

ORIGINAL

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21

BURO STAIRÉ MILEATA 1913-21

No. W.S. 2



ÉIRE

Telefón 61018.

ROINN COSANTA.

BURO STAIRÉ MILEATA 1913-21

(Bureau of Military History 1913-21),

26 RAEDH NA NÍARTHARACH,
(26 Westland Row),

BAILE ÁTHA CLIATH.
(Dublin).

DOCUMENT Ws. 2.

Statement by

CHRISTOPHER HARTE

On

Offer of a Bribe by British Agents to
betray General Michael Collins,
January 1921.

File S. 69.

ORIGINALMEMO.

Offer of Bribe to Christopher Harte, January, 1921.

Christopher Harte now a waiter in the Officers' Mess, McKee Barracks, was formerly a porter in Vaughan's Hotel, Rutland Square, Dublin, since renamed Parnell Square.

He was a close acquaintance of Michael Collins and is stated to have saved him from arrest on many occasions.

In the Mess to-day he told me the following story:

He was arrested shortly before midnight on the night of 31st December, 1920, and detained in Dublin Castle where he was ill-treated. The time was fixed in his memory by the fact that church bells were ringing in the "New Year" as he was entering Dublin Castle under arrest. A few days later, the exact date he cannot remember, while still in custody in the Castle he was questioned in a dark room as to his knowledge of Collins. He denied all knowledge of him, but was confronted with the statement that he had frequently been seen carrying Michael Collins's bicycle down the steps of Vaughan's Hotel from the hall into the street.

It was suggested to him by his unseen questioner that he was a poor man and that he would like to earn some money. He was informed that the authorities would be prepared to pay a large sum, perhaps up to even £10,000 for information ready to the capture of Collins.

The scheme suggested to him was that on some occasion when Collins would be in Vaughan's Hotel, he, Christopher Harte, should ring up the Castle, Extension 28, and give the following message:-

Brennan: The portmanteau is now ready.

The text was handed to Harte on a slip of paper. He was instructed to memorise it carefully and then destroy it. Needless to say, Harte did not, at any time, do as suggested.

He kept the slip and sometime late in 1921 and probably before 6th December of that year, loaned it to a Dr. Ahearne at the latter's request. Dr. Ahearne who was later an officer in the National Army did not return the slip to Harte.

From what I have been told by persons of standing associated with all phases of the fight for independence, Christopher Harte was undoubtedly closely associated with Michael Collins in circumstances of the utmost trust, that he was at all times in possession of information, the disclosure of which would have endangered his life and liberty of many prominent men in the struggle, and that this trust was never betrayed.

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This is a correct record

Director of the Bureau of Military History 15 Jan 1947

Christopher Harte
15 Janair, 1947.