

W. S. 947
ORIGINAL

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21
BUIRO STAIRÉ MILEATA 1913-21
NO. W.S. 947

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BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21.

STATEMENT BY WITNESS.

DOCUMENT NO. W.S. 947.....

Witness

Colonel Dan Bryan,
The Military College,
Curragh Training Camp,
Co. Kildare.

Identity.

Intelligence Officer 4th Bt'n. Dublin Brigade, 1921;
Comd't. Military College, Curragh Training Camp,
Co. Kildare.

Subject.

Sir James MacMahon,
Under-Secretary of State for Ireland, 1920-1921.

Conditions, if any, Stipulated by Witness.

Nil

File No. S. 2259.....

Form B.S.M. 2

ORIGINAL

The Military College,
Curragh Training Camp.

17 May 54

Confidential

Colonel J.V. Joyce,
Bureau of Military History,
Westland Row,
Dublin.

SUBJECT:- Sir James McMahon, Under-Secretary
for Ireland, 1921.

Further to our recent conversation and my promise to send you a written note regarding some incidents affecting Sir James McMahon. The facts are as follows:-

In 1921 I was acting and frequently Assistant IO. of the 4th Battalion, Dublin Brigade. *James Dwyer of Rathmines, * who became a Deputy some time about this period, was then the most prominent and active person in Sinn Féin and other civil activities, not merely in Rathmines, but in large areas of County Dublin. At the same time he was a member of the Volunteers and was IO. of "G" Company, 4th Battalion. As a Company IO. he dealt with the IO, 4th Battalion, on ordinary Volunteer intelligence. In addition, however, he had special sources of intelligence in wider fields, such as the political, and in connection with those he dealt directly with Director of Intelligence - Michael Collins. I was usually aware of his special activities in this respect but did not bother about the details. Some time, I should say in the late Spring or early Summer of 1921, he showed me at least one copy of a report which he was sending to the Director of Intelligence on a discussion he had had with Sir James McMahon, the then Under-Secretary for Ireland. Strangely enough, the only item in this report that I can now recollect was one on Sir Henry Robinson, the then British Chief of Local Government in Ireland, which was to the effect that McMahon regretted having to admit that Robinson, whom he previously regarded as a decent man, had now gone completely over to the side of the extreme military clique or crowd in the Castle. I assume, but do not recollect that the report generally dealt with information given by McMahon on the political condition of the British Government in Ireland and related subjects. I have a very definite, but not an absolute recollection that Dwyer had at least two interviews with McMahon. I do not know how the contact between Dwyer and McMahon was made but Dwyer and all

* note - James Dwyer referred to here had a grocery shop on Upper Rathmines Road. He became a T.D., voted for the Treaty, and was shot dead by armed men in his house in 1922.
20 May 1954. J.V. Joyce, Colonel

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his family had been in Blackrock College where McMahon had been educated. This may have provided some contact.

Turning over in my mind the recent discussion with you I have come to the conclusion that it might be assumed that the Dwyer-McMahon contact was an intelligence one and that McMahon was prepared to give information which could be used in the side against the British. Looking back on the matter since I do not think this was so. McMahon presumably had no reasons for knowing and believing that Dwyer was involved in the military side of the movement. Dwyer in fact had been arrested and released about 1920. On the other hand, Dwyer presumably was known to McMahon as a sensible, shrewd man, who was very prominent in the Sinn Féin organisation and in the political activities of the period. I assume, without knowing how the contact was made, that McMahon was merely anxious to discuss the general situation with a man who was both a member of Dail Eireann and a driving force in the Sinn Féin and related organisations.

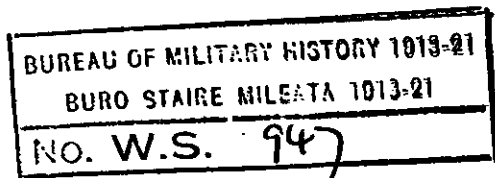
I should add that at an earlier period, Dwyer had obtained information from the Tulcewest Club, bearing on changes in British troops - the substitution of Sir John Ross as Lord Chancellor - which was associated with an effort by the military and extreme crowd in the Castle to secure a military victory. This may have led to encourage in this line of activity.

Dan Bryan
COLONEL
(Dan Bryan)

COMMANDANT: THE MILITARY COLLEGE.

Sir Cornelius Gregg, another ex Blackrock man, and now a permanent director of the National Bank, should have some information on the background in the Castle at this period

DB/KT



The Military College,
Curragh Training Camp.

ORIGINAL

17th May, '54.

Confidential

Colonel J.V. Joyce,
Bureau of Military History,
Westland Row,
Dublin.

SUBJECT: - Sir James McMahon, Under-Secretary
for Ireland, 1921.

Further to our recent conversation and my promise to send you a written note regarding some incidents affecting Sir James McMahon. The facts are as follows: -

In 1921 I was acting and frequently Assistant I.O. of the 4th Battalion, Dublin Brigade. (X) James Dwyer of Rathmines (X), who became a Deputy some time about this period, was then the most prominent and active person in Sinn Féin and other civil activities, not merely in Rathmines, but in large areas of County Dublin. At the same time he was a member of the Volunteers and was I.O. of "G" Company, 4th Battalion. As a Company I.O. he dealt with the I.O., 4th Battalion, on ordinary Volunteer intelligence. In addition, however, he had special sources of intelligence in wider fields, such as the political, and in connection with those he dealt directly with Director of Intelligence - Michael Collins. I was usually aware of his special activities in this respect but did not bother about the details. Some time, I should say in the late Spring or early Summer of 1921, he showed me at least one copy of a report which he was sending to the Director of Intelligence on a discussion he had had with Sir James McMahon, the then Under-Secretary for Ireland. Strangely enough, the only item in this report that I can now recollect was one on Sir Henry Robinson, the then British Chief of Local Government in Ireland, which was to the effect that McMahon regretted having to admit that Robinson, whom he previously regarded as a decent man, had now gone completely over to the side of the extreme military clique or crowd in the Castle. I assume, but do not recollect that the report generally dealt with information given by McMahon on the political condition of the British Government in Ireland and related subjects. I have a very definite, but not an absolute recollection that Dwyer had at least two interviews with McMahon. I do not know how the contact between Dwyer and McMahon was made but Dwyer and all his family had been in Blackrock College where McMahon had been educated. This may have provided some contact.

Turning over in my mind the recent discussion with you I have come to the conclusion that it might be assumed that the Dwyer-McMahon contact was an intelligence one and that McMahon was prepared to give information which could be used in the side against the British. Looking back on the matter since I do not think this was so. McMahon presumably had no reasons for knowing and believing that Dwyer was involved in the military side of the movement. Dwyer in fact had been arrested and released about 1920. On the other hand, Dwyer presumably was known to McMahon as a sensible, shrewd man, who was very prominent in the Sinn Féin organisation and in the political activities of the period. I assume, without knowing how the contact was made, that McMahon was merely anxious to discuss the general situation with a man who was both a member of Dáil Éireann and a driving force in the Sinn Féin and related organisations.

I should add that at an earlier period, Dwyer had obtained information from the Kildare St. Club, bearing on changes in British personnel - the substitution of Sir John Ross for Lord Glenavy as Lord Chancellor - which was associated with an effort by the military and extreme crowd in the Castle to secure a military victory. This may have led Collins to encourage him in this line of activity. Sir Cornelius Gregg, another ex Blackrock man, and now a permanent Director of the National Bank, should have some information on the background in the Castle at this period.

(Signed)

DAN BRYAN COLONEL

COMMANDANT: THE MILITARY
COLLEGE.

(X) Note: James Dwyer referred to here had a grocery shop on Upper Rathmines Road. He became a T.D., voted for the Treaty, and was shot dead by armed men in his house in 1922.

(Signed)

J.V. JOYCE COLONEL

20th May, 1954.

