

ORIGINAL

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21

BURO STAIRÉ MILEATA 1913-21

No. W.S. 515

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BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21.

STATEMENT BY WITNESS

DOCUMENT NO. W.S. 515

Witness

Eamon T. Dore,
9 North Circular Road,
Limerick.

Identity.

Member of :

1. I.R.B. Rockwell, 1912 - ;
2. Irish Volunteers, 1916 - .

I.R.A. Intelligence Agent, Limerick, 1918-1921.
Subject.

I.R.A. Intelligence work,
Limerick, 1918-1921.

Conditions, if any, Stipulated by Witness.

Nil

File No. S.1041.

Form B.S.M. 2

SECOND STATEMENT BY EAMON DORE.

C O N T E N T S.

| | Page |
|---|------|
| Correction of word in first statement. | 1 |
| Organisation of Limerick Intelligence Group and the arrest and attempt to rescue Bertie Byrnes. | 1-2 |
| A Military raid and search of my house. | 2-4 |
| Shooting of Dalton. | 4-5 |
| The Split between 1st and 2nd Limerick Bns. | 5 |
| Compulsory closing of shops in Limerick during funeral of woman searcher. | 6-7 |
| Contact with Liam Mellows in connection with arrangements by letter to import arms via Limerick Port. | 7. |

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SECOND STATEMENT OF EAMON DORE.

9, North Circular Road, Limerick.

* See page 11 of Mr. Dore's statement
of 1/6/1950, W.S. 392.

In connection with the typescript of my previous statement there is one small correction necessary in the fourth line from the end on page eleven. Where it is stated that "I got Hegarty fixed up in a job in Limerick" this should read - "I got Hegarty fixed up in digs in Limerick". Hegarty was a first year railway clerk and there was therefore no question of employment for him but merely one of getting suitable lodgings.

Before Hegarty came we already had a working intelligence system serving the Limerick city area. Bertie Byrnes, of the postal telegraph section in the Limerick G.P.O., was in a position to get much information, both in his own department and that of the postal branch, the officers of which - Maurice McGrath and Sean Coughlan - were in charge of sections of our intelligence groups. Byrnes was arrested in the early spring of 1919 and was afterwards shifted from the local prison to the "City Home" hospital where he was held under a guard of four R.I.C. Constables who had orders to shoot him if he tried to escape.

A plan for the rescue of Byrnes was made by the Limerick Brigade and was put into effect on Passion Sunday. The Volunteers succeeded in rescuing Byrnes from custody, but Byrnes died later from bullet wounds inflicted by the policeman who was guarding him at the time of the rescue. This policeman sat in a chair near Byrnes' bed holding a revolver at the ready at all times, and when the rescue party came on the scene he fired at Byrnes but was himself

shot dead by the rescuers.

I visited Byrnes on that date, and while sitting on his bed tried to talk business with him, but found great difficulty in disguising the purport of our talk from the listening policeman. I left him a few minutes before the appointed hour of rescue, cutting the time so fine that I actually met some of the rescue party on the stairs as they were collecting to enter the ward where Byrnes was confined.

Byrnes' death was a severe blow to the work of our intelligence group, but the others in the Limerick G.P.O. carried on the work up to the Truce.

About September 1920 there was some internal trouble in the mid Limerick Brigade and the messenger, a man named Barry, since dead, who usually collected intelligence reports from my shop had been replaced by another man who was not so reliable. Barry had been intercepted and searched one day, but fortunately had nothing incriminating on him at the time. He was, however, badly beaten up and so a replacement had to be found for him until he was able to take up duty again. During the period of Barry's absence from duty the man who was supposed to do duty for him often did not call to me for days at a time, so that quite a pile of correspondence and documents accumulated. These documents consisted of original telegraph messages of a suspicious nature taken from the post office, as well as general reports of enemy movements and such like. Some of these concerned the local Brigade and some were forwarded to adjoining Brigades, but others were intended for G.H.Q. in Dublin.

It was some time in October 1920 that, when going home one evening, I put a bundle of this accumulated intelligence data in my overcoat pocket as I did not want to leave it

around the shop, and in the same pocket I carried a Webley revolver with eight rounds of ammunition. When I got home I hung my overcoat, with the documents and the gun still in the pocket, on a hanger in a wall press. I was sleeping at home at this time as my wife was ill and sometime in the small hours of the morning I was awakened by a hammering at the door. Getting up to open the door and stop the noise, I found the place was surrounded by a military raiding party who had searchlights playing on the windows. I was at first chiefly concerned about my wife, who was ill, and I wanted to stop the noise at the door, but when I opened the door a number of military officers rushed into the hall with drawn revolvers, and incidentally, shut the door upon the troops standing outside. The searchlights playing on the windows from outside were lighting up the place, and the officer in charge turning to me said, "Open that door, I want my men in". I looked at him and said, "They are not of much use to you now. If I wanted to kill you, or if there was anyone in the house ready to do it, you would be already dead". He said "What do you mean?". I said, "While your backs were turned I could have done it, and if there was anyone on the stairs now he could have done it, so you can put away your guns". Then he said to me, "Get in front and go up that stairs", and they began to search the house in such a way that I could see that it was papers and things like that they were looking for. I had got such a shock that up to this point I had forgotten about the things in my overcoat pocket which hung in the wall press, but as they got to my bedroom I remembered them, and as I saw one of the officers making for the press I almost gave up. My wife lay sick in bed, and I sat on the side of the bed as he pulled the press open and put his hand into the pocket of my coat nearest him. Fortunately, it was the left hand pocket, from which he pulled out two letters written

to me by my mother, who was then very old, and wrote in a very cramped style. While he was trying to read one I came over to him to try to take his mind off the wall press and head him to some other part of the room. I said when I got near him, "I'm afraid you will never be able to read that. It's from my mother who is well over eighty, (actually she was about seventy), and it is only by the context I am able to make out what she means to write". "Oh", he said, I am sorry. I did not mean to read such a private letter, and I can see that the lady is old". By this time his mind was diverted, and as he handed the letters to me I walked as calmly as I could to the press and returned them to the pocket he had taken them from. Closing the glass door of the press I turned slowly around to find that he had joined the other officers who were searching drawers. They then went on to search the other rooms of the house and only left after some hours, leaving me behind with my sick wife.

The Officer in charge during the raid was a Captain who behaved himself very well in the course of it and made his men behave. He obviously did not like his task, and from his medal ribbons I could see that he had seen much active service.

Some months later there was a local man shot as a spy - a Volunteer named Dalton. I did not agree with this shooting, but got much notoriety because of it. His mother-in-law for a week after the shooting came to the door of my shop every morning, and kneeling on the footpath outside came into the shop on her knees cursing me and my people-in-law - the Dalys. Needless to say it was very uncomfortable while this exhibition went on and I was actually present on two or three mornings.

In April of 1921 there was a reorganisation of the Mid-Limerick Brigade in an effort to get the 1st and 2nd Battalions to pull together in some kind of a working arrangement.

Up to this time there had been a distinct cleavage and much bad feeling between these units arising from the circumstances of the foundation of each Battalion. The 1st Battalion was the unit which existed from the Redmondite Split in 1914, while the 2nd was formed after 1916 and was mostly composed of men who, up to the Easter Week executions had been very hostile to our movement and had been followers of the political party of John Redmond. It was men such as those who afterwards formed the 2nd Battalion who were foremost in the assault upon the Dublin Brigade when the latter came to Limerick on a recruiting parade on Whit Sunday 1915. This fact was not forgotten by those who composed the 1st Battalion, and was the chief cause of the bad feeling between these units. Even now in 1951 there are some whose memory of that Whit Sunday parade nourishes a feeling of ill-will towards the assailants of the Volunteer parade.

However, in the April of 1920, or it may have been late March, an honest effort was made to bring the units together, and there was an exchange of appointments to establish the give and take atmosphere necessary for a settlement. I was temporarily relieved of my appointment and my job given to a man named Liam O'Sullivan. O'Sullivan was a harness-maker by trade and had a shop in the same street as mine but on the other side.

He lived directly across the street from my shop and on the first morning after he had taken up his new appointment he seemed to have got alarmed when the usual couriers arrived to hand him their various messages.

Coming across to my shop he said to me in the presence of my assistant, Miss Kilmartin (who is still employed in my shop) "You had better keep all these" handing me the bundle of messages etc., "as my place might be raided", with which he walked back to his own shop. From then on to the Truce, a matter of some weeks, I had to accept the worry and responsibility of handling and safeguarding all the intelligence reports and messages, while Sullivan had the honour and glory of holding the appointment of Brigade I.O.

About a month later - this would be about May 1921 - the British Authorities ordered a complete shut down of all shops and works in the city of Limerick from 10 o'clock a.m. to 2 p.m. one day while they were burying the body of a lady of doubtful reputation who had been used by them as a woman searcher during their raids. She had been shot in a brawl between two sections of Black and Tans on the night before, but the authorities spread the story about that she had been shot in an ambush.

It was about 9 a.m. on the particular morning when I heard of this order to close all premises and, despite the risk involved, I resolved not to close my shop. After breakfast I called upon several shopkeepers and asked them to join me in a defiance of this order by keeping our shops open, but each and all of them refused and tried to dissuade me from my purpose. They said, "It is madness, they will only smash up everything, and probably use firearms. If they kill you they will then say that you fired first". Coming back to my own shop, I went upstairs to my wife and told her the result of my efforts, but she replied that no one could force me to close my shop unless I wanted to do so. I therefore decided to keep the shop open, whatever the consequences might be, and with this decision my wife agreed, though at the time she was nursing our four months old son.

Going back to the shop then, I told Miss Kilmartin, the assistant in charge, what I intended to do, and that she could leave in case anything happened, which she did. I went to the street door to see what was happening outside. It was about a quarter to ten and all premises around were closed and had their blinds drawn. As ten o'clock struck a few of my neighbours came to me and asked me to close my shop and not to bring unnecessary trouble on the street. I told them, however, that any trouble there might be could only fall on myself. My successor in the intelligence section, O'Sullivan, had locked up his shop and gone out the country to his sister in Ballyneety, some four miles out.

About 11.30 a.m. two R.I.C. men, Constables Horan and Lynch, came and stood outside my shop until 2 o'clock but did not come in. (Constable Lynch was later shot during the Truce). It was a most nerve racking experience, waiting through these hours and wondering what they might do at any moment, but nothing happened.

Just before the Truce, Liam Mellows, whom I knew of old, called on me in connection with a scheme he was engaged on at the time - to smuggle arms through the port of Limerick. He had enlisted the aid of a Customs Officer named Cullinan, and the arrangements were just completed when the Truce came. Some arms actually did come in during the Truce through this arrangement, but nothing of any great consequence.

Signed;

Liam T. Dore

Date:

21. 5. 1951

Witness:

J. Dore

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