

ORIGINAL

W.S. 1397

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21
BUREAU STAIRS MILITARY 1913-21
No. W.S. 1397

ROINN  COSANTA.

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

DOCUMENT NO. W.S. 1397

Witness

*Joseph Melinn,
No 1 Green View Terrace,
Tralee,
Co Kerry.*

Identity.

Brigade Vice Comdt

Subject.

National Activities 1916-1925

Conditions, if any, Stipulated by Witness.

nil.

File No *S. 755*

ORIGINAL

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21
BURO STAIRÉ MILEATA 1913-21
No. W.S. 1397

SECOND STATEMENT BY JOSEPH MELINN,

1 Green View Terrace, Tralee, Co. Kerry.

I hold the official internment order issued to me while I was a prisoner of war at Frongoch, Wales, in 1916.

Early in January 1917, the officers of the Irish Republican Army in Tralee started a reorganising campaign in the town of Tralee and afterwards in the country districts. I was actively engaged in this when I was again taken prisoner and deported, with twenty-seven others from other counties, to different parts of England on February 22nd 1917. By arrangement, the Irish Republican Brotherhood got us in touch with friends in London and Manchester who offered assistance to enable us escape back to Ireland.

With fourteen others, acting on orders from headquarters in Dublin, I thus escaped and reported to headquarters on the morning of May 5th, 1917. The following June, I and a few others, who remained disguised in Dublin, acted on G.H.Q. orders and returned to our homes with those who were released under the general amnesty although we had not been released. I hold the deportation order issued to me at Arbour Hill, Dublin, on 22nd February, 1917.

In 1918, owing to the intensified efforts of the officers to organise, equip and discipline the Irish Republican Army in Kerry, three brigades, in place of one, were formed.

At a meeting of battalion officers, presided over by the Chief of Staff from headquarters (Richard Mulcahy),

I was appointed Vice Commandant, Kerry No. 1 Brigade, Irish Republican Army.

All officers and men took the oath of allegiance to Dáil Éireann when it was established soon after the ratification of the proclamation of Easter Monday 1916 by the people of Ireland in 1918.

The enemy were then contemplating conscripting Irishmen into their army. We had to be very cautious about the admittance of the half-hearted element who were inclined to come into our ranks for shelter. While we were engaged in test mobilisations and preparing for a combined attack on R.I.C. barracks, I again became a prisoner of war on the 19th March 1920. I was sent to Cork jail and from there to Belfast where we started a hunger-strike for prisoner of war treatment or release. A few days after the start of the hunger-strike, I, with a large number of other prisoners, was sent to Wormwood Scrubbs prison, London. After two weeks there, still on hunger-strike, we were unconditionally released and sent to hospitals in different parts of London. I was sent to Islington, North, Infirmary, where I remained till I was considered fit to travel home at end of June, 1920. I hold the official internment order issued to me at Wormwood Scrubbs prison on April 1st, 1920.

From June 1920 to June 1921, nine R.I.C. barracks were attacked and rifles, revolvers and ammunition were captured from military on guard at Tralee railway station; also Lispole and Castlemaine ambushes in Kerry No. 1 Brigade area took place.

Prior to the formation of the 1st Southern Division, Irish Republican Army, I attended a special

meeting at G.H.Q. in April 1921, which was attended by officers from Cork, Waterford and other southern brigades. Some of them I met again soon afterwards when I was ordered to represent Kerry No. 1 Brigade at the first meeting of the 1st Southern Division (at Howard House) about ten miles from Millstreet, Co. Cork. This meeting was presided over by Liam Lynch (Divisional O/C). I then realised the necessity as well as the difficulty of keeping in touch with Cork brigades.

Immediately after this, we learned indirectly from a member of the R.I.C. that instructions came to the R.I.C. in Tralee to "get me". Eleven of the murder gang came to my house in Tralee at 2 a.m., entering through a window on the second storey which would be my bedroom when at home. Needless to say, I was not there when they called. The shock nearly killed my wife who had two days previously given birth to a son. This child died very soon afterwards. Then came the Truce, 11th July, 1921.

In accordance with my oath of allegiance, I remained loyal to the Irish Republican army and continued my duties, and was again made a prisoner of war in August 1922, this time by the Free State Army which was established by the Provisional Government of part of Ireland known as Saorstát Éireann.

I was held a prisoner till November 1922 when I was released owing to my wife's illness, giving birth to a child that was three months dead. (The officer in charge who effected my release unconditionally was an I.R.B. man and a prisoner of war in Frongoch 1916.)

I continued my activities till the cease fire
order in 1923.

SIGNED: Seorain Mo Maol-Finn

DATE: 1st. March, 1956

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21
BURO STAIRÉ MILEATA 1913-21
No. W.S. 1397

WITNESS John J. Daly