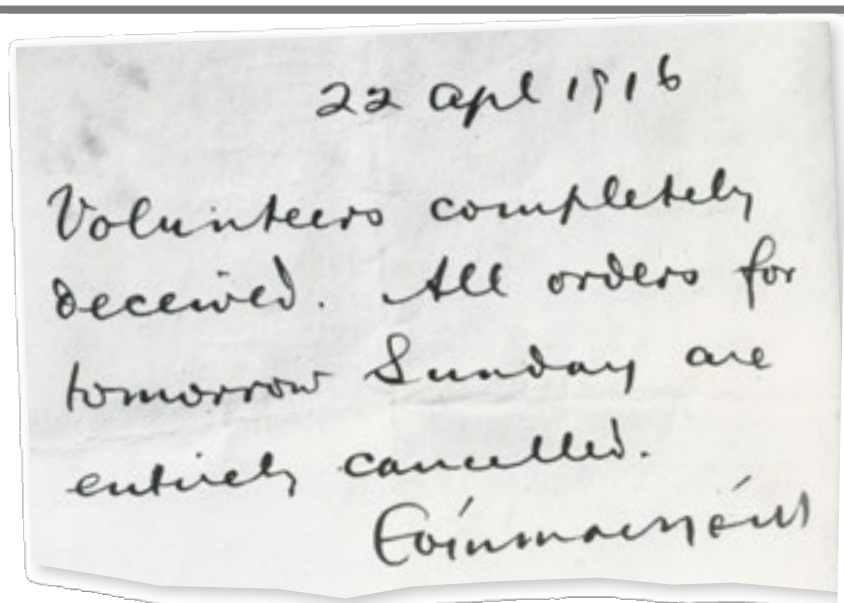
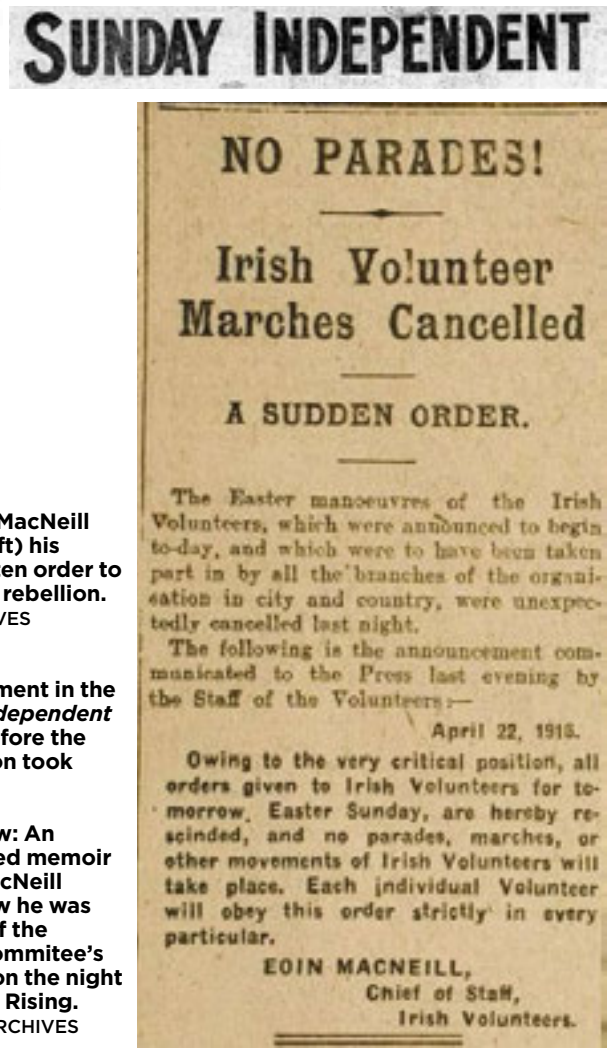

22 apl 1916
Volunteers completely deceived. All orders for tomorrow Sunday are entirely cancelled.
Eóinmacneill


SUNDAY INDEPENDENT

NO PARADES!

Irish Volunteer Marches Cancelled

A SUDDEN ORDER.

The Easter manoeuvres of the Irish Volunteers, which were announced to begin to-day, and which were to have been taken part in by all the branches of the organisation in city and country, were unexpectedly cancelled last night.

The following is the announcement communicated to the Press last evening by the Staff of the Volunteers:—

April 22, 1916.

Owing to the very critical position, all orders given to Irish Volunteers for tomorrow, Easter Sunday, are hereby rescinded, and no parades, marches, or other movements of Irish Volunteers will take place. Each individual Volunteer will obey this order strictly in every particular.

EOIN MACNEILL,
Chief of Staff,
Irish Volunteers.

Left: Eoin MacNeill and (far left) his hand-written order to cancel the rebellion. UCD ARCHIVES

Right: the announcement in the *Sunday Independent* the day before the insurrection took place.

Inset below: An unpublished memoir of Eoin MacNeill tells of how he was unaware of the Military Commitee's activities on the night before the Rising. MILITARY ARCHIVES

The 11th hour

The days before the Rising saw intense debates around the city before Pearse gave the order: 'We start operations at noon,' writes **Colm O'Flaherty**

GOOD Friday had yet to dawn on Banna Strand when the three men came crawling in from the waves. Roger Casement, Robert Monteith and Daniel Bailey had travelled to Ireland aboard the U-19 submarine to assist with the forthcoming Rising, although Casement had strong reservations about the undertaking. They had failed to rendezvous with the *Libau*, a German ship carrying arms, ammunition and explosives for the insurrection.

The *Libau*, masquerading as a Norwegian freighter called the *Aud*, was later spotted by the British Navy, who had become aware of the plan after intercepting German communications. They escorted the ship to Queenstown (now Cobh), where it was scuttled on Holy Saturday morning by its captain, Karl Spindler.

The three men on Banna Strand fared no better; within hours of arriving, Casement and Bailey were arrested, while Monteith was forced to go on the run. The episode was of particular interest to authorities in Dublin Castle, who believed it was connected to an uprising that was rumoured to be afoot.

News of Casement and the Aud came as a hammer-blow for the IRB's Military Council. Not only did it leave Volunteers across the country drastically under-supplied, but the promise of German military aid had also been key in ensuring the support of the Volunteers' Chief of Staff, Eoin MacNeill. Up until Holy Week, MacNeill had been unaware of plans for an insurrection, and his compliance only came after much persuasion from Seán Mac Diarmada.

When he heard the news on Holy Saturday, MacNeill became convinced that the Rising was condemned to failure. He travelled to St Enda's College in Rathfarnham, where he confronted Patrick Pearse. According to Colm O'Loughlin, who was also present, Pearse told MacNeill to "issue what orders you like, our men won't follow you".

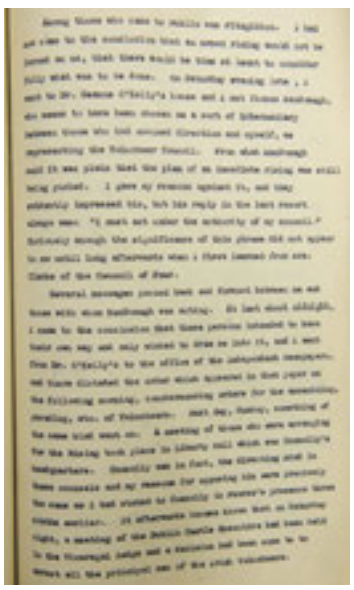
Pearse and the rest of the Military Council were determined to forge ahead with the Rising, which was due to commence the next day at 6.30pm. As Saturday evening set in, the members of the Council prepared themselves for battle. James Connolly retired to Liberty Hall, where he slept under armed guard; Mac Diarmada wrote a final letter to Min Ryan, the woman he intended to marry; in Eamonn Ceannt's house, a tricolour recently pieced together by Sarah Mellows was sprinkled with holy water.

Meanwhile, there was a gathering at the house of Dr Séamus O'Kelly on Rathgar Road. MacNeill had assembled allies, including Seán Fitzgibbon, Seán T O'Kelly and Arthur Griffith, in an attempt to address the crisis. Following hours of discussion, it was decided to issue a countermanding order that called off all actions set for Easter Sunday.

After being tipped off, Cathal Brugha and Thomas MacDonagh arrived to make representations against, but were rebuffed. Messengers were hastily dispatched to Volunteer leaders across the country. Amongst those sent out were Min Ryan, unaware of the full extent of her boyfriend's activities, and her brother James, who had just returned from Cork, where he had been issuing contradictory orders from Mac Diarmada containing final instructions for the Rising. Most significantly of all, MacNeill had managed to hand in a copy of the countermand to the *Sunday Independent*, just before it went to print.

> *James Connolly retired to Libery Hall, where he slept under armed guard; Seán Mac Diarmada wrote a final letter to Min Ryan, who he intended to marry; in Eamonn Ceannt's house, a tricolour was sprinkled with holy water*

The ability of the Military Council to respond to this blow was hampered by its dispersal throughout the city in safe houses. By the time James Connolly called a 9am meeting at Liberty Hall, the countermand had created an atmosphere of confusion, anger and dismay.



The events of the weekend had seen the best laid schemes of the Council fall almost completely asunder, yet there was a feeling that this would be their only chance to strike for independence.

After a four-hour meeting, they decided to go ahead with the Rising, but postponed it until Monday at noon. They then set to ensuring against any premature outbreaks on Sunday evening, with Pearse issuing orders echoing MacNeill's countermand. MacDonagh met with MacNeill, assuring his UCD colleague that "everything was off".

Dublin Castle seemed convinced of this too. In this sense, despite greatly diminishing the numbers who would participate in the Rising, MacNeill bestowed the conspirators an inadvertent favour. Along with the capture of Casement, the countermand helped to persuade the naturally hesitant Castle administration that the threatened insurrection was not going to materialise. They still intended to arrest Volunteer leaders, but it was felt such actions could wait until after the Easter holidays.

Unbeknownst to them, however, couriers were gathering on Sunday evening at the Gaelic League offices on North Frederick Street. There, Pearse awaited with signed notes carrying a simple message: "We start operations at noon today, Monday. Carry out your instructions."

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