

**ORIGINAL**

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21

CURO STAIRÉ MILEATA 1913-21

No. W.S. 372

ST. PATRICK'S CATHEDRAL, DUBLIN  
1913-21

R.O.I.N.N.



COSANTA.

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21.

STATEMENT BY WITNESS

DOCUMENT NO. W.S. 372.....

Witness

Department of An Taoiseach  
Upper Merrion St., Dublin.

Identity

Subject

Information re. Russian Jewels given as  
security for loan made by Irish Government  
in 1920.

Conditions, if any, stipulated by Witness

Nil

File No. S.610.....

Form B.S.M. 2.

# ORIGINAL

W. S. 372

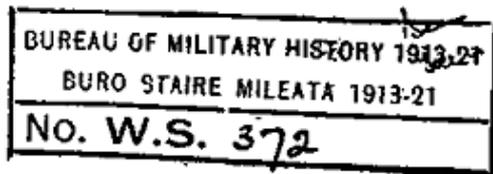
Uimhir Theagartha  
Ref. No.



ROINN AN TAOISIGH  
DEPARTMENT OF THE TAOISEACH

BAILE ÁTHA CLIATH  
DUBLIN

S. 14205.



4 Aibreán, 1950.



Rúnaí,  
Buro Staire Míleata 1913-21.

In reply to your minute No.S.610 of the 3rd instant, relative to the jewels which were given as security for a loan of \$20,000 made to the Representative of the Russian Soviet Republic in the United States of America from the American Account of the First Dáil in 1920, I am to refer you to the following:-

- (1) the statement made by the then Taoiseach, Mr. Éamon de Valéra, at Youghal on Saturday, the 17th January 1948, and reported in the Irish newspapers of the 18th and 19th idem;
- (2) the Dáil Questions answered by the Minister for Finance on the 9th March 1948 (Vol. 110, col. 172);
- (3) the Dáil Question answered by the Minister for Finance on the 15th December 1948 (Vol. 113, cols. 1526-7); and
- (4) the official statement issued through the Government Information Bureau on Saturday, the 1st instant.

I might add that this Department's information indicates that the jewels were handed in 1920, not to Mr. de Valéra as stated in your minute, but to the late Mr. Harry Boland, T.D.

*M. M. ...*

Rúnaí

s.610.

3 Abrán, 1950.

A Chara,

I am desired by the Director to refer to the jewels which were handed to Mr. de Valera by Russian representatives in the United States of America in 1920, as security for a loan made by the then Irish Government.

As it appears from Press reports that these jewels have now been returned, the Director has asked me to enquire whether it would be possible to make available for the Archives of the Bureau the history of this transaction, in so far as it is on official record.

Mise, le meas,



RÚNAI.

Rúnai do'n Ríaghaltas,  
Sráid Muirbhtheann Uacht.



The following statement was issued by the Government Information Bureau:-

The Russian Jewels were restored in September, 1949, on payment by the Russian Government of the sum of 20,000 dollars, the amount of the loan made in 1920.

The approach to the Russian Government was naturally through our Irish High Commissioner in London. The loan was repayable on demand and accordingly the High Commissioner was instructed to apply for repayment failing which the Irish Government would regard themselves as free to recover the amount of the advance, or as much of it as possible by disposing of the security.

The loan was duly repaid in dollars and the jewels were accordingly handed over. The jewels had been valued by people in the business who advised that the Government would be lucky if they got up to £2,000 for them. This view was confirmed by valuations made in London.

1st April, 1950.

Extract from  
Parliamentary Debates  
15th December, 1948.  
Vol. 113. cols. 1526-1527.

#### Russian Jewels.

Mr. Flanagan asked the Minister for Finance if he will state the whereabouts from 1922 to 1932 and from 1932 to date of the Russian jewels now in the custody of the Government, and if he will indicate to the House the history of these jewels as far as he is aware since their arrival in this country, and the amount of loan given to the Russians for which they are security, and if it is proposed to apply for the repayment of the loan and return the jewels, or sell the jewels to realise the amount of the loan.

Mr. McGilligan: I have no official information as to the history or whereabouts of these jewels prior to November, 1938, when they came into the custody of the Department of the Taoiseach, where they remained until they were transferred to the Department of Finance on the 18th February last. The loan for which the jewels were handed over as security amounted, I understand, to \$20,000. The question of disposal of the jewels has been receiving consideration, but no decision has yet been reached.

Extract from  
Parliamentary Debates  
9<sup>th</sup> March, 1948.  
Vol. 110, Col. 172.

#### The Russian Jewels.

Captain Cowan asked the Minister for Finance if he will state the present market value, if any, of the Russian jewels stated by the then Taoiseach during the recent General Election campaign to be in possession of the Government and what it is proposed to do with them.

Captain Giles asked the Minister for Finance if he will state whether the Russian jewels mentioned during the recent General Election campaign are now in the custody of the present Government; and, if so, is it his intention to investigate their origin and the amount paid for them.

Mr. McGilligan: I propose, with the permission of the Ceann Comhairle, to take questions Nos. 31 and 32 together. The jewels referred to are in the possession of my Department. There is nothing to indicate their origin beyond the fact that they were handed over as security for a loan of \$20,000 made in April, 1920, to a representative of the Russian Soviet Republic in the United States. The jewels are described in the receipt given for them as being worth \$25,500. I propose to have the jewels valued and, after valuation, to consider whether and in what manner they should be disposed of for the benefit of the Exchequer.

#### ~~Income-tax Exemption.~~

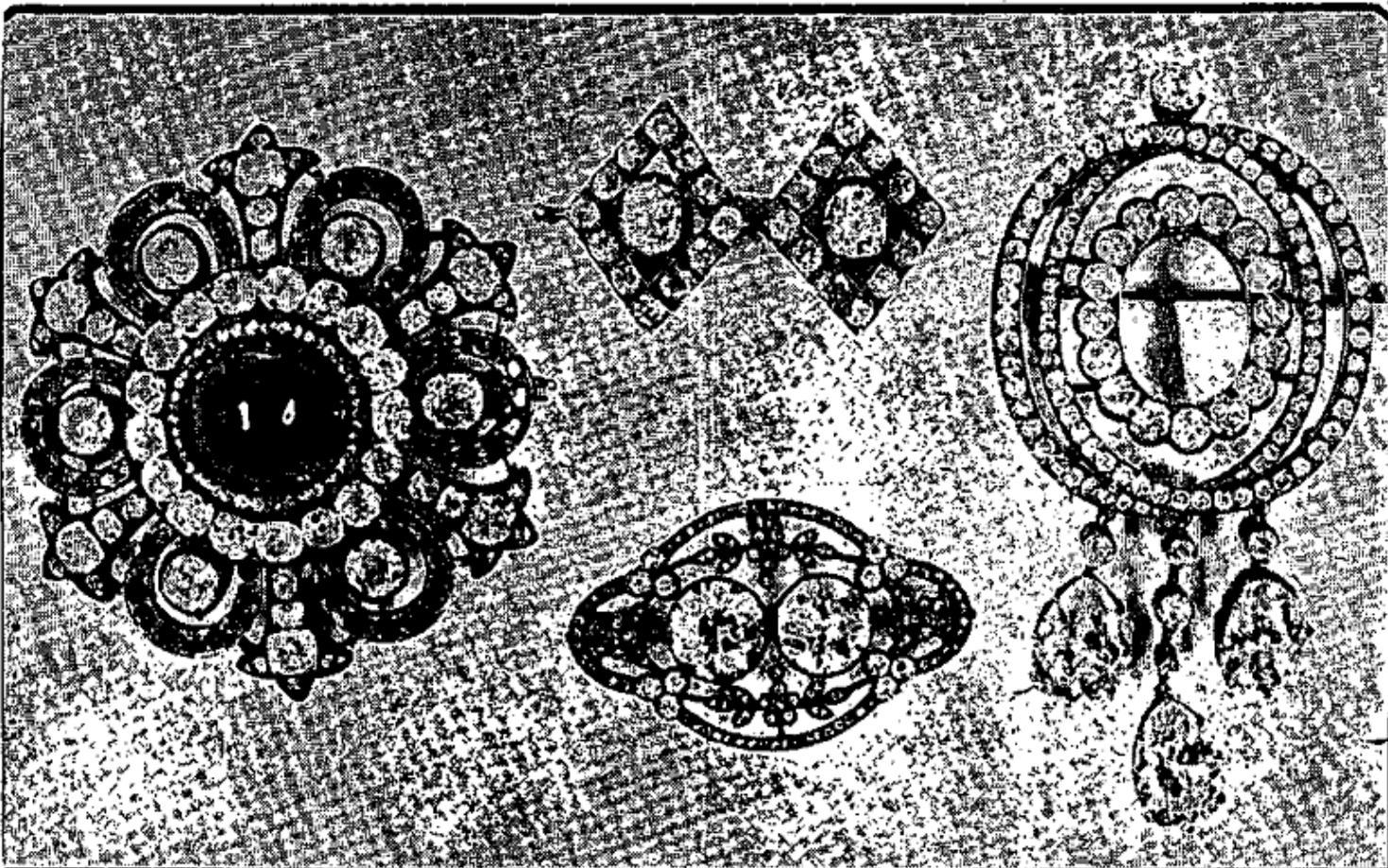
~~Mr. Cowan asked the Minister for Finance if it is intended to abolish or revise the exemption from income-tax which members of the Oireachtas~~

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21

BURO STAIRE MILEATA 1913-21

No. W.S. 372

## The Now Famous Russian Jewels



The "Sunday Independent" yesterday secured this photograph of the Russian jewels, which figured in a remarkable election speech made by Mr. de Valera in Youghal on January 17. Left: The centre-piece of this is of great value and is rated at 8 carats of sapphires. With it are 12 carats of diamonds and 3 of rubies. Right: 16 carats of diamonds. Centre, top: 6 carats of diamonds. Centre, bottom: 9 carats of diamonds. These four pieces are valued at

anything from £10,000 to £20,000 in a world market.

Mr. de Valera disclosed that 28 years ago a loan was given in the U.S.A. to a representative of the Soviet Government by emissaries of the Irish Republic, and the jewels were given as security by the Russians. The amount of the loan was not revealed, but it is believed to be between 10,000 and 20,000 dollars (£2,000 and £4,000 at the rates then obtaining).

### What Mr. de Valera Said

Mr. de Valera said he had been asked a number of questions by one of the candidates in the Election, and he would take this opportunity of answering them. The questions arose out of events that had happened in 1919 and 1920 in the United States.

"As you know," said Mr. de Valera, "we were at that time over there seeking recognition of the Republic, set up here following the Election of 1918.

"At that time there was a representative of the Russian Government of that day—there had been a revolution a short time before in Russia—also I think seeking recognition.

"He found it difficult to get American money. A loan was given to him by the Irish mission.

"In security for that loan, certain articles of jewellery were given up by him.

"I have been asked, first of all

"Was the loan ever repaid?" My answer is, "To my knowledge, no."

"The next question is 'Where, then, are the securities?' My answer is, 'They are safe in Government keeping.'

"They were handed in a short time after we came into office by the last private individual into whose keeping—they had come. Since then, they have been in Government control awaiting the day of possible redemption.

"So far as I know, there was never any effort made to realise them, nor, so far as I know, was any effort ever made to get an expert estimate of their value, whether it was little or much.

"The intention was that they should be kept until the loan was repaid and then they were to be returned. I hope my answer will satisfy the gentleman."

" Irish Press  
19 January, 1948.  
Page 1. Col 4 + 5.

## T.D. BROUGHT THE RUSSIAN JEWELS HERE

THIS is the story of the jewels which, as related by Mr. de Valera in his speech in Youghal on Saturday, were given as security by a Russian envoy in America in 1920 for a loan advanced by the Irish Republic.

The jewels, writes an IRISH PRESS reporter, were brought to Ireland by the late Harry Boland, T.D., who returned from the United States on St. Stephen's Day, 1921, just in time to vote against the Articles of Agreement for a Treaty between Britain and the Irish Republic.

He brought them to his mother's house and they were hidden.

Last night, his sister, Mrs. Kathleen Boland O'Donovan, told me of the big cluster, which might have been part of a crown, the ear-rings, and the pendant. There are four articles in all. Diamonds with topaz, they are mounted on platinum, with safety locks.

When Harry Boland had been shot and was dying, he told his mother and sister to keep the jewels till Mr. de Valera should return to power, then to hand them to him. That was in 1922.

At the time the Civil War was raging, and Mr. de Valera was in the country. When he next returned to Dublin Mrs. O'Donovan told him of her brother's instructions, and it was agreed between

them that the Bolands should do as they had been asked.

When Mr. de Valera was returned to power in 1932 the jewels were handed to him, and the receipt for them was signed by Mr. de Valera, Mr. Sean MacEntee, then Minister for Finance, and, as witness, by Mr. Maurice Moy-nihan, Secretary to the Government.

### WERE "VERY NICE"

Mrs. O'Donovan said last night that the jewels were "very nice to look at." She had never tried them on. Very few people knew of their existence in Ireland, and no one spoke of it.

Harry Boland held the jewels for the Government of the Republic, and it was his original intention to hand them to Michael Collins, Minister for Finance in the Cabinet, which split when the fatal vote for the "Treaty" went the way it did. At the time of Harry's death his brother, Gerald Boland (present Minister for Justice), and Senator O'Donovan were in jail.

When the time came, said Mrs. O'Donovan, the family were very glad to be rid of the responsibility of keeping the jewels safely. They had kept them for about ten years.

GOVERNMENT HAS RUSSIAN JEWELS

Republican Loan Not Redeemed, Mr. de Valera Says

M. R. DE VALERA, in a speech at Youghal on Saturday, disclosed that 28 years ago emissaries of the Irish Republic in the U.S. gave a loan to a representative of the Soviet Government and received, as security, jewels which were still in the hands of the Irish Government awaiting the day of possible redemption.

One of the candidates at the election had asked him a number of questions arising out of events which had happened in the U.S. in 1919 and 1920, and he would take that opportunity of answering them, Mr. de Valera continued.

"We were at that time over there seeking recognition of the Republic set up here following the election of 1918," he said. "At that time there was a representative of the Russian Government of that day—there had been a revolution a short time before in Russia—also, I think, seeking recognition. He found it difficult to get American money. A loan was given to him by the Irish mission. In security for that loan, certain articles of jewellery were given up to him.

"I have been asked, first of all, 'Was the loan ever repaid?' My answer is in my knowledge, no. 'The next question is, 'Where, then, are the securities?' My answer is,

Amount Not Stated

THE amount of the loan was not revealed by Mr. de Valera, but it is believed to be between 10,000 and 20,000 dollars (£2,000 and £4,000 at the rates then obtaining).

"They are safe in Government keeping."

"They were handed in a short time after we came into office by the last private individual into whose keeping they had come. Since then, they have been in Government control, awaiting the day of possible redemption.

"So far as I know, there was never any effort made to realise them, nor, so far as I know, was any effort ever made to get an expert estimate of their value, whether it was little or much," he added. "The intention was that they should be kept until the loan was repaid and then they were to be returned. I hope my answer will satisfy the gentleman."

NEGOTIATIONS IN MOSCOW

DR. PATRICK McCARTAN, who was a Presidential candidate, and is a Clann na Poblachta candidate for Cork City, in the course of

a letter to the newspapers had written:—

"As Mr. MacEntee goes back to 1931, perhaps I shall be permitted to recount some incidents of 1920. Early in that year, Mr. de Valera sent me to Ireland from the United States to explain his Cuban speech—External Association with the British Empire.

"The late Harry Boland took my place in Washington and New York. When I returned a few months later I was informed by both Mr. Boland and Mr. de Valera that they had not only had negotiations with Mr. Marten and his colleagues, the Soviet representatives in the United States, but also had loaned them ten or twenty thousand dollars. As security they had received from these Russian representatives jewels which had been smuggled into the United States."

"Under orders from Mr. de Valera, I sailed from New York via Sweden to negotiate with the Soviet Government in Moscow, where I spent four months.

"I would have as much ground for implying that Mr. de Valera was a Communist in 1930 as Mr. MacEntee had for suggesting that Mr. MacBride was one in 1931. But just as the matter has been raised, let me ask Mr. MacEntee or Mr. de Valera if that money was ever repaid by Soviet Russia, and, if not, where are the jewels of which their colleagues had custody?"

A Well-Kept Secret

ALTHOUGH it could hardly be regarded as a "dead secret" here, the story of the Russian Jewels was known only to a limited number, mostly old I.R.B. men or those who could be relied on to keep secrets.

The secret was well kept and it is doubtful if it got outside a certain circle, although many of those who knew about it took different sides after the Treaty.

REASONS FOR SECRECY.

The main reasons for the secrecy were that those who knew of the deal were given to understand that the jewels were some of the Russian Crown Jewels, although only a small portion of them, and that if the deal became generally known it might be given undue significance and used in two or three continents by those eager to injure the reputation of Ireland abroad.

Although the Irish who were working for Irish freedom in the

U.S. at the time did not think the jewels were Russian regalia jewels, they still regarded them as Crown Jewels in that they belonged to some member of the Russian Royal family.

It is stated that the jewels included a tiara and a necklace of pearls interlaced with diamonds.

Irishmen in New York believed at that time that the jewels were worth about £90,000 or £100,000, and it is said that they were worn on one occasion at a dance in New York.

Their transfer to Ireland was a well-kept secret, and it is thought they were possibly smuggled in in furniture, just as many guns had been smuggled.

Their handing over to the Government by a private individual was also a well kept secret, and it is doubtful if anybody outside Government circles had any idea that there were Russian jewels in a strong-room in Government Buildings for a number of years.