

**ORIGINAL**

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21

BURO STAIRE MILEATA 1913-21

NO. W.S. 554

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COSANTA.

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21.

STATEMENT BY WITNESS

DOCUMENT NO. W.S. 554

Witness

Major Jlorenc O'Donoghue,  
"Loch Lein",  
Eglantine Park,  
Douglas Road,  
Cork.  
Identity.

Adjutant Cork I Brigade:  
Member of Advisory Committee attached  
to the Bureau of Military History,  
1913-1921.  
Subject.

Projected purchase of arms in Italy  
1920-1921.

Conditions, if any, Stipulated by Witness.

Nil

File No. S.1825.....

Form B.S.M. 2

ORIGINAL

Statement by Major Florence O'Donoghue  
on  
Projected importation of arms from Italy in 1921.

I cannot recall at what time in 1920 I first heard of the project. My recollection is that the first intimation of it came to us from G.H.Q. between the dates of the first informal conference of Southern Brigade officers and the date of the second conference.

This first conference was held in the Southern part of Tipperary No. 3 Brigade area, as far as I remember, and it took place on the initiative of the Cork and Tipperary Brigade officers without the knowledge of G.H.Q. I am unable to fix the date, but think it was about October or November, 1920. There was of course no intention of keeping it a secret from G.H.Q., what I wish to emphasise is that Southern Brigade officers felt impelled to consult together at that stage on the best methods of developing the fight, and did so. Seamus Robinson presided. Dan Breen and Con Moloney from Tipp. 3 were present and Con Moloney acted as Adjutant to the Conference. Cork I was represented by Sean O'Hegarty and myself, Cork 2 by Liam Lynch and possibly another officer. East Limerick was represented by Denis Hannigan and Tom Malone. I do not remember if Cork 3 or Waterford were represented, but am fairly sure Kerry was not.

The two principal matters considered were:-

- (a) The need for more arms - particularly rifles,
- (b) Means of spreading the fight so that the enemy would be unable to concentrate against the active areas.

My recollection is that it was decided to press G.H.Q. to

endeavour to procure arms, and to urge on them the necessity for an active development of the quiescent areas, and the creation of machinery for the co-ordination of activities in neighbouring Brigades. It was the germ of the Divisional idea, which emerged in the following year.

Some time between that conference and the second one, which was held in January 1921, Cork I Brigade was informed, how, I do not remember, that G.H.Q. had a project for the importation of arms - a single cargo of some considerable quantity being envisaged. I was instructed to report to G.H.Q. and informed that a Cork 3 officer was to come also.

Liam Deasy, Adjutant Cork 3 Brigade, joined me in Cork about 11th December 1920, and we travelled by train to Dublin a day or two later. We attended a meeting at Barry's Hotel, Gardiners Row at which a number of G.H.Q. officers were present. I do not now remember who they were. The project was discussed in some detail, and the landing place settled, broadly, at some selected point on the West Cork coast in Cork 3 Brigade area.

The question arose of sending an officer to Italy for the purpose of travelling with the arms and of piloting the ship to the selected landing place. It was essential that he be an officer with maritime experience. I suggested Comdt. Michael Leahy, then Vice. O/C. Cork No. I Brigade. We could ill spare him at the time, but we regarded the project as the most important effort to obtain a substantial quantity of arms undertaken since 1916. The

recommendation was accepted, and Comdt. Leahy travelled to Dublin on the first stage of his journey in the early days of 1921.

When the second conference of Southern Brigade officers took place near Glanworth on 11th. January 1921, the project was one of the principal matters under consideration. Some plans were made for the distribution and security of the expected arms. There was a larger attendance at this Conference, all the Cork Brigades and Waterford, Tipperary and East Limerick being represented.

The next formal discussion of plans in connection with the project which I remember took place after the formation of the 1st. Southern Division. It was a Conference of Cork 1 Cork 3 and Kerry 2 officers, held at Shanachrane, north of Dunmanway, on 7th April 1921. Liam Lynch presided, and I, as Divisional Adjutant, acted as Adjutant to the meeting. Cork 3 Brigade had by then completed arrangements for the actual landing at Myross Strand, near Glandore Harbour. Plans were made for the distribution of part of the cargo northwards through Cork 1 and Cork 2 Brigade areas to Limerick and Tipperary. Dumps capable of holding the whole expected quantity were made in each Brigade, so that the arms would be secure in the event of distribution being delayed by enemy action. It was intended that Cork 1 and Cork 3 Brigade Columns would cover the landing, and that all Battalions on the line of movement northwards would be mobilised. The question of transport was worked out in detail. Some portion of the arms was to go to Kerry, and Humphrey Murphy and John Joe Rice, Commandant and Vice

Commandant of Kerry 2 Brigade attended the Conference. Lynch and I met them and Sean O'Hegarty O/C Cork No. 1 at Gougane on the night before the Conference, and travelled South with them next morning.

My recollection is that we did not have any definite information about the complete failure of the project at the Italian end until after the Truce. I do not think that a specific landing date was ever fixed. We did contemplate it, however, as being within a month or so of the Shanachrane meeting. It was after the Truce that we learned that Commandant Leahy actually arrived back in Dublin on the day we met at Shanachrane. I do not know why the project failed in Italy.

*F. W. O'Donoghue*

9/4/57

Witnessed

*S. D. ...* LT Col.

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