

ORIGINAL

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21
BURO STAIRÉ MILEATA 1913-21
No. W.S. 261

ROINN  COSANTA.

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21.

STATEMENT BY WITNESS

DOCUMENT NO. W.S. 261.....

Witness

General Piaras Beaslai,
82 Lower Drumcondra Road,
Dublin.
Identity

Member of original Provisional Committee
of Irish Volunteers;

Member of I.R.B.

Subject

Plans of 1st Battalion, Dublin Brigade,
for Rising, Easter Week 1916.

Conditions, if any, stipulated by Witness

Nil

File No. ...S.77.....

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Dublin

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Dear Colonel Joyce

I am sorry for my delay in communicating with you with regard to the question of the plans for the 1916 Rising, but I was searching old papers and records to try and get at the exact dates as far as possible. I have succeeded in finding some ~~other~~ entries in an old diary of mine for 1914-5 which are relevant, and, I think, important. I find I was a little astray when I said I had plans for the First Battalion before the end of 1914, but only a little. The first actual date was February 18th, 1915. ~~Here~~ Here are the relevant entries. I have added explanatory words in brackets. (Of course at the time I had to be very careful what I wrote and some very important things, such as the

messages I brought to Liverpool for the Germans are not recorded at all).

"Jans 28, 29, 30, ¹⁹¹⁵ Studying the line of the Tolks. Went down town, met Tomás (Aske) and made an appointment.

Jan 30. Meeting of First Battalion officers (at H.A., Kildare Street). Ned (Daly) elected Commandant.

Feb 10. Meeting of Battalion Council at Blackhall Street. I was elected Vice-Commndt.

Feb 13. Con (Collins), Tomás (Aske) and I dined at the Tyrone. Afterwards we adjourned to my office (in Middle Abbey Street) where Tomás submitted maps and details. ---

~~Feb 17 gave report to Plunkett.~~

(Later the same evening in Tom Clarke's shop). Ned (Daly) appeared and took me out to propound a certain plan.

Feb 17 gave report to Plunkett.

Feb 20. With Ned (Daly) up to Broadstone where we saw Gerald (Griffin). "

There are two different matters involved here - but they both bear on the question of plans.

(1.) At this time I was on the Executive of the Volunteers. Joe Plunkett was appointed Director of — something. I forget his title. After his appointment he sought me out and asked me, if I had any plans of military operations in the city or county, to draft them out as fully as possible and submit them to him. It is in this connection that my diary records studying positions on the North side and several interviews with Tom Ashe. Tomás took the thing up very seriously and ^{drafted} ~~submitted~~ plans and maps for the County Dublin which he submitted to me (Feb 13th). I gave them to Plunkett with my own report. (Feb. 17th).

These were not the plans for the Rising but they show that Plunkett was working on plans for Dublin at the time, and seem to confirm the theory that he was the original drafter of the 1916 plans. If that is so the statement of Cathal Brugha; quoted by Desmond Ryan in "The Rising" that "Connolly it was who prepared the plan for the defence of Dublin" can hardly be correct. I do not think Cathal was in a position to know anything about the matter at the time.

Of course Connolly was in touch with us at the time. On Jan 23rd, 1915, and again on March 6th, as my diary records, he gave lectures to the Dublin Volunteer officers at Headquarters on "Street Fighting" - very useful and practical lectures.

(2.) The second matter is what you really want. As soon as Samson Daly was elected Battalion Commandant,

I understood from him that he was co-opted on a committee - apparently a sub-committee of the Military Council - to deal with the plans for an insurrection. As his second in command, I was, I think the only person in whom he confided fully on the matter. My diary shows that on Feb 13th, 1915 (the same day I got the maps from Ashe) he called me out to "propound a certain plan". This must be the plan for the First Battalion. I remember he first told me of it outside Tom Clarke's shop. On a later date he again spoke of the subject and gave me maps of the ~~the~~ Broadstone and Four Courts area which, I understood, he had received from his committee - or, in other words, the Military Council.

I note from the diary that on Feb 20th Dohy and I went to see Gerald Griffin at the Broadstone. Griffin was ^{Assistant} Quartermaster of the

First Battalion, a member of the I.R.B. and an employé of the Great Western Railway Co., ~~and~~ working at the Broadstone. We did not then tell him of the plans but we asked him to show us over the station. Afterwards he brought us out to Liffey Junction, and explained about all the "loop lines," connections, points & signal boxes and how they could all be put out of action.

There is another incident which I have not recorded in my diary (no doubt for motives of prudence) but which I distinctly remember. Armed with the maps given me by Daly I went round and inspected the various outside approaches to the Broadstone Station. After a time I noticed a policeman watching me suspiciously, and realised my imprudence in carrying the maps while on such a mission. I did something to disarm his suspicious

and went away.

These are all the facts I have, but I think they are sufficient to prove that the plans for the First Battalion, at all events, were in our hands early in 1915 and were substantially the same as those we tried to carry out in 1916. They certainly involved holding the Broadstone, the North Dublin Union, the Four Courts and the area between. I don't think there was any mention at this time of the Mendicity Institution, and such details as the barricades at Cabra and the North Circular Road did not arise. Indeed, as was natural, the ^{exact} positions of the street barricades in Church Street & its approaches were only decided shortly before the Rising.

Michael Staines was Quartermaster of the First Battalion in February, 1915. I wonder did Daly ever discuss the

plans with him at that time. I don't think so, but it would be well to ask him.

One other point of interest about the First Battalion plans. When we were in Lewes in 1917 Tom Astle told me that his instructions were to establish touch with the First Battalion on Easter Monday and arrange some system of co-operation. In pursuance of this order, he said, he arranged for a Fifth Battalion (Fingal) Volunteers in uniform to wait at Cross Guns Bridge, at the time of our taking up our positions, for a messenger from us; but, though he waited a long time, no messenger arrived. I can only say that, though Daly went over the plans with me and the Battalion Staff in the minutest detail, he never mentioned this matter. Had I known I would have sent a

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messenger at once. I do not know whether
it was ^{that} Poly forgot it or that ~~he~~ a message to
him giving the order miscarried. It was
one of the numerous "mix-ups" of the week.

I thought it better to write this,
as I am a bad hand at dictating,
and I wanted all the facts set out as
clearly and succinctly as possible,
but I would be glad if you would
have typed copies of this letter
made, and send me one, which I
would like to keep for reference

Yours sincerely

Piavas Beaslai.

