

W.S. 716

ORIGINAL

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21
BURO STAIRÉ MILEATA 1913-21
No. W.S. 716

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BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21.

STATEMENT BY WITNESS

DOCUMENT NO. W.S. 716.....

Witness

Michael J. Molloy,
21 Marino Park Avenue,
Fairview,
Dublin.

Identity.

Member of 'E' Company, 2nd Battalion,
Dublin Brigade Irish Vol's. 1914 - .
Compositor in office of "The Irish Republic"
1914-1916.

Subject.

- (a) Printing of the Proclamation of an
Irish Republic, Easter Sunday 1916.
- (b) Jacob's Factory, Dublin, Easter Week 1916.

Conditions, if any, Stipulated by Witness.

Nil.

File No. S. 2027.....

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Statement by Mr. Michael Joseph Molloy.

21, Marino Park Avenue, Fairview, Dublin.

I joined the Volunteers in late 1913 or early 1914. At that time they were known as the National Volunteers. At the time we used to train in Clan-na h-Éireann Hall, Richmond Road. We used to get a run through drill by Major Monteith and he was accompanied by a man named Godkin. I was led to believe that he was training cadets in Trinity College at the time. We had a big parade from Fairview one morning at 6 o'clock. We got Mass in Rathfarnham Church. We did some manoeuvring round by Ticknock and the Lamb Doyle's. This continued all day long. We walked back then and dispersed, as far as I can recollect, at Parnell Square.

Sometime after the Volunteer split in September, 1914, the majority of the Volunteers went against Redmond and took the side of the Irish Volunteers. Immediately before the division the question was put to us on a parade, would we stand by Redmond as he had a guarantee from the House of Commons that we would be utilised for the defence of our railways. A vote was taken and the majority of my Company, whose names I cannot remember of the 2nd Battalion, Dublin Brigade, voted against Redmond's proposals.

Our next parade took place in Father Mathew Park, Fairview. Here we were formed into Companies. I became attached to "E" Company of the 2nd Battalion. The late Tom Weafer was my Company Commander and M. J. O'Reilly was also an officer.

I was a compositor by trade and one day in the autumn of 1914, a fellow-member of my Company, a man by the name of M. J. Keogh who was in the Evening Mail Office at the time and who was known to be a personal friend to James Connolly, came to me and said, "Would you take a job?" I asked him had it anything to do with compositing. He said yes, that James Connolly was starting a paper, "The Irish Republic", and would I go and take charge as compositor in the printing

office of Liberty Hall. I agreed, and an appointment with James Connolly was arranged. He asked me was I prepared to take the job that Keogh had mentioned to me, adding that there was a bit of risk attached to it. What he meant was that his place would be subject to raids by the Castle Authorities and that I might find myself in difficulties. I said to Connolly, "Certainly, I will take up the job". "As you are an experienced man", he said, "you will take charge of the office and you will be in my employment". When the office was got going following my interview with Connolly it was staffed by W. F. O'Brien, Compositor, Chris Brady, Machine Man, and an additional helper for piece-work by the name of Joe Newman - now dead. Brady and myself were paid a standing wage at the time. I cannot say when the first edition of "The Irish Republic" came out. Some of the subscribers to it were, as far as I can remember, Seán O'Casey (Playright and Author), Seamus Hughes and Seamus O'Farrell - a journalist now I think in Public Department, Irish Sweep Office. Other articles were contributed by Major Monteith and the late Sheehy-Skeffington. The paper was published weekly. The Countess Markievicz and Helena Moloney ran a Baby Clothing Stores on Eden Quay and it was known as "The Co-Operative Stores". At the back of this shop you could get direct to the room where the printing in Liberty Hall was carried on. Several times the Co-Operative Stores were raided by plain-clothes detectives. While the reason given for the raids on these stores was to search for pamphlets and literature regarded as illegal and seditious the main purpose was to try to locate the exact position of Connolly's printing press. They were not successful in this because the search party never got past the Countess Markievicz who prevented them at the point of the gun from entering Liberty Hall through her premises. Liberty Hall at that time had 99 rooms and men of the Citizen Army were always there on guard.

On Good Friday James Connolly sent for William O'Brien, Chris Brady and myself. He said that he wanted us to turn out a Bill for Easter Sunday that would be in the nature of a Proclamation,

but that we would have to get suitable type for it and he would bear the expenses. He said, "When you have the type ready let me know". I knew that to meet Connolly's requirements I would have to get a D.G. primer and it would take two sets of cases, upper and lower, for the purpose. I visited a few places and I was not successful. On going to the third place, which chanced to be West's of Capel Street, I told him what I wanted. He told me to go upstairs and see Graham, the man in charge of the case room and to tell him what I wanted. I told Graham that Mr. West had sent me up and that I was to get all the double D.G. primer that he had, giving Mr. West and Mr. Graham a promise that should anything happen the type the firm would be compensated. Graham at first put many objections in my way and I told him if he did not give it voluntarily it would be taken. Eventually he agreed. He brought it downstairs and put it on the hand-cart which was being pushed by a member of the Citizen Army nick-named "Dazzler". On returning to Liberty Hall I notified Connolly of my success. He summoned the three of us again to his office and then he told us that he would require us on Sunday morning at 9 o'clock. I told him that I was warned to mobilise with my Company on that morning and he said, "Tell your Captain that you are engaged by me and that I will take responsibility for you".

We arrived on Easter Sunday morning at the appointed time. While I had no clear idea of coming events I knew that something of importance was going to happen that day. Connolly opened the conversation by saying, "We are going ahead with it". Then he said, "The whole thing is called off". I said, "What!" He said, "Bulmer Hobson and John MacNeill have cried the mobilisation off". He repeated, "We are going ahead". He added that the job we were going to do that morning was for Easter Monday morning and that it was to print a Proclamation of the Irish Republic. He said, "This must take place; we must rise. If not, fathers and sons will be tracked by the British and there will be wholesale massacre".

Continuing, he said, "If we are able to hold the Capital for 48 hours we would, in fact, be in a position to declare ourselves a Republic". He then gave us the manuscript of the Proclamation. He read it for us and asked us was the copy clear enough. At that time there were no signatures on the manuscript. "But", he said, "it will be signed another time and if you care to witness the signatures you can remain here". Not long after that Joseph Plunkett came in from a cab and as he was in very bad health he had to be helped into the office. Within a half an hour the manuscript of the Proclamation had been duly signed by the signatories concerned. I cannot say who actually wrote the Proclamation. I was not familiar with the hand-writing. While the Proclamation was being signed we were busy transferring the cases of the type required from the case-room which was in the basement of Liberty Hall to a small room at the back of the Co-Operative Stores on Eden Quay, the idea being that there was an Easter Sunday night commemoration concert in the hall of Liberty Hall. To get from the original case-room to the machine-room we would have to pass through the hall while the concert was on and this would have given rise to suspicion. No one was allowed to contact us in Liberty Hall as we were under a guard of the Citizen Army who were posted on the fanlight over the door entrance to the Co-Operative Stores, also the door leading from the Concert Hall into the Machine Room and also at a rear entrance. At about 11 a.m. we set about work on setting the type and when we had the top portion of it set half way down, even to complete that half we had to treat letters with sealing wax. We could not go any further for the moment. So we sent up a message to Connolly that we would have to print the Proclamation in two halves. And the answer was, "Go ahead". We then ran off, I think, 1,000 copies with half the Proclamation printed. We then took the form off the machine and made arrangements for the setting up of the second half which would complete the Proclamation. This entailed a considerable delay

and the second and final half of the Proclamation was not printed until about midnight on Easter Sunday night. I do not know what became of the manuscript of the Proclamation but the signatures of the Proclamation were appended on a separate piece of paper in the order in which they were required. I took this with me and put it in my pocket and had it on my person when I was later a prisoner in Richmond barracks. Realising how dangerous it would be if the document containing actual signatures of the Proclamation was found, I destroyed it by chewing it up into small pieces and spitting it out on the floor. Actually the suggestion came from a fellow-prisoner. When he saw that I was beginning to tear this document he advised me that the best thing to do was to chew it up into small bits.

When we left Liberty Hall on Easter Monday morning about 1 o'clock passing by the Custom House on our way home Billy O'Brien and myself spotted men behind the rail pillars. Billy said, "I wonder are these fellows watching us". I said we would go slow. The figures slowed down and came across the road and followed us up Gardiner Street. So we made up our minds that we would give them a run. We continued all the way up Gardiner Street, cutting across Belvidere Place and up to Dorset Street. Now and again we used to do a little sprint and our shadows were still after us. We cut into Dorset Street and at Leech's Bridge we made up our minds to slip down the Canal and get on to Jones' Road where they lost us. We made our way home to our respective dwellings.

On Easter Monday morning I was mobilised for 9 o'clock. I was to be mobilised for Stephen's Green outside the College of Surgeons at 11 a.m. I reported as ordered and on arriving at the Green other Company Volunteers were already there. We formed up under Tom Hunter. He said, "We'll get our orders before 12 o'clock". A short time later a man came along wearing a large swinging cloak! He shouted to Tom Hunter, "What are you standing here for. Get those men to their places". I learned later that this was the late

Major MacBride. He called us to attention. We then moved off. Our first stop was Bishop Street where we were facing the door of Jacob's biscuit factory. We waited there for a while until a cab came along. Seated in the front seat with the cab-driver was Pat Sweeney. He was an officer of "F" Company, 2nd Battalion. He dismounted from the cab and immediately rifles were taken from the top and the inside of the cab together with ammunition. The door of Jacob's factory was then forced and a party of Volunteers entered and took it over. Our party remained 'standing to' outside. A short time later we moved off under the command of Tom Hunter to Fumley Lane. The Company was split up there - one half taking over Barmack's distillery and the other half, of which I was a member, took over a block of houses in Fumley Lane. We were told to get to work on burrowing an entrance through four houses. This block of houses covered the approach of British troops coming down Clanbrassil Street from Wellington barracks. Clanbrassil Street, at that time, contained a lot of dairy yards which had numerous milk delivery cars. These cars were taken out, turned up on their sides and used for barricades across Clanbrassil Street. At 9 o'clock on Easter Monday night we were withdrawn from outpost duty in the block of houses to Jacob's biscuit factory. We were posted to different positions all over the factory covering approaches along Bishop Street and the entrance to Bride Street which runs alongside Jacobs and Redmond's Hill. Orders were also given that we were to burrow through from Jacob's to a public house at the corner facing Aungier Street. We had two masons in our party and the burrowing was made easy. Strict instructions were given that no Volunteer was to take any drink from the public house. And although I am not a drinking man myself I must say that this order was strictly obeyed.

Throughout Easter Week our post, Jacob's factory, did not come under enemy fire. The only inconvenience to us was that the lights were turned off from the Power Station and we had to use candles which we got from Jacobs. The only activity on the part of our

garrison during the week was sending out of patrols. On several occasions throughout the week I was sent up for observation duty on Jacob's Tower. Snipers were posted there. Portobello Bridge is a considerable distance from the Tower. Yet it has been reported that the snipers took down military on duty on the bridge. The snipers claimed that the shining buckles of the British soldiers together with their bayonets showed them up very distinctly as targets. I forgot to mention that a machine gun was turned from Portobello in the direction of the tower. We remained there until Sunday in Jacobs. The order came that other buildings occupied in the city had surrendered and that they were the only garrison left and that we would have to surrender. Thomas McDonagh called us together and told us the position. Father Aloysius was with him and he said that we were not necessarily bound to surrender but that the British could make the position impossible for us by barricading all the surrounds and turning their Big guns on us. He said this would amount to a loss of many lives, both of Volunteers and civilians. In the circumstances he considered that it was no disgrace to surrender. We asked him if the British were going to compel us to surrender because, we said, if they were we would fight and that our decision should be conveyed to the British Commander. Sometime later word came back that we were to march out under our own officers carrying full equipment, both arms and ammunition, and ground arms in Bride Street. Sometime in the afternoon of Sunday we marched out under our own officers to Bride Street where the surrender was completed. Having been relieved of our arms we were then marched to Richmond barracks. About a week later I was transferred to Knutsford Prison where I was later re-transferred to the Upper Camp, Frongoch in Wales. I was released later in August the same year.

(Signed)

Michael J. Molloy
(Michael J. Molloy).

Date:

Sept 1952

Witness: *William Ivory Condit*

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