

# ORIGINAL

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21

BURO STAIRÉ-MILÉTA 1913-21

No. W.S. 1730

ROINN



COSANTA.

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21.

STATEMENT BY WITNESS.

DOCUMENT NO. W.S. 1,730.

**Witness.**

Lieut-Gen. Peadar McMahon,  
Dept. of Defence,  
Parkgate,  
Dublin.

**Identity.**

Adjt., Limerick Brigade, 1917-18;  
Organiser, Irish Volunteers & I.R.A., 1918-20;  
Secretary, Department of Defence.

**Subject.**

Irish Volunteer activities, Dublin, 1916;  
Organisation of Irish Volunteers, 1917-1920.

**Conditions, if any, Stipulated by Witness.**

Nil.

File No. S. 516.

Form B.S.M. 2

ORIGINAL

I joined the Irish Volunteers on the 25th November, 1913, at the Rotunda and was posted to "C" Company, 2nd Battalion, Dublin Brigade. Tomás McDonagh was first Captain of the Company. I was appointed Section Commander in 1915.

On Easter Monday, 1916, the Battalion to which I belonged paraded in Stephen's Green. I was deputed to take a squad of men to Connaught Street, Phibsborough, to convey shot guns, revolvers and ammunition from Micheál O'Hanrahan's house to Stephen's Green. When passing the General Post Office on our return, the building was being occupied by the Volunteers. On arrival at Stephen's Green I discovered that the 2nd Battalion was no longer there and I asked Commandant Mallin of the Citizen Army where the Battalion had gone. He replied that he required men and the arms which we had with us in the Green and, as we had been instructed some time previously to carry out the orders of the senior officer present - whether he was a member of the Volunteers or of the Citizen Army - I acted on Commandant Mallin's instructions.

When I was speaking to Commandant Mallin on the afternoon of Easter Monday he received a dispatch from General James Connolly. He showed me a letter from General Connolly stating that he agreed with Commandant Mallin's recommendation that I be promoted to the rank of Lieutenant. When looking at this letter I also saw a further one directing Commandant Mallin to evacuate the Green at dusk and to occupy surrounding houses. Later, when Commandant Mallin gave instructions regarding the barricading of the gates into the Green I asked him if it was not advisable to occupy the houses and vacate the Green. He replied "No, it is my life's ambition to defend the Green". I suggested that it could better be defended from the surrounding houses but he replied that he would defend the Green from the Green itself. During that night an attempt

was made by British soldiers stationed in Portobello Barracks to advance down Harcourt Street and Earlsfort Terrace but, after some firing, they retreated. One or two of our men received slight injuries from, I think, ricochet bullets.

On the Tuesday morning Commandant Mallin gave instructions that we were to evacuate the Green and occupy the College of Surgeons and some other houses. By this time a machine gun located in the Shelbourne Hotel had opened fire on the occupants of the Green and it was with difficulty that we got our men across to the houses. One man received a number of bullets from which he subsequently died.

On the following Sunday we were paraded in the College of Surgeons and Commandant Mallin read an order from General Connolly directing the troops in the Green to surrender. I had a feeling at the time that, as far as the Volunteers were concerned, it would be a fight to the finish and I asked Commandant Mallin's permission to re-join my Battalion, which I had learnt was occupying Jacob's Biscuit Factory. Commandant Mallin agreed. He gave me the surrender order which he had received from General Connolly and asked me to give it to Commandant McDonagh. Four of us - Joe Cotter, Tom Keogh, a Volunteer named Kavanagh and myself - proceeded to Jacob's Factory. On arrival, I was shown into the room occupied by Commandant McDonagh and by Major MacBride. I told Commandant McDonagh what had happened in the Green and gave him the dispatch from General Connolly to Commandant Mallin. Commandant McDonagh said that he would never surrender; that General Connolly was a prisoner and that he would not take orders from a prisoner. Later that evening Commandant McDonagh assembled all officers. He told them that he had communications from Generals Pearse and Connolly and said that, in all the circumstances, he had

decided to surrender. Some time afterwards we were marched to Bride Street where we were ordered by our own officers to "ground arms". We were then searched by British troops and marched to Richmond Barracks. We were packed into two large rooms and, while trying to sleep on the floor that night, Commandant McDonagh spoke to me. He said that until that day he had made up his mind never to surrender; that he only agreed in order to save Dublin and its citizens; that we would live to see the fruits of that week but that he and a number of the leaders would, he hoped, be in heaven at that time.

The following day from the window of the Barracks we saw Commandant de Valera being marched across the Barrack Square.

On Tuesday night we were marched to the North Wall, put aboard a boat and later arrived in Knutsford.

Some weeks later a number of the prisoners, including myself, were brought to Wandsworth and we had to appear before a Committee, the names of whom I cannot recollect at present. We refused to answer questions and were returned to our cells. The following day we were brought back to Knutsford. Later we were transferred to Frongoch and I was released from there in the following autumn.

The Shipping firm with whom I was employed refused to re-employ me, and Miss Madge Daly of Limerick, whom I met in the house of Mrs. Clarke, asked me if I would go to Limerick to assist in running the Bakery business. She said that her brother was executed; her uncle, John Daly, had died and some assistance was required to run the business. I decided to go to Limerick but before going there Mrs. Clarke asked me if I would bring to Dr. Paddy McCartan at Omagh a dispatch which she had received from John Devoy in America.

I left the dispatch at the address specified and brought back a reply from Dr. McCartan but I did not see him.

While in Limerick I assisted in the formation of a second Battalion in the City and a number of Battalions in the adjoining country. These were later formed into a Brigade and I was appointed Brigade Adjutant. The threat of conscription brought a rush of Volunteers into the various Companies and we were fully occupied in giving them some training and equipping them with the best available weapons. The majority were armed only with pikes and shot guns. When the Conscription scare was over I returned to Dublin as I was by this time wanted by the R.I.C. and could not return to my job.

About the middle of 1918 General Collins sent for me and asked me to go to Leitrim to organise the Volunteers there. Later he sent me to Co. Mayo for a similar purpose. On my return from Mayo, he asked me to go to Kilkenny to report on the organisation there and particularly on the officers of the Kilkenny Brigade. When this report was completed I returned to Dublin and Ernie O'Malley was sent to Kilkenny but, unfortunately, he was arrested with a copy of my report on him and all the best officers of the Brigade were arrested. This demoralised a Brigade which, in my opinion, would otherwise have given a good account of itself.

General Collins instructed me to go to Kildare to hold Volunteer Classes and also to keep in touch with a very valuable contact there - a Sergeant Maher of the R.I.C. who acted as Secretary to the County Inspector.

Later I was sent to Cavan. I found there a number of Volunteers who were prepared to join a Flying Column and, as the Volunteers had, at the time, become very active, I was anxious to attack the British Military in the town of Cavan

and a number of R.I.C. Barracks. Rifles were necessary for this purpose. I came to town and contacted Diarmuid O'Hegarty, who was then Director of Organisation. He brought me to see Generals Collins and Mulcahy and an appointment was made with the Quartermaster General - Seán MacMahon - for 12 o'clock the following day. I called, as directed, at Brunswick street (now Pearse Street) but Mrs. Fitzgerald told me that, although she had been expecting Seán, he had not yet arrived. A quarter of an hour later two tender loads of auxiliaries arrived and I was taken to the Castle together with Theo Fitzgerald, who was also on the premises. The Authorities in Dublin Castle did not connect me with my reports as they were all signed in Irish and it was only after the Truce that a British Intelligence Officer in the Rath Camp told me that they had a number of my reports - he actually showed me one. After some days in the Castle I was transferred to Arbour Hill and later to the Rath Camp, Curragh. I was elected as Internee Commandant and was detained there until the general release in the autumn of 1921.

In Leitrim, Mayo, Kilkenny and Cavan I found great enthusiasm for the Volunteers and had no difficulty in starting a unit in any area where there was not already one. The Volunteers were all anxious to obtain revolvers and rifles but, unfortunately, they were not then available. While I was in Cavan, G.H.Q. asked if anything could be done in that county which would result in the withdrawal of some of the British troops from the south as the Volunteers there were being hard pressed. I am satisfied that, had I been able to return to Cavan with sufficient arms to equip a Flying Column, the men of Cavan would prove themselves to be as good Volunteers as those of any other county. This opinion is borne out by the fact that when I decided to take Ballyjamesduff R.I.C. Barracks and arranged for an attack

on any reinforcements leaving Cavan Military Barracks or any of the adjoining R.I.C. Barracks, all the men mobilised that night turned up with the exception of the Ballinagh Volunteers. This Company held since 1916 the only rifles in the county - six in number - and, as the Company had been in existence so long, I felt I could depend on their co-operation. Rifles were required to cover the wide square in front of the R.I.C. Barracks and, as the Ballinagh men with the rifles did not turn up, I was obliged to call off the projected attack. Two days later I proceeded to Dublin where, as already stated, I was arrested in Fitzgeralds of Brunswick Street.

*[Handwritten signature]*

RÚNAÍ.

ROINN COSANTA.

Witness: \_\_\_\_\_

5 Deire Fómhair, 1951.

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21
BURO STAIRÉ MÍLEATA 1913-21
NO. W.S. 1730