

ORIGINAL

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21

BURO STAIRÉ MILÉATA 1913-21

No. W.S. 150

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BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21.

STATEMENT BY WITNESS

DOCUMENT NO. W.S. 150

Witness

Gregory Murphy

Identity

I.R.B. Centre. Member of Executive I.V.
after 1916.

Subject

I.R.B. from 1903
I.V. 1913-1916.
Holy Week and Easter Week 1916 - Dublin

Conditions, if any, stipulated by Witness

Nil

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Statement of Gregory Murphy,

F/Coy. 1st. Bn. Irish Volunteers.

I joined the Irish Republican Brotherhood at 41 Parnell Square, Dublin, shortly after the Boer War, about the year 1903 or 1904. It was the Bartholomew Teeling Circle of the I.R.B. I was introduced by Michael ^{Cowley.} Tom Nally was "Centre". He was succeeded by Michael Cowley, I don't remember the year, who remained "Centre" until about 1911 when Bulmer Hobson became "Centre". I had for some years previously been a member of the Gaelic League at first in the St. Brendan Branch, which met in Courtneys of Townsend St. and later in Johnstons Court - "Sceilg" and T.O'Neill Russell taught there. I was, along with others, expelled as a result of a protest we made at the hoisting of the Union Jack by an ex-British Army Officer at an outing we had to Bray. I went to the Michael Dwyer Club in York St. where there were Irish Classes. Those of us who had been expelled formed the St. McCartan Branch, Gaelic League in Terenure. Patrick Pearse and George Moonan were at the opening meeting of the St. McCartan Branch. I became later, I do not remember the date, Secretary of the Art Mac Morrough Branch of Cumann na Gael.

In the Teeling Circle I met Ernest Blythe, George Nichols, Sam Sloan, Paddy Whelan and others. There was also a Circle in York St. I do not recollect the name. P.T. Daly, who was "Centre", Michael Flanagan, Andy O'Byrne and George Lyons were members of this Circle. After a few years the Teeling Circle was sub-divided. George Nichols and I went to the Terenure Circle. About the year 1911, I was appointed Secretary of the I.R.B. for Leinster and was at the time "Centre" of the Terenure Circle.

The younger members of the I.R.B. were encouraged to

Study Irish History, support the G.A.A and other Irish movements. Prior to 1913 some drilling took place at 41 Parnell Square. It was conducted by the Fianna Boys in control of Con Colbert and Sean Heuston. Drill books were kept in Michael Crowe's house. About this time some small arms and miniature rifles were obtained.

Tom Clarke and Sean McDermott were very insistent that members of the I.R.B. should not seek executive positions in other organisations unless well qualified to hold such positions and have the confidence of the members of such organisations.

In 1911 Bulmer Hobson was Chairman of the Dublin "Centres" Board. He was of the opinion that England would at some time be involved in a war with the United States of America and that there was no hope of successful action until that occurred. He was also of opinion that the Country was not sufficiently organised for such action and that the lack of arms was an obstacle. The general feeling at the time was that it had been a mistake to allow the Boer War to pass without having taken some action.

The I.R.B. instituted a special fund for the production of the paper "Irish Freedom". Each member contributed one shilling per month. I was treasurer for the Dublin Fund.

About this time, 1911, there was a rift in the I.R.B. The younger members became restive. They considered that not sufficient progress was being made. They wanted a more active policy. Fred Allen thought that they were pushing matters too far. He had a copy of "Irish Freedom" produced supporting his views. This was produced at the same time as the usual issue of "Irish Freedom" and caused much confusion. Allen was a man of great influence.

However, every Circle, with the exception of one small one, Athboy as well as I can remember, turned Allen down. I went to Dun Laoghaire Circle of which he was "Centre" and carried the Circle against him. He resigned. I collected all the monies of the Organisation that I could lay my hands on and lodged them in the National Bank.

I remember attending only one General meeting of the I.R.B. which was held in the Clontarf Town Hall about the year 1912. It was addressed by Father O'Sullivan who dealt with the question of the Oath.

I attended the inaugural meeting to found the Irish Volunteers in the Rotunda in 1913, I joined the Irish Volunteers at that meeting. I attended the first parade in the Columbcille Hall in Blackhall Place and was attached to F/Coy. 1st. Battalion. All Members of the I.R.B. of Military age were required to join the Volunteers. Members of the Civil Service and others who could not attend public parades met separately. I was aware that it was a recognised policy in the I.R.B. that anyone who had taken an active part in hostility to the Parliamentary Party ^{initial stages of the} should not be openly associated with the ^{formation} of the Volunteers. I was employed in Insurance work. I visited a number of I.R.B. Circles, organising and keeping matters up to date and ensuring that members attended drill with the Volunteers. My out of pocket expenses were paid by the I.R.B. Owing to such duties I was unable to attend many parades of the Volunteers.

I gathered from conversations I had with Sean McDermott that a Rising had been decided on to take place before the War ended. I surmised about a month before Easter that the Rising was to take place then.

It came about this way- an English Firm were advertising the sale of rifles with silencers. These were two types - B.S.A. was One type - I cannot recollect the other. The firm would only supply one to any individual. Sean McDermott got one through the ordinary parcel post and I got another of a different type. Sean and I were discussing the making of the silencers in Ireland and he said "There is no time, now!". I was sent ^{by Sean McDermott} to Dundalk, Wexford and Athlone during the month prior to Easter to inform members of the I.R.B. that the position was becoming acute and that any attempt to disarm the Volunteers should be resisted, and to inform them that if any of them wished to leave the Organisation (I.R.B.) it was then the time to resign. Very few as far as I am aware, resigned. I met Bob Brennan, Sean Synnott, Seamus Doyle and others in Enniscorthy, Sean McGuill in Dundalk, Peadar Melinn and Seamus O'Brien in Athlone, Nick Newport in Wexford.

On Thursday night prior to Holy Week I was present at a meeting at 41 Parnell Square of Volunteers who did not attend parades openly such as Civil Servants and Men over Military age. There were about thirty present including Patrick Pearse, Sean McDermott, Major McBride. Pearse gave a lecture generally about street fighting and house to house fighting. Mobilisere for the Unit were appointed. After the meeting I remained behind with Pearse, McDermott, McBride and J.R. Reynolds, discussing the situation. McBride did not entirely agree with remaining in Dublin as he was of opinion that the British would surround the Volunteers and slaughter them. He thought that guerilla warfare should be adopted, attacking communications, etc. Pearse believed that something spectacular should be done, otherwise the rest of the country would not rise. It

appeared to me that he was impressed by the Robert Emmet plan to seize Dublin Castle, the centre of British administration in Ireland. I remember on one occasion when speaking to James Connolly, he left me under the impression that Pearse believed that the British would not shell Dublin owing to the damage they would cause to their own "garrison". James Connolly did not agree with that view.

I spent Holy week with Garry Houlihan, Con Colbert and Con Donovan clearing depots and distributing arms, ammunition and explosives. I had a depot in my Brother's shop in Rathmines - a cycle shop where the Post Office is now situated - and in my own home in Carnew Street. I helped Michael O'Hanrahan to move a case of revolvers from Seamus O'Connor's house in Woodville Terrace, Drumcondra. Some girls assisted in the removal. I had shotgun stuff at home, some of which went to Tullamore and the remainder to Swords. Though I heard nothing definite there was a sort of general understanding that the mobilisation on Easter Sunday was for a fight that night. During the week I met Ned Daly and Jim Sullivan apparently reconnoitring in the Four Courts Area.

Early in Holy Week I was at a meeting of the Dublin Centres Board, I.R.B. at 41 Parnell Square. Among others I recollect the following being present - George Irvine, Tom Hunter, P.J. Farrell, Sean Murphy, Con Colbert, Sean Tobin, Bulmer Hobson and George Lyons. At that meeting P.J. Farrell of Loughlinstown asked if the instructions he had received to interfere with the Railway were all right. Bulmer Hobson told him that nothing should be done without instructions from Eoin MacNeill. I knew that Bulmer Hobson went to see Eoin MacNeill after the meeting. With Tom Hunter I went and informed Ned Daly.

On Easter Friday when at Volunteer H.Q. in Dawson St. Sean Tobin came to me with a verbal message from James Connolly to be taken to Tom Hunter at Croydon Park for the arrest of Bulmer Hobson. I took the message to Tom Hunter at Croydon Park. Later on Saturday I went to Martin Conlan's house in Connaught St. to see if the order had been carried out. Hobson was there in custody. I gathered from conversations I heard in Liberty Hall from time to time that it was the general opinion of the members of the Citizen Army that Hobson would get them into trouble.

In Conlan's house I saw Martin Conlan, Tom Hunter, Sean Tobin, Harry Manning and about four other Volunteers. On Sunday Morning I met Martin Conlan at Frederick Street and we discussed what should be done about Hobson. We decided to await further instructions. I heard afterwards that Sean T. O'Kelly was sent on Monday Evening to have him released.

On Easter Sunday I went to an office over Hyland's shop in Frederick St. Pearse, McDermott and Willie Pearse were there. Sean McDermott gave me typewritten mobilisation orders to be given to J.R. Reynolds who was in charge of the Special Unit of Civil Servants, etc. These I delivered. They were to the effect that the Unit was to assemble at 41 Parnell Sq. on Easter Monday at 11 a.m. I was also instructed to get money from Tom Clarke for the expenses of the couriers to go to the country. I went to Tom Clarke at his home in Philipsburgh Avenue and on his instructions Mrs. Clarke gave me the money. It amounted to about £300. (three hundred pounds)

I returned with the money and gave it to McDermott. Mary Perolz was there then. She went as a courier to Kilkenny and Tralee. I also saw D.O'Hegarty and Sean O'Shea there. On Easter Monday J.R. Reynolds called with a mobilisation order for me at my home, 34 Carnew Street, and told me he had delivered the others. I then went to 41 Parnell Square. While there John O'Mahony and Joe Murray joined us. J.R. Reynolds went to the G.P.O. and Major McBride went with him saying he would like to give these amateurs a hand. Reynolds returned but McBride did not. About dusk I reported with the Unit to the G.P.O. I spent Monday night there. On Tuesday I went with a message from Connolly and Pearse to Ned Daly. It was typewritten but I paid no attention to the details. I found him in the Boys' Brigade Hall. On my return from the G.P.O. with the reply from Ned. Daly, Connolly informed me that Ned Daly wanted me in the Four Courts area. I reported to Daly and remained in that area for the remainder of the week. On the Saturday night I stayed in the Father Matthew Hall in Church St. with Martin Conlan and others. We decided to try and get away if we could and not surrender. On Saturday night we cleared the Father Matthew Hall of Arms and Ammunition. On Sunday Night I stayed in a garden beside the Church with Mick Foley and Martin Conlan. On Monday I succeeded in getting a suit of clothes and got to Nurse Brereton's house in Aughrim Street. I was not arrested afterwards. The week following the surrender I went to John R. Reynolds who was acting for Mrs. Clarke, who had a dependents' fund for the Volunteers. I assisted in collecting information about the dependents and distributing the monies. Diarmuid O'Hegarty was released early in May as a result of an error as to identification and I

contacted him immediately. We started to get in contact with the men who had not been arrested and were prepared to carry on. We also contacted supporters in the country and in America. We held a re-organisation meeting in the Minerva Hotel, Parnell Square on the first Monday in August, 1916. I was elected a member of a provisional committee. Other members I recollect were- Sean O'Murthuille, D.O'Hegarty, Father ~~XXXX~~ O'Daly, Liam Clarke, Luke Kennedy; Cathal, Brugha, who was in hospital, was elected Chairman. When Brugha had recovered, we usually held the meetings in his home in Rathmines.

In October, 1916 the first Convention was held in Flemings Hotel, Dublin. An executive, of which I was a member, was elected to hold office for a year or less depending on circumstances. After the general release of prisoners another Convention was held in Barry's Hotel, Dublin, in March, 1917. I was again elected a member of the executive. After the release of the penal servitude prisoners another Convention was held in Croke Park in October, 1917. I retired from the executive to make way for younger men - Michael Collins, D.O'Hegarty, Eamon Price, E.De Valera, G.O'Sullivan were elected on this executive. I then became attached to the ~~XXXXXXX~~ Department controlled by D.O'Hegarty. The following assisted in that department - C.Brugha, Luke Kennedy, Liam Clarke, Peadar Kearney and Tom Slater. We were ~~XXXXXXXXXX~~ engaged in procuring and distributing arms, collecting intelligence reports, etc. I remained with this department until the Truce in 1921.

My I.R.B. Circle was to a large extent disorganised after 1916. Some of us met frequently out of doors in Rathfarnham. We were mainly occupied in keeping the

Volunteers organised and in helping them. As I had been Secretary of the I.R.B. for Leinster I became a member of the Council of the I.R.B. in 1917 and remained a member until 1919. The other members whom I can recollect were Sean McGarry, Martin Conlan, Harry Boland, Liam Gaynor and Sean O'Muirthuille.

J. R. O'Garra

Witness -

R. J. Feely Comdt.

18 September 1948.

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