

ORIGINAL

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21
BURO STAIRÉ MILITIA 1913-21
No. W.S. 334

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BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21.

STATEMENT BY WITNESS

DOCUMENT NO. W.S. 334.....

Witness

Mr. Eugene Smith,
Mayville,
Bird Avenue,
Dundrum, Co. Dublin.
Identity

Official in Dublin Castle
prior to and post Easter Week 1916.

Subject

Transfer of information obtained secretly
in Dublin Castle, to Irish Volunteers
1913-1918.

Conditions, if any, stipulated by Witness

Nil.

File No. S.1433.....

Form B.S.M. 2.

ORIGINAL

NO. W.S. 334
SMITH, MARVILLE,

STATEMENT OF MR. EUGENE

BIRD AVENUE, DUNDRUM, DUBLIN.

1. Before the Rising I was an official in the Castle and in that capacity a certain document came into my hands. It was a long communication from Major General Friend, General Officer Commanding the Forces in Ireland and addressed to the Chief Secretary in London. I believed at the time and still believe that it was sent in reply to a query as to what military precautions would be necessary with a view to the enforcement of conscription in Ireland. The document was not in code or cypher.
2. It was unusual for Major General Friend to send communications from the Castle to London, as he had a private line from his headquarters at Kilmainham to London. It may have been that the matter dealt with in the document was discussed with Sir Mathew Nathan at the Castle and that was the reason the communication was sent from there, or it may have been that the private line connected only with military headquarters in London and not with the Chief Secretary's Office.
3. It was a lengthy document - about the length of that published in the press; but I had ample time to study the details of it, as it was I dealt with it, and I memorised the main points of it. I was deeply interested in the political situation in Ireland and in the threat of the application of conscription to Ireland which was then, to the best of my recollection, under active consideration in the British Press and in the House of Commons. Although I had taken an oath of secrecy I did not feel myself, as an Irishman, bound by it in the existing circumstances and I determined to give this important information to those whom it concerned.
4. The contents of the document were practically identical with that read out by Alderman Tom Kelly at the meeting of

the Corporation on Spy Wednesday except that, as far as I can recollect, it did not state that the operations suggested by Major General Friend were authorised by the Chief Secretary and there was no reference to maps or lists. The words Ara Coeli were mentioned as being the Archbishop's house and in this I think Major General Friend confused the Archbishop's Palace with that of Cardinal Logue, as he had correspondence with both. To the best of my recollection also, the Mansion House was included among the places to be surrounded.

5. Having memorised the contents of the document, I put a precis of it on paper. I cannot remember to whom I gave the paper, as at the time there were various persons to whom I passed information of that sort. I seldom went to the same place twice in succession as I had an idea that I might be followed. I used to hand such papers to Billy O'Flaherty, Jack Shouldice, Paddy Sheehan, Maurice Collins, who had a shop in Parnell St., and Micheal Ó Liathain, an uncle of Con. Lehane. I handed the paper complete and not in instalments to whoever was my go-between. I gave all this information about the document to Mr. Paddy Little some years ago and the ^{he published} account/of it is quite correct, as far as I know. I cannot state how Major General Friend's suggestions were dealt with or whether any reply came to them from the Chief Secretary's Office in London. If a reply came, there may have been another document in the Castle with the additions contained in Alderman Tom Kelly's version.

6. I never heard that there was a meeting in Dunboyne Castle to discuss measures to be taken against the Volunteers.

7. On the Wednesday after the Rising started I went down to the Castle ostensibly on duty. I wanted to find out what police messages were coming in from the country. The Castle was overrun with soldiers who were using all the rooms as

sleeping quarters and they were lying on the floors. When I arrived they would not admit me as I had no pass. I was kept waiting at Ship St. gate with a water official from the Corporation until a guard of soldiers came and marched me to the Provost Marshal's office, where I was identified by a policeman and obtained a pass. As I was then anxious to get out and transmit any messages there were to the Volunteers, I informed them that I would have to go home and relieve my wife's anxiety about me and that I would return again that evening. In fact, I did not return until the following Tuesday. That night or the next night a man called Sean Brown - I think he was a ticket collector at the Abbey Theatre ^{at Saisy} - came and said he was sent to find out information about what was happening in the country. I gave him any I had which was very little, as it was impossible to find an opportunity to read many documents on account of the crowds of soldiers in all the rooms. I never found out whether he delivered the information as I never saw the man since.

8. That was not the only information I brought to the Volunteers from the Castle. I can recall the following:

9. Shortly after the first world war broke out - I think the split in the Volunteers had not yet taken place - it came to my knowledge as an official that instructions had been given to detective headquarters to raid for rifles at the rear of a house in Hardwicke St. I passed the information through one in close touch with the Volunteers to two of the joint leaders of the Volunteers. One of these, Mr. Judge, said there were no arms stored in those premises. The other, who was a member of the Irish Volunteers, just winked at my friend and, when Mr. Judge was gone, informed him that the information was correct and that he would have arrangements made to remove the arms. This was done, and when the raid came nothing was found.

On another occasion immediately before the arrests in

connection with the German Plot, I learned from a conversation with a police officer that the detective force was to be mobilised at 9 o'clock that night to arrest all the leaders and I gave the information in outline to Liam O'Flaherty. The round-up in Dublin did take place that night and all the leaders except those who were members of the I.R.B. were arrested. The next day I took a document containing the names of those leaders in the country to be arrested to Hynes' Restaurant in Dame St. where Micheal Ó Liathain proceeded to copy it. While he was engaged on it a Police Inspector whom I recognised from having seen him sometimes in the Castle came in. He evidently recognised me too, for as he walked up the stairs he leaned over the banisters and had a good look at us. I was a bit uneasy lest he should guess what I was at. I had an official-looking paper in my hand from which Micheal was copying the names and he might realise where it came from. I went into the lavatory and disposed of the paper so that if I were searched on my return to the Castle nothing incriminating would be found on me. When I saw that the arrests took place in Dublin I wondered whether Liam had succeeded in passing on the information, but it is clear that he did, as Darrell Figgis' book shows that the matter was discussed at a meeting of the Sinn Fein Executive that night and that three different lines of action were proposed (1) that they would go on the run, (2) that they would let things take their course and submit themselves to arrest and (3) that they would call out the Volunteers and offer resistance. The second course was the one they adopted.

At the present time I cannot remember anything else of this kind that would be worth relating.

Signed: *E. Smyth*

Date: 3. 1. 50

Witness: *S. McCann*

