

ORIGINAL

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21

BURO STAIRE MILEATA 1913-21

No. W.S. 866

ROINN



COSANTA.

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21.

STATEMENT BY WITNESS.

DOCUMENT NO. W.S. 866.....

Witness

Gerald Hamilton,
56 Glebe Place,
Chelsea,
London S.W.3.

Identity.

Editor of "Lilliput"
Pocket Publications Ltd., London.

Subject.

Events of national interest,
1912, 1916, 1919-1921.

Conditions, if any, Stipulated by Witness.

Nil

File No. S.1095.....

Form B.S.M. 2

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21

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NO. W.S.

866

CASAIRÉ

W. 8.866

S.1095.


MR. GERALD HAMILTONNote by Director - 13th October, 1948.

1. In view of the fact that Mr. Hamilton claims to have arranged for and been present at an interview between Mr. T. O'Kelly, now President of Ireland, and Monsignor, later Cardinal, Ceretti at Paris at some date subsequent to December, 1918, I asked the President about him to-day. In this I was facilitated by the fact that I am Secretary to the President.
2. The President informed me that Mr. Hamilton's statement. that he arranged such an interview and was present at it, is untrue.
3. The President gave me the following information regarding Mr. Hamilton:- Prior to the trial which ended in his death in August, 1916, Roger Casement was in Brixton Prison. Mr. Hamilton was in that prison at the same time, not - the President believes - for any political reason, but for reasons which do not concern the Bureau. Whether Mr. Hamilton met Casement there or not the President cannot say.
4. On his release from prison Mr. Hamilton was introduced to Mr. O'Kelly by Art O'Brien. Mr. O'Kelly was not impressed by Mr. Hamilton and made that clear to Mr. Hamilton, who later complained to



CASAIRE.....

- Mr. O'Brien on that score. In contrast with Mr. O'Kelly's reaction, Mr. George Gavan Duffy, later President of the High Court of Ireland, became very friendly with Mr. Hamilton and remained so.
5. Mr. Hamilton is well-educated and speaks several languages. He is a convert to Catholicism. He is, or was at the close of the 1914-1918 war, persona grata with certain people in the Vatican.
 6. At the close of that war he took part in the organisation, "Save The Children Fund", which was established under Vatican patronage or with its approval, and travelled around for some time in connection with that organisation.
 7. He was later arrested and tried and spent some time in prison for, it is believed, obtaining money under false pretences.
 8. He has written a book called "As Young As Sophocles", a copy of which he has sent to Mr. O'Kelly who did not acknowledge it and does not answer any of his correspondence.
 9. The fact that Mr. Hamilton makes the false claim that he arranged and was present at an interview between Mr. O'Kelly and Monsignor Ceretti in Paris is an indication of the extent to which he can be regarded as a reliable witness.



(M. McDunphy)

DIRECTOR

13th October, 1948.

COPY.

~~ORIGINAL~~

leaflet.

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

15 Meán Fómhair, 1948.

A Chara,

The enclosed leaflet will explain why I am writing to you.

The Director has read an article by Richard Lane entitled "Portrait of a Fisherman in Troubled Waters" which appeared in the September issue of "Lilliput" (page 85).

During the course of the article Mr. Lane gave a brief account of your connection with the late Roger Casement.

The Director would be glad if you could see your way to set down on record for the Bureau the full story of your association with Casement as well as your experiences in connection with the other matters mentioned in the articles.

The story which you have to tell can be told in any manner you choose, and can take the form of a single statement or any number of statements. The essential thing is that whatever you set down should be a record of the facts as they are known to you. It should be told with as much detail as you can remember, including dates, persons, places, etc., as incidents which appear to be of minor importance may, in the view of historians, have a real significance.

Statements, when received in the Bureau, are carefully covered and bound to ensure their preservation and protection as historic documents, and for that reason it would be appreciated if you could arrange, when drawing up your statement, to use one side of the paper only, and to leave a margin of about one inch on the left, so that none of the text may be obscured in the binding.

Mise, le meas,

(sgd) P. J. BRENNAN.
RÚNAÍ.

Gerald Hamilton, Esq.,
c/o. The Editor,
"Lilliput",
Pocket Publications Ltd.,
43 & 44 Shoe Lane,
LONDON, E.C.4.

FLAXMAN 8020



56 GLEBE PLACE
CHELSEA S.W.3.

13th October, 1948.

The Director,
Bureau of Military History,
26, Westland Row,
DUBLIN. EIRE.

Ref. S.55.

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A Chara;

Thank you for your letter of the 28th September. I beg to enclose a very short narrative of my connection with Sir Roger Casement and other Irish leaders. I have purposely made it brief and if it is suitable in its present form well and good. If, however, there are any particular points you want me to develop, I would be pleased to do so. I have not entered into less important matters such as the quarrel between Art O'Brien and Gerald O'Kelly and various other matters which do not seem to me to be pertinent although they had some bearing on Irish affairs.

When I am next in Dublin, I will give myself the pleasure of calling at your office, letting you know before hand when I shall be in Eire and if there is anything I can do at any time, I shall be pleased to do so.

I have not, of course, referred to my short internment during the second world war because it had nothing to do with Irish affairs. I attempted a Peace Move which was sponsored by the Vatican. I met my old friend, Cahir Healy, in Brixton at the time, but he was interned for a very much longer period than I was.

Yours sincerely,

Gerald Hamilton

(Gerald Hamilton)

P.S. I am still a British subject and travel under a British Passport. This is because I was not resident in Eire in 1921. I still feel this is a great pity and wonder if anything can be done about it.

Second Hand

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I first met Sir Roger Casement in June or July 1912 during a brief visit of his to London. I always had a great admiration for him and for the work he had done in the Congo and Peru and being an Ulsterman myself and, at that time, a recent convert to the Catholic Church, I was fired with Nationalist zeal and regarded Casement as a special hero. It is true that at that time he had not come out openly into the lime light as an enemy of England, but he told me at the time that he was quite happy to be in the British Consular service and would serve England faithfully just as long as Irish interests did not conflict with such services.

During 1913, as is well known from those who knew him, and also from his writings at the period, he underwent a gradual change and became more hostile to England, in view of the worsening of conditions in Ireland and of the relationship between Ireland and England.

I flatter myself that Casement liked me personally and when he went to America, he remained in touch with me, until some months after the outbreak of the war.

In view of the fact that I spoke ~~perfect~~ German like a German, and knew Germany so well, he was anxious for me to join him in Berlin, if I could manage to reach that country. Actually when the war broke out I was in Italy, living in Rome, but moved to Spain when Italy entered the war in May 1915. At that time my money allowances from England were stopped and it must have been reported to London that I frequented German society in Madrid and was a friend of the German Ambassador there.

I returned to London, intending to leave for Holland, for during the first world war it was not nearly so difficult to move about as it was during the second world war. My friend Emily Hobhouse, for instance, actually went to Berlin,

in the very middle of the war, via Switzerland, without much difficulty and I was hoping to meet her when she as there, although the mission that took her to Berlin was not connected with Irish affairs, but with a Peace plan of hers.

During my brief stay in London, I noticed that I was the subject of police surveillance and my movements were followed closely. The evening before my departure to Holland, police and military officers raided the small flat in Westminster in which I was then living, removed my passport and all papers but did not arrest me. I was arrested about two days later, after going to Oxford, where I had a relative, to whom I wished to explain what had happened. I was taken to Brixton prison and kept there, as they called it at that time as a "military lodger", i.e. a prisoner at the disposition of the military authorities. I was taken for interrogation to Scotland Yard several times and interrogated there by Sir Basil Thompson, who adopted a very threatening attitude. I had heard, of course, when in Spain, of the project of the '16 rising but as I left Spain in October 1915 when Casement was in Berlin, I, of course, knew nothing about matters, after reaching London. The last letter I received from Casement was from Munich and he complained very bitterly of his treatment by the German Foreign Office, at least, reading between the lines of his last letter this was what I took it to mean. I was told that I was to be court-martialled, but evidently Sir Henry Curtis Bennett, who came to see me at Brixton to question me, judged that it would be difficult to obtain a conviction. For my defence was that I had done nothing whatever to help the enemy of England, that I regarded myself as an Irishman and that my

Prison

*to know a
copy of it*

country was not at war with the Central Empires, and that I had not planned to go to Berlin, as I was accused of doing, but only to Holland, in order to be in a neutral country and away from the war which was no concern of mine, unless Ireland were brought into it.

A clause in the then Defence Act (Clause 14B - distinct from the 18B of the Defence Act of the recent war) enabled the military to hold allied citizens such as Belgians, Russians and others and it was under this clause that I was detained until the end of the war.

Amongst those detained under the same clause were several Irish people (as distinct from those sentenced to varying terms of imprisonment for participation in the 1916 rising, who were, of course in convict prisons), Amongst those I met during my detention or internment was an Irish Professor at the University of Buenos Aires named McConnastair, who first taught me Erse, an Irishman named Cotter - I forget his Christian name, and Chicherin, who was interned until he was made the first Soviet Commissair for Foreign Affairs, when his release was arranged against the release of Sir George Buchanan, the former British Ambassador at St. Petersburg.

The news of the '16 rising was first brought to me by my solicitor, but newspapers were allowed and, of course, I was able to read about this at the time.

Later Casement was brought from the Tower to Brixton when it was decided that he was to be tried at the Old Bailey for High Treason. It will also be remembered that although not a Catholic, he registered as one in order to have an opportunity of seeing fellow Irishmen (later, of course, he was received into the Roman Catholic Church and died a Catholic) but he was carefully guarded at Brixton and it was quite impossible to see him and even in the Catholic

Chapel he sat, not in front where the prisoners sat but to the side of the Altar, where curtains were, so that he could hardly be seen. The only communication I held with him, although we were in the same prison, was when once he sent by a warder a copy of St. John Ervine's "Life of Carson", with his comments in the margin and at the beginning, written in pencil. The warder in question, of course, saw that it was nothing more than a book, and that no letter was contained.

I was released from internment at the end of December 1918 and soon afterwards went to see Art O'Brien who then had offices in the Adelphi. He asked me if I would like to go to Paris and get in touch with George Gavan Duffy there and Sean T. O'Ceallaigh, who were at the Grand Hotel, during the Peace Conference. I did this; and having good connections at the Vatican was able to arrange for an interview with Mgr. (later Cardinal) Cerretti, who was the Papal Delegate to the Peace Conference, for the two Irish representatives and was present at this interview. It is, of course, well known that the English did all they could to prevent a presentation of Ireland's case to the Peace Conference but thanks to the help of the French authorities and to Mgr. Cerretti's insistence, some progress was made but not all that we hoped to make.

Later Colonel Maurice Moore, brother of George Moore, came to Paris as a representative of Eire but he did not stay for long. Mention, of course, should be made of Mr. McWhite, who was at the Irish Delegation all the time and rendered invaluable services. He had served in the French Foreign Legion and therefore was persona grata with the French authorities.

I met Archbishop Mannix for the first time in my life at the Irish Delegation in Paris soon after the war and this was the beginning of a life long friendship which still continues. I remember he was taken off a liner by a British destroyer and landed at a French Port. The French and American correspondents were very anxious for interviews with him, but these he declined. I told them at the time that they could say it was the greatest British Naval victory since Trafalgar, which amused them.

I was with Gavan Duffy in Brussels, Rome, and Berlin and when he came to Berlin I arranged for him to meet various German friends of mine, Stresemann and other politicians.

In conclusion I may mention that I first met Mr. De Valera also in Paris, when he was there with the Countess Markievicz before the 1921 treaty. I wrote ^{him} and implored that Ireland should insist on these negotiations taking place not in London, but at Paris, Brussels, or in Holland, as I felt that the London atmosphere, as was in fact the case, might jeopardise Ireland's complete freedom. I still think that Ireland then held trump cards. The whole civilised world was shocked by the atrocities of the Black and Tans and a Treaty might have been arranged which would have saved Ireland the shame and horror of Partition if the negotiations had taken place on neutral territory.

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