

ORIGINAL

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21
BURO STAIRÉ MILEATA 1913-21
No. W.S. 841

ROINN  COSANTA.

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21.

STATEMENT BY WITNESS

DOCUMENT NO. W.S. 841.....

Witness

Patrick Sarsfield (P.S.) O'Hegarty,
Highfield House,
Highfield Road,
Rathgar,
Dublin.

Identity.

Member of Supreme Council of I.R.B.;
Member of Advisory Committee attached
to Bureau.

Subject.

The I.R.B. and
events immediately prior to the Rising
of 1916.

Conditions, if any, Stipulated by Witness.

Nil

File No. S.49.....

Form B.S.M. 2

DOCUMENT CFURTHER NOTES ON THE PERIOD23RD APRIL, 1953.

This document is in the handwriting of the author, Patrick Sarsfield O'Hegarty, and is signed by himself.

Explanatory Note:

The articles by Pierce Beaslaoi referred to in the opening sentence were a series published over that writer's name in the Irish daily "Independent" under the collective title "Nation in Revolt."

There were twenty-five of these articles and they appeared in successive issues of that newspaper, excluding Saturdays, from Monday 5th January, 1953, to Friday 6th February, 1953, inclusive.

A complete set of the relevant cuttings from these issues is filed in the Bureau - Reg.No.P.C.10.

Further Notes on the Period
ORIGINAL

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In Pierre Bessières' recent article in the Independent, there was a few matters I wanted to comment upon, but I thought it better to leave it until I could write a few additional notes for the Bureau rather than write to the Press and elicit heavy comments.

(1) Bessières commented on Le Ross's Military Committee to the effect that it was near to his knowledge called a military committee. When in May 1915 Jean Maréchal told me of the situation he said

"he put up a small committee to get out plans. When they met they found that Joe Plunkett had plans prepared, or that he had been working for a long time, and they adopted them practically without alteration, and the Supreme Council accepted their recommendation."

He detailed the plans to me, and they were the actual plans as put into operation, even to the name of the buildings to be occupied. It is certain that the plans were complete in May 1915 and that Joe Plunkett was their sole author. In his account to me, Maréchal never referred to the Committee as military. And he was a master of the art of holding as little of the facts as he wanted to, and he spoke of the Committee, once it had recommended plans, had ceased to function and that the Supreme Council itself was in charge.

(2) Bessières quotes Jiffill as saying "when we started the Sun Free Daily we capital of a quarter of million pounds..." This is an error. Jiffill started the Sun Free daily, against the advice of all his colleagues, on something in the neighborhood of £5000. He had asked for either £10000 or £20000, I think, but he went ahead any way, being at the time obsessed with the idea that S.F. must have a daily.

(3) ^{Bersani} He made a reference somewhere to the Crown Jewels. (2)
The Crown Jewels were "stolen" by a Col. Gorges, a military
adventurer of one of the "Anglo-Irish" families. Gorges afterwards
contacted the Irish Volunteers and gave all the facts about the
Jewels to Phelim Hobson, who is the only person alive
who now knows about them. The last time I saw him
I urged him to set these facts down, and I think he would
dictate them if somebody were sent to him in the
paraphernalia.

(4) The Connolly Kidnapping.

When I left London in 1913 Dick Connolly succeeded
me as South of England representative in the Supreme Council, and
I became a co-opted member. He remained on the Council until
the Rising, and both McCullagh and McCann have told me
that he was one of the strongest advocates of a Rising. He
was, I am sure, very much in MacDonnell's confidence, and it
was to him I wrote in the Spring of 1915 - after hearing
that MacDonnell had been several times in London -
to tell Sean to call in at Whitehall to me, which
he did in May, 1915. I did not see Connolly
again until 1922, and I then asked him about various
matters, and he said, about James Connolly, that
he had made a pact with Mallon and Mackinnon, that
if any of the three was arrested, or disappeared, the
other two would call out the Citizen Army, and that
some time later Connolly did disappear for a
week or so. MacDonnell and Tom Clarke however knew
about the pact, and they warned Mallon and
Mackinnon that if they called out the Citizen Army
Sean and Tom
they would not call out the Volunteers but
they would denounce the move. Whereupon there was
no more and Connolly returned. Then, later on, he
was kidnapped and held until he had fallen in with

the I.R.B. arrangements. It is extremely unlikely that ^{Dick} Conway (3) would have invented this story, but anyway this was his story in 1922. I discussed this recently with Denis McFurlong, who was at this time Chairman of the I.R.B., and he informed about the 'Plot' and the first disappearance and the action taken by Mae Dermott and Clarke. But he never heard of the later Kidnapping and does not believe it happened. He argues that he, as Chairman, would have been told about it. But, as I pointed out to him and as he had stated before earlier, his first news about the Rising was to receive instructions a few days previously to mobilize his men on Easter Sunday, and, on the Sunday before Easter, he himself had been in Dublin, looking for information, and had been told by Tom Clarke that he did not know, and that he had been told by Mae Dermott, whom he failed to find, and left Dublin still in the dark. So that the fact that he did not hear about the kidnapping means nothing, especially as no meeting of the Supreme Council was held after the one that was held late in Dec. or early Jan., when it was decided that there should be no rising unless and until another meeting of the S.C. was held and sanctioned it [This was stated to me by both Dr. Tolan & McFurlong]. The two disappearances have led to confusion. William (Happy Bill) O'Brien remembers correctly saying after his return that he had been "in Hell". This, to my mind, clearly points to the first voluntary disappearance. But every word that I hear about the Rising confirms me in the belief that it was organized by Mae Dermott, Plunkett, and Pearse, and that even Tom Clarke was not told everything. Then ^{Conolly} the L is alleged to have said that

he had engaged his father - what would point to the (4)
kidnapping business.

(5) A point that stands out for examination is, when and why was the Rising made an All-Ireland one.

In reply to a question of mine in May, 1915, Mac Dermott stated quite categorically that it was to be a Dublin rising solely, and that the country would not be touched. He also said they hoped to be ready in September, and when I said they had better have it early in September, because the getting married some time that month - they actually married on 7th Sept 1915.

Everything points to a late and hurried decision. It is obvious that the country was not organised for a rising, and that it was called out on some sudden tactical decision. McCartan & McCullough knew nothing about the Rising until midweek of the week immediately preceding Easter: of course, in Dublin only, though what was known even here of a projected Rising ~~until~~ until Easter Sunday evening when a belated instruction reached him to meet a column ~~some~~ that morning some miles west of Ballynagay, where he was. He set out, to find on Monday that the column had assembled and, finding no instructions, had dissolved. ~~Mac Dermott~~ MacSwiney and MacCurtain, it appeared afterwards, were both in the Masson area on Easter Sunday, but they never contacted him, nor did they apparently contact anybody else. In early May 1916 Mary MacSwiney visited me at Kellsport on the way to Drogheda to see Terry. I said to her "Surely Terry was not in favour of that Rising". She said "Indeed he was not; and I was not. He did his best to stop it and he only cooperated in order not to let the Dublin men down". And she went on to

5
say that in the weeks preceding the Rising they had had seven
different messages in Cork for Dublin, and didn't know
what to do. I know, of course, that what she said is
not evidence, she was not in Terry's confidence, but it
shows the back ground. One of the difficulties about
establishing the truth about something we have all lived through
is that people will persist in thinking that they approached
public affairs in 1916 with the high patriotic enthusiasm
and patriotism and determination that developed afterwards,
and are people who might be supposed to know on subject
to decisions.

Mrs Clarke, persists, wrote a letter to
the Sunday Independent, apropos of a reference of mine, to say
that MacDermott was specially authorized by the Executive
Council to call on me in Waterford and disclose what they
were doing. But this is not so. MacDermott came in
response to my message to him through Dr. Conroy.

Deceased Lynd, who was a member of the Council
until 1916, wrote to me to say that Mrs Clarke
was in error, that the Council did not send
MacDermott nor authorize him to go. In fact, of
course, I was then a member of the Council and
entitled to be told what was up. Lynd also
cleared up another point. He said that I remained
a co-opted member of the Council until after that
visit of MacDermott. Some time in the summer
of 1915 the regular election of all Officers took
place, and I was not co-opted. Naturally, they
co-opted only people who were in favour of the
Rising, and I had definitely asked to be recorded
as against it.

J. S. O'Hagan

23 April 57

In Pierce Beaslaoi's recent articles in the Independent, there were a few matters I wanted to comment upon, but I thought it better to leave it until I could write a few additional notes for the Bureau rather than write to the Press and elicit hearsay comments.

(1) Beaslaoi commented on Le Roux's Military Committee to the effect that it was never to his knowledge called a Military Committee. When in May, 1915, Seán MacDermott told me of the situation he said -

"We put up a small committee to get out plans. When they met they found that Joe Plunkett had plans prepared, on which he had been working for a long time, and they adopted them practically without alteration, and the Supreme Council accepted their recommendation."

He detailed the plans to me, and they were the actual plans as put into operation, even to the names of the buildings to be occupied. It is certain that the plans were complete in May, 1915, and that Joe Plunkett was their sole author. In his account to me, MacDermott never referred to the Committee as military. But he was a master of the art of telling as little of the facts as he wanted to, and he spoke in such a way as to leave me under the impression that the Committee, once it had recommended plans, had ceased to function and that the Supreme Council itself was in charge.

(2) Beaslaoi quotes Griffith as saying "when we started the Sinn Féin Daily on a capital of a quarter of a million pounds...." This is an error. Griffith started the Sinn Féin daily, against the advice of all his colleagues, on something in the neighbourhood of £5,000. He had asked for either £10,000 or £20,000, I think, but he went ahead anyway, being at the time

obsessed with the idea that S.F. must have a daily.

(3) Beaslaoi made a reference somewhere to the Crown Jewels. The Crown Jewels were stolen by a Colonel Gorges, a military adventurer of one of the "Anglo Irish" families. Gorges afterwards contacted the Irish Volunteers and gave all the facts about the jewels to Bulmer Hobson, who is the only person alive who now knows about them. The last time I saw him I urged him to get these facts down, and I think he would dictate them if somebody were sent to him with the paraphernalia.

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When I left London in 1913 Dick Connolly succeeded me as South of England representative on the Supreme Council, and I became a coopted member. He remained on the Council until the Rising, and both McCullagh and McCartan have told me that he was one of the strongest advocates of a Rising. He was, I am sure, very much in MacDermott's confidence, and it was to him I wrote in the Spring of 1915 - after hearing that MacDermott had been several times in London - to tell Seán to call in at Welshpool to me, which he did in May, 1915. I did not see Connolly however until 1922, and I then asked him about various matters, and he said, about James Connolly, that he had made a pact with Mallon and Markievicz that if any of the three was arrested, or disappeared, the other two would call out the Citizen Army, and that some time later Connolly did disappear for a week-end. MacDermott and Tom Clarke, however, knew about the pact, and they warned Mallon and Markievicz that if they called out the Citizen Army Seán and Tom not alone would not call out

the Volunteers but they would denounce the move. Whereupon there was no move and Connolly returned. Then, later on, he was kidnapped and held until he had fallen in with the I.R.B. arrangements. It is extremely unlikely that Dick Connolly would have invented this story, but anyway this was his story in 1922. I discussed this recently with Denis McCullough, who was at this time Chairman of the I.R.B., and he confirmed about the 'Pact' and the first disappearance and the action taken by MacDermott and Clarke. But he never heard of the later kidnapping and does not believe it happened. He argues that he, as Chairman, would have been told about it. But, as I pointed out to him and as he had stated to me earlier, his first news about the Rising was to receive instructions a few days previously to mobilize his men on Easter Sunday, and, on the Sunday before Easter, he himself had been in Dublin, looking for information, and had been told by Tom Clarke that he did not know, and that he'd have to ask MacDermott, whom he failed to find, and left Dublin still in the dark. So that the fact that he did not hear about the kidnapping proves nothing, especially as no meeting of the Supreme Council was held after the one that was held late in December or early January, when it was laid down that there should be no rising unless and until another meeting of the S.C. was held and sanctioned it. (This was stated to me by both McCartan and McCullough). The two disappearances have led to confusion. William (Hoppy Bill) O'Brien remembers Connolly saying after his return that he had been "in Hell". This, to my mind, clearly points to the first voluntary disappearance. But every new thing I hear about the Rising confirms me in the belief that it was

engineered by MacDermott, Plunkett and Pearse, and that even Tom Clarke was not told everything. Then Connolly is alleged to have said that he had conquered his jailers - which would point to the kidnapping business.

(5) A point that stands out for examination is, when and why was the Rising made an All Ireland one?

In reply to a question of mine in May, 1915, MacDermott stated quite categorically that it was to be a Dublin rising solely, and that the country would not be touched. He also said they hoped to be ready in September, and the last thing I said to him was "Well, have it early in September, because I'm getting married some time that month" - I was actually married on 7th September, 1915.

Everything points to a late and hurried decision. It is obvious that the country was not organised for a rising, and that it was called out on some sudden theoretical decision. McCartan and McCullough knew nothing about the Rising until midweek of the week immediately preceding Easter: my brother, in Ballingearry, knew nothing whatever, never even heard of a projected Rising until Easter Sunday evening when a belated instruction reached him to meet a column that morning some miles west of Ballingearry, where he was. He set out, to find on Monday that the column had assembled and, finding no instructions, had dissolved. MacSwiney and MacCurtain, it appeared afterwards, were both in the Macroom area on Easter Sunday, but they never contacted him, nor did they apparently contact anybody else. In early May, 1916, Mary MacSwiney visited me at Welshpool on the way to Frongoch to see Terry. I said to her "Surely Terry was not in favour of that Rising". She said "Indeed he was not: and I was not. He did his best

to stop it and he only cooperated in order not to let the Dublin men down". And she went on to say that in the week preceding the Rising they had had seven different messages in Cork from Dublin, and didn't know what to do. I know, of course, that what she said is not evidence, she was not in Terry's confidence, but it shows the background. One of the difficulties about establishing the truth about something we have all lived through is that people will persist in thinking that they approached public affairs in 1916 with the high patriotic enthusiasm and patriotism and determination that developed afterwards, and even people who might be supposed to know are subject to delusions. Mrs. Clarke, for instance, wrote a letter to the Sunday Independent, apropos of a reference of mine, to say that MacDermott was specially authorised by the Supreme Council to call on me in Welshpool and disclose what they were doing. But this is not so. MacDermott came in response to my message to him through Dick Connolly. Diarmuid Lynch, who was a member of the Council until 1916, wrote to me to say that Mrs. Clarke was in error, that the Council did not send MacDermott nor authorise him to go. In fact, of course, I was then a member of the Council and entitled to be told what was up. Lynch also cleared up another point. He said that I remained a coopted member of the Council until after that visit of MacDermotts. Some time in the summer of 1915 the regular election of all officers took place, and I was not coopted. Naturally, they coopted only people who were in favour of the Rising, and I had definitely asked to be recorded as against it.

(Sd.) P. S. O'Hegarty,

23rd April, 1953

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