

ORIGINAL

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21

BURO STAIRÉ MILLEATA 1913-21

No. W.S. 1,745

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BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21.

STATEMENT BY WITNESS.

DOCUMENT NO. W.S. 1,745.

**Witness**

John C. Bolger,  
"St. Damien's",  
Cabinteely,  
Co. Dublin.

**Identity.**

Lieut., Irish Volunteers & I.R.A. ;  
Attached to G.H.Q. Intelligence.

**Subject.**

Tracking British suspects for G.H.Q.  
Intelligence during Truce, 1921.

**Conditions, if any, Stipulated by Witness.**

Nil.

File No S. 3,046.

Form B.S.M. 2

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STATEMENT BY MR. <sup>John L.</sup>~~SEAN~~ BOLGER,

St. Damian's, Cabinteely, Co. Dublin.

During the Truce, there were six of us stopping at Mrs. Rogers' place, in the rear of 24 Gardiner's Place. I was engaged on Intelligence duties, and we were working with Jimmy McNamara, Dan McDonnell, Ned Broy, Frank Thornton, Tom Cullen and others of the G.H.Q. Intelligence Section.

About this time, a man arrived, by the name of Burke, from England. He met Mrs. Seán Connolly, Mrs. Rogers and Mrs. O'Connor (Linda Kearns' sister) in the city. They were selling flags for the Prisoners' Dependants Fund. He told them that he had a very important letter from Father Dominic, which, I understand, was genuine, and asked would they recommend him a hotel. They fixed him up, I think, in Fleming's Hotel that night, got in touch with somebody, and then brought him to our hide-out, next day.

A few days afterwards, another man, low-sized and red-haired, arrived, by the name of Coady, who was supposed to have escaped from the Curragh Camp. He was also put into our hide-out. Actually, he was never in the Curragh Camp.

Burke and Coady became very friendly. Burke, who was about five-foot-ten or eleven inches, was able to take a suit of clothes out of his bag, and give it to the second man, Coady, who was a small man. This made me suspicious.

I was sent to see Father Albert in Church Street. As a result, Fr. Albert visited Collins and other members of G.H.Q. Staff in Vaughan's Hotel, where, presumably, this matter was discussed. I was detailed to watch Burke.

I was sent to a hall where the Cumann na mBan used to meet, in Cumberland Street. There, two members of Cumann na mBan were selected to assist me following this man, Burke. However, we found this a very difficult operation, as he always appeared to take precautions to avoid being followed. He was too slick.

Burke made a good impression at an early stage, and, at one time, a member of the Dáil, Eamon Duggan, was about to secure for him a job in the Castle where he was to work for us. He was watched at that stage. Eventually, he was arrested.

Michael Collins was supposed to have said that, if he was touched at this stage, Truce negotiations would break down.

Burke was working his way into the higher circles, and actually was, one night, in a house in Merrion Square where Mr. de Valera was attending a meeting. He was a good-looking fellow, and all the women fell for him; and this, presumably, made his task easier.

I got suspicious of him, and reported my suspicions to my superior officer who, presumably, brought the matter before Michael Collins. I was

then instructed not to let him out of my sight. This, we found extremely difficult to do, as he was a slippery customer. Eventually, it was decided to arrest him one Sunday night, and I went to Vaughan's Hotel where we made all the arrangements. I went back to the hide-out. There was an arrangement for the raiding party to give a special knock on the door, as a signal of their approach. Tom Cullen, Dan McDonnell, Jimmy McNamara and another, whose name I have forgotten, arrested him. He was brought to one of our places of detention near the North Wall, and was under the care of Seán Kavanagh, or his brother. Even from there, he succeeded in making contact, through letters, with the outside world. He was not shot, and he was eventually allowed to go back to England, after the Truce was signed. I have reason to believe that he was a journalist who was working for the British Secret Service.

I don't know what happened to the other man, Coady. He was a waiter. He worked in close conjunction with Burke. He was shipped to England too.

At one stage, we found our belongings in the loft had been interfered with. Burke remarked, "The British Secret Service must have been here to-day!" My belief is that either himself or Coady did the job.

Some of Burke's letters were examined, coming in, but, as these appeared to have been written in code, we found it very hard to make sense of them.

On one occasion, Burke crossed the water to England. It was suggested that I should follow him there, but this idea was not pursued, as I felt I did not know England sufficiently well to go.

There is no doubt that he was a high-class secret service agent, and Collins was quite concerned over his activities. Collins, however, felt that he could not be bumped off, as this might lead to complications in the negotiations which were going on. Liam Tobin, of course, knew about all this also.

SIGNED:

John C. Bolger

DATE:

28 - 11 - 58

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WITNESS

J. V. Joyce  
Colonel.