

ORIGINAL

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21

BURO STAIRÉ MILEATA 1913-21

No. **W.S. 383**

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BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21.

STATEMENT BY WITNESS

DOCUMENT NO. **W.S.**.....383.....

Witness

Very Rev. Dr. Thomas Fahy,
University College,
Galway.

Identity

Chaplain to Irish Volunteers
Esker, Co. Galway, Easter 1916.

Subject

Associations with Liam Mellows
and other Irish Volunteers, Co. Galway,
from 1912 up to Easter Week 1916.

Conditions, if any, stipulated by Witness

Nil

File No. ...S.1462.....

Form B.S.M. 2.

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STATEMENT BY VERY REV. DR. T. FAHY,

University College,

Galway.

I was ordained Priest in Maynooth in 1912 for the Diocese of Clonfert. I was appointed Professor in Ballinasloe College in March 1913. I first met Liam Mellows in Ballinasloe in the summer of 1915 when he was coming to organise Galway. He visited the College to see Fr. Connolly who was then prominently identified with the Volunteer Movement. I asked Mellows did the Volunteers really mean to fight. I was astonished by the impressive way that he assured me of their determination to fight. I returned to Maynooth as Professor in October, 1915.

I was home at Esker near Athenry on holidays during Easter Week, 1916. Immediately the Volunteers assembled at Moyode Castle, Fr. McNamara, a Redemptorist from Esker, and I heard confessions of the Volunteers. I visited the Volunteers

practically every day, and on each occasion had a chat with Fr. Feeney, who was acting as permanent Chaplain to the Volunteers. On Friday, Fr. Feeney asked me to go to Galway to find out what his ecclesiastical superiors were saying. I was very glad to learn from the Priests that His Lordship the Bishop of Galway, Most Rev. Dr. O'Dea, highly approved of Fr. Feeney's action in accompanying the Volunteers.

While in Galway on this occasion I learned that the leaders in Moyode had suddenly resolved to leave Moyode and take up positions in Lime Park which would be more easily defended in case of attack. On my return back from Galway, I fell in with the main body on the road to Lime Park. I gave Mellows all the information I had learned in Galway concerning the movement of British troops from Dublin to Loughrea, and R. I. C. from elsewhere.

I tried to reason with Mellows that the only sensible thing to do was to disband his men, otherwise they were likely to be surrounded and caught. He said no; he would fight it out to the end. These men had

joined him voluntarily and he would never ask them to go away.

When we reached Lime Park at about 2 a.m. on Saturday, I suggested to Mellows that at least a meeting of the officers should be held to discuss the question. He agreed to this.

A meeting of the officers was held, about fourteen being present. I gave the meeting the information I had, which however, they had independently. Mellows said that it would be better to fight it out now as their lives were all forfeit anyhow. He also pointed out that the six local R.I.C. prisoners would be able to identify everyone of the Volunteers. After deliberation these six R.I.C. men gave an undertaking they would give no information to their authorities, which undertaking I was glad to be afterwards authentically assured, was honoured.

All the officers at the meeting with the exception of Liam Mellows and Alf Monahan voted for disbanding. I asked Mellows to convey the decision to the men. He begged myself to do so, saying that he was reluctant to ask a single one of them to go away.

I then addressed the men, telling them the decision and advising them to break up immediately and save their equipment for another day.

Mellows did not address the men. He was very depressed; the news from Dublin had upset him greatly.

The Volunteers disbanded, and I understand Liam Mellows, Alf Monahan and Frank Hynes remained together. Fr. Feeney came with me and evaded arrest, subsequently making his way to Mount Mellera where he remained for some weeks. As his health was in poor condition, he was directed by the Bishop of Galway to go to the United States temporarily.

SIGNED

T. Fahy

DATE

May 7, 1950.

WITNESS

Sean Brennan. Capt.