ORIGINAL

ROINN COSANTA.

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21.

STATEMENT BY WITNESS

DOCUMENT NO. W.S. 379

Witness

Mr. Jeremiah Mee,
46 Whitethorn Road,
Clonskeagh,
Dublin.

Identity

Constable R.I.C. 1919-1920.

Subject

(a) Mutiny of R.I.C. Listowel 1920;

(b) His activities at Republican H.Q. 1920-1921.

Conditions, if any, stipulated by Witness

Nil

File No. S.1509

Form B.S.M. 2.

ORIGINAL

STATEMENT OF JEREMIAH MEE,
46, Whitethorn Road, Clonskea, Dublin.

At the age of nineteen years I joined the R.I.C. and, having spent nine years in various parts of Co. Sligo, went to Listowel, Co. Kerry, in the autumn of 1919. The town of Listowel was then peaceful, and there was no crime in the district apart from the usual minor offences common to all districts. Listowel was District Headquarters and comprised one acting County Inspector, one District Inspector, three Sergeants and fourteen Constables. We did the usual routine police work and carried arms only at night. There was no interference with the people who went about their business and did not show any active animosity towards the police. There were no military in the town and no necessity for them.

This state of affairs continued until May, 1920, when a company of military stationed themselves a mile from the town at a place called Ballinruddery. The military were under the command of a Captain Chadwick, a tall handsome British military officer who kept his men under good control and did not interfere with the police or people. The military did no raiding, just hung on and did routine parades, etc. This was the position up to 16th June, 1920.

On the evening of June 16th, 1920, a phone message came from the County Inspector, R.I.C., Tralee, which was Headquarters. The phone message was an instruction to

send a policeman to the railway station to take over an important despatch. The despatch contained transfers for all the policemen at Listowel Barracks with the exception of three sergeants and one constable who were to remain in Listowel to act as guides to the military who were to be in possession of Listowel Barracks at twelve noon on the following day, 17th June. Captain Chadwick and his company of soldiers were to take possession of Listowel Barracks on 17th June and actually put in four tons of coal for military use. Beyond the fact that we were to be out of the barracks by twelve noon the following day and transferred to various outposts in Kerry, we had no idea as to what the next move might be. We held a meeting in the diningroom. The men were all excited. Some were disappointed over the transfers; some were disappointed over various things. After a lot of discussion, I personally addressed the men in the day-room. I pointed out that a war had been declared on the Irish people and that, looking at the case from the most selfish point of view, we had to consider our own position. We were asked evidently to take part with the military in beating our own people. I might find myself shooting the mother of one of my comrades, while he would be shooting my mother in Galway. I pointed out that in a war one of two things must happen. We had either to win or lose. I assumed that we would win the war with the assistance of the British military. When we had defeated our own people, the British military would return to their own country and we would remain with our own people whom we had, with the assistance of the British Government, crushed and defeated. That would be the best side of our case. If we lost the war, the position would be still worse. I suggested that, instead of going on transfer, we would hold the barracks and refuse to hand over to the British military. We had bombs, rifles and revolvers, and any amount of ammunition; and there was no reason why we could not hold the barracks at least for a few days. To this, I got a rousing cheer from each and every man. They immediately agreed that we would refuse to hand over the

barracks. There was not one dissentient voice in it. The men were all there, including the Sergeant but not the District Inspector or the Head Constable. It was then decided that I would represent the men who were about to be transferred from the barracks, and Constable Lillis would represent the four men who were to remain in the barracks.

At about nine o'clock on the night of the 16th, I phoned on behalf of the men to the County Inspector, Tralee, and informed him of our decision to refuse to leave the Barracks. He cut me off without replying. Later that night a further phone message came from the County Inspector to our District Inspector Flanagan instructing him to have the men ready for parade at ten on the morning of the 17th. When County Inspector Power O'Shea arrived on the 17th, we were lined up in the day-room on parade. He commenced to lecture us on the seriousness of our attitude regarding the refusal to go on transfer and explained that the military had to be in the Barracks at twelve noon on that date and that the same applied to all headquarters stations in Munster. When I spoke up on behalf of the men, the County Inspector cut me short by saying, "Do you refuse to obey an order of the Divisional Commissioner, an order that applies to all Munster, and bring discredit on the police force?". I replied that I refused. "Then", he said, "you had better resign". I then stepped forward and said, "Accept my resignation now". The County Inspector, after some hesitation, said, "Anybody else prepared to resign?". The fourteen Constables then stepped forward, each saying, "I resign", "I resign" - until the whole fourteen had tendered their resignations.

The resignation of fourteen men was more than the County Inspector had expected, and it threw him somewhat off his balance. Here he began to reason with us by saying that he himself did not like the idea of working with the military and that if we gave our reasons

in writing for refusing to co-operate with the military, he would submit those reasons to the proper quarter. He left the dayroom and went into the District Inspector's office which was just across the hall from the dayroom where we were on parade.

In due course we submitted our reasons to the County Inspector and sent them in to him. We gave the reasons under four headings:-

(1) There was no crime in Listowel district and we felt that, as policemen, we were quite capable of doing any police work in the district without the co-operation of the military.

(2) When we joined the police force, we joined with characters second to none, and we refused to co-operate or work in any capacity with the British military, men of low moral character who frequented bad houses, kept the company of prostitutes and generally were unsuitable and undesirable characters.

The other two reasons were of minor importance and I cannot now recall what they were.

On receipt of the document conveying our reasons for non-co-operation, the County Inspector rushed out of the room and, throwing the document down on the table, exclaimed, "Do you wish me to submit this filthy document to my authorities?". We told him that we did

wish him to do so. "If you remove paragraph (2) dealing with the moral character of the military," he said, "I will submit your case but not otherwise". We informed the County Inspector that we would not remove paragraph (2), as our main reason for refusing to co-operate with the military was based on paragraph (2). He then left the barracks, taking the document with him, and he gave us no further information. Twelve noon had gone by and the military had not taken over as arranged, and we felt somehow that we had won the first round.

The remainder of the day passed without incident and, strange to say, everybody seemed elated. We had resigned from the force and still we were in the force and even sent out on police duty as usual. The 18th June was a long day for us; we got no news whatever from the authorities who evidently decided to let us cool down. Meantime the military made no move to take over the Barracks and so things drifted and we wondered what was going to happen next.

At ten o'clock on the night of 18th June a phone message came from the County Inspector to the District Inspector instructing him to have the men ready for parade with side arms (belt and sword) to meet Colonel Smyth at ten o'clock next morning, 19th June. No details were given.

Colonel Smyth had been appointed Divisional Commissioner for Munster on 3rd June, just two weeks

earlier. His appointment was direct from the British Cabinet and he was given complete charge of the military and police for the whole of Munster. Beyond the fact that he was appointed Commissioner, we knew nothing whatever about him, and neither did our District Inspector.

The morning of the 19th June was for us a time of tense anxiety and anticipation. We were lined up in the dayroom which looked on to a nice green lawn edged with flowers at the front of the Barracks. It was a beautiful day. Outside, people went about their business and knew as little as we did ourselves of impending events. From 10 to 10.30 a.m. the nervous tension and suppressed excitement was evident, especially so in the case of the District Inspector and acting County Inspector, Mr. Dobbyn. To say that I myself was anxious would be to put it very mildly. I was one of the junior members in the Barracks and one of the newest members to the county, having been but a few months in Kerry. I tried hard to memorise the plans we had made the previous night, and the more I considered them, the more futile they appeared. I was half regretting having taken on such a heavy responsibility. I had no experience as an orator and none whatever of leadership. For myself I did not worry in the least. The worst that could happen was that I might be dismissed, but, having tendered my resignation two days earlier, this did not worry me. What did annoy me was the fear that I might be incapable of doing justice to the men who had placed such confidence in me.

Constable Lillis, who had been appointed to represent the four men who were to remain in Listowel, had very conveniently absented himself from parade and I took over responsibility for all including the men who were to remain in the barracks. About 10.30 a.m. General Tudor, Inspector General, R.I.C., arrived from Dublin in a crossley tender and escorted by a large force of R.I.C. men, including at least three officers. They were all in full dress, wearing helmets and were armed with rifles and swords. Next to arrive was the County Inspector Power O'Shea, also escorted by armed policemen and also in full war dress. Captain Chadwick was next to arrive in a crossley tender and escorted by British military with rifles and swords. The last to arrive was Colonel Smyth who came from Cork in a crossley tender. He too was in full dress uniform and wearing at least a dozen war medals across his breast. He was escorted by British soldiers fully armed with rifles and swords. By this time, at least a dozen military and police officers, including Colonel Smyth and General Tudor, had assembled in the lawn in front of the window where we were on parade. The four crossley tenders were lined up on the road in front of the barracks, and the military and police escorts (at least fifty in number) were grouped outside the front gate and in front of our window. The officers in the lawn were smoking and chatting, and seemed to be enjoying each others' yarns. This display of force was no doubt intended to terrorise and overawe our little garrison within, and I will admit that I never felt less cheerful

in my life. Nevertheless, our men stood the test splendidly and, though there may have been nervous tension, there was no evidence whatever of fear.

After some time the officers, both military and police, numbering ten or twelve, came into the dayroom where we were assembled. They lined up in front of us with their backs to the fireplace and facing us. Up to this very moment, we had not the least idea as to what was going to happen. Colonel Smyth, who had only one arm, having lost the other arm in the 1914-1918 war, went straight to the point and proceeded to address us without making any reference whatever to our previous insubordination and refusal to co-operate with the military. Immediately he commenced to speak, I stepped out, saluted him, and told him that we understood that this conference was to be between the police and their authorities and that we objected to the presence of the military officers. Strange though it may seem, Colonel Smyth made no comment whatever on my action, while the military officers smiled at each other and quietly walked out of the room. Colonel Smyth then commenced his speech again and continued:-

"Well, men, I have something of interest to tell you, something that I am sure you would not wish your wives to hear. I am going to lay all my cards on the table, but I must reserve one card for myself. Now men, Sinn Féin has had all the sport up to this; we are going to have the sport now. The police have done splendid work,

considering the odds against them. They are not sufficiently strong to do anything but hold their barracks. This is not enough, for as long as we remain on the defensive so long will Sinn Féin have the whip hand. We must take the offensive and beat Sinn Féin with their own tactics. Martial Law, applying to all Ireland, is coming into operation shortly, and our scheme of amalgamation must be complete by 21st June. I am promised as many troops as I require from England; thousands are coming daily. I am getting 7,000 police from England.

Now men, what I wish to explain to you is that you are to strengthen your comrades in the out-stations. The military are to take possession of the large centres where they will have control of the railways and lines of communication, and be able to move rapidly from place to place. Unlike police who can act as individuals on their own initiative, military must act in large numbers under a good officer; he must be a good officer or I shall have him removed. If a police barracks is burned, or if the barracks already occupied is not suitable, then the best house in the locality is to be commandeered, the occupants thrown out in the gutter. Let him die there, the more the merrier. You must go out six nights a week at least and get out of the barracks by the back door or skylight so that you will not be seen.

Police patrols in uniform will go out the front door as a decoy. Police and military will patrol the country roads at least five nights a week. They are not to confine themselves to the main roads but take across country, lie in ambush, take cover behind fences, near the roads, and, when civilians are seen approaching, shout "hands up". Should the order be not immediately obeyed, shoot, and shoot with effect. If the persons approaching carry their hands in their pockets or are in any way suspicious looking, shoot them down. You may make mistakes occasionally and innocent persons may be shot, but this cannot be helped and you are bound to get the right persons sometimes. The more you shoot, the better I will like you, and I assure you that no policeman will get into trouble for shooting any man. In the past, policemen have got into trouble for giving evidence at coroners' inquests. As a matter of fact, inquests are to be made illegal so that in future no policeman will be asked to give evidence at inquests. Hunger strikers will be allowed to die in jail, the more the merrier. Some of them have died already, and a damn bad job they were not all allowed to die. As a matter of fact, some of them have been dealt with in a manner that their friends will never hear about. A ship will be leaving an Irish port in the near future with lots of Sinn Féiners on board; I assure you men, it

will never land.

That now is nearly all I have to say to you. We want your assistance in carrying out this scheme and wiping out Sinn Féin. Any man who is not prepared to do so is a hindrance rather than a help and he had better leave the job at once."

Colonel Smyth then, pointing to the first man in the ranks, said, "Are you prepared to co-operate?". The man, who happened to be an Englishman named Chuter, replied, "Constable Mee speaks for us". Smyth pointed to each man in turn, asking the same question and getting the same reply, until he reached myself. I was about the seventh man he addressed, and by the time he had reached me I was so horrified by his speech that all our plans of the previous night had completely evaporated and, in any case, would have been useless for a contingency such as now confronted us. In desperation, I stepped forward and said, "By your accent, I take it you are an Englishman. You forget you are addressing Irishmen". He checked me there and said he was a North of Ireland man from Banbridge in the County Down. I said, "I am an Irishman and very proud of it". Taking off my uniform cap, I laid it on the table in front of Colonel Smyth and said, "This too is English; you may have it as a present from me". Having done this, I completely lost my temper and, taking off my belt and sword, clapped them down on the table, saying, "These too are English and you may have them. To Hell with you, you are a murderer". At this, Colonel

Smyth quietly said to District Inspector Flanagan, "Place that man under arrest". District Inspector Flanagan and Head Constable Plover came forward and linked me out of the room down to the kitchen which was at the far end of the corridor, and remained there with me for a few minutes. In less than four or five minutes after going into the kitchen with the Head Constable and District Inspector, I heard a wild stampede down the corridor and in rushed the whole crowd of my comrades whom I had left in the day-room. They were highly excited and half dragged and half pushed me back into the dayroom. When we got to the dayroom, which I had left five minutes earlier, the room was empty. Divisional Inspector Smyth, General Tudor and the other police officers were in the District Inspector's office with the door closed. Colonel Smyth's uniform cap was still on the dayroom table. District Inspector Flanagan and Head Constable Plover went into the District Inspector's office and joined the other officers. In the dayroom the men were in a very angry mood and all was excitement, some going so far as suggesting that Smyth deserved to be shot.

In the midst of this turmoil, District Inspector Flanagan, whom we held in the highest esteem, came into the dayroom and said that General Tudor wished to speak to us as a friend. We refused to meet Tudor and advised the District Inspector to get Smyth and his party out of the Barracks or there would be bloodshed. Flanagan appealed and appealed to us to hear Tudor, and we eventually agreed to do so.

Although General Tudor came to Listowel in full uniform dress which included medals and a large white feather on his helmet, he now appeared dressed in a nice brown suit of tweeds. Although he tried to appear calm, it was quite evident that he was in a state of great excitement. He said, "Well, men, I would like to say just a few words to you as a friend. Just to show that I am a friend, I will shake hands with each one of you." He then started with the first man and went right along the line and shook hands with each one of us. His opening remarks were, "Although I am an Englishman and was born in Kent, my ancestors came from Ireland. I like Irishmen". He then explained that Dominion Home Rule applying to all Ireland was to come into operation in the near future, that the R.I.C. would get twelve years added to their service for the purpose of pensions, and that all would be well and that we especially would come out well under this new arrangement. At this stage one of our men, Constable Byrne, spoke up and said, "We have heard all this kind of promises in the past and we know that it ends up in nothing. If you are serious about those promises, why are you leaving our men out in police huts where they can be shot like rats?" Tudor asked him how many huts there were in the district and Byrne replied, "There are six huts in this district". Tudor then said, "Consider these huts broken up as from this date". Realising the danger of these promises, I stepped out and gave the men the word of command, "Dismiss!" They immediately broke ranks and left the dayroom and went towards the yard singing "A Nation Once Again" and "Wrap The Green Flag

Round Me, Boys"

When we returned to the dayroom again after a few minutes, Divisional Inspector Smyth, Tudor and their party had left and so also had the military. Colonel Smyth went away without his uniform cap which had to be sent after him later in the day.

It should be mentioned here that my action in calling Smyth a murderer surprised my own men as much as it surprised Colonel Smyth and myself. The whole thing happened so suddenly and unexpectedly that it took some little time for the men to recover from the shock and collect their wits. Immediately I had left the dayroom they rushed towards the dayroom door which was closed after I went out. The County Inspector, it would appear, put his back to the dayroom door and said, "What are you going to do, men?" He was roughly handled and the men rushed out the door and down to the kitchen, as already explained.

Until that great moment I never realised how much the loyalty of good comrades could mean in a crisis. The men, one and all, were splendid in the highest degree and not one seemed to have a single thought for the future. Not a single man said or even hinted that I had acted rashly or that I should have done this or done that on their behalf. Unconsciously, I had expressed through my action the innermost feelings of each man's heart. It was indeed a great moment in our lives. In the short space of forty-eight hours we had stood up against terrific odds and still held undisputed possession of the barracks.

The first two rounds had gone in our favour and Colonel Smyth was still on the "defensive" not alone against Sinn Féin but against the R.I.C. on whom he had placed so much confidence.

I shall always remember with pride and gratitude the part played by our District Inspector Thomas Flanagan during the Listowel crisis. Flanagan, a native of Elphin, Co. Roscommon, had risen from the ranks and was within a few years of his well earned pension. Yet, through thick and thin, he stood by his men and went down with them when, one month later, he was suspended and finally dismissed on a nominal pension.

After Colonel Smyth and his party left Listowel Barracks on the 19th June, I went in to Flanagan's office and informed him on behalf of the men that, while we appreciated the fact that he was with us in spirit, we did not wish nor expect him to ruin his own future by backing us openly. I shall never forget his reply. With tears in his eyes he stood up, thrust his hands into his trousers' pockets and looked out the window in front of which half a dozen of our men were chatting in the lawn. "Mee", said he, "when I look out there and see those fine lads who have shown such courage and bravery within the past few days, I feel that I am the happiest man in Ireland. It has been a great privilege and honour to me to have been placed in charge of such men, and I would be unfit to live as an Irishman were I to desert

them. That I shall never do, and God bless you all".

One of the six men whom the District Inspector was admiring was Thomas Hughes from Hollymount, Co. Mayo, that gentle and brilliant six-foot athlete who, for the past seven years, is a Catholic Bishop in Nigeria and whose diocese is six times the size of Ireland. What fools the British were if they expected men like Thomas Flanagan and Thomas Hughes to go out and kill their own people.

Immediately Colonel Smyth and party left Listowel Barracks, we rang up the police at Tralee, Killarney, Castleisland, Kenmare and Dingle, all of which were Headquarter stations. The police cheered us over the phone and promised to stand by us. Smyth tried to address the R.I.C. at Tralee but was met by opposition from the police. They then drove on to Killarney where they were met with shouts of "Up Listowel" from the police assembled there. Again Smyth tried to address the police but the police showed stern opposition, and so the party cancelled their tour and went to Dublin Castle evidently convinced that they were up against organised R.I.C. opposition.

In the meantime I went up to the bedroom, which was the only private room in the barracks, and I wrote out as near as I could, word for word, Colonel Smyth's speech. This was signed by myself, Thomas Hughes, John Donovan and Michael Fitzgerald. Our intention was to send the statement to Republican Headquarters in Dublin and have it

published so that we might give evidence while still serving in the police force. Although we had complete confidence in all the men, we considered it too risky to discuss the publication of the document with the whole lot lest it might inadvertently leak out before publication. If that happened, the document would never get publicity and the consequences for all of us would be serious.

When the document was signed, we contacted the local curate, Rev. Fr. Charles O'Sullivan, now P.P. Castletownbere. We gave him the whole story, including the written statement, and asked him to forward it to the proper quarter, and that once the document was published all the other signatures would be forthcoming. Father O'Sullivan forwarded the document to Republican Headquarters, and it was returned for the signatures of all the men. We explained to Fr. O'Sullivan, and he quite understood, the importance of having the document published without further delay and without any further signatures until after publication.

For the next two weeks we were left in a state of complete indecision. Apart from one visit from the County Inspector in which he called me into the District Inspector's office and told me that I took Colonel Smyth too seriously and that he looked on Smyth as a fool, we heard nothing further from the authorities. At the end of about two weeks, we received an official notification to the effect that the police serving in the province of

Munster were to get 14/- per week increase in pay. This had the opposite effect to what the authorities had expected. It might have pacified certain members in Munster but it almost created mutinies in other parts of Ireland where the police demanded their 14/- and had to get it. This was the first time in the history of the police force when one section of the police were given special treatment regarding pay, and it was not tried a second time.

In this state of uncertainty we remained until the 6th July when five of us, Thomas Hughes, John Donovan, Michael Fitzgerald, Patrick Sheeran and myself left the force without either resigning or being dismissed. Four of us travelled to Limerick by train and received a great reception from the railway men at Limerick who somehow had got the word that we were the Listowel mutineers and on our way home. We all took our revolvers, haversacks and ammunition with us and were held up on the outskirts of Limerick by the British military. The military officer in charge looked into our car, saw the haversacks and revolvers and directed us to proceed and saluted us. He evidently took it for granted that we were police in plain clothes, which we really were, as we had not resigned and were not dismissed at that time. We just left without any formality of resignation or dismissal. For this offence alone, I believe we left ourselves open to penalties, but details such as these did not occur to us in those stormy days.

On 10th July the Smyth speech was published fully in the "Freeman's Journal", a daily newspaper published in Dublin. On the following day John Donovan and myself went to Dublin where we made contacts with members of the Dáil Cabinet, Michael Collins, Erskine Childers, Madame Markievicz, Alex McCabe, T.D., as well as Thomas Johnson and William O'Brien of the Labour Party and Martin Fitzgerald of the "Freeman's Journal" in the offices of the Irish Labour Party. The object of the meeting was to get from us the full facts of the Listowel episode. It should be mentioned that the publication of the Smyth speech was one of the reasons for the breaking up of the "Freeman's Journal" by the British forces and the subsequent arrest of the owner and editor, Messrs. Fitzgerald and Hooper.

During this interview it was plain to us that Michael Collins did not think that the British Government was dastardly enough to conceive a scheme of the kind outlined by Colonel Smyth to the police at Listowel. Childers, on the other hand, seemed to have no doubt whatever that the British Government were capable of conceiving and carrying out the scheme; and for that reason justified his having published the case in the "Irish Bulletin" from which paper the "Freeman's Journal" had published it.

Thomas Johnson and William O'Brien of the Labour Party went to London to attend an international Labour conference. They raised the question of Smyth's speech and handed copies of the "Freeman's Journal" containing Smyth's speech to each delegate attending the conference.

This caused an uproar at the conference and the Irish delegates got the full backing of British Labour in demanding an investigation into Colonel Smyth's speech. A Labour delegation later visited Ireland and reported fully on the Black and Tan atrocities.

On Wednesday, 14th July, T.P. O'Connor raised the question in the British House of Commons. He asked and was refused leave to move the adjournment of the house to discuss the incident and the remarks attributed to Divisional Commissioner Smyth as calculated to produce serious bloodshed in Ireland. Sir Hamar Greenwood's reply on that date is very interesting. He said that Divisional Commissioner Smyth had informed him that "the instructions given to the police in Listowel were those mentioned in a debate in this House on the 22nd May last by the Attorney General for Ireland, and he did not exceed these instructions". For once, Hamar Greenwood spoke the truth for, as I shall prove later, Smyth was the spokesman of the British Cabinet and the instructions given to us were the exact instructions sanctioned by the British Cabinet on 22nd May, 1920.

Colonel Smyth's address to the police at Listowel got the widest publicity, both in Great Britain and America, and caused quite a sensation as it was taken that Smyth was acting as spokesman of the British Government; and there was a general outcry and demand for a full investigation. Lloyd George, the British Prime Minister, finding himself in a tight corner, gave a promise of a full investigation

but said that, before doing so, he would call Smyth to London to get the full details from Colonel Smyth personally.

It might not be out of place here to review shortly the events of the previous weeks. It must have been obvious, even to a casual observer, that the police mutiny was handled rather badly by the police and military authorities. The reason for this was that only two weeks previously all power and control were taken out of the hands of the civil authorities in Munster and handed over to Colonel Smyth, a man who may have been a good military officer but knew nothing whatever about the handling of a highly disciplined police force such as the R.I.C. It is certain that the higher police authorities resented the passing of this control into the hands of the military and that they were pleased rather than otherwise to see Colonel Smyth in trouble. Smyth, on the other hand, found himself in the unenviable position of being neither a policeman nor a soldier when faced with a sudden crisis such as the police mutiny. A mutiny of troops in the field could be dealt with by the firing squad such as happened to the Indian mutineers a week later. Policemen had taken a oath to protect life and property. Now they were asked to shoot down their own people and destroy the property they were sworn to defend. When Colonel Smyth was giving instructions to the R.I.C. to go out and kill, he forgot that he was addressing police officers and not ordinary soldiers; and when his orders were challenged he was up against something new in his experience and he

was unable to meet the situation. As I shall prove later, the orders given to the Listowel police were the same orders given by the Prime Minister himself to Colonel Smyth before he left London two weeks earlier.

With things in this mess, Colonel Smyth was called to London to see the Prime Minister, Lloyd George. Smyth did not, or could not deny having incited the police to commit open murder, since those were his instructions from the Prime Minister himself. The fact that Colonel Smyth had lost an arm in the war and had at least a dozen medals for bravery in the field counted for little now that the British Cabinet had to be saved. After two days in London, Lloyd George sent him back to Cork ostensibly to regulate police duty for the assizes but with full knowledge of the fact that this brave officer was going to his doom. Once Colonel Smyth's instruction to "shoot at sight" was published, it must have been clear even to Lloyd George that Smyth was a marked man. Yet when he was shot dead in the Cork County Club a few days later, he had no bodyguard and not even a private soldier or policeman in the vicinity of the Club. This was a sad end to a great soldier betrayed by the treachery of the politician, Lloyd George. When Smyth's wife heard the sad news of her husband's death, she said, "My husband was a great soldier. It is a pity that he died in such a rotten cause". No doubt her natural womanly instinct told her of the great betrayal. It may be mentioned in this connection that, after the death of Smyth, his

brother, Captain Smyth, who had an appointment in the War Office, volunteered for service in Ireland to avenge his brother's death. He was shot dead while raiding Professor Carolan's house in Drumcondra on the occasion when Dan Breen and Sean Treacy escaped.

When Colonel Smyth was dead, Lloyd George was then able to say, "I can't now have an inquiry into the Listowel affair as our principal witness has been murdered". In this way he shuffled shamelessly out of the inquiry which he never had the least intention of holding.

General Tudor, with other high ranking officers, was present when Colonel Smyth delivered his infamous ultimatum to the R.I.C. at Listowel. Why was General Tudor not summoned to London to give evidence of Smyth's speech? The reason is that the British Cabinet were already committed to a policy of outrage and murder in Ireland. Investigation or inquiry was the last thing that the British Cabinet then desired. Colonel Smyth had been indiscreet enough to put their secret policy for bloodshed to the R.I.C. at Listowel and for this he had to pay the extreme penalty. His death gave Lloyd George the breathing time he so much needed while he was being forced for an explanation and inquiry by an outraged public opinion even in Britain. It was only a chance that Listowel had been the scene of this explosion. Similar instructions had been issued to the officers of all other counties about. The police co-operated with the military, but Listowel was the only barracks which had refused to co-operate. Hence Smyth's visit and the display of force

that accompanied it.

Immediately after Smyth was shot in Cork, I wrote to the daily press expressing regret at the death of Colonel Smyth and accusing the British Government of connivance thereat. My letter was never published. Again, in January, 1922, when the British authorities were still in Ireland, I made the accusation in a speech in the Mansion House, Dublin. My speech got front page headlines in the daily and evening papers. Next day, the 23rd January, 1922, an unsigned statement on behalf of the British authorities in Ireland appeared in the daily papers refuting certain statements I had made regarding the death of Colonel Smyth.

The following is an extract from a letter of mine which appeared in the daily press of the 24th January, 1922:-

> "On behalf of the fourteen R.I.C. men who signed the statement in connection with Colonel Smyth's speech at Listowel, I asked, through the press, for a sworn inquiry. My letter was not published, for obvious reasons. In the cause of truth and justice and on behalf of those R.I.C. men for whom I acted as spokesman, I again demand a public sworn inquiry into the Listowel "incident" and all its details. I regret the death of Colonel Smyth as much as the British authorities do, because he helped to expose the hidden policy of the British Government in Ireland."

To this also there was no reply.

I would now refer to the findings of the Irish-American Commission of Inquiry into Conditions in Ireland published towards the end of 1920. This Commission was set up in Washington and its members comprised, among others, distinguished senators, state governors, the higher clergy of the Protestant, Catholic and Jewish churches, leading educators, journalists, editors, mayors and other public and distinguished citizens of the United States. This surely was an impartial tribunal, and their findings are a terrible indictment of the British Government. This volume of evidence runs into over a thousand pages. So important did this Commission consider Colonel Smyth's address to the R.I.C. in Listowel that the last four pages of this volume are devoted to a summary of evidence to prove that, when Colonel Smyth addressed the R.I.C. at Listowel, he was speaking not as an officer but as a spokesman of the British Cabinet. The following extracts from the Chairman's (Frank P. Walsh) summary of evidence are of great interest:-

> "The conclusive failure of the British policy of coercion during 1919 came in the municipal elections held in January, 1920, in which the Republican policy was endorsed by even a greater majority than it had received in the general election in 1918. Inroads were made on the strongholds of the Unionist Ulster, and conclusive proof was given to the world that coercion by arrests, suppression and wholesale raids was increasing the determination of the Irish people to secure their independence. The English Cabinet

was thus brought to a realisation that the ordinary methods of arrest, imprisonment, which had been the ruling policy in 1919 would not break the spirit of the Irish people. During the last days of March, 1920, therefore, the adoption of a policy of organised military terrorism was decided upon by the English Cabinet. At this Cabinet meeting, Sir Neville Macready was appointed Commander-in-Chief of the English Army of Occupation in Ireland."

"On the 3rd April, 1920, the "Daily Mail" said:-

> "Sir Neville Macready, who is leaving for Ireland shortly to take up his new post as Commander, has been given a free hand by the Cabinet"."

"On the 10th April, 1920, the press announced the retirement of those among the high officials of the Royal Irish Constabulary who were known to be opposed to a policy of frightfulness. The officials who were asked to retire were Mr. W.M. Davis, Deputy Inspector-General of the R.I.C., and Messrs. H.D. Tyacke and R.S.C. Flower, Assistant Inspectors General of the R.I.C. The press on the same day stated that these officials were to be replaced by Mr. C.A. Walsh, Mr. A.A. Roberts and Mr. E.M. Clayton, officers who had proved their thoroughness in aggression. Some short time previously, Inspector-General Sir J.A. Byrne was removed from office and his place was taken by T.J. Smith, a notorious advocate of oppressive measures."

"On May 13th, 1920, Lord Birkinhead at a dinner given in a London club, in referring to Sir Neville Macready's appointment said:-

> "I cannot speak here tonight of what the Executive have done or to tell you of the conclusions they have reached, but I can tell you this that, as a Government, we have decided to reinforce these men (the R.I.C.) by every means in our power. We have taken special and wholly exceptional steps"."

"On June 19th, Colonel Smyth addressed the policemen at Listowel Barracks and outlined the new policy of the English Government and instructed them as follows:-

1. "I am getting seven thousand police from England".
2. "If a barracks is burned, the best house in the locality is to be commandeered".
3. "The police are to lie in ambush and shoot suspects".
4. "No policeman will get into trouble for shooting any man".
5. "Hunger strikers will be allowed to die in jail".
6. "We want your assistance in wiping out Sinn Féin".

It was denied by Sir Hamar Greenwood, English Chief Secretary for Ireland, on July 22nd in the English House of Commons that any such statements had been made but on the following day, July 23rd, General T.J. Smith issued an order to the R.I.C.

announcing that the Government "has directed" that no prisoners were to be released until they had served their sentences, in other words, "hunger strikers will be allowed to die"."

"On August 3rd the English Chief Secretary for Ireland introduced in the House of Commons the Restoration of Order (Ireland) Bill, one of the clauses of which made coroners' inquests illegal. The Chief Secretary admitted, in the introduction of the Bill, that it had been drafted in the previous June, in other words, it was known in that month to the English officials in Ireland that it was the English Government's intention to suppress coroners' inquests. All the other points of Divisional Commissioner Smyth's review of the "special and wholly exceptional steps" the English Government had on May 11th decided to take in regard to Ireland have been borne out by events subsequent to the Commissioner's speech. Thousands of English recruits are being brought to Ireland as policemen. Whenever a police barracks is burned, the houses of prominent Republicans are commandeered or burned by the police. More than 150 innocent civilians have been murdered since the Commissioner's speech was delivered. That the Commissioner's address to the police in Listowel was an outline of the official policy in Ireland is no longer a doubt."

"The New Policy in Operation.

Meanwhile, Sir Neville Macready's suggestions to the English Cabinet, all of which were approved by that Cabinet, were put into operation. During the five months following the English Cabinet meeting held in London on May 11th, 1920, 133 Irish towns and villages were sacked, shot up or partially burned. Sir Neville Macready, having the full knowledge of the Cabinet, has not shirked taking responsibility for this policy of terrorism which, in the words of Divisional-Commissioner Smyth, has for its object the "wiping out of Sinn Féin"."

"The "New Statesman", a London weekly newspaper, said in its editorial on November 30th, 1920 -

> 'Whatever doubts we may have about the facts of individual outrages, Mr. Lloyd George and Sir Hamer Greenwood can no longer deny that men who, in the last resort, act under their orders commit numerous and atrocious crimes. They know that murder, theft and arson are becoming commonplace in whatever part of Ireland the Black and Tans enter. They know that women and children have to hurry out of their beds at midnight to escape from houses deliberately set on fire by the agents of law and order. They know that men, including a priest and a policeman who resigned rather than take part in a shooting-up orgy, have been dragged from

> their beds, stripped naked and flogged. They know that army discipline itself is giving way before officially licensed brutality and violence. They know that British newspaper correspondents have been threatened with murder for speaking the truth. They know that between thirty and forty creameries have been burned down by Black and Tans, soldiers and police. They know that such a state of government terrorism exists in Ireland as would seem horrible even under Turkish auspices in the Balkans.' "

"The history of the last three months of 1920 is one well known to the Commission through the testimony of eye-witnesses and expert Irish and English investigators. It is needless, therefore, to reiterate what is already contained in the Commission's records - the burning and sacking of farms, creameries, private houses, towns and even great cities like Cork; the complete destruction of the economic and industrial life of the nation; the raids upon cathedrals, convents and institutions of learning; the murder of two priests under circumstances of the utmost brutality; and finally the murder of a woman (Mrs. Ellen Quinn) with a child in her arms and another about to be born, justified by Sir Hamar Greenwood as a precautionary measure. All these are matters which, directly or indirectly, have been brought to the attention of your honourable Commission. They are the circumstantial evidence

which proves that Divisional-Inspector Smyth outlined to the policemen of Listowel the official policy of the British Government in Ireland."

This scathing indictment of the British Government proved beyond all doubt that the report of Smyth's speech, as submitted by us, was accurately interpreted and given in full detail to the press. All the points outlined in Smyth's speech, with the exception of two, were immediately put into operation and exceeded in violence and brutality even Lloyd George's most bloody expectations. It should be noted here that two points mentioned by Colonel Smyth were not carried out. The first was the evacuation of the headquarters barracks by the R.I.C., which was the object of Colonel Smyth's visit to the police barracks. The other point was the most important of all, the intended sending of a ship with Republican leaders on board, and that this ship would never land. When Colonel Smyth mentioned the sinking of that ship, I had no doubt than that it was the British Government's intention to round up the prominent Republican leaders, put them on board ship on the pretence of sending them to a concentration camp and then arrange for an accident at sea. After a lapse of thirty years, my opinion has not changed one iota in this regard. In face of the publication of Smyth's speech at the time saying that the "shipload of Sinn Féiners would never land", the British Cabinet and Sir Neville Macready had to change their mind on this intended outrage which would have pulled down the British

Cabinet and shaken the empire.

Looked at from the purely military point of view, the Listowel mutiny was of great importance because -

(1) it disclosed to the Republican Army the secret plans of the enemy and put them in the position of being able to make their plans to meet and counter the enemy's tactics;

(2) it caused the enemy to alter their original plan of putting the military into large centres and reinforcing the police in the remote areas;

(3) instead of sending reinforcements to the outlying stations, as was originally intended, the British vacated these outposts and concentrated all their forces in the large towns; this left the Republican forces large isolated centres in which to manoeuvre and leisurely plan the hit-and-run tactics which proved so successful against superior forces;

(4) the police mutiny created doubts in the minds of the British authorities as to the absolute loyalty of the R.I.C., whom, in the past, they could always rely on for secret information;

(5) resignations from the police force became accelerated immediately after Smyth's

speech was published, and resignations reached peak point during July, August and September, 1920;

(7) the wide publicity given to Smyth's speech, both in England and U.S.A. kept the critical eye of public opinion focussed on the British Government, so that such excuses as "shot while attempting to escape" carried little weight at home and abroad.

Immediately after Colonel Smyth's death, we heard of the resignation of Captain Chadwick, the officer who had been instructed to take over Listowel Barracks on the 17th June, 1920, and had not done so. Although no reasons were given for his resignation at the time, I am satisfied that Captain Chadwick, who was a very good type of British military officer, did not resign through cowardice but was probably removed from office under the same circumstances in which they removed police officers who were not prepared to do the dirty work required of them.

Towards the end of July, 1920, things began to reach a crisis in Ireland. On July 24th the daily papers carried big headlines announcing the shooting of Colonel Smyth in the County Club, Cork. On the same date it was announced by the British authorities in Ireland that, in future, hunger strikers would not be released until they had served their full term of imprisonment. A few days later it was announced that the holding of coroners' inquests on Sinn Féin victims would be made illegal. The raiding and looting of houses and the sacking of towns were

becoming an everyday occurrence. Colonel Smyth was dead but the policy which he had outlined in Listowel was now in full swing. The Republican army was now up against a ruthless foe whose war cry was 'murder', with no regard for the rules of warfare.

In so far as I personally was concerned, I fully realised that the British authorities would hold me morally responsible for the death of Colonel Smyth. I also knew that R.I.C. men had been drafted into Dublin from the various districts throughout the country, for the express purpose of 'spotting' men on the run. They were specially selected men and got a special course of training for this kind of work. The reason why they were selected from the country towns was because of their local knowledge of the particular district and, in Dublin, they would be able to pick out the I.R.A. men coming into or leaving Dublin. I also knew that at any time I might run into one of these special policemen. I also knew that the R.I.C. looked upon me as a traitor from their ranks and I expected no mercy from them if caught.

Early in August I was informed by Alex McCabe that the Countess Markievicz wished to see me. I was introduced to her at her offices, 14 Frederick Street, which was her headquarters as Minister for Labour. She received me in the most friendly manner and explained to me that she had set up a special bureau for the purpose of finding employment for resigned and dismissed R.I.C. and that she was placing me in charge of the bureau. She

explained the objects of the bureau which were to encourage resignations from the police force. She thought that, if we were able to fix these men into suitable employment, it would stimulate resignations and spread disaffection among the forces, that I, being an ex member of the forces, would understand their requirements and, in addition, I might be able to make contacts inside the police force.

I was given a room to myself and, for the next month or so, I must have met most of the prominent I.R.A. men in Dublin as well as men on the run from the country who called in to see the Countess. She used to take great delight in introducing her visitors to me. She would walk into the room with her visitor and casually say, "This is Mr. So-and-So who is wanted by the police". "This is an R.I.C. man from Kerry. Have you ever met him before?" She would then go into a fit of laughter at the shock the visitor would get. On one occasion the late Joe McDonagh called at her office, dressed as a clergyman. He was a rather nervous type of man. On this occasion she seemed to enjoy the position immensely. Pointing to Joe McDonagh, she said, "This is Joe McDonagh, one of the most wanted men in Dublin". "Mr. McDonagh, this is an R.I.C. man, my private secretary." She told me afterwards that Joe McDonagh never forgave her for the shock he received.

It was three years later, at a meeting in Sligo, that the Countess told me of how I came to be employed in

her office. She said that, after our first meeting at the Labour Party's offices, Collins and herself had an argument on the question as to whether I could be trusted. She said that Collins looked upon me as a dangerous man while she held that I was alright and that she trusted me. To prove her point, she decided to take me into her own office and that, if I proved to be a 'wrong one', she herself would do the shooting.

As the programme outlined by Colonel Smyth was being put into operation and exceeded in violence the Smyth programme, it was soon apparent that we had given in advance the true facts to the Republican Government. This gave the Countess great satisfaction, as she was able to tell Collins what a bad judge of character he was.

All this time I was quite unconscious of the fact that I was very much on probation during the first weeks in my new office. Looking back on the position now, I am inclined to think that the Countess had a second motive in introducing me to the prominent I.R.A. men who called to see her. I hope I am wrong in believing that she was doing a check-up on the new recruit. This I do know, that in less than one month I was accepted as O.K. by the Countess and that Michael Collins was generous enough to admit that his first impressions of me were wrong. As proof of this, he sent me on important missions both at home and in Britain and, almost weekly, consulted me on questions relating to the police force especially.

In the meantime, the Countess succeeded in placing my friend, O'Donovan, in employment as Manager of the Court Laundry, Harcourt Street.

During my first few weeks in my new employment, I got many surprises, especially in connection with the Republican army.

I found that the Republican army was made up of selected men who went about their ordinary work during the day and did their soldiering during the night.

I found it quite a common thing to be introduced to a very ordinary looking individual whom I treated quite casually and to learn later that I had been speaking to an O.C. or perhaps a Brigade General; that the I.R.A. man, in addition to being a proved patriot, was of necessity a shrewd secret service man. His very life and the life of his comrades depended on his tact in keeping his mind to himself and treating all strangers with suspicion.

I was surprised to find that one could travel the city of Dublin without ever meeting an I.R.A. man, as far as outward appearances were concerned. In shops, in publichouses and in the streets, politics were not discussed as nobody knew who was who, except those actually in the movement.

An English military officer, after spending six months in Ireland, when asked what he thought of the I.R.A., replied that he had not met any I.R.A. men. I think it

was General Crozier who said that the I.R.A. were everywhere and nowhere at the same time. The success of the I.R.A. was due to the fact that they believed in quality rather than quantity.

The novelty of working at Republican headquarters and especially with Madame Markievicz appealed to me very much. She was a grand person to work with and was one of the few who understood that the question of the R.I.C. was an economic rather than a political one. It was because of this that the Bureau was set up to try and place resigned men in employment and, at the same time, to encourage others to come out. The following circular was sent out in September, 1920, and will explain the objects of the Bureau:-

"A Chara,

At the present moment a large number of R.I.C. have left the Force owing to their repugnance to the outrages that are taking place and in which they are required to take part. Some of these men have narrowly escaped with their lives. In one case, of which I have the details, a man was dismissed for refusing to participate in sacking a town, and was fired at on leaving the barracks.

These men, whether they were dismissed for refusing to carry out instructions or whether they resigned as a protest, are now without any means of support.

I am addressing this to you as I believe you to be one who would object on principle to the outrages on the people that are taking place, and that you would view with horror the burning of creameries and homesteads, and burning and looting

towns, and the daily terrors the people have to suffer from the callous shootings from which so many have lost their lives.

In expectation of your being willing to come to the aid of men victimised because they would not allow themselves to be used for such work, I write to ask you to co-operate with me in finding work for these men, and I would ask you, if there are any vacant jobs under your patronage for which they would be suitable, to communicate with me.

The majority of these men seek employment as clerks, agricultural works, stewards, watchmen, agents, motor drivers, caretakers, etc.

Mise do Chara,

CONSTANCE DE MARKIEVICZ.

Please reply to the Secretary, General Employment Agency, 61, Highfield Road, Rathgar, Dublin."

The response to the circular was most encouraging. We were able to place a number of resigned men in suitable employment and resignations from the police force became more rapid as a result. In addition to the circulars, we put advertisements in the daily papers asking employers to give preferential treatment to men who had left the force.

This brought us right up against the British authorities who interpreted our activities as "Spreading disaffection among His Majesty's Forces", an offence punishable under the Defence of the Realm Act.

About September or October the British authorities started a paper known as "Sir Hamar Greenwood's Weekly

Summary". Madame and myself came in for special attention practically every week. From memory, I quote one or two items that appeared in the "Weekly Summary" -

> "Two R.I.C. men resigned recently and thought they would be received with open arms by the I.R.A. When these two men attended a dance in their home town, the music stopped and most of the dancers left as a protest against the presence of the two ex policemen. Next day, in disgust at this reception, they called at the local police barracks for the purpose of rejoining the force but, needless to say, they could not be accepted. They have since left the country. What does ex Constable Mee think of this?".

Although our head office was 14, Frederick Street, we never got any correspondence addressed there. Our official address was 61, Highfield Road, Rathgar; this was the address of a Miss O'Byrne, an active officer in Cumann na mBan. This address came in for special attention by the crown forces. On one occasion two men called on Miss O'Byrne's mother and asked for me. They were very friendly and gave their names as O'Donovan and Sheeran, two men who left the force with me. They informed Mrs. O'Byrne that they had urgent news for me and wanted to see me immediately. Later that evening Mrs. O'Byrne saw two men jumping over a wall from her back yard. When Miss O'Byrne reported this incident the following morning, I contacted O'Donovan at Harcourt Street Laundry and found that he knew nothing whatever about the incident.

In addition to my work in the Bureau, I was able to make many useful contacts with serving members of the R.I.C., both directly and indirectly. Resigned men who were in direct correspondence with me and who came up for interviews from time to time were often able to give advance information of other men who were thinking of resigning. In such cases, I was often able to arrange an interview in Dublin with R.I.C. men who were still serving. This was highly dangerous work but I am glad to be able to record the fact that I did not meet a single wrong one.

As soon as I had made suitable contacts with men from the country who were anticipating resigning, I would supply the names to Michael Collins. Next time the I.R.A. officer from that man's district would call at Republican headquarters, Collins would introduce me to the I.R.A. officer to whom I would give a note of introduction to the R.I.C. man concerned. In this way, direct contact was made between the local I.R.A. officer and the friendly R.I.C. man and dangerous correspondence was avoided. In this way also, Republican headquarters were able to get particulars of the latest instructions issued to the R.I.C.

In October, 1920, I got word from Listowel that the District Inspector and three men, Kelly, McNamara and Synnott, were suspended for over a month awaiting dismissal. I saw Michael Collins and volunteered to go down to Listowel and to try and get a number of the Kerry force out in sympathy with District Inspector Flanagan and the three men. Collins, who knew the position fully, advised me not to go. He told me that the greatest scoundrels in the force had been sent to Listowel since we left and that, apart from the

danger to my own life, I could do no good. I persisted and he eventually agreed that I might try. I shall never forget that journey. For some reason which I cannot recall, I could not get a connection from Limerick Junction to Listowel. I, therefore, joined with three cattle dealers and we went by car from Limerick Junction to Newcastle West. We were held up and questioned over a dozen times before we got to Newcastle West. At Rathkeale I was taken out of the car and brought into the police barracks where I was subjected to the most gruelling examination. As the result of the delays, we were barely in time to catch the train at Newcastle West. It was eight o'clock at night when I got into Listowel station where six R.I.C. men were on duty and carrying revolvers. When the train pulled up, the carriage in which I was travelling stopped just in front of the Stationmaster's office. I walked straight into the office and then into an inner room off the office where I waited until all was clear and the Stationmaster, Mr. McElligott, came along to close up the place. When he saw me in the room, he was very angry and shouted at the top of his voice to know what I was doing there. I made urgent signs to him to keep quiet, and he seemed to grasp the position immediately. He locked the door and left me in the room and went out on the platform and returned when the coast was clear. When he found out who I was, he did everything possible to help me and escorted me across some fields towards the parochial house where I thought I would meet Fr. O'Sullivan, my friend of a few months ago. Unfortunately, I did not meet Fr. O'Sullivan so I went down town and called on the late Paddy Breen, Church Street. On

my way to Church Street I walked right into the police patrol whom I had gone to so much trouble to avoid. They walked past and took no notice of me. When I went into Paddy Breen's, the bar room was packed with military and Black and Tans drinking and enjoying themselves. Without looking to the right or left, I went upstairs to the sittingroom. Miss Breen came up to the sittingroom and, when I explained who I was, she gave me a very friendly welcome and went down to the shop and sent her father up to the sittingroom. I shall never forget the friendship of the Breen family who treated me as if I were a king. By the time I arrived in Listowel, I was hungry and exhausted, not having touched food since eight o'clock that morning. Food and refreshment supplied by the Breen's soon put me right, and shortly after my arrival T.J. McElligott (now of Leixlip, Co. Kildare) and Mr. Crowley, V.S., Listowel, came up to greet me and, while the Black and Tans were enjoying themselves downstairs, we were enjoying ourselves upstairs. Kelly and McNamara, two of the suspended R.I.C. men, joined us later. I sent for Mr. Flanagan, the District Inspector, but he thought it too dangerous for him to come and he sent word to me to clear out or I would be shot like a dog if found by the Black and Tans. I found from Kelly and MacNamara that nothing could be done in the district and that the morale of the R.I.C. had deteriorated generally throughout the county. I stayed in Breen's until the next evening and then went on to Tralee and found that the position there was worse even than in Listowel, so I returned to Dublin next evening without having accomplished anything and I felt very disappointed indeed. The following day I reported to Collins who held that I had accomplished much in being able to evade the police and get

back safely. He, of course, was well accustomed to disappointments himself and never complained of the failure of others through no fault of their own.

Flanagan, Kelly, Synnott and McNamara were dismissed shortly afterwards. Kelly and McNamara went to America, on the instructions of Collins and Griffith and at the expense of Dáil Éireann, to give evidence before the Irish-American Commission of Inquiry. The published report of that Commission gives their evidence in full.

In September, 1920, Madame Markievicz was arrested and lodged in Mountjoy jail. This was a great blow to our little Department but we managed to carry on, first under Mr. Joe McGrath and, when he also was arrested, under Mr. Joe McDonagh. The destruction of the economic life of the country brought unemployment to peak point and it became increasingly more difficult to place the resigned men in employment; and the "Weekly Summary" made full use of this to discourage resignations from the police force.

In the end of November, 1920, the first National Convention of the Self-Determination League was held in Manchester and was attended by over fourteen hundred delegates from England, Scotland and Wales. Two days prior to the Convention, Collins sent me to London with a letter of introduction to Seán McGrath, General Secretary, Self-Determination League. Seán McGrath took me to a meeting of the Executive in London and I explained the importance of procuring employment for the resigned R.I.C., pointing out that:-

(1) Without the assistance of the R.I.C., with their local knowledge, the military would be powerless against the I.R.A.;

(2) Unless we were able to place at least a percentage of the resigned men in employment, resignations from the police force would slow down;

(3) The destruction of property, including the destruction of factories and workshops, had made it impossible to fix even a small percentage of the resigned men in employment and we looked to the Self-Determination League, as representing the industrial life of Britain, to help us to solve this question.

Seán McGrath and Art O'Brien, to whom I put these facts, appreciated fully the importance of our request and promised full co-operation. They suggested that I accompany them to the Conference in Manchester, which I did. Seán McGrath put my claim before the Conference very well indeed and introduced myself personally, mentioning the prominent part I had played in Listowel. The reference to myself took me completely by surprise and gave me a frightful shock as there were at least a dozen policemen in uniform on duty in the hall. During the two days which the meeting lasted, I was able to contact the delegates from the various industrial centres, all of whom were more than anxious to help, and a tour was arranged for me. Within the next few weeks, I visited Liverpool, Cardiff, Middlesborough, Newcastle-on-

Tyne, Manchester and Swansea, and succeeded in placing quite a few of the resigned men and got a guarantee that, through the Self-Determination League, all the resigned men could be absorbed into employment in England.

Towards Christmas, 1920, the Self-Determination League came in for special attention by the British Government, and most of the leaders were rounded up and put into jail. This was a great setback to us and we soon reached a point when we could not guarantee employment for anybody.

January, 1921, saw the war of extermination at peak point. Raids, lootings, shootings and cold-blooded murder were an everyday occurrence. I attended at the office every day but had little or nothing to do. Early in February I was very much relieved when I was informed that I was to go to the country as an organiser of the Belfast Boycott. My district was Louth, Meath, Armagh and Down. Between then and the truce, however, I had covered the counties Fermanagh, Tyrone, Derry, Donegal, Sligo and Leitrim as well.

As I had already made many contacts with R.I.C. men while in the office in Dublin, I was now given an opportunity to continue this work in the country. I found, however, that this was not nearly so easy as I had anticipated. In the first place, the police and people in the towns and country districts were not on friendly terms with each other and, as the R.I.C. generally moved about in groups of five or six, it was not an easy matter to contact a friendly

individual. I did, however, succeed in making contacts in many cases and often in the most unexpected way. The very first day that I arrived in Derry city, I met a policeman on duty in the platform who had been, at one time, stationed with me. I was so surprised and taken unawares that I was about to speak to him when he suddenly turned his back on me and walked away. He did not pretend to recognise me but that night he called at the hotel where I was staying. He came in plain clothes and we had a very long chat; and we met many times afterwards and I found him most useful. During my first visit to Derry, I called at Joe O'Doherty's house. The O'Doherty family were all in the movement, including two sisters, and they had been burned out twice. Whenever anything unusual occurred in Derry, the O'Dohertys' house was raided. Ever after my first visit to the O'Doherty home, they were privately warned of intended raids. Although I visited the O'Doherty family on many occasions and was always well received, they just knew me as William Walsh from Headquarters and I never disclosed to them my identity nor did I ever disclose the author of the private notes which warned them of the raids.

The carrying out of the Belfast Boycott, especially in the Northern counties, was interesting but highly dangerous. Apart from the military and ordinary police, one had to contend with the Special Constabulary who were a kind of secret service police force. By an extraordinary stroke of good luck, however, I was able to travel through Northern Ireland in comparative safety.

I went north as William Walsh, commercial traveller,

and carried samples of Dripsey tweeds for the then Irish Co-Op., Middle Abbey Street. Four days after leaving Dublin I was on my way from Newry to a little place called Hilltown. Two miles from Newry I was overtaken by a Crossley tender carrying ten Constables, one Head Constable and two Sergeants of the R.I.C. They were armed with rifles. They all got off the tender and made a circle around me while they put me through a very severe cross-examination. I was taken back to Newry Barracks where I went through more questioning and, after a few hours, allowed to go to the White Horse Hotel under "open arrest". I was cautioned not to leave the hotel without permission. That night a Constable named McFadden called at the hotel and asked if I could sell him a costume length for his wife. I told him that we only dealt with wholesalers but, in the circumstances, I might consider letting him have a costume length at wholesale price. He took the samples away and returned later and selected a very nice piece of costume material which I quoted well under wholesale price. This seemed to please him very much and we became quite friendly over some refreshments. Next day I was allowed to go on my way and from then until the truce, whenever I was held up by the R.I.C., I referred them to Constable McFadden, The Island, Newry, and produced my order book to show that he was a customer of mine. Whether or not Constable McFadden was every asked to verify William Walsh, I cannot say. The one and only drawback to Constable McFadden's permit was the fact that I had to stick to the name, "William Walsh" or forfeit this useful permit. I

remained William Walsh and found it awkward getting back to my own name after the truce.

In the early spring of 1921, while I was going about openly as an Organiser of the Belfast Boycott and helping to "spread sedition among His Majesty's Forces", my father's home was burned by the military and police. At two o'clock one morning lorry loads of military and police called at my father's house and, without knocking, burst open the door and dragged my father and mother and my two sisters, seventeen and nineteen years of age respectively, out of their beds. They were put up against the wall outside the house in their night attire while the house, out-offices, hay, oats and stock were put to the flames. My father was threatened with instant death unless he disclosed my address. This, of course, was an outrageous demand since he could not give my address at that particular period. Only three weeks prior to this dastardly outrage, my mother had undergone a severe operation and was in very delicate health. Nevertheless, through the grace of God and kind neighbours, my parents did not suffer any ill effects and lived happy for many years afterwards.

When my father's home was put to the flames, he had committed the horrible crime of refusing to hand over his son to the murder gang. Colonel Smyth's instructions to the police in Listowel were, "Throw them out on the gutter and let them die there". Now the instructions had come home to me in real earnest. As the British troops on that chilly morning turned away from the ruins and saw the half-naked old couple and their two young daughters weeping over the ashes

of their home, they must have experienced a thrill of pride in the power of the great British Empire.

I evaded arrest and was still on active service when the truce came in July, 1921.

By an extraordinary coincidence, I received a letter from Maurice O'Sullivan, Ennismore, Listowel, Co. Kerry, enclosing a number of documents sent to him by John McNamara, one of the two dismissed R.I.C. men of Listowel who gave evidence before the American Commission of Inquiry. I don't know Mr. O'Sullivan but, as his letter shows, he discovered that I am Chairman of the Resigned R.I.C. Men's Organisation. Apparently Mr. O'Sullivan wrote to Mr. McNamara to inform him of the recent improvement in the pensions of resigned R.I.C. men. McNamara who, on account of his short service - two years - in the R.I.C., did not qualify for a pension from the Irish Government under the first legislation, hopes that his case will be now reviewed and has forwarded all these documents for that purpose.

SIGNED: Jeremiah Mee

DATE: 18th April 1950

WITNESS: S. McCraith