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Telefón 61018.

ROINN COSANTA.

BURO STAIRÉ MILEATA 1913-21

(Bureau of Military History 1913-21),

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(Dublin).

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Statement by

Niall MacNeill,
Ordnance Survey,
Phoenix Park,
Dublin.

Dated: 7th January, 1948.

On (1) Easter Week, 1916.
(2) Na Fianna Éireann.

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Ordnance Survey,
Phoenix Park,
Dublin.

6th. January, 1948.

Secretary,
Bureau of Military History,
26, Westland Row,
Dublin.

Referring to yours of 31st. ultimo and to previous telephone conversation with Mr. Michael McDunphy, I am afraid that I am not able to amplify what I told him. This is solely due to a very imperfect memory and to the absence of any records at my disposal or information among members of my family which would serve to refresh it. Even if such means of sharpening my memory were available I should use it with the utmost caution as I believe that the value of your work depends very largely on people confining themselves to statements of what they know for certain to be facts.

Sometime about the middle of Easter Week, 1916, my father (Eoin MacNeill) told me that he had an important errand for me to carry out. He was then at our home at Woodtown Park, Rathfarnham, Co. Dublin. He gave me a letter addressed to the British Military Authorities - I do not remember to what officer in particular it was addressed. I gathered that it expressed his willingness to intervene to stop further bloodshed. My father's instructions to me were to take it to the highest officer I could reach after first presenting myself at the British lines (cordon round Dublin).

I went to Clanbrassil Street Canal Bridge, as well as I remember using my bicycle, and from there was directed to Company Headquarters of the Unit finding the personnel on duty at Clanbrassil Street. Remarkably enough, this Company Headquarters was located in a house near the foot of (baggot Street end) of Waterloo Road, in a house on the City side. It is my recollection that up to this point I was unescorted.

After being detained there a short time I was sent under escort of, I think, two soldiers, on foot, to Portobello Barracks. The only clear recollection of this was that one or two shots were heard during the walk and that we ~~were~~ went by Appian Way - Ranelagh - Castlewood Avenue. I was not clear whether I was considered to be a prisoner or not at this stage.

At Portobello Barracks I was placed in a room in which there were a few other people (none of whom I knew), seemingly under detention. After a time - I should say about an hour - I was brought into a smaller room in which there were a few officers and from that conducted to a military touring car in which I was driven back home. My recollection is that the other occupants of the car consisted of the driver and two officers (one of relatively high rank). My father was taken into the City by them almost immediately and I did not see him again until after his release from prison over a year later.

I was seventeen years of age at the time. The only other things I can state about the incident are the following vague recollections. First that the decision to send me was only taken after my father had with difficulty been dissuaded from going himself and that he was dissuaded only for the reason that that method might have led to failure to carry out his aim, either by his being detained by some subordinate headquarters or perhaps meeting a worse fate. Secondly, that he was at pains to explain in the letter that I was simply acting as messenger.

The foregoing statement includes everything that I can recollect of the incident.

Mr. McDunphy has suggested that I should give particulars of some information I have concerning Na Fianna Eireann (Irish National Boy Scouts). I think that my brother Brian (deceased), my cousin Hugh (now Major-General) and I can claim to have been the founders of the Ranelagh Company, which was originated in and had its headquarters at Cullenswood House, Oakley Road - better known as the original home of St. Enda's College. Other members of the Company, including ~~Major~~ General MacNeill, would be far better qualified than I to give details of this Company's history, as I have - as already mentioned - a very imperfect memory. My recollection is that the Company was founded in 1915. Prior to its foundation my brother Brian and I and the General and his brother Bermet, had a sort of private Boy Scout organisation of our own, called Na Ceithearnai Coille, of which I think we were the only members. I recall that we had a blue flag with, I think, a saffron device on it.

I think I can claim, individually, to have been responsible for the revival and re-organisation of the Rathfarnham Company of the Fianna in 1917, but again my memory is a blank in regard to details. In the period between the 1916 Rising and this, or sometime shortly after the re-organisation of the Company, I was "court-martialled" by a Fianna Court-martial for not having taken part in the Rising. ~~Countess Marckievicz and Barney Mellows~~ Countess Marckievicz and Barney Mellows were members of the Court and I think there was a third whose identity I cannot recall. I gathered that I was "exonerated" on the grounds that I was under the influence of my father in the matter. I remember that I took a very poor view of the whole proceedings and by no means formally acquiesced in any right to try me on any such charge and that my resentment was a severe damper to my enthusiasm for the Fianna. In so far as the "verdict" was to be taken seriously at all I regarded it as a piece of ~~unpleasant~~ "face-saving" to justify keeping on in the organisation one whose services were of some value.

7 JAN 1948

Niall MacNeill
NIALL MACNEILL

