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BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21.

STATEMENT BY WITNESS.

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Witness

James Duggan,
Richmond,
Templemore,
Co. Tipperary.

Identity.

Captain, A. Company, 2nd Battalion, 2nd Tipperary Brigade.

Subject.

Activities of A. Company, 2nd Battalion, Irish Volunteers, 2nd Tipperary Brigade, 1918-1921, and Prison Experiences, 1918-1919.

Conditions, if any, Stipulated by Witness.

Nil.

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STATEMENT BY MR. JAMES DUGGAN

Richmond, Templemore, Co.Tipperary.

It was, as far as I can now recollect, towards the end of the year 1913 that an Irish Volunteer organiser from Dublin, named Sean McLoughlin, visited my native place of Castleiney, near Templemore, Co. Tipperary. Volunteer companies were then being established in many parishes and towns all over Ireland, and, with the assistance of some people who were interested, McLoughlin, during his brief visit, organised a company which I joined in Castleiney. I was then about 19 years of age and was at the time employed by my father who was a building contractor.

My recollection of that company is rather short and sweet. We had about 25 regular members and we did an amount of parading and drilling with wooden guns. As regards officers, whilst we most probably had a company captain, my recollection is that he was looked upon not in the military sense of the word, but as chairman of the local Volunteers and, similarly, his two principal lieutenants were regarded as the secretary and the treasurer.

On a Sunday in the early summer of 1914, our company with, I should say, most companies in the Mid-Tipperary area, attended a Volunteer review which was held in a big field at Inch, about 5 or 6 miles from Templemore. I am sure that at least 1000 Volunteers took part in the parade which was reviewed by Colonel Maurice Moore, then a member of the Volunteer Executive. His address was mainly in the nature of an appeal to the Volunteers to secure new members, to take their training seriously and sincerely and to keep it up.

Later on in July 1914, on what is traditionally known as

"Rock Sunday", the company marched from Castleiney to Templemore where it linked up with Volunteer companies from Drom, Templemore and Loughmore in a march to a meeting at Barnane. The late Father O'Malley, who died a few years ago in New Inn where he was parish priest for a long number of years, was the principal speaker at that meeting. Father O'Malley was no protagonist of the Imperial British Government; he was a very sincere patriotic Irishman, and his speech that day was an inspiring one, dealing as it did with nationality and national ideals. I am reminded of that meeting, for it took place on the same Sunday as the Howth gun-running and the shootings at Bachelor's Walk in Dublin.

Our drill instructors at that time were two British army reservists named Carroll and Williams. We lost their services in August 1914, when, on the outbreak of the 1914-18 Great War, they were called-up to serve with the British army.

That, briefly, is the history of the Volunteer movement in Castleiney prior to 1916, as I can now recollect it. Shortly after the 1914-18 Great War started, I was engaged for some time on work for the then Great Southern Railway at Lisduff, but as I frequently visited my home and spent all my weekends there, it is most unlikely that there would have been any Volunteer activity without my being aware of it. The company appears to have disintegrated at the time, and a few pro-Redmondite individuals who attended the National Volunteer review in the Phoenix Park on Easter Sunday of 1915 did so solely as individuals.

I am not now exactly sure when the Volunteer Company was reorganised in Castleiney, but I imagine it was in the early months of 1917. I know that at that time I was taking an interest in Gaelic League affairs, first in Templemore, where

I attended Irish language classes one night a week, and later in Castleiney when a branch of the Gaelic League was established there. One of our principal Irish teachers in Templemore was a man named Sean O'Sullivan. He was then a schoolteacher at Shanakill. He is now Colonel Sean O'Sullivan, A.D.C. to the President. I also took an interest in Sinn Fein Clubs which were being formed at the time and I was appointed either joint secretary or assistant secretary of the local Sinn Fein club in Castleiney. In all this organisation work, the late Mr. Seamus Burke, B.L., of Rockforest (later Minister for Local Government) took a prominent part and he was ably assisted by the late Mr. J.J. Hassett of Barnane who was a T.D. for a long number of years.

In the early months of 1918, the Volunteer Company was very active in matters such as parades and drill. Sean Scott was then the company captain and I held the rank of either vice-captain or 1st Lieutenant. My recollection is that, at that time, all Mid-Tipperary - or what later became the Mid-Tipperary Brigade - was then one battalion with James Leahy, the of Thurles and now of Nenagh, as battalion commandant. The strength of our company was then approximately 40 men and our arms consisted of a couple of .22 revolvers of the vest-pocket type, a .45 bulldog revolver which I possessed, and some shot-guns which were the private property of some of the members.

The conscription crisis period in the summer of 1918 was our peak period so far as numbers were concerned. The strength of the company more than doubled itself and parades and training were intensified and carried out openly. Anti-conscription meetings to which the Volunteers marched were held in Templemore and Castleiney and at these meetings the Volunteers maintained order and, generally speaking, did all police duties.

About that time I attended a few Battalion Council meetings with Sean Scott, the company captain. At one Battalion Council

meeting which was held on a night or two prior to 15th August 1918, the question of whether Volunteers should or should not read the Sinn Fein manifesto at public meetings which were being held all over the country on August 15th was discussed. No definite decision was reached on the point and it was left to the Volunteers' own discretion. These public meetings had been organised by Sinn Fein, and the copy of the manifesto which was to be read at the meeting in Castleiney was forwarded to me personally by Mr. J.J. Hassett, who was then a member of the Sinn Fein Executive. It was a lengthy document and it dealt in some detail with the fight which was then being waged in Belfast Prison by Irish political prisoners against their treatment as criminals and convicts. In the evening of August 15th, I took it with me to the Temperance Hall in Castleiney and, on the suggestion of the Secretary of the Sinn Fein Club, I stood up and read it to the meeting, As I have said, the meeting was a public one and amongst the audience were two members of the R.I.C.

About 4 p.m. on either the following day or two days later, a police van from Templemore with 5 or 6 R.I.C. men on board called to my home, searched the house, found nothing incriminating, and arrested me. They took me to Ballinroe where they arrested Sean Hynes at his home. We were then taken to Templemore R.I.C. Barracks and put in a small cell which was already occupied by J.J. Hassett who had been arrested before us. He was more advanced in years than either Hynes or myself and he was an old campaigner, having been through the Land League Campaign.

We spent three days and nights in this unsanitary cell without any form of trial. Our friends arranged to have food sent in to us. On the third day we had a visit from the

local dispensary doctor who condemned the place as unfit for human habitation and he arranged to have us removed to the cells of the guardroom at Templemore military barracks. There we spent three more days without any charge being preferred against us and we were then taken by train under R.I.C. escort to Cork Prison.

After about two weeks in Cork Prison, we were formally charged and handed typewritten documents which informed us that we would be tried by courtmartial. I cannot now recall the exact wording of the charge, but it was something to the effect that we had uttered or caused to be uttered words likely to cause disaffection amongst His Majesty's subjects. A week later our trial took place in Victoria (now Collins) Barracks, Cork. All three of us refused to recognise the court and, when its findings were promulgated a few days later, we learned that each of us had been sentenced to two years imprisonment with hard labour. This sentence was later reduced to one year in each case. Amongst the prisoners with us at that time in Cork Prison was Professor O'Rahilly of University College, Cork, now Father O'Rahilly of the Holy Ghost Congregation.

There were then a big number of political prisoners in Cork Prison and demands for better treatment or removal to another prison were served on the prison authorities. As these demands were not being met, the prisoners became very restive and, one day during recreation, we collected stones in the yard to break the prison windows. We were placated, however, by being told that our demands were receiving urgent consideration. Within a few days of that incident, twenty of us were brought by train under R.I.C. escort to Belfast. A special coach on the train was provided for the party and

it was taken on direct to the Great Northern line without the necessity of our having to disembark and change trains in Dublin.

There were about 500 political prisoners in Belfast Jail when we arrived there in October 1918. By their struggle earlier in the year, and which was referred to in the Sinn Fein manifesto, they had won for themselves what they then called ameliorated treatment - later to be known generally as political prisoners' treatment. We found it a big improvement on the conditions in Cork. Prisoners were permitted to mix freely and to talk with each other during the day time, and, other than censorship, there were no restrictions on the sending of letters or of the reception of letters and parcels. The late Austin Stack was then the prisoners' leader in Belfast Jail.

In the following month, the big 'flu epidemic which swept Ireland at the time made its appearance in Belfast Jail. I was fortunate in being one of about 30 from the total number of political prisoners who escaped infection. By the end of November the prison hospital was full, and the remainder who were ill had to be treated in their cells. Those who escaped the 'flu were facilitated by the prison authorities in looking after the sick, and the cell doors were never locked either day or night as it might be necessary for those who were able, to rise during the night to visit or look after patients who were bad. There were no fatal cases amongst the prisoners, and, by Christmas of 1918, the epidemic had run its course.

On the Sunday following Christmas, all who were able to do so attended Mass in the prison chapel. Amongst those present at the Mass was a man named Sean Doran from some part of the Co. Down who was a sentenced political prisoner, but

who was serving his sentence amongst the criminal prisoners. As we were leaving the chapel, some of our men, on Austin Stack's instructions, seized Doran and took him to the wing of the prison where we were quartered. This was done in full view of the warders who, for lack of numbers, were powerless to stop it. It led later in the day to a verbal request from the prison authorities to return Doran, but this Stack steadfastly refused to do.

A force of R.I.C. men and British military were then brought into the prison to search for Doran, but we had so effectively barricaded the entrances to our wing with the furniture and the bedding, that the R.I.C. and military were unable to enter it. We prepared for a siege and all the food which we possessed and which, fortunately as a result of our Christmas parcels, was plentiful, was collected into a common larder and arrangements were made for rationing it. The authorities then cut off our water and gas supplies and our reply was to proceed to wreck the place. We wrenched off the cell doors, broke the windows and smashed the corridor railings. I was one of a small party who climbed up through the ceilings, smashed some slates and got out on to the roof where for upwards of an hour we pulled off slates and threw them down to the ground. While we were thus engaged a party of military stationed outside the prison kept their rifles trained on us but they did not fire. On the following day, presumably fearing a renewal of the 'flu epidemic, the authorities restored our water and gas supplies.

This state of siege lasted for three days and, during that time, we received the news of the result of the 1918 general election. The results from each constituency were shouted to us by some of our men who were still patients in the prison

hospital which was not more than 50 yards away. Amongst our numbers were at least four of the newly-elected T.D.s and that was the first intimation they received of their success.

On the third day a truce was called when the late Dr. McRory, then Bishop of Down and Connor, and Mr. Laurence O'Neill, then Lord Mayor of Dublin, came to act as intermediaries. As a result of their intervention, a settlement was reached by which it was agreed -

1. that Doran would be allowed to remain with us and that he would receive political prisoners' treatment, as it was then called, and
2. that, pending our removal to an internment camp which was to take place not later than January 19th, we would accept the conditions and discipline which were the rule prior to the outbreak of the 'flu epidemic.

We maintained our part of the agreement, but about the time we were due to go to the camp, warders and R.I.C. men without any warning commenced to remove prisoners' private property from the cells. Austin Stack immediately issued orders to us to resist this by every means in our power and the majority of the prisoners did so with a will. What I did myself was, I think, typical of what the majority of the others did. I went to my cell, dismantled the bed and barricaded the cell door with it. The door was a strong wooden one, covered on the inside with sheet iron. When the warders and R.I.C. men arrived they used sledge hammers and crowbars to break down the door but it resisted their best efforts for at least half an hour. Meanwhile, I had broken the glass in the cell window and had managed to remove some stones from the dividing wall which separated my cell from the one next door. When the door was forced and the barricade removed, three R.I.C. men and a warder came in. I struggled with them and after a tussle which lasted for about seven minutes, they overpowered me and handcuffed my hands behind my back. They then

straightened back the door as well as they could and locked it when leaving. They took with them all my personal belongings even to my toothbrush, but, curiously enough, they left me my pyjamas.

I was lucky that the prisoner in the cell next door was not of the militant type. Perhaps he was ill, or perhaps he did not know how to do it, but he did not barricade his door and on that account he was not handcuffed. I placed my hands in the hole which I had made in the dividing wall and he smashed the handcuffs for me. That left me free to continue for a few hours with the work of knocking down the dividing wall. At the next inspection I was discovered and re-handcuffed, again with my hands behind my back. A meal of bread and water was then brought into the cell and this I had to lap up as the warders refused to remove the handcuffs.

That night, I got my friend next door to smash the handcuffs again and with my hands and arms freed I was able to snatch some sleep and rest. On the following morning the same procedure took place. The R.I.C. men and the warders re-handcuffed me and after their departure I got my friend to smash them again. On the next inspection I was forcibly put into a leather device, called a muff. This was made of heavy leather. It covered my arms to the elbows and was strapped around my shoulders and body, my wrists being strapped tightly together inside the muff. I remained in that for five days and nights except for short intervals when it was removed to permit me to go to the toilet.

The muff was removed on a Saturday afternoon and, on the following morning, I was permitted to attend Mass in the prison chapel. Some of the prisoners looked much the worse of the wear but, personally, I did not fell too bad. When

about to re-enter our cells after our return from Mass, and as pre-arranged, we used the prison bibles to unhinge the cell doors. This caused some further consternation to the prison authorities and we were then herded by the R.I.C. men and warders to another wing of the prison where we were again locked up.

Then commenced a period of close confinement which lasted until the second week in April 1919, during which we were permitted no visits, parcels or letters. We were only permitted to leave the cells once each day and that was when we were taken individually to the toilet and, on each such occasion, the prisoner had to be forcibly taken back to his cell. We would not be permitted to attend Mass on the Sunday mornings unless we gave an undertaking to return to our cells without doing any damage, but we refused to give any such undertaking. We broke the glass in the cell windows and each night at about 11 p.m. when the traffic eased off outside, what we called concerts began. Through the windows we sang or shouted rebel songs and recitations, and some of our best orators made speeches to an audience which we could always command on the outskirts of the prison. These concerts usually continued until 1 a.m. or 2 a.m. Our meals were served to us in the cells in tin containers or on tin plates and immediately the meal was finished, each prisoner stamped on his tins, flattened them out and threw them out through the cell window.

The monotony of that eleven weeks of close confinement was broken by bi-weekly visits from the acting prison chaplain Rev. Father McGeehan, later to become Bishop of Down and Conno He not only gave us spiritual consolation, but invariably he managed to bring us some cigarettes.

One evening in the second week of April at about 5 p.m.

a warder came to my cell and told me to dress myself and prepare to travel. I asked him where I was going and he replied that he could not tell me. I immediately shouted my news through the spyhole and learned that some of my fellow-prisoners had received the same orders. Instead of dressing, I took off what clothes I was wearing and got into bed. About half an hour later, a party of R.I.C. men came to the cell and dressed me forcibly. Refusing to walk, I was, with nine others including our commandant - Austin Stack - carried bodily out of the prison and put into a covered truck. We were then brought to the quays in Belfast and, handcuffed in pairs, we were put on board a ship. That night we got neither food nor drink and, early next morning, we arrived at Fleetwood from where we were conveyed by train under military escort to Strangeways Prison, Manchester. With Stack and myself on this voyage from Belfast to Manchester were eight others, viz: Fionan Lynch (later Judge Fionan Lynch), Sean Doran from Co. Down, Patrick McCarthy, Freemount, Co. Cork, Con Connolly of Skibbereen, Seumas Mulcahy Lyons of Clonmel, Michael Keating of Wicklow, and two others whose names I cannot now recall.

When we arrived at Strangeways Prison an amusing situation arose. Our military escort had a list of our names, but they did not know us personally and, when we were brought before the chief warder, we refused to answer our names as they were called out from the list. Various attempts were made to establish our identity, but without success, and we were then removed to cells. We were served with a meal of the ordinary prison food which we refused to accept as we had decided to go on hunger strike if we did not get political prisoners' treatment.

During the next few hours we had visits from various prison

officials all with the one object of endeavouring to get our names. Eventually, it transpired that for the moment, at any rate, they were only concerned with finding Austin Stack, and Stack then admitted his identity.

Later in the evening there was an agreeable surprise in store for us. We were called out of our cells and addressed first in Irish and then in English, by Stack, who informed us of the terms of our imprisonment which he had arranged with the Governor and the chief warder. The terms were, that we were to be accommodated in a special portion of the prison with our own exercise ground which comprised a nice green lawn, a flagged courtyard and a handball alley. We could have free association from 9 a.m. until 9 p.m. when the cell doors would be locked for the night. We could wear our own clothes and each prisoner could have one visitor weekly. There would be no restriction beyond the usual prison censorship on the number of letters which we could receive and send out. We were to receive the usual prison diet which could be supplemented by unlimited parcels from home and from our friends outside. We were also given back our personal belongings which, as I have already mentioned, were taken from us in Belfast.

When brought to our new quarters we were given a substantial meal which we thoroughly enjoyed as we had not had anything to eat for over 24 hours. We then proceeded to get off our almost four months growth of beard and hair. It was a wonderful change for the better, and after a haircut, a shave and a wash, we scarcely recognised each other. In the course of a few days our first visitors - members of Cumann na mBan in Manchester - called to see us. During the months that followed we had reason to be more than grateful to these ladies for their attention to us. They ensured that

each one of us received a visit and at least one parcel every week. They sent fresh food into us almost daily, in fact, after the first week or so, we had to use very little, if any, of the prison fare.

About June, we were joined by the late D.P. Walsh and, soon afterwards, by Piaras Beaslai. Their arrival brought our numbers to 12. Meanwhile, we had organised Irish language classes and classes in military tactics. The latter classes were conducted by Austin Stack and occupied about three hours each day. A similar time was spent at the language classes which were given by Fionan Lynch and by Beaslai after the latter's arrival. The remainder of the day we spent playing games of handball and rounders and generally keeping ourselves fit. I might add that during my five months imprisonment in Strangeways Prison I learned sufficient Irish to qualify for the Fainne which I received within a month of my release.

As September 1919 and the day when I was due to be released drew near, Austin Stack and Piaras Beaslai took me into their confidence and told me that they were contemplating ways and means by which they, and the remaining prisoners might escape from the prison. Fionan Lynch had been released a few weeks before and they asked me to meet him in Dublin and to give him a written message which Stack then gave to me. It was considered quite safe for me to take the written message with me as it was known that other prisoners had not been searched when being released. (Note: For a detailed account of the escape from Strangeways which took place on October 25th, 1919, and in which six of my former comrades - Stack, Beaslai, Sean Doran, D.P. Walsh, Con Connolly and Paddy McCarthy - secured their freedom, I refer the reader to an article by Piaras Beaslai which appeared in "Prison Escapes" edited by Noel Hartnett and published in 1945.)

I left Strangeways Jail about mid-September 1919, on completion of my sentence, leaving, as far as I can remember, 8 fellow-prisoners behind, amongst whom were A. Stack, P. Beaslai, D.P. Walsh, Sean Doran, Con Connolly and Paddy McCarthy. I spent a few very enjoyable days with Cumann na mBan friends in Mosside and returned to Dublin via Liverpool

I met Fionan Lynch in Dublin and gave him the message from Stack. I offered my services in the matter of the projected escape, but as I knew very little about Manchester, and further, as I would be immediately suspect, he thought I had better keep out of it. I stayed one night in Dublin and met J.J. Hassett who had just been released from Belfast. Sean Hynes had been released in ill-health some time previously and we came home next day together to Templemore where we were royally received with bands and banners and addresses of welcome.

I resumed work after a few days and was soon re-initiated into the Volunteers, then as captain of A/Coy. 2nd Battalion, II Mid Tipperary Brigade, I.R.A., and also into Sinn Fein and Connradh na Gaedhilge. As I have said, I had made considerable progress in the language during my time in prison and was presented with the Fainne by Templemore Gasra about a month after I came home.

"A" Company was then about 40 strong. There was a parade cum meeting one night each week (apart from any special works) at which we did a little drill with or without arms, and some tactical exercises, after which we adjourned into a house or barn for inspection, care of and cleaning of arms. Our arms then consisted of about a dozen shotguns and 2 or 3 revolvers The shotguns belonged to members of the company with the exception of about three that had been loaned to us. Occasionally we had instruction from battalion officers on the

mechanism and use of rifles, hand grenades, explosives, map reading and signalling.

At the local elections in 1919 I was prevailed upon, very much against my will, to stand for our area of Thurles Rural District Council. With the backing of Sinn Fein, enhanced somewhat perhaps by my 13 months jail record, I happened to head the poll and was duly elected chairman of the R.D.C. and ex-officio a member of the Co. Council for Tipperary North Riding, where I got a further appointment as a member of the Joint Mental Hospital Committee for both South and North Ridings. These appointments meant that I had to attend some meeting or other almost every week either in Nenagh, Thurles or Cashel. All had to be negotiated on the push bike as there were no travelling expenses allowed and I could not afford to hire one of the few motor cars then available. I remember being at a Mental Hospital meeting in Cashel on the day D.I. Wilson of the R.I.C. was shot in Templemore in the summer of 1920, and on my way home through Thurles a scout informed me of the occurrence and advised me not to go home via Templemore. I willingly took his advice. Later that night we learned that Templemore was being sacked by military and R.I.C. The town certainly presented a gruesome spectacle next day with the Town Hall in ashes and the streets strewn with broken glass and debris from the broken windows and doors throughout the principal streets.

During the late summer of 1920, when the alleged 'miracles' in Templemore brought huge crowds from all over the country, and both the military and R.I.C. garrisons went underground, I was ordered to Templemore with some of my company to help maintain law and order. During the three weeks I spent there part of my job was to supervise and check collecting boxes

sent a round to raise funds for the brigade. The people subscribed very generously. I remember counting the contents of a box turned in by a lady collector who was home on a holiday from U.S.A. The day's takings in it amounted to £17 odd. All monies collected were handed to the brigade quartermaster.

During the latter part of 1920, our company - now 22 strong - made many efforts to do something tangible in the fight, which was now being intensified throughout the country. About 12 of us lay in ambush one night for several hours near a bend of the Templemore-Templetuohy road at Ballinlassa, awaiting an R.I.C. patrol that we expected to be travelling to Templetuohy. The patrol failed to appear and we went home really disappointed On another night we assembled at Ballyknockan, Templetuohy, where we met the Templetuohy Company and the battalion officers. It was arranged to carry out an attack on Gorthaderrybeg R.I.C. barracks and we were to travel cross-country from Ballyknockaur. I remember carrying, with others, two heavy home-made mines consisting of cast iron wheel boxes filled with explosives, but, for some reason I cannot now remember, the attack was called off and we had to carry the heavy mines home again.

Some time later we were instructed to demolish Moyne R.I.C. Barracks which had been temporarily vacated. We travelled on foot across country to Moyne, a distance of about 5 miles and, with some of the Moyne Company, we entered the barracks to find that nothing worthwhile had been left in them. We could not burn the barracks as there were occupied houses adjoining, so we stripped off the roof, doors, windows and floors and left the building uninhabitable.

Many times, when we thought that as a result of engagements in other parts of the county, the marauding military and R.I.C. from Templemore might be coming on an errand of reprisals, we

patrolled the roads and likely places, but we were never in luck. About this time, we spent many nights collecting I.R.A. levies which, I am glad to say, were paid willingly and with good heart by the majority of the people we visited.
I rarely slept at home during this period. There was one house, for instance, where I was made very much at ease and was always welcome. Here I filled a couple of hours regularly giving lessons in Irish and Irish dancing to the children.

Some time in the autumn of 1920, with Battalion Commandant J. Scott and some of my company, I had the honour of harbouring Sean Treacy, R.I.P. and Seumas Robinson for a night at our home in Gurteen where they enjoyed a good night's rest while we kept vigil. Also around this time, we had a visit from the brigade flying column under James Leahy. We brought them to Templeree where they waited a couple of hours in the hope of meeting an enemy patrol of R.I.C. which very often travelled from Templemore to Templetuohy at night time. Nothing happened and later we billeted the column on a couple of families that were not very favourably disposed to the cause, and posted sentries and guards while they were regaled with food and a much needed night's rest. Having attended to the welfare of the column, I cycled to an isolated house, some 7 miles away on the Laois border, to contact two local I.R.A. officers in order to make arrangements for the reception of the column on the following day. It was some time after midnight when I arrived and, after discussing my business, they invited me to remain for the night and I very gladly shared their modest bed on the floor, where I slept soundly.

During the night of 21st/22nd December 1920, a motor car load of would-be assassins, comprised of commissioned officers of the Northampton Regiment from Templemore military barracks, visited two houses in Castleiney on their gruesome errand.

They visited John Mahon's, a member of our company, house, but drew a blank, and then visited O'Dwyer's house in the village just as Michael O'Dwyer, another member of our company, and his two sisters were retiring for the night. They brought out Michael O'Dwyer, beating him up with their revolvers. He struggled with them out in the road and succeeded in pulling the mask off one of them whom he recognised as Captain .... and called him by his name. This apparently upset them somewhat, so that they released their hold on him and immediately he jumped over a low wall into a millstream some 10 feet below and lay stunned in the stream where, luckily, there was only about one foot deep of water. They looked down over the wall and, presumably thinking he was killed, got into their car and drove to Templemore.

O'Dwyer came to after a few minutes and was helped out by two neighbours who appeared when the raiders had gone. A message was sent to my house but, as I was not there, a brother of mine went over to O'Dwyer's house to see if he could help. He found O'Dwyer badly shaken and bleeding from head wounds. They were in the act of tending to his wounds when it was announced that military lorries were coming. My brother, with O'Dwyer and Patrick Lynch, a neighbour, ran out the back way through the fields and escaped to Lynch's house some distance away. It was presumed that the party of military had been sent out by the aforesaid captain and his gang immediately they got back to the barracks. The party searched all around the village for upwards of an hour without success and then left.

When I heard of the affray next morning I went to see O'Dwyer immediately and sent for Dr. McCormack, Templetuohy. The doctor arrived about 9.30 a.m. and was dressing the wounds when a scout told us the military were coming. I looked out

and saw a party of soldiers, about 50 strong, on bicycles. We hid the doctor's swabs and, placing one of the Lynch children, in whose house we were, in a chair as a decoy patient for the doctor, I took O'Dwyer out the back door and across the then swollen river, through a thorn hedge, and we lay low at the end of a rick of mangolds in Laffan's haggard. We could not get any further as the military had by this time surrounded the place. When the soldiers went into Lynch's house they found O'Dwyer's bloodstained cap, which he had lost in the rush out of the house, and this made the search more intense. They continued to search the village and precincts for about two hours, but luck favoured us. They looked in through the gate of the little haggard but did not come in. They left about noon, bringing Mr. Laffan and one of his workmen with them to Templemore where they released them soon afterwards. When the coast was clear we arose and, being wet to the hips, we were numb with the cold. We went to my house where we met two or three other members of our company and, when I had changed my clothes, we went to a neighbour's house further on where we had a meal and, after we had procured a supply of clothes for O'Dwyer, he and I went to MacDonald's of Killanigan. Miss MacDonald went to Templetuohy to arrange for Dr. McCormack to meet us at Doyle's of Lisheen later that night. We went to Lisheen and the doctor duly arrived and dressed the wounds which luckily were not too serious. We stayed the night there and, early next morning Martin ~~Michael~~ Ryan, captain of the Moyne company, and I borrowed Doyle's pony and trap and drove O'Dwyer to a friend's house in Galmoy, Co. Kilkenny. On our way home through Moyne I borrowed a bicycle at Purcell's, Ryan continuing on to Lisheen with the pony. I arrived home in the small hours of Christmas Eve morning.

I visited O'Dwyer two or three times during the next few weeks and found him completely recovered and trying to make the most of his exile.

On a Saturday evening, about mid-January 1921, I made a call home about 4 p.m. I decided I would clean up the front yard and had only just begun the job when I heard a shout of "Put up your hands and don't move". On looking round I saw a party of British military and two R.I.C. men, all heavily armed. They had come on bicycles and hence made no sound until they were right into the yard. They brought me to Templemore military barracks and lodged me in one of the detention cells where I soon discovered I had good company, as Michael Eustace, Sean McCormack of Thurles and a couple of others hailed me across the passage. When I settled down I began to feel hungry, having had nothing since lunch. I knocked and asked for something to eat but got nothing. About 9 o'clock a guard asked me if I wanted biscuits. I eagerly said I did, thinking I was going to get biscuits to eat. In a few minutes he returned and, opening the door, threw me a mattress folded in three parts and a blanket. The folded mattress, I subsequently learned, was known in army language as biscuits. During the following two weeks I was taken out as a hostage on military lorries about three times and, on one of these occasions, while they were raiding houses in Toomevara, they shot dead a young boy of 17, named Devaney. I think the boy panicked when he saw them coming and ran, but it was hard to blame him, as they had shot a brother of his about two weeks previously.

About 1st February 1921, Sean McCormack and I were taken on a military convoy to Limerick and lodged in the Ordnance Barracks - now the premises of Messrs. Morgan McMahon & Co., Builders Providers, where about a dozen others were already

confined in a large stable, amongst whom were Peadar Dunne, a Limerick I.R.A. Brigadier, Michael Colivet, later T.D., and Con Ryan of Borrisoleigh. Con Ryan and I had brothers in the Christian Brothers Community in Limerick at the time and, as the Monastery was quite near the barracks, they sent us in our meals each day. After a week or so, Sean McCormack and I were again paired and taken to Newcastlewest where we were kept at a military outpost for about five weeks and taken out regularly as hostages. We were invariably warned when starting out on a tour that if the convoy were attacked, we would be plugged, but after the first week or so, we felt safe enough as we became increasingly convinced that the convoys chose the routes where they were least likely to meet opposition. During these journeys we were always handcuffed before leaving Newcastlewest outpost and kept so till we returned, and, though they never provided either food or drink for us on the tours, they seldom objected to the people giving us food & cigarettes in the villages where we happened to halt. I can never forget the generosity of these Limerick villagers, particularly girls, who braved the jibes and jeers of the British Tommies, in order to succour us whenever opportunity offered, and especially Mrs. McEnery and her Cumann na mBan friends in Newcastlewest, who treated us royally during our sojourn there. Every time we returned from one of these tours with the convoys day or night, no matter what the hour, they had a hot meal sent into us within 30 minutes of our arrival.

Towards the end of March 1921, we were brought back to the Ordnance Barracks in Limerick and were not many days back when we were all told by Michael Colivet, after breakfast one morning, to prepare for escape. Peadar Dunne and Michael Colivet had arranged with the Limerick Volunteers to have the masonry wall, which separated our stable from the grounds of

Shaw's factory adjoining, bored during the day, and help was to be waiting outside to convey us to safety. We put on all the clothes we could about midday and kept up a continuous sing-song during the afternoon to prevent any noise made in cutting the wall from being heard inside the barracks. We were later informed that our would-be rescuers had the wall practically cut through and were awaiting the all-clear signal from our side before making the final breach through the inner shell, but, owing to some misunderstanding, no signal was given and they were forced to withdraw at 4 p.m.

When the military sentries occupied the outposts overlooking Shaw's factory grounds (these outposts were unoccupied from about 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. each day) the breach in the wall outside was discovered almost immediately and, in a very short time, a very angry mob of soldiers appeared and we were bayonetted and rifle-butted out of our lair, across the barrack square and into a small store about 10 ft. square with a stone paved floor, where we were left to cool our ardour, nurse our bruises and bemoan our misfortune for the night. Meantime, we discussed what the next day was likely to bring and we were rather agreeably susprised about midday to find ourselves packed into lorries and convoyed to Cork Jail

We were only about two nights there when, with a number of others, we were brought to Spike Island, then a strong British fortress in Cork Harbour, a short way outside Cobh.

The fortress on Spike Island was sunk 18ft to 20ft. deep in the middle of the island, and occupied about half of its 150 acres. It contained a number of two-storied blocks of barrack rooms, offices and stores, spacious parade grounds and a sizable building used for religious services and other purposes. The foregoing are surrounded by a moat, the walls

on either side of which are stone lined to the ground level of the island, nearly 20 feet above. On our arrival we were soon introduced to our camp commandant, Henry O'Mahoney, of Passage, Cork, and our vice-commandant, the late Bill Quirke, later Senator Quirke of Fethard, Co. Tipperary, and assigned to our quarters. Each barrack room contained 20 to 25 men and we had all to assemble at about 10 a.m. every morning on the parade ground to be checked and counted, and we were again counted in our quarters at night. We were allowed out on the parade ground for a time each day where we played hurling or football for exercise. This ground was completely surrounded by a dense barbed wire entanglement and while we were out there was always a number of armed sentries outside the barbed wire. One afternoon, while we were thus amusing ourselves, a hurling ball went to the edge of the barbed wire surround and Paddy White of Limerick, on going to retrieve the ball, was shot by a nervous sentry; he died in a few minutes. It took three days before his people could get permission to remove his body for burial and, meantime, we maintained a guard of honour on him both day and night.

I was appointed quartermaster of the barrack room in which I was domiciled and this occupied me for about two hours daily. I taught elementary Irish classes for a further two hours each day to about 40 prisoners and, as well as this, I attended an advanced Irish class each day which was, for a time, taught by Padraig Ó Siocradha ("An Seabhach"). When we arrived in Spike Island there were about 600 internees there and about 50 sentenced prisoners (political) who, although kept in a separate part of the fortress, we were able to contact them occasionally. We had Mass in the chapel almost every morning which was well attended, but the sentenced men were only allowed to attend Mass on Sundays.

Some time before the Truce in July 1921, about 100 of our comrades were removed to Bere Island as Spike Island was overcrowded. Soon after the Truce, we agitated for more facilities and when they were not granted, a hunger strike was declared. It lasted for eight days and I think almost every one of the 500 odd prisoners participated. The hunger strike was called off by G.H.Q. on the plea that it might embarrass the negotiations with Britain. Soon after this we were taken out to bathe in the sea about twice. We were taken in groups of about 100 and the part of the beach assigned to us was closely fenced, under and over water, with barbed wire,, and, as well, we were heavily guarded.

In the second week in November, seven of our group, including the commandant and vice commandant, escaped one night from the fortress. I had the honour of helping in a small way to cover up the initial stage of their getaway. There was a disused passage behind our quarters which connected the fortress with the moat, and it had been built up on our side with a thick wall of loose stones. We hung out a number of blankets, ostensibly for cleaning and airing, but really to cover the passage entrance, and about 5 p.m. we removed some stones and, when the boys got into the passage, we replaced the stones behind them while they awaited the cover of night to make their daring dash for liberty which, we learned later, was an unqualified success.

Next day, when the men were missed from parade, there was a great deal of questioning by the guards, but it was night time before they (the guards) were convinced that something must have happened. About 10 p.m., as we were retiring, there was terrific commotion. All our rooms were invaded simultaneously by military and we were driven out at the point of the bayonet and herded on to the parade ground where, shivering

with cold, as many were only half dressed, we were held for over two hours, surrounded by a wall of bayonets and under searchlights.

The entire garrison appeared to be gathered around us, including the commanding officer and his staff, and all, from the C.O. to the private, appeared to be in a state of nervous tension. About 12 midnight they seemed to calm down somewhat, and they drove us out into the moat where we were left for that night and all next day without food, drink or sanitary facilities. There was one shot fired from the top of the embankment into the crowd in the moat during the night, but, luckily, there was no serious casualty. Paddy Mulhall of Kilkenny suffered the loss of one of his toes as a result of a bullet going through his shoe.

Next evening we were shepherded back to the barrack rooms which were in a terrible state of disorder after an apparently intensive search. A great deal of our private property was missing and we never retrieved it. I, personally, lost a valuable silver watch which was hanging over my bunk and which I overlooked on being driven out the previous night. I also lost my best overcoat, a pair of shoes and many other wearables. Though the rooms were a vast improvement on the cold bleak moat, we nevertheless felt anything but at home during the next few days and it was, therefore, with a feeling of relief we received orders to pack up on about the fourth day after the rumpus began, and we had no regrets when the boat pushed out from Spike Island about two hours later.

We were rather pleased to find, after an uneventful journey, that Portlaoise Prison was our destination. The treatment here was reasonable and we were not nearly so isolated as we were at Spike. One of the first things we did

when we settled in was to lodge a written complaint with the Prison Governor in respect of the properties which were taken from us by the British garrison at Spike, of which more anon. We tried to start the various classes again but without much success.

There was an air of unsettlement about as we followed the day to day reports of the London negotiations. One practical group, however, got down to business and, after little more than a week from our arrival, had begun to excavate a tunnel to freedom and had considerable progress made on it when the order for our release came a few weeks later.

On the morning of 8th December 1921, which, incidentally, was, I think, the first celebration of the Feast of the Immaculate Conception as a Holyday of Obligation in Ireland, the order came for our release. The news was received with mixed feelings as, even at this stage, there were sharp differences of opinion as to the merits of the Treaty. When the first batch of men reached the Governor's office on their way out, it transpired that before being released each man would have to sign a document declaring that he had no claim on his British Majesty's Government. Most of the batch refused to sign and returned to the prison where a meeting of all the prisoners was held and it was decided that no one would sign the declaration, and demanding unconditional release. This decision held for a time and no further releases took place for a couple of hours. During the early afternoon some of our men began to get uneasy and, eventually, some of them went out and signed as requested by the prison authorities and, little by little, others followed suit until about 6 o'clock p.m. nearly half of our number had gone. The remainder held firm. About 8 p.m. the prison authorities ordered us out. We were taken to the office in batches but, whereas the men who signed the declaration on leaving were not asked to open their bags or parcels, our's were opened

and searched, the contents upset, and anything they found in the way of army boots and souvenirs made from blankets or other prison property were confiscated, all this as a mean form of reprisal for having insisted on our rights.

I was amongst one of the last batches to leave the prison at nearly 11 p.m. I was met at the gate by a brother of mine and a local friend who had been waiting there for several hours. We stayed that night at our friend's house in Portlaoighise and arrived home next day. I attended receptions over the next few days one of which was from my comrades of A/Company. They presemted me with a beautiful inscribed watch which considerably more than offset the watch I lost to the British garrison in Spike Island.

At this stage I thought it was time I got down to earning my living and, therefore, I took no further part in either the militant or political field, though I continued to do whatever I could for the language movement. I very much regretted the nation-wide split between the pro- and anti-Treaty ites, but I remained neutral and friendly with my former comrades on both sides.

In April 1923, I thought I would like to join the newly-formed Garda Siochana. Armed with references, I presented myself at the Depot H.Q. but was turned down because I only measured 5' 7¾" in height. Greatly disappointed, and ashamed to go home and admit failure, I went next day, without consulting anyone, over to Beggars Bush Barracks, presented my credentials and was enlisted in the Army Corps of Engineers and posted to Donegal Command with the rank of Lieutenant. I remained in the army and in Donegal until there was a large scale reduction of the forces early in 1924. I was demobilised with a promise that my application for a commission in the

proposed Irish-speaking battalion of the army would be considered when that unit was being established.

I came home straightaway and settled down to work with my brother at the building trade and I forgot about the Irish-speaking battalion and the army. My only contact with the army subsequently was in the emergency in the early '40's, when I held a commission in the Local Defence Force.

Now turned 60, while I still have a strong affection for my early love, the language movement, outside my business and family, my main interest is, and has been for many years - Catholic Action. I devote practically all my spare time in doing as much as I can in the Catholic Apostolate and, with God's help, I hope to continue to do so while He sees fit to spare me.

Signed: Seán Mac Giollarnáth

Date: 12th December 1956

Witness: Grace.