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STATEMENT BY WITNESS.

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Witness

Dan Breen, T.D.,
9 St. Kevin's Park,
Dartry,
Dublin.

Identity.

Quartermaster. 3rd Tipperary Brigade.

Subject.

3rd Tipperary Brigade, I.R.A., 1917-Truce.

Conditions, if any, Stipulated by Witness.

Nil.

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Form B S M 2

STATEMENT BY DAN BREEN,

9, St. Kevin's Park, Dartry, Dublin.

I was born on the 11th August, 1894, according to the parish baptismal register. The official register at the Custom House says the 11th October. The difference in dates is probably due to the later official registration of the birth. I presume the baptismal register is more correct as I would have been baptised within a day or two of birth whereas the official registration of the birth is often done months afterwards. I never thought of checking on this while my mother was alive but, for the reasons given, I assume the earlier date to be more correct.
I was born in a place called Grange in Dunohill, Co. Tipperary
I was one of a family of eight, one of whom died young.
He was my eldest brother, named Laurence, but a younger brother who was born subsequently was also called Laurence.
There were five boys and three girls.

My father died when I was about six years of age.
He died in the year 1900. I have only a slight recollection of my father. I was brought up solely by my mother and it was she, therefore, that impressed my early years. We were not blessed with a lot of worldly goods.
My mother was a midwife and so, when my father died, she had to work very hard to support us. The family was generally a young family, I being about six, and there was another brother after me who was only in his cradle, but nevertheless we lived happily there. My mother was a hard worker and thrifty and contrived to make ends meet.

My mother's sentiments were entirely national and it was from her I absorbed the national sentiment and love of freedom that was further developed in later years.

My mother's maiden name was Moore and she had come from a place called Reenavanna in Co. Limerick, near Doon. All her family had a record of national service in 1798 and later in the Fenian times.

My father, I believe, was also nationally disposed and his people had all been Fenians, but the impression I gained was that he belonged to a type of Fenian who did more talk than anything else. I, of course, don't know much about that myself as I was too young when he died, but I have heard it said of the people that he represented that they were great fellows for talking and drinking and doing very little after that but, on the other hand, I suppose there was little they could do in their day.

It was my feeling - the impression I got at the time - that it was the women of the country who kept alive the national spirit. The men of my father's generation had apparently drifted into a system of what we might call publichouse debate as their only contribution to the national movement of the time, but it was the women who kept alive the traditions of the past and handed these things on to my generation.

About the longest memory I have that is as clear to me to-day as it was at the time is the Boer War. The people around my district were all pro-Boer and I listened to the daily discussions that took place on the progress of the war.

I also remember what was probably the last of the evictions which took place near my home. That is well over fifty years ago now and I remember this man, Michael Dwyer Bán, being evicted and dying on the side of the road. This eviction took place about a mile from my home and the people who were evicted were some sort of cousins or relatives of ours. The event left a deep and lasting

impression on my mind. I can still remember the horror with which I viewed people being thrown out of their homes.

Then came the Land Act of 1903 under which most of the people around purchased their holdings. The advent of the land purchase scheme brought great joy to those concerned in the purchase of their land. They thought they had reached some kind of Utopia and would never want again, but I remember some of the discussions which took place on this and it was felt that the rents, even under the land purchase scheme, were very high, the average rent around my part of the country being £2 to £2 - 5 - 0 an acre, even under the land purchase scheme, which was very high at that time, considering the value of the pound.

Some of the discussions on these matters that I listened to took place between a cousin of my father, who was my godfather, and an uncle of mine. Besides this question of rents, they discussed the price of milk which was being supplied to Cleeve's factory which had just then been started. I remember that the price paid to the producers by Cleeve's was less than threepence a gallon and these men argued that such a price was uneconomic. I did not know just what the word meant, nor did I understand a lot of what was said, but I did gather the impression that there was something like disillusionment and that the land purchase scheme had not brought the Utopia that was expected of it. This was before the co-operative creameries were established and the price per gallon for milk meant that there was no milk coming back - no "back-milk" as they called it.

All this stuck fast in my mind and, for this reason, and because our family actually experienced poverty, I realised in after years how little above the edge of bare existence were the mass of the people. There were very few people in our part of the country who had enough money to be any way comfortable. Potatoes and milk were the staple food, as they had been in the Fenian times. The prices obtainable for products, such as, milk or crops, were small while on the other hand anything they had to buy was practically outside their reach. Of course, money values at that time were very different to what they are now.

I remember that, when I first went to work as a labourer, my wages were 1/6d a day. Having gone to the local national school until I was fourteen years of age and having reached the Sixth Standard, which was the highest attainable there, I then went to work as a labourer. The first job I got was to assist at the renovation of my old school which was then being done up. It was Father Martin Ryan (afterwards Canon Ryan) who gave me the job on the school where I worked for the princely sum of 9/- a week. But still I looked upon this as money and as money which I had earned myself, and after all 9/- to a young fellow at that time represented something worthy of consideration.

It might be of some interest to state here that, when I was about eight or nine years of age, the local schoolmaster, named James Power, who was a cousin of my father, died and the teacher who came to replace him was Cormac Breathnach from Kerry who died a few years ago. Cormac stayed around that country as a teacher of Irish and also did relief work in any school that found itself

without a teacher. It may be of interest to know that he also taught Seán Treacy, Dinny Lacey, Packy Deere and a lot of my pals who are now dead. While we did not belong to the same parish, there would not be two miles between any of our houses, so Cormac taught most of the fellows who were any good afterwards in the national movement, a fact he boasted of to the end of his days.

I was a couple of years working with farmers around the neighbourhood and when I was seventeen - that would be 1911 or thereabouts - I got a job on the railway. I was on the railway a good few years when the war broke out, I know, because I was about twenty years of age when the 1914-1918 war began. During my time on the railway I worked in Mallow, Cork and Dublin as a linesman. The line maintenance gangs moved about from place to place whenever their services were required, and so I was in Dublin. I was employed at the laying of the yard in Inchicore when the General Strike of 1913 occurred in Dublin and I was around the town in the evenings during the baton charges and all that excitement, so that I had a good knowledge of Dublin before I came here again in later years.

Some twelve months or thereabouts before the Volunteer movement began, I was sworn in to the I.R.B. by Seán Treacy. At the time I became a member of the I.R.B. there was a great surge of re-organisation of the Ancient Order of Hibernians going on around the country and Treacy and I would have nothing to do with this organisation. Having discussed this when I joined the I.R.B., we did our best to frustrate the efforts at A.O.H. organising in our area. Seán Treacy lived near me, about three-quarters of a mile away, and as well as being my neighbour

he was my best friend. We discussed all these matters whenever we met but, of course, when I began to work on the railway, I was away from home for long spells and so it was only on my occasional visits home that I met him then. The I.R.B. Circle to which we belonged was centred at Doon. There were very few people around our part of the country that could be relied upon and so we had to cycle eight or nine miles to attend these Circle meetings. Packy Ryan of Doon was the Centre of that Circle and it was at Ryan's of Doon that I first saw Seán MacDermott who was, I believe, on some kind of an organising mission around Munster. It may have been at Kilcummin because Packy Ryan also had a place there.

At the time I speak of, Packy Ryan was the trusted man in the organisation, that is, the I.R.B. He was about fifteen years older than Treacy or myself. We were only ordinary members and, being little more than boys, we were just looked upon as handy messengers and suchlike, so that we did not know about what was on except what we could see for ourselves.

It was some time soon after the inaugural meeting in the Rotunda Rink, Dublin, that a Volunteer Company was formed in Dunohill and must have been before the end of 1913, because I remember we had some British Army reservists - N.C.O.s - training us in drill and suchlike and when the war came in August, 1914, these fellows were called up and left us.

When the Volunteers were first formed, it was in the same peculiar atmosphere that existed in other parts, that is, there was a sudden wave of enthusiasm, based upon the imitation of Carson's Ulster Volunteers, and, of course, the Irish Party and the A.O.H. were supporting

the Volunteer movement at this time, so that everybody joined in enthusiastically, marching and drilling. Soon after the declaration of war, however, we lost all our instructors when these were called up to their respective Regiments for war service. Following soon on top of that came the Redmondite split in the Volunteers, about which I need not go into details, suffice to say that in our district ninety per cent of the Volunteers followed the Redmondite lead, leaving Seán Treacy, myself and one or two others odd men out again. The Redmondite Volunteers carried on for a while but gradually fizzled out after a few months.

There were so few of us left in the district that we could not form a Volunteer unit, as we would have to gather up odd ones from several surrounding parishes to form a couple of sections, not to speak of a company. Besides Packy Ryan of Doon, there were only Seán Treacy, myself, a young brother of mine, Packy Deere, Michael Ryan and Eamon O'Dwyer. There was also Dinny Lacey and a couple of others in Tipperary town. The names given here covered several parishes. We just tried to keep in touch with the movement by buying the national papers and attending any Volunteer gatherings within our reach. In this way, we went to Limerick on Whit Sunday, 1915, when a big parade through the streets of the Dublin Volunteers, under P.H. Pearse, took place. All that has been adequately described by others and so I need only remark that my feelings were much the same as most of the Volunteers there that day. We were only restrained with difficulty from opening fire on the hostile crowd that assailed our ranks as we marched through the streets of Limerick.

Treacy and I discussed everything between us. There were no secrets between us. Neither of us had much money and he, working away on the farm, had even less than I had. When I came home, perhaps on a week-end visit, I had a free pass issued to me to travel on the railway, so I often got off there and, if Treacy wanted to go to Dublin, he used my pass to travel on to Dublin and back. He had, however, to be back in time to allow me to get back to my work on Monday morning.

Seán Treacy had a marvellous intellect and I recognised him then as the boss. He had the ability to read and absorb all kinds of things and to think out ideas for himself which he could enunciate clearly. He had a wonderful grasp, even at that early age, of everything that mattered and a logical mind that could apply principles to every-day affairs. He was away ahead of anything one might expect to meet in a country district. He had vision and to him nothing was impossible. To Treacy any problem submitted was never approached as - "Can it be done?" - but rather "How can it best be done?". His outlook on most things might be summed up in something I heard years afterwards - "The idea is only as good as the man behind it. Anything in the world can be done if only you had the will to do it". He was a very inquisitive man. If he came into a place where he saw anything in progress for the first time, he would bore everyone concerned until he had found out exactly what was being done, why it was being done, why it was being done in that particular way rather than in any other way, and generally all that was to be known about it. It was this particular characteristic of his that brought about with him the position that, once he had seen anything, he knew all about it.

I am emphasising some of the outstanding characteristics of Seán Treacy because I knew him perhaps better than anyone else; and nothing I have read about him that has been published since his death has done him justice or shown the man as I knew him. So perhaps I may in this way give some additional facts to future writers.

Treacy's father had died when he was very young and he, with his mother, lived with an aunt, about whom I could say nothing complimentary. She was a bossy, domineering type. She dominated Seán's mother entirely and tried also to compel Seán to live in the groove she had marked out for him. To my knowledge, she made life a complete hell for him by frustrating all his natural inclinations. She had no national sentiments and was intolerant of any such matters when Seán might allow his interest in them to become known in the house. Her effort was to make him work like a nigger on the small farm that they had and which could scarcely make a living for them. She would allow him no relaxation whatever, nor any thought outside the sheer necessities of life. Immediately following 1916 she made strenuous objection to Seán keeping company with me and, in later years, she always referred to me as "Breen, the murderer". She blamed me for having led her nephew into trouble which, in fact, was very funny and showed how little she understood her nephew as to think that anyone could lead him anywhere he did not want to go. I believe she had this view conveyed to the R.I.C., that is, that it was Breen who led Treacy into trouble, thinking perhaps that she could in this way take the police off Seán's track by putting them on to mine, but I doubt if even the police then were deceived in this manner.

I mention this in passing to show how great was Seán Treacy's intellect because, though he had not a scrap of national sentiment on either side of the family - the Treacys and the Alliss - he himself had done his own reading and studying and had made up his own mind on these matters. I had had the advantage of my mother's early influence as others have had the influence of parents and relatives to start them off in the right direction, but in Treacy's case he had no such influence except what was all in the other direction. So he had to learn everything for himself, but he learned it much more thoroughly than those who had the national traditions handed on to them without effort on their part.

I do not wish to be taken here as condemning Treacy's people. The business of living, of ekeing out a stark existence forty years or so ago was something not to be taken lightly. These people had had experience, or at least had a tradition of the Famine of 1867 and of the struggle for existence from that time on, that anything that did not relate itself directly to the business of producing food, or the wherewithal to keep body and soul together, had no meaning for them. I myself have heard my grandmother speak of the famine years as something that happened under her own eyes and as something dreadful that must never be allowed to occur again, and so I suppose it is hard to blame people because their minds were obsessed with the scraping together of their daily bread.

In going into these details of Treacy's life, I do so to show how great a man he was, who could rise above his environment. He had a great brain. In fact, I have never met anyone whose thinking powers were greater than Treacy's. I knew Mick Collins and I rated him very

highly in this respect; and I would not wish to be taken as in any way belittling the greatness of Collins but, in the matter of mental capacity, I would put Treacy in the same category, that is, I would bracket them together as men of the same stamp and of equal mental powers. They had the highest respect and regard for each other and I suppose it indicated the greatness of both of them that there was not the smallest spark of anything like personal jealousy on either side. Treacy looked upon it as a high honour for Collins to ask him to do anything and, on Collins's side, I knew he had such admiration for and confidence in Treacy that, when he did give him a mission, he looked upon it as good as done, that Treacy would fulfil his task or die in the attempt. On a few occasions Collins showed his high regard for Treacy in this way. For example, I remember seeing a message in writing which Treacy received from Collins after the Knocklong rescue which read, as far as I can remember the wording, "Congratulations on a splendid achievement". Seán displayed this message to us proudly for to him it was like an award of the Victoria Cross.

Returning to the sequence of this story, I have been dealing with the events preceding Easter Week, 1916. Coming up to Easter Week, on my visits home, Treacy and I discussed the progress of the war in Europe and the prospect of a rising in arms. I was working at this time on the line about Kilmallock.

When I came home for Easter, Treacy told me he expected a rising to take place on Easter Sunday but, when the cancellation messages were received, he told me about this and I went back to my work beyond Kilmallock.

Having heard further messages of the Rising in Dublin, I returned home again on Tuesday but did not meet Treacy until the Friday of that week, as he was away from home and, as we learned since, was cycling about from one centre to another trying to urge the Tipperary Volunteers to take action in support of the fighting in Dublin. By the end of the week we had learned, however, of the surrender in Dublin and I went back to my work again.

The gang I was working with at this time consisted of about 150 men and, out of that number, I only knew one man, Mick Ryan, who was an I.R.B. man. We had heard the rumour of the fighting in Dublin on the Monday night and it was in duscussion with Ryan that I had decided I should go home, so as to be in a position to take action when I had consulted Treacy as to what should be done. When I was passing through, I found that Limerick Junction was held by British forces but, as a railway employee, I passed through all right and, as I have said already, having arrived home, I was unable to find Treacy until the following Friday.

I remember that it was on the Sunday night following Easter Sunday that Treacy, Ned O'Dwyer and myself met at the old cottage where I was born and we discussed the situation. I was going back to Kilmallock as I had to be at work at six o'clock the following morning. We were bitterly disappointed that the fighting had not extended further than Dublin and we said that, if ever there should be another fight for freedom, we would be in it wherever it was.

Soon after this, having finished the job I was on in Kilmallock, I returned to my own gang at Limerick Junction where I was nearer home. We began immediately and quietly to reorganise the Volunteers around the locality. When I say we began reorganising, it should be remembered that before the Rising we had actually no proper unit in Dunohill. There were maybe five or six odd Volunteers spread around two or three parishes, but we now began in earnest to form a company in that locality and with some success.

There was also a peculiar thing that there seemed to be a swing-over about this time. Hitherto we had looked up to the townspeople as being more in touch with things and perhaps as countrymen we suffered some sense of inferiority. Now, however, for some reason, after the Rising the townsmen were more inclined to look up to us and so conditions were reversed. Treacy and I went about to all the towns, like Tipperary, Cahir and other places around about there, and urged the reorganisation of the Volunteers in these places. In the aftermath of the Rising and the feelings that were generated by it, we had a lot of success.

All this was, I believe, due to Treacy's personality. He had within him a dynamic driving force which impressed itself upon everyone he came in contact with. I often noticed that, when he came into a room where a lot of other people were, everyone was at once conscious that something had come into the party that was not there before. His earnestness and obvious sincerity always impressed people, so that, when he went into a place and announced that he wanted to have a Volunteer unit started there, it was already under way.

Seán studied Irish in his spare time and was fond of singing an Irish song as we went along on our bicycles - "Óró'Sé Dho Bheatha 'Bhaile" - but when I say singing, this is probably an exaggeration because Seán had not a note of music in him. When he sang the "Wearin' Of The Green", it still had the same air and, in fact, except to speak the words in a sort of a monotone, he could make no effort at music, though apparently he liked to hear these songs sung.

I would like to record here that one of the men whom Treacy looked up to as having saved the name of Tipperary during Easter Week was Michael O'Callaghan of Tipperary, who had resisted the attempt to arrest him and shot down the police who tried to do so. Treacy looked upon O'Callaghan as having set a headline as well as saving the honour of Tipperary. O'Callaghan had got away to the United States of America some time after the Rising and I think it was about 1917 that he was arrested in the U.S.A. and extradition proceedings were started. We discussed this at the time - Treacy and I - and Treacy had his mind made up that, if O'Callaghan was brought back to Ireland for trial, he would organise an attempt to rescue him, so that his mind had run on these lines even before the Knocklong episode. I have forgotten now the full details of what happened in connection with O'Callaghan in U.S.A. but I knew them all at the time because we kept in close touch so as to be able to take action when any suitable occasion for rescue would arise. So far as I remember, O'Callaghan was arrested by the American police and was held in the Tombs prison. Extradition proceedings were also going on in the case of Jeremiah O'Leary and some others and, whether the case against O'Leary was dismissed on its merits or whether the Irish in New York had managed to pull strings, I don't know, but after this the case

against O'Callaghan was dropped and he was released. Joe McGarrity and Senator Maurice Reade in Washington were the people chiefly instrumental in securing O'Callaghan's release.

At this time, following 1916, I was Treacy's chief, if not, in fact, his only confidant and he discussed everything freely with me. I remember him talking about the Rising of 1916 and calling it "another '98", meaning that this was another failure as 1798 had been, and yet he was insistent that everything was not yet lost and that we might still do something to retrieve its failure. This was why we started in so quickly to reorganise the Volunteers in Tipperary. Seán was very anxious that Tipperary should distinguish itself in the national cause. As a Tipperary man, he had always that feeling for the honour of his native County but this was not to say that he was in any parochial in his mind. His mind embraced the country at large, but the way he looked upon it was if you have to belong to a parish, well then it is up to you to make it the best parish that can be made and, if everybody would do this, the country as a whole would benefit.

As I say, we had organised a unit around Grange which afterwards became the Dunohill Company. It had a strength of 25-27 and the members of this company came from a radius of about seven miles around us. People nowadays might look upon a distance of seven miles as of no great consequence, but at that time to travel such a distance on bad roads was a serious consideration when only an odd one had a bicycle and most of the journey had to be made on foot to attend drills and parades.

During the remainder of 1917 we had extended the organisation of Volunteer companies into the surrounding places and it was then we made contact with Galbally, which is on the borders of Tipperary and East Limerick, so that we had the general framework of an organisation already in being when we formed the South Tipperary Brigade in the early Spring of 1918.

The formation of the Brigade coincided approximately with the conscription crisis of April, 1918. At this period Treacy was in jail, as he had been arrested for the second time in the early part of 1918 and sentenced to a term of imprisonment. He was originally arrested following a parade which took place in Tipperary town some time about the middle of August, 1917, and had been engaged in the hunger-strike at Mountjoy Jail in which Tom Ashe died. It was during his second period of imprisonment that I was appointed Acting Brigade Commander in his absence.

We held this meeting at which the Brigade was formed, and the consensus of opinion was in favour of Treacy as the Brigade Commander but, as he was in prison, I was elected to act as Brigade Commander until his release. Maurice Crowe was elected Brigade Adjutant at the same meeting and he will be able to give the details of that election. I was Battalion Commander of Tipperary town area before I was elected to act as Brigade Commander.

Treacy actually underwent a couple of terms of imprisonment and, when he was finally released, he was appointed by Collins as a full-time organiser for Tipperary. It was this fact that made it a little awkward for us to carry out a new election to appoint

Seán as the Brigade Commander. It was he himself that brought this point up. He thought that it would not be compatible with his appointment as a paid organiser that he should also hold the appointment of Brigade Commander. In any case, as he told me at the time, he felt that we were just two country lads with neither financial nor social standing and that some kind of background was necessary in the man who would be appointed as Brigade Commander that would give him standing in the locality.

When Treacy returned after his release from Dundalk Jail following the hunger-strike there, which was some time in the Spring or early Summer of 1918, we discussed the situation about the command of the Brigade and we decided that it was best to carry on as it was, until we would hold an election in the Autumn; I think it was October the election was arranged for. The idea in this was that it would give us time to see what was best to be done in the meantime.

It was evident that the right thing to do was to appoint Treacy to the command of the Brigade but, as I have already pointed out, Treacy did not consider this to be a wise thing to do, for, as he said, we were only two working boys who could not or did not have sufficient prestige for such an appointment in a rich county like Tipperary. He said that we should get someone from outside and we thought of applying to G.H.Q. to have someone sent down to us to take the appointment. Suddenly, however, we learned that there was such a man - a man who had had service in the Rising of 1916 and was not a native of the County - working at Eamonn O'Dwyer's

of Ballough. So both of us went over there to see this man and see if he would serve our purpose. We had no information at all about this man except that he was a 1916 man and that he was staying with Eamonn O'Dwyer at Ballough. The man we went to see turned out to be Seumas Robinson, and having spoken to him, we made no mention of the purpose of our visit until we had gone home and discussed this first between ourselves.

Having seen Seumas Robinson, we were satisfied that he would be suitable. We decided that we would ask him to accept the appointment as Brigade Commander and, for this purpose, we called over to Eamonn O'Dwyer's a second time.

I well remember the night we called. We found him engaged in a cowhouse milking a cow and, to show how little acquainted either of us was with Seumas Robinson at this stage, I remember that we addressed him as "Mr. Robinson". Treacy and I kept talking to him while he continued with his milking and, to our suggestion, he replied that he would do whatever we wanted him to do. When he had finished milking the cow, we expected he might stand up to talk to us but he got up with his bucket of milk and began to walk away, saying over his shoulder as we walked after him, that he would do whatever we wanted him to do but that he could not afford to idle as he might lose his job there.

We were satisfied at this stage that Robinson would serve our purpose because Treacy had already outlined to me a certain direction that we should follow. As he put it, the Volunteer organisation at the time was in great danger of becoming a purely political organisation and he wanted to restore it to its military outlook. As he said to me some time about then, "We have had enough of being pushed around and our men

being killed now and then by the enemy forces, and it is time that we did a bit of pushing around and killing of the other side". We considered that this business of getting in and out of jail, which was common at the time, was getting us nowhere and, while we had nothing definite in mind at the time, we thought about carrying out some big attack or other that would serve to start the ball rolling in Tipperary.

The Brigade meeting for the election of a Brigade Commander and Staff was arranged for some time about October, I think, of 1918. Dick Mulcahy came down from G.H.Q. to preside at that meeting which was held at P.J. Brown's, Clúmad. Seumas Robinson had been arrested in the meantime and was in jail at this time. So, as we had previously arranged, I proposed the election of Robinson as Brigade Commander and this was seconded by Seán Treacy, the appointment being agreed to without further discussion and ratified by Mulcahy on the spot.

Treacy was elected Vice Commandant at that meeting and, Robinson being in jail, he proceeded to act as Brigade Commandant from that time. I became Brigade Quartermaster then. Robinson was released from Belfast Jail sometime about the end of the year, but it was the middle of January before we saw him in Tipperary.

As I have already pointed out, Treacy and I had discussed the situation and had agreed that some positive military action was necessary. So about this time we were discussing the feasibility of attacking the R.I.C. escort which accompanied explosives to Soloheadbeg Quarry. The Volunteers were in need of high explosives for the manufacture of grenades and demolition work but, apart from that, Treacy believed that to take this gelignite

violently from a police escort would have a much better effect than if we were, for example, to capture it by stealth, and it was in this mood that the Soloheadbeg ambush was planned. We expected there would be an escort of about six armed police and we had the full intention not alone of taking the gelignite they were escorting but also of shooting down the escort, as an assertion of the national right to deny the free passage of an armed enemy.

We had to wait in readiness for some weeks while we expected this gelignite to come along. In the meantime, we had sent word to Robinson, telling him what had been arranged, but it was only a couple of days before the actual attack took place that Robinson came along to us, so that his presence in the attack was to some extent accidental in so far as the attack might have come off at any time from a couple of weeks earlier and before he had reached us.

I mention this to show that the whole conception and planning of the Soloheadbeg ambush was Treacy's. Some confusion may have arisen in the minds of people who did not know, because of the fact that Robinson was present at this ambush and was at the time Brigade Commander. As I have already explained here, Treacy had arranged that Robinson should be appointed Brigade Commander to suit his own purpose. He wanted a sort of yes-man, or a stooge as we would call it now, in the position and we thought that Robinson would serve this purpose. Robinson was not consulted about this ambush or the plans for it, or about a number of other things like that which were arranged. He was merely told about it as something that was being done. Treacy and I had

decided that we were going to shoot whatever number of police came along as an escort with this gelignite, but we did not tell Robinson anything about this. It was not a matter of distrusting him or anything like that, but we felt that it did not concern him and that he did not have to know about what our intentions were.

I would like to make this point clear, and I state here without any equivocation that we took this action deliberately, having thought the matter over and talked it over between us. Treacy had stated to me that the only way of starting a war was to kill someone and we wanted to start a war, so we intended to kill some of the police whom we looked upon as the foremost and most important branch of the enemy forces which were holding our country in subjection. The moral aspect of such a decision has been talked about since and we have been branded as murderers, both by the enemy and even by some of our own people, but I want it to be understood that the pros and cons were thoroughly weighed up in discussion between Treacy and myself and, to put it in a nutshell, we felt that we were merely continuing the active war for the establishment of an Irish Republic that had begun on Easter Monday 1916. We felt there was grave danger that the Volunteer organisation would degenerate and was degenerating into a purely political body, such as was the A.O.H. or the U.I.L., and we wished to get it back to its original purpose. When we did decide that we would shoot this police escort, we also decided that we would not leave the country as had been the usual practice, but that, having carried out this act of war, we would continue to live in the country in defiance of the British authorities. We felt that such a

demonstration must have the effect of bringing about similar action in other parts of the country. The only regret we had, following the ambush, was that there were only two policemen in it instead of the six we expected, because we felt that six dead policemen would have impressed the country more than a mere two.

Seumas Robinson did not know of the police being shot that day until he was nearly at home in Ballough. He was at a point about 300 yards from where the shooting took place and, though he heard the shots I suppose, he did not see the effect of them. It was Robinson himself who told me afterwards that himself and McCormack, one of the other men who were engaged with us, had nearly arrived at Ballough on their way home when McCormack told him that the two police were dead, and that this was the first he had heard of anyone being killed. Robinson was separated from us then, as he apparently had intended to carry on with his work at Ballough with Eamonn O'Dwyer, and it was some weeks afterwards, when someone gave him the tip that he was about to be arrested in connection with the Soloheadbeg shooting, that he went on the run and joined us. In fact, I think it was about six weeks afterwards.

The reason I am giving all this is to show you why we made Robinson Brigade Commander. Treacy believed that we were too unknown and unproved to carry any weight in Tipperary and it must be remembered that a man who had the label of being one of the Volunteers who fought in 1916 was still a hero to us all in 1918.

I would like to record one thing which I consider of some importance. After Soloheadbeg raid, there was considerable pressure put upon us by G.H.Q. to leave the

country and it was some time after the Knocklong rescue episode, or some time between that and the attack on Lord French at Ashtown, which took place in December, 1919 - some time between these dates - we met Dick Mulcahy by appointment at the S.P.I. Hall in Parnell Square. I acted as spokesman at that interview.

I remember that Mulcahy advanced a certain line of argument as to why we should allow ourselves to be smuggled away to America. We told him against that, that we had no intention of leaving the country, to which he replied that, if we persisted in staying here, we would be disobeying the ruling of the General Staff. He pointed out that the General Staff could not allow itself to be pushed into war before it was ready to take such action itself and that our action at Soloheadbeg and Knocklong, having been taken entirely on our own responsibility, could not be stood over by G.H.Q. He said that, if we insisted on staying in the country and if we were arrested or killed by the enemy, G.H.Q. could not acknowledge us as acting with authority and that we would, therefore, be branded as murderers. I said that we realised all that, but that we still intended to stay here and to carry on the fight we had begun, following which Mulcahy then made the extraordinary suggestion that, if we persisted in remaining, G.H.Q. had authorised him to offer us a payment of £5 a week to keep us. To this offer I replied that, if we were to be considered as murderers, at least we would not justify the name of paid murderers and that our friends, who had been so kind as to keep us all this time, would no doubt continue to do so.

What Mulcahy said to us that night in the S.P.I. Hall was never withdrawn and, though conditions altered

considerably in 1920 and 1921, we never received a penny from G.H.Q. to assist in our upkeep. I suppose I might say that officially we were still not recognised as part of the Irish Republican Army when the Truce came, although, of course, everything else went to show that this original attitude of G.H.Q. had been departed from.

Much earlier - it must have been about June of 1919 - when we were in North Kerry recuperating (I had been rather badly wounded at Knocklong and I was pretty ill, so Seán Hogan and I remained there and Treacy and Robinson went to Dublin), I have an idea that they were called up to Dublin to give a report, but I am not sure. I believe I did hear at the time that they had been to see Collins, who had asked them all about the ins-and-outs of Soloheadbeg and Knocklong and, I think, perhaps had given the viewpoint of the General Staff on these things. However, I don't know anything about this from my personal knowledge. Seumas Robinson may be able to state what happened then. But it was much later on, when we had moved from Kerry to Tipperary and up to Offaly, that we went on to Dublin and it must have been sometime in the Summer when I had the interview with Mulcahy that I referred to here. We had been staying with Tommy Scully in Killasally, Offaly, and from there we went to Dónal Buckley's in Maynooth; and it was from Maynooth we went to Dublin in the summer of 1919.

I would like to make it clear that at no time did we ever receive payment of any kind from G.H.Q. We lived on our friends who indeed were very good to us. When I was in Dublin we lived on the Fleming's in Drumcondra, the Boland's and some others, who not alone provided us with board and lodging but clothed us, gave

us pocket money and even money to buy the arms and ammunition which we were using from time to time.

While we were in Dublin, there were a number of occasions, between the time we arrived in Dublin in the summer of 1919 and the date of the actual attack in December, when we set out to shoot Lord French. While we were in Dublin, we placed ourselves at the disposal of the G.H.Q. Squad, under Mick McDonald at the time, and there were at least four or five occasions when arrangements were made to ambush the Lord Lieutenant, Lord French, in all of which he failed to turn up, or in some way the arrangements proved abortive.

We all arranged to stay somewhere that we could be easily reached by 'phone, but Robinson, who was staying in Heytesbury St., could not be contacted by 'phone. So I went on one of these occasions to warn him of a projected attack, but he informed me that he was having nothing to do with it and that he was not taking part in any more of these Dublin exploits. I told Treacy about this and actually we did get him to come with us to Ashtown when the actual attack on French took place, but from this on Robinson was no longer proving amenable and, on quite a number of occasions after this, he upset the applecart rather badly by giving countermanding orders when we had something arranged in Tipperary.

The only thing about the attack on Lord French was that in later years in New York I met the constable who was wounded and I obtained a job for him. He was badly off. I think after the French incident he resigned. In New York I got him a job in a Shipping Company. For years afterwards he wrote to me but he may now be dead.

After the French attack, things were fairly quiet as far as I was concerned. I had been wounded. Peadar Clancy promised me that the Independent Office would be wrecked and the editor shot, but this was not done. And, of course, Archbishop Walsh did not play a very great part after that. He was loud in his condemnation of the attack on Lord French.

I met Mrs. Despard and Mrs. MacBride in O'Connell St. in 1920 and Mrs. Despard was very annoyed with me for attacking her brother, John. But I said the only thing I was sorry for was that we did not get him. She said he was a good Irishman; but I did not dispute that with her. "Poor John dead"! said she.

I was down in County Meath with Tom Carter and Dr. Gus Lynch. I was staying with Tom Carter. Gus Lynch, Vincent Purfield and George Plunkett were there. Carter was a road steward or ganger, and Quigley, who was the County Surveyor, was out in 1916. Tom Carter used to make a point of being friendly with the R.I.C. on the surface, and went out of his way to be nice to them. Any time I was around in 1918, I'd stay with Carter and mind the house while he was out working at night. Quigley, being such an extreme Republican, was very hostile to Carter as he misunderstood his attitude to the R.I.C. There was an increase in pay given to the road workers in 1920, but Quigley wouldn't give it to Carter and did all he could to get him sacked.

About the 14th July, 1921, I went out to see Carter and we were sitting down inside when who came in but Quigley. "Are you there?" he said. "What do you want, Quigley?" I rejoined. "I want Carter to do his work". "When you were crucifying Carter" I said,

"he was looking after me". He got a shock as he thought Carter was an out-and-out. This was because Carter was so friendly with the police. Carter was using these tactics to keep his place secure.

Carter lived on the main Dublin-Belfast road on the Dublin side of the Nanny river. He died there a few years ago. He was a great little man.

George Plunkett had a great time around that country.

I came back to Dublin in Easter, 1920, I think. On Easter Saturday we were coming into Dublin and we met, I think, two lorries. We drove into Whitehall and here there were two sentries left, so we thought we were for it. Much to our surprise, they told the driver to go on. It was an officer and a sentry and the officer got talking to us and we became friendly. We were in one of those open touring cars.

There were two detectives living near Drumcondra Bridge whom we were keen on getting. This was in 1919. A lad named Byrne was sent along with me to get them. One of the detectives was named Walsh. They got off the tram at Drumcondra Bridge. I looked at Byrne and the two detectives opened fire on me. They started to run and I started to follow them. I got one of them and the other got away. Years went by and I used to go racing a lot. I became friendly with a butcher in Moore St. named Walsh. I used to meet him racing and I often gave him a lift. About ten or fifteen years ago he came to see me in the Dáil. He waited for me to come down and I shook hands with him. Liam Tobin was very excited and he signalled me. I said, "Wait, until I

see my friend off". Tobin said: "You are a right bastard! Do you know the fellow you are talking to. He's the detective that was with the other fellow you shot that night in Drumcondra". He never came back after that. Tobin sent word to him to the gate to say he was not to return.

Another funny story about Tobin. This happened during the war 1939-1945. I had a car and I used to drive Tobin home. You know the level crossing at Merrion, near Imco. We were on the main Merrion Road and I just missed a fellow on a bicycle. He threw himself off it. Tobin said, "It was a pity you didn't get him". He said, "That's Dinny Barrett, the Assistant Commissioner of the Tans". It would have looked deliberate if I had hit him. He's still alive. He was an R.I.C. man in Belfast. He was with Redmond when the latter was shot in Harcourt St. They were Catholics and members of the A.O.H. They were sent down to Dublin in order to contact the A.O.H. men in the city. Redmond was the first Assistant Commissioner, and then Barrett. We got Redmond but Barrett escaped. We used to go to Mass at 5.30 a.m. in Clarendon St. to get him, but he never came.

I could tell you a funny story. There was a fellow named Quinlisk. I forget the period, perhaps 1920. He was one of the supposed Casement Brigade and he came to Dublin and was in touch with Collins. But Collins had information that he was double-crossing. He was living in Eccles St. I slept two nights with the bastard, at least I shared the room with him. He knew who I was. There was a man named Tom Cullen. Tom relieved me and we let off Quinlisk, but we knew that

Quinlisk was in touch with an Inspector named Brien in the Castle. Perhaps this was January or February, 1920. We knew that Quinlisk's code name was "Mr. Business", so I got on the 'phone and I asked for Inspector Brien and I said that "Mr. Business wanted to talk to him". I handed the 'phone over to Cullen and he continued to talk. Brien wanted him to go to the Castle. I had a second 'phone connection and was listening in. Cullen impersonated Quinlisk and said that it was too dangerous, that he was being watched, but that he would like to meet him outside. So he made an appointment at the Mail Office for 8.30. It must have been winter time. Neither of us knew Brien, so we had to go to Tobin in Vaughan's Hotel, Parnell Square, and ask him to come and identify Brien. We did get Tobin and we went ahead, it being arranged that Tobin would come along and join us. We set off about 8.20. It was pouring rain. We stood in the archway at the Mail Office and this powerful man came along. He said he thought he'd wait until the rain stopped. No sign of Brien or Tobin coming. We were there until about 8.40. There were some fellows on the other side of the street. The big man said, "I don't think it will clear at all; I'll be off". The fellows across the street moved off too. Up came Tobin. "What kept you?" we asked. "Weren't ye talking to him for the last 15 minutes" said Tobin. But he was evidently covered by the boys on the other side of the street. Cullen and myself were quite unconscious of the fact that it was Brien we were talking to. Brien resigned next morning, and I think it was on a Friday morning. I suppose he felt he was as near to death as ever he wanted to be. We were cursing Tobin and sure he (Tobin) could not come near us.

Imagine, we were talking to Brien about everything under the sun. He was a big, powerful fellow. He'd be a terrible tub of guts if he was killed! They'd want a crane to lift him. This happened on a cold, wintry night. Cullen considered it was twice as good that nothing happened. We took Cullen out a few times and he was a very bad shot. He was a very fine character.

The weather was fine when I went down the country. I'd travel by train, car or cycle, and sometimes I walked. I remember leaving Dublin one morning at 6.30 and I had a meeting in Tipperary at 6 o'clock that evening, and I was the only one in time. Actually I was there ahead of time, and with bad roads and carrying all my artillery too. I'd make from Dublin to Tipperary in ten hours, and 15 or 16 hours to make Cork from Dublin. It used to take me five days to walk to Cork across the fields.

I always remained out in the open. I walked the streets of Dublin freely all my life. People have a wrong idea about all that. It was only at night you were going to be trapped. They were not looking for fight at all after the first few raps.

When I was down the country, there was to be an attack at Ballyclerihan, near Clonmel, but Robinson called it off. So then we ran into the Lucas attack. We went out to get the mail cars which used to come under military escort from Limerick to Tipperary. That was the morning that the famous General Lucas escaped, and instead of running into what we thought was the military mail at first, it turned out to be more than we

bargained for. We thought there would be two or three lorries of men there - 40 soldiers - but there were that many lorries present, so after a brief engagement we withdrew. We had to bring about 150 men out of it. We fought a rearguard action and held them at bay, and we hadn't more than seven men who knew anything at all about fighting. We got back on our bicycles about a mile back near Oola in the County Limerick.

About that time we attacked Rearcross Barracks. We were nearly 1½ days trying to take it. We ran out of ammunition and petrol and burned the place. They didn't surrender. Coming back from Rearcross after the fight, we were going through Holyford and the whole column outfit was there, 80 or 90 men. O'Malley and Jim O'Gorman were wounded and we were walking at the rear of the column - Treacy, Ned Reilly and myself. Going up through the village of Holyford, all the villagers turned out and said "Up Sinn Féin"! O'Malley turned to us, saying "Oh, J.C., after fighting for a few days, see what they are calling us, bloody Sinn Féiners"! Treacy was in charge there. Whenever Treacy was present, he was in charge.

I don't know when this happened. I was in Tipperary town area and for some reason or other they decided they were going to attack the town. They asked me to take charge of some men on the north side of the town. We had to move from three or four miles outside the town. At that time, when you made a big attack you would call all the local Volunteers.

We came along near Soloheadbeg and there was a fellow called Dinny Leahy, a fireman in the local creamery. On a Saturday night, when the locals got a few bob

they'd go into the town and have their few pints of stout, and Dinny, like the others, returned home this night but he was 'mogalore'. He was called out: "Din! Din!", but not a word, he was in a state of coma. The only answer we got was a semi-conscious grunt. "Come on, Din, you must get up! You are to block the roads". Din, being now awake, exclaimed with the utmost feeling and sincerity, "I wish to J.C. Ireland was free"!

The attack did not come off because the garrison went into the barracks. I got in as far as the town and there was an exchange of shots with somebody. The garrison would not come out. I don't remember what year that was; it might be 1921.

I came back to Dublin sometime in August, 1920. Collins notified me to come back. I had been down the country for some time. Then we had some scraps in Dublin, but these were not much. In one scrap, when I remained in bed, Treacy got the sole shot off his shoe. This was in Beresford Place. Some fellow was coming in from Belfast; they went down to get him, but without success.

Mick McDonnell was the O/C of the Dublin Squad, not Paddy Daly, and I can give you that on oath if you want it.

I was wounded in Ashtown in 1919. Daly and Joe Leonard were with me and, while I have no time for Daly, he stood by me. I was all blood, staggering on foot, and they pushed me along. I tied the leg of my trousers to hide the blood and I tried to cover my head, which was also bleeding. I could not forget this to Daly and Joe Leonard.

The most dastardly thing against Daly and Dick Mulcahy was the unfortunate boy they led to the gallows in 1924. They told this boy that his trial was only a farce and that they would get him away out of the country. This boy was tried and convicted and put into his 'condemned' cell. He remarked "I will be off to America in a few days", and it was only the day before his execution he realised it was serious. When going out to his execution he said, "There will be two men, Mulcahy and Paddy Daly, pleased that I am dancing on the trap door this morning". Kevin O'Higgins was insisting on trials at this time. That was the time Mulcahy and O'Higgins fell out.

It was sometime in 1924 that a child was christened belonging to Mulcahy, and the late Owen O'Duffy was godfather. They had a dinner that evening and Mulcahy had an appointment in Government Buildings at 8 o'clock. So also had Owen O'Duffy. Neither told the other who he was meeting, but they were both meeting Kevin O'Higgins. They didn't go together but they went in their separate cars. O'Duffy was shown into one room and Mulcahy was shown into O'Higgins's room. Mulcahy got his dismissal from O'Higgins and was told to get out and stay out. O'Duffy was appointed Commander-General of the Army, or some term like that. You will also find that Mulcahy was out of office as a Minister until after O'Higgins's death. Who shot O'Higgins?.

I was very much in the mutiny with McGrath and Tobin. I was a go-between. Mulcahy sent out his troops to round up Tobin and Company in Parnell Street at Liam Devlin's publichouse. He sent out six lorries of troops. He had a drumhead courtmartial ready and had his firing squads picked. He was going to present the Government

with a fait accompli, but he failed to capture them and it was after that O'Higgins sent for him.

The mutiny might have been a success were it not for the stupid interference of Miss Mary MacSwiney and her public meeting in O'Connell St., when she denounced the army fellows and said their hands were dyed with blood. All this is recorded in the papers of that time. Mary MacSwiney was the cause of giving the game away to a certain extent. She was hitting at people like me who were mixed up in the mutiny with the mutineers. But I could not see anything wrong with the other fellows, even if they had not seen the light for three years. They were good at heart.

It must have been September when I came back to Dublin, because I was only up three weeks when Treacy joined me. He was killed in October.

Colonel Smythe story:

There were three Smythe brothers. One of them made the famous speech in Kerry: "Don't argue, but shoot. The more you shoot the better I like you.....". He was shot for that in Cork. I tried to get him near Clonmel at one time, but I missed him. Anotner brother of his was shot in the North, in Lisburn, I think. I pulled up for a drink there one night and someone recognised me and the barman said:- "Get out". But that is a digression. I was blamed for the shooting of those brothers. Colonel Smythe was in India and he brought eleven picked men over here with him to avenge the shooting of his brother or brothers. They didn't know Treacy was there. They thought it was Lacey was with me. When Smythe heard that I had gone into a house in Drumcondra, he called his 'braves' and decided to go down and get me, and

to bring me back and skin me alive. Smythe was cautioned to look out for me, that "this fellow will fight", but he said, "No, they are only rats; I'll bring them back alive and I'll skin them alive". And he meant it. He did not go back because he was killed, and they say eleven of his pals were killed with him.

On that night in Drumcondra, Treacy was with me and neither of us were in good health after being severely wounded. We had been on the move more or less since 1916. We simply had to fight because we knew if we were caught that night it meant certain death. We were just caught in a corner. But we knew how to fight. There were Colonel Smythe and his eleven 'braves', 200 men and a posse of detectives and, of course, armoured cars. We got out the back windows after fighting for about 1½ or 1¼ hours inside the house. Four of Smythe's 'braves' were shot inside in a room. Some were dead and dying on the landing outside the room. Some dead were being dragged by an officer up the stairs.

A considerable time after this, two firemen came over to me and, shaking hands, they said: "We have not seen you for a long time, Mr. Breen". They said they knew me at Phil Shanahan's place down in Foley St. This was the prostitute area of Dublin. The men remarked that the last time they had seen me was the night we had the fight in Drumcondra. They added that they took away 18 dead in our ambush, in addition to the wounded. This was the story that was given to me. When we got out through the window, we continued out through the back and over the walls down by St. Patrick's Training College. I was not wearing boots because I was caught in bed, and I broke my toes. I went on towards Glasnevin after that.

The first shot fired wounded my right hand, and then I had to use my left hand. I had many wounds, including leg wounds. At the time, I was more or less oblivious of my wounds, but I suffered great pain afterwards. I was in the Mater Hospital then. I was brought there by Mick McDonnell, Maurice Brennan, and Joe Lawless. (Brennan works at O'Beirne's and Fitzgibbon's, O'Connell St.). McKee and Clancy were there.

The lady prostitutes used to pinch the guns and ammunition from the Auxiliaries or Tans at night, and then leave them for us at Phil Shanahan's publichouse. I might add that there was no such thing as payment for these transactions, and any information they had they gave us. The man who composed "The Soldier's Song" frequented Phil Shanahan's. Saint and sinners met there, including Jimmy Walsh from Templemore. Collins ordered me to get in touch with this "saint" from Templemore. He was the fellow who operated the bleeding statue. I met him over in O'Neill's in Pearse St. But we did not trust him; we thought he was a spy. I went across and Dinny Lacey was with me, also many others. I brought Dinny into O'Neill's in Pearse St. The "saint" was in the next room, and when it came to my turn to be interviewed, Dinny said: "The next time he meets the Blessed Virgin Mary, be sure to insist on nothing less than a Republic". Dinny was a very solid Catholic. I said to the "saint", "How do you do, boy?". After about 15 minutes' talk, I mentioned going but he insisted on going first. They were kissing his coat. I had a look at the boy and concluded he was a fake. Collins said, "One can't take

any notice of what you say, Breen, because you have no religion". That was the last I saw of the failure, Walsh. Phil Shanahan took a car down to Templemore and brought a bottle of water back with him. He wanted me to take a drink of it, but I declined.

Daniel Breen

Signed: Dan. Breen

Date: 4th August 1958

Witness: Seán Brennan Lieut-Col.
(Investigator).