

ORIGINAL

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21
BURO STAIRÉ M. 1913-21
NO. W.S. 417

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BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21.

STATEMENT BY WITNESS

DOCUMENT NO. W.S....417.....

Witness

Mr. David McGuinness,
12 Leoville Street,
Belfast.

Identity

Member of Irish Volunteers Belfast 1914 - .
Assistant to O/C. Intelligence 3rd Northern
Division I.R.A. 1918 - 1921.

Subject

- (a) National organizations Belfast 1910-1922;
- (b) I.R.A. Intelligence, Belfast, 1918-1921.

Conditions, if any, stipulated by Witness

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Statement by David McGuinness,

12, Leoville Street, Belfast.

In the year 1910, after the formation of the Fianna in Dublin, the Countess Markievicz decided to get the organisation going in Belfast. She contacted Mr. Joe Robinson and sent him to Belfast to make contacts which would be useful in getting Belfast area organised. Mr. Robinson had a relation living in Belfast named Peter Donnelly, a painter by trade, who was a member of the I.R.B. and was also more or less in touch with everything national in Belfast. Donnelly got an introduction to a man named William Woods, a member of O'Neill's Piper's Band, and Woods with the other members of the Band were also members of the Peter O'Neill Crowley G.F.C. This football club was one of the oldest and strongest in the city and had a big junior following. I was a member of this club. Robinson and Woods decided to make use of the juvenile section of the Club as a recruiting ground for the Fianna. I was then an active member of the Band and the Football club and both Robinson and Woods came to me with their problems in connection with getting recruits. I took over the job of getting Fianna members from amongst the members of the Band and the football club, and was able to procure the use of the band-room for Fianna meetings. This was an upper room of Dowley's - Tobacconists, Mill Street, (Milfield Corner) which is now occupied by a family named Fitzsimons. We used those premises once a week for meetings and lectures. We started off with a very small number of members, but in about 3 months recruited about 70 boys. We soon got far

too numerous for the premises and we became a bit of an embarrassment to our obliging landlords. We decided that our position was sufficiently healthy to justify our looking for a Headquarters of our own. We procured a hut at Willowbank, formerly used by a British Cavalry Unit.

After we moved into Willowbank we were properly organised and had an officer staff functioning, and recruitment was still going strong. We came to the decision to split into two sections. The original Sluagh was named Willie Neilson and rather than hurt the feelings of any of our boys we gave them the option to volunteer to make up the start of a new Sluagh. About one-third of the boys volunteered and the new Sluagh was known as the Henry Joy McCracken Sluagh. The start of the new Sluagh had the result of creating a spirit of rivalry between the new and old Sluaghs. In the course of time, when our numbers increased, we started other Sluaghs, Willie Orr, Roddy McCorley and Wolfe Tone Sluaghs.

In 1912 we formed the first Ladies Sluagh of Fianna Éireann in all Ireland;- the Betsie Gray Sluagh. When this Sluagh was started we met with considerable opposition from many of the Fianna boys. This Ladies Sluagh sent the following delegates to the 1912 Fianna Convention - Ina Connolly, daughter of James Connolly, Kate O'Kane and Rose Leckey.

The Fianna organisation reached its peak in 1914. We had perfect organisation, splendid discipline and by then we had taken over three large huts at Willowbank to accommodate our boys.

At this time the Countess Markievicz lived in Leinster Road, Rathmines and I met her there for the first time. I knew Bulmer Hobson and knew he had then been associated with Literary and Dramatic associations and personnel for a number of years. To my knowledge I do not remember him having any association with Fianna Éireann for some time after their formation in Belfast.

In 1912 I joined the I.R.B., at the suggestion of Seán O'Sullivan, who administered the I.R.B. oath to me. Seán O'Sullivan was a native of Co. Cork and was the Fianna Irish language teacher. After joining the I.R.B. I quickly realised how the I.R.B. were fostering and encouraging the Fianna. I also found out from the Countess that she was, what I can describe as, jealous of any I.R.B. influence over the Fianna. She expressed to me her disapproval of all secret societies and disapproved of the I.R.B. using the Fianna as a recruiting ground for themselves. Her ideal of the Fianna was an open organisation without any secret entanglements. It was based on the old Fianna tradition of Fionn MacCumhail days "Truth on ^{our} lips, courage in our hearts and strength in our arms".

When the Volunteers were first formed about the end of 1913 the Fianna immediately threw themselves enthusiastically into the new organisation. The Volunteers were organised as a counter-blast to the Ulster Volunteers and all nationalist bodies in the city of Belfast encouraged their members to join the Volunteers. Large numbers of the supporters of the Irish Parliamentary Party Organisation joined. We in the Fianna felt that our organisation was in danger of losing its Fianna

identity in the larger organisation of the Volunteers. This fear prompted us to join up in two companies, C and F., which would be mainly composed of Fianna members. Later on we found that we were receiving a lot of non-Fianna recruits in both our companies and these men were mostly Parliamentary Party supporters, thus they were considered by us in the Fianna organisation as undesirable. We held weekly lectures: Cathal O'Shannon ran a series of lectures on History - European, Political and Irish National. We formed debating groups under the supervision of Cathal O'Shannon and we arranged debates with our political opponents - men from the United Irish League Branches. Thus we kept the cultural and national ideals of the Fianna right. Another of our purely Fianna activities was our anti-recruiting propaganda. Bill posting of anti-British and anti-recruiting propaganda was carried out by us every Saturday night and into Sunday morning during the years and we had to make many hasty retreats from the police who were attempting to prevent our work.

The outbreak of the Great War in 1914, and the Split in the Volunteers occasioned by John Redmond's attitude towards the British war effort and his promise of Volunteer assistance to Britain produced great changes in the Volunteer circles in Belfast. The overwhelming majority of the Volunteers sided with the Redmond party and the Republican Volunteers were reduced to approximately the small number of men, who in the early days of 1913-1914 started the organisation in Belfast. The Split also affected the Fianna but to a limited extent compared with the Volunteers. Large numbers of Redmond's followers joined the British Army - 16th Irish Division, and marched to the Railway Station to entrain for their training camp near Fermoy, Co. Cork. A small number of Fianna also joined up at this time - the number who did so would not be

more than about twenty out of a total of three hundred Fianna.

Following the outbreak of the War and the formation of the 16th Division the danger of conscription became a possibility and our minds were directed towards meeting the threatened danger when it came and the possibility of defeating it. The course of the war in 1914-1915 diverted people's minds from the early national aspects of our struggle for Home Rule, and amongst the extreme crowd of nationalists, from the Republic. The 'press' generally was inclined to divert people's minds from things national; the Church was not helpful, and so the Volunteer movement fell into a feeling of apathy and indifference. The Fianna were not quite so badly affected in numbers but with the widespread decay there was an easing off in our activities. Cultural and social activities were maintained and training camps were established in the summer months in Cranfield and Ballyhornan Co. Down and Red Bay Co. Antrim.

The danger of conscription in the winter and spring of 1915-1916 produced a situation in which young Irishmen were being recruited in Britain, and others fearing a similar fate were returning to Ireland. Some of those men formed a Company at Kimmage in Dublin which took part in the Easter Week Rising.

From the Split in 1914 onwards I became exclusively a Volunteer, being as I have stated already a member of the I.R.B. The Volunteers at this time were, what I might describe as a composite Battalion made up of various units such as Clan Ulidh Pipe Band, St. Malachy's Pipe Band and the various G.A.A. clubs. / Even the members of the I.R.B. joined one of the many football clubs.

Even the members of the I.R.B. joined one of the many football clubs. Thus we maintained contacts and camouflaged our Volunteer activities. The R.I.C. became more antagonistic after 1914. Denis McCullough was the most important personage in the Republican movement in Belfast. He was a Centre in the I.R.B. and was in charge of the Irish Volunteers. His business interests compelled him to move about the city and surrounding districts constantly and he was for ever shadowed by R.I.C. In order to give the police trouble he moved about mostly by bicycle. Sometimes when he went into a house on business and left his bicycle on the street he would leave by the back door and one of us, who was acting as his shadower or his shadower's shadow, would take his bicycle and hand it over at an arranged venue. The police in McCullough's case, and in other men's cases to my knowledge, called on the houses where McCullough and those other men had visited and made inquiries from the inmates in such a way as to give the impression that the 'visitor' was not an honest person. This economic blackmail was police policy at the time. They never referred to McCullough's political activities but to his supposed criminal proclivities. (The Volunteer's activities at this time were mostly directed to the collection of cash for the purchase of arms, and the collection of arms wherever possible. We were able to get a small number of single-shot rifles. We purchased the most of our arms in Glasgow. Each Volunteer subscribed 1/- per week if he could afford it and when the price of a revolver was collected we purchased it and put it up for balloting amongst the Volunteers.

I do not propose to go into any detail about what happened in Belfast in Easter Week 1916. At that time I was an ordinary Volunteer holding no rank. None of us feel happy about what happened. We obeyed our orders and we do not try to apportion blame if blame can be apportioned.

After Easter Week 1916 a number of the important Volunteers and I.R.B. members were arrested and deported. I was not arrested however. A feeling of despair existed in Belfast as in other parts of the country after Easter Week and the movement in Belfast became totally disorganised. We had no leaders as all the prominent men were in prison or scattered, some on the run. After the release of the prisoners about early 1917 a move to re-organise the Volunteers was made. As many of our Volunteers were, for economic reasons, or for safety reasons, forced to emigrate to England and Scotland to obtain employment the numbers of pre-1916 Volunteers were greatly reduced. We never really lost our comradeship, even in the darkest days after Easter Week we met on Sundays. We maintained our associations through ~~the~~ G.A.A. clubs and other kindred organisations, so we were in touch all through the later months of 1916. Father Fullerton, C.C. St. Pauls, Fr. Chas. O'Neill, St. Peters and Fr. Hassin, St. Marys did a lot to keep the fires alive, and renew drooping spirits. These priests were sincere patriots and were most anxious to encourage things cultural and national and were a great help to the remainder of the Volunteers after 1916. They were not identified with the Volunteers or with revolutionary activities of any description. Their sympathies were with us and I believe each priest individually felt disappointment that things turned out as they did.

The first move to effect a reorganisation was the notification, by word of mouth, to Volunteers to attend a meeting at premises opposite the Forester's Hall in Mill Street. This meeting was most informal, no proper chairman, each man had apparently something to say and said it. It was agreed that a reorganisation would commence, and that if sufficient men were available from any of the old pre 1916 Companies they should reform into that Company and appoint officers. In the case of the old C and F Companies, we formed a new Company known as C Company. After this reorganisation we had four companies in the Falls Road area, A, B, C and D. These companies were only in skeleton form at first. As before 1916 the companies were based on G.A.A. Clubs and Pipe Band organisation as follows: A Company was associated with the O'Neill Crowley and Michael Davitt G.A.A. Clubs; B Company, John Mitchell G.A.A. Club; C, as the old Fianna Companies again and the Clan Ulaidh Band. D Company had no association with outside clubs or bands. These clubs or band associations for Volunteers were a means of camouflage for Volunteer activities and it provided a problem for police intelligence to segregate Volunteers from footballers and bandmen.

The South-Armagh Election, February 1918, gave the Belfast Volunteers a stimulus which enabled us to come out in the open. We sent bodies of Volunteers into the South Armagh area to do election work under their own officers working as a military body. These Volunteers were in the charge of the late Seán O'Neill. The work that Volunteers were expected to do on elections was purely non-political. Their duty was wholly to protect Sinn Féin interests, protect voters

and to prevent the attacks on Sinn Féin supporters from Hibernian hooligans.

There are events of importance in 1918 which I do not propose to deal with in detail as others will be dealing with them. The anti-conscription campaign which lasted for about six or eight weeks produced a big influx of recruits for the Volunteers. For the rest of this year our constant efforts were directed to the perfecting of our organisation, training, drilling and lectures on military subjects. At the end of year 1918 the General Election took place, with a contest in West Belfast in which Mr. De Valera was defeated by Joe Devlin. In 1919 the whole year was a continuation of our efforts to train and equip our men. Our training then included field work in the open country, instruction in the use of all arms, including hand-grenades, tactics, defence and attack on positions etc. These activities carried on into the early months of 1920. The burnings of the Income Tax offices in the city were carried out on Easter Saturday and Sunday morning 1920. I do not propose to elaborate on these as others will be dealing with them in proper detail. They were carried out successfully according to plan.

My principal duties as a member of the Volunteers were connected with the Intelligence department of the Volunteer organisation. Around about the period 1918-1919 G.H.Q. ordered all units in the country to concentrate on special services such as munitions, chemistry, engineering, signalling, first-aid and last and most important - Intelligence. I took up intelligence work and from then onwards intelligence was my speciality. In the early days of intelligence our energies were directed to

information re the R.I.C. and the Irish Parliamentary Party's organisations and Unionist Civil population. The Ulster Volunteer organisation about the end of the 1914-1918 war became practically moribund and did not then constitute a problem for the Volunteers. At this time every Orange lodge was an Ulster Volunteer arsenal where arms and war equipment were kept. I was engaged on the work of obtaining information as to the whereabouts and the quantity of arms in each location under Unionist control. This information was checked for exactness and filed for action. Our efforts were to contact some of the people who had access to these arms and obtain the arms by bribery, or purchase, if possible. Our most successful efforts to obtain arms from outside organisations were from the old National Volunteers. We purchased some rifles from them, however, which proved more dangerous to the user than to a person in the vicinity of the target. We got information about rifles located in Antrim town, under the control of the A.O.H. and stored in their hall. The Belfast Volunteers went out to the hall and found 17 rifles on the premises and got possession of them without any trouble. Another incident, which I had no personal connection with, happened about this time. A priest had control of a number of National Volunteer rifles and he felt they were in danger in his dump and decided to hand them up. He sent in a message to Belfast for some of his Hibernian friends to come out to his place and take control of them. This message fell into our hands and our men travelled out to the priest's place and represented themselves as National Volunteers and were handed over the rifles.

The British military were stationed at Kilroot Camp, some miles outside Belfast. This Camp was previously the base for the garrison artillery but at this time it was a training ground for various other units. Some person got in touch with a man, who himself was in touch with the Quartermaster's Department in the Camp, and agreement was reached for the handing out of a quantity of arms for an agreed sum. The night selected was a Saturday night. The men selected for receiving the arms went out to the Camp but some unforeseen incident occurred and no transfer took place.

In the 1920 period the Intelligence Staff was in charge of a teacher named Francis Grummey who in 1920 became Brigade Organiser. Grummey had a number of contacts in military police circles, the Post Office Telegraph and Telephone Sections. In connection with the sorting of letters in Belfast, all the important official letters were handed over to a special staff in the Post Office. The ordinary staff of sorters never got near those communications. The military and police correspondence were delivered in sealed bags and handed over to representatives of the Service to which they related. Soldiers collected the military, and police the other, and so on. In connection with the incoming correspondence the same procedure pertained but we were able to arrange to have some of this correspondence 'tapped'. Those letters had to be dealt with, to a great extent, by the ordinary sorting staff and we were able to have letters extracted when we deemed it necessary to do so, but we found, however, that the information we obtained in this way was not of very much value. A lot of the correspondence containing information to the British Authorities was anonymous and was of little value to us or to the British Authorities.

At that time the organisation all over the country found it a comparatively easy matter to obtain military codes. On the other hand, the R.I.C. codes were proving an extremely difficult problem and despite efforts all over the country the secret was not discovered. This fell to the lot of the Belfast Brigade to solve; therefore, police contacts in the County Inspector's Office and the District Inspector's Office at Downpatrick were established to obtain copies of the much wanted codes. These were forwarded in due course to Headquarters, Dublin, and by subsequent arrangement copies were sent to other Northern Brigades. The codes were generally changed monthly. There may have been a week when a delay would occur in their transmission to us but all copies of code messages, police and military, were retained until the codes themselves were available. The older codes were destroyed. I might say here that the "big fellow" (Michael Collins) sent in a strong recommendation to our Intelligence department for their success in obtaining the codes. The most valuable contact we had for obtaining keys to the codes was a clerk in the County Inspector's Office in Downpatrick. It can be appreciated that in matters of this kind I do not feel I should mention names and do not propose to do so.

It can be understood by people who know the position in the North how dangerous it was to act as contact for our Intelligence. The British Intelligence organisation in Belfast area had an overwhelming amount of material to work on, such as 'A', 'B' and 'C' Special Constabulary, and at least 75 per cent of the civil population. This position of extreme danger made it essential that all our contacts in the British Service would be only known to I.R.A. personnel as a code name or number.

In fact, some of our principal contacts were only known to me by their real names years after their services to us ended. For example, the contact whom I have referred to above in Downpatrick was not known to me in his real identity until 1926 or 1927. In this way the knowledge of persons working for us was kept safe from the British Intelligence. It really meant a big organisation of "go-betweens". For instance, the information from the C.I.'s Office, Downpatrick, was transmitted by the C.I.'s clerk to a local business man named Rice. He, in turn, would pass it on to the local Battalion O.C. and thence by various channels to Belfast Headquarters. Despite this cumbersome channel of communication everything arrived with amazing speed and without undue delay. There were methods of transmitting the information received to the South and the surrounding Brigade officers by means of lorry drivers employed by certain Belfast bakers. These men travelled with their lorries mostly by night. Their bread deliveries were made at the various towns on routes extending 50 or 60 miles in the Counties Down, Armagh and Tyrone. From Tyrone a further transmission was made to link up the Counties Derry and Monaghan Brigades. Communications were maintained with Dublin and Derry cities through attendants on the Great Northern Railway Dining Cars.

In the General Post Office in Belfast we had a number of agents working for us in the Telephone and Telegraph Departments. Practically all the telegraph coded police or military messages passing through Belfast were intercepted and copied by some of our men. A number of the telephonic messages would also be listened in to and notes made of the contents of the messages. Some of our most important information was obtained by the night

telegraphists and a number of important plots were in this way discovered by our night staff in the Post Office; for instance, officers speaking to each other from places such as Victoria Barracks and Balmoral Showgrounds, and also the Grosvenor Road Hospital. The latter place had originally been a Mental Institution but at that time it was used as a Military War Hospital and there was a detachment of troops stationed there for emergency purposes. It was the only military establishment they had in west Belfast. One particular instance comes to my mind. This was a telephone conversation held between the officer who was acting as Duty Officer that night at Victoria Barracks and his corresponding number in the War Hospital which unfolded with gusto the story of a plan to trap the "Shinners", as they were referred to, at Balmoral. The trap was to be laid on the following Saturday when it was expected to capture the most effective and dangerous I.R.A. men operating in Belfast. I got this information late on Thursday night and I related it first thing on Friday morning to my superior officers. This was conveyed immediately to the officer who was working on the supposed handing over of arms which my information concerned. Unfortunately, the I.R.A. men concerned did not appreciate the reliability of the information and they actually disobeyed their orders and proceeded on the job which resulted in a large privately-owned lorry being captured. The driver of the lorry was wounded and several men arrested. Not one person of importance was engaged in the operation.

In 1920, Mick Collins was apparently unaware of the fact that the British authorities had a photograph of him, copies of which they had distributed to their agents

in different parts of the country in an effort to effect his capture. One of our Intelligence contacts was drinking with the Tans and R.I.C. in the Queen's Hotel, Victoria Street, Belfast. One of the Tans had evidently taken out his wallet and was displaying the photographs he had taken while on operations down south. These mainly consisted of groups of Tans, and photographs of buildings they had destroyed, and so on. Amongst the lot was this photograph of Michael Collins and while handing round the photographs for inspection this particular one dropped to the ground and our contact covered it with his foot and at a convenient moment retrieved it. We sent this copy on to Michael Collins who was much surprised to learn that the British authorities had it in their possession.

After the pogrom started in 1920 and before Dáil Éireann Publicity Department was set up, the Brigade Intelligence organisation in Belfast was dealing with all the various publicity material from the pogrom condition existing in the city and collecting each day material such as, shootings, burnings, attacks on the Catholic districts, the number of people killed, wounded and arrested, and all other items of interest. This material was issued in the form of a daily bulletin. When the Publicity Department of Dáil Éireann was set up and a branch opened in Belfast, we supplied them with the stuff that we were formerly using in our own daily bulletin. We set up a committee called "The Catholic Protection Committee". The Honorary Chairman of this committee was Rev. Bernard Lavery, St. Patrick's Catholic Church. The County Secretary of the Hibernians, Felix Kennedy, was also on the committee. Dr. McSparran was by way of being an honorary member. Under these auspices the

Catholic Protection Society functioned but the real work was performed by our Intelligence staff and all the information collated by the Company Battalions and Brigade was tabulated here. Each report was thoroughly investigated; every incident was reported. A couple of men would be sent out to obtain the details regarding incidents, information from witnesses and that sort of thing. Everything had to be vouched for before it was accepted. In events of importance, sworn statements were obtained from eye-witnesses. Owen McKiernan, a school teacher, was handed all this volume of evidence embracing our reports. He co-ordinated in into proper form and order and sent it on. He was in complete control of the issue of the bulletin and the arrangements of the matter contained in it. So effective and trustworthy was the information and its set-out that in time the Dáil Publicity Department ceased to alter anything contained in the bulletin as issued from Belfast. In the early days the Dáil Publicity Department were inclined to look on some of the stuff contained in our bulletin as untrustworthy, but experience showed them that the most unbelievable reports were based on facts which could not be contested. In this connection there was a gentleman sent from Dublin to Belfast for the purpose of finding out how far we were exaggerating in our accounts of happenings during the pogrom. After a short stay in Belfast this gentleman went back to Dublin and informed his authorities there that our reports if they had erred were on the side of understatements. To those who were not familiar with conditions under the pogrom it was to be expected that the incidents related sounded fantastic.

Our day-to-day work was dealing with matter such as I have described. It was a very routine job and had no flair or excitement about it. Sometimes we would get information which would give us a bit of thrill, but generally

it was a matter of receiving reports regularly from our agents, copying them, checking them and sending them on.

Frank Crummev was a Brigade and later a Divisional Intelligence Officer. I was his deputy. Each battalion had its own Intelligence Officer and each Company had its own Intelligence Officer. In addition to this, each Volunteer was expected to make a report on anything of consequence which might come under his notice. In the west Belfast area we organised a series of Street Captains whose functions were to act as observers on the conduct of the inhabitants of each particular street and make reports accordingly. These reports recorded matters such as visits by strangers, persons in uniform and all incidents which might appear to be suspicious to the observers.

The execution of D.I. Swanzy at Lisburn in August 1920 precipitated a series of attacks by the Orange mob upon the Catholics of Lisburn. The latter were beaten up unmercifully, driven from their homes and their homes set on fire. They were compelled to make their way in the small hours of the night across the hills to Belfast. Many of these unfortunate people found refuge in Dublin. Later, similar attacks were made at Banbridge and Dromore, County Down and eventually what presumably began as a mob reprisal for the shooting of Swanzy took the form of a carefully prepared and devilishly executed campaign to drive out all 'Catholics', a word synonymous with 'Rebel', not alone from employment but from their homes and businesses. Some weeks later meetings were held in Belfast shipyards addressed by speakers imported from Lisburn and Banbridge who exhorted all loyalists to get rid of the "Shinners" and to have their jobs filled by

/loyalists.

loyalists. On the resumption of work that evening, armed gangs entered the various workshops and boarded the ships interrogating those who did not wear a loyalist emblem. Those unable to satisfy the interrogators were brutally beaten and many were thrown into the docks and while swimming to safety were attacked with showers of rivets and iron bolts. That night the Belfast skies glowed with the fire from hundreds of Catholic homes set ablaze by the mob. This took place in every district in the City. The attacks were not isolated but were synchronized. These mobs were protected and led by armed members of the Special Constabulary. The outrages continued day and night in an effort to break the spirit of the Catholics and were met with stubborn resistance. These attacks continued with increasing ferocity for some two years and only when a big number of important business concerns, owned and staffed by loyalists, went up in flames in acts of reprisal did any lull take place. Repeated appeals by the Bishop of Down and Connor, by the Catholic Protection Committee and other prominent members of the Catholic community in the City to Churchill and other members of the British Cabinet went unheeded until the boycott campaign was introduced. This did more than anything else to bring the Northern Authorities to their senses, while the effect produced on America, on the Continent and in the Dominions by the bulletins issued by the Dáil Publicity Department finally brought about a cessation of mob attacks. This campaign threw an additional strain on the Intelligence Staff and to meet the conditions forced upon us by the upheaval we were compelled to recruit and train an Auxiliary Force composed of dockers, railway men and carters, the purpose of which was to provide material for the transport of merchandise

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which, if permitted to go on, would have rendered a boycott ineffective.

When the Truce was declared and was effective in Southern Ireland it made no difference to the Intelligence work in Belfast. The arrival of Eoin O'Duffy as liaison officer witnessed the setting up of office premises and staff at St. Mary's Hall to enable him to carry out his duties as liaison officer for the Six-County Northern Area. As an indication of the farce of the Truce which existed in Belfast it will be necessary to state that we were forced to provide Eoin O'Duffy with an armed guard in St. Mary's Hall. This guard had to be maintained during his working hours and it had also to be continued on a twenty-four hour basis to protect files and papers in use by O'Duffy.

During O'Duffy's stay in Belfast the Intelligence Department there had to furnish him with all incidents of outrageous shootings, burnings and so on. Part of his work was to keep abreast of all these happenings. Each incident called for an immediate investigation and a collection of evidence from eye-witnesses to establish authenticity. As a further precaution the account was then taken to the local Parish Priest or Curate for his version of the affair and his opinion of the person submitting the account. This was a safeguard against fictitious accounts.

There was a number of members of the Crown Forces in Belfast, particularly police officers and men who were on a "wanted" list. These were individuals who were more than usually active in political activities who had by their villainous and ruthless methods earned the death penalty. Some of the names of those men were supplied

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to us by G.H.Q. in Dublin. These were principally police officers who had committed atrocities in Belfast and other parts of the country, and the others were, as I have already stated, Belfast men who had come under this category by their local activities.

Joe Savage who was at one time Quartermaster of the Brigade, put me in touch with a civilian clerk employed at the Military Headquarters, Victoria Barracks, Belfast, and from the outset he proved indefatigable and anxious to meet our wishes and demands in every way. The routine method we adopted was that certain files were abstracted each night except, of course, when there was a sign of unusual activity in or around the barracks and there was a danger of a search. By arrangements, these files were handed over to us in St. Mary's Catholic Church. Donegan and I sat up the whole night copying these files in their entirety, and we handed them back the next morning in St. Mary's Catholic Church. In a few short months we had practically completed a copy of every important file in the Military Headquarters. Around about that time an offer was made to our contact to have him transferred to the Royal Ulster Constabulary, also in a civilian capacity. He came to us and consulted us about the matter, asking for our decision, so we decided that more useful work could be effected by him in R.U.C. Headquarters, hence we advised him to accept the transferred position. He (our contact) took up duty as Confidential Clerk to Major-General Solly-Flood at Waring Street Headquarters. The same procedure was carried out here as at Victoria Barracks and when a suitable occasion presented itself the files were

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abstracted, brought to us to be copied and returned the following morning. Our contact continued doing his work efficiently up to about June 1922. In order to explain the circumstances that ended his connection with us and his employment with the R.U.C. it will be necessary for me to go back to the time the Split occurred in the I.R.A., and the Executive formed previous to the Civil War breaking out in Dublin. This was about April 1922. The Intelligence Officer of the Executive Forces in the Belfast area having had previous knowledge of our contact's work with our Intelligence Department made several attempts to wean him to their side and to get him to supply them with the material he was supplying to us. The contact sensed a danger in this dual connection and fought shy of it. Later he was menaced and threatened of personal injury which forced him to board in another part of the City. This caused a drying up of that source of information for a number of weeks. We took steps to contact him again, found out where he was living and threshed the matter out with him. We then discovered the reason he was not supplying further information, and to our relief learned that it was not fear or reluctance on his part to continue with us but rather the danger to himself and ourselves which was likely to occur should the Executive Force insist on him complying with their demands. Relations were again resumed on the old terms and the flow of information continued as before until further uneasiness developed on the part of our contact. He (our contact) informed us that his position in the County Inspector General's office was insecure insofar as that he might be, at any moment, substituted by a Unionist or a uniformed policeman. His qualification as an ex-Serviceman would not counterbalance the fact that he was a Catholic, hence he suggested to us that in the interests

of economic security he would resign his job and come to Dublin and obtain a position in the newly formed Garda Siochana. This news did not make us feel too happy as we saw in it our most valuable source of information dry up, so after consultation we decided to make the best of a bad bargain and finish the chapter with a "grand slam", that is a list of the most important files then available, secret dossiers, etc., the compilation of which we had some knowledge. We therefore instructed the contact to collect as many of these files as possible. This seemed to put him in a panic and we lost trace of him for several weeks, but eventually we prevailed on him to carry out our plan. By arrangement Donegan and myself met him on a Saturday evening for the purpose of entering Police Headquarters and helping ourselves to the required material. Our contact at the last moment funk'd taking us with him and insisted that we remain outside while he entered alone. A half hour later he left the premises, followed us some hundred yards away where we entered a public-house and in a secluded spot we took charge of some dozen or so files all marked "Secret and Confidential". I remember one of them was in relation to the Beleek situation. We gave our contact a stiff drink to steady his nerves. Donegan escorted him to the Great Northern Railway Station, purchased a railway ticket and sent him to Dublin with instructions to stay at the Regent Hotel, D'Olier Street, and at his convenience contact Seamus Woods, our Divisional O/C., then in Dublin. I transferred the files to a young girl in Smithfield Markets, had them taken home, and on Sunday morning they were handed over to our Divisional O/C., Seamus Woods, who took them immediately to Dublin,

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and took them immediately to Dublin, and so ended the chapter. After that our big scale intelligence work came to an end.

In justice to our contact it is necessary to state that he never received any money for any work he did for us and he took extraordinary risks. As some recompense for his work on our behalf he was recommended to the newly formed Garda Siochana to which he was admitted. A short time later he rose to the rank of Superintendent.

Signed: David M. C. Gurnes

Date: 28th July 1950

Witness: John Treacy
28/7/50

