

ORIGINAL

BUREAU OF MIL HIST	17-21
BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY	
No. W.S. 292	

ROINN  COSANTA.

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21.

STATEMENT BY WITNESS

DOCUMENT NO. W.S. 292.....

Witness

Mr. Donal Hales,
Via Monte Zovetto,
3-3 Genoa, Italy.

Identity

Consular and Commercial Agent
in Italy for the Irish Republic
1919-1922.

Subject

- (a) Propaganda for Ireland through
articles published in Italian papers;
- (b) Acquisition of arms for Ireland
in Italy 1921.

Covering letter from witness.

Conditions, if any, stipulated by Witness

Nil

File No. S. 1407.....

Form B.S.M. 2.

~~John Kissane~~ ~~Knowlton~~
Bandon 16/11/47

Secretary to
Department of Defence
Dublin

ORIGINAL

A copy,

I have just received your communication dated 14th inst, and draft of declaration which I have read through and signed. I had to correct a few things which owing to the haste of the moment were not well or correctly expressed.

On my return to Geneva I will look up letters and papers, and will communicate as much matter as I can to you. The news of the military work done at home and abroad is very

important for the Irish people,
and I earnestly trust it will all
be correctly stated, and that
our men will have the merit
that is due to them.

Hoping the present will
find you enjoying the best of
health & spirits.

Yours sincerely

Donald Hales

P. S.

I am going to speak
to my brother William this
week and shall report re history
of West Cork fighting & H

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21

BURO STAIRÉ MILEATA-1913-21

NO. W.S.

Statement of Mr Donald Hales
Via Montegiovetto, 3 - 3
Genoa,
Italy
(Address while in Ireland: Knocknacarra, Bandon
Co Cork.)

I had been in Italy before 1914 and I was teaching

As I had publicly in an Italian school, advised the Italian people not to take part in the war 1914-1918, I was summoned before the judges in Genoa. After the said war, many Italian, especially some ship owners, came and affirmed that I had advised them right and that Italy would have become a very rich country if they remained out of the war and left others decide themselves.

* I married an Italian lady who is now President of the Organisation for the Dispersed and the Prisoners. *Here,* *was* I went out to teach and my wife is in the Fur Trade. I was teaching privately and in the schools. My wife continued her business. *in the fur trade* We came over now to see if we could promote a general trade with Ireland. While *we* *are* Italian imports and exports *has* been able to give orders for a considerable quantity of wool material, it is questionable whether *we* *he* will be able *to get permission to export the dollars or pounds from the Italian Gov.* to pay for it as there is no trade agreement between Ireland and Italy as exists between Ireland and France.

I was appointed by Mr. Blythe as a Consular and Commercial Agent in Italy for the Irish Republic in 1919.

I put up a plea to that effect and it was *accepted* promoted. *Both on my house door and office door I had placed a bronze plate on which was inscribed Consul of the Irish Republic and "Agente Consolare Commerciale della Repubblica Irlandese"* We carried out a great propaganda for Ireland in

Italy through articles published in different newspapers,

for example in 'Voce Repubblicana' and in *Il Cittadino of Genoa, Il Cittadino of Brescia, Epicureo Commerciale, Il Mondo of Rome,* Catholic papers and other papers - sometimes even the principal papers such as 'Corriere *re* della Sera', *'La Stampa' of Turin, 'Il Popolo di Italia' Mussolini's paper,* and also commercial papers

and other papers which ^{we} showed that England, who was pretending to be a civilised country, was simply assassinating ^{the inhabitants and civilising} a civilised country like Ireland. Michael Collins used to write to me every week recounting the British atrocities in Ireland and we made this the material of our propaganda. ^{*} This propaganda created such a fury against England that Lloyd George, who was spending a holiday in Switzerland, had to fly out of the country as he was threatened by the Swiss railwaymen.

At that time I also got letters, from various sympathisers, which I hope I have got still. ^{in spite of the destruction caused by Anglo-American bombs in the recent war} Everyone abroad felt that if Ireland continued her struggle and remained united there would be no difficulty in getting a Republic. In fact "The Stampa" of Turin had an article to that effect. At a later date on account of one of these propaganda articles, especially supported by the Republicans of Italy, I was arrested when King George passed through Genoa and was detained in a prison there for five days. Mussolini dismissed the Chief of the Police for life for having arrested me. At that stage Mussolini was anti-English.

/The

His private letters almost always had enclosed Greek propaganda material

The Irish methods of resisting a strong Empire were so much admired abroad that a man called Strickland, who was a cousin of the Governor of Malta and related to many prominent English families and also to Irish families through his grandmother, and who was interested in promoting the independence of India, advocated the use of similar methods in India. In fact, he advised me, in a letter, ^{to persuade the Irish Republicans} to continue the resistance - ^{to the effect} that the Irish people should ^{in no account give in and} continue their resistance and that England would eventually have to yield. ^{He published among other anti-British books "The Black Spot in the East"}

The young Irish priests in Italy, who were sent out to be missionaries abroad, ^{and studied at Genoa, in Via Fassola} were also great patriots. They used to say their ^{first} Masses in a Church in Bobbio where a great Irish saint, St. Columbanus, died. ^{thirteen centuries ago} St. Columbanus was a propagator of the Faith in Bobbio, ^{where sculpture, music, and farming were taught and practiced by Irish, French and Italian monks} I was sent to Bobbio by the Irish Government at the time. I used to accompany these priests around in my capacity as representative of Ireland in Italy. The Bishop of Bobbio and Piacenza invited me to accompany these priests and they always spoke patriotically of Ireland and were listened to by the Italians with enthusiasm, ^{(and) who to-day are proud to call themselves children of Erin and "piccoli irlandesi"}

On the occasion of the Beatification of Oliver
in May 1920
Plunkett, Sean T. O'Kelly came to Rome as Official

Representative and I was sent down by Collins to assist him
in any way I could. At the Grand Hotel they held an
extraordinary meeting and a ceillidhe. *Sean T. O'Kelly, besides others who spoke
in English, spoke in Irish, and got great applause*
(An ecclesiastic, whom I took to be a bishop, sang a patriotic song, and was enthusiastically cheered)
reception and banquet at which the English protested because
of the adverse criticism England received there. The
English were highly offended. *The London
and Dublin with much propaganda material*
Art O'Brien was also there.

the Dail
When De Valera entered Parliament and took the Oath
I was disappointed.

When my brother was shot at Dublin, I protested in the

indirectly, were believed by the government, to have caused the death of my brother,
Italian papers over the shooting of those people who killed
who *helped the men who fired at*
or/were supposed to have killed my brother. I sent a

*(It was published in the London
Irish paper: 'The Corriere della Sera')*
protest to the important Italian papers, that there should
*condemning the act, stating that the man shot, who was a true Irish republican at heart, would be the first to
condemn it himself, if he were alive, besides the men in prison
was his friends.*
be no revenge. That was at the shooting of Mellowes, etc.
and the others were shot.

My family at Knocknacra gave a public statement in the same sense

My brother, William Hales, who is living at Upton, *Curren*
near Cork, has written a very beautiful and interesting
scrupulously impartial, exactly correct

history of the Rising in South Cork. This history has not
*As the writer stated he wanted all the Irish Republic should be declared
before doing so.*
been published. My brother refused a pension *though* but he was

one of the first promoters of the Rising in West Cork

*who had been corporal in the British army
and much*
himself. He worked with Tom Barry *who came in later in fact
only about the last nine months
of the West Cork fighting*

*It was he, with only an unloaded pistol, who
went on board an English cargo boat on the Brandon
river above Kinsale, and obliged the captain to hand
him over what arms he, the captain, had on board
his ship.*

Tom

as the real hard patriotic West Cork fighters, who had begun the work even several months before 1916, affirm in which

Tom Barry's book is ¹fantastic and the ~~real~~ men who worked and did all the fighting are hardly mentioned at all.

Tom Barry came in for the last nine months. His book is unreliable in the details. My brother has written too about the ancient history of Bandon, *called formerly Orange Bandon town*

I am from Bandon. We came very early. My forefathers ^{*to this country.*}

came with the Cromwellians and land was given to ^{*Ham Ose*} him. He ^{*of them*} married a catholic and ^{*another*} returned, ^{*all*} the land to the people and ^{*went back to England.*}

Other forebears: married catholics and were in consequence boycotted severely by the protestants. A great-aunt of mine was thrown off her horse by protestants on the hunting field.

I have still distant relatives who are protestants, but they are ^{*Truly*} patriotic. One of these relatives is ^{*Teaching*} living in

Connemara. I visited her recently. ^{*in Bandon town*} She is preparing to get married and her wedding clothes are of Irish design and manufacture.

as to historic facts. My brother, William, is religious, and scrupulous, ^{*man*} ^{*exact*} ~~and~~ ^{*for a Republic for the whole of Ireland, even if compelled to take up arms to accomplish it*} he is patriotic. He took part in the Struggle. He was

at the battle of Crossbarry with my brother Sean. I believe my brother Tom, ^{*who had been dreadfully tortured by the brutal English soldiers in their attempt to extract information from him*} was in an English prison at the time.

Sean had ^{*big*} a gun at Crossbarry which was almost like a ^{*little*} cannon. and which, as one of the principal participants in the battle, afterwards stated, cheered them up in the fight, as long as they heard its thundering against the English lines on the road. /There.

my brothers Sean and Bob

There was another man there with William, that day, who *kept* playing the pipes during the battle. I wrote an article in the "Southern Star" because a man who was present - a Mr. Kelleher - gave me all the details of that battle. The date of the publication of this article was about August, 1938. The Irish had only 99 men and the English had, I believe, over 1,000. I think Barry made a mistake; he had *not* foresight. The English made a mistake too because they left one side open to the Irish which *the latter made use of* they used to make their retreat.

About three or four months before the Truce, *messengers come from Ireland to Italy for arms.* we were requested by an Italian General to accompany him down to Rome to the Military Department. The man who came over first was a Mr. O'Shea, I think. O'Shea had gone over to France to buy arms, being commissioned to do so by Collins. *He failed to get them there.* He was merely a messenger. I think he lives in Dublin but I do not know his christian name. He was sent by Michael Collins *to get in touch with me for acquiring just a week or so* to look for arms in Italy. It was *before* ~~the time~~ that our house in Knocknacurra was burned down by the Black and Tans. *told me he lives* O'Shea had been in England previously. I think he used to play football there. Another man was also sent out from Cork called Leahy. They both came for arms.

I approached the Italian General who accompanied me to Rome for the arms for at that time contact would be difficult. *through the good office of the General had no difficulty in getting the guns* In fact, we found we ~~could get the arms alright.~~ We could get as many rifles as we wished - up to 100,000. These rifles were Italian rifles which had been used in the previous war; they were in good condition and only required cleaning. We could also get ammunition. There was some talk as to what ammunition would fit these rifles. Things were in such a position in Ireland that we could not get quickly in touch with it. * O'Shea had ~~had~~ returned to

Just on his return to Dublin, many raids and burnings effected by the Black & Tans took place in the city which may have been the reason why I could not have any news from him or from M Collins for some time after.

Ireland to report to Collins regarding the position and I did not hear anything further that ~~he could get arms.~~ *about sending the ** I believe the Truce came on shortly after this. These rifles were not removed. However, the British Consul-General must have been told by some one that I had hidden these arms in Genoa. He was informed, *probably* by his Intelligence Officer, that the guns were in Genoa awaiting shipment. That was not true because they were in Rome: they were not paid for and were never called for. My sister spoke to Collins then who said the money would present no difficulty at all. He mentioned the sum of £10,000 which she thought would be sent immediately. No money was sent and they

/were
/were

were never removed.

My opinion is that the arrangements to procure the arms may have been to bluff England, ~~as~~ ^{if} the Irish were fully armed they could hold out longer and kill most of the British soldiers here. The idea of getting the arms, I believe, would be to influence England to come to terms with Ireland. Collins may also have had the idea of trying to get in Ulster. Ulster would come in if there was a final settlement. There would have been ^{some} difficulty in shipping these arms to Ireland, because ~~how~~ ^{now} the British got the knowledge of them was extraordinary. The wife of this British Consul was Irish and she reported it to the Irish

*Clerical students in
Via Fagnola
Genova* *whom in turn reported to me.*

Priests. It was incredible how they got this knowledge.

A bargain was practically made with the Italian ^{Official} ~~Government~~.

These arms were the property of the Government ^{but} and naturally

the Government did not want to appear ^{at all} in the matter. Still ^{for reasons easily to be understood.}

the Italian Government was quite willing to give the arms.

also Mussolini certainly was willing to help Ireland in every way

He always gave hospitality to my articles in his paper Il Popolo d'Irlanda before becoming head of the Government
The Government simply waited for the final move to be made

~~in~~ The price ~~which~~, I believe, was nominal and very small.

I wrote a letter to Mr. Costello, congratulating ^{what he occurred unteously} him on declaring the Republic (but I did not receive an answer ^{to a second letter, in which I gave a great account of the important events relating to the period I had been, working for the Irish Republic.} I called on him and gave him a little description of the fight in Italy and I mentioned ^{the matter about the arms.} I saw him for a few minutes during one of my ^{recent visits to Dublin.} question of the arms. He made no remark then as he was

^{just} making his departure only that he had got my letter.

Sean?

My brother, was a great friend of Seán MacEoin. ^{*} My

* When my brother Sean burned Lord Bandon's Castle, as a reprisal for the burning down of our town, Lord Bandon made him a present of a fine stick, as a mark of his gratitude and esteem, for Sean's conduct towards him and for saving his life. I think Sir Sean MacEoin is now in possession of that stick.

Knows

brother, Tom, wrote to Mr. MacBride well, I think.

I was surprised they did not try to procure the arms. It may have been a bluff on the part of Mick

Collins to bring about the Truce and they may have been

trying to get some arms into their possession in order to ^{bring about} and get good terms realise the Truce at a later date.

When I was in prison in Italy the Russians published a strong rebuke to the Italian Government for having arrested me. At that time the Russians were very favourable to Ireland. That would be about 1922 or 1923.

^{and have still} I had a lot of papers, but during the last War at the ^{relating to our propaganda in Italy} invasion of Italy I fear ^{some} many of them got destroyed, but ^{through the displacement of the air caused by the bombs} I will look up ^{all the} any letters ^{and papers} I have.

I brought with me to show you, the credentials sent me by Mr. De Valera dated 1st December, 1922, appointing me *Représentant Diplomatique et Consulaire* ~~me~~ Consul to the Republic. At that time, of course, I followed De Valera because I thought he was true to the Republic.* If the "Split" had not come between the parties in Ireland they could have achieved the Republic. I considered it a great calamity although I don't like to take sides with either party as one of my brothers went with

De Valera and the other went with the Treaty party, *both firmly believing that through the steps they had taken, the final complete independence of their country would be achieved in the Irish Republic*

* In fact the credentials bore the signature:

"Eamon de Valera
 " *Président et Ministre des Affaires Etrangères*"
 Fait à Dublin ce 1^{er} Décembre
 L'an de Notre Seigneur 1922"

Headed: "Gouvernement de la République Irlandaise"

Now, looking back, it seems strange that a man signing himself president and Minister of external affairs of a Republic, in an important public document, should have been content to remain during the fifteen years of his long term of office, prime Minister of a partitioned free state!

Donal Hales,

September 16th 1949

Sci. Cosain
 23.9.49

Genoa, Via Monte ^Noretto 3/3
Bureau of Military History 1913-21
Dublin
4/x/49

A. Chas. I have just received yours dated 30 Sept. 49 with
Statement for signature enclosed

The summons you refer to was, as you will
see from original enclosed, issued 15/3/1918 about 7 months
before the end of the ^{present} war, without any consequences for me,
while my arrest and imprisonment took place during
the visit of George V to Rome + St. Gov. on May ^{4th} 1923, as
you will note from enclosed cuttings, one of which in the
leading Republican paper "La Voce Repubblicana" contains
my protest against the action of the police. Same was
published in many Italian papers. After translation you
will kindly return originals.

Many things of course had to be
omitted in the short Statement, as it was given
from memory without any preparation of events and
after so many years had elapsed. I forgot to
mention that the bed in which Daniel O'Connell
died in Genoa was made a present by the descendant
of the proprietor of the hotel and sent by me to

the Irish College, Rome where it now stands in a hall of the building.

As you may need to have photostatic copies made of original letters before returning them to me, I will mail you the originals which, when you have done with them, you will kindly send back

Statement has been duly signed also by witness. I am returning same registered and it will reach you in due time.

Of course you have only to ask me for any information which I can possibly give you in the interests of the country

Yours sincerely

Tonal Hayes.

Statement of Mr. Donal Hales,

Via Monte Zovetto, 3 - 3

Genoa,

Italy.

(Address while in Ireland: Knocknacurra, Bandon, Co. Cork.)

I had been in Italy before 1914 and I was teaching there. As I had publicly, in an Italian school, advised the Italian people not to take part in the war 1914 - 1918, I was summoned before the Judge in Genoa. After the said war, many Italians, especially some ship owners, came and affirmed that I had advised them right and that Italy would have become a very rich country if they had remained out of the war and left others decide their own quarrel by themselves.

I married an Italian lady who is now President of the Organisation for the Dispersed and the Prisoners. I went out to teach there. My wife ^{was} in the Fur Trade. I was teaching privately and in the schools. My wife continued her business in the Fur Trade. Two of my young sons fought for Italy in the late war. We came over to see if we could promote a general trade with Ireland. While an Italian importer and exporter has been able to give orders for a considerable quantity of wool material, it is questionable whether he will be able to get permission to export the dollars or pounds from the Italian Government to pay for it as there is no trade agreement between Ireland and Italy as exists between Ireland and France.

I was appointed by Mr. Blythe as a Consular and Commercial Agent in Italy for the Irish Republic in 1919. ^{My brother Sean, had seen an article I had written in the Irish press in favour of Ireland, asked me to help in the struggle, and got Mr. Blythe to appoint me Trade agent for Italy.} ^{Mr. Collins who knew I put up a} ~~led to that effect and it was accepted.~~ Both on my house door and office door I had placed a bronze plate on which was

/inscribed

inscribed "Consul of the Irish Republic" and Agente Consolare Commerciale della Repubblica Irlandese".

We carried out a great propaganda for Ireland in Italy through articles published in different newspapers, for example in "Voce Repubblicana" and in Catholic papers "Il Cittadino" of Genoa, "Il Cittadino" of Brescia, "Giornale Commerciale", "Il Mondo" of Rome and other papers - sometimes even the principal papers such as "Corriere della Sera", "La Stampa" of Turin, "Il Popolo d'Italia", Mussolini's paper, and also commercial papers. We showed that England, who was pretending to be a civilised country, was simply assassinating the inhabitants of a civilised and civilising country like Ireland. Michael Collins used to write to me every week recounting the British atrocities in Ireland and we made this the material of our propaganda. His private letters almost always had enclosed Irish propaganda material. This propaganda created such a fury against England that Lloyd George, who was spending a holiday in Switzerland, had to fly out of the country as he was threatened by the Swiss railwaymen.

At that time I also got letters from various sympathisers which I hope I have got still in spite of the destruction caused by Anglo-American bombs in the recent war. Everyone abroad felt that if Ireland continued her struggle and remained united there would be no difficulty in getting a Republic. In fact, "The Stampa" of Turin had an article to that effect. At a later date on account of one of these propaganda articles, especially supported by the Republicans of Italy, I was arrested when King George passed through Genoa and was detained in a prison there for five days. Mussolini

/dismissed

dismissed the Chief of Police for life for having arrested me. At that stage Mussolini was anti-English.

The Irish methods of resisting a strong Empire were so much admired abroad that a man called ^{Sir Walter} Strickland, who was a cousin of the Governor of Malta and related to many prominent English families and also to Irish families through his grandmother, and who was interested in promoting the independence of India, advocated the use of similar methods in India. In fact, he advised me, in a letter, to persuade the Irish Republicans to continue the resistance - to the effect that the Irish people should, on no account, give in and continue their resistance and that England would eventually have to yield. He published, among other anti-British books, "The Black Spot in the East".

The young Irish priests in Italy, who were sent out to be missionaries abroad and studied at Genoa in Via Fassola, were also great patriots. They used to say their first Mass in a Church in Bobbio where a great Irish saint, St. Columbano, died. St. Columbano, thirteen centuries ago, was a propagator of the Faith in Bobbio where sculpture, music and farming were taught and practised by Irish, French and Italian monks. I was sent to Bobbio by the Irish Government at the time. I used to accompany these priests around in my capacity as representative of Ireland in Italy. The Bishop of Bobbio and Piacenza invited me to accompany these priests and they always spoke patriotically of Ireland and were listened to by the Italians with enthusiasm, who to-day are proud to call themselves "Children of Erin" and "Piccoli Irlandesi".

On the occasion of the Beatification of Oliver Plunkett in May, 1920, Sean T. O'Kelly came to Rome as Official

/Representative

Representative and I was sent down by Collins to assist him in any way I could. At the Grand Hotel they held an extraordinary meeting and a ceilidhe. Seán T. O'Kelly, besides others who spoke in English, spoke in Irish amidst great applause. An ecclesiastic, whom I took to be a Bishop, sang a patriotic song, and was enthusiastically cheered. There was a great reception and banquet at which the English protested because of the adverse criticism England received there. The English were highly offended. Art O'Brien, who provided me both from London and France with much propaganda material, was also there.

When De Valera entered the Dáil and took the Oath I was disappointed. When my brother was shot at Dublin I protested in the Italian papers over the shooting of those people who in some way, indirectly, were believed to have caused the death of my brother, or who were supposed to have helped the men who fired at him. I sent a protest to the important Italian papers - It was published in the leading Italian paper - "Il Corriere della Sera" - condemning the act; stating that the man shot, who was a true Irish Republican at heart, would be the first to condemn it himself, if he were alive; besides, the men in prison were his friends. My family at Knocknacurra gave a public statement in the same sense.

My brother, William Hales, who is living at Upton, Curra, near Cork, has written a very scrupulously impartial, exactly correct and interesting history of the Rising in Cork. This history has not been published as the writer stated he waited until the Irish Republic should be declared before doing so. My brother, William, refused a pension, although he was one of the first promoters and most active workers of the Rising in West Cork himself. It was he who, with only an unloaded pistol, went on board an English cargo boat on the Bandon river above Kinsale, and obliged the Captain to hand him over

what ~~arms~~ he, the Captain, had on board his ship. He took part in the fight with Tom Barry who had been a Corporal in the British Army, ^{during the 1914-1918 war} and who came in much later; in fact, only about the last nine months of the West Cork fighting.

Tom Barry's book is fantastic as the real hard, patriotic West Cork fighters, who had begun the work even several months before 1916, affirm, and in it the men who worked and did all the fighting are hardly mentioned at all. Tom Barry came in for the last nine months. His book is unreliable in the details. My brother has written too about the ancient history of Bandon, called formerly Orange Bandon town.

I am from Bandon. We came very early to this country. My forefathers came with the Cromwellians and ^{much} land was given to them. One of them married a Catholic and another returned all the land to the people and went back to England. ^{was} Another forbear ^{was} married Catholic and in consequence boycotted severely by the Protestants. A great-aunt of mine was thrown off her horse by Protestants on the hunting field. I have still distant relatives who are Protestants, but they are truly patriotic. One of these relatives is teaching in Connemara. I visited her recently in Bandon town. She is preparing to get married and her wedding clothes are of Irish design and manufacture.

My brother, William, is a religious man and scrupulously exact as to historic facts. He is for a Republic for the whole of Ireland, even if compelled to take up arms to accomplish it. He took part in the Struggle. He was at the battle of Crossbarry with my brothers Sean, ^{and Robert} I believe my brother, Tom, who had been dreadfully tortured by the brutal English soldiery in their attempt to extract information from
/him

him, was in an English prison at the time. Seán had a big gun at Crossbarry which was almost like a little cannon, and which, as one of the principal participants in the battle afterwards stated, cheered them up in the fight, as long as they heard it thundering against the English lorries on the road. There was another man there with my brothers, William, Seán and Bob, that day, who kept playing the pipes during the battle. I wrote an article, ^{on the fight} in the "Southern Star" because a man who was present - a Mr. Kelleher - gave me all the details of that battle. The date of the publication of this article was about August, 1938. The Irish had only 99 men and the English had, I believe, over 1,000. ^{Some affirm 1500.} I think Barry made a mistake in the arrangement of his men; he had not foresight, but his men, every one of whom had military genius, made up for the mistake, doing exactly the right thing at the right time. The English made a mistake too because they left one side open to the Irish which the latter adroitly made use of to make their retreat.

Mr. O'Shea should know the date. After research I shall certainly find out, after the Christian name of O'Shea. Donald Hales

About three or four months before the Truce messengers came from Ireland to Italy for arms. We were requested by an Italian General to accompany him down to Rome to the Military Department. The man who came over first was a Mr. O'Shea, I think. O'Shea had gone over to France to buy arms, being commissioned to do so by Collins. He failed to get them there. He was merely a messenger. I think he lives in Dublin but I do not know his Christian name. He was sent by Michael Collins to get in touch with me for acquiring arms in Italy. It was just about a week or so before our house in Knocknacurra was burned down by the Black and Tans. O'Shea told me he had been living in England previously. I think he used to play football there.

/Another

* The name on his passport was, I believe, James Collins wrote later that they were not too satisfied with his work. I don't know the reason why. Donald Hales

Another man was also sent out from Cork called Leahy. They both came for arms.

* If this name I will find out finally, as a relative of mine, knew him personally, but this has of course little importance. Donald Hales

I approached the Italian General who accompanied me to Rome for the arms for at that time contact would be difficult.

In fact, through the good offices of the General we found we had no difficulty in getting the guns. We could get as many rifles as we wished - up to 100,000. These rifles were Italian rifles which had been used in the previous war; they were in good condition and only required cleaning. We could also get ammunition. There was some talk as to what ammunition would fit these rifles. Things were in such a position in Ireland that we could not get quickly in touch with it. O'Shea had returned to Ireland to report to Collins regarding the position and I did not hear anything further about sending the arms. Just on his return to Dublin many raids and burnings, effected by the Black and Tans, took place in the city which may have been the reason why I could not have any news from him or from Michael Collins for some time after. I believe the Truce came on shortly after this. These rifles were not removed. However, the British Consul-General must have been told by some one that I had hidden these arms in Genoa. He was informed probably by his Intelligence Officer that the guns were in Genoa awaiting shipment. That was not true because they were in Rome: they were not paid for and were never called for. My sister spoke to Collins then who said the money would present no difficulty at all. He mentioned the sum of £10,000 which she thought would be sent immediately. No money was sent and they were never removed.

My opinion is that the arrangements to procure the arms may have been to bluff England. If the Irish were fully armed they could hold out longer and kill most of the British /soldiers

soldiers here. The idea of getting the arms, I believe, would be to influence England to come to terms with Ireland. Collins may also have had the idea of trying to get in Ulster. Ulster would come in if there was a final settlement. There would have been some difficulty in shipping these arms to Ireland. How the British got the knowledge of them was extraordinary. The wife of this British Consul was Irish and she reported it to the Irish clerical students in Via Fassola, Genoa, who, in turn, reported to me. It was incredible how they got this knowledge. A bargain was practically made with the Italian officials. These arms were the property of the Government but naturally the Government did not want to appear at all in the matter for reasons easily to be understood. Still the Italian Government was quite willing to give the arms. Mussolini also certainly was willing to help Ireland in every way. He always gave hospitality to my articles in his paper, "Il Popolo d'Italia" before becoming head of the Government. The Government simply waited for the final move to be made. The price, I believe, was nominal and very small.

I wrote a letter to Mr. Costello congratulating him on declaring the Republic which he answered courteously, but I did not receive an answer to a second letter in which I gave an account of the important events relating to the period I had been working for the Irish Republic in Italy and I mentioned the matter about the arms. I saw him for a few minutes during one of my recent visits to Dublin. He made no remark then, as he was just making his departure, only that he had got my letter.

My brother, Seán, was a great friend of Sean MacEoin. When my brother, Seán, burned Lord Bandon's Castle for the burning down of our house, Lord Bandon made him a present of a fine stick as a mark of his gratitude and esteem, for Seán's conduct towards him and for saving his life. I think big Seán MacEoin is now in possession of that stick.

My brother, Tom, knows Mr. MacBride well, I think.

I was surprised they did not try to procure the arms. It may have been a bluff on the part of Mick Collins to bring about the Truce and they may have been trying to get some arms into their possession in order to bring about the Truce and get good terms.

When I was in prison in Italy the Russians published a strong rebuke to the Italian Government for having arrested me. At that time the Russians were very favourable to Ireland. That would be about 1922 or 1923.

I had and have still a lot of papers relating to our propaganda in Italy but during the last war, at the invasion of Italy, I fear some of them got destroyed through the displacement of the air caused by the bombs, but I will look up all the letters and papers I have.

I brought with me to show you the credentials sent me by Mr. De Valera dated 1st December, 1922, appointing me Représentant Diplomatique et Consulaire. At that time, of course, I followed De Valera because I thought he was true to the Republic. In fact, the credentials bore the signature:

"Eamon de Valera

President et Ministre des Affaires Etrangères

Fait a Dublin ce 1, Decembre

L'an de Notre Seigneur 1922"

Headed: "Gouvernement de la République Irlandaise".

If the "Split" had not come between the parties in Ireland they could have achieved the Republic. I considered it a great calamity although I don't like to take sides with either party as one of my brothers went with De Valera and the other

/went.

went with the Treaty party, both firmly believing that, through the steps they had taken, the final complete independence of their country would be achieved, i.e. The Irish Republic.

Now, looking back, it seems strange that a man signing himself President and Minister of External Affairs of a Republic in an important public document, should have been content to remain, during the fifteen years of his long term of office, Prime Minister of a partitioned Free State.

Signed:

Donal Hales

Date:

October 5th 1949

Witness:

Bragardo Lima

Via Monterovetto, 3 - 9 - Genova.

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21

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