ORIGINAL

ROINN COSANTA.

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STATEMENT BY WITNESS

DOCUMENT NO. W.S. 317

Witness

Madam Maud Gonne McBride,
Roebuck House,
Clonskeagh,
Co. Dublin.

Identity

Foundress of Inghini na hEireann;
Foundation member of National Council
of Sinn Fein.

Subject

(a) National activities 1900 - 1921;
(b) Work of Inghini na hEireann;
(c) Formation of Cumann na nGaedheal and Sinn Fein;
(d) White Cross 1918 - 1922.

Conditions, if any, stipulated by Witness

Nil

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STATEMENT BY MADAM GONNE McBRIDE, ROEBUCK HOUSE,

CLONSKEAGH, DUBLIN.

ORIGINAL

My memoirs "Servant of the Queen" cover as accurately as my memory allows the events with which I was connected from birth, December 1866, up to my marriage with John MacBride, March 1903.

A few further details about my family and my early life might be of interest: The Gonnes came from Co. Mayo, but my great-great grandfather was disinherited and sought fortune abroad trading in Spanish wine. My grandfather was head of a prosperous firm with houses in London and Oporto - he destined my father to take charge of the foreign business and had him educated abroad. My father spoke 6 languages but had little taste for business, so he got a commission in the English Army; his gift for languages secured for him diplomatic appointments in Austria, the Balkans and Russia and he was as much at home in Paris as in Dublin.

My lovely English mother died when I was 4. and my sister Kathleen 2. Inconsolable, my father never remarried and devoted much time to the 2 children.

In care of a nurse our early childhood was spent in Donnybrook, Howth and the Curragh with occasional visits to our mother's relations in London. We hated these visits after our free Irish life where we were allowed to play with the children of the many mud cabins which existed then everywhere.

Childhood memories are vivid - just as words of my father influenced my whole life - "Never be afraid, even of death". "Will is an incalculable power", a sentence I heard said by a woman whose name I don't remember,- remained with me; "The creatures, God help them, they have lost their mother". She said it while she was taking off my shoes and socks to dry them one day when a rain storm had sent me with her own barefooted children rushing for shelter into her cabin. Of course I took the invariable kindness of the poor people for granted then, but later I realised how extraordinary it was when there were so many survivors of Black '47 who had seen

seen one million of our people die of starvation while the abundant harvests they had sown and reaped, under escort of the English garrison, were exported to England. Kathleen and I were children belonging to the English garrison. Would the people of any other nation have been as forgiving as the Irish?

That sentence "The creatures, God help them, they have lost their mother" came to my mind in 1884 when I saw the evictions, and many times after during the wholesale destruction of mud cabins by the battering rams manned by emergency men, recruited from the Orange lodges protected by the R.I.C. and sometimes by the red-coated military.

I wish to amplify that conversation with my father recorded in Chapter III of my memoirs. He told me that the Land War had made him realise that as an Irishman he felt he must resign from the English Army and that he intended standing as a Home Rule candidate at the next elections; that the only thing that was troubling him was the change this would make in our social position and how it would affect me. He said he had accepted the post as Adjutant General in Dublin because he wanted me to have a good time on "coming out". We were both so happy when we found our thoughts were as one, for I worshipped my father. He died of typhoid fever before he could put his resolve into effect.

The shock of his death made me very ill. When I recovered I found our guardian had sold all our belongings in Ireland and had destroyed all my father's private papers, including that election address. He was a bitter Unionist and a diehard Tory. We quarrelled violently and I left his house without a penny to earn my living on the stage, got an engagement with a touring English theatrical company, but having worked so hard at voice production I again fell very ill and was ordered by the doctor to take a cure at Royat where I met Millevoye and General Boulanger and I realised the possibility of getting French aid for my country.

Regrettably my documents, including letters from Yeats, Russell Griffith, Pearse, Connolly and my French documents were all destroyed

by a raid on my house 73 St. Stephen's Green by Free State Forces early in the Civil War in which previously I had refused actively to take sides believing it to have been engineered by England immediately after the truce through her instrument the Orange Institution.

In my house there was an immense collection of papers for during the Black and Tan War. I had been asked to keep Republican files of Black and Tan atrocities by Desmond Fitzgerald and Bob Brennan in 1918 and was working with them on Republican publicity. Miss Dorothy McArdle, who occupied a flat in my house and was working at Publicity with Erskine Childers after the split, was arrested and in Mountjoy at the time, which may have been the cause of the Free State raid. Evidently the raiders were drunk and found it easier to burn all papers than to examine them. So, returning home after a weekend in the country, I found the door of 73 St. Stephen's Green hanging open on the hinges and guarded by a D.M.P. man, who told me apologetically "The military have done this, not the police. I am only here to stop looters getting in". Every window was broken and skulls and cross bones daubed on bedroom walls, while outside were the still smoking ashes of an enormous bonfire where the papers had been burned and charred scraps blew about the Green for days.

I want to make a correction in my book of memoirs for historical accuracy. I place Chapter XXIV - The Battle of the Rotunda - as having occurred before my marriage, when actually it occurred 2 months after my return from our strange honeymoon in Spain and also I inadvertently omitted the name of an old friend of mine who worked hard in the early Sinn Fein movement, Alderman Tom Kelly, who was one of my guests at the little tea party in Coulson Avenue which turned itself into the Delegation from a mythical Citizens' Watch Committee, whose question as to the date of Lord Mayor Harrington's holiday provoked the uproar which started the Battle of the Rotunda.

Recently, Seamus McManus, the historian, visited me and we refreshed our memories of these events. We both agree on the importance of that "battle" for it marked the first open clash

between the decaying parliamentary movement and the rising Sinn Fein movement, though as an organisation Sinn Fein was only started a few years later in 1905? and its result was even more important as being the first time since the Union in 1800 when officially Ireland refused to recognise the English Crown and Edward VII on his first visit to Ireland after the coronation received no official welcome in Ireland's capital - an event whose significance got much publicity in the foreign press.

Previously, despite all our efforts we had never succeeded in preventing Lord Mayors welcoming Victoria, the Famine Queen and on bended knees in their crimson robes going to meet her and presenting her with the keys of the city. The delegates approached by the Citizens' Watch Committee were - Edward Martyn, spokesman; Griffith, who drew up the question; Alderman Tom Kelly, Henry Dixon, Seamus McManus and myself, and outside the Rotunda after the battle we arranged to meet next morning some other members of Cumann na Gaedheal at the office of the United Irishman in Fownes St. to form The National Council of Cumann na Gaedheal, so that we would have a body able to make quick decisions and with more national authorisation than a mythical Citizens' Watch Committee. McManus thought the meeting was held in my house, but my recollection is that we met in the Fownes St. office. Father Anderson was at that meeting which had his blessing, but I think he said again that, belonging to the Augustinian Order precluded his name being published. My memory is not clear enough to state with certainty the names of the other members. I think Councillor Cole was one and Pat Lavelle of the Celtic Literary Society, but neither I nor McManus are certain. We agree that Edward Martyn was appointed as President and I Gen. Secretary.

I should like to recount in some detail the following rather amusing and interesting incident that occurred at the time of King Edward's visit:-

The day before the arrival of the English King many Irish newspapers appeared with black borders for the death of H.H. Pope

Leo XIII. The Bishop's banquet in honour of Edward VII would have to be cancelled, so everyone said. It had horrified me that Archbishop Walsh had consented to attend it, for I venerated the Archbishop who had confirmed me. He was looked on as a patriot and he had subscribed £20 to the Wolfe Tone Memorial Fund, which proved his unspoken disapproval of some of his colleagues who had denounced Ireland's national hero, Wolfe Tone, whom the English had murdered in a prison cell.

To everyone's amazement the Maynooth reception of King Edward was not cancelled. Dublin streets were disgusting with the display of Red, White and Blue bunting. Mary Quinn and I were feeling very tired and a little depressed as we took the last Rathmines tram after a strenuous day bill-posting with Inghinidhe na hEireann of the Coronation Oath of which we had had printed 10,000 copies. It had given the police much work washing them off every available wall, hoarding and lamp post, and Inghinidhe even harder work replacing them. Mary got off at her digs in the Rathmines Road, promising to lunch with me next day. Messrs. Findlater, where she worked as typist, like all Unionist firms, were giving a holiday to their employees in honour of Edward VII's arrival in Ireland. As I walked down Rathgar Road I felt a little anxious. There had been no arrests for the bill-posting; the Coronation Oath could not be called a seditious document and any charges in the police courts for posting it would have given it more publicity. But I did not feel so secure about the street corner meetings for burning Union Jacks. Inghinidhe na hEireann had a great collection of these trophies snatched from the enemy by the children of our free classes. I thought it was quite likely Mary and I would find ourselves spending the following night in the verminous Bridewell - not a pleasant prospect, as I knew from experience. In Mary's case also it might mean dismissal from her job.

Arthur Griffith and Charles Oldham had often spoken to me of this danger for members of Inghinidhe. Oldham had said rather brutally: "It is all very well for you who are independent to carry out your wildcat schemes, but you should think of what arrest might

mean to girls earning their living". As if I did not ! I had taught Inghinidhe the meaning of the word Solidarity. I knew that we were all equally resolved that an injury to one was an injury to all and, so long as any of us had means, we would never allow any of our members to suffer want. But I was generally careful and very lucky and, so far, none of the Inghinidhe had ever been arrested. Moreover, our organisation was popular and had enough influence, I thought, to secure other jobs for members who might be victimised for national activities.

Disrespectfully and affectionately our friends often called Inghinidhe "the Ninnies", and the Ninnies would have been indignant had they been told they were not to do national work because they might be arrested.

As I turned down Rathgar Road the street lamp at the corner of the little cul-de-sac, dignified by the name of Coulson Ave. where I lived next door to A.E., shone on a small house, almost opposite to my own, which was literally plastered with red, blue and while bunting and Union Jacks. We had such a big collec ion of these to burn that, being tired, I did not think it worth while to avail of the late hour and the quiet street to snatch another. I wondered what fool could have thought it worth while to put up decorations where there were so few passers-by to see them, probably some small British civil servant, hoping for promotion.

As I sat in my kitchen, waiting for the kettle to boil, my eye rested on a broom in the corner - it would make a good flag-pole; so I went upstairs and found an old black petticoat I decided might be sacrificed, tore it in half, nailed one half to the broomstick and hung it out of the sitting room window as a contemptuous though childish answer to the Union Jacks.

I was awakened next morning by my charwoman, Mrs. Fitz, bringing i n my breakfast tray. "Oh, Miss Gonne, I mean Madam dear" she said "the police have been and taken your black flag

and they have taken the broom too, though I told them I needed it." "Never mind, Mrs. Fitz" I said sleepily, "you will find the other half of the petticoat lying on the kitchen floor and if you haven't another broom, ask Mrs. Russell for the loan of hers. When I came down, another black flag hung out of the sittingroom window. As I was writing at my desk, I heard Mrs. Fitz in the tiny garden, again having trouble with the policeman, so I hastily withdrew the flag thinking it would be safer upstairs. Seeing it disappear the policeman, satisfied, departed into Rathgar Road. Even from my ~~bedre~~ bedroom window, the house being very small, the folds of the black petticoat hung dangerously low - with a jump it could be caught - so, with a chain, I padlocked the small gate and told Mrs. Fitz. to say I was 'not at home to callers"

A little later, however, I heard the following altercation:
"The Madam is busy and no time to see callers".
"Open that gate".
"I can't. The Madam has the key".
"Take down that black flag then".
"I can't, because the Madam put it there and said it was to stay there".

From the window I saw the 2 sleuths (G.men) Dublin Castle appointed to follow me everywhere, at the gate, and one of them, taking no notice of Mrs. Fitz, stepped over the little railing, so I thought it time to step over the window sill and stand directly béneath the flag.

"What do you mean by trespassing in my garden?" I asked with dignity. "Didn't you hear my maid tell you I was receiving no callers". "Go out at once".

"We will have to get that black flag first".
"Who are you?"
"The police".
"You will have to prove that" I said, and reluctantly he produced his G.man's card and I carefully read out aloud his name and number. "Now, where is your warrant for forcible entrance on

my property?"

Instead of answering, he tried to get past me. I knew he could catch the end of the black petticoat with a jump and it was the last half. The man laughed and tried to push me aside, but I stood firm, even though Mrs. Fitz was gallantly and vociferously supporting me and hanging on to my assailant's arms. Inwardly I felt mad with myself for the childish impulse of last night which had got me into such an undignified position. I was conscious of neighbours coming out of doors to watch. I heard Mrs. Fitz's voice "You dirty scoundrel, daring to lay hands on a lady; you murderer, you double murderer, daring to touch a lady in her condition", but I was too excited to take in the meaning. Suddenly the G. man loosened his hold of me and I heard his companion on the road say "Come on, the police will have to get a warrant!" My assailant stepped over the railing and the two disappeared up the Rathgar Road.

Violet Russell, in a blue overall which matched the colour of her lovely eyes, had come out of her house and stepped over the small railing between our gardens.

"Maud, whatever is the matter. Why, your blouse is all torn".

"Only the police breaking the law and trespassing without a warrant".

"How disgraceful!" said Violet. "You know, I as an Englishwoman care nothing for politics, but if those people may put out flags, why shouldn't you?"

Then she whispered "The neighbours are all Unionists and worse than the police. They may attack you".

The small crowd on the road certainly looked hostile and I was relieved to see the graceful figure of Mary Quinn coming quickly down the road. She had evidently taken in the situation, for she did not try the gate, but got over the railing.

"What weapons have we?" she asked.

"Only our respectability. You and Violet look eminently respectable, though I don't with my torn blouse. Mrs. Fitz might prepare a kettle of boiling water. I saw many houses

defended with that during the land war. You and Violet hold the fort till I change my dress and find a weapon" and I hurried into the house. I had forgotten my little revolver in Paris. but I remembered a scent squirt which looked exactly like a revolver and would certainly hold that crowd in check. I got into another dress with the rapidity of a quick-change artist and with the toy revolver in my hand returned to Violet and Mary who were still talking beneath the black flag. The crowd on the road had been augmented with various errand boys who were not at all hostile. One even shouted "Up the rebels" as I came out.

"I must go and get dinner for my children" said Violet, "but you and Mary will be able to manage. I will come back if you need me". Then, catching sight of the revolver in my hand, "For God's same, don't use that!"

"Not unless it is necessary" I assured her and she went into her house.

Mrs. Fitz came to the door to say that lunch was ready.

"We can't leave the flag unprotected" said Mary.

"It's a lovely day" I said "what about having lunch in the fresh air?"

A little table and two chairs were brought out and Mrs. Fitz served lunch while the crowd looked on. The revolver lay on the table well in view. We were at coffee when there was a sudden commotion and the noise of marching men, and a Sergeant and twelve stalwart D.M.P. men marched into Coulson Avenue and formed in double line on the road in front of my tiny garden. The Sergeant, a big red-faced man, looked good-natured.

"Miss Gonne" he said "I don't want any trouble. Be reasonable and take down that black flag". Like Mrs. Fitz, and sometimes myself he had forgotten that I was married 2 months ago.

I got up and went towards the gate, the revolver in my hand.

"I am sure, Sergeant, you don't want trouble, neither do I, and I am grateful to you for removing all those rude people from the path in front of my house. They seem never to have seen anyone taking their lunch in their garden on a fine May day".

"That flag has got to come down, Miss. Its against orders to show black flags". Then, coaxingly: "You have made your little demonstration; now take it down".

"I can't do that, Sergeant" I replied gently "though I would gladly oblige you. You see, it is a matter of principle. I have a revolver and I am a very good shot. Anyone who enters my property against my orders will get a bullet. It's not worth a man's life and I shall try and not shoot to kill, but I mean what I say. That flag will remain as long as those Union Jacks opposite remain. One man actually got over the railing, so I had to get my revolver and I have a licence for it (which was true, though it may have been out of date) but now you are here I will have no need to use it!" Then, raising my voice, I said "You are an Irishman and a Catholic, so probably are all your men, and don't you think you would be acting more like a Catholic and an Irishman if you occupied yourself hauling down those unseemly decorations opposite. Don't you know that our Holy Father the Pope is lying in state in Rome and that in every Catholic country in the world, except Ireland, flags are flying at half-mast, in mourning. Yet here, because an English king, who has taken a blasphemous oath against our religion, arrives, Catholic Dublin is to be disgraced with unseemly decorations".

I could see my speech was having an effect on the policemen. Some of the D.M.P. men looked at me approvingly; one of them roughly pushed back some of the crowd trying to get on the path. The Sergeant saw a way out of the difficulty.

"Miss Gonne, if you will tell me that flag is only there out of mourning for His Holiness the Pope, I shall not interfere with it".

"No, Sergeant, I shall tell you nothing of the sort, because as an Irishman and as a Catholic you should know yourself the meaning of that black flag" and I returned to Mary and our coffee.

"You do know how to deal with situations" she said. A shrill cry came from a boy at the back of the crowd - "O, Miss, look out for the flag. They are trying to get it from the roof" We could not see the roof from where we were sitting with our backs to the house. Turning round, we saw a man on my roof who was trying to lower a noose of rope round the flag. I seized the revolver, but Mary, who knew it was only a scent squirt, caught my hand. "Oh! Maud, don't fire. Let me deal with this" and, taking a bottle of ginger beer from the table, let it fly at the man on the roof with such sure aim that he rolled off the roof on the opposite side of the house. She was country-bred and could throw stones with anyone.

There was a horrified cry in the crowd. The Sergeant, followed by 6 of the policemen and the crowd, made his way down a little lane which led to the rear of the houses. Mrs. Fitz went to view events from the kitchen window, while I said loudly: "I hope that will be a warning to trespassers and law-breakers". Mrs. Fitz returned to report that the man had been taken off to hospital in a cab. "He's not much injured, only a good bump on the head and, I think, a broken arm". He was a Unionist neighbour. Of course, as he had no right to be on my roof, he had no case against me.

"This is all very well, Mary" I said "but we have forgotten we were to meet Inghinidhe at our offices this afternoon. "Don't worry" said Mary. "As I was coming here your milkboy told me there was a nasty crowd round your house and you were defending a black flag, so I scribbled a note "Our president's house besieged. Come at once". I told him to put it on our office door, so the girls will be here soon. "Do you think he will have it delivered?" I asked. "I am sure he will, for he was one of the boys who brought us in a Union Jack he had snatched yesterday". "Bravo, Mary, you think of everything. But for you and your ginger beer bottle we would have lost the flag and the revolver would have been 'exploded'".

The police still stood in a line in front of the house, but they were guarding us and there was no more talk of removing the black flag. Also, the crowd in the road was now augmented by many sympathisers. Some of the Unionists had retired into their houses to watch events from the safety of their windows.

Suddenly there was another sound of marching men and round the corner of Rathgar Road swung a great procession, four deep, headed by the Celtic Literary Society. It was the Cumann na Gaedheal Club. The Inghinidhe, seeing Mary's message, had told Arthur Griffith. The procession moved on past my house and, as there was no exit, Coulson Avenue was soon entirely blocked. It had never seen so many people. I unlocked the tiny gate. Members of Inghinidhe na hEireann, Arthur Griffith, Mick Quinn (Mary's brother) Joe Ryan, Peter White and many friends crowded into the tiny garden. I asked Arthur Griffith to thank the Sergeant for his timely aid, which I think embarrassed the Sergeant and Arthur assured him that now the Cumann na nGaedheal had taken charge, there would be no more danger of disorder.

It must have been long past their teatime and, after a few minutes talk with Griffith, the Sergeant and his 12 men marched away and the crowd cheered and every Unionist disappeared.

I would have liked to have invited everyone to tea, but as there were certainly over a thousand people, that was obviously impossible. Violet Russell lent all her teacups and boiled kettles for tea on her own fire to help Mrs. Fitz, while some members of Inghinidhe slipped away to forage in little shops not already closed for loaves of bread and packets of butter. They were used to playing hostesses at the Cumann na Gaedheal ceilidhes. At Arthur Griffith's suggestion I then went out and thanked the crowd. I said: "It is great to belong to such a movement as ours. It gives one a great sense of safety and protection. This illustrates Sinn Fein: by our own strength and numbers and courage and standing together we will free our country." Then I suggested there were many meetings in the town they would be wanting to attend and, after much cheering, the crowd at last dispersed.

Cumann na Gaedheal appointed 4 men to guard the flag that night, but I said this would be unnecessary as I intended taking it in at midnight.

There were a number of men I did not know who introduced themselves as correspondents of many foreign newspapers who had been sent to Dublin to report the Royal Visit. I invited them all to come into tea. They were a number of press correspondents in search of copy, after an uneventful day in Dublin - the Maynooth banquet having shocked Catholics too much to allow publicity. They had seen a procession crossing town which puzzled people, as no demonstrations were announced. The siege of Maud Gonne's house by Unionists and police was a good story and lost nothing in the telling. The efficiency and rapidity of the Cumann na Gaedheal organisation was impressive. Neither Mary nor I made mention of a black petticoat or a scent squirt, but Arthur Griffith and A.E., who arrived late, had a great opportunity of explaining to them our Republican views and Ireland's resolve for independence, and the significance of refusal of a civic welcome to Edward VII.

When at midnight I took in the black flag, the Union Jacks and decorations on the houses opposite had all disappeared.

Next morning I got a telegram of comgratulation from John MacBride in Paris and a letter from Willie Yeats in London - "You certainly have succeeded".

It was only then I remembered to ask Mrs. Fitz the meaning of her words "a lady in her condition".

"Didn't you know, Madam, I saw him in his pram in the teacup and he's a grand boy, God bless him?"

My dear char was a witch with the teacup, for that boy in the pram was Sean who was born the following Feb. 7th.

Cumann na Gaedheal was founded in 1900 at my house immediately after the deplorable events recorded in Chapter XXVII of my memoirs and Arthur Griffith and Willie Yeats drew up the programme. The

English, working for the Entente Cordial and the French Government, prevented the arrest of the French Colonel being published in the newspapers - he was handed over to the French Embassy in London which arranged for his return to France. The Colonel - at Dr. Ryan's request, had come to England to make direct contact with the I.R.B. and I had acted as intermediary so his betrayal destroyed my work in France and all our hope of obtaining aid from the French General Staff. Moreover it considerably weakened the anti-British section and helped Clemenceau, who always wanted an Anglo-French Alliance, to return to power.

I resigned from the I.R.B. to which, I believe, I was the only woman ever admitted, as did Willie Yeats and Arthur Griffith and a good many other young I.R.B. men when they learned those facts. We had lost faith in a secret society for freeing Ireland, but we felt an open revolutionary movement could create an atmosphere out of which armed revolution could develop.

Cumann na Gaedheal was the society from which the Sinn Fein movement developed. For the purpose of publicising our ideas Arthur Griffith and I composed a speech which I delivered at various places including Limerick, Cork and Skibbereen. Arthur was not fond of public speaking. The speech was published in full in the Skibbereen Eagle. Each paragraph of it ended with the words Sinn Fein.

We started at once to appeal to Young Ireland Societies who needed some central direction to galvanise them into activity and all the numerous '98 Clubs who, after the Centenary of '98 was passe had little to occupy them. In fact, we accepted the affiliation of any club or society, literary, dramatic, social, athletic, whose members accepted the ideal of complete national independence and who agreed to send delegates to annual conventions which at first were to be held in Dublin at Bealtaine and at Samhain and for which we usually were able to secure the Mansion House, or sometimes the Rotunda. These conventions often lasted for 4 or 5 days. Inghinidhe na hEireann and its several branches affiliated and acted as

hostesses as did the National Players who arranged for shows and ceilis. It was a great opportunity for all those working for independence to meet and get to know each other and soon became an important organisation.

The birth of Sean obliged me to resign from the post of Secretary of the National Council as I had to live in France - John MacBride could not return to Ireland for having joined the Transvaal Brigade and fought openly against the British.

Inghinidhe na hEireann had sent a flag to the Brigade, which, after we had unfurled it - at a meeting held by the Dublin Transvaal Committee at the top of Grafton St. and St. Stephen's Green over the foundation stone laid by John O'Leary at the '98 Centenary for the monument to Wolfe Tone - I smuggled it the same evening out of Dublin to Paris to be sent to the Transvaal with the French Committee, who sent an ambulance to the Boers and who arranged for our small Irish ambulance consisting of 1 doctor and many stretcher bearers who joined the Irish Brigade, to travel with it. That flag, which floated over the Irish Camp on the Veldt when the fighting became serious John MacBride sent for safety to Johannesburg. Today, that flag - safely returned to me in 1932 - hangs in the National Museum.

After Sean had received provisional baptism in Paris I brought him to Ireland to be christened officially in my parish church at Terenure - his grandmother, Mrs. MacBride of Westport, as godmother, and John O'Leary as godfather, attended the christening. The ceremony nearly ended in disaster when the priest objected to John O'Leary, a Fenian, standing as godfather, but somehow, Joseph Mac Bride got over the difficulty with the priest and after long delay Sean was satisfactorily christened, though John O'Leary proudly stated he was a Fenian and I was adamant that John O'Leary and no other should be his godfather. It would have greatly distressed old Mrs. MacBride if the ceremony had not taken place.

I was greatly delighted to hear of the rapid progress Cumann na Gaedheal was making all over Ireland, but again I had to return to

France with baby Sean. We were staying on the Normandy coast when Arthur Griffith came to visit us to tell us that McDonagh and Pearse were forming Freedom Clubs and McDonagh was particularly anxious that the young men who had resigned from the I.R.B. should rejoin that organisation which, he said, had purged itself and was now under the control of young men

Maud Gonne MacBride

5th Sept '49

Séan Cronin
5. 9. 49

STATEMENT OF MADAM GONNE McBRIDE
(Second Instalment).

ROEBUCK HOUSE, CLONSKEA, DUBLIN.

After the birth of Sean I spent my time between Paris and Dublin. We had a house in Passy and John worked as Secretary to Victor Collins who earned a large salary as correspondent to the New York Sun and Laffan"s Bureau, a fairly important newsagency in New York. Despite my warning John became the inseparable companion of Collins, who introduced him to a rather undesirable drinking set who usually foregathered in the American Bar. He had an unhappy life in Paris. He did not know a word of French and must often have been very lonely, as my work kept me much in Ireland.

I used to come over to Ireland leaving the children in the care of my good friend Mme. Avril de Sainte Croix. Sometimes I left Iseult in the convent at Laval where her godmother was the Superior. I had been introduced to this nun by Canon Dissard, who was chaplain of the convent. He came from Auvergne and was very proud of his Celtic origin. He said his name meant 'high god' and that his ancestors had been druids. He had a golden sickle in a glass case which, he said, had been used by them to cut the mistletoe in connection with their religious rites. This had been found in a cave with some other Celtic remains that had been handed over to the Museum.

My husband came back to Ireland, I think in 1906, when Sean was two years old. I was in Ireland and was summoned back to Paris by my friend, Mme. Avril de Ste. Croix to look after my house which was being sadly neglected and ill-used. On my arrival my friend told me that my husband had left Paris for Ireland with Victor Collins. Our trains must have crossed, she said. I thought he would be arrested straightaway, as Arthur Lynch was, for his part in the Boer War in the Transvaal. Victor Collins, who had neglected his own work, had got the sack from his two papers. He got employment years later from Father

Sweetman in his school in Gorey. I always thought he was the undoing of McBride. I got a legal separation shortly afterwards, having failed to get an amicable separation which would give me complete control of my son's upbringing. I then resigned my presidency of Inghini na hEireann and my secretaryship of the National Council.

I then gave up my house in Ireland and my visits home were fewer. I did not always bring the children with me. Willie Yeats, who had become a member of a rather snobbish Unionist club, told me once that he asked at this club "How is it McBride was treated so differently from Arthur Lynch"? The reply given him by someone in the club, whose name I don't remember, was "That is simple; it will keep Maud Gonne out of Ireland".

Sean was a very delicate child and his nervous constitution often caused me considerable worry. When he grew older I sent hir to a day school run by the Jesuits called St. Louis de Gonzague.

About 1912, I think, when I was in Ireland with him, an incident in St. Stephen's Green aroused my interest in the poverty of the children of Dublin. Sean was feeding the ducks in the pond from a bag of food he had brought for the purpose when some ragged children snatched the food that was thrown to the ducks. Sean ran to me in tears and made a complaint about them. I took the children to the D.B.C. and fed them with buns. I then went to the Franchise League, of which Mrs.Skeffington, Mrs. Connery and Mrs. Kettle were members, and enlisted their aid in organising school meals for the children. We went as a deputation to the Corporation who said they would co-operate wit us. A few days after we got a letter from them saying their legal adviser had informed them that they could not strike a rate for the purpose unless the School Meals for Necessitous Children Act were extended to Ireland. Without delay I went over to London and interviewed Stephen Gwynn who got the necessary legislation through the House of Commons. Meanwhile we had got together a Ladies Committee who did the wor voluntarily. I got several of the Inghini na hEireann girls

to help and we employed a paid cook. Connolly got the Trades' Union to vote us a weekly subscription. At first we had some difficulty with the school managers who were inclined to look upon the move as the thin edge of the wedge of socialism - the bogey of communism was not invented at that time. We hired donkeys and carts to bring the hot Irish stew to the various schools from the central kitchen which I think was in Francis St. Each child got a pint of stew. The people who ran the Penny Dinners helped us with advice as to where we could get the food at reasonable prices.

That continued during the labour troubles in 1913 and until the School Meals Act was extended to Ireland. Stephen Gwynn has a flattering chapter in his book of memoirs in reference to me. He calls it Beauty in Action. He says the ~~ere~~ preparations made here for the legislation were so complete that there was no difficulty in getting the bill through parliament. As far as I remember, it was chiefly the Franchise League women who prepared the bill - Helen Laird (now Mrs. C. Curran) was Secreta of our school feeding committee.

After the Bill was passed the Corporation set up a School Meals Committee and financed the scheme from the rates.

Mme. Markievicz, who was a great friend of mine, ran a Soup kitchen in Liberty Hall, while the workers' strike was on. She was a great woman and I always think she does not get the credit she should. Sean Ó Faolain and O'Casey make me angry with their sneers at her in their books. I had made her acquaintance as well as that of her husband, Casimir, in the house of George Russell. I had previously seen, but not spoken to her, at a ball in London at which she and her two sisters, who were as tall as myself, were pointed out to me. I was asked on that occasion whether all Irish girls were as tall as we. At A.E's she announced to me that they had come over to live here and she intended to devote herself to effecting the freedom of Ireland. I suggested she should join the Inghinidhe, adding

that I had a job for her straightaway. I gave over to her the boys' classes which we ran and which were too much for the Inghinidhe as the boys were so unruly. The Countess managed them wonderfully and we never had a day's trouble with them once she took them over. Out of that, I think, developed the organisation of the Fianna. I got to know her intimately and we were close friends.

In 1913 during one of my visits to Ireland, Sean, whom I had left in Paris, got seriously ill, and I hurried back to nurse him His doctor sent him to the Pyrenees after an operation for appendicitis. Helena Molony and Iseult were there with us. The war broke out while we were there and we had to stay put because all trains were commandeered for military purposes. The tocsin was sounded from all the hills calling the men to the colours. The Mayor of Argeles came up one day to our village and asked any women who knew anything about nursing to come and nurse the wounded as there were not enough trained nurses. The municipal hospital was so crowded that they converted the Casino into a hospital, but they had no nurses for it. I volunteered although I was not trained, but I had some experience. From that on people were not allowed to travel without passports. I could not leave my children alone in a war-invaded country as the Germans were advancing very rapidly. So I came down and took rooms in a tiny house in Argeles where I was nursing. Helena Molony eventually succeeded in getting back to Dublin.

The trains were arriving with the wounded and when Helena had left, Iseult began to nurse also. Sean ingratiated himself with the wounded soldiers by acting as a sort of page boy bringing messages, etc.

It was said that the French lost 50% of their wounded for the lack of trained nurses. I should mention that a short time previously, through the influence of the Freemasons, the nursing institutions had been laicised and the religious orders expelled from them. King Edward, during his frequent visits to France,

had succeeded in smoothing out the differences between the two branches of freemasonry, the Scottish Rite to which the English belonged and which up to then the French had looked upon as a sort of fifth column of the British Empire, and the Grand Orient to which the Franch belonged. Thus was effected the Entente Cordiale which, in my opinion and that of many of my French friends, made war inevitable.

When we had our hospital at Argeles working well, I was complimented on my organising power and I was asked if we would go on to other hospitals nearer the front. Iseult and I got the rank of Lieutenants to enable us to travel with the army, if required. We went to a place called Paris-Plage, where the wounded were sent direct from the front.

Early in 1917 I volunteered for night work in Paris as I hoped by that means to make some sort of contact with Ireland from which I was getting no news. In 1916 I had seen tiny paragraphs in the French papers "Riots in Dublin", "Rioters executed" and I had seen my husband's name among the latter. I had translated some of Pearse's poems and had them published in the Mercure de France which also contained a small editorial to the effect that these men could not be merely rioters.

I came back to Ireland in 1917 in August. When the Sinn Fein prisoners were released I was allowed to come as far as London on my passport. Willie Yeats, who had come over to Paris to help us, accompanied us to Victoria Station. There I was met by C.I.D. men who served me with a notice under D.O.R.A. that I was not to leave the London district. I took lodgings in King's Road, Chelsea, and there were always two C.I.D. men posted at the door.

I often visited Eva Gore-Booth at her flat - always followe by the C.I.D. men - and there she arranged the disguise. One da I went into the Turkish Baths and about five minutes after Sean, who had trailed the C.I.D., came in and told me they had gone

into a publichouse. They probably thought I would be a long time in the Baths and that they would be safe to relax their vigilance for a while. I hastened to Eva Gore-Booth's and put on my disguise which consisted of a short tweed skirt and a red hat. Eva and Miss Roper stuffed me with cushions to make me appear fat and as unlike myself as possible. Miss Roper brought me to the station and saw me off. Sean travelled in a separate carriage and we did not know each other on the train. Iseult, who, through Willie Yeats, had got a job as librarian in the School of Oriental Studies, stayed in London. Helena Molony, who I knew was coming, came to the boat to meet me, but did not recognise me. I saw her, but did not speak to her as there were C.I.D. men about. Sean and I took a cab and drove to Dr. Lynn's. A little time after Helena came in and said "Maebh has not arrived".

Next day Connie Markievicz came and took me to stay with her at Surrey House in Leinster Road. She asked me what work I would do and I said I would find something. First of all, I wanted to have a house. Before leaving France I had got together all my money and brought it with me. I bought 73 Stephen's Green and moved into it.

At that time Desmond Fitzgerald and Bob Brennan had an office in Kildare St. at which they did publicity work for the Republic and they asked me to help at that. I had considerable experience at publicity, having run a newsagency in Paris called l'Irlande Libre through which I had news published in several of the foreign papers. Any foreigners, press people, etc. who came over to Ireland for news used to come to me at my house.

One day I was taking an English M.P., Mr. King, who came over to learn about conditions in Ireland, to George Russell who was incensed over the interference with the creameries - Sean was with me - when we were suddenly surrounded by police in St. Stephen's Green and I was arrested. Notwithstanding Mr. King's protest, I was taken off and spent the night in the damp dungeon of the

Bridewell. My little Sean ran after the Black Maria in which I was taken and when it reached its destination, with wonderful sense he ran back home, got my big fur coat and brought it to me. He was not allowed to see me. He brought me my breakfast next morning, but again was not allowed to see me. Next day I was transferred to Arbour Hill military prison where I was the only woman prisoner. Count Plunkett and many others were there having been rounded up in connection with the 'German Plot! I protested at not having a woman attendant. I had a big row with the Governor in his office where there was only one chair on which I promptly sat down. He told me to get up, but I refused to do so. He sent for a guard and had me brought to the guardroom where the British tommies - more polite than the Governor - gave me a chair next the fire and offered me cigarettes. Sean had found his way up to Arbour Hill and asked to see me but was not allowed. He was told that if he went to Parkgate St. he might get a permit to see his mother. Instead of getting a permit he was immediately arrested and charged with the possession of arms, because in the pocket of his coat was the butt end of a revolver given him as a souvenir by a French soldier.

When it was getting dusk a covered lorry was brought and I was driven in it by a roundabout way to Kingstown. The lorry was full of tommies. I realised I was being deported and that they were taking precautions that it should not be known. So I pretended I could not jump down from the lorry as it was too high. While they were looking for a wooden case a crowd collected to see who were the prisoners and finally I departed to the sympathetic shouts of the crowd "Up Maud Gonne". I was in charge of a lieutenant or young captain and eight soldiers. I spent the night in Holyhead station and went on in the morning. When we arrived at Euston the Black Maria had not come for me and the crowd was gaping at the woman prisoner. The young captain took a taxi for the two of us and when we arrived at Holloway Prison he asked me to pay for the taxi if I had money. I naturally declined and, while I was being taken charge of by the warders,

I heard the altercation continuing as to who would pay for the taxi.

The Governor of Holloway informed me that I was being detaine in connection with the 'German plot' and when I protested that there was none, he said "You have no right to say there is no 'German plot'".

After some argument I got the Governor's permission to write to George Russell and enclose a cheque for £20 for my son's maintenance. The Governor again said "You have no right to say there is no 'German plot'".

Concerning that letter which the Governor gave me to understand was being sent - there was nothing in it except the referenc to Sean - it was returned to me six months later with the cheque when I eas leaving Holloway.

In that prison I found my two friends, Constance Markievica and Kathleen Clarke. The latter had been taken from a sick bed and looked very ill. We were allowed to associate at exercise. I told them that I intended to go on hunger strike, but unfortunately they said "If you do, we will". I knew it would kill Kathleen and I tried to dissuade her, but they resolved that we would all do the same thing. I therefore gave up on that occasion. But, as I will never remain in jail, I determined to find another way.

I had studied hypnotism in which I had always been interested I believe that the mind has considerable control over the body and as I noticed that the English had a curious habit of weighing their prisoners once a week, I started auto-suggestioning myself to get thin. I had to eat normally, yet in three months I lost three stone and became a living skeleton. They got alarmed and the doctor was trying to find the cause. I told him I had T.B.— I had been treated for it at the age of 21. They got the wind up and one evening the governor and matron came to my cell. She sai she came to help me pack as I was being sent to a nursing home.

During our stay in Holloway we discovered in a quite casual way that we were housed in the syphilis wing. The wardress came one day to conduct us to our baths, letting us bring our towels which were very small, with us. Connie, who was full of high spirits, ran along the corridor and, seeing some large towels in a cupboard, snatched one of them and took it with her to the bathroom. The wardress lost control of herself and screamed at her to let it go. "Didn't you Know that this is the syphilis wing and that your linen is washed apart". Connie dropped it at once.

A short time after the visiting justices came to see us and to inquire if we had any complaints. It turned out that I knew one of them. I had met him at dinner at my uncle's when I was staying with him some years before. He expressed regret at seeing me in such circumstances and asked if he could do anything for me. I said I thought it rather a strange thing for the British government to put us into a V.D. wing. He was evidently not aware of it. He got very angry and said that would be remedied at once. The next day the governor and matron came and apologised to us, adding that every precaution was taken to ensure us against infection. We were moved to other cells. The prison was very crowded and I do believe they had done their best to safeguard us.

The nursing home to which I was brought was run by a nice English woman. The day after my arrival she said "I want to tell you when you were brought here last night, the police said you were a prisoner and that I am responsible for you. But I told them that I am the head of a nursing home and that I am not responsible for you. Therefore you are free to do as you like, but there are two C.I.D. men at the door". I thought it very decent of her.

Meanwhile, Sean, who was released the day after I left Ireland, had resisted all attempts of George Russell to send him to school. He said "My mother is in London and I am going to get her out of jail". He got Gertrude Parry, Casement's cousin, who

lived in London, to bring him over there. She wanted to keep him in her house, but he joined Iseult in Woburn Buildings where Yeats had a flat which he had lent to Iseult, as he had just got married and was living in Ireland at my house in Stephen's Green. Sean went to the French and American embassies and asked them to use their influence to get his mother out of jail. They received him very nicely but I never heard that they succeeded in doing anything for me.

Sean resumed the shadowing of the C.I.D. and discovered that between 7 and 8 o'c. in the morning the coast was clear. He visited me every day and he informed me of this. One morning I went out at that hour, ostensibly to Mass, and did not return. I went to the house of a rich Englishman who had an Irish housekeeper whom Sean had somehow got to know. I took the role of her old granny and disguised myself in black with a black bonnet. She saw me off at Euston station. She asked some tommies who were in the carriage to look after me. I was saying my rosary in the corner. At Holyhead the tommies helped me into the boat and I arrived safely. I think I went to George Russell's and I was not molested again. I continued my work.

I had written to Arthur Griffith - I can't remember whether it was before my arrest or after my return - suggesting that we would have to have some organisation to help the people such as there had been during the time of the Land League. I think it must have been some time after my return, probably 1920. I got no reply from him, but he rushed in one day and asked "What do you suggest as a means of organising relief? I think you should go to Mrs. Erskine Childers who was very good in organising a relief fund for the Belgians during the war and enlist her aid" said he. He gave me a cheque for £10 to pay for typing &c. which I brought to Mrs. Childers. Erskine Childers used to come in while we were working in their house. I had not known him previously. She was crippled in some way and was lying on a sofa in her room where we worked.

We drew up appeals which took up several days. We composed one specially for America. We had no connection with the Prisoners Dependants' and National Aid Fund, although some of the members worked on both committees. We called our organisation the White Cross Fund and conducted all our propaganda in the open The Irish Nationalists in America contributed generously, but the money - about one and a half million pounds altogether - was brought over by six Quakers to ensure that the Fund would not be interfered with by the British. We could relieve victims of the war on either side. In fact, however, with very few exceptions, we only relieved the victims on our side. A large proportion of the money was devoted to those who suffered from the Belfast pogroms. Robert Barton's cousin, David Robinson, was the first secretary. I was so much connected with it that I was on the Executive, on the management committee and I was President of the Dublin Relief Committee. Mrs. O'eannt and Mrs. Clarke, who were members of the Volunteer Prisoners' Dependants and National Aid Fund, were also members of our Executive, so there was no overlapping between the two Funds in relieving distress. The Dublin Committee used to meet at my house in Stephen's Green so as to save office expenses. George Russell recommended Mr. James Douglas - a Quaker - as treasurer of the Fund. All the meetings of the Executive took place in the Mansion House; the Managing Committee met in Mr. Douglas's business premises in Camden St.

In addition to my activities in connection with the White Cross Fund I was also busy getting wounded into hospital. Some of these were cared for by private people whose expenses were defrayed out of the Fund. I cannot speak too highly of the generosity of the hospital personnel, especially the nuns and doctors who did all in their power for these men. Even before th fund was inaugurated and we had no money, we had no difficulty in getting our men treated. The Rev. Mother of the Mater, in reply to our expression of appreciation, said "We nurse for the love of God". Afterwards, when we found that the lay hospitals sent in

bills to the Treasurer of the Fund for the recoupment of their expenses, I suggested that all the hospitals should be treated alike in this respect and I went immediately to the Rev. Mothers of the Mater and Vincent's to ask them to send in bills for the earlier cases treated by them. It was with the greatest difficulty I got them to do it. One of them said "What we have done for these men is our contribution to the cause".

After the pogroms, refugees from Belfast - chiefly women and children in an indescribable state of terror - who had had their houses burnt by the Orange mob, poured into Dublin. A special office was opened here to deal with them and was under the supervision of David Robinson. The difficulty was to find accommodation for them. Mrs. Despard opened this house to them. At one time we had as many as five children here waiting to be supplied with artificial legs by the White Cross.

The I.R.A. took over the Fowler Hall in Rutland Square where the Black Presbytery of the Orange Institute used to meet, to house some of the refugees.- That was after the Treaty. They fet. fetched me to come and help look after the women and children and especially to provide beds. The Provisional Government had already taken over some of the military barracks, so I went to Arthur Griffith at the offices of the Provisional Government in the University Buildings to ask him if he would send us down twenty beds from the barracks which had been taken over. To my surprise, Griffith, who was looking very worried, said "They had no right to take over that, it will cause trouble". But I replie "What more suitable place than the house belonging to the Orange-men could be found to house the victims of the Orange terror?" I pressed the matter of beds and he did not say yes or no, but said "They should not be there". I must admit that the Provision Government took over a very much more suitable place, Marlborough Hall, Glasnevin.

I went back to Fowler Hall and as we were putting the children to bed on some mattresses on the floor, a lorry passed

rapidly up Rutland Square and fired several volleys at the house - I think it must have been a machine gun - and sent those poor refugee children into hysterics. My interpretation of the incident is that it must have been some Orangemen who commandeered a lorry to do this. I went down to the hall where an I.R.A. guard was stationed and he said "There is the Provisional Government now for you". I said "I am not so sure, did you see them?". He said he did not.

The White Cross allowed 10/- per week lodging money for each of the refugees. In many of the poorer houses where charitable people took them in and gave them beds, the refugees had to be out of them in the day time, so they were obliged to wander the streets in misery.

n The White Cross took a large house in North Great George's St. and I was given two rooms in it for a workroom. In a short time I had about 100 girls working at sprigging, knitting, &c. I arranged to market their products and appointed a manageress. I got some very good French patterns for underclothing and children's garments. We had them displayed at the R.D.S. shows and they sold very well.

Then the White Cross closed down which, in my opinion, it should not have done, as I think there were still some funds unexpended. I shall lend you the published report of the organisation. It shows that the last Balance Sheet presented is dated August 1922. I do not know how the unexpended funds were disposed of. There was a supplomentary report which I shal search for and lend you also.

I continued my workrooms for the girls, but shortly after moved into premises in Harcourt St. The numbers declined as the girls returned to Belfast. I took in Dublin girls too. We defrayed our expenses and paid the girls' wages from the proceeds of the sales.

Signed: Maud Gonne MacBride

Witness: Sm Crosáin

Date: 1st Oct 1949