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ROINN COSANTA.

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STATEMENT BY WITNESS

DOCUMENT NO. W.S. 404

Witness

Mrs. McWhinney (Linda Kearns),
29 Gardiner's Place,
Dublin.

Identity

Member of Sinn Fein;
Lecturer in First Aid to Cumann na mBan post Easter Week, 1916;

Courier Dublin-Sligo 1917-1920.

Subject

(a) National activities 1914-1922;
(b) Dublin - North side, Easter 1916;
(c) Despatch work, Dublin-Sligo, 1917-1920;
(d) Civil War, and death of Cathal Brugha.

Conditions, if any, stipulated by Witness

Nil

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Form B S M 2

ORIGINAL

STATEMENT OF MRS. McWHINNEY (Linda Kearns)

The first thing that made me interested in national politics was a visit I paid, about 1911 or 1912, as a trained nurse to the typhus hospital in Belmullet, where my sister was nursing the patients. There was an epidemic of that disease in Mayo and I was horrified at the conditions prevailing in the hospital. It was not a hospital at all; it was only an old barn that was converted to this purpose. You could see the sky through the ceiling and walls and the patients were lying in filth on the floor. It occurred to me that it was time that the government that was responsible for that state of affairs should be expelled from the country.

Subsequently in Dublin, by chance, I met Tom McDonagh, who was a patient in Miss Quinn's Home at 27 Mountjoy Square, where I was visiting a friend who was a patient there too. That was in 1915. I met him a couple of times again before the Rising. I began to describe to him what I had seen in Belmullet and he preached an eloquent sermon to me about the misdeeds of the British government in Ireland. In the interval, of course, I had made the acquaintance of the Gaelic League and the language movement and had begun learning Irish. I attended private classes somewhere in Baggot St. I visited Tourmakeady three summers in succession and was very enthusiastic about studying Irish.

I was never a member of Cumann na mBan, but I was asked by them to lecture to them on First Aid. I did this in the Ranelagh Branch which, I think, met at Cullenswood House, and at the Central Branch in 25 Parnell Square. Molly Hyland and Miss Hoban used to be in the Ranelagh Branch, and Mrs. Clarke, Mrs. Ceannt, Miss O'Rahilly and many others whose names I don't remember were in the Central Branch. This was after the 1916 Rising.

My first direct association with the Republican movement was on the first night of the Rising - Monday - when John O'Mahony, who lived beside me, came in and asked me to open a hospital for the wounded Volunteers. He issued me with a pass which enabled me to get into the G.P.O. if required. It was signed by de Valera and merely said "Please admit Nurse Kearns". I think it was intended that I would act as a liaison officer between Boland's Mill and the G.P.O. The only time I made use of it during Easter Week was when I brought a clean shirt to John O'Mahony.

I opened the hospital in an empty house in North Great Georges St. belonging to some titled lady. I got bandages, dressings and disinfectants from a chemist's shop called Toomey's, who were good republicans. I put a Red Cross in the window. The only casualties we treated were two British soldiers who came in to have their hands dressed. A British officer came next morning to close down the hospital and when I protested, he replied that the wounded could be treated in the Mater and Jervis St. hospitals.

I walked around the streets then during the week to see if I could give assistance to any wounded Volunteers. On the Friday, accompanied by a boy who was staying in O'Mahony's Hotel, and who had seen the body of O'Rahilly lying in a lane off Moore St., I went carrying a stretcher to rescue the body. We got through the barricade at the Parnell St. end of Moore St., but a British officer who was standing beside the body said there was no use removing him as he was quite dead; so we had to return without achieving our object. I always regretted that I was not able to do something for that brave man.

The next thing I remember was that Mick Collins and Diarmuid O'Hegarty called to see me early in 1917. They asked me to carry messages to a man called White who lived

at a place called Ballinabole about three miles from Collooney, Co. Sligo. The messages were transmitted by White to Alec McCabe, who was on the run at the time. Afterwards, I found out that these messages were connected with the I.R.B. organisation. I also was sent to Kilroy's at Newport, Co. Mayo. On some occasions I brought back little bags of bullets that were sent up from Sligo by Alec McCabe. I always delivered them to Diarmuid O'Hegarty at different places.

This went on for several years. On one occasion I was ~~ser~~ sent to the fair of Ballinasloe with a letter to a man whose name I can't remember. He gave me a letter to bring back to Diarmuid O'Hegarty. I was able to carry on this work because to a certain extent I was my own boss. I had no regular employment. My sister and I kept a nurses' home in Gardiner Place. We did not normally take patients, but Mrs. Clarke stayed with us for six weeks when she had the breakdown after she came back from jail.

I always travelled by train and on one occasion I was carrying a box of eggs which had been given me at Teeling's Monument, Collooney, by a boy called Marren, a messenger from Alec McCabe. Our train was held up at Longford station by the Black and Tans. I was taken out and searched, but I left the 'box of eggs' in the train. I returned to my carriage where I found the box untouched. The Black and Tans evidently never suspected that an egg box could contain anything but eggs. I think I delivered this message to John O'Mahony.

After this I bought a new car and then I was told to go to Frank Carty at the Harp and Shamrock Hotel in Sligo, which at the time was the rendezvous for all republicans. From that on I was taking orders from Frank's brigade. Both Frank and Billy Pilkington seemed to be in command of that brigade. I had a good deal to do with Billy. I was used now chiefly for carrying guns before and after an engagement. It seemed

as if a couple of flying columns were using the same material. I would bring them to Chaffpool one day and perhaps the next day back to Grange. I did this regularly in broad daylight without ever being molested by police or Black and Tans until the end of October 1920.

After the Cliffoney (Grange) ambush on 25th October in which four policemen were killed and two badly wounded, who later died, and all their guns and equipment taken, I arrived in my car, collected the guns from a young I.R.A. b boy called Feeney and handed them over on to another I.R.A. man.

A few nights after that I drove over to Dromore West between Sligo and Ballina with a few tins of petrol to meet the flying column. I handed over the petrol to them to burn the barracks. The effort was fruitless, as the grey stone building did not go on fire. They used a stick with cotton wool steeped in petrol tied to it. It was not effective; they would have required an explosive bomb.

I did a good deal of messages that week; one, a dispatch to a boy called Brennan, who was in command in Tubbercurry; one to Mr. Mulcahy, the technical teacher in Sligo Vocational School, of which he afterwards became head-master. His daughter subsequently married a German student in Trinity who had returned to Germany before the war broke out and was prevented by the British from returning here. She followed him there and only returned two or three years ago. I heard that she met Frank Ryan in Germany where he died of consumption and that she knows where he is buried, as she was at his funeral.

Michael Nevin, the present Lord Mayor of Sligo, and at that time Manager of Connolly's licensed premises, was the key man for dispatches. If I could not contact the

Volunteers, I brought my messages to him.

On the Saturday after Bloody Sunday (21st November 1920) I got a message from Marren to report with my car at 7 p.m. at the Harp and Shamrock, Sligo, and there to await further instructions. I went there and waited and a boy came in with a dispatch which he showed me. He was to accompany Nurse Kearns to a certain crossroads on the road to Lough Gill. On the way out of Sligo we stopped at a house and a boy came out with two guns which he placed in the back of the car. We went along to the crossroads named - I forget now which one it was - and there three boys were waiting for us - Jim Devins, who was in command; Eugene Gilbride and Andy Conway. They were waiting for a car to take them to Frenchpark to attack the Auxiliary headquarters there. They had a lot of equipment with them including some revolvers. I was to take all the arms and equipment. We hung around for about an hour but their car did not turn up.

Jim Devins then took me down a little way along the road by the shore of Lough Gill and he said to me: "Have you taken the oath?" I said "No". "You had better take it now, not that it will make any difference. If you wanted to give us away you could have done so long ago. But those are my orders". I repeated the oath after him. It was a thrilling and unforgettable moment in the dark of the night by the side of the road.

We came back to the others and he decided that I had better take the men as well as the equipment. We all got in and I drove away back to Sligo. Feeney directed me through the back streets out of the town and he left us when we had left the town behind us.

He had barely jumped off the car when we ran straight into a lorry load of Auxiliaries. They shouted: "Halt!"

I said to Jim Devins: "Shall I rush through? I would have room to do so". He said: "No", and I halted. They rushed at us. They were wild with drink and started firing all round, shouting "Shoot them". We were lined up against a wall. Orders and counter-orders were issued: "Shoot them; line them up; put them in the lorry". I was put back in my car with two Auxiliaries and told to drive back to Sligo Barracks. The Volunteers were put into the lorry, where four other prisoners had already been placed. These included Dr. Conlon and a man called Flynn. I cannot now remember the names of the others, but one of them is now at the head of the Pearl Insurance Co. in Tralee.

When we arrived at the barracks there was chaos. I was brought in first, then the boys, then the equipment, and quantities of drink that the Auxiliaries had collected. The police recognised the rifles that we had captured. It was then they saw red; they beat us up, calling us murderers. Jim Devins and Andy Conway got me into a corner and asked me what line of defence I would take. Jim reminded me of a new order that anyone found with a gun could be shot at sight. I said I would say that everything in the car, including guns and ammunition, was mine and that I only gave a lift to three boys I overtook on the road. I thought they would not shoot a woman. I stuck to this story to the end, and I think it saved their lives.

The Auxiliaries adopted a devilish plan, probably to wear down my nerves. They took the boys out one by one and we heard a shot each time and we thought it was the end. I did not see the three again during the night. The Auxiliaries kept asking me where we were going when they met us. I kept answering that I was going to meet boys at a certain place but they were not the boys who were in the car with me. Eventually, an officer came in to me with an overcoat over

his pyjamas - he may have been an Auxiliary - and spoke very nicely to me. He said if I told where I was going and whom I was to meet I would be allowed to go home and nobody would ever hear about the episode, adding that I was damned unlucky to have got myself into such a stew. I still refused to give any information.

When he left, the R.I.C. took me on again and one of them, a notorious fellow nicknamed Spud Murphy, gave me a bad time. He beat me about the head and chest and broke one of my front teeth. A real Cockney Black and Tan who was among them protested against this conduct. He said: "Leave 'er h-alone; she might be as h-innocent as the child h-unborn"

After this, they put me in the only place they had available - the mortuary - and locked me up.

Next morning I was taken out to the square and, to my great relief, I saw all the boys again. I thought they had all been killed. We were all brought to Sligo gaol and kept there for a week. One very cold morning about 4 a.m. we were hauled out by the military and taken by lorry to Mullaghmore and placed in a destroyer. There was no pier in Mullaghmore them and we were lowered one by one by rope from a cliff into a rowboat which brought us out to the destroyer. They had evidently some queer ideas about us. At first they thought I was Madame Markievicz. They kept asking me who I was. I had nothing on me to indicate who I was. I had been searched in the police barracks by the Black and Tans who left me minus my watch, a gold ring and a leather coat; also, I never saw my car again, which was almost new, as I had it only a short time.

We cruised round towards Buncrana for two or three days. We were kept a day and a night off Buncrana, I suppose until they were able to contact someone to take us ashore. Very

early in the morning we were marched from Buncrana to Derry. After marching for several hours-I was handcuffed to a military officer - a lorry picked us up and that is how we finished the journey to Derry gaol. We had been well-treated on the destroyer. The sailor boys provided me with towel, soap, nail file, &c. and I had nothing to complain about from the military too on the journey from Buncrana to Derry apart from the fatigue I endured from the long march. I was a fit, active woman then and well able to walk.

I was a week in Derry gaol where I was the only woman prisoner. There was no accommodation there for women and the Governor said he was a very foolish man to take me in. He put me into the hospital which had no patients at the time. I was quite comfortable there. A nurse, who was a friend of mine, living in the town, sent me in my meals from a restaurant. The warder, who was looking after me was an old man, and he brought me an iron, so I washed and ironed all my clothes and was quite happy. After about 10 days I was hauled out again early in the morning to the station where I saw the boys again.

We were brought to Belfast gaol. The boys were taken in, but the Governor refused to take me because it was not a female prison. He shut the door on myself and the young officer who was in charge of about twenty soldiers. The officer, who was considerably embarrassed, said: "What shall I do with you?" I said: "Let me go home". He replied: "I wish to God I could". I was still handcuffed to him. He sent off one of the soldiers for orders and when the soldier came back I was taken to Victoria Barracks. The officer did well to keep me handcuffed as I would certainly have taken a chance to escape. I knew Belfast and had some friends there.

I was kept a night in Victoria Barracks and sent the following day with a group of women criminals, street women &c., to Armagh gaol. The police were in charge of us on this journey.

I was a good while in Armagh gaol, I cannot recollect how long. The Governor was a woman, very competent and very humane. She said to me"As far as I am concerned, you are innocent until you are proved guilty. You can do what you like as long as you don't escape. It is my duty to prevent that". She asked me for my word of honour that I would not attempt to escape. I refused to give it. She did not get angry. In fact, she was so nice to me that it was the first time I broke down during that whole escapade. I put my head on the table and cried.

The doctor was quite different. He was a poor type. Every prisoner was examined on arrival at the gaol. When I went down for examination I, being a nurse and accustomed to salute the doctors I had to do with, said "Good morning, doctor". He grunted and said: "I am not accustomed to 'good morning' from prisoners".

I was in Armagh quite a good while. I ordered my dinner to be sent in every day from the hotel and I was very comfortable. I had a very good room with everything I wanted. The Governor repeated that she wished me to understand she counted me innocent until I was tried, but she would prevent me from escaping if she could. I had great admiration for her humanity and discipline. One other political prisoner, Eileen McAdam, came. She had been tried in connection with something she published in the Derry Journal of which her father was owner and editor, and was sentenced to a fortnight in gaol. We used to talk at exercise which I was allowed to take whenever and for as long as I liked. I had several

visits including one from Father McKeown, the Parish Priest of Carrickmacross, whom I had met at Lough Derg on a pilgrimage. Some time in February my father died and I asked for parole to go to the funeral, but was refused. I felt very bitter about that.

Some time towards the end of February I was brought to Belfast for my trial by courtmartial. Four British officers formed the Court. I again met my three Volunteer friends who were tried by the same Court. They were Andy Conway, Jim Devins and Eugene Kilbride and, in a room in the courthouse, I met the young man who had been sent down, probably by Diarmuid O'Hegarty and Mick Collins, to defend me. I think he was Cecil Lavery. The Dublin people wanted to keep me unknown and not identified with the movement.

As already stated, there was an order in force that any person found in possession of a gun was to be shot. The trial went on all day and in the evening the President of the Court announced to me that the sentence would be promulgated in due course. I had given my name in Armagh prison, so they knew now who I was.

I was brought back again under heavy military escort to Armagh prison and at the end of about three weeks, on 11th March 1921, there was fearful excitement. Lorry loads of military came down from Belfast. They marched into the central hall of the gaol and lined up two deep making a formidable display of force. I was brought down by two wardresses and was placed in the very middle bwteeen the two lines. A young officer stepped out and read me my sentence from a huge manuscript. It was a most impressive affair. The gist of it was that whereas and wherefore I was found guilty on twenty-six counts, I was sentenced to ten years' penal servitude. The main charge against me was that I was an accessory to the murder of six policemen. The officer's

voice was trembling and he seemed more upset than I was.

The case was well organised by our side. At no time could the authorities prove that the three men had been in possession of the arms that were the subject of the charge. However, they got thirteen years' penal servitude each.

I was brought back to my cell and from that on there was always a heavy police guard in charge of me whenever I went in the grounds.

A fortnight after that somebody from Dublin arranged an attempt at an escape. One Sunday after Mass the curate sent for me to the sacristy. He told me that the following Wednesday would be a fair day in Armagh. He told me to rwmain in the grounds all day except at meal times when I would have to go in. At a certain point of the surrounding wall, which he indicated to me, a rope would be thrown over. I was to hold on to it and I would be pulled up. I agreed. On Tuesday afternoon, however, an escort of twenty police and a sergeant came and took me in a lorry to Belfast where they put me on board a boat for Liverpool where I was imprisoned in Waltham Prison.

I have very little impression of that prison except an all pervading smell of raspberry jam from the adjoining factory. The first day I refused to put on the prison clothes. Canon St. John came in and told me that Madam Markievicz and others had been there and worn the clothes. He blessed them and I submitted to putting them on. I was weak and ill and felt unequal to a further struggle. The food was bad and the prison was dirty and badly kept. Every prisoner was locked up at 5 o'clock. You would have to be dying to be let out after that hour. They asked you were you dying if you wanted to be let out. We could not go to the lavatory, with the result that in the morning when the cell

were opened there was a pestilential smell in the corridor. We were provided with a bucket in the cell.

The next thing I remember was the arrival of Eileen McGrane whom I now met for the first time. They cleverly prevented us from associating. We were weighed regularly and if we fell below a certain weight we were moved to hospital, so that it happened that when I was in the hospital she was not, and when she was in hospital I was back in the cells. She had to wear the clothes too. We had very little opportunity of talking.

I was told by one of the wardresses that the Custom House was burned.

Some time after that Eileen was brought back to Mountjoy and I demanded to be returned to my own country. I remembered a man came down from the Home Office to interview me. To meet him, I had to put on my Sunday garb - which included a white apron and a cap with frills and a white kerchief round my neck.

He asked me what I had to complain of; I said the food. I had previously told one of the visiting justices that the cabbage was not properly washed and I had found a worm in it which I had kept to show him. He said I got more than the regulations provided for; I had got meat as well as vegetables. I am afraid I lost my temper and threw the worm at him saying: "you may have it". I also told the man from the Home Office that I could not have a bath as the prisoners with venereal disease were using the same bath and I had seen the signs of the disease in it. His only comment was "Yes, yes" and I got no satisfaction or no further reply from the Home Office.

I then informed the Governor that I would go on hunger

strike and would remain on it until I was returned to my own country. I went on hunger strike and was in the hospital in bed. I think it continued for about 10 days and then I was told to get up, that I was being taken to Ireland. I did not feel too bad because I was able to dress myself - with help - in my own clothes. The wardresses were all decent, a lot of them were Irish girls, but as the discipline was very severe, they could do very little for me.

Canon St. John was a charming man and did all he could for me. He brought me in my letters which were addressed to him. He brought them in books which he lent me to read. During my stay at the prison I embroidered a complete set of altar cloths for him. He brought me the materials and the patterns. I thought it was very wise of him to do this. It kept me occupied and kept me from brooding.

On the 14th September 1921 I was brought to Mountjoy accompanied by two plain clothes policemen and two wardresses in plain clothes. We travelled by Holyhead and Dunlaoghaire. I have very little recollection of the journey, except the joy I felt on coming in to Dunlaoghaire.

I arrived in Mountjoy where I was given a great welcome. I was given a lovely tea, the first decent one I had had for a long time. I was very sick and was put into the hospital. Eileen McGrane, and K. Brady were in the hospital too.

Altogether there were nine women political prisoners; the three of us, Eithne Coyle, Miss Keogh, who was Father Sweetman's housekeeper, Miss. Burke, a post office worker from Limerick, who had been sentenced for giving information contained in telegrams to the I.R.A. There were three young girls from Cork whose names I can't remember. They had been working thinning turnips in a field near where an ambush took place and they were arrested, although they had nothing

to do with the ambush. I don't think they were even in Cumann na mBan.

We remained there some time and met together at exercise. We discussed everything including the possibility of escape. We heard that peace negotiations were going on.

Then I suggested to Eileen McGrane that I would try to organise an escape and asked would she come too. She said she wouldn't and so did K. Brady. Eileen also asked me not to take the three Cork girls as she considered them too young and the plan too dangerous.

The situation was this: Fr. Dominick of Church St., who was in prison in England at this time, gave a boy called Burke from Silvermines who was in prison with him and was now being released, a letter to bring to me - he had several letters for other people. The letter to me contained a recommendation of the boy who wanted to get in touch with the Volunteer authorities. I, as well as others, assumed that the boy was a political prisoner, but we afterwards found that he had been convicted for some crime connected with a bank. He called at my house and a nurse brought him up to Mountjoy Prison to see me. It was he suggested that he could help me to escape. He was able to contact one of the male warders who brought me notes from him. I was at the time in the hospital which was over the male prison hospital. I got a parcel and a thermos flask of hot tea and in the tea was a lump of dental wax with which I was to get the impression of the keys concerned, i.e., the key of my cell and the key of the door leading from the corridor to the grounds. For this I had to get transferred from the hospital to my cell, so I promptly got well and was released from the hospital.

I took Ethna Coyle into my confidence and she agreed to help me in every way she could. During exercise when the wardress was on duty with us, Ethna talked to the wardress - her name was Waters - while I took the impression of the key which was dangling at her side. The same key opened all the cells on that landing. I sent that impression out to Burke and he had the key made and sent it in to me. It fitted perfectly, but as it turned out, I never had to use it because at the time arranged for my escape the cell doors were open. The other key was more difficult and I got the impression by bribing another wardress called Dunne.

The next thing was to decide at what particular spot we would get over the wall. Burke arranged that we should get out opposite the laundry door - we used to exercise between the wall and the laundry. Now, the question was, who would come with me. Ethna Coyle, Miss Keogh and Miss Burke agreed to come with me. The day and the hour were fixed by Burke who had, meanwhile, sent me in the key of the corridor also. Between six and seven in the evening we were allowed freedom in the corridor and I organised a football match for the evening of our escape. I had already found out that if we made plenty of noise, the wardresses relaxed their vigilance.

While playing football on the appointed evening, we pushed our ball down towards the door and Eileen McGrane promised to keep up the noise, I opened the door quietly and the four of us slipped out and raced towards the appointed spot on the wall. We hid in the doorway of the laundry until the sentry who was on duty had passed to the other side of his round, which left us sufficient time to effect our escape. There was a revolving light on the corner of the wall which flashed intermittently and we

succeeded in dodging that too. I threw a stone over the wall - I had been practising that for a week and was now well able to do it. A strong string with a piece of lead attached was thrown over to me. I called the other three and we started to pull. Unfortunately, the ladder which was attached to the string on the other side was too heavy and we pulled too close to the wall, with the result that the string was cut by the sharp stones and the whole thing fell back on the other side leaving me with the piece of lead in my hand. We all ran back to the laundry doorway and waited until the sentry had passed again. I again went back to the wall and threw another stone over it. I got the string back again, this time with a penknife attached. We all pulled carefully and well out from the wall. Our time was getting short and I was beginning to worry. This time the ladder came down with a flop. Although it was night we had sufficient light to see it.

We had already agreed to climb up in accordance with the length of our sentence. I, having got 10 years, went first; the next was Miss Burke, who was serving three years, then Miss Keogh and finally Miss Coyle, who had only eighteen months to serve. She said she would not mind even if she failed to escape. During this whole time we never spoke one word, which shows what a state of tension we were in. The ladder was so close to the wall, although the other girls did their best to keep it out as far as possible, that the knuckles of my hands were skinned and bleeding and when I got to the top I had to slither down a rope which skinned and flayed the inside of my hands. The others had the same experience.

Outside the wall I found Burke, a young fellow called Ryan, a brother of the priest in Dominick St., who had made the ladder of window cord. He had tested it carefully before

he let it out. Ryan was a friend of Mick Collins and must have been one of his squad because he had a motor-bike belonging to them. I also found Nurse O'Connor, a great friend of mine and of Surgeon St. John Gogarty. Ryan conducted me along the canal and over the bridge at Doyle's corner where I found Doctor Gogarty and Dr. McLaverty with two cars. I got into Gogarty's car and he had orders to wait for a second passenger. Ryan ran back and appeared in a minute with Miss Burke and we drove off.

Dr. McLaverty waited for the other two and drove them away. Dr. Gogarty brought us two to his aunt's house - Miss O'Rourke - in Earlsfort Terrace. He left us there and rushed off. He came back in a short time with some headed notepaper from the Shelbourne Hotel. He said there was a vacancy for a matron in the Meath Hospital and I was to apply for it. He told me what to say, principally that I had vast experience of British institutions. I obeyed his instructions, but I was not surprised that I did not get the post. Although Dr. Gogarty had the courage to propose me under my name, he found no seconder, but I am certain he got a great kick out of the whole situation, especially when he saw the British military raiding the Shelbourne Hotel the following day.

We remained three days at Miss O'Rourke's. Burke visited me twice during that time. The third night Dr. Gogarty came back and said he had been talking to Cope at the Castle, jeering him for not being able to hold his women. Cope said it would be all right; he would be able to catch them again as they could not resist the attraction of Grafton St. Meantime I learned that Miss Keogh and Miss Coyle were perfectly safe in Dr. McLaverty's house.

The next time I saw Dr. Gogarty I told him we would

have to leave town as there was a reward offered for our capture. Burke kept in touch with us, and Dr. McLaverty arranged with Joseph O'Connor, afterwards Chairman of the Pensions Board, and then Circuit Court Judge in Cork, to take us down to the Convent of the Cross and Passion in Kilcullen. Miss Burke, Miss Coyle and myself went there, but Miss Keogh decided to go home to Fr. Sweetman's school in Gorey.

We were in Kilcullen about a week when young Ryan arrived on a motor bicycle to say that Mick Collins had been informed that the Castle had got word of where we were from Burke who evidently was weak and could not resist the temptation of the reward. I afterwards learned that the I.R.A. put him on board ship and sent him out of the country.

We went up at dusk to the curate's house - I forget his name - and he drove us straight down to an I.R.A. camp at Ducket's Grove, Carlow. A young man called Stack from Listowel, who afterwards was a superintendent of the Guards and is now dead, was in charge there. I think about the third day we were in the camp the Parish Priest arrived. He was shocked at the idea that three women would remain where there were so many men. I explained to him that I was a trained nurse and that there were nurses in charge of the hospitals in every army in the world and that I saw nothing wrong in remaining there. We won him round to our point of view. We set to work and made a great job of the place which had been commandeered by the Volunteers. There was beautiful furniture in it, but the house was in a disorderly condition. We organised an officers' mess, an emergency dispensary and we had quite a lot to do in it as there were 400 men in occupation.

One morning we got eleven men who had escaped from

Kilkenny gaol by a tunnel they had made and had walked all the way to Ducket's Grove. They were very exhausted and ill when they arrived and we had to nurse them back to health.

We organised concerts and helped to keep discipline and to keep the boys happy while they were in training. We remained there until the Treaty was signed. Poor Stack was very upset about the Treaty. He knew it would be a failure.

I have occasionally seen Dr. Gogarty since the kind act he did for me. The last time I saw him was about five years ago when he returned from the Bahamas, where he is living, for a holiday. He told me he was consultant physician to the Duke of Windsor. When I told a mutual acquaintance who is a doctor too, he said "more likely, he is the Court jester".

I came back to town the night the Treaty was signed.

I took part in the Civil War, starting at Barry's Hotel, and going from there to the Gresham. When the various groups were ordered out of the Gresham, some going with de Valera, and some with Madam Markievicz, there remained only 16 men with Cathal Brugha, Dr. Brennan, Art O'Connor, Katty Barry, Muriel McSweeney and myself. We held the place for two days after the rest had gone. Then Cathal asked Art O'Connor to take out the 16 men, Katty Barry and Muriel McSweeney. Art, who was not a soldier but a Red Cross man, took off his Red Cross badge and led them out. They were captured immediately outside the door. One boy refused to go and hid. He was brought before Cathal Brugha. Cathal asked him did he not know the punishment for a soldier who disobeyed orders on the field of battle. The boy replied: "I do, but I would rather be shot by you, Sir, than leave you". Cathal said: "Won't you go for love of me?" The

boy saluted and left. I wish I knew that boy's name.

I had a conversation with Cathal about two hours before the end. I asked him was he acting wisely in going to his death. "We have too many unnecessary deaths already" I said. He replied: "Civil war is so serious that my death may bring its seriousness home to the Irish people. I feel that if it put a stop to the Civil War it would be a death worth while". At that time we were alone and the place was burning all round us. It was the most poignant moment of my life. We kept moving back from the smoke until we reached the back door. We went out into the lane. Cathal had a revolver in each hand and he kept on shouting "No surrender". He was shot in the hip, the femoral artery being severed. I was beside him, but was not hit. To give the Free Staters their due, I don't think they wanted to kill him and aimed low. But as he was a small man, he was struck higher than they expected and in a vital part.

The ambulance came at once and took him to the Mater. He lived for two days. I blamed the hospital for not getting more speedy aid, as he had not lost much blood up to his arrival there. I had kept my fingers on the artery, which stopped the flow of blood. He was not taken to the theatre until an hour after his arrival and it was another hour before the doctor arrived. I stood by him for an hour and then I collapsed and fainted and the same ambulance that took Cathal to the Mater brought me back to my home. Meanwhile his life blood had been flowing away and when the doctors attended to him it was too late to save him. He lived for two days.

After Cathal's death I went out to Brittas where the fighting was going on, and brought Harry Boland in to the funeral. When it was over I drove him part of the way to Skerries. He was picked up on the road and brought the rest of the way by someone else. He was shot that night in his bed by the Free Staters.

I was sent with Muriel McSweeney by de Valera to America, and we were in Cork, waiting for our boat, when the city fell to the Free Staters.

It would take too long to describe my experiences in America and in Australia, which I visited later.

Signed: Linda Kearns Macbride

Date: 6th July 1950.

Witness: S. mac Cormaic