

**ORIGINAL**

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21

BURO STAIRÉ MILÉ'TA 1913-21

No. W.S. 284

ROINN



COSANTA.

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21

STATEMENT BY WITNESS

DOCUMENT NO. W.S....284 .....

**Witness**

Mr. Michael Staines,  
8 Castle Road,  
Clontarf,  
Dublin.  
**Identity**

Q..M. Dublin Brigade I.V's. 1913-1916;  
Q.M.G. do. Easter Week 1916.  
First Commissioner of Garda Síochána.

**Subject**

- (a) National activities 1913-1916;
- (b) G.P.O. Easter Week 1916; - in charge of distribution of ammunition.
- (c) Hoisted tricolour on G.P.O. Easter Monday 1916.

**Conditions, if any, stipulated by Witness**

Nil

File No. ...S..595... ..

Form B S M 2

# ORIGINAL

STATEMENT OF MICHAEL STAINES

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21

BURO STAIRE MIL'IA 1913-21

NO. W.S. 284

Q.M.G. - IRISH VOLUNTEERS. 1916.

I was not a member of any of what may be called Irish Ireland movements previous to the year 1913 except the Gaelic League. I was Treasurer of the Colmcille Branch of the Gaelic League which met at 5 Blackhall St. Dublin. The members of that Branch were always zealous in maintaining the non-political and non-sectarian Constitution of the Gaelic League.

Shortly before the inauguration of the Irish Volunteers I was approached by Mr. Seamus O'Connor to let the hall at Blackhall St. for the purpose of drilling on one night a week at a weekly rent of ten shillings. Having been assured by Mr. O'Connor that the new movement was to be non-political and non-sectarian, I agreed to do so and obtained the consent of the Committee for the letting.

I attended the inaugural meeting to found the Irish Volunteers in the Rotunda on 23rd November 1913. I joined the Volunteers that night.

Three companies of the 1st Battn. drilled in the Colmcille Hall, viz: "A", "D" and "G". Two companies - "B" and "C" in 41 Parnell Sqr. and one - "F" - in 25 Parnell Square. I was appointed Quartermaster of each of the three companies "A", "D" and "G".

I immediately got in touch with The O'Rahilly for the purchase of arms. I collected one shilling per week from every Volunteer who wanted a Martini rifle and two shillings and sixpence from any Volunteer who wanted a Lee Enfield rifle. Having the money I was very successful in getting the arms from The O'Rahilly as he wanted the money to purchase more arms. Every man in the three companies had a rifle.

Sometime in 1915 I was appointed Dublin Brigade Quartermaster.

I obtained rifles from The O'Rahilly, from members of the I.R.B., revolvers and shotguns from Henshawa, where I was employed, shotguns and ammunition from Keegan's and Garnett's, gunsmiths. In addition, I obtained rifles from Peadar Breslin and Jack Shaw, who got them from British soldiers by purchase.

My brother Humphrey, who was employed on the Liner "Baltic" used to bring from America about twenty revolvers on each trip to Liverpool. These he passed on to Neil Kerr and P. Cahill, who sent them over to me. When I got a case of shotguns (twelve) in Henshaw's, I used to send them by rail to a merchant such as Donal Buckley in Maynooth, and afterwards collect them. I had pikes made by a man named Kenny in Schoolhouse Lane off High St. Explosives were made in Kimmage (Larkfield). On Easter Monday, with the connivance of C.M. Byrne and Larry Nugent, I sent to the A.O.H. Hall in Parnell Square and got a number of serviceable rifles and ammunition.

In September 1915, I was appointed a Lieutenant on Pearse's staff. I had no specified duties. On his instructions I resigned from the Gaelic League in order to devote all my spare time to the Volunteers. At this time the duty of obtaining information about military barracks devolved upon the Battalion Commanders. On one occasion Pearse and Geannt asked me to get information about Islandbridge Barracks. With the aid of a soldier I knew I was able to get into that Barracks and to make a sketch showing the location of every important building in it. Along with Larry Lawlor, I erected a flag staff in St. Enda's College, which was designed to carry wireless.

About 1915 a General Council of the Volunteers was constituted consisting of the original members of the Executive and representatives from various military units in the country. This Council met about once a month and the Resident Executive once a week. I attended a meeting of the Dublin Companies in Brunswick St. to select a representative. The member of H.qrs. who was to preside, did not turn up and De Valera, who happened to be in the building, presided. De Valera advised those present to be very careful in selecting their representative, as on his vote might depend peace or war. I was selected. Other members of the General Council, whom I recollect, were J. Ledden, T. McCurtain, Pierce McEann, R. Etchingham, L. Lardner, in addition to Pearse,

McDermot, O'Rahilly, Mellows, &c. of the original Executive. At meetings of the Council reports from the country of their plans were discussed by Mellows, McDonagh and Ceannt. I do not recollect the details.

During this time there are a couple of incidents I remember - The first was the evening Monteith and myself and a few others burst into a meeting of the Provisional Committee in Brunewick St. and demanded that action should be taken concerning the circular issued by some government departments about enlistment in the army and which contained a veiled threat of dismissal in the event of non-enlistment. The Redmond nominees were on the Committee at the time. As the Committee decided to hear only one of us we forced our way in. We did not succeed in getting the Committee to take any action except to publish a protest. On another occasion I was staying in Rathdrum when a number of volunteers cycled from Dublin and called on me. At their request I took them up to see Aughavanagh, the home of John Redmond. It was the eve of the Buckingham Palace Conference and there were a number of people present in Aughavanagh. We were very amicably received and John Redmond showed us over the house. At this time he knew me. I asked him for some of the guns he had brought in, but when he told me there was no ammunition for them I asked him what good they were without ammunition. That night I saw him again at Aughrim Station when he was departing and I said to him "Trust Ireland and Damn England".

I was a delegate for "A" Coy. 1st Battn. at the First Annual Convention of the Irish Volunteers which was held in the Abbey Theatre, Dublin, on the 25th October 1914. I was in charge of the arrangements for it and the guard was also under my control. I personally examined the credentials of every delegate who attended and I remember actually refusing permission to P.H. Pearse to enter until he had been identified by The O'Rahilly, as he was not in possession of an admission ticket. I need hardly say that I knew Pearse well, but I was simply carrying out my instructions to allow nobody in without a ticket.

Decisions were taken unanimously in all cases and the original Provisional Committee was re-elected. I do not now recall what the decisions taken actually were.

I was, as previously stated, the first representative of the Dublin Brigade on the General Council of the Volunteers. I attended meetings of that Council which were held about once a month, and which continued to be held up to the Rising. The last meeting was held between the 16th March 1916, and the date of the Rising. This Council dealt principally with organisation in the country, as Dublin was fairly well organised at the time. At these meetings the question of a Rising was frequently discussed. The general feeling was that we would be beaten militarily. On one occasion I remember Sean McDermott jumping up and saying "Was Robert Emmet a failure?" Everyone agreed that he was not. The feeling of those present at these meetings was that we should not let the war end without our generation making a gesture or a protest against the British rule and occupation of the country. Early in 1916 it was felt by everyone that action could not be long delayed.

I remember Connolly giving, at 2 Dawson St., to selected officers and men from each battalion of the Volunteers, about six to ten lectures mainly on street and house-to-house fighting, and which I attended.

About 6th March 1916, I was told by Eamon Ceannt that the Headquarters Staff had instructed him to inform me that I was to give up my employment and take up full-time duty as Quartermaster General in place of The O'Rahilly, who held this post, because he (The O'Rahilly) was opposed to the Rising. The O'Rahilly accepted the change without demur and handed over everything freely and willingly to me. I gave notice terminating my employment at Henshaw's and took up full-time duty as Q.M.G. on 16th March 1916.

My duties included the distribution of munitions to city and country units from St. Enda's, Larkfield, Dawson St. and Thompson's

(Townsend St.) where Willie Cullen was manager, from Liberty Hall, where a large amount of hand grenades were made by Jim O'Neill. I had to buy picks, shovels, crowbars in preparation for the Rising for the purpose of breaking down walls &c. in street fighting and which were distributed to the five Dublin Battalions which included a H.qrs. Battn. and stored. I bought one hundred and twenty of each of these implements and, in order to divert attention, I told Henshaw's, from whom I purchased them, that they were being used by Mr. Batt. O'Connor, a builder, for the purposes of a large building estate. I also purchased wire cutters and sandbags and incandescent paraffin lamps in case the ordinary lighting should fail. I knew that medical supplies were bought but not by me. I think E. de Valera purchased these, but whether for his own Battalion or for the Brigade, I am not aware. Each Battalion had to make its own arrangements about food, but I purchased as a reserve cheese, tinned meat, Oxo cubes, etc. For use in the landing of arms from Germany in Fenit, on instructions from Sean McDermott, I purchased two ships lamps showing a green light, which I handed over to two ladies from Tralee. I was told afterwards by Sean McDermott that they had arrived safely in Tralee. I also hired a large marquee, on Sean McDermott's instructions, which I sent to Tralee to provide shelter for the men who would be engaged in the landing of the arms. From time to time I sent rifles and ammunition to Liam Mellows in Galway and to Terence McSwiney in Cork. I probably sent them to other districts also, but I do not remember.

About the end of 1915 at a meeting of the General Council of the Volunteers, I remember a discussion about the landing of arms, and Galway, Limerick and Kerry were mentioned. I understood that Sean McDermott had made arrangements with John Devoy to get arms, rifles and ammunition from Germany. I knew that Monteith had gone to Germany, his mission being to obtain help from Germany.

I was anxious to obtain rifles and ammunition owing to the lack of such equipment generally in the country, but in the light of Ireland's experience in the past, I had no desire to see German or

other foreign troops landing. It was announced at the meeting by Sean McDermott that Kerry had been selected for the landing of arms.

With regard to transport for the Rising I made arrangements for about twenty motor cars to report to me at Liberty Hall on Easter Sunday, also a number of cabs. Unfortunately, these could not be got on Monday as they had gone to Fairyhouse Races. Willie Cullen was also to send me a number of horse lorries from Thompson's, the carriers, to be used as the situation demanded.

Shortly before the Rising, I was introduced personally to Connolly by Tom McDonagh.

At a meeting of the General Council of the Volunteers at Dawson St. shortly before the Rising, there was a discussion as to the reason we were declaring a Republic. I think it was Sean McDermott who pointed out that France, which had helped us in the past, was a Republic, and that America, where many of our kin were also a Republic. Those present at the meeting had an open mind - they desired freedom for the country and they considered the simplest way to let the outside world know of that desire was to declare a Republic. It was generally agreed that when we got our freedom it was solely a matter for the people themselves to decide their form of government.

At some meeting previous to this there was a discussion about the "flag". It was stated that the tricolour was first used in 1848. It was agreed that the tricolour should be adopted. Actually, during Easter Week, the Green Flag with the harp, but without the crown, which was used by the British, was also flown, as we had some followers of John Redmond, and many others who still regarded the Green Flag as the flag of their country.

The General Council as a body did not know of the existence of the Military Council - I was, however, aware of its existence.

On the Sunday before Easter, Tom McDonagh and I were sent down to a meeting of the Fingal Brigade to try to settle a dispute which

had occurred over the Lusk Pipers' Band. The meeting took place on the roadside near McAllister's of Turvey Cross, and was well attended by all parties.

Headquarters were very anxious to settle it as we wanted the Fingal Brigade to go into action on Easter Sunday. We got instructions to settle the dispute by telling them that things were becoming serious and that the Rising was coming off soon, but not to tell them that it was coming off on Sunday. Tom MacDonagh addressed them and, without telling them in as many words, made it clear to them that the Rising was coming off on Sunday. This was so pointed that on the return journey I said to McDonagh that we had got instructions not to let them know that the Rising was coming off on Sunday, ~~but~~ that he had practically told them but, on the other hand if I was asked to prove it, I could not point to any words of his to do so. McDonagh said "It takes a professor to say a lot without saying anything".

I addressed the men afterwards and was careful not to let any hint slip. All differences were amicably settled.

On Wednesday of Holy Week Pearse asked me to send my brother, Liam, to him, and I did so. Liam returned that night and on Holy Thursday morning he went with a message from Pearse to McCormack of Drumraney, Moate. Liam, on his return, told me it was an order for the Rising to go ahead on Sunday. I knew from discussions I had with McDermott and others at this time that MacNeill and Hobson were opposed to the Rising.

On Good Friday night I learned, I think from Sean McDermott, that the arms had not been landed in Kerry, and that there was no hope of them being landed. I told this to Sean Heuston, Commandant of the H.Q. Battn., and he said "Micheal, this is horrible, horrible" I know that Sean McDermott had sent Sean Ó Murthuile down and that he got as far as Limerick, and I believe it was in connection with the landing of the arms. I also believe that Stack was actually in charge of the landing operations.



On Easter Sunday I spent most of the day removing arms etc. from dumps to the Battalion areas.

I spent most of Holy Week in and out of Sean McDermott's office in D'Olier St. where there was considerable activity, and most of this, I understood, was directed towards the landing of the arms in Kerry.

It was understood by everyone that the time of mobilisation was 4 p.m. on Sunday. On Sunday morning I went to Mass in Church St. There was a large number of Volunteers at the Mass, most of them receiving Communion, as they felt something was going to happen. Outside the ~~Church~~<sup>Church</sup> after Mass, when I was speaking to a member of the Volunteers, Charlie Byrne asked me what about the cancellation of the manoeuvres. I replied "We do not take our orders from the Sunday Independent". I went home, got my breakfast and went to Liberty Hall. I saw there James Connolly, Pearse and McDonagh amongst others. It was before noon. They agreed that the mobilisation was off. They appeared to be worried that de Valera was going out with the 3rd Battn. in spite of the cancellation. I was instructed by Connolly, Pearse and McDonagh to go over to the H.Q. of the 3rd Battn. and tell him that Comdt. McDonagh, O/C. Dublin Bde., had ordered the cancellation of the mobilisation. I went over accompanied by Sean Heuston. De Valera came out from the hall accompanied, I think, by Simon Donnelly, and I delivered my message. De Valera asked me whom I represented. I said I represented T. McDonagh, Commandant of the Dublin Brigade. De Valera said he thought he should make me a prisoner, presumably because I brought him that order. I explained to de Valera that his Battn. would be the only one out. De Valera gave me no indication whether or not he was prepared to obey the order. Sean Heuston was very indignant and told me afterwards that he was almost on the point of drawing his gun. I left with Sean Heuston and was glad to get away. I returned to Liberty Hall and reported to McDonagh. He was satisfied that as I had got in touch with de Valera the matter would be all right.

It seemed to me at this time that no decision had been arrived

at as to future action. After this there appeared to be a meeting of the Military Council.

Sean Heuston and I felt that the cancellation had ruined everything and he suggested that we should go to some peaceful place and talk it over. Peter Reynolds took us in his motor cycle and side-car to the Pine Forest near Glendhu. We were downhearted. We were both keen on going on with it, but there was nothing to do but await orders. We came back to Blackhall St. about 3 p.m. and found Heuston's Coy. mobilised there. They remained mobilised in Blackhall St. all that Sunday night and Heuston remained with them. There were members of other companies there also. Heuston's Coy. was the H.Q. Coy. of the 1st Battn. Pearse had told me that Heuston was to command a H.Q. Battn. composed of one company from each battalion and its original function was to occupy the Castle which was then to be the H.Q. The G.P.O. was to be the H.Q. of the Dublin area and Pearse confirmed this to me when he went into the G.P.O. He told me not to worry about matters as we would be going to the Castle almost immediately. It is clear he expected the Castle to be taken. I went home, had dinner, and returned to Blackhall St. about 5 p.m. There was an atmosphere of uncertainty. I left about 10 p.m. with Ned Daly, Jim Sullivan, Eamon Duggan and Ned Morkan and went to Morkan's home. We had supper there and talked over matters. We intended to stay up all night. About 2 a.m. someone, whom I do not recollect, called looking for me. He had gone first to my home, then to Blackhall St. and finally came to Morkan's. He told me that Comdt. Pearse wanted to see me in the Keating Branch of the Gaelic League in Frederick St. Ned Daly, Eamon Duggan, Jim Sullivan and Ned Morkan came with me. When I arrived, Pearse and MacDermott called me aside and spoke to me. Pearse said "We are going into action at 12 o'clock today and, as the representative of the Dublin Brigade we want your consent". I said to him "Have you done everything possible with MacNeill?" He replied "Yes, we have done everything possible, we can't do more". By this I took it he had done everything possible to get MacNeill to agree to the Rising. He said "We are all going to be arrested anyhow, and on behalf of this

generation we will have to make a gesture". I said "I am sorry MacNeill did not agree, but as I would be with you anyhow, I don't think I can withhold my consent as the representative of the Dublin Brigade; consequently I agree". I felt the responsibility of committing other men to this course, as I thought there was little hope of success, whereas, if we had MacNeill, there would be a reasonable chance of success. Pearse told me to report to Liberty Hall at 8 o'clock that morning. We left them. I always regarded this as a very solemn and final interview. I went home, had a wash and went to look for motor cars - most of them were, however, booked for the races at Fairyhouse.

I then went to Blackhall St. and found that the mobilisation orders had been issued for the three companies, A, D and G, which met usually in the Colmcille Hall. D/Coy. was to mobilise at George's Church, Temple St., and I later saw it pass Liberty Hall on its way to take over the Mendicity Institution on Usher's Quay.

I reported to Liberty Hall at 8 a.m. and met James Connolly there. My job was to transfer all the munitions to the G.P.O. I got a cab which I loaded. I remember in later years getting payment for the cabby whom I had forgotten to pay on Easter Monday. While it was being loaded The O'Rahilly came along to me and said "Although I am opposed to the Rising, now that it is on I am prepared to help in every way". His sister Aine was with him and she tried to persuade him to go away and said it was all madness. I told The O'Rahilly that it was God who had sent him as we particularly needed his motor car. He agreed to let me use his car and helped in carrying out the munitions from Liberty Hall. We filled his car and the cab with munitions, and also packed the top of the cab. I was so busy I did not pay any attention to what was happening around me. Men were arriving all the time. The garrison at Liberty Hall eventually fell in about five minutes before 12 noon. At the head of the procession I noticed James Connolly, Padraig and Willie Pearse, Joe Plunkett and Sean McGarry. The O'Rahilly and I took the rear with the car and the cab. We proceeded up Abbey St. and wheeled into

O'Connell St. towards the Pillar. On the way up Abbey St. the horse stumbled and Gearoid O'Sullivan, who was seated beside the driver was almost thrown off. I was seated in the cab surrounded by home-made bombs and ammunition of all sorts. It was a mercy the whole lot did not explode. When the head of the parade reached the G.P.O. the order "left wheel" was given and the men marched straight into the G.P.O. Besides the Citizen Army contingent, there were some men of the 2nd Battn. of the Volunteers. I followed in to make sure we had got possession. I then got some men and took all the munitions into the sorting room at the back of the main office. I used the pigeonholes for segregating the ammunition. We had Mauser, American, Howth rifles and .308 rifle ammunition, .25, .32, .38 and .45 revolver ammunition. I gave Brian O'Higgins the job of sorting it. During the week civilians came and handed in ammunition. In some cases they appeared anxious to help us and in other cases I formed the opinion they were anxious to get rid of it.

The O'Rahilly kept his car in the yard of the G.P.O. during the week and we used it on many occasions to bring in ammunition. On Monday we commandeered Judge Law Smith's car and his chauffeur remained with us throughout the week and was one of those who carried James Connolly from the G.P.O. on the evacuation.

In addition to Brian O'Higgins, Pearse handed over to me Desmond Fitzgerald, as he did not consider them to be fighting men. I put Desmond Fitzgerald in charge of the commissariat. There was a good dinner being cooked in the canteen which was served to our men. We kept this canteen going all the week. There was plenty of food there and, in addition, we got in food. I actually offered to send some to the Mendicity, but only a box of chocolates was taken. During the week we commandeered groceries from shops in Henry St. I also commandeered a load of bread from one of Kennedy's vans. I asked the driver the price and he said he did not know the price, but would tell Mr. Kennedy. I gave him a receipt for the load of bread. I told him to tell Mr. Kennedy I wanted another load of bread and to send the bill for the two and I would pay. Mr. Kennedy sent back another load

of bread and told the man to tell me there was no charge. We had plenty of chocolates, groceries, fresh meat, etc. The cooking during the whole of the week was done by the six Connaught Rangers who were prisoners and were assisted by some of the Cumann na mBan. I commandeered a lorry load of milk cans from the Dairy Engineering Co. in Bachelors Walk for the purpose of storing water. I left a receipt for them. Our water supply did not, however, fail during the week. There was a continuous service during the week so that the men could get food at any time. Pearse, Connolly and other members of the H.Q. Staff had their meals in the canteen, and British officer prisoners usually had their meals with them.

We were not long in the G.P.O. when The O'Rahilly came along and told me they had not taken over the top floor and the staff were still working there. He said he thought somebody should have got them out. I got six men and made a rush for the stairs - the staff were coming down the stairs - most of them appeared hostile, but one girl named O'Callaghan said to me "That's the stuff to give them, Michael". When the stairs were free we ran up them. I heard the shout "Halt" and saw some six soldiers above us pointing their rifles at us. We rushed up and I shouted to my men to fire, which they did. We were armed with revolvers. One man, a sergeant, fell. I ran up with my men & seized the rifles. I demanded the ammunition but found they had none. I searched and satisfied myself they had none. They said "Not an ounce". The sergeant was wounded, a scalp wound. As our own first aid station had not been established, I got four men to take him to Jervis St. Hospital. He at first refused to leave his post until he was relieved as he was on duty, so he said. He was removed against his will. After treatment in Jervis St. Hospital, he returned to the G.P.O. The Connaught Rangers asked me to give them back their rifles, as they wanted to fight on our side. I consulted Pearse and he asked me if they could cook. He told me to put them in the kitchen to work if they would cook. They said they were willing to do anything for us, stressed the fact they were Connaught Rangers and would rather fight. I put them to work in the kitchen.

When I entered the machine room where the telegrams were being sent I found that all the staff had gone except the lady in charge who was still sending out messages by telegraph (by telegraph). I told her to cease and she pointed out that some of the telegrams were important and urgent, such as notification of deaths, etc. I told her to get her hat and coat and that we would send out the urgent ones ourselves. She left. We sent out and delivered all telegrams relating to deaths. J.J. Walsh, who was a trained operator, did this work later on. Some time later J.J. Walsh communicated by telegraph with some of the office staff in Cork, Galway, Athlone and Wexford. I don't know if he communicated with Kerry, but he created consternation by telling the men that neither Cork nor Kerry were out. I told him it was foolish to spread such a report and, as he did not agree with me, I reported it to Pearse, who gave instructions that I was to tell him that he must cease or be shot, although I don't believe it was ever intended. After the first day, telegraphic communication came to an end. I then found that everything was going smoothly in the canteen - the Connaught Rangers in charge.

I went on to the roof where I hoisted a flag on the corner near to Henry St. on the front. It was a tricolour, probably about 6ft. by 3ft. green next the flag post. I can't say definitely what other flags were there. I also hung a green flag with harp from the ceiling in front of a low window in the ground floor. When on the roof I had a look round generally and I saw Pearse reading the proclamation. He stood on the edge of the footpath at a point in front of the window where there is now a door, on the Prince's St. side of the portico. There was a large number of people around when this was happening, but there was no demonstration.

Shortly after we had occupied the G.P.O., while I was at one of the windows, I saw a troop of Lancers coming towards the Pillar from the direction of the Parnell monument. They were fired at from the windows and one of the horses was shot. I do not recollect if any of the Lancers were killed or wounded. The troop immediately

retreated in haste. Numbers of people came along sight-seeing even after the Lancers had been fired upon.

When the report came in that the Castle had not been taken it caused consternation, as Pearse intended to move there and make it his headquarters. He never intended to remain in the G.P.O. I was aware that the Rathfarnham Company, Pearse's Own Company, had been allotted the task of capturing the Castle along with Sean Connolly and his Citizen Army Party, and Pearse was disappointed at his Company's failure to mobilise in time to do so.

On Monday afternoon I remember Sean Milroy reporting to the G.P.O. Connolly detailed him to take over a post at Liffey St. with a few men and, without the slightest hesitation, he saluted and set out on his mission. I remember also Sheehy-Skeffington coming in a getting authority to form a Citizens' Committee to prevent looting.

Father O'Flanagan, Curate in the pro-Cathedral, also came in and heard confessions. He also spent some time endeavouring to get the people to disperse and to prevent looting. Father O'Flanagan attended in the G.P.O. during the whole week.

On Tuesday I sent messengers with dispatches to the Battalion O/Cs. to inquire if they needed anything in the way of ammunition or food. The messengers got through to their destination and reported back to me that nothing was needed. From Tuesday onwards Jim O'Neill had a party of men making bombs at the back of the sorting office. Orders had been given prohibiting alcoholic drink. On Tuesday, however, some looters pillaged a publichouse opposite the G.P.O. in Henry St. and some women handed bottles of stout to the members of the Citizen Army occupying the windows of the G.P.O. I saw some of the men with the drink and, at my request, they threw it away, all except one man. On being threatened by me with disciplinary action he, too, obeyed. He at first probably did not understand why I should give him an order.

I did not get any sleep until Tuesday night when I took a

mattress up to a room on the third floor at the Princes's St. corner and slept for a few hours.

On Wednesday, sniping began from the G.P.O. towards D'Olier St. Parnell St. and Amiens St. This shooting was directed against enemy snipers. The first sound of shell-fire was heard, but none of the shells fell near the G.P.O. On <sup>Thursday;</sup> Wednesday, James Connolly was wounded while in Abbey St. or Williams's Lane arranging to send men to some post in Liffey St. I went out and found him in Williams's Lane and with the aid of four men, carried him into the G.P.O. where Jim Ryan treated him. After a short rest he insisted on being brought up to the men in the front of the G.P.O. to cheer them up. I went up there with him.

On Wednesday night I got a sleep in a room set aside for the staff. When I awakened on Thursday I saw Tom Clarke lying on another mattress. He appeared to be very cold; I remonstrated with him for not taking one of my blankets and he replied that as I was sleeping so soundly he did not wish to disturb me. I gave him some of my blankets and he went asleep.

On Thursday morning the fighting started in earnest. The enemy had arrived in force at Brunswick St., College Green and Findlater's Place and kept up a continuous fire from three sides on the G.P.O. to which our men replied. I was kept busy going round replenishing the ammunition. The rifle and machine gun fire was terrific. Our men never slackened, with the result that no assault could be made by the enemy on the G.P.O. Towards noon the enemy started to shell the G.P.O. One incendiary shell struck Kelly's at the corner of Bachelor's Walk and the building immediately went on fire. The garrison had to withdraw to the G.P.O. Another incendiary shell struck the "Freeman's Journal" offices in Prince's St. and they immediately took fire, but no direct hit was registered on the G.P.O. throughout Thursday. Towards evening one of the shells hit Hoyte's Drug Store at the corner of <sup>Sackville Place</sup> Nelson Lane, and a terrific conflagration followed. The fire spread to the adjacent buildings compelling



the Volunteers in the North Earl St. and Abbey St. to evacuate their posts. The heat from the burning buildings opposite was so great that men had to be employed to keep the window fortifications drenched with water to prevent the sandbags and sacks from going on fire.

The intensity of the heat was so great that a withdrawal had to be made from the front portion of the G.P.O. of all those struggling to prevent the G.P.O. itself from going on fire. The men were stained by soot, scalded by steam and scorched by the fire but finally succeeded in their task, though sweating, weary and parched.

The rest of Thursday night passed peacefully - no sound of the big guns, only an occasional shot from a sniper. During that day an attempt was made to burrow under Henry St. in case it would be necessary to evacuate the G.P.O. but the attempt had to be abandoned. Openings were, however, already made through the walls of adjoining buildings as far as the Coliseum Picture Theatre.

At daybreak on Friday the fight was renewed more intensely than ever. The enemy's gunners were evidently endeavouring to get the range. About noon the first shell struck the G.P.O. It was not very effective and the fire it started was quickly got under control. It was not until about 3 p.m. that the first shell to cause damage struck the building over the portico. It was localised for a short time, but despite all endeavours, it caught a lift shaft and spread downwards to the cellars. The enemy had now apparently got the range, as incendiary shells began to pour into the building and fires broke out in various sections. The fire-fighters had a busy time. When one fire was nearly subdued a fresh shell would start another at a different point. It became necessary to remove the bombs, ammunition, etc. to the courtyard. Meanwhile, the majority of the men were standing at their posts at the windows, behind the parapets and at innumerable loopholes steadily returning the enemy's fire. Towards dusk, the building was alight in every quarter and the front portion was a roaring furnace. The position had become untenable and a general mobilisation was ordered in the

large sorting room at the rear.

The actual evacuation began at about dusk on Friday night from the Henry St. side door. It was Connolly's intention to try and reach Williams and Woods' Factory in Parnell St. He had sent The O'Rahilly in charge of the advance guard sometime earlier. We all got orders to prepare for evacuation and to remove all explosives, etc. to the basement. This took some time. As fire was coming down the lift we had to remove all the stuff to the courtyard. A number were employed on this work while the others were evacuating. When this work was done I reported to Pearse and with him were Connolly, Willie Pearse and Judge Law Smith's chauffeur. Pearse inquired if every man had left and I replied in the affirmative. He insisted on my going down through the Henry St. houses where we had broken through the walls. I went and searched them; amongst them was the Waxworks, where I got a bit of a fright at the wax images of C.S. Parnell, Charles Peace and others. When I reported back, Pearse himself went down to ensure that no one was left, either dead or alive.

P.H. Pearse, Willie Pearse, the chauffeur and myself brought Connolly on the stretcher. Although there was firing down Henry St. we got across safely to Henry Place. Before we reached the corner of the "L" of Henry Place we found some of the men in a panic as Henry Place at the end of Moore Lane was under machine-gun fire from the Rotunda Hospital. Sean McLoughlin lined the men up and steadied the Joe Plunkett drew his sword and stood exposed in the middle of the machine gun fire and allowed two men to rush across each time he dipped his sword. All got over safely, including Connolly on the stretcher. We went into a house, No. 10, in Moore St. at the corner of Henry Place. We placed Connolly in a bed and made his room the headquarters. I placed the green flag with the harp, which I had taken from the G.P.O. with me, over his bed. <sup>X</sup> We then cut through the walls along Moore St. until we reached Sackville Lane. It was there reported to us that O'Rahilly's body was lying in the lane.

On Saturday there were rumours of making terms. Miss O'Farrell  
*X I heard Connolly complimented Mr. Loughlin and  
 promote him Commandant*

of the Citizen Army had remained with us all the time. I did not see her coming or going from the British Commander. On Saturday I reported to the H.Q. and saw Pearse, Connolly, Sean McDermott, Tom Clarke, Plunkett and others. Sean McDermott said Pearse was going to the Castle to arrange terms and that James Connolly had to be carried there on a stretcher. He asked me to select six stretcher bearers and that I was to remain with Connolly to witness the terms. The names of the stretcher bearers were:- Joe Tallon, Seamus Tallon, Ml. Nugent, Paddy Byrne, Seamus Devoy and Liam Tannam.

We carried Connolly through the houses until we reached Gore's Chemist's shop, No. 17, and then brought him down the stairs to the street. We were to be met by British military at the top of Moore St., i.e. at Great Britain St. They were to guide us to the Castle. A Major Walsh came down to us, but he knew nothing of the arrangement. Diarmuid Lynch, who had followed us, explained that we were going to the Castle and that it had been arranged. He asked Lynch if he were in charge and he replied in the affirmative. Major Walsh said that the only thing he could do was to take us to their H.Q. at the National Bank opposite the Parnell monument. Major Walsh went into the H.Q. and on returning told us we were to go to the Castle. Diarmuid Lynch walked beside Major Walsh and we carried Connolly to the Castle.

All down Great Britain St. to Capel St. we were booed by the crowd and would have been attacked in some places, only the Notts and Derbys, who lined the street, kept them back. The only place we got a cheer was passing Gt. Strand St. where there was quite a crowd of people. I recognised one man in the crowd. When I met him about twelve months afterwards I asked why they cheered while the others jeered. His answer was "We were prisoners".

We went in through the Upper Castle gate. Some high officers came out and looked at us and one of them said: "Take Commandant General Connolly inside and march these men to the guard room". I protested and said we had come there under a flag of truce and that

I had come to witness terms and demanded to be sent back to my unit rather than to the guard room. Connolly was taken inside and we were marched to Ship St. Barracks and put into the guard room there. There was quite a lot of coming and going of high officers. Eventually one came to take a statement from me. I made the statement that I had previously made about coming under a flag of truce to witness terms. This was taken down in writing and I signed it.

Later, another officer came to take another statement. Diarmuid Lynch spoke to this officer who wrote down everything Diarmuid said. He proceeded to read and said: "Captain Staines makes the following statement". I said: "I did no such thing". He then asked Diarmuid/<sup>his name</sup> and having ascertained it, he erased mine and inserted Diarmuid's. Before leaving Moore St. Sean McDermott took my Sam Browne belt and said "You will be better off without this - you will be wanted later on". I wore only a private's uniform and thus my rank was not ascertained.

Next day, on Sunday about 12 o'clock, we were marched to Kilmainham Gaol and put into cells, three to a cell. There was only one bed in each cell. There were also some looters detained there. I tried to get into a cell with the Tallons. A warder prevented me joining them and I had to go into a cell with two looters. Their appearance was repulsive and I dreaded having to stay with them for the night. They decided I could have the bed. Before nightfall we were sent to the hospital to make way for the Cumann na mBan girls. There were fourteen of us put in one room.

We had a decent sergeant named Doyle from Wexford in charge who explained that food was scarce. I was elected in charge of the room. He told me always to ask for sixteen meals, which I got, for the room.

On the 3rd May we heard the three volleys and we knew that there were three gone. On that same evening while we were exercising in the ring I saw Joe Plunkett exercising by himself in a ring in the same yard - Sergeant Smith, a Newry man, was in charge of him. When

passing close to him on one occasion I saluted. Smith saw it and ordered me inside. Doyle came over and asked what it was all about. Smith said I spoke to his prisoner. Doyle said he was in charge of me and I was not going in and in any case he, Doyle, was senior to him (Smith). Smith said I was breaking the regulations. Doyle then asked me if I wanted a chat with my pal and I replied that I did. Doyle told me to go and talk to him. I went over and walked round with Plunkett. The conversation was just everyday. Joe Plunkett said to me "You are extraordinary; you can smile under all conceivable circumstances". He said it was a glorious week and we had made our protest. He did not criticise anybody. That night Doyle gave me a copy of the evening paper giving the names of the first three executed. Next morning we heard four volleys and knew <sup>more</sup> four were gone.

We were all sent on Saturday to Richmond Barracks where Detective Sergeant Hoey came along and picked out Diarmuid Lynch and Batt O'Connor. From there <sup>the rest of us</sup> we were sent to Wakefield, arriving ~~there~~ on Sunday morning.

For the first week we were confined for the 24 hours; the only time we got out was the first three mornings when the warders were looking for three men they thought missing. They had got three extra names on their lists and, although we knew these men had not come, we did not inform them as it suited us to get out of our cell. For breakfast we got bread and cocoa. Some mornings we got gruel. For dinner we got soup with a little meat and potatoes. We got tea and bread about 5 p.m. We were always hungry, as our food ration was altogether inadequate. After the first week we got ten minutes exercise each day. On one occasion I was sent in for answering a question of another Volunteer about my brother. After another week, exercise was extended to one hour and visitors were allowed in. The first visitor was a priest from Derry. He saw Vincent and Joe Boherty and myself. We told him we had not had an opportunity of hearing Mass for the two Sundays we were there. He went to see the local Parish Priest who, at first, refused to have anything to do

with a "pack of murderers". However, he changed his mind and said Mass the following Sunday, having heard confessions on Saturday - and was surprised we were not as bad as he had at first thought. We were over a fortnight there before we were allowed to send a letter.

A number of Irish girls from Leeds came to see us. A girl of Irish descent from Wakefield frequently came to see me, and brought me in a suit of clothes. She took out my uniform and posted it to my mother. We were later inspected by an Inspector from the Home Office who reported so favourably on us that the Governor gave us an extra ration of bread which was a great treat, as most of us were starving with hunger.

After about three weeks we were transferred to Frongoch.

Brennan-Whitmore has given a fairly accurate account of conditions in Frongoch, to which I have nothing to add.

Signed: *Micéal de Staíneor*

Date: *25<sup>th</sup> July 1949*

Witness: *A. J. Feely Comdt.*

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21  
 BUIO STAIRÉ MILCATA 1913 21  
 No. W.S. *284*