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BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21.

STATEMENT BY WITNESS

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Witness

Diarmuid Lynch,
Tracton,
Ballyfeard,
Co. Cork.

Identity.

Member of Supreme Council of I.R.B.
1916.

Subject.

The Countermanding Orders
of Holy Week, 1916.

Conditions, if any, Stipulated by Witness.

Nil

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The Countermanding Orders of Holy Week, 1916.

The attached eight-page printed document entitled:

"The Countermanding Orders of Holy Week 1916"
by Diarmuid Lynch

is a printer's proof.

The article was written by Diarmuid Lynch early in 1947 for publication in An Cosantoir. It was, in the first instance, submitted by the Editor of An Cosantoir to Mr. Bulmer Hobson for his comments.

Mr. Hobson, who was intimately connected with the incidents covered by the article, and whose name is frequently mentioned therein, replied to the effect that "statements about myself and about certain other matters just do not happen to be true".

In view of all the circumstances, the Editor decided to postpone publication of the article and forwarded copies of it together with Mr. Hobson's original letter to the Bureau for inclusion in our archives.

Mr. Hobson's letter is registered under No. W.S. 652.

B. Connolly
KEEPER OF RECORDS

29 Feb. 1952.

The Countermanding Orders of Holy Week, 1916

by

DIARMUID LYNCH.

THAT part of the article on Commandant Tomás MacCurtain published in the February, 1945 issue of AN COSANTÓIR which dealt with the failure of the Cork Brigade to participate in the Easter Week Rising suggests two thoughts: First, that the conflicting orders issued from Dublin to the Irish Volunteers at Easter-time, 1916, which so mystified Commandants outside the Metropolitan area, remain a mystery even to-day to any one who has not made an intensive study of prior developments among the men who then controlled or sought to control the destiny of the Volunteers; second, that a chronological sketch showing the sequence of events would help to elucidate the situation.

In October-November, 1913, a Provisional Committee was formed in Dublin to bring into existence a Volunteer organisation. Eoin MacNeill was elected Chairman. The majority of the Committee were members of the Irish Republican Brotherhood, a fact unknown to the minority (which included the Chairman)—the I.R.B. being a *secret* body, the continued existence of which was unknown to the public.

At a public meeting held on November 25th in that year, the "Irish Volunteers" organisation was formally established. Its objects were declared to be:

1. To secure and maintain the rights and liberties common to all the people of Ireland.
2. To train, discipline, arm and equip a body of Irish Volunteers for the above purpose.
3. To unite for this purpose Irishmen of every creed and of every party and class.

The "rights and liberties" mentioned were never defined, nor were the means

whereby they might be "secured." Some people construed them as meaning defence of the anticipated "Home Rule" position—to oppose which the Carsonite Volunteers had been organised previously in the North. The I.R.B., with an eye not alone to the hostility of the British Government to the establishment in Ireland of any organisation, national and military, in character, but also to the antagonism of the Irish people in general at that time to any policy savouring of "extreme-ism" or opposed to that of the Irish Parliamentary Party, decided not to oppose openly such a construction. For itself, however, the I.R.B.—true to the Fenian tradition of the 'sixties, which it had ever fostered, definitely construed the terms to mean: *'maintenance of the right of Ireland to national independence as a Republican State, and to secure that right through an Insurrection in arms.'*

This difference in outlook on the aims and objects of the Volunteers existed also among the members of the *governing body of the Volunteer organisation*. To this can be traced the serious crux which arose in Holy Week, 1916. If the revolutionary aims of the I.R.B. or its purpose to enlist the Irish Volunteers as a fighting force in an Insurrection were to succeed, *it necessarily had to keep them secret from men who held different views.*

In June, 1914, Tom Clarke and Seán MacDiarmada—representing the "Executive" of the I.R.B.*—were definitely opposed to Redmond's demand that the Provisional Committee should co-opt twenty-five nominees of his, which in

* This "Executive" comprised the President, Treasurer and Secretary of the Supreme Council. When the Council was not in session, control of the organisation vested in the "Executive."

Volunteers comprised the firing party at the graveside. Pearse's oration (from which we quote) was a clarion call to the nation, and particularly to the Irish Volunteers:

"If there is anything that makes it fitting that I, rather than some other, I, rather than one of the grey-haired men who were young with him and shared in his labour and in his suffering, should speak here, it is perhaps that I may be taken as speaking on behalf of a new generation that has been re-baptised in the Fenian faith, and that has accepted responsibility of carrying out the Fenian programme. I propose to you then that, here by the grave of this unrepentant Fenian, we renew our baptismal vows; that, here by the grave of this unconquered and unconquerable man, we ask of God, each one for himself, such unshakable purpose, such high and gallant courage, such unbreakable strength of soul as belonged to O'Donovan-Rossa.

"Deliberately here we now avow ourselves; as he avowed himself in the dock, Irishmen of one allegiance only. We of the Irish Volunteers; and you others, who are associated with us in to-day's task and duty, are bound together and must stand together henceforth in brotherly union for the achievement of the freedom of Ireland. And we know only one definition of freedom: it is Tone's definition, it is Mitchell's definition, it is Rossa's definition. Let no man blaspheme the cause that the dead generations of Ireland served by giving it any other name and definition than their name, and their definition.

"Our foes cannot undo the miracles of God who ripens in the hearts of young men the seeds sown by the young men of a former generation. And the seeds sown by the young men of '65 and '67 are coming to their miraculous ripening to-day. . . . The Defenders of this

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effect would give him control of that body and of the Volunteer organisation. Bulmer-Hobson, Secretary of the Committee and a member of the Supreme Council I.R.B., not alone decided to vote for ~~submission~~ ^{capitulation} to Redmond, but induced other members of the Committee to support his view. Redmond thus won control of the Volunteers. Hobson was compelled thereupon to resign all offices held by him in the I.R.B., but was permitted to retain membership in that organisation.

In the following September, Redmond attempted to throw the strength of the Volunteers behind Britain's war effort. The Split in the Volunteers ensued. Ninety-five per cent. of those enrolled followed Redmond under the title "National Volunteers." Approximately 10,000 "Irish Volunteers" remained loyal to the original Committee; these retained the original title.

Twenty members of the re-organised Provisional Committee of the "Irish Volunteers" (including MacNeill—Chairman, Hobson—Secretary, Pearse, MacDiarmada, etc.) issued a call for a Convention, and proposed (among other points) to

"2. Re-affirm without qualification the manifesto proposed and adopted at the inaugural meeting.

"3. Oppose any diminution of the measure of Irish self-government which now exists as a Statute on paper, and which would not now have reached that stage but for the Irish Volunteers."

In this the I.R.B. leaders were guided by the same considerations as at the inception of the Volunteers in 1913, with the additional purpose of winning back from Redmond as many as possible of those who followed him at the Split. While proposal number three gave colour to the construction placed on the term "rights and liberties" by the so-called "moderates" on the Committee, the I.R.B. members of it had no misconception on this point.

The Irish Volunteer Convention was held on October 25th, 1914. Its policy was, generally speaking, a reiteration of previous declarations. It elected an "Executive Committee."

Subsequent to ^{capitulation} ~~submission~~ to Redmond, the difference in outlook between what may be termed the "moderate" element and that of the revolutionary wing of the Volunteer Executive Committee was not emphasised to any appreciable extent until Holy Week, 1916. Over this period Hobson did occasionally stress the purpose of the Irish Volunteers as a purely *defensive* one, and he, due to his former positions in the councils of the I.R.B., had a deeper insight into the attitude of MacDiarmada and Pearse than that possessed by his "moderate" colleagues. Pearse and MacDiarmada did not force an issue on this question; it would not suit their purpose to do so. But, so well had they guarded the secret of their insurrectionary preparations, that not until Holy Week, 1916 (and then only by chance), did Hobson realise that a Rising was actually imminent. He then did his utmost to ~~execute~~ ^{execute} the plans which they and their colleagues of the Military Council had perfected for it.

From the very inception of the Irish Volunteers, men prominent in the I.R.B. throughout the country, especially in the most populous centres, took a leading part in organising and training the various Companies and Battalions. What with this and the further fact that the secret organisation was well represented among the rank and file of the Volunteers, the force as a whole gradually, and perhaps unconsciously, became imbued with an "offensive" rather than a "defensive" concept.

Pearse's writings and speeches were a powerful influence in that respect; O'Donovan-Rossa's funeral on August 1, 1915, marked a tremendous step in the same direction. The marching contingents were marshalled by Commandant Tomás MacDonagh on behalf of the I. V. Headquarters Staff; uniformed Volunteers headed by their officers, formed the most striking feature of the procession;

Realms have worked well in secret and in the open. They think that they have pacified Ireland. They think that they have purchased half of us and intimidated the other half. They think that they have foreseen everything, think that they have provided, against everything; but the fools, the fools, the fools!—they have left us our Fenian dead, and while Ireland holds these graves, Ireland unfree shall never be at peace."

That the Volunteers who heard, and read, these inspiring words felt themselves "re-baptised in the Fenian faith," and were confirmed in the determination to "carry out the Fenian programme," cannot be doubted.

Few, however, realised that Pearse and his I.R.B. colleagues were at that moment perfecting plans "for the achievement of the freedom of Ireland" as defined by Tone and Mitchell and Rossa.

In the summer of that year (1915), the then "Executive" of the Supreme Council, I.R.B. (on which I substituted for MacDiarmada) appointed a "Military Committee." The original members of the latter were Pádraic Pearse, Joseph Plunkett and Eamonn Ceannt. Later, Tom Clarke and Seán MacDiarmada (the two members of the I.R.B. "Executive" resident in Dublin) actively co-operated. Henceforth, the body may be termed "THE MILITARY COUNCIL"—by which title it became known in after years. James Connolly was co-opted late in January, 1916; and Tomás MacDonagh, early in April. Thus the Military Council eventually numbered seven—the seven signatories to the Easter Proclamation of the Irish Republic.

The date of the projected Rising had been selected by the end of 1915; the method by which the effective participation of the whole Volunteer force could be arranged *without exposing the secret purpose of the Military Council* was a problem of prime importance. Mindful of the 1914 ~~arrangement~~ ^{arrangement} to Redmond-con- Executive—the question of such partici-

ation could not safely be left to a vote of the governing body of the Irish Volunteers. A simple and what at the time seemed an effective solution was decided on: Pearse, besides being a member of the secret revolutionary group, was also Director of Organisation on the I. V. Headquarters Staff and in this latter capacity it was one of his functions to order any general exercises or manoeuvres by the Volunteers throughout the country. The issuance by him of such an instruction for Easter-time, 1916, was calculated not to arouse the least suspicion and to ensure a general mobilisation under arms at the opportune moment.

Pearse's order appeared in due course in the *Irish Volunteer* of April 8th, 1916. In the light of subsequent events, the camouflage in the first and third paragraphs is of particular interest:

"1. Following the lines of last year, every unit of the Irish Volunteers will hold manoeuvres during the Easter Holidays. The object of the manoeuvres is to test mobilisation with equipment.

"3. Each Brigade, Battalion or Company commander, as the case may be, will, on or before 1st May next, send to the Director of Organisation a detailed report of the Manoeuvres carried out by his unit.

P. H. Pearse, Commandant, Director of Organisation."

This was published with the approval of the Volunteer Executive and of Eoin MacNeill, Chief of Staff, but Pearse did not tell them that he had already issued secret orders to the Battalion Commandants as to the areas in which their respective "manoeuvres" were to be held. Nor did he inform them of the ultimate purposes which those manoeuvres were intended to serve.

MacNeill when reviewing a muster of Volunteers at Lough Gur, Co. Limerick, about the end of March, 1916, inadvertently got an inkling that Commandant Pearse had issued certain orders of which he had not been aware. The O/C, on

that occasion, in the belief that the I. V. Chief-of-Staff had cognizance of all orders issued, casually remarked that he as Commandant of the Limerick Brigade had received instructions to "hold the line of the Shannon in the event of actual hostilities." This seemed rather peculiar to MacNeill but he did not dwell on the subject, and its real significance did not then occur to him.

There is no other evidence available to show the approximate date on which these secret instructions had been issued by Pearse, nor by whom they had been conveyed. I happen to know that the initial strategic positions to be occupied by the Battalions of the South and West had been envisaged at the end of 1915. Cork was to hold the County to the south and west of the Boggeragh Mountains—left flank contacting the Kerry Brigade which was to extend eastwards from Tralee; Limerick was to contact Kerry on the south, Clare and Galway to the north; Limerick, Clare and Galway were to hold the line of the Shannon to Athlone. These details were given to me by Pearse at Saint Enda's in January, 1916; they were to be transmitted orally by me to the respective Commandants. My mission was, however, cancelled; I had no further association with these despatches.

[Though irrelevant here, the reason for my disconnection with this phase may be mentioned because of its relationship with a matter of historical interest. In the autumn of 1915, on instructions from Pearse, I paid a special visit to Tralee, Dingle, and other coastal points in the south-west to ascertain the most suitable spot at which a ship-load of arms from Germany could be landed and from which they could be most expeditiously distributed. I reported in favour of Fenit, which was the point eventually chosen. Another result of this visit was that the British Government held I had not, on entering a "prohibited area," fulfilled the regulations pertaining to registration by "friendly aliens," and in January, 1916, served me with an Order under which I was classified as an "enemy alien" and confined to a five mile radius from my temporary residence in Dublin.]

On Spy/Wednesday, April 19th, the famous "Castle document" was read at a meeting of the Dublin Corporation. To cope with the alleged plans of the Castle authorities as detailed therein, MacNeill, Chief-of-Staff, issued an Order that day to the Irish Volunteers:

"Your object will be to preserve the arms and the organisation of the Irish Volunteers. . . . In general you will arrange that your men defend themselves and each other in small groups so placed that they may best be able to hold out."

The fact that the Volunteers were thus keyed up at this particular moment suited the Military Council admirably. But, a rude shock was in the air.

Bulmer Hobson (according to Le Roux in *Tom Clarke and the Irish Freedom Movement*), at a meeting of the Volunteer Executive held that same evening, (Wednesday), overheard a conversation between I.R.B. members of that body from which he deduced that a Rising was contemplated. He immediately informed MacNeill who now coupled this information with what he had learned at Lough Gur; both decided to "check the plans.

Late that night (apparently) they drafted an order instructing Commandant J. J. O'Connell to proceed to Cork, and authorising him to "take chief command over all Volunteers in Munster." It also stipulated that "all orders issued by Commandant Pearse, or by any other person heretofore, are hereby cancelled or recalled," and that officers in Munster should "report to Commandant O'Connell as required by him on the subject of any special orders which they had received and any arrangements made or to be made by them in consequence."

On Holy Thursday night, MacNeill (accompanied by Hobson) called on Pearse at St. Enda's and put to him the direct question as to whether an Insurrection was planned. Pearse answered in the affirmative. MacNeill then said that he would do his utmost short of informing the British Government, to stop it. Accordingly, MacNeill and Hobson during the small hours of Good Friday morn-

ing took further steps to call off the Easter manoeuvres of the Irish Volunteers ordered by Pearse as Director of Organisation.

This attitude of MacNeill with respect to participation by the Irish Volunteers in an armed insurrection is understandable on the basis of his interpretation of the inaugural policy of the Volunteers. It also furnishes justification for the Military Council in having withheld its revolutionary plans from MacNeill and from the Volunteer Executive as a whole.

The fact that Easter-time, 1916, was a most "opportune moment" for Irishmen to strike for Ireland's freedom—a time at which Britain was engaged in a desperate struggle with a powerful enemy, and when many small nations sought to secure or maintain their independence by engaging in that conflict—cannot now be gainsaid. And, had the Volunteers not participated in the Easter Rising, this question would have arisen in after years: Why did the Irish Volunteers—a military body pledged to secure and maintain certain undefined "liberties,"—not avail of that opportunity to fight for the achievement of *National Independence*?

The supplementary orders drafted Holy Thursday night by MacNeill and Hobson "were sweeping in character, but as these do not seem to have been promulgated (for a reason apparent in the next paragraph) it is unnecessary to quote them.

Copy of MacNeill's order pertaining to Commandant O'Connell (dated April 19th) reached an office in O'Connell St. early on Friday. It was read there by Tomás Aghas and myself about noon. I immediately reported its contents to Clarke and Connolly; this was the first intimation they had of it or of any other move of MacNeill's to stop the "Rising." Before 1 p.m. MacDonagh arrived at the O'Connell St. address: I showed the MacNeill order to him, and he asserted that "the matter is alright." Questioned further as to what he meant, MacDonagh stated that MacDiarmada and himself (and Pearse, as I learned later) had interviewed MacNeill that morning at his residence, that they "put all their cards

on the table," and, that MacNeill, on learning for the first time that a shipload of arms was due to arrive "abdicated" his position as Chief-of-Staff"—thereby permitting the Military Council to take control of the Volunteers as they had planned.

Pearse, after receipt of MacNeill's ultimatum on Holy Thursday night, contacted MacDiarmada and MacDonagh; the three of them lost no time in interviewing MacNeill; between 8 and 9 o'clock Friday morning they called on him at his residence, Woodtown Park, Rathfarnham. He was in bed at the time and received MacDiarmada in his bedroom. MacDiarmada for the first time recited to him facts pertaining to the Rising; that it was to commence on Easter Sunday. He also told MacNeill that a shipload of arms and ammunition was expected from Germany; MacNeill on hearing this for the first time, replied: "In view of that, the fight is inevitable and we are all in it." MacDiarmada also told him that a Proclamation was to be issued on Easter Sunday; on being asked what its terms were MacDiarmada stated that the document was not yet complete. MacNeill then dressed and came down stairs where he found Pearse and MacDonagh waiting; the three visitors joined him to breakfast. (These details were furnished to me by Eoin MacNeill on August 14, 1936. They confirm, substantially, MacDonagh's remarks of Good Friday afternoon, 1916).

Thus the disaster which threatened the plans of the Military Council had been warded off—temporarily. The way was again clear for action. Lest news or rumours of the crux just overcome should have reached the country, MacDiarmada at once sent despatches to various centres. That for Cork was taken by Jim Ryan (now Minister for Agriculture). It read:

"Commandants MacCurtain and MacSwiney are to proceed with the Rising. Commandant O'Connell is to go forthwith to () as per previous advices."

MacCurtain's reply: "Tell Seán we will blaze away while the stuff lasts"

showed that the Military Council had the Cork situation well in hand. Saturday morning, April 22nd: But subsequent orders and events confused the whole position.

The Military Council received word that Saturday that the German arms-ship had been captured by the British.* The efficient arming of the Volunteers in the South and West had thus become impossible. News of the capture reached MacNeill later; he called several advisers into conference that night and decided once more to take matters out of the control of Pearse, MacDiarmada, etc.; he despatched messengers throughout the country with this countermarching order:

"Volunteers completely deceived. All orders for special action are hereby cancelled and on no account will action be taken."

About 10 p.m. he summoned Jim Ryan (who had just returned from the South) and gave him copies of this order—one to be delivered to Commandant MacCurtain, Cork. The O'Rahilly, was despatched to Limerick; others elsewhere. Thus the plans of the Military Council were again disrupted. The Rising, based on those plans was scheduled to commence the following afternoon (Easter Sunday)!

* The statement in AN COSANTOIR of February, 1945, that "the *Aud* was under continuous observation from the time she left port until she arrived in Tralee Bay," gives a wrong impression. Captain Karl Spindler's account of the voyage—"The Mystery of the Casement Ship"—demonstrates how the *Aud* under the neutral Norwegian flag, successfully bluffing British naval units, whenever she passed them, en route. The proof of this is evidenced by the fact that more than twenty hours elapsed between her arrival (5 p.m. Thursday) and the hour of her virtual arrest by the British (1 p.m. Friday)—during which time the cargo of arms could have been landed had the Volunteers been at Fenit to receive them.

The British had been on the look-out for the German steamer *Libau*. She, in her Norwegian guise as the *Aud*, fooled them. She also fooled the Captain of *Shatter II*, twelve hours after arrival in Tralee Bay, when the latter interviewed Spindler at 5 a.m. Good Friday. But, papers found on Casement on his arrest later that morning (Spindler p. 169) evidently directed suspicion in a special manner to the *Aud*. The challenge of the British "wireless boat" at one o'clock that afternoon can thus be accounted for.

*The explanation of the challenge given by Pearse to the *Aud* is contained in Dewey's recollections.*

About midnight (Saturday) MacDonagh arrived at 27 Hardwicke Street—MacDiarmada's headquarters for the night—with news of MacNeill's latest countermarch. The situation was appalling. Pearse and Plunkett arrived later. The four sat in conference—in which I, by virtue of my membership on the Supreme Council, I.R.B., was called on by MacDiarmada to participate. Clarke, Connolly and Ceann't, who had not stayed at their own homes that night, were not available. It was decided to call a full meeting of the Military Council for next morning at Liberty Hall. To ensure widespread circulation of Saturday night's cancellation order, the following appeared in the *Sunday Independent*, April 23rd.:

"Owing to the very critical position, all orders given to Irish Volunteers for to-morrow, Easter Sunday, are hereby rescinded, and no parades, marches, or other movements of Irish Volunteers will take place. Each individual Volunteer will obey this order strictly in every particular.

E.OIN MACNEILL."

Undismayed, the Military Council in session at Liberty Hall, Easter Sunday forenoon made two important decisions:

First: To send despatches immediately to the various Commandants confirming MacNeill's cancellation of that day's manoeuvres;

Second: That the *Rising would commence* in Dublin *next day* at noon—despatches to this effect to be forwarded that night to the country Battalions.

The first was intended to obviate the possibility that units outside the Metropolitan area might start operations before the Dublin Battalions could occupy their allotted positions on Easter Monday. Also, that should the British perchance become aware of this follow-up of MacNeill's countermarch, any suspicion on their part of impending action by the Volunteers may thereby be allayed.

Messages implementing decision number one were despatched from Liberty Hall

about 1 p.m. In addition to the twofold purpose mentioned in preceding paragraph, it is obvious from the following note written by Pearse at 5.5 p.m. Sunday, that the intention was to convince MacNeill also that the Rising had been called off—thus obviating any further untoward action by him:

"To Eoin MacNeill, Woodtown Park.
"Commandant MacDonagh is to call on you this afternoon. He countermarched the Dublin parades to-day with my authority. I confirmed your countermarch as the leading men would not have obeyed it without my confirmation."

The second decision of the Military Council—THAT THE RISING WOULD COMMENCE IN DUBLIN NEXT DAY, EASTER MONDAY, was the vital one. These indomitable men could not be swerved from the task to which they had set their hand.

Couriers were notified to be present that Sunday evening at the rooms of the Keating Branch of the Gaelic League, North Frederick Street. Pearse arrived there about 8 p.m. He had ready on small slips of paper a brief despatch, in his own writing, which read:

"We start operations at noon to-day, Monday. Carry out your instructions. * P.-H.-PEARSE."

Some of these left Dublin that night; others not until next day. The "opportunity moment" had arrived. No human act could now stop the Rising. The ill-effects of MacNeill's countermarch had been discounted so far as the Dublin Battalion was concerned, and Hobson was under arrest since the afternoon of Good Friday. Even had the British military machine in Ireland got into action prior to noon Easter Monday, the fight would have gone on, though the initial operations would thereby have taken a different turn.

When during the last few terrible days the plans of the Military Council were at

* This was signed either P.H.P. or P.H. Pearse

times on the verge of irretrievable disaster, these valiant men remained unshaken in their resolve. Once the Insurrection got under way, their heart-rending experiences were for the most part forgotten by them. They had "saved Ireland's honour" and were content.

20 interesting
 We who have had opportunity to ponder on incidents in Ireland's fight for Freedom during the subsequent years, may well feel that the outcome of those ~~same~~ experiences of Holy Week, 1916, were Providential in more than one respect.

The valedictory words of Padraic Pearse, Commander-in-Chief of the Irish Republican forces, written in the burning G.P.O. on Friday, April 28th., 1916 (with respect to the failure of most of the country battalions to participate in the Rising) will serve as a fitting close to this review of what proved to be a bewildering chapter in the history of the Insurrection:

"Of the fatal countermanding order which prevented those plans from being carried out, I shall not speak further. Both Eoin MacNeill and we have acted in the best interests of Ireland."

There is, however, another noteworthy phase: Historians when dealing with previous Irish revolutions belaboured the fact that the organisations responsible for them were cursed and thwarted by spies and informers. They also insinuated that all Irish revolutionists against British domination were "easy marks" for such spies, and were fools to think that their plans could be kept secret, from the eyes of the British Government. These critics side-stepped the well-known fact that every great Power has had its spies continually prying into the military secrets of its rivals—often with considerable success. The point I wish to stress in conclusion is that neither the leadership of the I.R.B. in 1916 nor that of the other organisations which participated in the Rising of "Easter Week" was cursed by either spies or traitors. Herein we have splendid testimony to the extreme care in recruiting exercised by the men responsible for the I.R.B. over a generation (coupled with propitious circumstances), and in particular to the methods followed by the members of the Military Council who guarded their secrets so jealously from the British that the insurrectionary forces were enabled to march unopposed into their several strategic positions on Easter Monday, 1916.