

W. 8. 784
ORIGINAL

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21
BURO STAIRÉ MILEATA 1913-21
No. W.S. 784

ROINN



COSANTA.

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21.

STATEMENT BY WITNESS

DOCUMENT NO. W.S. 784

Witness

Professor Liam O'Briain,
Coill Tomair,
University Road,
Galway.

Identity.

Member of I.R.B. 1916;
Associate of Arthur Griffith and other
Irish Leaders.

Subject.

Shooting of Sir Henry Wilson
in London, 1922.

Conditions, if any, Stipulated by Witness.

Nil

File No.S.80.....

Form B.S.M. 2

ORIGINAL

45 8.784

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21
BURO STAIRE MILEATA 1913-21
No. W.S. 784

Statement Of Professor Liam Ó Bráin,
University College, Galway.

(In Connection With The Shooting of Sir Henry Wilson)

In 1935, I think, appeared Piaras Beaslaoi's shorter Life of Michael Collins. It was attacked violently in a leading article in the 'Irish Press' for dishonestly suppressing the essential importance of the ultimatum sent by the British Government to the Provisional Government in Dublin, ordering them to move immediately against the Four Courts after the assassination of General Sir Henry Wilson. Beaslaoi took an action against the paper, challenged them to produce the ultimatum and received £300 from the 'Irish Press' in settlement of his claim for damages.

A letter from me to the 'Irish Independent', pointing out the historical importance of this incident, led to a long controversy between the Editor of the 'Irish Press' and myself in the columns of that paper.

In the course of this controversy, a man, called Frank Martin, came to see me in Galway. Frank Martin was an Engineer under the Board of Works in Galway and had been reared in London. He made the following statement to me, saying that it might be useful to me in the controversy:-

"I was a member of the London Company of the I.R.A. in 1921 and 1922. When the split came, practically all the Company became anti-Treaty. My attitude was that we should accept the decision of the "people at home" on the question, but I

remained in the Company and the Company continued intact. When the "Four Courts Executive" was formed, the Company recognised it and was taking orders from it.

One day, the Captain, Reggie Dunne, came to me and asked me would I take part in a big job. The Four Courts people, he said, had decided to shoot Sir Henry Wilson. This would precipitate an attack on the Four Courts by the British military forces still in Dublin. The "Portobello people" (that is, the Army under Mulcahy and Dáil Éireann) could not stand by and see old comrades attacked by the British and would have to come to their assistance, and so the split would be healed up and we would be "all one again", fighting the British, and there would be no further question of the Treaty.

After long consideration, I declined and Reggie Dunne got Sullivan to assist him in the job."

I (Liam Ó Bríain) wanted at the time Frank Martin to write down and sign before witnesses this statement, but the usual procrastination occurred. He was transferred to Dublin some time afterwards and, when finally Colonel John Joyce at my urging sent Commandant R.J. Feely to record his statement, he discovered that Frank Martin had died a month before. This was I think in 1949.

I should add that I asked (about 1951 or 1952) Ernie O'Malley about this matter. He said he had no recollection of any such decision being taken by the

Four Courts Executive, of which he was a member.

SIGNED: Liam O'Brien
(Liam O'Brien)

DATE: 20th Eanáir 1953
20 Eanáir 1953.

WITNESS: Isa Hughes (Isa Hughes)
J.V. Lawless Col.
(J.V. Lawless) Col.

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21
BURO STAIRÉ MILEATA 1913-21
No. W.S. 784