ORIGINAL

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STATEMENT BY WITNESS

DOCUMENT NO. W.S. 286

Witness

Mrs. Nora Connolly O'Brien,
40 Galtymore Park,,
Drimnagh,
Dublin.

Identity

Daughter of James Connolly;
O/C "Betsy Gray" Sluagh Fianna Eireann, Belfast 1912 -
O/C. Cumann na mBan Belfast.

Subject

National activities 1909-1916;
Important messabe to Von Bernstorf in America, December 1915;
Rescue of Liam Mellows from Leek 1916;
The North and Dublin - Easter Week:1916.

Conditions, if any, stipulated by Witness

Nil

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ORIGINAL

STATEMENT OF MRS. NORA CONNOLLY-O'BRIEN,
40, Galtymore Park, Drimnagh, Dublin.

I had always been associated with my father, James Connolly, from the time I was six or seven years of age. He had taken me on lecture tours with him when I was a small child. He was always giving me books to read; and he was not content with merely giving them to me, but would ask about the books I read. He was very particular - I suppose he was helping me in my education - if ever I came across a word I did not understand; he would not tell me, but would get the dictionary and tell me to look it up. I don't know why he picked me. There was an elder sister, who died, and there were much younger ones in the family. As I say, he took me on the lecture tours, and he used take me around to meetings here in Dublin. I can't remember how young I was at the time, but he was standing for the Corporation election as a Labour candidate; and I remember him taking me down to the election rooms, where they were doing the work. I saw them all writing, and I said I could do that; so they gave me the job of addressing envelopes. I suppose that would be very early in the 1900's.

We went to the United States of America about 1902. The whole family went. My father

was organising for, I think, the Socialist Labour Party. He had a row with Daniel de Leon; he did not like the tendencies of his philosophy. He had a fight with him on that. He left that party, and became organiser for the Socialist Party. He was terribly keen on getting the Irish over there interested in Labour-Socialism. He said we should have a movement, which was of special appeal to them, and not to have them used by local politicians, who were looking for good results with the help of the Irish vote. So he launched the Irish Socialist Federation. I have the programme of that. Then he brought out a paper. I went to all the meetings - the initial meeting; and then we had public meetings. Finally, we got out the paper; I should not say "we", but he got out the paper. It was called "The Harp", because "the harp" was used as a term of contempt. In America, the Irish were referred to as "the harps". When my father had to leave New York - he went on a trans-continental tour - he made me manager of the paper. At that time, I was about sixteen years of age. I had to see about subscriptions, and things like that. That is just a little explanation of how closely I was linked with him. I was not a great asset, but he kept me in touch with all his activities, and always gave me some job to do in connection with them.

I think it was in the winter of 1909, when we

came back here to Dublin. The whole family came back. At that time, my father was working for the Socialist Party of Ireland. Later, he was working with the Transport Union; and he went up to Belfast as their Northern representative. He had the docks mainly, and he did really very well for the dock workers. They had terrific, ferocious conditions. He got all that changed. Then the mill girls - their fathers, brothers and uncles were working in the docks when they went on strike, although they were not organised. They went to the Union, for Mr. Connolly to do something for them. He made me make my first speech for them. At dinner time, he said: "What would you say to them?" I said: "I'd say about how difficult it was to keep together in the U.S.A., as they had such varied nationalities; but here, they are all speaking the one language". "Fine", he said. When we went down to the meeting - I had a headache that morning - he leaned back, and said: "How are you now?" I said: "Fine". The next thing was: he introduced me as a speaker. I did not want to let Daddy down. I got up, and made the speech anyway. Evidently it went fairly well, because he said I did better than he did at his first attempt. That was about 1912, or so.

The Fianna had the only girls' branch in Ireland in Belfast. My sister, Ina, and I joined the Fianna - the "Betsy Gray" Sluagh, of which I

became Chief Officer. I don't know what my title was. I don't think we had military titles. I don't think I was Captain. I don't remember being referred to as being "Captain". I was in charge of this Branch anyway. We were feeling that we should do some political propaganda, apart from training, in the Sluagh. There was close co-operation among the Sluaighte. We decided we would form the "Young Republican Party", to appeal to the youth - a political group, as distinct from our military organisation. Cathal O'Shannon, Archie Heron, Davy Boyd, Wardlaw and other boys in the Fianna and we of Betsy Gray Sluagh joined together. I designed the banner; it was green, with golden sunburst, and with the letters, "Irish Republican Party", in white. We issued a programme with its objects. We felt terribly bucked when Pearse referred to it in "An Claidheamh Soluis"; he praised what we were planning to do, and said that, if there was the same type of enthusiasm all over Ireland, it would help in the struggle. We had indoor meetings in the winter time, in the Belfast Freedom Club's premises. That was the open expression of the I.R.B, and, any time any important Dublin Republican Nationalist would come, he would come and speak at our meetings. We came down to the Fianna Convention every year in Dublin. There was always a big Belfast contingent. We always wore our uniform. The girls had the uniform, as well as the boys; we had green linen shirts instead

of their hopsack shirts. Great numbers came from Belfast. There was quite a number of Branches in Belfast. It was usually held in July; and July was the time they had holidays in Belfast. A lot would come down to attend the Convention, and later go camping with the boys. The girls were usually under Madame Markievicz' charge, when we came down here.

I think the most interesting thing that happened during one of the Conventions was when the Howth rifles were run. We were still in Dublin, and practically all the boys participated in that. Then there was the shooting in Bachelor's Walk; we all carried big wreaths at the funeral. Then, of course, there was the 1913 Strike. In Belfast, we held meetings. The older boys and myself used try to get funds for the strike, and explain that it was really a Lock Out, and a fight for the right to choose one's own Trade Union.

There used be cheap excursions from Belfast - around five shillings. When we came to a Convention, we used come by boat; that ticket lasted for six months. We always came down to get a refresher course in Dublin, away from the feeling that we were an isolated body among enemies; it was grand to come down here, and find everyone was the one way of thinking. Liam Mellows had a friend in Amiens Street Station. When I came on the excursion, he always marched me around to Amiens

Street, to this friend of his, who signed the ticket, so that it would not cost me extra to stay longer. That is why I was so often down here in Dublin. I saved the money for the fares from my wages; and Liam would take me to Amiens Street Station; and I would stay for a week or so.

Out of the Strike then, the Citizen Army was born. They did their first drilling with broom handles and hurley sticks. I remember seeing Captain White training them in Croydon Park. There was a big house in Croydon Park; and the Transport Union took it as a holiday resort for their members; and it was out there they did their drilling.

I was in Dublin at the time when Redmond's Nominees were ejected from the Executive Council - which later took over control of the Irish Volunteers. That was after the split, and after his speech at Woodenbridge, about September, 1914.

As far as I remember, it was in Dawson Street that the Volunteers had an office. Then they moved to Great Brunswick Street, and had it near the Queen's Theatre. Liam Mellows took over secretaryship; and Fianna Boys did guard duty there. It was on the first floor of the building, over an arch, near the Queen's Theatre. They had the office in Dawson Street too.

I formed the Cumann na mBan in Belfast too.

I sent a letter to all the nationalist newspapers, and had a meeting, and got Cumann na mBan started in Belfast. The trouble was that they all overlapped. There was only a small body to call on. We got quite a good Branch of Cumann na mBan started. I was in charge of it. I remember then I was busy on something else; and I can't remember the name of the Secretary after me. The Secretary was the person in charge. Róisín Walsh was teaching in Belfast that time; and Una Ryan - Dinny McCullough's wife - she was teaching, and she joined; and there was quite a few that we had not touched with, in our other meetings. We were glad to have them. Of course, there was not much to do at that time, beyond propaganda and general training; we had first-aid, teaching history and the usual things like that.

I taught the Fianna and the Volunteers first-aid. There was a young doctor - I can't remember his name; he took me and gave me the lesson; next day, I gave it to the Cumann na mBan, next day to the Fianna, and next day to the Volunteers.

I was in Dublin on one of my usual trips, when I met the Kimmage Garrison - those Volunteers who had come from England and Scotland to avoid conscription. They had no money, and were short of food and cigarettes. When I went back to Belfast, I called a meeting of the Cumann na mBan.

I told them about these lads. I suggested we could get food and cigarettes. After all, I said, there was very little we could do in Belfast; there were not so many calls on us as on people in Dublin. We had a tobacco squad, a cigarette squad, a butter squad and bacon and general groceries squads. We arranged to collect these, and send hampers to Kimmage. I was on the tobacco squad.

One Saturday afternoon, shortly before the Rising, I was out gathering cigarettes, or money to buy them, for the tobacco squad. Instead of going home from work, I went round to collect these. I was very late getting home; and when I got home, Barney Mellows was there. He had come by an early train from Dublin; and he told me that Liam was to be deported. He told me that they had decided that I was to get over there ahead of him. They wanted to send him back. He was to be deported that Saturday night, and they did not know where he was going. Liam had been allowed to choose one or two places. He mentioned, among other places, Leek, where I think his father was born; but it was not known to which place he was to be deported. At six o'clock that evening, the deportation was to take place. Later that evening, someone was to come, and bring that information. Barney gave me a long list of addresses. He said: "This is a list of addresses of people in England and Scotland who will help you. The idea is to get Liam back, before people

there are able to recognise him". You see, people who were deported were not put in prison; they were sent to an area; and they had to stay in it; and they were under watch all the time. I had a note from my father: "Barney will tell you what we want. We have every confidence in you". All the instructions they gave Barney was: I was to get Liam back; and they would leave it to my own good sense. They were not hampering me with any plan. They left it to my own judgment. So we waited. We got ready. There was to be somebody up at six o'clock.

At about nine o'clock, Helena Molony came. They had got no word, but it might come later; from what they understood, they thought he was going to Leek, in Stafford, but they did not know. What they suggested was that Barney and I should start for Birmingham; and they would get word over to Birmingham. It was decided that we would go on the boat, on which all the theatrical companies went; it was held over late, for scenery; and there would be a lot of strangers on it; and we would be less likely to be noticed on that boat. As I was well known in Belfast, Helena, from her stage experience, did me up, and made me old-looking. We went separately. I went on the boat first; and Barney followed later.

We got to Glasgow alright. Then we decided

to go to Edinburgh. We had an address in Glasgow. We just called to that address, and told them we were doing a job. We did not say what we were doing. We said we might call on our way back, that we were not sure, just so that they would know us. The addresses were written out by Seán MacDermott. The girl of that family knew Seán very well, and knew his handwriting. Seán was the Secretary of the Supreme Council of the I.R.B.; and my list of names was of members in England; and when I showed anybody his writing, I was accepted immediately.

We decided that we would not go direct to Birmingham, because we did not know whether there was someone watching that house, or not. We decided to go to Edinburgh. Barney decided that we were brother and sister, teachers, from Scotland, who were going down to the Shakespearean Festival at Stratford-on-Avon, because we knew our accents were not English accents. We went to Edinburgh. Then we decided to go to Carlisle. When we went to the station, to go to Carlisle, we found that all the trains were stopped. We did not know the reason for it. They told us in the railway station that there would be no trains travelling that night. We left the station, and went to a hotel. In the middle of the night, there was a big rattling on my door. It was Barney. He said: "Are you alive or dead?" It was a Zeppelin raid. They had called me two or three times, but I never heard it. So I

slept through a Zeppelin raid. The next morning, we returned to the Station; and we got on down to Carlisle. We did not make any long journey. We left Carlisle station, went around the town, and went back later; and went on to some place else - I don't remember.

We went to Birmingham, and we contacted one of the Foley's - I don't know was it Richard. He had no word. It was to him that Helena Molony told us they would send word about Liam's deportation. We hung on for several days, and no word came. We were nearly demented. We were afraid we were getting ourselves recognised in the town, but what could we do? We were nearly in despair when, finally, word came that Liam had gone to Leek.

We started again on our journeys. We took a motor car some part of the way. I think we took a train to Crewe - I am not certain. It was a Sunday, and there were no Sunday trains; and we hired a motor car to take us to Leek. We did not want the driver of the car to know the house, to which we were going. My accent is rather nondescript; it was not so "Dublin" as Barney's; so I did all the talking. I was the rather bossy sister of this spineless young man. Barney did that awfully well. In the car we hired, I said to Barney it would not be well to drive to the address we had for Liam in Leek; we would ask the driver to bring us to a

place near the railway station. Barney asked: "Where will we go, when we arrive there?" I said: "We will go there, and - " - and then it struck me we might have some difficulty getting back to Crewe. So I opened the window, and spoke to the driver. I said: "Are you going back to Crewe?" He said: "Yes". I said: "I am here on chance to see a friend. I have not seen them for a long time. I have not heard from them. If they are left, I am stranded. There are no trains. Do you mind waiting half an hour, or so, until I find out if they are there? If they are not there, we will go back to Crewe. If they are there, I will come back, and let you know. There will be a little extra in this for you". He was going back, empty anyway, so he agreed to that. We arrived at Leek, and the driver stopped the car at the corner; and we got out. Barney said: "Where will we go?" I said: "Turn right". So we did. After a bit, we asked someone, and we got the direction; and went to the house. We knocked at the door. An old man opened the door. We said we wanted to see Liam Mellows, and finally he let us in. Liam had just arrived about half an hour, or so, before. I said: "I'll sit down here, Barney. You go up". Barney would change clothes with Liam. We did not know what clothes Liam would have had, and if it would be necessary to change clothes. Barney would stay there; and I would be off with Liam; and after a

while, Barney, when he thought we were safe, could make his way out of the town too. When Liam came down, I said: "Are you ready?" He said: "all right". He said good-bye to the man; and we pelted down to the motor car, and got into it. The driver brought us along to Crewe alright.

When we arrived at Crewe, I went to the railway station, and got tickets. I said to Liam: "We can do the excess afterwards. We are not leaving anything behind us there". I had a map of the journey, and that is what we planned. I said we would take tickets for about half-way; and then we would get out, and go on to another station; but, as it happened, we were on the Scotch express, and we decided that we would stay on, and go to Glasgow; and go to this Glasgow contact, and stay there. That is what we did. They were very excited, and delighted that the job was done. They went round to a young priest, a friend of theirs; and he came back with a clerical rig-out for Liam; and Liam got into the 'duds'. We had a half an hour, or so, from the time he got the clothes, to get down to the boat train for Belfast. We got there. I think we went to Greenock. In the train down to the boat, Liam was sitting in one corner, and I was in the other. We were not travelling together. At no time did we appear to be travelling together; except in the case of tickets, I did the buying. In the train at Greenock, a

whole lot of cattle dealers got in; and they were arguing; and suddenly they spotted Liam in clerical clothes; and they looked at him; and one of them said: "Sorry, Sir, we did not see you". Liam said: "It is all right".

Then we came to Belfast. I said to Liam: "This is a place where I am well known. We can't get a tram - its too early - and a car would attract attention. We will have to walk. I'll start off; you can follow me; then you go ahead of me; at any corner, you slow down at the corner, and I'll overtake you; or, if I'm ahead, you will follow me". We lived at the top of the Falls Road; and when we came to Bank Buildings, I said: "Its a straight journey now. Keep on until I overtake you". We went on. I was amused to see all the policemen saluting him, and he saluting them back. There was pandemonium when I got him into our own house.

Then the job was to get Liam to Dublin. I told Denis McCullough I had brought Liam back; he was wanted in Dublin. There were always cars going to Dublin, but I was not in with the monied people who had cars. Denis said he would get someone to take Liam down in a car; and later he sent word that he had got someone to take him. It was a Dr. McNabb. We were to meet him away out the Lisburn road. When it came dark, we walked down the Lisburn road, and finally Liam was picked up. Liam got to Dublin

late that night, and before he had time to draw a breath, he was bundled off to the West. The "Workers' Republic", the paper, of which Daddy was Editor, came out as a "Stop Press", with the news that Liam was back in Ireland. It was near the time of the Rising - I think it was Good Friday he arrived back; I couldn't swear. So that job was done. It was very exciting at the time. Barney came back, of course. He stayed only the next day. The old fellow looked at him next morning, and he said: "You are not the same lad?" Barney said: "No, I am his brother". So he said: "You had better follow your brother". So Barney followed his brother; and I think he was back on the Saturday.

Something else happened before this journey to Scotland and England, which I omitted to tell you. It was before the Rising. It must have been in December, 1915, when I was sent to the United States of America, to contact Von Bernstorf. He was the German Ambassador to America at the time. It referred to the Q-boats. I got a message from my father to go down to Dublin. I went to Dublin. I did not know it was a job like that. I was asked was I willing to go over to New York on very important business. I did not enquire whether he was acting for himself, or with others, though I realised later, when he was speaking to me, that others were concerned; but the message, asking me to go to Dublin, came from my father. He said there was

a very important job they wanted done, that it was a very secret job, and, if it was found out, I could be hanged for treason. If it was found out, not only would I be hanged for treason, but several others also. It was not discussed with anybody else but Daddy. I said: "If you think I am fit for such a job, I will do the job". I was given a paper to read.

I was told, first of all, to contact Von Bernstorf. I was not to bother about naval or military attachés. I was to see Von Bernstorf personally, and give him the details. I had nothing written; the details were to be memorized. I can't remember the details. There was some special name - Council of something - that this message was coming from. It was not being sold to them; it was being given to them; there was nothing asked for in return for it; it was information that would hamper our ancient enemy and their present enemy - these are just bits of it - that this Council, if ever they found out anything of great importance, would send information; and they would know it could be relied on, if it came under the name of the Council; that, if ever anything was asked, in the line of money, concessions, or promises, for the information, they would know the information was false, or they would know it was not really an accredited person, who was

bringing the information. This is only from memory. I was given a sheet of paper to learn off by heart. There was a detail of the construction of Q-ships, and what was being done, where they were being built, what they hoped to achieve with them, what their appearance was. I really can't remember now. These are just the things I vaguely remember. I was not to take anything at all with me written, in order to save myself and those who were associated in the business; so that, if I was arrested and charged, it was the only way to safeguard me and themselves here in Dublin.

Well, I got to America. Daddy came to Liverpool, to see me off. I was by way of going to America to make my fortune, I suppose. The "Baltic" was the name of the steamer. I travelled second-class on the "Baltic". The only address that I had with me - even that was not written down - was "John Brennan's". She was living there at the time. Madame Markievicz gave it to me. She said "John Brennan" would help me around.

When I got to Ellis Island, I wirelessed to "John Brennan", and said: "Arriving such a day, Connolly". I did not put "Nora", as she might not remember me. "Connolly" - she might think it was important. When the boat arrived, Jim Larkin was there, and "John". They expected my father. One instruction I had been given was not to discuss with

anybody - no matter whom - what I was in the States for, that, after I was finished my job, I could use my own judgment; but they would prefer that there was nothing told - it was left for me to decide. I was to complete my business, and wait until I got word to go home. They felt there should not be any whisper of what I had gone over for. I did not tell Larkin what I was over for. I just told "John" that I wanted to contact Bernstorf in New York, or Washington. "John" said the best thing to do was to contact the Consul General.

As far as I remember, it was a Sunday when I arrived in New York again, because the offices were closed, and because we went out to the Consul's home address - Von Scholl's. I went to his home address, and "John" came with me, as I did not remember my way around New York. When we went there, we met his wife. I said I was Irish; I had a message; I had just come from Ireland; I wanted to contact Von Scholl. She said: "How do you know he is here?" I just looked wise. But, after, we discovered he was not living at home; and it was the first day he had been in his house for some time. "John" said afterwards that I was like the mystery woman in a novel. Anyway, she said, I did give the impression that it was Irish Intelligence that knew about Von Scholl. He came out; and I told him I had information for Von Bernstorf. After a while, he brought the military attaché. He said: "This is

the military attaché; you can give him the information". I said: "No. My instructions are not to give it to anybody but Von Bernstorf." He came back with another man, and said: "This is the naval attaché". I said: "No. All I want is for you to make an appointment for me, so that, when I call on him, I will be received; I am not selling anything". They tried to persuade me to give it to the naval attaché. I said: "No. I am under instructions". They had a conference; and they came back, and said they had arranged the matter - if I took the midnight train to Washington, Von Bernstorf would see me in the morning. I said that was all I wanted.

I went to Washington, and called to see Von Bernstorf. I had to find out where the place was. I had the whole palaver of military and naval attachés there again. Finally, I got to Von Bernstorf. I gave him the message; and I remember he was amazed I did not ask for quid pro quo; and I don't think he had the information at the time; he had someone in, to take notes. I said: "You have everything clear now? You have the name of the Council?" He said: "Yes". I said: "That is all". I remember he got up, and shook me by the hand. He said: "Well, its amazing! So much information comes to me that must always be bought. This is the first time information is given to me as a present".

I came back to New York, and waited for word to come that it was safe to go back. Finally, I got word from Daddy: "Your mother is not at all pleased about your being away; she will not be reconciled to the separation; so you had better make arrangements to come home as soon as possible".. There was censorship at the time.

When I was going home - I had been in to Devoy; he never asked me what I was doing; he said: "You know your own business" - when I was going, I said: "Mr. Devoy, I am going back to Ireland. Is there anything you want me to do? Is there any message?" He said: "The only things we want to get across are some letters from Casement to Ireland, and some money to Casement's sister; and, as the money must not be traceable, we are sending it in gold. Will you take that?" I said to myself: "I had nothing coming out; no one bothered me; maybe no one will bother me now". So I said I would chance it. He gave me the money and the letters. There were about half a dozen different letters, from Casement in Germany, to several people here; and I took the gold. I know one of the letters was addressed to his sister, but I don't remember to whom the others were addressed.

Coming back on the boat - I was not a bit worried going out, because I had no documents - but

coming back and having these things, they were rather weighing on me. On the journey out, I had met a Scot, who was going to the States, in connection with shipping business for the British Government, and, like as you do on board ship, got rather friendly; and he was, fortunately, on the same boat coming back. It was the "Lusitania" - the time she hoisted the American flag before she landed; there was a great deal of talk about sailing under the American flag. On board, I noticed a man. He seemed to be always about, wherever I was. I got rather worried. I thought: "Maybe I can find out who he is, or something about him, from the shipping chap". I pointed him out. I said: "Who is he, do you know?" He said: "He is a Scotland Yard man". So immediately I thought it was myself he was following. I could see him, no matter where I was. So I decided that the only thing to do was to strike up a friendship with him; I might find out. That night, after dinner, I went over to the rail, where he was, and we talked. He told me about his going to South Africa; he had been in India; he said he was in Boston on the day the boat sailed, and he got word to join that boat. I got frightened. The day I had booked my passage was the day the boat sailed. So I said: "What sort of business are you in?" So he told me he was a detective. My relief was so great that I laughed. He said: "What are you laughing at?" I said: "You

must have heard I was terribly interested in detective stories". He protested. The greater he protested, the greater was my relief. He pulled out some cards. I wouldn't look at them. In my relief, I realised I was the only young woman on board, and no wonder he was always in my vicinity. I was so worried about the job I was on that I did not think of that.

When the boat came in to Liverpool, the passengers were issued with landing cards. This was a part I thought would be difficult - the examining of cards. I was standing beside a woman; and she had her landing card; and she had "subject" on it; but on my landing card, "subject" was crossed out, and "citizen" was written on it. "Why should she be a British subject, and I a British citizen? That will draw attention to me among the immigration officers". When these two - the detective and the shipping agent - were going forward for examination, I linked arms with them. They knew the lads; and we all talked. My cards were put down with theirs, and I came away with them. Madame had lent me, for the journey, a fur-lined coat, and when we were landing, I put the papers in the lining of the coat. I gave the detective my coat to carry off; and he carried my coat off the boat. He was "R", and I was "C". He had my coat, while I was seeing the Customs. When I was through, I went to him, thanked him, and took the coat. If they had

examined me thoroughly, they would not have had my coat, I thought, but they really did not trouble to look closely.

I arrived the next morning in Dublin. Daddy was stopping with Madame Markievicz. I went there, and wakened him up. It was very early. I started to tell him - "I won't hear a word now. I won't hear a word until the others have got a report". We had breakfast. We went to Liberty Hall. I was not allowed to say a word about my trip until Tom Clarke and Seán MacDermott came in; and then I was allowed to make my report. It must have been February, 1916, when I came back.

I think it must have been about March, 1916, that Daddy told me definitely that the fight was to take place. There was a big parade of the Volunteers in College Green, on St. Patrick's Day. I was down for that; and it was then he told me. He said: "Are you coming with me? Will you be with me during the fight?" I was torn, because I had been with the Belfast contingent all the time. As I said, I had trained them. I said to him: "After all, I should be with them in the North. The girls will have more confidence if I am there". And I wanted to be in Dublin with him. I did not know what to do. In the end, I decided to be with the Northern contingent. I remember he told me to see whoever was in charge in Belfast, and make it

definite that I was going. I said that, up to that time, I had not received any information, that it was in the air, but that I had not received any definite instructions. He told me to go to McCullough, or whoever was in charge, and to tell him that I knew definitely that it was taking place, and that I was going with the Northern contintent; and he told me to see that I got supplies for whoever was going with me.

I told McCullough. As a result of our jobs of assisting with the Howth gun-running, we had got a couple of the rifles. They were collecting any arms and ammunition they had in the North, to send to some centre point. They were going by lorries. Our rifles were collected. They got all the arms safely away from Belfast. Then I knew the preparations were on. I went to McCullough, to a meeting of the Volunteers at Willowbank Huts, and told him that I knew definitely that the fighting was to take place, and that I had chosen to stay with the Belfast contingent: how many of the Cumann na mBan did he want to travel. He was reluctant to have any of the Cumann na mBan to go with him. I had quite a lot of arguing. Finally, he agreed to six. I said he could not send the men out without anyone to give first-aid. I said: "None of us is trained beyond first-aid. You will have to find doctors afterwards. The first essentials - we all know

what to do". He fixed the time they were going. He seemed terribly taken aback that I knew so definitely.

For the six members of Cumann na mBan to accompany me, I chose the two Corr girls, Lizzie Allen, Kathleen Murphy, Bridie O'Farrell - she was an elderly woman, prominent in the Gaelic League and the Ulster Players; and I thought it was wise to have her with us, as we might lose our heads and she was experienced. There was another girl who lived up the road from us; I can't remember her name. I chose six; and then my sister, Ina, and myself were outside the six. We were going on our own. McCullough gave me money for the transport for six; and then I paid the transport for Ina and myself. Bridie O'Farrell did not turn up; something happened to her; and the other girl did not come. So there were just six.

We left Belfast on the Easter Saturday, in the afternoon, for Dungannon and Coalisland. McCullough was in charge of the Belfast contingent. I don't know what rank he had. He was considered the officer in charge by us all. P.J. Burke was in charge of Ulster; he was from Dundalk district.

At that time, there was always a great deal of traffic out of the city on bank holidays. Everyone was going on holidays. Previous to

Saturday, the lorries had gone with arms, ammunition and various things to Tyrone. When the six of us got to the railway station, there were queues all over; and we distributed ourselves around the queues, to get tickets. When we got into the train, the Young Ireland Pipers came along; they were Volunteers also. They were unusual looking pipers; they had groundsheets, bandoliers, bayonets on their hips, and pipes under their arms. Every sort of old carriage was gathered together for the holiday travel. The carriage we got into was old-fashioned, with half-backs, so that one could see the people in the next. We were in the one, and the Young Ireland Pipers got into the other. We steamed out of Belfast station to the tune of the pipers playing "The Soldiers' Song".

I think we went to Dungannon first, and were taken to Coalisland. I have an idea we broke the journey at Dungannon. When we got to Coalisland, the boys were formed up in marching order. A local Volunteer came to me, and said he had been sent to meet us, that they had rooms for the girls in the hotel, and that, after we had stowed our baggage and got something to eat, we were to go along to the Drill Hall. I don't know what they were using for the Drill Hall - I remember it was quite a big hall. After we put our things in the hotel, we went over. There was quite a number of local Volunteers there. Someone came running as

soon as we got to the Hall - "Where are those first-aiders? Connolly, you are wanted in a hurry. One of the lads shot himself, while cleaning his revolver". He was only grazed. It was the first shot in the affair. It was very funny. I had the job of fixing him up; and they all gathered round, watching the process. Evidently, it was quite satisfactory. There was one big fellow there; he gave me a big whack on the shoulder, and said: "You are coming with us". I said: "What do you mean by that?" He said: "We want someone with us who knows the job". I said: "I have got a rifle and ammunition on one of the lorries. How do you know I don't want to use them?" He said: "Come with us, and you can do both".

We were not long in the Hall, when somebody came and said I was wanted outside. I think it was the local organiser of the Volunteers. Anyway, I went outside, and two young men were there. I am not certain, but I think one of them was Padraig Ó Ríain; I will have to look it up. I knew the two chaps, but I can't remember their names. They said they had been sent by the O/C, Ulster, with a message to me, to tell me that there would be no fighting, that they had received a Demobilisation Order, and there would be no fighting in the North. It was very dark. I wouldn't say for sure, but I think it must have been between nine and ten p.m.

He said that they got the demobilisation order that there would be no fighting in the North, and that I had my choice of going back to Belfast or Dublin. I think that was it. I said: "There's something wrong. Why should there be no fighting in the North? You have all the arms and stuff gathered here; you have a contingent from Belfast; you are standing under arms?" He said he did not know; he only got the message. I said: "I think there is something wrong. Why have I a choice of going to Belfast or Dublin?" He said he understood there would be fighting in Dublin. I said: "Why should there be fighting in Dublin, and not here?" He said he did not know; he only got the message. I said I would not go to Belfast; I would go to Dublin. I said I would ask the girls, and give them the choice of going to Belfast or Dublin. The local organiser asked me not to leave. I said: "I have an order to leave; I cannot stay; I regard myself as under military orders; I have got to go". He said: "There must be some mistake. The mobilisation may be on again". I said: "I must leave. If you were told to leave, you would have to leave too. You just could not hope that things will turn out the way you want them". He was terribly upset. He did not want me to go. He was sure the thing would be rectified. He agreed with me that I would have to go.

So I went to the girls, and called them back

to the hotel. I told them the message. I said: "I'm going to Dublin; so it is up to you to decide whether you are going to Belfast or Dublin; there is a midnight train leaving Dungannon". That is why I think it must have been nine or ten o'clock when I received the message. So they said they would go to Dublin with me. (Dr. McCartan and McCullough were not there that night. I don't know exactly where they were meeting. I suggest you get Father Coyle's and Father Daly's story; they would have the exact details. I did not meet either of them. They may have been in Dr. McCartan's place, in Carrickmore). The girls all decided to come with me; and we got to the station. When we got there, there was another contingent from Belfast getting off the trains. I saw Cathal O'Shannon, among others. I went over to him, and told him the message I got. I said I thought there was something queer; but, I said, as I was told, I was going to Dublin. I left them very upset and perturbed about the message.

I would say that, roughly, there were about two hundred Volunteers, all told, from Belfast assembled there at Coalisland; there were nearly one hundred on the second contingent. They were from other districts as well. This was the meeting place. They were all to meet in different places. I could not give a guess as to how many arrived in Coalisland. When I got back on Easter Monday, they

were all dispersed. I never heard the number that assembled there.

When we got in to Dublin, it was before six o'clock in the morning. I went round to Liberty Hall, and knocked at the door. A Citizen Army man, under arms, let me in. He did not know me, though most of them knew me. I told him I was Connolly's daughter, and had come from the North with a message for him. At first, they did not want to disturb him; he had just gone to bed; so I said it was urgent. The officer of the guard came, and discussed it with him; and he brought me up, and along the corridor to where Daddy was. Daddy said: "What are you doing here? I thought you were with the men in the North". I said: "What is happening? Are they not going to fight?" I gave him the message I got. "Is the fight really off? There is fighting to be here, and not in the North? What does it mean? Why are we not going to fight?" He sat up in the bed. The tears ran down his face. Evidently they had a meeting before that, and he was very upset. Afterwards, I heard they had a long session with MacNeill, and he was absolutely obstinate - they had word that arms had not arrived - and he was absolutely obstinate about giving orders to go ahead; he would not. It must have been in conversation with my father that I got that information. We were so busy afterwards.

So then I told Daddy - I remember saying:

"Are we not going to fight?" "If we don't fight now", he said, "the only thing we can do is to pray for an earthquake to come and swallow us up, and our shame." Then I told him what happened - how I arrived there with the first contingent; and the message coming to me; and then deciding to go to Dublin; and meeting the second contingent from Belfast; and about speaking to them in the station, waiting for the train. "Second contingent? But", he said, "we got a message that they could not get fifty men to leave Belfast". I said to my father: "Don't take what I am saying as gospel. There are other girls downstairs, and you can question them". So he told me to go and call the guard on the door. I called the guard; and he told the guard to send up the girls that were downstairs. The guard then brought up the five girls. I have vaguely in my mind that it was to Eilis Corr he spoke first. He asked: "What has happened since you left Belfast?" And Eilis told him just as I had told him. Then he went to the next girl, and said: "What has happened since you left Belfast?" And she told him the same. It was the same with the other girls. He said: "Is there anything she has said you don't agree with?" All the girls agreed with the story. He sat thinking for a while, and then said to me: "Nora, go and tell the guard I want to see the officer of the guard". I went outside

again, and called the guard; and told him Mr. Connolly wanted to see the officer of the guard. When the officer of the guard came in, my father said: "I want six men to escort these six girls to different addresses". When the men came in, we did not know whom we were going to see. He called the officer of the guard over, and gave him instructions. When we went out, we did not know whom we were going to see. What we were told was to go with this escort, and tell the man we would see exactly what we had told my father, to answer any questions he would ask, and, when we had finished, to say that my father would like to see him in Liberty Hall as soon as possible.

I was taken to Seán MacDermott. He was in some place in Parnell Square. I imagine it was Vaughan's Hotel, but I am not sure. I was taken up to his bedroom; and I told Seán exactly what had occurred, and gave him the message. Then Seán said to me: "Have the others been told?" I said: "There were five others with me; and Daddy questioned them all, and sent each one of us, with an escort, to see a different person. I don't know whom they have gone to see". Seán said: "I see. Tell your father I will be along to the Hall immediately".

I went back to the Hall; and when I got back to the Hall - I remember very well - Daddy was in

uniform. It was the first time I had seen him in uniform. All the time of the parades and exercises, he never had a uniform. I used joke him about going out in his navy-blue suit and slouch hat, and all the uniformed men behind him. But now he was in his uniform. He was in much better form. He felt that something might be done; and he was going around the room, singing a song which he usually sang when things were going well with him - "We have got another saviour now. That saviour is the sword". A young officer from Limerick came in then. He any my father had a long confab.

Daddy said: "What about breakfast?" I agreed to get breakfast. I think Seán MacDermott was the first to arrive, then Tom Clarke, and then Thomas MacDonagh; and after him, I think it was Joesph Plunkett; I remember he was in his uniform, but his neck was all swathed with bandages; he was just getting over an operation; and Padraig Pearse was the last. I don't remember in what order Ceannt arrived, but he was there too; he must have come between Plunkett and Pearse. I remember the order up to that. I remember Pearse came last. They sat down, and had their breakfast.

One of the girls had gone out to Mass, and she arrived back with the "Sunday Independent", with the notice from MacNeill - "All manoeuvres cancelled".

She said: "Look, Mr. Connolly, do you see this?" He was amazed. "I know nothing of this", he said. He did not know it was going to be put in the papers. My father asked Pearse. He just said: "Do you know anything of this?" And Pearse said: I know nothing of this".

When they all had had breakfast, they left the room. They usually held their Council meetings in No. 7, in the Hall. They were going up there now to hold a meeting. Just as they were leaving, Daddy told me to stay about the Hall, but that I could send the girls to Madame's house to have a rest. He said: "You can get into a corner and nod; but don't go away". I was around the hall all that day.

The meeting started right after breakfast. Since we arrived in Dublin around 6 a.m., had the talk with Daddy and were sent out to different places, and all the girls coming back, one by one, saying - it was really extraordinary; everyone of the girls had the same message - "He said he would be along immediately", and then serving breakfast, I suppose it must have been around 10 a.m. when the meeting started, because there was no time lost.

I stayed on in the Hall. There was great activity in the Hall. The great front door was

closed, and an armed guard along the stairs and along the corridors. I remember thinking of something I wanted to ask Daddy about; I thought I could knock; but, as I went towards the corridor, the Guard there stopped me, and said: "Nobody is to pass". I said there was something I wanted to say to my father. "Orders, Miss. Nobody is to pass". I remember that incident very well.

I remember another incident occurred before that. Clare , who became Mrs. Bulmer Hobson afterwards, and one of the Ryan girls came up to me, and asked me what happened Hobson. I said: "I don't know. I have only arrived here". She said: "Hobson has been arrested, and we don't know what to do". She was in a great state of excitement and distress, and wanted to see Mr. Connolly. The guard said: "Nobody can see Mr. Connolly". She said she must see him. "Orders is - Mr. Connolly will see no one." She saw me, and asked me what happened to Hobson. I said: "I don't know. I have only arrived here". They told me he had been arrested. I said I knew nothing about it. She made several attempts to break down the guard and get in to Mr. Connolly; but the guard would not allow her. She went away.

I stayed around the Hall all day. I should say it was about four p.m. when the Citizen Army, with their arms, bandoliers and rifles on a cart,

started gathering outside. Crowds seemed to gather, as if they were waiting and expecting something. They were all gathered around the Hall and over at the Custom House arch. They were watching the place all day long, as if waiting to hear something.

The Citizen Army men all knew they were going out to fight, because there had been a meeting before. I was at the meeting in Liberty Hall, at which Daddy announced to the Army that they were definitely going to fight. He said something like this: "We have been playing at soldiers for a long time, but the time has come to be soldiers in real earnest. If there is anyone, who, for any reason, mystic or otherwise, is not prepared to go the whole way with us, let him step out now. There will be no hard words and no hard feelings. It would be better for him to do so now, than to come along with us and let us rely on him, and then fail us when he was most needed". Not one stepped out. I remember he walked along the ranks of them. He said: "Let them step out now. There will be no hard feelings and no hard words". And none of them stepped out. I can see him, walking with his hands clasped behind his back, and his eyes shining: "Boys, I never doubted you".

The Citizen Army men all knew they were definitely in for a fight, and, naturally, their

families - they were all terribly loyal and a terribly compact body. They pulled a dray cart with them, as if they had a whole lot of ammunition and stuff inside. Women and girls came over, and kissed them, and gave them packages, cigarettes and things. It must have been 4 p.m. - because I was watching them, and it was not dark yet - when Daddy tipped me on the shoulder. I said: "What are they going to do?" They had their rifles, and had their haversacks and revolvers. Daddy said: "They are creating a diversion; they are going to march, and draw the people away from looking at the Hall". I could not say how many there were. There was a small body. They looked as if they were going off on a special job.

So I turned to Daddy, and I said: "How are things? All right?" "It is all right now", he said, "we are going on". "What will I do?" I asked. He said: "Stay here a little longer, if you are not worn out". He knew I had been up the night before. "Stay around. I may need you. When I no longer need you, I will send you a message".

Eamonn Martin and Garry Houlihan came to the Hall, and they asked me what was the news. I said: "Everything is all right. It is going on".

They said: "Are you sure of that now?" I said: "Yes, Daddy has just told me". They said: "That is all right", and they went off.

A couple of hours later, Daddy came to me again. He said: "It is all right now. You can leave the Hall. I advise you to go to Madame's, and get a nice sleep. And be down here, with your girls, not later than eight o'clock tomorrow morning".

The meeting in No. 7 lasted for several hours. They were there all that day. It was 4 p.m. when Daddy gave me the first message that everything was all right. Then he went back again, and told me to wait. It was quite dark when he came to me again, and said: "You can go off now". I think it must have been 8 p.m. when I left the Hall.

I went to Madame's house, on Leinster Road, joined the girls, and had a night's sleep. We were all at Liberty Hall at eight o'clock on Easter Monday morning. When I arrived there, and reported to Daddy, he said we were to go back to the North. I did not like that. It was a struggle to go to the North, away from Daddy. I almost felt it was providential to be back with him; and here he was sending me away again. He said

Pearse was sending a message to the people in the North; and we were to take it. He told us that the fighting would start in Dublin at noon; and that we would probably be quite safe up to noon; but that, after that, we would be under suspicion. So we were all to know what was in the message, in case we had to separate. There was a verbal message for McCullough and a written message for Dr. McCartan. Pearse had not arrived by the time we came. We were only there a short while when Pearse arrived; and he too told us that he wanted us to take this message. I remember when Thomas MacDonagh came in. He was a very gay soul. He knew what we were going to do, and he began jeering: "You are a nice strapping lot! Here you are, going out of the city, and we are going to fight!" There was a train leaving at ten a.m.. I can see MacDonagh jeering at us still.

When Pearse arrived, Daddy told him to write out the message for us; and he went off to another room to write it. When he came back, he had a poster in his hand; and he opened it, and said: "This is the Proclamation of the Republic. This will be posted up, when we go into action. I want you all to read it, and memorise it as much as you can. When you reach these people, tell them you have read this; then tell every Volunteer you meet

that we will be fighting from twelve o'clock on; and, even though they have not received their orders, to hold themselves in readiness; and they will receive orders". They evidently did not think that the Volunteers would have been dispersed. Their last information was my report that the second contingent from Belfast had arrived.

There was no further news from the North.

When we got back to Coalisland, early in the afternoon, there was nobody there except the local Volunteers. I contacted the local officer and told him. He was in a blazing fury. He said: "They were in such a hurry to get the Belfast men away that they marched them at the double to Dungannon, to catch the train".

Eilish Allen took the message to McCullough, asking him to return. I think it was a verbal message, because the direct despatch was to McCartan. We had been all present. It was not merely hearsay; it was direct from Pearse. Eilish Allen was to tell McCullough that Pearse had said to mobilise, the fight was going on - we had seen the Proclamation - to tell them to hold themselves in readiness for remobilisation. Eilish Allen was sent to McCullough to inform him

what was happening; that a remobilisation order had been sent to McCartan; that the local Volunteers in Coalisland were being mobilised; and that, if there was any difficulty in getting the Belfast Volunteers through the roads to Coalisland, he could bring them over the Cave Hill to the shores of Lough Neagh, where they would get - I remember him calling them - "Fenian fishermen" to take them across. I know that Lizzie Allen got that message to McCullough, because I met her afterwards, and she told me so.

My sister, Ina (Mrs. Archie Heron), took the message to McCartan. I waited in Coalisland to find out what was the result. I know they mobilised the local Volunteers, because that night we were taken along to what looked like a big farm-house, a big barn of a place - a kitchen; I remember there was a fire in it. They had their arms stacked around the walls. They were waiting for the word. It did not come. Then we were put into an old Fenian's house; it was out in the country, where we would not be the object of attention. I remember the word going around that someone was coming - "It is all right; orders has come; pack up and be ready" - but it was a false alarm. It was Seamus Dempsey, a Belfast Volunteer or Fiannaidhe. He had got fed up and had gone to the country; and when they saw him coming along, they thought it was with the message. They told me that they made an

arrangement that they would ring the chapel bells; they would not send a courier; and the Volunteers would know. I got worried and upset. Nothing happened. That local Captain of the Volunteers - he was very anxious and worried. But nothing happened. No orders came.

Then I said to the other girls that it looked to me as if nothing was going to happen. Ina did not come back from McCartan. We did not know what was happening. I said to the girls to go back to Belfast; I would go and find Ina and, if I did not find her, I would go to Dublin. The girls did not want to go back, but eventually they went. That was a couple of days after Easter Monday.

It was Thursday when this local Captain got me a motor car, and drove me to McCartan's. It was fairly dark when I arrived there. McCartan was not there at the time, but they got in touch with him, and brought him along. I asked McCartan why he had got nothing done; did he not know the men in Dublin were fighting? He said they were all demobilised. It was much more difficult in the country to get the men together, once they had been dispersed. There was no use waiting - waiting for what? We had a very bitter discussion. It was quite definite that nothing

was going to happen - that they were not going to fight in the North at all. It was late then.

We were raided that night in McCartan's. I was subjected to a very close scrutiny. Police and military raided the place. But they did not stop me. They did not take anything from me.

In the meantime, I had asked McCartan had he any idea of where Ina was. He said the last he heard of her, she was in Clogher. He said I could not go there at night time, as it was over the mountains. So it was agreed I should stay there, and go off in the morning.

I started off in the morning to contact Ina. It was an awfully long walk. I was tired out, thirsty; and I never passed any house; and could not get a drink. I remember drinking some brown bog water, which was awful. I was nearly at the end of my tether, when I saw two girls coming on a bike; and one was Ina. They had come to see was anything happening. I said: "Nothing".

We decided to get to Dublin. There was a train at six in the morning; and we took it; and it brought us to Dundalk, but went no further. The only trains travelling to Dublin were military

trains. "There is nothing for it", I said, "we will have to walk". We started off to walk. There were barricades, I remember, at various villages along the road. My sister Ina's accent - she was very good at accents - was a great asset when we were stopped along the road. We watched the soldiers. They stopped some people, and others they did not bother. Ina could adopt a very good Northern accent; she exchanged badinage with the soldiers; and we always got through. We walked, and walked, and walked. We did not know the names of the villages in between. I said: "It is all right walking in the daytime. In the middle of the night, we can't say we are going somewhere. We don't know the names of the villages. We won't be able to travel in the night-time". I remember Ina saying: "Pick out a nice warm field, and stay there until it is light". And that is what we had to do; and certainly it was not warm. I think that is the first time I realised all the bones there are in the body!

As soon as it was fairly bright, we started walking again. We got to Drogheda, and heard the whistle of a train in the station. Ina said: "If we could only get a train". We went to the station again, to see if we could get to Dublin. They said: "No, only military trains". So we started

off again. We walked, and we walked until we came to - between Balbriggan and Swords. We had got, for our field operations, rather heavy boots or shoes; and we were not accustomed to those. I remember saying to Ina I simply could not stand it any longer; I would have to get my boots off; and we went to a ploughed field, and got our feet into the earth. It did feel good. And then we heard the rumble of the guns; and we realised it was the fighting in Dublin. So we got into our shoes, and started off again.

We decided to ask for a lift. It was between Balbriggan and Swords. However, a man with a motor car stopped, and asked to give us a lift. "Where are you going", he asked. "We are going to Clontarf" - our mother was there; we wanted to bring her back to Belfast. He brought us just beyond Swords. He was definitely a very Loyal person. The telephone wires had been cut, as there had been fighting outside Balbriggan. We spotted it, and thought he had not noticed it, but he had spotted it too; and stopped at the Police Station, and reported it. We left the car just beyond Swords, and thanked him. He said he was only too glad to help anyone. We wondered what he would say if he knew that he had helped the two daughters of James Connolly.

We got to Drumcondra, and went to Padraig Ryan's sisters' house on Clonliffe Road. They looked at us, as if we were ghosts. They were very worried.

After leaving the car, we met a body of British soldiers - an artillery company, with their regiment, with their big guns. They were coming from Dublin. I remember our hearts sank. "Why are they leaving Dublin? Are we beaten?" I remember it was the first thing that struck us, when we saw them coming towards us. But when we arrived nearer to Dublin, everything seemed quiet and normal - people on the streets. It was not our idea of a place where there was fighting. We were bewildered, and tried to solve the situation.

When we met the Ryan girl, she was amazed. "We have come from the North", we said. She told us about the fighting. It was all over. It was an awful shock. She said: "The last of them surrendered a few hours ago". I asked about Daddy. She told us that he was wounded and in prison. We did not know what to do. Then we thought of Mama. She had left Belfast, and come down to Dublin with all the youngsters. Madame had a house at the Three Rock mountains; and they had gone there. I said: "We had better go for Mama, and bring her

into the city, so that she can be near at hand to see Daddy". She said: "You will have to get a pass, if you want to stir out of your own districts. You only chance of getting across to Three Rock is in the day time. You might get your way through by some friendly soldier who would not want to have you identified". So we stayed there that night.

Next morning, it was walking again. We walked down O'Connell Street. It was like the photographs of bombed streets during the war. I remember seeing all the ruins. There was one big ruin, in the shape of a cross, just swaying as if ready to come down. In Cathedral Lane, there were dead horses, and everywhere a terrible smell of burning buildings and some rubber. We were stopped at various places. We said the same to all - we were caught in the city, and wanted to get out to Dundrum; our mother would be distracted. I remember a poster - the "Daily Sketch" - showing the dead rebel leader, with a big photo of my father. I said: "I am glad Mama is at Three Rock; she won't see that".

We got to the cottage. I hurried on ahead. I heard someone sobbing. It was Mama. Someone had kindly brought her a copy of the paper. I said: "Daddy is not dead. He is wounded. You can come in to Dublin and see him". She had her

mind made up: "I don't care. I know they won't let him live. As long as he is alive, there is a chance of it starting again".

Anyway, we packed up, and came into Dublin; and we went to William O'Brien's house. It was not a small thing to get us taken in; there was my mother and the five girls; the youngest was, I suppose, about seven. When we got to William O'Brien's house, we learned that William was arrested, and Roddy was arrested - my brother. He had been in the G.P.O. Every day, William O'Brien had gone down to the G.P.O. to have a talk. The last time he had gone was just prior to the surrender, and Daddy said to him: "You had better not come again" - and asked him to take Roddy away. Roddy was only fourteen years of age. When they had news of the surrender, they had gone down to O'Connell Street to see what news they could get; and they were spotted and arrested. By that time, the detectives were working with the military.

We learned that Daddy was in the Castle. Mama went to the Castle to see him. She did not see him the first day, but she saw him the second day. Of course, she could not say anything. She had to give a promise that she would not discuss anything that happened outside. She had been very thoroughly searched. Fiona, the girl of seven years, was undressed, in case there was anything

concealed about her. Then they made Mama give her word that she would not take anything - meaning poison - in. When she came back and told us, she was still absolutely certain that he was going to be executed.

It was terrible in Dublin that time. Every morning the Stop Press would come out in Dublin - "One More Executed"; "Two More Executed". At that time, Dublin was under martial law; you were not allowed on the streets after sundown; soldiers patrolled the streets; you were not allowed to show a light in the windows after sundown. The soldiers were jittery. If they saw a light anywhere, they would shout: "Put out that light".

One night, Roddy came in. They were releasing lads under sixteen. That lifted Mama's heart a bit. Mama said she was sure they would execute him. They executed Willie Pearse, because he was Padraig Pearse's brother. Roddy said he called himself "Carney", or something like that. He had an unusual experience. He was in the cell along with MacBride, MacDermott and Clarke. Three of the 1916 men, who were executed, were in the cell with him. I remember a man telling me afterwards, who was in the cell at the time, that Roddy, even then, kept up that he was

Carney; and the only one, who knew who he was, was Seán MacDermott. When they released the boys under sixteen, MacDermott told the others, and said: "Connolly had that boy well trained".

I went to see Daddy. He seemed to me to be very weak that day. I asked him was he in great pain. He said no, he had been courtmartialled, and was feeling very tired. Then I knew Mama was right, that, if they courtmartialled him in bed, they were going to execute him. I tried to talk. We were still hampered. I remember he gave us messages for Sheehy Skeffington, not knowing Sheehy Skeffington was killed. He was rather making plans for what we would do when he was gone.

One night, we were knocked up at about eleven o'clock. There was an ambulance outside the door; and there was a military Captain with it. He said the message he brought to us was: James Connolly was very weak, and wanted to see his wife and eldest daughter. Mama had seen him the day before, and he was very weak; and she half-believed him; but I guessed what it was. We were brought in the ambulance up to the Castle. I remember it so well. You know the part of the Castle, where there are a porch and pillars outside; there is a staircase landing above, which branches into corridors; they had soldiers on

every step of the staircase; and on the landing they had little mattresses; there were soldiers lying on them; and there were soldiers at every door.

We were brought into the room where Daddy was. He lifted his head, and said: "I suppose you know what this means?" Mama was terribly upset. I remember he said to me - we were talking about various things - he said: "Put your hand under the bedclothes". He slipped some paper into my hand. He said: "Get that out, if you can. It is my last statement". Mama could hardly talk. I remember he said: "Don't cry, Lillie. You will unman me". Mama said: "But your beautiful life, James", she wept. "Hasn't it been a full life? Isn't this a good end?", he said.

Then they took us away; and we got home. We just stood at the window, pulled up the blind, and watched for the dawn; and, after we knew he was gone, the family all came in; and I opened the last statement, and read it:-

"To the Field General Court Martial, held at Dublin Castle, on 9th May, 1916.

(Evidence mainly went to establish the fact that the accused, James Connolly, was in command at the General Post Office, and was also Commandant General of the Dublin Division. Two of the

witnesses, however, strove to bring in alleged instances of wantonly risking the lives of prisoners. The Court held that these charges were irrelevant and could not be placed against the prisoner.)

'I do not wish to make any defence, except against the charge of wanton cruelty to prisoners. These trifling allegations that have been made, if they record facts that really happened, deal only with the almost unavoidable incidents of a hurried uprising against long established authority, and nowhere show evidence of set purpose to wantonly injure unarmed persons.

We went out to break the connection between this country and the British Empire, and to establish an Irish Republic. We believed that the call we then issued to the people of Ireland, was a nobler call, in a holier cause, than any call issued to them during this war, having any connection with the war. We succeeded in proving that Irishmen are ready to die endeavouring to win for Ireland those national rights which the British Government has been asking them to die to win for Belgium. As long as that remains the case, the cause of Irish Freedom is safe.

Believing that the British Government has no right in Ireland, never had any right in Ireland, and never can have any right in Ireland, the presence, in any one generation of Irishmen, of even a respectable minority, ready to die to

affirm that truth, makes that Government forever a usurpation and a crime against human progress.

I personally thank God that I have lived to see the day when thousands of Irish men and boys, and hundreds of Irish women and girls were ready to affirm that truth, and to attest it with their lives, if need be'.

JAMES CONNOLLY, COMMANDANT-GENERAL,
DUBLIN DIVISION
ARMY OF THE IRISH REPUBLIC."

I have presented this statement to the Museum.

Afterwards, we went to the Castle to demand his body. We knew they would refuse it, but we had to make the request. They refused our request. While we were standing there, a nurse came along, and said: "Mrs. Connolly, I clipped this off your husband's head". She gave her a lock of his hair. I have that still.

Then we met Father Aloysius, who was with him before he was executed. I asked Father Aloysius: "How did they shoot him?" He told me he had not known Daddy. Of all those men, Daddy was the only one he had not known personally. He felt it was a great favour to have met him before he died. I said: "How did they shoot him?" He said: "They came in an ambulance. They carried him on a stretcher to the ambulance.

I accompanied him in the ambulance, and drove to Kilmainham. They carried the stretcher to the yard, and put him in a chair. Before he was executed, I said to your father: 'Will you say a prayer for the men who are about to shoot you?'" My father's answer was: "I will say a prayer for all brave men who do their duty". Then he was shot.

We went to the Castle after that, to claim his watch, his wallet, or anything they might have belonging to Daddy. We thought there might be a chance of getting his uniform; but we did not. We only got his underclothes; and they were marked with his blood, where he had been hit by a sniper. I have given these to the Museum also.

They did not give us the wallet. We knew he had in it a first photograph of Mama, which he always carried in the wallet. We did not get it; and we did not get his watch. Captain Stanley, who had conducted us on our last visit to see Daddy, was very, very kind; and Mama got in touch with him; and asked him how she could get these things. Captain Stanley made all sorts of enquiries, and said he could not get the stuff for her. He asked: "Would you be willing to meet Maxwell, and demand it from Maxwell? I will arrange the interview". Mama said yes, she wanted

these things.

He arranged a meeting with Maxwell. I remember Mama telling it. She went along. Mama had an extraordinary dignity, though she was so retiring. Maxwell went forward to shake hands with her - the man who had given the order to execute her husband! She just put her hands behind her back. She told him she had come for her husband's wallet and watch, which had not been handed back.

Maxwell sent her to Major Price. He was in Intelligence. Price questioned Mama about her son. "My young son?" He said: "No, I don't mean that son. I mean the other". Mama said: "I have no other son". I was not present at the interview. But she got back the wallet, with her photograph and a few odd papers that were in it. I remembered then I had once, as a joke, got myself into Volunteer uniform; and had a photograph taken; and had signed it, "Your soldier son"; and given it to Daddy. When the wallet was taken, they found the photograph; and they were looking for that son. We never got that photograph back. They were looking for Daddy's "soldier son". Mama said all the questions were about her son, not the boy of fourteen, but the other son.

SIGNED: Lora Connolly O'Brien

DATE: 21st July 1949

WITNESS: Seán Brennan Leandth