minutes I felt a pull and then I got a note back which said "This is Barney Ryan", and telling who had come in with him. I sent back another note asking him if he wanted food or anything. In this way I was able to supply them with anything they wanted; it was only necessary to send the notes up and down on a cord and the warders would bring in the stuff.

The six lads were executed on the same morning and they went to the scaffold very cheerfully. We were locked up that morning and we said the Rosary through the windows for them.

When Seán MacEoin's escape was first mooted, Collins sent in revolvers to arm the lads in the wing. My sister, May, carried in three or four of them at a time when she visited me. She would have been subject to a search if the authorities had suspected anything, but they did not suspect her. She brought in 22 .45 revolvers which I passed down on a string to the lads below and they hid them in their cells under mattresses and elsewhere. The Auxiliaries did not think of searching cells, they thought everything was all right.

MacEoin and the lads with him were in the plan inside. I knew about it from outside. The lads outside did what I considered a very foolish thing. To get into the jail they brought a parcel, addressed to me, which contained stones or clay. If it had been an ordinary parcel it would not have been so bad, but in order to get

the gate open and get a foot in they had the parcel for me. They could have sent in an ordinary parcel and the fellows who delivered it need not necessarily be those who were going to do the job. On acccunt of this parcel there was suspicion on me afterwards in the jail.

Another foolish thing they did was that before they captured the armoured car they left guns in my mother's house, which was a suspected house, and collected them afterwards, so that my mother really knew more about the arrangements than I did.

One day a British Army Officer and some soldiers arrived at my mother's house in an armoured car. The officer was very nice and told my mother that he wanted her to come with him to the Castle for interrogation. The word interrogation rather frightened my mother. She had visions of third-degree methods and that she might give away some information, for which she knew she would never forgive herself. She declined to go and, as she was of a robust build, the officer decided not to use force without further orders. He went back to the Castle where the authorities consulted Mr. Cope. The officer was told to go back and try to coax my mother to come to the Castle but that he was not to use force.

When the armoured car arrived back Mrs. James McKean was with my mother. The officer did his best to get her to go the Castle but she still refused, and as she had Mrs. McKean with her it made her more independent still. They departed in the armoured car and that was the last she heard of them.

Mr. Cope confirmed this incident subsequently during my period as Liaison Officer.

The attempted rescue of MacEoin on the 4th May, 1921, would have succeeded only for Bob Grace, the chief warder in Mountjoy, who died recently. He was a stickler for discipline, and if the I.R.A. had been wearing all the British uniforms in the world he would not have let them in without authority. It was he who blocked the plans. I thought at the time that he was bitter towards us, but knowing him afterwards in Phibsboro', I felt that he had only done his job regardless of who was concerned. Some of those who took our side did not turn out very well afterwards; when Kevin O'Higgins took over they let him down too.

We were in the hospital on the morning of the attempted rescue of MacEoin, and the first we knew of any excitement in the jail was when we saw five or six Auxiliaries rushing over to the barbed wire and climbing it like cats. Then they rushed into the hospital shouting "Where are the Specials?" They really thought that the attempt was for us, but we were sitting down having a game of bridge. We asked the Auxiliaries what was wrong but they would not give us any information. We did not hear any shots being fired because we were inside in the corridor at the time. The whole jail was between us and the firing and the sound did not travel that far. We were out practically on the canal.

MacEoin was still under sentence of death at the time of the Truce. His courtmartial was deferred on a number of occasions.

I got a letter every day from Mick Collins explaining the position outside. On one occasion the Deputy Governor found the warder who was in charge of the bootmaking in my cell on his way to work. He had just given me a letter. The Deputy Governor challenged the

warder about what he was doing there and the warder told him that he was just having a look round and that he knew me outside. He denied that he had brought anything to me. I had the letter actually under my mattress at the time. The Deputy Governor made no attempt to search my cell, and if he had I would not have let him. I was in a strong position because I was held there illegally. The warder was reported and, although a married man, living in one of the prison cottages with his wife and family, he was transferred to Maryboro'. I can~~not~~ think of his name now, Daly — he had a boot-maker's shop in Berkeley Road afterwards. I wrote about this matter to Hammy Bell, Dessy Bell's father, who was ~~assistant~~ acting secretary for the Prison Board, and asked him to use his influence to get the warder back to Dublin, to Mountjoy. Bell showed the letter to The McDermott, Vice-Chairman of the Prison Board, who immediately issued an order for the transfer of the man back to Mountjoy.

Both McDermott and Bell were good, and Green, John Redmond's son-in-law, was not bad ~~and~~ but he never interfered much.

Griffith, MacNeill, Duggan and myself were au fait with every move that was made outside. We were kept informed by Collins through the medium of the underground post.

Arising out of the peace negotiations which were then proceeding, the order came for the release of Griffith and MacNeill on the 30th June. A warder came in and said they were wanted in the Governor's office and they went down there. The Governor told them that they were being released. When they came back Griffith told us that he objected and that he had refused to leave the prison unless Duggan and myself were released with him. The Governor

telephoned the Castle and told them the position and Sir Alfred Cope asked the Governor to tell Griffith to go, that we would be going in the evening. Griffith still objected, and it was only when he came back to us again and we advised him to go that he agreed.

Griffith then proceeded to pack up his personal belongings. I told him that I would look after his books, of which he had a number in his cell, and that I would send them to St. Lawrence Road. The parcel which he made up was the most untidy parcel I ever saw in my life. When he was about to leave the cell I noticed that the tail of a shirt was sticking out of the parcel, and that the seat was out of his pants showing the tail of his shirt. I offered him my suitcase, and told him that I would have the books packed and sent to his home in St. Lawrence Road, but he objected on the grounds that as I would be leaving in the evening I would require the suitcase to carry my own stuff. I insisted on him taking the case, telling him that I could make up a tidier parcel than he could.

A few hours later Duggan and myself were released. We left Mmuntjoy and walked into a hold-up on the canal bridge at Phibsboro' which was cordoned off by British military. Everybody was being searched and as I had a number of uncensored letters in my possession I did not relish the idea of being searched. I explained to the officer that we had just been released from Mountjoy and that anything we had was censored and he let us pass.

We went into John Doyle's for a drink, where the manager, Mr. Flynn, produced a bottle of champagne in honour of our release. After a time I went home and Duggan went to his home. The three of us met in St. Lawrence Road that night and Griffith's books arrived there from Mountjoy, brought by different people.

Offices were opened in the Gresham and I spent most of my time there. I worked with Mick Collins.

MacEoin was still a prisoner and the Dáil refused to meet until he was released. As a result of an ultimatum issued by Collins on the 18th August 1921 MacEoin was released that evening. Joe McGuinness and myself went to Mountjoy for him and then drove to the Mansion House where the Dáil had assembled.

It was decided to negotiate. Towards the end of the negotiations, after they had returned from London, I remember Arthur Griffith and Duggan coming back from the Mansion House one day. Griffith was very downhearted because de Valera had turned down the Treaty, and candidly, I considered he was mad to turn it down. I suggested to Griffith that I would go to de Valera and see could I do anything with him. I rang up de Valera, told him I wanted to see him and he said certainly. Austin Stack and Cathal Brugha were with him when I arrived. I told him what I had come about. Both Brugha and Stack, especially Brugha, wanted to stop me altogether, but de Valera said I must be heard. I asked him was there any hope of coming to an agreement about the Treaty and he said "Absolutely none", so I had to go back and tell Griffith and Collins that there was no hope. Griffith had told me that he did not think there was much use in my going to see de Valera, but I did what I could.

Big numbers of people were delighted about the Treaty, but some of them turned the other way overnight; somebody must have got after them.

The acceptance of the idea of a Truce was influenced by the fact that the position of the fighting men was very precarious in view of the grave shortage of ammunition. This fact very definitely influenced Collins

in his negotiations with the British.

I was positive that the fighting would start again, that we would never get a Treaty, and I sent my gun to West Mayo having decided that I would fight with the West Mayo Column.

There was no actual break between the pro-Treaty and anti-Treaty elements in the Dáil at this time. Griffith was adamant in holding out for a Republic, having given up the idea of the King, Lords and Commons which he had previously advocated. De Valera always asked everybody else's opinion about the forms of self-government and then made up his own mind.

About the beginning of August 1921 I was appointed Liaison Officer for counties Galway and Mayo and had as my assistant Comdt. Joe Ring of Mayo. I still remained Quartermaster General but Fintan Murphy acted for me in my absence. When I arrived in Galway as Liaison Officer I went to Eglinton Street police station which was the headquarters of Divisional Commissioner Cruise, who was in charge of counties Galway and Mayo. I was told that Cruise was not in and the Auxiliary officer whom I saw was not inclined to give me much information. I told him that I had been instructed to come to Galway and act as Liaison Officer with Mr. Cruise, and as I knew he was actually in the County Club at the time I told the officer that unless I could see him within the next half hour I would return to Dublin. I called back in half an hour and Mr. Cruise was there to meet me. He told me that he had arranged quarters for me in the Railway Hotel. I had passed through the Railway Hotel on my way from the station and found that it was occupied by Auxiliaries and that there was barbed wire along the staircases and corridors. I refused to stay in the Railway Hotel and told him that I would stay where I always stayed when in Galway - in

Ballinasloe House, Salthill.

A few months before this the Auxilairies and Black and Tans had broken up Ballinasloe House. They had smashed all the windows and the whole place was boarded up. When Mr. Cruise explained this to me I told him that I understood that, but I also told him that every pane of glass would be in before night. Then I went to Isaac Conroy in Thomas MacDonagh & Co. and asked him to have the windows put in. He sent men out and the shop windows were in and the shop opened that night. Mrs. Grehan was the only resident in the house as her husband, Joseph Grehan, was 'on the run' in Dublin at the time. Everything went all right for a few weeks until one day some drunken Auxiliaries called looking for me during my absence. I reported the matter to Mr. Cruise, and told him that if he allowed anything like it to happen again these men would have to be deported. This had a civilising effect and I was not troubled further by them.

On my second day in Galway a report came in that trees had been felled across the road at Kilmaine. Mr. Cruise took a very serious view of this, as about a week previously some of his men from Ballinrobe had been disarmed at Kilmaine. I agreed to investigate the matter with him and we drove to Kilmaine where we found that two trees had been blown down by the storm. Both of us agreed that it was an act of God and not an act of war.

Some time later there was a horse-race on the Swamp which was really run by the I.R.A. for the purpose of raising funds. The Auxiliaries and Black and Tans turned up in force and demanded free admission. Our people agreed to allow them in on payment only. I was very ill at the time, but when I heard of the row I got up

and went down to the people who were trying to get in and explained to them that they would get in all right if they paid but not otherwise. Mr. Cruise claimed that as they were police they should be allowed in free of charge, but I said that they would not and they cleared away. I then went back to bed.

On the same night there was a dance in the Town Hall organised by our people. While the dance was in progress a motor car containing some British officers passed by the Town Hall. They were fired on and one of them, a native of Guernsey, was shot dead. As the shooting took place at the Town Hall it was thought at first that it was our people who fired. The Black and Tans and Auxiliaries under Mr. Cruise in uniform occupied the Town Hall and late at night, probably about eleven o'clock, Cruise sent an official R.I.C. car to Ballinasloe House for me. Joe Ring, who was also in bed, came from his room and told me that an R.I.C. car had come for me. He objected to my going in the R.I.C. car, but I said I would travel in it and that he could take our own car. Tom Savage took Joe Ring in my car and I went in the R.I.C. car. I decided not to bring my gun with me.

On the journey the car in which I was travelling was held up by Auxiliaries in Shop Street. It was held up because it was a police car. The Auxiliaries told the driver about the shooting and said that they wanted to get out of Galway as quickly as possible to Lenaboy. In my hearing they admitted that they were the culprits who had done the shooting. Of course they did not know that I was in the car.

When I arrived at the Town Hall several Auxiliaries rushed at me with their revolvers, and two of them actually had their revolvers on my chest when Joe Ring

came in behind me with a gun in each hand. He covered the two British officers, saying, "Put down those guns or I'll shoot", and they put down the guns. I told them that I had come there to see Mr. Cruise and that I did not want to discuss anything with them. I was taken inside to Mr. Cruise. He was in a raging temper and told me about the fine man who had been shot. I said, "Yes, one of the finest fellows in the British Army, but it was your men who shot him, not mine. You are going to burn the town to-night, but I strongly advise you to take your men off the town entirely and I will look after the safety of it". He asked me where I had got the information about the shooting, and when I told him he threw his arms round my shoulders and said, "This whole thing is our responsibility. It is our job to keep the peace here". I said, "Yes, that is what I came to Galway for, and if you take your men off the town to-night there will be peace". He agreed to do so.

There were two Inquiries into the shooting. General O'Duffy held an Inquiry into it on our side and the British held their own Inquiry. The British admitted that one of their D.I.s had done the shooting. The D.I. had been under the impression that when the car was going past the Town Hall either Baby Duggan or Michael Staines was in it and did not know that there was a British officer in it.

There were a few isolated threatening incidents round that time but that was the only shooting. Galway and Ballinasloe were the only two towns in which the R.I.C. were allowed to carry arms, this being the agreed procedure where the population of a town exceeded five thousand.

On one occasion while travelling by train I saw a party of armed R.I.C. men at Woodlawn station. I got out of the train and challenged them. They told me that they were guarding Lord Ashtown. I just passed the remark like "He needs it" or something and said no more about it.

Cruise worked with me all right because he was afraid I had influence with Lloyd George. He was really afraid of me.

The arrangement was that I would report to Collins and that the British representative would report to Lloyd George, and if either of us asked to see the other's report he would have to be shown it. It was agreed that Collins would show my report to Lloyd George and Lloyd George would show the British report to Collins. The raiding of mails went on during the Truce and we got a private report belonging to the British representative and discovered that he was sending in an official report and also a private report despite the arrangement that private reports would not be furnished. I was not sending any private reports. I just made a pretty strong report on anything I saw that I considered wrong. They were playing a double game.

There were forty murders committed by the British forces in County Galway during the period of the fighting but there was none in County Mayo. Cruise was responsible for both counties, and I said to him one day, "You are responsible for the forty murders in Galway. You knew all about them, including Father Griffin's". He said yes & I added "No", he said, "I didn't know about that". I said, "There were forty murders and Father Griffin's was one of them". I always called them murders. Then I asked him, "How is

it that there were forty murders in Galway and none in Mayo?", and he answered, "We were afraid of the Mayo lads". In Mayo when the Auxiliaries went out, like in the Carrowkennedy ambush, a lot of them never came back, but Galway being a flat county did not lend itself to active guerilla warfare of the type which was carried out in Mayo. For that reason the British forces in Galway had more or less a free hand, the population being more or less defenceless.

Joe Ring, who was my assistant Liaison Officer, had been in charge of the Carrowkennedy ambush in Mayo. He was much respected by both Auxiliaries and Black and Tans for the way he treated them subsequent to the ambush when they were lying seriously wounded. He rendered first-aid and had them transported by their own lorries to Galway for medical attention.

While I was in Galway there was an associate of the Black and Tans there named William Joyce. He was quite a young fellow, about 16 or seventeen years of age. His father had returned from America where, I understand, this yound lad was born. Our people were very much opposed to young Joyce on account of his association with British forces.

Shortly before I left Galway I saw William Joyce in company with some Auxiliary officers, and as I went by he passed some jeering remarks and actually spat at me. There was a young lad with me who considered himself my guard and he wanted to shoot Joyce there and then. I went to Commissioner Cruise immediately and told him that unless Joyce was out of Galway that night I would not be responsible for his safety. Cruise got in touch with London and got instructions to have Joyce sent to Gairloch in Scotland. He was not seen in Galway afterwards.

I have heard since that Joyce later proceeded to London where he joined the English Fascists. Shortly before the last war he got a passport to Germany where he was picked up by the Nazi party and figured later as one of Dr. Goebbel's chief English propagandists on the German radio. He was known as "Lord Haw-Haw".

General Macready, Commander-in-chief British Forces, wanted to stop the jail escapes and keep the lads. He insisted on our people appointing a Liaison officer for the jails and internment camps. At about 4 o'clock on a morning in September 1921, I got word from Dublin to come up and take over the job. Before I left Galway I appointed Joe Ring, who was my assistant, to carry on in my absence. When I arrived in Dublin I went out to Greystones to see de Valera and protested against the appointment, but he said somehne had to do it and that it was an order. I said I would do the jail job only because it was an order.

I said that the prisoners had been kept in all the time since the beginning of the Truce, and that they would think it impertinence on my part to go visiting them with a representative of the British Government. Some of them did object and I was not too favourably received. The fact was that our people wanted to keep the lads in jail quiet while the peace negotiations were proceeding and that was the object of my visit. I impressed on them that there was nothing to prevent them escaping and, in fact, there were several escapes during that time. As a matter of fact, the British authorities asked me to hand up my own brother who escaped during that time but I refused, saying that he was perfectly entitled to escape.

Before I went on the jail work I saw General Macready at his headquarters in Kilmainham, where he actually lived.

MacEoin was living there afterwards. I saw Macready in connection with the liaison work in the gaols, and it was he who told me who was going with me. I did not discuss it very much with him, but I found him a nice man to meet in his own house. He was purely a soldier and seemed to be a man who was there just to carry out a job.

Those with whom I was associated on liaison work were a high representative of the Prison Board and a Colonel in the British Army. I visited the gaols with the representative of the Prison Board. His father was Governor of Mullingar Gaol, where he himself was born. I saw the prisoners when I visited the gaols and internment camps and I could ask for any particular prisoner I wanted to see. One of the prisoners I asked for in Mountjoy is now Governor there - Seán Kavanagh.

I must say that I found the gaol Governors very reasonable. There was a very decent man in Cork and another, Faulkner, in Limerick. I never met a man who knew more Irish history than Faulkner did. ~~I think~~ He was Governor in Mountjoy afterwards. I used to meet him often and he was certainly a very well-read man. His outlook seemed to be entirely Irish. He was just carrying out his job.

During my period as Liaison Officer I saw Father Kennedy who was a prisoner in Berehaven. He had been Secretary to the Bishop of Killaloe prior to his arrest. There were priests in other internment camps which I visited but I cannot remember their names.

During my visit to Ballykinlar some time about the end of November 1921, Tadhg Barry of Cork was shot dead. When we arrived in Ballykinlar we proceeded to the Commandant's office. I was looking out the window when

I saw a lorry disappear and one of the British officers present said, "Another tunnel". We then went down to inspect the camp and I talked to some of the prisoners. I was not talking to Tadhg Barry, but he evidently wanted to see me about something. He was waiting at or near the gate to have a chat with me when he was shot by the sentry. It is believed that the sentry ordered him away and when he refused to go the sentry shot him.

I returned to Dublin immediately and arrangements were made for the funeral which came to Dublin by road the next day or the day after. The newspapers at the time gave a great deal of publicity to the shooting and Collins kicked up a terrible row with Lloyd George about it. On account of the publicity the prisoners were released sooner than had been intended - they were actually released before there was a settlement at all.

I was to visit Belfast Gaol and Derry Gaol after leaving Ballykinlar but the release of the prisoners after Tadhg Barry's shooting made that unnecessary. I had been in all the internment camps and gaols except Derry and Belfast.

Another thing that had a good deal to do with the early release of the prisoners was that when I visited the Curragh Camp I found that it had been completely surrounded by a trench which the British military had made as a means of discovering tunnels made by the internees. In making this trench they cut through everything, including sewers, so that the camp was surrounded by an open sewer. I made a very strong report on this matter which, I was told by Michael Collins, had a wonderful effect on Lloyd George. This, coupled with the shooting of Tadhg Barry, brought about the decision for the early release of the prisoners.

When visiting the Curragh I asked to see my two brothers, James and Vincent, who were prisoners there. Vincent was there under the name Harry McCann and had been bayoneted a few days before when trying to escape in a refuse cart. The English representative did not know that "Harry McCann" was my brother and strongly objected to the length of time I stayed with him, but I said I could stay as long as I liked with any prisoner.

Signed : M.J. Staines
(M.J. Staines)

Date : 10th May 1954
10th May 1954.

Witness : M.F. Ryan Comdt
(M.F. Ryan)