

ORIGINAL

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21
BURO STAIRÉ MILÉ TA 1913-21
No. W.S. 1,056

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BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21.
STATEMENT BY WITNESS.

DOCUMENT NO. W.S. 1,056

Witness

Very Rev. T.J. Shanley and others,
216 West 68th Street, N.Y.,
New York (23),
U.S.A.

Identity.

Close associate of leaders of Irish Party
in New York, 1919- .

Subject.

Purchase of arms in America and
arrangements for transport to Ireland.

Conditions, if any, Stipulated by Witness.

Nil

File No. ...S. 2191.....

ORIGINAL

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21
BUREAU STAFF MILEATA 1913-21
No. W.S. 1056

Attempt to purchase the ship "Ida":

There was a ship in view, the "Ida", an Austrian ship, which had been acquired during the war by the U.S. Government. Fawcett was consulted. Boland told McGee about the idea of purchasing the ship. He said: "I haven't got the details but Fawcett wants to see you about it". McGee went to Fawcett who said to him: "I suppose Harry told you what we intend to do". When he mentioned the name of the ship, "Ida", McGee said he knew the ship. Fawcett had the plans. He said: "What I want to know is if you know a good surveyor who will survey her". McGee said that he did. The plans of the ship showed that she was a 12-knot boat, burned 20 tons of coal a day. The idea was to put her into the Irish trade. The "Ida" was surveyed and thought to be at a cheap price and in good seaworthy condition, but the shipping board wouldn't sell her on account of the Moore & McCormick Line being in the same trade, running to Cork, Belfast, London and Londonderry, and didn't want to have any competition on that route. So the deal fell through.

Fawcett went ahead and chartered a ship from the Baltimore Shipping Company to take a load of coal from Norfolk to the Dublin Corporation (5,000 tons). Harry Boland called up from Washington when he heard the ship was in Baltimore. He said he thought it would be a bad place. Pedlar told McGee he was wanted in the office. It was Harry Boland calling up from Washington and he (McGee) said the whole thing was bad. He said: "We will have no control over the crew in Baltimore". McGee said he would rather see Boland in New York. They met and McGee explained that they could have no control over the engineers, deck hands, firemen, oilers, and the fact that the strike was on would make the job more difficult. McGee said he could get the job done better in Newport News because he knew the crowd down there,

but he didn't think much of it anyway. Finally Harry got in touch with Judge Lawless of Norfolk and gave the Judge the whole case. The ship had already been chartered from the Baltimore Shipping Company. Lawless came on to New York and succeeded in breaking up the charter.

It had been Fawcett's intention all along to get the job done in Baltimore. His attitude was that he was against gun running. Too, he was antagonistic to Harry Boland.

Chartering the ship "East Side":

The "East Side" was lying off West 9th Street, but was moved over to the Army Base, fearing sabotage. She was chartered. Jimmy Lynch was in charge of firemen, etc. There was one engineer (third assistant) who acted as strike breaker. He had to be fired. The cooks and stewards were hard to handle. There was a colored fellow called Granger (from B.W.I.) among them whom they thought they couldn't trust and he had to be fired.

Everything was in order and Bill(Gleeson?) and McGee went down in a taxi to Paddy McGee's house and told him they wanted him to go as first assistant. He was not to go aboard until 6 o'clock on Monday morning and he did go on then. Bill got in touch with Andy Dempsey of the Cosmopolitan. It was decided by Harry that Curley, Harry Simpson and Paddy Hughes (chief engineer) should be in charge of the ship. Lynch had picked a man, Peter Fearon, as chief engineer who refused to go at the last minute so McGee went instead. He had wanted to go in the first place. Harry said he ought not to go as he would be missed. Hughes, Curley and Simpson were to be aboard since the previous Sunday, Paddy McGee going aboard on Monday. Then they would sail for Norfolk.

Dempsey was told to get Whitey Lewis (in charge of longshoremen) and four or five other men. He instructed them to "put steam on the deck"(which means to get the machinery going in that part of the vessel).

When the "East Side" was chartered, Harry Boland, McGee and Gleeson were at lunch in a place in either Fulton or Nassau Street, and McGee and Harry said to Boland that the equipment of such a large number of pieces of machinery would be very hard to handle. Harry said: "I am forced to do this. The 'Big Fellow' is riding out of me".

Instructions were to open up the hatches of the "East Side", put the stuff down, cover the hatches and proceed "light" from New York. They were to be left in the hold buried in the coal.

Things went wrong. On Sunday Gleeson went aboard and found the guns piled in the alley way leading to the refrigerating room. The cook had got suspicious because when putting things away in the refrigerator he ran his knife into one of the packages to see what was in it, found the machinery, and gave the alarm that they were guns and they would be killed.

(Lynch's men were not aboard at that time. Only the third assistant was aboard, also the cook and strikebreakers.)

Nothing could be done without the cooperation of the Captain. He was very fond of drink and used to bring whiskey into the U.S. from Havre and Bordeaux. The trip previous to the one he was going to make on the "East Side" he was caught with 1,000 or 2,000 bottles of whiskey and had been fined. Gleeson knew of this and he went to see him as he was in need of money. Gleeson said his ship was chartered for Dublin. He told him what he wanted, him

to bring over. He said he would do it for \$2,500. Gleeson said OK - he would get \$1,000 here before he left and \$1,500 in Dublin when he went over. Gleeson assured him that his name would never be mentioned, and it never was.

The Captain said he would tell the first officer, who was OK, that the stuff would be aboard Sunday morning and to say nothing about it. He would go ashore on Sunday and not come back before Monday morning.

How McGee heard of the trouble in Hoboken:

There was an engineers' meeting in Webster Hall. During the meeting a phone message came from Curley to McGee. He said there was trouble at the pier. McGee hung up the phone, and when he got home at 6 O'clock Curley was there. The next morning about 4 Harry came to his house and was very upset and nervous about the whole thing.

When McGee went down to the Barge office it was deserted. Olsen, a sailor's delegate, was the only one there. He knew nothing. Drennan walked in shortly afterwards and went over to Olsen and questioned him. At first Olsen would not give his name but after seeing Drennan's badge, he spoke with him. Drennan went right in to Quinn, followed by Dempsey.

Gleeson at the ship:

Gleeson went over to the ship and saw Paddy McGee and said: "Well, the Captain says if you stay on board we will be able to get it through yet". Paddy McGee said: "They haven't the guts of a ...". Gleeson couldn't stay too long and came back to the Barge office. Drennan had left word to come up and see the Chief.

Getting the stuff over to the ship at Hoboken:

The stuff was taken from 29th Street. They left there at 2 in the morning, all working hard, and all were sworn to secrecy. The truck driver's name was Culhane. When they were about to leave they met Mr. McGuinness. From 41st Street Harry and McGee took a taxi and followed the truck down Fifth Avenue. Part way down the springs of the truck broke down. They were fixed up, however, and the truck continued on its way. McGee saw the stuff go on board at Hoboken.

The pieces had all been packed in burlap at 29th Street and sewed up by sailors.

Conditions on board as described by Gleeson:

When Gleeson went aboard the stuff was lying in the alley. Lynch and Dick O'Hare went aboard Saturday night. The ship was lying in port with one boiler going and a line running from the dock to the back of the switchboard with her own boiler lying idle. O'Hare started getting the other two boilers ready. He had got the fire ready in the second boiler when the trouble started. He said: "We can go ahead with one boiler".

Instructions had been received by the men on board from McGee that as soon as the stuff came aboard it was to be put down a hatchway or carried forward or aft. At 2 o'clock on Sunday it was dumped in a pile in the alley way. There were 500 pieces. Even if nobody else was there, three of them could have put the stuff away.

Reason the stuff was not put away:

On Sunday evening Gleeson found the men afraid, including Curley, the man in charge. He tried to tell him that the captain was with them but Curley insisted on coming off the ship with Gleeson and called McGee

in Webster Hall.

The following morning Gleeson went to Judge Bohan and told him exactly how things were. The Judge said: "I think you should step out for a while". Gleeson said that if he did step out there would be nobody to bear the brunt of it, and he went back to work. That morning around 12 o'clock a Bureau of Investigation man (Drennan) came down to see Gleeson at the Barge office.

McGee could not go near the piers on account of the strike.

Paddy McGee's description of how things were at the ship:

It looked to me as if they made no effort to get the ship to move. There was steam in one boiler; one boiler was empty and the other not working. There was an electric cable strung from the dock into a switchboard on the ship. Simpson said he couldn't do anything. I disconnected the switch and got the ship's engines running. The chief engineer (Hughes - a Dundalk man) wanted to help. My impression was that the men did not want to help at all. McGee had told them to get to Norfolk anyway".

The man most to blame was Curley who had been put in charge by Harry Boland. He had worked previously with McGee on the "Tashmoo" putting 145,000 pieces aboard this ship. He managed to get everything off the ship at Cork and Dublin.

Shipment on the "Tashmoo" to Cork:

Harry called McGee up and said he wanted to see him right away. He said: "Did you give any orders on the "Tashmoo" to put all the stuff off at Cork?". He then lit into McGee and said he knew all about ships. He handed McGee a letter from Michael Collins saying he was in charge and everything had to go through him. Harry had implicit faith in Collins.