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BURO STAIRE MILEATA 1913-21

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Statement by

Fred Murray,
Lislin,
Strawberry Hill,
Cork.

Dated 3 September, 1947,

On D. Coy., Cork City Batt.
and Cyclist Coy. I.V.
1914 - 1916.

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BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21
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STATEMENT OF EVIDENCE OF FRED MURRAY,
LISÍN, STRAWBERRY HILL, CORK.

PERIOD: EARLY 1914 TO EASTER, 1916.

UNITS: 'D' COMPANY, CORK CITY BATTALION AND
CYCLIST COMPANY, I.V.

I joined the Irish Volunteers when the Cork Corps had Headquarters in Fisher Street in 1914, but I have no very clear recollection of details in connection with the movement up to the time of the Split in September, 1914. At that time Tomás MacCurtain gave me a number of rifles to keep safely, and from that time onwards I had a good deal of contact with him and with Terence MacSwiney.

Soon after the Hall in Sheares Street was taken as Volunteer Headquarters early in 1915, a Company of Cyclists was formed of men drawn from the City Companies, and I was put in charge of it with the rank of Lieutenant of Cyclists. There were at least fourteen men in this Unit. We took twenty Mauser rifles to the Ballinadee Company some time after the Howth gun-running; Tomás MacCurtain and Terence MacSwiney were with us that day.

From the end of 1914 intensive efforts to organise the whole of the County Cork were made by the leaders here. Speakers and organisers were sent out to different areas, usually on Sundays, and the Cyclist Company generally went with one or other of these organisers. In July, 1915, Terence MacSwiney became wholetime organiser for County Cork, and the cyclists very frequently accompanied him to the Sunday parades in different parts of the County. They went also with Tomás MacCurtain occasionally.

There were four Companies in the City at Easter, 1916 - 'A', 'B', 'C' and 'D' - and they comprised the 1st Battalion, of which Seán O'Sullivan was Officer Commanding.

The Company Officers, as far as I remember, were:-

'A'	Captain	Sean Scanlan.
	1st Lieut.	
	2nd Lieut.	
	Adjutant.	
	Quartermaster.	
'B'	Captain	Donal Barrett.
	1st Lieut.	P. Trahy.
	2nd Lieut.	Donal óg O'Callaghan.
	Adjutant	Pat Harris..
	Quartermaster.	
'C'	Captain	Paddy Cotter.
	1st Lieut.	Bob Langford.
	2nd Lieut.	
	Adjutant.	
	Quartermaster.	
'D'	Captain	Chris O'Gorman.
	1st Lieut.	Con Collins.
	2nd Lieut.	
	Adjutant	William Rabbett.
	Quartermaster.	

I was in 'D' Company.

In the middle of the week before Holy Week Tomás MacCurtain asked me to leave my work (I was a builder's foreman) at the end of that week and be available to take mobilisation orders to County Units during Holy Week. I demurred, and explained the difficulty about leaving my work to do something which I thought was not so important that he could not get others to do it. MacCurtain then bound me to secrecy and said the time had arrived when we were going to take action, and said that I must ensure that no suspicion of our intentions arose from the fact that I was leaving my work in the following week. On being told this I at once agreed to be available for any work he wanted me to do. I gave as an excuse to my employer that I had been engaged to train a team of step dancers for a Feis in Kenmare on Easter Sunday.

On the Monday of Holy Week I got written Mobilisation Orders from Tomás MacCurtain at the Railway Men's Rooms in Maylor Street to take to Rathduff, Mourneabbey, Mallow, Castletownroche and Rock Mills. The Orders were written by Tomás MacCurtain and were to the effect that the Companies were to parade on Easter Sunday with all arms, complete equipment, and food for two or three days. The Rathduff, Mourneabbey and Mallow Companies were to march to Bweeing Cross on Sunday, but I am not sure of where the Castletownroche and Rockmills Companies were to go. As far as I remember, the time fixed for the parades was 12 o'clock. I cycled to Rathduff, left the order with Pa Twomey there, cycled to Mourneabbey and left his order with Bill Jones, and then cycled on to Mallow. I do not think I saw Dan Hegarty at Mallow, but I left the order for him. I then cycled to Castletownroche and left his own order and the order for Rockmills with - Palmer there. My instructions were that Palmer was to deliver the order to Rockmills. I returned to Cork late on Monday night.

On the Tuesday of Holy Week, for some reason that I do not now remember, MacCurtain sent me back over the same ground as far as Mallow. I returned to Cork again that night.

On Wednesday I reported to MacCurtain at the Railway Men's Rooms in Maylor Street and stayed with him there all day. On that day a number of Volunteer Officers from the County came to receive their orders. There were a number of them in at different times during the day, but the only one I can clearly remember is Daití C'Brien of Cobh. I understood the position to be that in the case of any Company unable to send an Officer in to Cork the orders were being sent out to them.

On that Wednesday MacSwiney was in the rooms in Maylor Street and a discussion took place between him and Tomás MacCurtain in reference to who would go to Newmarket. I was not consulted. I was told on Monday by Tomás I was to go and on Wednesday was sent instead to Eyries, Castletownbere.

That was the first time I heard that a ship with arms was to arrive. Tomás told me of it, and said that whoever went to Newmarket would have to arrange about the distribution of the arms that would come there. Eventually it was decided that Terry would go to Newmarket, and that I would go to Eyries and Kenmare on the following day - a journey which he had intended

to do. I cannot remember if he actually went to Newmarket that day, or next day, or at all.

I did not at any time get an idea of what the general plan of action for the Cork Brigade was, but I have a clear recollection of a discussion with Tomás MacCurtain in the Maylor Street rooms that Wednesday, from which it was clear that he visualised the taking and holding of towns. He took Banteer as an example, and went into details in instructing me as to the action to be taken for protection, feeding, billeting, and so on, if I should be in the position of an officer in charge of Volunteers who had taken the town.

On the Thursday of Holy Week I started out from Cork on a bicycle with Mobilisation Orders for Kenmare, Eyries and Ballycrovane. I may also have had one for Dan Corkery at Macroom, but am not sure. These orders were written by Tomás MacCurtain. I do not know what they were, but my impression is that the Castletownbere men were to join up with the Kerry men at Kenmare. I do not know why MacCurtain would have sent an order to the Kenmare Company, which was not in his Brigade, except for some such reason as this.

I cannot remember the name of the man in Kenmare - he was a school teacher - but I went to a girl, Miss O'Sullivan, in Sullivan's Hotel, whose name I had been given, to get in touch with him. He was away and I left the order for him. I went to Eyries and Miss Sheila O'Driscoll got Jack Driscoll for me. I arrived there very late at night, and gave him his orders. I stayed in Eyries that night and next morning Jack Driscoll cycled out with me the seven miles to Jim McCarthy, Ballycrovane, to whom I delivered his orders.

Next day, Good Friday, I cycled back to Kenmare. The Stations were on and I went to the church there. When I came out of the church I had the first indication of something unusual being afoot. There were four policemen outside. They made a move as if they intended to hold me up but I jumped on my bicycle quickly and got away. They seemed hesitant and uncertain of what action they should take. I was not in uniform but was wearing a Volunteer breeches.

I cycled to Headfort Junction to get a train to Cork. I don't know what time I arrived there, but I had a long time to wait for the train and it was dusk when it came in, perhaps between 9 and 10 o'clock. As soon as I got into the carriage I was addressed by a man already in it. He said "Was it out mobilising you were?" I did not recognise him at first and made an evasive answer. He then asked me did I not know him, and I asked him to take his hat off. He did so and I recognised him as Councillor Partridge of Dublin. He then told me he had come from Tralee and was on his way to Dublin. He said the arms ship had been captured and that Casement had also been captured. Discussing the loss of the arms, he said, "It will not make any difference in Dublin; we are going on in Dublin". I did not know before this that Casement was coming; MacCurtain did not mention Casement in giving me the information about the arms ship on the previous Wednesday. I left Partridge at Mallow and came on to Cork.

On arrival in Cork I went at once to the Volunteer Hall in Sheares Street. It was sometime in the early hours of Saturday morning. I had difficulty in getting admittance, Langford was Captain of the Guard. Tomás MacCurtain was in bed but got up. He was in his pyjamas. He asked me why I had come at that hour and I said "Bad news; the arms ship has been captured". It was a great shock to him. I said, "there was a man captured also". "Casement?" he asked. I said "yes". He said, sadly, "things had been going too well". I gave him a full account of what Partridge had told me, and, after considering the matter a little, he instructed me not to inform anybody of what I knew, but to carry on as if this had not happened. I came back to the Hall later on Saturday and continued preparations for Sunday.

On Easter Sunday the Volunteers assembled at the Hall in Sheares Street about noon. Some groups had come from Cobh and other places in East Cork. All men who had bicycles were put into the Cyclist Company, and this brought its strength up to about sixty men. No man in it had a rifle, and I do not think anyone had a shot gun; revolvers were the only weapons we had. I am not sure if every man was armed. I myself had a .32 revolver and 45 rounds of ammunition. I had given my rifle to Pa Murray. *my nephew*

After the men had moved off to Capwell Station, the Cyclist Company remained at Sheares Street as Tomás MacCurtain had instructed me to hold them. Tomás and Terry were in the Hall; they had a car outside. Another car arrived with two men in it, and the men went upstairs to where Tomás and Terry were. After a while I got uneasy about not being instructed to move off and I went upstairs into the room where Tomás, Terry and the two men were. Tomás had the countermanding order from McNeill in his hand. He passed it to me and I read it. There was some short discussion in which Tomás asked what would happen in Dublin and one of the two men said that a few of the hot heads may make trouble. Tomás instructed me to take the Cyclist Company to Crookstown as originally arranged, and said he and Terry were going there in the car.

When I got to Crookstown with the Cyclist Company I found that the Cork men and the West Cork men who had joined them there had moved on towards Macroom. I followed and overtook them about half-way between Crookstown and Macroom. We fell in on foot behind the Column. Con Collins, Lieutenant in 'D' Company, was in charge of the rearguard. He asked me if there was any change in the position, as he had orders not to let any armed man pass the rearguard. I went forward to Seán O'Sullivan, who was in charge of the whole body, and enquired from him if Tomás or Terry had given him any instructions. He said yes, they had told him the parade was cancelled, but he had forgotten to change the orders for the rearguard. He did so then. I did not myself see Terry or Tomás again that day.

The Cyclist Company led the parade on foot into the town of Macroom. When we halted at the Square I saw the car that had been at the Hall earlier standing near Williams. The day was very wet and we went to the Railway Station. The instructions were to come back to Cork on the next train. I have no

recollection of a meeting of Officers being held. I have no recollection of anything important being discussed by the Officers. We returned to Cork by train that evening and dismissed at the Hall.

I do not remember anything of importance happening on Easter Monday.

Some day later in the week there was a meeting in the Hall in Sheares Street of all the city men in connection with the proposal to surrender the arms. Tomás and Terry were in favour of it, and Terry came to me and asked me to help in getting it carried. A large majority voted for surrender of the arms, but, in fact, only about 20% of those held by the City Companies were handed in to Lord Mayor Butterfield.

One morning at 4 a.m. (I am unable to say if it was in Easter Week, but it probably was) Tomás and Terry came to my house with sealed orders to be delivered to the Officers at Macroom, Banteer and Kanturk. These orders had reference to the surrender of arms, but I do not know what the terms of them were. I took them to Dan Corkery in Macroom, a man whose name I cannot remember in Banteer, ^{mill} and ✓ O'Connell in ~~Kanturk~~ ^{Street}. I think that Terence MacSwiney went to Limerick about the same time to discuss the question of arms, but I am not sure of this.

About the same time a number of us were arrested by the police and taken to Cork Jail. Tomás, Terry, Seán Murphy, Seán Nolan and myself were among the number. The Bishop and the Lord Mayor intervened and we were released in less than a day. The general arrests followed later, but I was not picked up.

My opinion is that if the arms ship had not been captured the Rising would have taken place in Cork in spite of the Counter-manding Orders.

I. R. B.

There were five I.R.B. Circles in Cork City at Easter, 1916, one in each of the four Companies and Seán O'Hegarty's one in the G.P.O. I was centre of 'D' Company Circle. McNeilus and Martin Donovan were in it. It was very small in numbers.

There were no special I.R.B. instructions about control of the Volunteer Organisation, but practically all the Officers were I.R.B. men, and this gave effective control.

After the first expulsion orders by the British in 1914, every Volunteer Officer in Cork was required to give an undertaking that he would not leave the country if served with such an order.

Signed:

Judith Murray

Date:

September 3rd 1947

Witness:

Florence O'Donoghue

