

ROINN



COSANTA.

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21.

STATEMENT BY WITNESS

DOCUMENT NO. W.S. 760.....

Witness

Sean O Seaghdha,
Corcađuibhne,
Dundroma,
Baile Atha Cliath.

Identity.

Member of Sinn Fein, 1912 - .

Subject.

His mission to Italy, November 1920,
in search of arms for I.R.A.

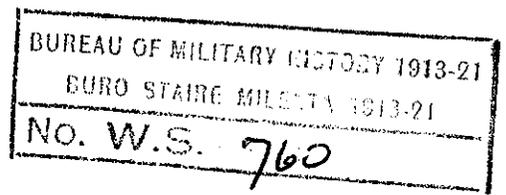
Conditions, if any, Stipulated by Witness.

Nil

File No.S.2092.....

Form B.S.M. 2

ORIGINAL



STATEMENT OF SEÁN P. Ó SÉAGHDHA,
Corcadhuibhne, in-Dúndroma, Baile Átha Cliath.

By virtue of the position I held as manager of the Irish Cutlery Company, 17 Merchants Quay, Dublin, I was frequently approached in 1914, 1915 and 1916 by Micheál Ó Hannrachán to assist in making pikes and shells, it being known that I was a contractor to the British Government for shells, and this gave me the right to import steel with priority certificates. Such priority certificates enabled me to get the steel in without both delay and examination.

From the time I came to Ireland in 1912, I was identified, firstly, with the Gaelic League, secondly, with the Volunteers and thirdly, with Sinn Féin. I was also associated with the Dublin Industrial Development Association. These facts brought me into contact with the leaders of the independence movement, who were able to call upon my co-operation as I have described in the preceding paragraph.

As far as I can recall, the order to go to Italy came from Cathal Brugha who asked Micheál Ó Coileáin to go down and see me at 17 Merchants Quay. Sometime during the day before Micheál called, I noticed considerable activity on the part of the D.M.P. and the C.I.D. around my place, and I recall distinctly a big "bleachtaire" outside near the forge as Micheál Ó Coileáin came up the gateway and both made the same signal simultaneously, that is, they put their thumbs into their eyes. Micheál came in and gave me instructions to see Cathal Brugha, which I did subsequently. As Micheál went out, I accompanied him down to the gate, to

find leaning up against the Liffey wall another big "bleachtaire" and, to my surprise but to my great pleasure, the same signals were exchanged, that is, the thumbs to the eyes, which to me indicated that Micheál had got his friends inside the Castle working for him.

The day after Micheál's visit, Risteard Mulcahy came to me confirming the arrangements Micheál had made with me regarding the visit to Cathal Brugha and to Italy.

I saw Cathal Brugha and he up in the attic of Lalor's, Candle Manufacturers, Ormond Quay. Cathal was very precise, and I think within a quarter of an hour or less I got my instructions and, as far as I recall, I got a sum of money for my expenses. In addition to the instructions, Cathal also gave me a letter of introduction to Donal McHales of Genoa (Agente Consolare Generale, Irlandese per L'Italia, Piazza S. Bernardo 26, Genoa, or Via Montesuello 3-10). I still have his card which I shall give to the Bureau, ^(A Handwritten A) I also had a message for Seán T. O'Kelly in Paris. He was our Ambassador in Paris at the time.

I recall how eager Donal McHales was to give me all the information as to how I could get in touch with the War Office official in Rome to discuss the purchase, delivery and packing of the military equipment.

I recall distinctly Donal McHales accompanying me to Rome because of incidents such as the following. The journey from Genoa to Rome is very long and, after the war, rolling stock, both passenger and freight, in Italy was poorly conditioned. We were held up at some railway station en route to Rome when I heard "God Save The King" being played by a band. The train stopped and all

passengers went to the corridors. Also it was on this occasion that Donal introduced me to Monsignor Ratti, who afterwards became Pope Pius XI, and he challenged Monsignor Ratti, saying that though he, Monsignor Ratti, had seventeen or eighteen languages, he could not talk Gaelic. I spoke Gaelic to him and kissed his ring, and he tried to repeat after me a few phrases in Irish.

We were travelling from about four o'clock one afternoon to eight o'clock the next morning before we reached Rome. Donal wasted no time in taking me to the War Office official's place of reception. My memory is not at all clear on what took place at this interview but, as far as my memory goes, an order for the military equipment was given and instructions as to its packing, such as, a false bottomed ship which was to transport the equipment. Having made arrangements for the purchase of the arms, the quantity of which I cannot now remember, we probably interviewed shipping firms and purchased quantities of marble and architectural work in Genoa which was to act as a camouflage for the arms.

So highly satisfactory was my mission that, on my arrival in London, I gave my wife detailed instructions written in Irish to bring back to Cathal Brugha. I also wrote in shorthand a translation of the same instructions to a girl in Dungarvan, named Éilis Ní Carthaigh, for transmission. This was a girl whom I had never seen. I knew her only by her poems in the Irish weekly and monthly "Mosquito" press and she had written to me on some occasions applauding points of view that I had advanced in the same press.

I travelled from London to Dublin first, my wife

crossing the day after. On arrival in Dublin I immediately reported verbally to Cathal Brugha and he was obviously very pleased.

Probably a few months had elapsed and there was no word of the military equipment from Italy arriving in Ireland. I was not, of course, aware of the arrangements that Michael Collins and Cathal Brugha had made regarding port of disembarkation in Ireland but, being very anxious, I made enquiries and found, I think, that there was some question about insufficient lira being available for the purchase. It was thereupon decided to send another agent to Italy to settle this matter. It may have been Vize. There is no doubt of the success of my mission. The mystery to me is why or how the whole affair petered out.

As far as I can remember, I had no written message for Seán T. O'Kelly but I think I had for Donal McHales and this may have contained instructions re the port at which the guns, etc., would be landed, because I definitely have no recollection whatsoever of getting instructions on this particular point.

I remember visiting the Archbishop of Dublin after coming back from Rome and this was probably occasioned by the instructions of Monsignor Curran of the Irish College, Rome, whom we had visited there. I don't remember what message I had for him, if any.

I notice that my passport, which I still have and which I will give to the Bureau, ^(Appendix B) is dated 27th February, 1920, and that it is endorsed for Germany via Holland. I did not go either to Germany or Holland. My first journey seems to have been to France and the visas from the

Foreign Office and the French Consul General in London are dated 19.5.'20. I travelled via Southampton-Le Havre. I must have gone to France again almost immediately after my return to London because the passport has another visa from the French Consul General in London, dated 25.5.'20. Apparently I went this time via Calais, though I have absolutely no recollection of this, as I thought I always travelled via Southampton-Le Havre. It must have been on this occasion that I was advised for precautionary reasons by either Leo Kerney or Mr. McWhite, who were working in our Office in Paris, to return to London via Ostend because there is a visa for Belgium, dated 27.5.'20. I have a distinct recollection of this journey via Ostend because I sent a telegram from Ostend to my friends in London. There is another visa from the Consul General of France in London, dated 31.5.'20, and an embarkation stamp shows that I returned - probably from this journey - on the 10th June, 1920.

The passport shows two further visas, one dated 12.6.'20, issued by the Consul General of France in London, and another dated 17th July, 1920, issued by the British Foreign Office for "travelling to France and Germany". I never travelled to Germany.

I always said I travelled to the Continent on six or seven different occasions and this is confirmed by the passport. Unfortunately, owing to my defective memory due partly to the lapse of thirty-two years and partly to a breakdown I had in 1937, I cannot now remember very much about them and am inclined to confuse them all in my mind. I know that in Paris I stayed in the Hotel des Etrangers, not far from the Grand Hotel where Seán T. O'Kelly had his headquarters. I visited our representatives there many

times to consult them about my missions. I am convinced that all these journeys were for the purpose of procuring arms, but I don't think any of them had any result except the last one when I went to Italy, as I have already described.

If I had to rely on my memory about this too, I would have said that it was in the summer and that I spent several days in Paris both on the outward and return journey, but that impression is contradicted by the passport. This shows the date of the visa for this journey as 15th November, 1920, and the frontier stamp for my entrance into Italy as 17th November, 1920. Two further stamps give the date of my leaving Italy as the 22nd November, 1920, and my embarkation at Le Havre as 23rd November.

It is a good job I kept the passport as, otherwise, any information I would have given from my confused memory would have been quite misleading. However, Donal McHales and Monsignor Curran should be able to confirm the success of my journey to Genoa and Rome in search of arms for the I.R.A.

SIGNED: *Sean P. O Seaghdha*

(Sean P. O Seaghdha)

DATE: *9th Nov na hEanáir 1952*

9adh Mi na Nollag 1952.

WITNESS: *S. Ni Chiosain*

S. Ni Chiosain.

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21

BURO STAIRE MILEATA 1913-21

No. W.S. 760

Appendix A

D. MC HALES

AGENTE CONSOLARE GENERALE IRLANDESE PER L' ITALIA

Piazza S. Bernardo 26.

Genova.

or

Via Montenapoleone 3-10.

PASSPORT REGULATIONS.

1. APPLICATIONS for Foreign Office Passports must be made on the authorized form, and enclosed in a cover addressed to THE PASSPORT OFFICE, 1, LAKE BUILDINGS, ST. JAMES' PARK, LONDON, S.W. 1."

2. The charge for a Passport is 5s. Passports are issued at the Passport Office, between the hours of 10 and 4 (Saturdays 10 to 1), except on Sundays and Public Holidays, when the Passport Office is closed. Applications should, if possible, reach the Passport Office not less than seven days before that on which the Passport is required. If the applicant does not reside in London, the Passport may be sent by post, and a Postal Order for 5s. should in that case accompany the application. POSTAGE STAMPS WILL NOT BE RECEIVED IN PAYMENT.

3. Foreign Office Passports are granted :—

- (1.) To natural-born British subjects.
- (2.) To the wives and widows of such persons ; and
- (3.) To persons naturalized in the United Kingdom, in the British Dominions or Colonies, or in India.

A married woman is deemed to be a subject of the State of which her husband is for the time being a subject.

4. Passports are granted :—

- (1.) In the case of natural-born British subjects and persons naturalized in the United Kingdom, upon the production of a Declaration by the applicant in the authorized form, verified by a Declaration made by a member or official of any *Banking Firm* established in the United Kingdom, or by any *Mayor, Magistrate, Provost, Justice of the Peace, Minister of Religion, Barrister-at-law, Physician, Surgeon, Solicitor, or Notary Public*, resident in the United Kingdom. The applicant's Certificate of Birth and other evidence may also be required. Applicants serving in His Majesty's Forces may have their declarations verified by their *Commanding Officer*.

(2.) In the case of children under the age of 16 years requiring a separate Passport, upon production of a Declaration made by the child's parent or guardian, in a Form (B), to be obtained upon application to the Passport Office.

(3.) In the case of persons naturalized in any of the British Self-governing Dominions, upon production of a Recommendation from the High Commissioner or Agent-General in London of the State concerned; and in the case of natives of British India and persons naturalized therein, upon production of a Letter of Recommendation from the India Office. Persons naturalized or ordinarily resident in any of the Crown Colonies must obtain a Letter of Recommendation from the Colonial Office.

5. If the applicant for a passport be a Naturalized British subject, the Certificate of Naturalization must be forwarded to the Passport Office with the Declaration or Letter of Recommendation. Naturalized British subjects, if resident in London or in the suburbs, must apply *personally* for their Passports at the Passport Office; if resident in the country, the Passport will be sent, and the Certificate of Naturalization returned, to the person who may have verified the Declaration, for delivery to the applicant.

Naturalized British subjects will be described as such in their Passports, which will be issued subject to the necessary qualifications.

6. Foreign Office Passports are not available beyond two years from the date of issue. They may be renewed for four further periods of two years each, after which fresh Passports must be obtained. The fee for each renewal is 2s.

7. A Passport cannot be issued by the Foreign Office on behalf of a person already abroad; such person should apply for one to the nearest British Mission or Consulate. Passports must not be sent out of the United Kingdom by post.

No. 67909

PASSPORT.



*Mr. George Nathaniel Curzon,
Earl Curzon of Kedleston, Viscount Scarsdale,
Knight of the Most Noble Order of the Garter,
a Member of His Britannic Majesty's Most
Honourable Privy Council, Knight Grand Commander
of the Most Exalted Order of the Star of India,
Knight Grand Commander of the Most Eminent
Order of the Indian Empire, &c. &c. &c.
His Majesty's Principal Secretary of State for
Foreign Affairs.*

*Request and require in the Name of His
Majesty all those whom it may concern to allow*

Mr John Patrick O'Shea

*to pass freely without let or hindrance, and to
afford him every assistance and protection of
which he may stand in need.*

*Given at the Foreign Office, London
the 27th day of February 1920*



Curzon of Kedleston

This passport is valid for two years only from the date of its issue. It may be renewed for four further periods of two years each after which a new passport will be required.

RENEWALS

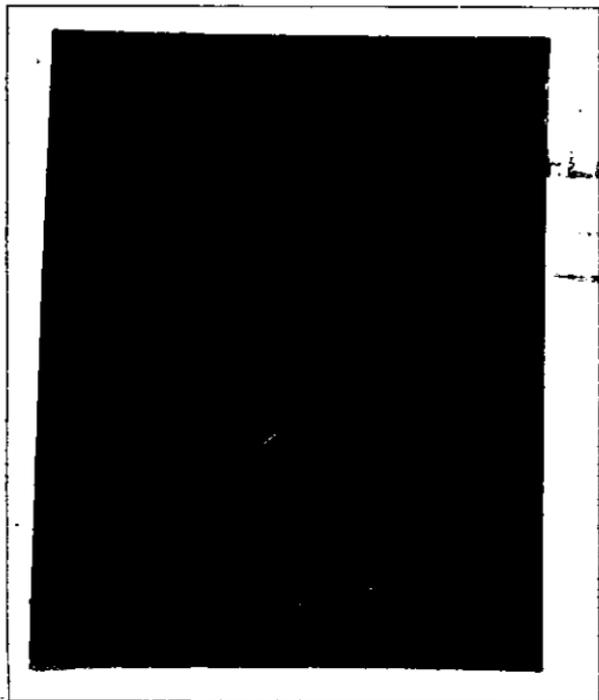
DESCRIPTION OF BEARER

Age 32 Profession Manager
 Place & date of birth Skibberene, Cork
 Height 5 feet 8 inches
 Forehead medium Eyes grey
 Nose regular Mouth regular
 Skin regular Colour of Hair brown
 Complexion fresh Hair Black
 Any special peculiarities Wears glasses
 Nationalities Danish - born subject

Married name of witness or
 several women travelling
 singly

July 1st 1887

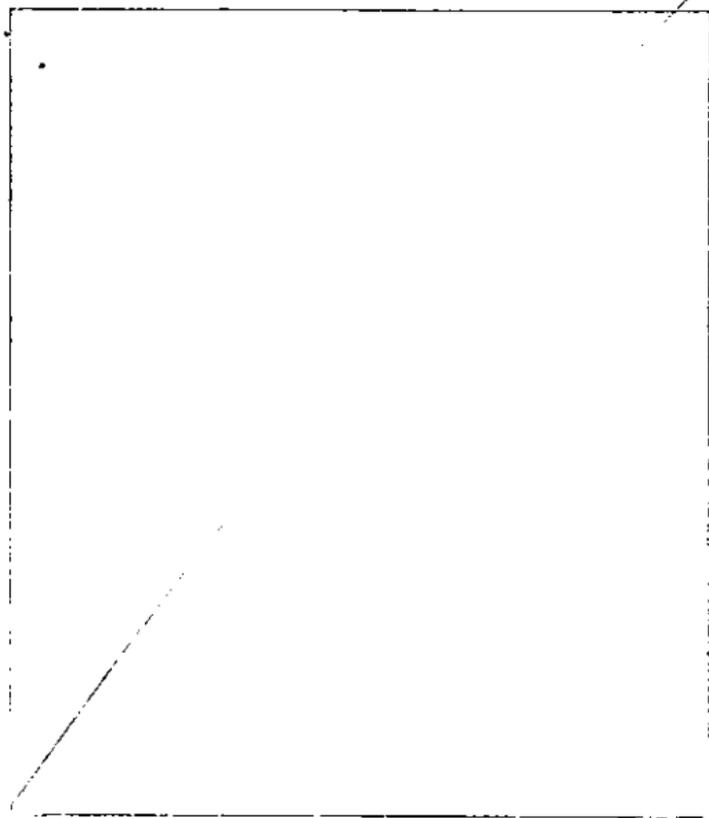
PHOTOGRAPH OF BEARER.



SIGNATURE OF BEARER.



PHOTOGRAPH OF WIFE.



SIGNATURE OF WIFE.



ENDORSEMENTS

Travelling to Germany via Holland

IGN OFFICE
PARIS

Q1
TUV
GARY

Travelling to



France

19 MAY 1940

20/7/40

24 MAY 1940

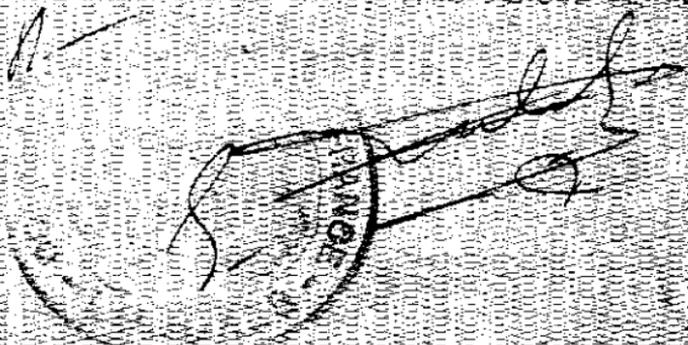
ENDORSEMENT

46
19.5.20
105

19.5.20

MAR 1920

W.A.



MAR 2 1920

N. 4462

Visé à Paris

le 27.5.20

pour Belgique

Palais Municipal 8-6-20

The holder of this **ENDORSEMENT** must obtain
"Permis de séjour" from the
local authorities if staying in France for
15 days.

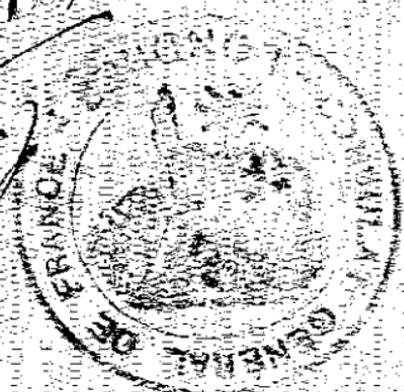
LONDON

BRITISH CONSUL GENERAL

31/5/20

GENERAL

Grati



W. King

Pour la Partie de Police

Le Chef du 3^e Bureau de la Division du Cabinet

ENDORSEMENTS



[Handwritten signature]

The holder of this passport must obtain a "Permis de séjour" from the French local authorities if staying in France over 14 days.

R. U. E.

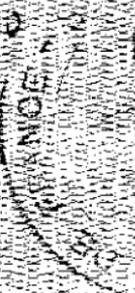
| | |
|---------|-------|
| LONDRES | |
| Quota | 1/10 |
| Taxe | 26.00 |
| Aut | 10 |
| Tarif | 10 |

VII AU CONSULAT GÉNÉRAL

DE FRANCE A LONDRES

2.6.20

GENERAL



[Handwritten signature]



ENDORSEMENTS

The holder of this passport must obtain a
permit to enter the French
territories of the French zone
14 days.

ONDRES
No.
Date
City
Name

3
15/5/60

VU AU CONSULAT GENERAL
LE 15/5/60
AU CONSUL GENERAL

4/15/60
15/5/60



Handwritten signature or initials.

STAMP: ENDORSEMENT
1960
23/05/60

ENDORSEMENTS



Travelling to

France and

UFFICIO di P.S.
GENOVA
17 50 13
PROTEZIONE FODARE
ATA

Viso speciale Valletta del mese

No. 1246 Diritto Lire 10 art. 57, Tariffa Consolare

Viso al 50° Consolato d'Italia

Vale per la destinazione d'Italia

Genova 15 novembre 1910



Il Console Generale
P. F. Righetti

Vice Console

ADMINISTRATIVE

ENDORSEMENTS

21 MAY 1920



Handwritten: Authority to travel to France & Italy - not valid for the (Magyar) ^{area}

VISA SPECIAL

Valable

Handwritten: until the 12.6.20

Se vendra en France au Consulat
dans toutes les autres parties du monde
au visa des autorités compétentes
des Consulaires Françaises.

ALLER ET RETOUR

18 NOV 1920

Handwritten: ~~Peru~~

EXAMINÉ LE 18.11.20
PAR LE CONSUL



Handwritten signature: M. Ma...

ENDORSEMENTS

~~1917~~ 970820
Service
NOV 1920
Commissaire Special

R. UFFICIO di P. S.
INTERNAZIONALE
22 NOV 1920
BARDONECCHIA - MODANE
USCITA

100
198
100
30/11/20