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BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21.

STATEMENT BY WITNESS

DOCUMENT NO. W.S. 399.....

Witness

Mrs. Richard Mulcahy,
Lissenfield House,
Rathmines,
Dublin.

Identity

Secretary Cumann na mBan, 1915-1916;
Courier to (i) Wexford and (ii) Enniscorthy
(i) Holy Thursday and (ii) Easter Sun. 1916.

Subject

- (a) National events 1913-1916;
- (b) Meeting at Dr. Seamus O'Kelly's home
Holy Saturday night 1916;
- (c) G.P.O. Easter Week, 1916.

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ORIGINAL

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No. W.S. 399

STATEMENT OF MRS. RICHARD MULCAHY,

Lissenfield House, Rathmines, Dublin.

My family was first attracted to the national movement through my eldest brother - later Father Martin Ryan - who was then in Maynooth College as a student. At that time (1902-1906) Maynooth was leader of young opinion, especially regarding the language, and afterwards regarding Sinn Féin. There was a large number of students there, particularly the Ferns men, who were interested in these movements. They had a new outlook as to the means of attaining freedom. I remember my brother coming home on holidays. He was one of those people who always had a new idea. He would come home at holiday time and talk tremendously about the language movement and Sinn Féin. We started to read papers about every single thing that was said by Arthur Griffith in connection with the Sinn Féin movement. Of course, Griffith was the man at that time. We used to read every paper he was connected with, from cover to cover. That was the origin of our coming into the movement. At that time, it was only ourselves in our locality had that sort of interest. It was purely a small intellectual crowd who were interested in these new ideas - particularly priests.

It was a new movement, with very little following. The bulk of the people were satisfied with the Irish Parliamentary Party and with their efforts to get Home Rule. If you talked about Sinn Féin and tried to bring up a new idea, people looked on you as being a bit queer, with "notions". That was the atmosphere, even just before the Rising, and when the Councils Bill had been mooted, so much was this the case that in order not to stymie Redmond in the achievement of his Home Rule, Pearse and even Griffith stepped on the soft pedal to give him a chance. They would accept anything for the sake of advancing the idea of freedom. Pearse was actually on Redmond's platform at a very big meeting held in O'Connell St. some time before

the Volunteers were started.

The Volunteer movement was really founded by a happy chance. They would never have had an opportunity of going out openly under arms and carrying out manoeuvres, only that the Ulster Volunteers had been founded for the purpose of preventing Home Rule. There was a threatened mutiny in the Curragh, to be led by a British Officer, if Home Rule was brought in. The Ulster Volunteers were established in order to resist Home Rule, even in arms if necessary. That being so, the British could not very well keep us from having Volunteers here. Of course, their Constitution was based on the principle of freedom for Ireland; and the British Parliament, I suppose, was looking on Home Rule as something they were giving; and our people said: "We will use the Volunteers to fight for Home Rule, if necessary". That was the feeling. Therefore, our Volunteers were able to get ahead although we had difficulties amongst ourselves.

The Volunteers, therefore, were formed under the leadership of John MacNeill and under the Sinn Féin auspices and by people who were getting tired of the Irish Party. No doubt the movement was heartily welcomed by the I.R.B. It caught the imagination of the country. The Irish Party got very uneasy about it. They did not want a national movement not under their control and they suggested an agreement by which they were to have fifty-fifty on the Volunteer Executive. The Irish Party would have twenty-five representatives to twenty-five of the original committee of the Volunteers. That created a balance by which consciences on both sides were saved.

Anybody could go into the Volunteers and support the movement. That is the way it was in London when I was there, about the middle of 1914 - after the Redmond Party joined up

that movement. We knew that at the time, and some of us were not terribly keen on the idea of the I.R.B. on account of its being a secret society. The people that displayed the greatest ^{and} energy/were the real driving force behind the movement were Tom Clarke and Sean McDermott. Another man who was very active in the Volunteers and did a great deal of the confidential work as well as writing, was Joe Plunkett. Tom MacDonagh, who was English Literature Lecturer in University College, was also very prominent. But particularly McDermott and Clarke were the two whom I knew who worked day in ^{and} day out for this movement. The Volunteer movement could not have had its success without those two men. I think the seven signatories on Easter Monday were all I.R.B. men. A man like John MacNeill, who was a very fine gentleman and a marvellous scholar, was used by them, because he would be a man who would appeal to the country generally. He probably knew he was being used that way, but he did not mind. I think Pearse was an I.R.B. man too. The Volunteers kept gathering strength all through 1915. They got a lot of new adherents.

After my return from London at the end of 1914, I went home. I came to Dublin in January 1915, and took over some German classes from my sister in Rathmines Technical School. This post, which left me a good deal of liberty, suited me very well at the time. I then became housekeeper for my sister, first at Leeson Park Avenue, and then when we moved to 19, Ranelagh Road. Mrs. Wyse-Power was delighted I had come back. She said: "Here's one of the girls who has plenty of time. She can become one of the secretaries of Cumann na mBan. I became one of the secretaries. We had rooms in Dawson St. - No. 2, I think. The headquarters of the Volunteers was in the same building. We had not the same rooms. Very often we would not see them, because they only came in to us when they wanted to inquire about something. Bulmer Hobson was Secretary that time. I often met Sean MacDermott there. That year was full of

with the Volunteers. Dr. Sophie Bryant was very enthusiastic about it. She was of Irish descent. She was headmistress of the North London Collegiate School where I taught. We had a very fine crowd there. We formed a branch of Cumann na mBan of which I was Hon. Secretary. We collected a good bit of money. When the war started in August 1914, Home Rule was put on the Statute Book, but there was no more about it.

Shortly after that, Redmond began to advocate that our people should join the Allies to fight for the rights of small nations. The other side of the Volunteers would not have anything to do with that sort of thing and there was a lot of bad feeling which brought about a split. The Sinn Féin Volunteers were left where they were before, only rather worse, if anything, because a large number of the people, who had joined before then, were in favour of Redmond. Consequently, we had to re-organise again. At that time I was still in London. I could see the danger of the money we had collected being held up if I did not act quickly and bring it over to John MacNeill. Mrs. Stopford Green, who was President of the Branch, arranged for me to come over to Ireland in November. I think our rooms were in Bedford St. or Fleet St., I cannot well remember now. I know nothing further about that Branch after November, 1914. I don't think they met any more, because Cumann na mBan broke up over there. That was the end of my career in London.

In 1915, the Volunteers had begun to gather strength. These were the Irish Volunteers. The National Volunteers was the name given to the Redmond Section of the Volunteers who broke off. The National Volunteers were supposed to continue their organisation, but they did not continue in existence any length of time, as a great many of them joined the British Army to fight "in defence of small nations" on Redmond's advice.

The Irish Republican Brotherhood was very strong behind

excitement and activity. We always talked of having a Rising, but, although we talked of it, we never realised that it was so near. It was almost as impossible to realise its proximity as that of the end of the world. That year was passed in building up Cumann na mBan.

Cumann na mBan was started in April 1914. They had been making progress all through 1914. In 1915, we were building up again after the split. We did quite a lot of organising all over the country, trying to get branches started. We were a completely independent body from the Volunteers. People like Mrs. Wyse-Power and others used to maintain that we were not an auxiliary to the Volunteers, but an independent body; but the fact of the matter was that our activities consisted of service to the Volunteers. We had it straight in our Constitution - that we were an independent organisation working for the freedom of Ireland. We had it almost the same as the Volunteers had it. We put in a great deal of Red Cross work, training our girls for war - even to take up arms, if necessary - and to do any sort of work in connection with war; also, to build up our national movement from the point of view of propaganda, history and so on. I imagine it should be possible to obtain a copy of the original Cumann na mBan constitution. As will be seen from that, we were not formed as an auxiliary, but we looked on ourselves as such. I remember Nancy Power stressing the idea of its being an independent women's movement. I was still joint-secretary.

A lot of the Cumann na mBan spent their time making up bandages - not for ourselves, but for the Volunteers - not knowing what it was really for. I did a good deal of organising myself - going around the country - at a later period, but before 1916, I don't think I went anywhere except down to Wexford. During 1915, as far as I can remember, it was all general sort of work. We helped to organise public meetings; of course, it was during the war, but these

meetings were allowed. The Volunteers were always parading and they were not prevented by the British authorities.

For little more than a week before the Rising there was tremendous excitement - a sort of seething undercurrent. You felt that something was going to happen, but what it was you did not know. First of all, there was that secret document from Dublin Castle that they had. Certain leaders were going to be seized. Places were going to be held, such as the Archbishop's house at Drumcondra. A great many of us held that it was not an authentic document. Some say Joe Plunkett wrote it. There was some basis of truth in it, I suppose. We were very excited over that. I remember Mrs. MacNeill and myself going to Gill's to see Keohane and Sceilg about it, and to find out what would be done about it and how we could counter it in the eyes of the world.

Our rooms were entirely given over to bandage making at that time. There were supposed to be great Easter manoeuvres to show our strength. We felt that, although there had been manoeuvres, this was something different.

Every year, during Easter Week, we always went home to Wexford. My sister - later Mrs. Sean T. O'Kelly - was in the University at that time. She went down to Wexford on Holy Thursday morning. Phyllis and Agnes had gone down a day or two before Sean MacDermott, who used to be in our house a great deal, said to me when he heard I was going too: "You ought to remain in Dublin over Easter with Jim. Jim is under orders. You ought to stay and see after him". Jim was my brother (afterwards Dr. James Ryan, T.D. for Wexford). I said: "All right. I will announce my intention to my sisters that I will stay here". Although Jim was still a medical student he seems to have been a good deal connected with the activities of that week. I think he went down to the country with some message from headquarters about the Rising. I myself took a written dispatch from Sean

MacDermott on Holy Thursday morning to Sean Sinnott, who was in charge of the Volunteers in Wexford. He must have handed it to me on Wednesday night at our house. He did not tell me what was in it. When I handed it over to Sean Sinnott in Wexford town his only remark was "That will be all right". I got no written reply to bring back. I returned that evening by train to Dublin.

No meetings took place in our house that time. Most of the meetings were held down-town. I hardly saw Sean MacDermott again except on Good Friday in the Red Bank. Gearoid O'Sullivan and himself were having dinner. I don't remember with whom I was on that occasion. I only exchanged a few words with him. They were all at fever pitch and sort of secretive. Of course, you can understand it, when you realise what happened subsequently.

Easter Saturday came and I remember being at home and wondering where everybody was. Sean T. O'Kelly came in, in great distress, and said he had been in to see Griffith on his way up and that the position was terrible. Of course, he knew at that time that the German arms had been destroyed, that those two young fellows had been drowned at Killorglin and, generally speaking, that the fat was in the fire, from the Kerry point of view. I did not know anything about the arms at Kerry, I think. I knew that they were having some connection with Germany, because Sean MacDermott had asked me one time if I would go to Germany for him as he thought a girl would get there more easily than a man, but when I told my sisters, they would not let me go, because they said that, as I was connected with such a big family, it would never do. That would have been, I think, Easter 1915. It was Joe Plunkett who went afterwards. I learned that from Mrs. Dillon, his sister, who let it out to us at that time that Joe had gone. She came in to say that she had got a message from Joe saying

that he had left Liverpool safely. She gave us that information to pass on to Sean MacDermott. Incidentally, my sister Kit and myself played a joke on Sean about this. We were having coffee with him in Bewley's and I said to him: "By the way, Sean, did you see where Joe Plunkett was arrested?" "Where?" said Sean, who looked very concerned. "In Liverpool" said I. He then noticed by my smile that it was only a try-on and he said: "Damn you, anyway".

Joe went to Spain, ostensibly on account of his health, and from there he got to Germany.

Anyway, on Holy Saturday afternoon about 3 or 4 o'clock, Sean T. came in and said he had been in with Griffith who told him the Volunteers were going to rise the next morning. He must have told me that the I.R.B. were very much behind the project and that the arms had been lost; that Sean Fitzgibbon had come from Kerry and told MacNeill about the disaster. I am certain that it was Easter Saturday afternoon that Sean T. O'Kelly told me that. We talked it over and both of us felt that something must be done. He said: "I think I will go out and see MacNeill". So Sean T. went off to see MacNeill. I had an uneasy feeling. We had not seen Sean MacDermott. I thought Sean T. would have been a big man in the I.R.B. but at this stage I realised, to my surprise, that he was not. Sean T. came back from MacNeill afterwards and said they were having a meeting that night in Dr. Seamus O'Kelly's at 54, Rathgar Road, and that MacNeill would likely issue some statement. Sean T. was very upset about the whole situation as he was very much in the dark about things and he feared that the Rising might end in a holocaust.

He arranged with me to bring everyone we could find suitable up to Seamus O'Kelly's that evening in case the meeting wished to issue any message. Jim, Liam O'Brien, and

Father Paul Walsh were to come. Father Paul must have been staying in our house that time; he was a priest then, doing research work in the Royal Irish Academy.

We went up to Seamus O'Kelly's, as arranged. We were in an ante-room, and inside were the Volunteer people, like MacNeill and Sean T. and Fitzgibbon, and a great many others, including Cathal Brugha. I can't remember who were with me in the ante-room besides Father Paul, Liam O'Brien, Jim and myself. There may have been others there in the ante-room, but I can't remember them. Then there was a great lot of 'hugger-mugger'. I remember Dr. Seamus O'Kelly; he was like a man awaiting news of the birth of a baby - in and out, fussing, and in an awful state. We were all waiting, and getting into an awful state, too. Then, after a long, long time, and very late in the night, I remember someone coming in to us and handing to each of us a piece of paper. I remember MacNeill's handwriting on it. It read: "There will be no manoeuvres tomorrow. All manoeuvres are cancelled. This is to be obeyed by every officer". It was signed with MacNeill's own name. I was asked would I go to Wexford with this message. I said: "All right."

Jim went to Cork. O'Rahilly went to Limerick. Father Paul must have gone to Galway. Liam O'Brien went to Tyrrell's Pass and Tullamore. Some of them started that night. I went down on the nine o'clock train to Wexford on Easter Sunday morning. I remember I had an awful feeling that the Rising would take place, but I had to take my order.

Sean T. had come back to our house after the meeting on Saturday night. He did not go on any message, but it was he brought us up there. He said: "I have been talking for the last two hours to Cathal Brugha". There was some other man, as well as Cathal, who was against MacNeill issuing anything. I did not see McDonagh going in to the meeting, but I did hear he was there. I know that Cathal Brugha stayed there and

fought against issuing anything. He talked to Sean T. outside on our road for I don't know how long. He was all against MacNeill doing this. When Sean T. came back to us, I had no knowledge that he had changed his views, but I think Cathal Brugha had made a bit of an impression. Sean T. was the man who was in sympathy with MacNeill about the situation but it was then too late to change his attitude. He certainly did not interfere with us. Neither did he interfere with Liam O'Brien. They all came up to Dr. O'Kelly's on account of Sean T. Jim was in a very queer position; he had already taken messages down to Cork about the Rising; now, he had to go with messages to stop it.

On Easter Sunday morning I got off the train at Enniscorthy. I went to Wexford town afterwards. I knew Ginger O'Connell was in Enniscorthy and was in charge of that part of the country - Wexford, Carlow and Kilkenny. I suppose he would be Captain O'Connell. As I was coming along the street in Enniscorthy, I met Father Pat Murphy of the Mission House. He was always a great man in the movement with us. I told him I was looking for O'Connell, or the Volunteer Executive people there. I told him why I was down there. His mouth opened with astonishment. He said: "Go up to your aunt's house". I had an aunt living there; and I went to her house. They all came in. Seamus Doyle came in, I am nearly sure, and O'Connell and Father Pat Murphy. I can't remember if Rafter was there. I have only a knowledge of the three know. I told O'Connell and gave him the message. He read it and he was very confused. I told him then of the conversation between Sean T. and myself and what had happened about the arms, etc. and that the MacNeill group thought it was better to countermand the Rising. So I said: "My opinion is that there will be a Rising". I knew Sean MacDermott was at the back of that Rising. I had not had a talk with him for some days, but I felt he was not a man who would abandon it.

You would think by O'Connell then that he was very disappointed that the Rising was off. His head was in his hands and he was utterly confused. I suggested I should go to Wexford to see Johnny Sinnott. I wanted to go home to my own place and back to Dublin again. They got a car and we drove to Wexford. We saw Johnny Sinnott who was in charge of the Wexford Volunteers. He was a nice quiet sort of a fellow. I think he was a carpenter in Pierce's. I had not much to say to them there as Ginger took over and spoke to them. He said that I had brought this message. They all looked terribly glum. Nobody made any remark, like; "It's a good thing too". They all looked utterly confused and disappointed. I did not see Bob Brennan. I knew afterwards that he went to Enniscorthy on Monday, and found it hard to get the people together. I then got a taxi from a man called Duff, intending to make my way to my home place, Tomcoole. When I arrived there I found them all in the breakfast-room and you can imagine the talk. I kept saying: "I am certain it will come off. I have to go back. I must go back to Dublin". They said: "You should take someone back with you". So Phyllis came with me. We went off fairly late. We took a taxi. I remember we paid £6 for it. It is always said since - but I wouldn't like to accuse him of it - that when the taximan went back to Wexford he gave information about our journey. In spite of my message, Bob Brennan and other Volunteers did rise.

Anyway, we arrived back in Dublin late on Sunday night. Sean T. was there. Liam O'Brien, I think, was back, and the others were not. Phyllis and I went to bed. The men slept in the drawingroom.

Next morning - Easter Monday - it was talk, talk again. Then suddenly a dispatch came in to me. It was a mobilisation order, that I was to report at some street near the Broadstone.

It gave the name of the street, which I cannot remember now. It was probably Blackhall Street. It was just at the Broadstone. Phyllis was not in Cumann na mBan that time, so she stayed at home. She got no notice. Besides, somebody would have to be there, as we had a lot of arms. Just before that Con Murphy had brought arms which he had in his house for us to store. He asked Jum to take them. As a matter of fact, they were all taken afterwards, but our own arms were not.

We were there at the assembly point at twelve o'clock on Monday. We spent the day there then. I was a good while in a little house along with Mrs. Rogers - then Miss MacMahon - and someone else. We sat behind a table. The girls came in and we told them a lot of addresses to which we would like them to go with messages from the men who had been mobilised. We were to let their people know they were all right. We had the names and addresses of the men; they must have been supplied by Ned Daly to Miss MacMahon. May Hayes - she was May Kavanagh then - was in the Central Branch as well as myself at that time. Can you imagine us going around and telling all these people that their men were all right? May Hayes spent one day and night going around. I do not know what we were doing that day. I could not remember what we ate. May Hayes said we were told to bring rations for a day; I suppose we did. We stood around. We were very tired. I remember hearing shots - a few shots together, and then the firing stopped. You would hear a shot now and again, and then things were terribly still. Mrs. Rogers - she is a sister-in-law of the Secretary to the Department of Defence - was a great worker. At five o'clock she got a notice from Ned Daly to say they did not think our services would be further required. There was no mention of where we were to report next day. Well, she said, she could not see anything else to do but to disband. Individually, we could do as we liked. May Hayes does not remember any more either. I remember a certain feeling of

pleasure. I said: "Now we can go around and see what is happening". I remember Effie Taaffe and myself marched off with ourselves town-town, straight down along from Dorset St. to O'Connell St. We came openly down the street. There was an awful crowd of people gathered round in groups, watching. You could not get them to move off.

We came to the Post Office without being stopped or interfered with in any way. The first thing that made us realise there was a war on was a dead horse, lying on its back with its feet up. This horse belonged to one of the Lancers who had come down from the north side to make an attack on those "rebels" and get rid of them. They got a volley of shots from the Post Office, a couple of horses were shot and they retreated. There was nothing going on when we came along at about six o'clock on Monday evening. People were standing around in groups every place, watching for developments. There was not much excitement. I remember the flag interested me because I had never seen our tricolour flying like that before. We came to the Post Office and saw this big man - Connolly - in full uniform, standing outside the door with a young man, a sentry, with him. We did not know him and we passed along, very disconsolate.

Then near O'Connell Monument we saw Sean T. O'Kelly marching along with a little band of Citizen Army men. I had left Sean T. and Liam O'Brien in the house. They had both gone off and joined. Sean T. came down to the G.P.O. and met Pearse who made him a Staff Captain. Liam O'Brien went into the College of Surgeons and joined up with the Citizen Army there. And here was Sean T. leading that little band of men from O'Connell Monument. He had about seven or eight fellows behind him. They were an odd number, I remember. So, "Halt" came from Sean T. He was not in uniform, but had a Sam Brown belt. Anyway, we stopped and said we had been disbanded.

Then Sean T. said, with that great air of his: "Would you like to come into the Post Office? Would you like to see Sean McDermott?" I said: "We would love that, but we are afraid to go in". Sean T. said: "Come along with me".

Then Effie Taaffe and myself were brought in to the G.P.O. Sean T. O'Kelly told Connolly who we were and then he went off on business. I remember going to the back of the Post Office. I was looking for Sean MacDermott. I was left on my own and looked exactly like the complete camp follower. I said to Gearoid O'Sullivan, who was a sort of aide-de-camp to Sean MacDermott: "I would like to see Sean MacDermott".

I was told: "You can't see him. He is resting". I came out of the G.P.O. then and went back to 19, Ranelagh Road. I lost sight of Effie Taaffe in the Post Office. Whatever she did, I do not know. I must have known some time, but I don't know now.

It was great that I did go back home on Monday evening, because Phyllis was waiting. Jim was not there. He could not get back from Cork until next day, when he came by Blessington. I stayed there that night with Phyllis, because I was to give Jim a message when he arrived back. I must have been told by someone in the Post Office that Jim was to report to the G.P.O. immediately when he got back. I know it was not Sean MacDermott who told me that, because I did not see him when I was in the G.P.O. that day.

On Tuesday we waited for Jim. Phyllis and I went down town. I remember the women around Charlemont St. were talking a lot against the Volunteers. Jim arrived that afternoon. We told him in a great hurry that he was expected at the G.P.O. Phyllis is certain she brought his gun down for him under her long coat. The three of us walked down the whole way to the G.P.O., along by Trinity College - Jim, Phyllis and myself. I remember, when I was passing by

Trinity College I had a feeling that there was something serious going on there. You would see an odd man peeping out from behind sandbags or you would see the muzzle of a gun. There was odd shooting, and people would go off the street and come back again. We got into the Post Office at the front. We saw Sean MacDermott in a small room off the main office and he made us come in and sit down. I said: "I suppose you will kill me for taking MacNeill's message". He said: "It won't make any difference. I knew in my heart and soul that they had wanted the fight". I think it was the mercy of God that it was like that. If we had a big Rising, we would have had a lot of destruction.

We stayed in the G.P.O. that evening. Phyllis and I went upstairs to the commissariat - Miss Gavan Duffy. I can't remember exactly who was there. There were others in different places. I was put to carve a lot of beef. At that time there were nearby the Metropole, the D.B.C. and the Imperial Hotel. All the stuff that was in those places was commandeered and brought into the Post Office and receipts were given for it on behalf of the Irish Republican Army. I remember carving, carving. Very likely, girls came in and took the food around to the men. The men did not come up to our room to eat, but remained at their different posts. Desmond Fitzgerald was there. I knew him fairly well. Phyllis said that the first thing he asked was: "Now listen, girls. Have you been to confession?". He asked every girl who came into the place the same question.

Then I had a talk with Tom Clarke in the kitchen that Tuesday night. First of all, Sean MacDermott told me that Tom Clarke wanted to have a talk with me and with Miss MacMahon. Tom Clarke told the same story to each of us. I could not remember it all. The gist of it was - that people naturally now would be against them for rising and

coming out like this; that one of the reasons for people being against them would be because of the countermanding order, but that they had come to this conclusion that it was absolutely necessary that they should have this Rising now, because if they did not have it now, they might never have it; that when the men had been brought to a certain point they had to go forward; that, in any case, a rebellion was necessary to make Ireland's position felt at the Peace Conference so that its relation to the British Empire would strike the world. I asked him: "Why a republic?" He replied: "You must have something striking in order to appeal to the imagination of the world". He also said that at all periods in the history of Ireland the shedding of blood had always succeeded in raising the spirit and morale of the people. He said that our only chance was to make ourselves felt by an armed rebellion. "Of course" he added, "we shall be all wiped out". He said this almost with gaiety. He had got into the one thing he had wanted to do during his whole lifetime. He spent sixteen years in British prisons and when he came out, went to America. He was not young at this time. He must have been about sixty years of age. He talked a whole lot to me after that. Then other people came along including Sean McGarry who looked wretched. Tom Clarke said, jokingly, to him: "Miss Ryan will get you a cup of bovril. She gave one to me; it is great stuff".

The headquarters people were not doing any fighting in the G.P.O. They were watching things. Pearse spent most of his time in the front part of the Post Office. It was nearly the same then as it is now, although it has since been done up new. There was, more or less, a front passage. There was a counter where you could get stamps. All these young fellows - the Plunketts, Mick Collins and crowds of others, including the members of the Larkfield Camp, were

manning the windows. The headquarters staff sat there talking quietly. The Howth guns made a lot of noise, but it seemed that those young Volunteers quite enjoyed firing away. Gearoid O'Sullivan, who was high in rank, was inside all the time. Pearse sat out there in the front on one of the high stools, and people would come and talk to him. That is where we were talking to Pearse with Sean MacDermott later.

Tuesday night passed. All that night I was upstairs at the very back, where the kitchens were. On one occasion I was coming along a passage and ran into Diarmuid Lynch. We found we knew each other. Normally, Diarmuid Lynch was a terrible pessimist, but that night he seemed very cheerful and we had a long chat.

On Wednesday morning, I don't remember what work we did, but I remember we went down to Sean MacDermott. He said: "Come in to Pearse. There is a message to be sent". The messages we took out were really not from Pearse, but from O'Rahilly. We went with letters to the wives of three British officers. On the day the Volunteers seized the Post Office they arrested three British officers who were in the precincts. I think they were buying stamps at the time. All three officers had their wives living on the north side. O'Rahilly was in charge of the prisoners. Pearse told MacDermott that O'Rahilly wanted to give us these messages. We went to the back yard. O'Rahilly was changing guard on the prisoners. They were kept around at the right-hand side of the yard. One guard, which consisted of three or four Volunteers, was standing to attention as the new guard came on. O'Rahilly said to us: "Excuse me". He said to his men: "Now, these prisoners are in our charge and we are in honour bound to see that they are treated as prisoners of war. If it's the last bit of food in the place, it must be shared with the prisoners, and if any man does not follow my instructions he will get this" - and he pulled out a gun. Then he gave us the letters

which, he said, had been written by these British officers. One of the addresses was not very far out - Drumcondra; another was Seville Place, and the third was The Thatch.

Wednesday morning we started off to deliver those letters. We had been up all night. Our feet got very tired. It was terribly warm. Coming towards Drumcondra we saw a lot of British soldiers passing along. We went on out and delivered all the letters. I always remember the look on the women's faces when they read the messages. We asked: "Is there any message?" They looked at us as if we were awful women.

It was late on Wednesday evening when we were coming back. There was a lot of firing. It was not at the Post Office but at Liberty Hall. When we got to the top of Dorset Street, we found that there were British soldiers all along the streets where we wanted to pass. We decided we would go to Mountjoy Square to Walter Cole's house. We went down there and found Mrs. Wyse-Power and her two daughters there. Mrs. Wyse-Power had simply lost her nerve. She felt it was going to be a complete fiasco, a washout. She said: "Don't go back. What would you go back for now?" Her house had been burned down and looted. While we were going with the messages earlier that day, I remember seeing some of the looters at Norton's in Henry St. Prams were being thrown down through the windows above, for women to catch them below. By Wednesday, Mrs. Wyse-Power's place was burned and looted. She was in a bad state. I think she did not let Nancy go back. Anyway, we said nothing at all; we were determined to get back. It would be absolutely idiotic not to; if the men were to die, we would too; that is the way we felt. That night we went to bed at Cole's. Phyllis was saying since that she remembers sitting in the bathroom and Mrs. Wyse-Power rubbing her face with a towel, and saying "Don't go back".

In the morning - Thursday - Phyllis heard the bells and we got up. We did not get our breakfast at Cole's. Nancy Power said we came in to her. I forget what she said to us, but she gave us some message to bring back. We started off for the G.P.O. I don't know what streets we travelled, but I suppose we went straight out by Findlater's Church, then we got across into Parnell Square and down along Moore St. We found there was nothing very active going on.

We must have got in to the G.P.O. at the side without any shots or experiencing any danger. When we got in, Sean MacDermott got hold of us again. We was very pleased with us. "Now", he said, "I think the Commandant General (Pearse) would like to send out a few messages. We were always very sorry we got those messages, as it meant leaving the G.P.O. again. Pearse wanted to send a message to his mother, who was living on the south side, and another message to the people in the country, asking them to support him. On this journey we had to cross to Dame St. by the Metal Bridge. Both sides of the quays were held by the British military - I think the Sherwood Foresters - to prevent anyone crossing. We were halted by them and threatened to be sent to the Castle to be searched. After many protestations of innocence and ignorance on our part we were let pass. As we came into Dame St. I saw for the first time an armoured car passing slowly along. I was seized with a feeling that this was something diabolical and devastating.

We got the message to Pearse's mother, which was easy enough. We sent that out. We passed it along. We could not get any messages to the country to tell the people to support him. We could not get out of town. The place began to be surrounded.

We had seen Jim in the Post Office, but very little. We came in on Tuesday. We were out on messages on Wednesday;

came in on Thursday morning and went out again on Thursday about midday. We went home to Ranelagh Road then with our dispatches and various other messages for different people. We took three copies of the Proclamation which I gave to wives of the leaders.

When we got home, I remember seeing a great big piece of corned beef. We had loaves and butter, and everyone who came in had slices of beef and bread.

Later on Thursday, we went out to see my sister, Mother Stanislaus, Loreto Hostel, 77, St. Stephen's Green. We stayed the night with her. She was in an awful state. She wanted us to go down and tell Mr. Pearse he had fought long enough.

On Friday, I made an attempt to get back to the G.P.O. It was very difficult. I tried, in a most stupid manner, to get back. I went to a main street and along by the College of Surgeons. I could have got into the College of Surgeons, but it never occurred to me to do so, as my mind was bent on getting to the Post Office. I turned back then, when I found it impossible - when I saw a dog shot dead at my feet. The College of Surgeons was all pock-marked from a machine gun placed on the Shelbourne Hotel. It was in front of the College of Surgeons that I saw the dog being shot. It ran out in front of me and suddenly it lay on the ground. It could have been myself, if I had walked on another bit. I went home then.

Friday night was a miserable night. The whole place was being burned down. You could see the blaze of fire from the windows. We heard rumours that Sean MacDermott was shot; then that O'Rahilly was shot. We had a very miserable time. We had people coming in who could not get down town, like Geraldine Plunkett and Tom Dillon. Quite a lot of other people came; half of them I forget.

On Saturday, we heard that the Post Office was burned out and that they had surrendered, but we did not know.

It must have been about 11 o'clock on Sunday morning when Louise Gavan Duffy called in to our house to hear what news we had. She told us then who had been killed - that O'Rahilly had been killed; that the others had come out safely, but had surrendered; that she did not know anything about Jim. She had not seen him. He was in charge of all those people who were wounded. At the last minute he went with the others - Sean MacDermott and Connolly - and left the wounded to be taken to hospital. Desmond Fitzgerald went with him too, I think. Louise said to me: "Come on, we'll go over to the College of Surgeons or Jacob's". I was delighted and we left Phyllis at home.

As we came to the College of Surgeons, they were just surrendering - just being marched into their places by British Tommies. We were let talk to the prisoners. Liam O'Brien gave us messages - one to his mother and one to Helen Lalor, who afterwards became his wife. Nellie Gifford was there. There was quite a number of other people there who were quite freely getting notes from the prisoners, who were all allowed to hand over things.

Then Louise said: "We'll go over to Jacob's". We went in over to the side door there. Mick Hayes told us that MacDonagh had gone to the British Commander and had insisted on seeing Pearse and the others. Mick said that they had more or less resigned themselves to what was going to happen. Jacob's was the queerest place anyone ever picked out. It was all glass on top and could have been easily destroyed. I read some reason given for its occupation - that it was a very good observation point.

Some of the Hanrahans, Dick King and a whole lot of others, gave us little letters to take out to their people.

Then we went to the little headquarters room where Major MacBride was sitting, and a few other officers. Jack MacDonagh was in there too. Then the Commandant came back. He came in jauntily as if he were about to issue another proclamation. He talked to us gaily and said: "I'm afraid, ladies, as you are not on my staff, I shall have to ask you to leave." We left. We brought Maire Ni Shiubhlaigh with us. There was another woman, but I don't remember who she was. We made Maire come with us as she was on the verge of being hysterical. When we came to the door, a high-ranking officer and a young officer were arriving to take the surrender. They came in a small two-seater car. I suppose the high ranking officer was General Lowe. The young officer stood, and we stood too. Louise stood up with great dignity. One of the officers said: "We are not taking women, are we?" The other said: "No". We went off. Louise said: "The cheek of him anyway - not taking women".

When we got home to 19 Ranelagh Road, we put Maire Ni Shiubhlaigh to bed. She was worn out completely. We sat again, and sat and sat.

I could not tell you really very much after that. Sean MacDermott was not shot until the 12th. We thought he was going to escape. I wrote an article in a paper in America, which I will hand in. It gives exactly my impressions at the time I went to see Sean MacDermott. This was the morning he was executed. We were there at 12 o'clock and remained till three. He was shot at a quarter to four. The message was brought to us by an army car and we returned in it. They sent word first, I think, that they were calling. Someone came in a car, with an army driver, and handed me a note to say that the prisoner, Sean MacDermott, would like to see me and my sister, if she would like to accompany me. We had to call to the North Circular Road to collect Sean Reynolds and Sean MacDermott's landlady. Sean wanted Sean Reynolds to make his will for him; he had not very much to leave, just a few pounds

for Masses. He handed me mementoes which I gave to various people - buttons to Maire Cregan and Margaret Browne. He had previously sent me his signet ring through Sean McAvin. Afterwards I got his rosary from the priest who heard his confession. The things I got I gave to other people. I kept only the ring.

We were all there together, listening to each other's conversation. He was very anxious to have the others go. He was much more intimate with us, but there was no budge out of them. "That is all now" Sean would say, but there was no budge at all. Then we all came out together.

Father McCarthy, who was attached to the prison, had Sean's rosary beads. It was he who was with him for his last confession. He sent for me to go to see him in his parish. He gave me a whole lot of things - an old yellow muffler, the rosary beads and something else, which I brought back to his sister. I think I gave the rosary beads to Father Paddy Browne. He had seen Sean McDermott in the prison too, but that was before our visit.

Signed: Mary Josephine Mulcahy (Ryan)

Date: 23rd June, 1950.

Witness: Sr. Crowley

