

## DEPRESSION STRATEGY

By James Collins

The first days of the depression in America occurred in 1929. It took a couple of days for there to be runs on the banks when people rushed in any get their money. Americans had previously encountered bank failures but they occurred so far before, that memories dimmed. This was not the case with the Irish immigrants. Bank failures occurred in Ireland frequently because they were very low on cash and there were no government controls or guarantees. They were the first in line to take their money out of the banks.

Din and Dan Kiely, my uncles, were former IRA members of the North Cork flying column. From 1916 to 1920, they had fought the British, the black and tans, and the auxiliaries. They had been hunted men living in the hills and valleys for years on end hitting the British with guerrilla tactics every chance they got. When they signed the treaty, it made the lower 26 counties free and independent but kept the northern six counties under the British thumb. When Michael Collins and the IRA headquarters signed the treaty, it caused the Civil War in Ireland for many fought for total freedom. Din and Dan with the majority of the IRA members in Cork were in the midst of a new war fighting the treaty supporters. They lost. Dan sustained a hand wound in a battle and since they captured him holding a Thompson submachine gun they sentenced Dan to death. Only, with the amnesty that came after the Civil War ended, they pardoned Dan. Times in Ireland were unsettled and many a grudge from the Civil War was still apparent. The sisters banded together, collected some money, and shipped their brothers out of Ireland to America. The brothers landed in New York, found many of their comrades in arms, and started benefiting from the American way of life.

Michael Quill, the eventual head of the Transportation Workers Union (TWU) in New York, heard of Din and Dan through IRA contacts and hired them to protect the bus drivers who wanted to join his union. The owners of the bus companies had hired Murder Incorporated to terrorize the bus drivers and the union needed a force to counteract them. Ex IRA gunmen who had taken on the British Empire and defeated them, were just what the union wanted. Now Din and Dan carrying .45 caliber automatics were riding next to the bus drivers or the subway drivers protecting all of their routes through New York City. People on both sides died and were maimed in these confrontations. Eventually the unions won.

By the time the depression hit both Dan and Din were ensconced in the unions and were being paid quite well. However, their experiences in Ireland had sensitized them to the vulnerability of banks. They were among the first in line at their bank cleaning out their accounts. They arrived at my mother's apartment late in the afternoon, looking furtively about them as they carried in a large canvas shopping bag. As soon as it got dark,

so as not to attract attention, they pulled down all the shades in the apartment. They then tore up the floorboards in the corner and took in excess of \$10,000 and wrap bills out of the shopping bag and deposit them in the floor. They then replaced the floorboards and took turns, four-hour shifts, guarding the cache with automatic pistols on their laps. This went on for a couple of weeks. Then they left with the money. Where they went nobody knew because they did not tell anyone.

A few months later, they told the sisters they were going back to Ireland. Almost 10 years had passed and Ireland was recovering. Since Dan had been a bodyguard for DeValerra who was now the president of Ireland, he was made a Garda in the Irish police. Din was given a job with the post office. These were plum positions in Ireland as they were government jobs, which were never cut. Both married younger women and settled down to long happy lives. Din had 13 children, 11 boys and two girls while Dan had 14 children, eight girls and six boys. The majority of these children are now American citizens as my family vouched for them and brought them over as soon as they turned 18.

**THE END**