

ORIGINAL

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21

BURO STAIRE MILITAIRA 1913-21

No. W.S. 1,729

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COSANTA.

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21.

STATEMENT BY WITNESS.

DOCUMENT NO. W.S. 1,729.

Witness

Capt. Jos. J. Togher,
7, Francis St.,
Galway.

Identity.

Staff Captain, Galway Brigade.

Subject.

I.R.A. activities, Galway 1917-1921.

Conditions, if any, Stipulated by Witness.

Nil.

File No. S. 1,970.

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SECOND STATEMENT BY JOSEPH J. TOGHER,

7, St. Francis St., Galway.

I was born in Headford, Co. Galway, on the 8th September, 1898. My father was a shopkeeper and a native of Headford. My mother came from Bagenalstown, Co. Carlow. I remember her telling me that there were five Fenians in her family who were executed in 1798.

I went to the national school in Headford and later in Shrule, before we moved to Galway about 1910, when I was sent to the Patrician Brothers' School. I remember one Brother in particular, Brother Leo, who was the only outstanding Nationalist on the staff. He was very keen on the language and Irish history, 1798 particularly.

In 1915 I applied for a post in the post office and secured it, firstly as a Learner, later being transferred to the telegraphic section.

During the Rising of 1916, the R.I.C. mounted a guard in the building, but, strange to say, this did not take place until Wednesday of Easter Week, the Rising having taken place on the previous Monday. There was another man with me named Redington who, while under the influence of drink, was very outspoken in favour of the Rising, and we had a bit of a job keeping him under control to save him from being arrested. When the Rising was over, the R.I.C. left the building and everything returned to normal.

Later on, I was comparing the Rising with similar Risings in our history, when the thought suddenly struck me that something wonderful had taken place and I went down town and joined a branch of the Gaelic League. The teachers

I remember were Tom Flanagan, Seamus Carter, and the present Lord Mayor of Galway (1958), Peter Green. The classes were very badly attended, the average number being about twenty. We started with one meeting per week, and later on increased it to two and three nights weekly.

The executions which followed the Rising had a very depressing effect on a number of us, including some of my colleagues in the post office, Peter Hynes, Paddy Walsh and Tom Courtney, who were later on my comrades in the Volunteers. The Nationalist or Redmond Volunteers were operating here since 1913, which I did not join. They were actually acting like Special Constables of the British. This body soon began to decline, and shortly after the Irish Volunteers were organised the Redmondite Volunteers ceased to exist. The Irish Volunteers were reformed about April, 1917. I joined the Castlegar Company because some of them had been arrested after 1916 and I considered them better than the City Company at this time. Mick Newell was the Company Captain, and after a conversation with him and a few others, including Tommy Flanagan, it was suggested that I should not make myself too prominent, as, at a later stage, on account of my position in the post office, I could be very useful.

There was very little to report until 1918, when I got special instructions on cyphers, making them up and breaking them down, from a man named Peter Hynes who, as well as being an expert, had a special flair for this particular kind of work. To this day, I do not know how he got all this information, but there was not a trick in the trade he didn't know. I dealt personally with all the incoming and outgoing mails for both the military and R.I.C. at

Renmore and Eglinton Barracks. It meant quite a lot of night work for me in order to ensure no undue delay. In order to enter the office at night, which I could not do officially, I was obliged to climb in through a second floor window, extract any mail I was doubtful about, bring them back home, break up the cypher and pass on the information to the Brigade Commandant, Seamus Murphy. I remember one particular cypher which gave Hynes and me such an amount of trouble that Hynes decided we should take it away instead of making a copy of it, as we usually did. The girl who handled the telegrams that day missed it the following morning and reported it to the Postmaster (who was not favourably disposed towards us). This resulted in all telegrams being locked every night in the Assistant Super's safe. We got over this alright as we had a very handy blacksmith in the Volunteers named Flanagan, who made a perfect copy from an impression we got of the key while Hynes was acting as Assistant Super. for a few days. Our new key worked perfectly.

I would like to mention before going any further that the British cypher was changed at the beginning of each month, of which one became very familiar, as the wording never changed. When broken up, it always read "Suspect Stephen Jordan on evening train to Broadstone".

During this time we had Intelligence Officers appointed in each battalion, although I had very little time to instruct them, as I was working night and day.

I did not come under the suspicions of the R.I.C. until well on in 1920. It is interesting to note that an R.I.C. man named Igoe, a native of Mayo who later became a member of the notorious British Murder Gang, made overtures of friendship to a member of the Cumann na mBan - Miss Margaret

Burke - who refused to have anything to do with him.

I think it was a pity she did not pursue the matter with him, even though I think it was a "plant". We might have succeeded in doing something about him, as he was later transferred to Dublin Castle.

I had one Sergeant of the R.I.C. who was useful to me. He was stationed in Moylough and was married to a Miss Flanagan - whose brother was a Company Captain in the Volunteers and the maker of our spare key for the post office safe. Another great source of information was personal correspondence addressed to R.I.C. or military officers, of which we got quite a large number. In some cases it was impossible to trace the senders. I would like to mention one letter in particular. It was in an ordinary envelope and addressed to "The R.I.C., Galway, and went on as follows.... Giving different movements of Volunteer companies in Connemara and mentioning the Brigade Comdts, Michael Thornton's name and others, signed..... A Friend." The writing, by design or otherwise, was not good. There were a few other letters obviously from the same source. I took them with me one evening and gave them to Thornton for his attention. Shortly afterwards, another letter arrived - same writing, same envelope, which went on to say much more about Thornton and others. The handwriting was shortly afterwards recognised as being the work of a teacher named Joyce who lived near Barna. Some time later, I went out to see our Brigade O/C, Murphy, and found him in Father O'Meehan's with the late Father Griffin. I warned them that I had received some news which would probably result in reprisals, that a British officer had been shot that evening near Moyculler. Murphy suggested that I should go on to see Brigade Comdt. Thornton, who had some operation on that night. I contacted

Thornton about 1 a.m. and gave him my information. He decided to go on with his job, which was the execution of Joyce, who had been tried and convicted. The execution was duly carried out, and the remains interred in a bog. I would like to mention that the courtmartial and execution were properly carried out under the proper military authority. Joyce and Father Griffin were not on friendly terms over some parish trouble, and Joyce was always antagonistic towards us.

I made it part of my duty, doing a job which was very distasteful, frequenting the hotel bars and lounges which the British army and R.I.C. frequented, one hotel in particular, The Skeffington Arms, also Baker's Hotel in Eyre St. I made three good contacts - a Sergeant Cantwell, R.A.M. Corps, a Signals N.C.O. named McKeown, and an army civilian employee named Hickey who, strange to say, was attached to the Intelligence Section. I got all troop movements, reports on different raids, etc.. Other useful agents were a Miss Carter in the County Club, and George Cunniffe in the Railway Hotel.

About October, 1920, the British set up a centralised Intelligence depot and took over a house in Dominick St. Capt. Keating, a British army officer, was in complete charge, the object being to pool all the information there, have it assessed and dealt with immediately. Their code word was O/C Forting. This depot had a complete over-riding authority over all branches of the British forces - army, R.I.C., Black and Tans, Auxiliaries and navy. All or one could be directed to act on instructions from this depot. I had a friend named Michael Brennan, an ex-British officer who was also friendly with Keating. He, Brennan, who was in the Congested Districts Board, supplied me with many items of

useful information such as Keating, fitting, instructing and sending out agents throughout the country disguised as tramps or otherwise, some of whom never returned and others who brought back useless information. I had another useful agent in the National Bank named Kirwan, who also kept me supplied with material about Keating, who had his bank account with them and was always well overdrawn. In view of this, I was working on the idea of buying information from Keating, especially to find out who were actually responsible for the murder of Father Griffin. This we failed to find out, as it was an inside job carried out by the Auxiliaries. Keating was heard to boast in the County Club during these negotiations that he was going to walk the Shinners into it. In any case, I think he could not find out the information. As I said earlier, it was an inside job, concocted and carried out by the local company of Auxies stationed at Lenaboy, Taylors Hill.

Together with the general work of intelligence in the brigade, I succeeded in compiling a list of the home addresses of British army and Auxiliary officers in England, had it sent up to G.H.Q. and also to neighbouring brigades.

Shortly after the Kilroe ambush, which turned out to be a terrible debacle, I intercepted a personal letter for District Inspector McGlynn of the R.I.C. giving information about a Volunteer named Connolly. We suspected an ex-soldier named O'Halloran. We failed to make a case against him, but gave him the usual warning.

The brigade and battalions became badly disorganised at this time - September, 1920, which naturally made matters very difficult for me, so I decided to travel to Dublin and G.H.Q., where I saw Colonel O'Connell (Ginger) and Emmet

Dalton. I explained the situation and they advised me to return to Galway and tie in with the Connemara Brigades. I agreed to do so, as Galway City was completely devoid of any organised activity. I returned to Galway, where I made contact with men I could trust - Paddy Hession, Martin King, Tim Duggan, Johnny Carter, - Murphy, Martin Brennan, Jack Darcy, Joe (Slogger) Walsh and John (Tim) Lally. Our first difficulty was procuring arms. I again went to Dublin to contact the Brigade Comdt., Seumas Murphy, who told me that the men who knew where the dumps were named King and Browne. I returned to find the two men whose names I had got were gone to America, so we had to make do with a few revolvers. I also heard on my visit to G.H.Q. that Igoe, the R.I.C. man who had been sent from Galway to Dublin, was badly wanted by us on account of his Murder Gang activities, and moving around Dublin in civilian attire, spotting I.R.A. officers up from the country. He was actually responsible for the attempted murder of a Volunteer named Newell, a brother of Mick Newell, the Comdt. of a neighbouring brigade, in Greek St., Dublin. Newell recovered from his wounds and is still alive. I informed G.H.Q. that I would see what could be done about getting Igoe, as he came to Galway occasionally to see a girl who worked in Giles's publichouse. He only returned once after this, together with a personal armed guard, which showed his importance to the R.I.C., and left after a few minutes.

The day after Bloody Sunday, I was arrested and kept for a week. Although I was told I was second on the list to be shot after Frank Hardiman, a prominent Sinn Féiner, not in the I.R.A., under severe interrogation, I still believed I was not fully suspect. I pleaded complete ignorance of

inside post office matters, telegrams, etc., and the bluff worked. The Intelligence Officer was particularly astute at his job - a Captain Hannon, nicknamed Capt. "Splendid", of the King's Royal Rifles, K.R.R. I was later released with three other Volunteers, and the whole matter was hard to understand just then. I decided we were released to be shot later on, and I went 'on the run'.

In November, 1920, at about 2 a.m., a person called to Father Griffin's house. He answered the door himself, and after a conversation with the caller in Irish, he departed with him on an alleged sick call. We were convinced that the caller (a tout for the Auxiliaries) was none other than William Joyce, later executed by the British after World War II for his activities as an announcer from Berlin Radio Station on behalf of Germany. He became known as Lord Haw-Haw. Some more details of Joyce might be useful. His father was managing a small bus company called the Galway General, and Joyce (his son) was well known to have acted as a scout for R.I.C., Black and Tan, and Auxie raiding parties. We did not succeed in actually pinning anything on him until the following incident which occurred during the Truce. I intercepted a letter from Joyce to an Auxie, which, after being broken down, revealed that Joyce had the R.I.C. cypher which was in use that particular month. Michael Staines, our Liaison Officer, confronted Divisional Commissioner Cruise of the R.I.C. with this information, as Cruise had continually denied Joyce's association with the R.I.C. Had we had this information earlier, Joyce would have been executed. Shortly after the Staines-Cruise interview, Joyce joined the 4th Worcester Regiment and departed with them for England.

From the night (November 7th or 8th) Father Griffin disappeared, local rumour had him a prisoner of the Auxies in

Lenaboy. Capt. Briody has assisted me to confirm that his body, under a few feet of earth, was found in a field, with part of his coat above the ground, off a bye-road outside the village of Barna on the morning of November 14th. There was one bullet wound in the temple.

In 1921, we got instructions from Michael Collins to secure all the information possible about the murderers of the following, with our results: -

- | | | |
|-----------------------|---|--|
| Walsh, Old Malt House | - | a Black and Tan named Miller, with two others not identified. |
| Father Griffin | - | Auxiliaries, one of whom was named Nichols, and Wm. Joyce. |
| Joe Howley | - | Shot at the Broadstone station while accompanied by the late Paddy Mullins, O/C East Mayo Brigade, who told me later that Howley refused to alight from the train with him on the opposite side from the platform. When Howley got on to the platform, he was approached by a man named Leahy, who shook hands with him. Howley left the station and in a few minutes was shot outside. I interviewed Leahy later, who informed me he was a relative of Howley and went to warn him. |
| J. Darcy | - | Taken off the train at Oranmore and murdered by R.I.C., with the usual excuse - "shot while attempting to escape". No information. |
| C. Folan | - | Shot while in bed, by a party of R.I.C. under D.I. McGlynn, the only one identified. |
| Tully | - | Nil. |
| Quirke | - | Shot by Black & Tans with R.I.C. as a reprisal for a Tan named Crum. No one identified. |

After reporting the aforementioned to Dublin, I immediately proceeded to form a small column and secure as much arms as we could, with the aim of executing the aforementioned R.I.C. and Tans as far as we possibly could manage it. Through lack of any co-operation, I was completely helpless, and all we succeeded in doing was the burning of enemy stores, with an occasional shot at the different barracks and the 17th Lancers Camp at Earls Island from a point across the river known as The Dyke.

All during this time, I continued censoring all the enemy correspondence going through, until shortly afterwards their suspicions were aroused, when a system of daily dispatch was instituted between Galway and the Curragh Camp, which was H.Q. for the Mid and West Military Districts. Notwithstanding this, there was no noticeable decrease in the volume of correspondence to be checked.

Before concluding my statement, I wish to mention the names of the following who were very closely associated with me - Martin Brennan, Jack Darcy, Tom Lydon, Tim Duggan, Johnny Carter, William Carter, and on the civilian side - George Cunniffe, Abbey Hotel; Joe Heneghan, Mick Brennan, Terry Mahon, - Temple of the railway staff, and Joe Kirwan of the National Bank.

Signed: *J. J. [unclear]*Date: 25-1-58Witness: *[Signature]*

(Investigator)

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