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COSANTA.

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21.

STATEMENT BY WITNESS

DOCUMENT NO. W.S. 441

**Witness**

Miss Lily Mernin,  
167 Mangerton Road,  
Drimnagh, Dublin.

**Identity**

Shorthand-Typist Dublin Castle 1914-1922;  
Typist Department of Defence at date of  
Statement.

**Subject**

Intelligence work 1918 - 1921.

**Conditions, if any, stipulated by Witness**

Nil

File No. S. 1552

Form B.S.M. 2.

STATEMENT BY MISS LILY MERNIN,

167 MANGERTON ROAD, DRIMNAGH, DUBLIN.

I was employed as a shorthand-typist in the Garrison Adjutant's office, Dublin District, Lower Castle Yard, during the years 1914 to 1922. Piaras Beaslaoi, who is a relative of mine, used to visit my house, and during the course of conversation I may have made some references to the work on which I was engaged in Dublin Castle.

Apparently, Beaslaoi spoke to Michael Collins about me, because some time in 1918, Michael Collins asked to meet me and Piaras Beaslaoi brought him to my home and introduced him to me as a Mr. Brennan. I did not know he was Collins at the time. He asked me would I be willing to pass out to him any information that might be of value which I would come across in my ordinary day's work. I remember he produced letters that he had intercepted concerning some of the typists and officers in the Castle, and things that were happening generally. I cannot remember exactly what they were. I promised to give him all the assistance that I possibly could.

The Garrison Adjutant for Ship St. Barracks and Dublin District at the time was Major Stratford Burton. The work that he gave me to do was connected with Volunteer activities generally and, in addition, Courtmartial Proceedings on Volunteers was also given me to type. These dealt with the strength of the various military posts throughout Dublin district. Each week I prepared a carbon or a typed copy, whichever I was able to get. Sometimes I would bring these to the office placed at my disposal at Captain Moynihan's house, Clonliffe Road. He had a typewriter there and I typed several copies of the strength returns and any other correspondence which I may have brought with me that I thought would be of use. I left them on the machine and they were

collected by some person whom I did not know. I had a latch key for the house and nobody knew when I came or went. It was arranged for me that if I had anything special requiring urgent delivery to the Intelligence staff that I would deliver it at Vaughan's Hotel between certain hours and/or Máire Ní Raghallaigh's bookshop, Dorset St., and Captain Moynihan's, Clonliffe Road. Another place where I left messages was at Collins's shop, Parnell St., the number I cannot remember.

I cannot recollect the exact nature of the letters and correspondence that I passed to the Intelligence Staff. All I can say is that, in general, they dealt with the movement of troops, provisions for armoured trains or cars, and instructions and circulars issued to military units from G.H.Q.

One document in particular I remember. I managed to get an invoice from the Royal Engineers giving measurements of different plates and other details of a consignment of steel plating which had been delivered at the Great Southern and Western Railways workshops, Inchicore, for the construction of armoured cars or trains. A 'Stop Press' announced a raid on the Inchicore Works and getting the steel plates about two or three days after I had passed on the information to the Intelligence Staff.

Before the 21st November 1920, it was part of my normal duty to type the names and addresses of British agents who were accommodated at private addresses and living as ordinary citizens in the city. These lists were typed weekly and amended whenever an address was changed. I passed them on each week either to the address at Moynihan's, Clonliffe Rd. or to Piaras Beaslaoi. The typing of the lists ceased after the 21st November 1920.

There was a girl in the office who was the daughter of Superintendent Dunne of Dublin Castle. When he resigned she moved out of Dublin Castle to an address in Mount Street. Stopping at the same address were a number of men. Every morning when she would come in to the office she would tell us about them; she was puzzled to know who they were. Her brother also resided there with her and, apparently, he used mix with them, and he discussed their conversation with her. She would report this conversation to us when she would come in to the office in the morning. There was one fellow there by the name of MacMahon who was very addicted to drink. While under the influence of drink he was, I believe, liable to talk a lot, and, mainly, his conversation concerned raids and arrests of 'wanted' I.R.A. men. Whatever tit-bits of information that I could glean from Miss Lil Dunne I immediately passed it on to the Intelligence Section. Suspicion was thrown in my direction one morning when Miss Dunne entered the office and excitedly said that her brother had been missing and that she thought he was held by the I.R.A., that somebody in the office had given information to the I.R.A. concerning the conversation we had in the office about MacMahon and Peel, British agents, who were lodging in the same house with her in Mount Street. However, I found myself in a predicament, but I remained cool and calm and bluffed my way out of it and said: "Who could be a spy?" and put the blame on her brother for talking too much. Some time later the position was eased when Miss Dunne took ill and never again returned to Dublin Castle.

All this information was, of course, passed on to the I.R.A. Intelligence prior to the 21st November 1920.

After the 21st November 1920, a number of British Intelligence officers were drafted into Dublin Castle. A

new department was opened up in the Upper Castle Yard. My work did not bring me in contact with this department. I was asked by the I.R.A. Intelligence Squad to get what information I could about the movements of these officers. These were mainly descriptive particulars for the purpose of identification, where they resided, and where they frequented, also the registration numbers on motor cars used by them.

These Intelligence officers used come into our office. The three girls of the staff were curious to know who they were. Some of the girls would ask "Who was so-and-so that came in?" In this way, we got to know the names of the various Intelligence officers. Some of the girls in the office were very friendly with them and used go around with them. General conversation would give a lot of information concerning their whereabouts, things that were said, etc. Any information obtained was immediately passed by me to I.R.A. Intelligence.

On various occasions I was requested by members of the Intelligence Squad to assist them in the identity of enemy agents. I remember the first occasion on which I took part in this work was with the late Tom Cullen in 1919. Piaras Beaslaoi asked me to meet a young man who would be waiting at Ó Raghallaigh's bookshop in Dorset St. and to accompany him to Lansdowne Road. I met this man, whom I learned later was Tom Cullen, and went with him to a football match at Lansdowne Road. He asked me to point out to him and give him the names of any British military officers who frequented Dublin Castle and G.H.Q. I was able to point out a few military officers to him whom I knew.

When I got to know the Auxiliaries better, I accompanied Frank Saurin (known then as Mr. Stanley) to various cafés

where I identified for him some of the Auxiliaries whom I knew.

The Auxiliaries organised smoking concerts and whist drives in the Lower Castle Yard. I was encouraged by Frank Saurin, a member of the Intelligence Squad, to give all the assistance I could in the organisation of these whist drives for the sole purpose of getting to know the Auxiliaries and finding out all I possibly could about them. Frank Saurin had arranged with me that should any of the Auxiliaries see myself or any of the girls of the Castle home, he would have members of his squad hanging around Dublin Castle to identify them. However, the Auxiliaries never did come past the Castle gate.

On one occasion I asked Frank for a reliable girl, whom I could trust, who would come along to the whist drives with me, to enable her to get to know these Auxiliaries and so prove a further source of identification. He sent along Miss Sally McAsey, who is now his wife. She did her work very well. She had a very charming manner and struck up a friendship quite freely.

One day a sergeant from British Intelligence came into my office, carrying a lot of magazines - as I thought - bound together. I asked him what they were and he told me they were copies of "An tOglach" and would not part with them for five hundred pounds, as they were very valuable to them. I reported this to Piaras Beaslaoi the same night, not knowing he was the editor of "An tOglach", and wondered why he became so alarmed about it. I got the impression that some member of the I.R.A. had been playing a double game.

While I worked as an agent in Dublin Castle, Michael

Collins or any other member of the staff never referred to me by name. Michael Collins always referred to me as the "little gentleman".

Following the swoop on British agents on 21st November 1920, I still continued on my normal work in Dublin Castle, and passed out as heretofore any information that I thought would be of value to the I.R.A. until I was dismissed early in February 1922.

Signed: Lily Mervin

Date: 27th October 1950.

Witness: William Ivory Bondt

