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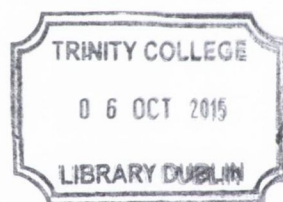
Internment of the Anti-Treaty I.R.A. in the Free State 1922-4

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**Submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy to the Department of
History, Trinity College Dublin.**

2015



Thesis 10910

Declaration

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Summary

This thesis is a study of Anti-Treaty I.R.A. internment during the Irish Civil War, a period of Irish history, which marked a bitter end to the revolutionary years. On the eve of the Truce in July 1921, there were some 6,129 prisoners interned as a result of their activities during the War of Independence.¹ After the signing of the Anglo-Irish Treaty, on 6 December 1921, the British Government granted these internees a general amnesty. The political division that followed in the wake of the Treaty resulted in armed opposition to the new state and the rapid deterioration of law and order. In response, the new government implemented internment wholesale, as a means of containing the growing crisis. Within a brief few months, as the country descended into civil war, the new state's jail and camps were to fill once more, and with twice as many prisoners as the Pre-Truce period. The 13,000 men and women, who were arrested on suspicion of their 'hostile' or 'irregular' intentions, were to play an important role in the overall outcome of the civil war. The Free State used this body of prisoners as a means of control and the manner in which the new government wielded this power would have drastic consequences, both outside and inside of the prison system. The introduction of emergency legislation, executions, counter-propaganda and censorship would directly affect internees in the new state and the outcome would be severe for both prisoners' and their families. Civil war internees, however, were well versed in the art of prison warfare, having spent much time incarcerated under the British Administration. Throughout these years, Irish prisoners had developed their own methods in order to combat the establishment and, on a number of occasions, had managed to successfully destabilise the prison system which sought to confine them. Successive hunger-strikes, riots and prison escapes presented the British Authorities with endless problems in the years 1912-1921.² During the civil war, Anti-Treatyites once again attempted to re-introduce these tactics. However, by 1922, internees faced an administration which contained veteran prisoners of the old regime who had not forgotten the strategies of their revolutionary past. This thesis will analyse these issues in the wider context of the civil war and discuss how internment became central to government policy, in order to ensure the Free State's survival.

¹ William Murphy, *Political Imprisonment and the Irish, 1912-1921* (Oxford, 2014), p. 1.

² William, *Political Imprisonment and the Irish, 1912-1921*, p. 215.

Abbreviations

AARIR	American Association for Recognition of the Irish Republic
BL	British Library
CAB	Cabinet Papers
DCLA	Dublin City Library and Archive
DÉD	Dáil Éireann Debates
DDA	Dublin Diocesan Archive
DIB	Dictionary of Irish Biography
FIN	Department of Finance
GPB	General Prisons Board
HA	Home Affairs
HO	Home Office
ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross
IRA	Irish Republican Army
IRPDF	Irish Republican Prisoners' Dependents Fund
JUS	Department of Justice
KJA	Kilmainham Jail Archives
MA	Military Archives
NAI	National Archives of Ireland
NIPD	Northern Irish Parliamentary Debates
NLI	National Library of Ireland
PRONI	Public Records Office Northern Ireland
TCD	Trinity College Dublin
TNA	The National Archives U.K.
UCDA	University College Dublin Archives
WO	War Office

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Introduction

In November 1924, President Cosgrave ordered a general amnesty for the remaining Anti-Treaty prisoners interned as a result of the Irish Civil War.¹ The war had ceased nineteen months previously and over the course of the state's brief existence, two elections had produced Pro-Treaty Sinn Féin/Cumann na nGaedheal majorities and a boundary commission established to determine the precise delineation of the border between Northern Ireland and the Free State. These rapid political changes were accompanied by the menacing turmoil of civil war, which saw the emergence of draconian legislation, violent confrontation between the government and Anti-Treaty forces, the destruction of private and public property, various military and civilian casualties and the widespread internment of government opponents. Those who were released by President Cosgrave in November 1924 were the final trickle of what had been a sea of over 13,000 prisoners interned during the course of the conflict. The objective of this thesis is to examine the political and social repercussions of Anti-Treaty internment during and in the wake of the civil war. This period has been the subject of various studies, providing a valuable insight into the nature of hostilities. However, despite the thousands of individuals arrested and detained, a definitive history of the complexities of civil war internment has yet to be written. Prisoners played an integral role in the wider context of the war, and for those who were interned; their incarceration became a political, social and economic burden. It could be argued that the absence of any concise analysis of civil war internees speaks volumes about the nature of imprisonment and how historians and society have come to view it.

¹ *Kerryman*, 15 Nov. 1924 (N.L.I.).

The omission of the prisoners' voice has left, in some respects, a deafening silence among the pages of the Irish Civil War. Present studies of the conflict centre on the military, social and political themes and while these works make reference to internment, they provide little in-depth analysis of how it affected the overall outcome of the war. It is by no means surprising that these aspects have come to dominate, since prisoners are by their very nature hidden from view, rarely spoken of and thus become, in times of conflict, a concealed reality of war.² Michel Foucault, in his work *Discipline and Punish*, explored the nature of punishment and imprisonment from the 1700s to modern times. In doing so, he propelled the prisoners' experience into the spotlight and deftly explored the various methods by which the social order sought to control those convicted of crimes, either minor or severe. By the nineteenth century, the use of brutal torture methods during executions were fast becoming repugnant acts as society began to recognise the 'humanity' of convicted criminals, regardless of how heinous their crimes.³ Foucault asserted that this transition in societal attitudes birthed the modern prison system which progressed towards the 'humanisation' of penalties, shifting the emphasis of power from the prisoners' body to control over the convicts' mind.⁴ In this environment, the modern prison system emerged as an 'apparatus for transforming individuals' and became a platform through which the reformation of the convict took centre stage. This was in direct contrast to the old system, where 'the body of the condemned man became the king's property, on which the sovereign left his mark and brought down the effects of his power'.⁵ Foucault noted that this gradual shift towards psychological penalties such as confinement, determined that prisoners were now under state control, '... the property of society, the object of a collective and useful appropriation. This explains why the reformers almost always proposed public works as one of the best possible

² This is due, in part, to censorship in wars. In the Irish context, this involved the lack of reportage on prisoners' cases; see Peter Martin, *Censorship in the Two Irelands 1922-39* (Dublin, 2006).

³ Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Modern Prison System* (London, 1977), p. 74.

⁴ Ibid, p. 101.

⁵ Ibid, p. 109 & p. 233.

penalties'.⁶ The exploration of power and control in the modern prison system are essential to our understanding of the Anti-Treaty experience during the Irish Civil War. It is the examination of this theme through the lens of internment, which will be discussed throughout this thesis. The Free State's attempt to reinforce control through the prison system was fundamental to how the civil war was fought and eventually ended. In this respect, internment has been alluded to, referenced often but not sufficiently expanded upon, leaving behind not only the internee experience but our further understanding of the period.⁷ This thesis will explore the nature of imprisonment 1922-4, through the eyes of those interned, the actions of those sitting in the Dáil Cabinet and the military governors who were called upon to enforce government decisions. There are, however, a few topics which do not receive in-depth analysis throughout this thesis. One such issue is the arrest of Free State prisoners by Anti-Treaty forces during the civil war. There are a number of reasons why this was not expanded upon. Firstly, the keeping of prisoners by the Anti-Treaty I.R.A. presented various practical problems. On the run from government forces, many members were forced to sleep in 'safe houses' and in some cases dug-outs on the side of the road. Upon his escape from Newbridge in 1922, Seamus O'Connor related the difficulties that arose for an ex-internee on the run:

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Sean McConville has so far provided the most comprehensive study of prisoners during the Irish Civil War. His study assesses the conditions within the camps for internees, renovations & internal disruptions and the response of the International Committee of the Red Cross. However, these conditions are not placed in the overall context of the Irish Civil War and how internees within the prison system affected the outcome. Sean McConville, *Irish Political Prisoners 1920-1962: Pilgrimage of Desolation* (London, 2014), pp 167-426; Michael Hopkinson mentioned the importance of prisoners to the conflict, referring to them as 'pawns' but he did not elaborate on this. There was little discussion of the internal disruptions within the system but he stated that 'What went on within the prisons was of great significance to the Republican cause'. Michael Hopkinson, *Green Against Green: The Irish Civil War* (Dublin, 1988), p. 229 & pp 268-271; John Regan referred to internees in the context of prisoners-of-war status, executions and releases. He explored these issues in the context of his 'counter-revolution' argument within the Irish Free State, beginning in 1922. He did not assess the nuts and bolts of internment. John Regan, *The Irish Counter Revolution 1921-1936: Treatyite Politics and Settlement in Independent Ireland* (Dublin, 1999), p96 & p. 174 & pp 104-8; Bill Kissane's study placed the civil war in the wider international context and he referred to internee executions and releases in this regard. Bill Kissane, *The Politics of the Irish Civil War* (Dublin, 2007), p. 107 & p.113; Tom Garvin made brief reference to prisoners in his study, which placed the Pro and Anti-Treaty sides into a democrats and dictators model. Of the Anti-Treaty internees in Newbridge, Garvin stated that they were being 'taught courses in constitutional law, local government, and Irish History under the ageis of Dan O'Sullivan...'. Tom Garvin, *1922 The Birth of Irish Democracy* (Dublin 1996), p. 136.

Even travelling by night became difficult, as parties of troops used to lie in wait at different strategic points during the night with the hope of our running into them. We repaired to a bog three miles away. We cut a hole in the bog, roofed it with iron and sods on a level with the bog, and put in two ticks of feathers as mattresses. The first night it rained heavily, and the water poured into us on all sides and we had to abandon the dugout.⁸

In this environment, it would have been immensely difficult to keep and maintain prisoners effectively. O'Connor openly confirmed that the lack of facilities and stable accommodation led, on many occasions, to the release of Free State soldiers. He stated that 'in the many hundreds of prisoners taken by our side, I am not aware of any instance where one of them was ill-treated, let alone killed. They were disarmed and let go. We could not hold them, of course, as we had no place to do so'.⁹ During the War of Independence, O'Malley noted a similar problem stating 'we could not keep prisoners; soldiers and police, when disarmed, were put on the roadside to walk to their posts'.¹⁰ However, while O'Connor may not have known of any Free State prisoner execution, that is not to say there were none. One might suggest that National Army personnel taken prisoner during the civil war met a similar end to that of Belcher and Hawkins in the short story, *Guests of the Nation*, by former Anti-Treatyite internee Frank O'Connor. Set during the War of Independence, the story related the execution of two British soldiers held hostage by a group of I.R.A. men. The shooting and burying of these two men appeared to be a harrowing experience for the fictional narrator, who related that 'I don't remember much about the burying, but that it was worse than all the rest because we had to carry them to the grave'.¹¹ This event mirrored the reality of the period, as was displayed by Ernie O'Malley in his memoir *On Another Man's Wound*, in which he recounted a similar styled execution of British officers, by the 2nd Southern Division in the months before the truce. The officers were arrested but on this occasion, they

⁸ Seamus O'Connor, *Tomorrow Was Another Day: Irreverent Memoirs of an Irish Rebel Schoolmaster* (Cork, 1987), p. 88.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ernie O'Malley, *On Another Man's Wound* (Anvil, 1979), p. 361. This was not always the case, as O'Malley himself noted in the same memoir, pp 371-3.

¹¹ Frank O'Connor, *Guests of the Nation*, p. 380 (The-Oxford-Book-of-Short-Stories_29GuestsoftheNation.pdf. Accessed 5 December 2014.).

were not released. O'Malley informed them that 'any officers we capture in this area are to be shot until such time as you cease shooting prisoners'.¹² The men were indeed shot and of this O'Malley stated 'It seemed easier to face one's own execution than to have to shoot others'.¹³ This was Ernie O'Malley's emotional response to the killing of enemy prisoners during the War of Independence but what of the civil war? Does the reluctance to mention the execution of National Army prisoners speak for itself? Was Anti-Treatyite Seamus O'Connor simply deaf to the execution of Free State prisoners because many of his comrades remained silent on the subject? The complexities involved in addressing this issue will not be discussed in this thesis. The six chapters herein are an analysis of Anti-Treaty internment and the methods by which the Free State utilised this body of prisoners to control and end the Irish Civil War.

The second aspect of this thesis which presented difficulty was endeavouring to obtain an exact figure of those interned by the Free State. The archival records are the main stumbling block in this regard. Overall, the Military Archive's database of Civil War Prison Ledgers recorded some 16,332 internee entries.¹⁴ On closer inspection, this figure cannot be viewed as an accurate depiction of civil war internment. The various transfers that occurred, revealed that internees were often recorded a number of times in different prison or camp ledgers, resulting in multiple entries for a single prisoner. This obstacle becomes further complicated when considering internee details, as many provided false names and addresses. When combined, these two challenges make assessment of the various entries in the prison ledgers a task worthy of separate study. Given that the objective of this thesis is to highlight

¹² O'Malley, *On Another Man's Wound*, p. 371.

¹³ Ibid, p. 373.

¹⁴ Prison Ledgers Collection (Military Archive, hereafter M.A., IE/MA/CW/P.).

the multifaceted experience of internment, a more solid average figure of over 13,000 internees will be used throughout.¹⁵

Another topic which received little analysis throughout this thesis is the issue of one hundred Anti-Treatyites arrested in the United Kingdom and deported to the Free State in March 1923 and lodged in Mountjoy Jail. Amongst this group of male and female internees was the well-known London-born Republican Art O'Brien.¹⁶ These deportees challenged the legality of their imprisonment under the Restoration of Order in Ireland Act 1920, which by 1923 had become obsolete, since the passing of the Irish Free State Constitution Act 1922 had established an Independent Executive in Ireland.¹⁷ Kevin O'Higgins, Minister for Home Affairs, did not oppose their application and informed the British Government that if asked, they could have the prisoners returned at once.¹⁸ The deportees won their case and were released in May 1923.¹⁹ Since the ultimate objective of this thesis is to develop a deeper understanding of those arrested in the Free State 1922-4 and additionally to consider this in the context of the government's overall counter-insurgency policy; this particular group of internees will only be referred to in the context of their conditions and treatment during the civil war

In turning to the Free State's objectives, the native government sought to reassert control, authority and power through a number of legislative and military measures. One of the most notable, if not by now historically infamous of these methods, was the adoption of

¹⁵ Ibid. President W.T. Cosgrave remarked in 1923, that at one point the Free State had interned some '13,000' prisoners; President Cosgrave, to Archbishop Byrne of Dublin, 28 Oct. 1923 (N.A.I., s. 1369/10.).

¹⁶ *Irish Times*, 18 May 1923 (N.L.I.) Art O'Brien was born in London in 1872 and was a member of the Irish Republican Brotherhood and Irish Volunteers. He was co-founder of the Irish Self Determination League of Great Britain in 1919. He took the Anti-Treaty side during the civil war and 'he was arrested in Dublin on 4 July 1922 but subsequently released. On 1 August he was arrested again in Dublin, and imprisoned in Maryborough jail until 21 August. On 11 March 1923 O'Brien was arrested again in London, deported to Ireland with more than 100 other prisoners, and interned in Mountjoy prison. Under a *habeas corpus* application, O'Brien was brought back to London and released on 16 May 1923, but was immediately rearrested.' (Dictionary of Irish Biography, <http://dib.cambridge.org/>, accessed 18 December 2014.).

¹⁷ *Irish Times*, 19 May 1923 (N.L.I.); (The National Archives, London, hereafter TNA, HO/144/3577.).

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Ibid.

executions. The brutal and rapid manner with which these executions were conducted ensured their place in civil war historiography. However, every single execution affected an internee in a Free State jail or camp; some were calculated, some perceived to be random.²⁰ Michael Hopkinson in his work *Green Against Green*, touched upon the impact of these executions and noted how prisoners, in particular, were used as ‘pawns’ by the new state in order to achieve victory over the Anti-Treaty side.²¹ However, what is evidently missing from recent study is how the executions also worked as a method of control over the prison population, by instilling fear among those who remained trapped by internment throughout the Free State. The omission of this perspective, in one sense, means that the overall effect of the executions in the wider context of the civil war has yet to be analysed. Furthermore, while assessing the executions policy and the effects of internment on civil war prisoners, it is necessary to provide comparisons with contemporary civil wars of this period and later. Bill Kissane, in his study *The Politics of the Irish Civil War*, placed the executions and the conflict in a wider international context. In assessing the executions, he drew comparisons with Finland and Hungary, where the death toll was significantly higher. Kissane stated that ‘despite the cynicism, the policy of executions continued to be applied in a selective way and no more than 77 men had been officially executed by the end of the war. As Keogh suggests, in a comparative context this is small scale: at the end of the Hungarian civil war more than 5,000 people were killed in the White terror not to mention the 12,500 Finns who died in White prison camps in the summer and autumn of 1918’.²² Stanley Payne, in his work *Civil War in Europe 1905-1949*, recorded that in Finland ‘about 67,000’ political prisoners were ‘convicted, mostly to prison terms, but 555 death sentences were passed, of which 275 were

²⁰ The first executions have come to be considered a trial run for the bigger executions of more notable figures, such as the execution of the Four Courts men, Liam Mellows, Dick Barrett, Rory O’Connor and Joe McKelvey; executed in retaliation for the assassination of Seán Hales. The month of January 1923 witnessed a number of executions in quick succession, totalling some 34 in all.

²¹ Hopkinson, *Green Against Green*, p. 229.

²² Kissane, *The Politics of the Irish Civil War*, p. 92.

executed'.²³ In the aftermath of the Yugoslavian civil war, the establishment of a 'new regime modelled on the Soviet Union,' resulted in 'approximately 100,000 violent deaths, most of them executions'.²⁴ In the Greek civil war, scholars have suggested that between 1946-9, 'out of 7,500 death sentences, between 3,000-5,000 political prisoners were actually executed'.²⁵ These figures dramatically surpass the executions carried out during the Irish Civil War and Kissane has suggested that in places where executions were high, such as Kerry, this was the 'result of outsiders (mainly Dubliners and Northerners)'.²⁶ He further examined the conflict in the context of decolonisation in the early twentieth century and noted that the Irish Civil War was a 'violent creation of order'.²⁷ He discussed the dominant argument that either 'British Malevolence' or 'the IRA's rejection of democracy' resulted in civil war.²⁸ However, Kissane also noted that moderate opinion among Anti-Treatyites played its part in the aftermath of the Treaty and explained that 'moderate anti-treaty IRA obstructed rather than threatened the democratic process, and although their attitude was a key factor in that mix of circumstances that led to civil war, it was not the only one'.²⁹ Kissane also highlighted how decisions made by the administration in the aftermath of Collins' death, became increasingly brutal as the government pushed forth their agenda through emergency legislation.³⁰ This legislation had dramatic consequences within the prisons, as the internee population soared and executions increased. Tom Garvin, in his work *1922: The Birth of Irish Democracy*, argued that the civil war was a battleground between democrats and dictators of which most of the new leaders were 'unenthusiastic democrats'.³¹ Garvin provided a favourable analysis of the reasoning behind Free State policies and noted that the 'popular support for the Free

²³ Stanelly Payne, *Civil War in Europe 1905-1949* (Cambridge, 2011), p. 30.

²⁴ Ibid, p. 213.

²⁵ Mark Mazower (ed), *After the War was Over: Reconstructing the Family, Nation and, State in Greece, 1943-1960* (Princeton, 2000), p.81.

²⁶ Kissane, *The Politics of the Irish Civil War*, p. 93.

²⁷ Ibid, p. 233.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Ibid, p. 234.

³⁰ Ibid, p. 84.

³¹ Garvin, *1922 Birth of Irish Democracy*, p. 205.

State was generally by a wish for orderly government and disgust at the fanaticism and criminality of the IRA and their supporters'.³² He concluded that only Cosgrave, O'Higgins and Mulcahy were 'unconditional democrats' willing to kill people for Irish democracy.³³ John Regan, on the other hand, believed that the democrat versus dictator's model was an 'oversimplification of the political situation of 1922' and suggested that Garvin ignored the 'complexity of historical circumstances.' Regan highlighted how, over time, some on the Anti-Treaty side abandoned the armed struggle and rapidly reorganised the political organisation, later entering the 'Dáil in the guise of Fianna Fáil.' Regan remarked, however, that this democratic element was well hidden in 1922 'behind Rory O'Connor's incitement to dictatorship'.³⁴ Overall, Regan's central argument focused on the counter revolution that began during the civil war, noticeably in the tactics employed by the new state, in particular the executions and the eventual establishment of the middle-class Catholic elite, who paid little attention to the revolutionary ideals of the previous years. In order to enhance our understanding of the Irish Civil War, there will be occasional reference throughout to international civil wars in terms of executions, legislation, releases and the post-conflict environment for those who were defeated. These comparisons will be made in order to place the Irish experience of internment in context with other European civil wars and highlight the ways in which the Free State's treatment of military internees was not unique. On the contrary, and in many ways, the new government's handling of opposition prisoners was not nearly as extreme as other European countries.³⁵

There are, however, some aspects of internment which remain universal. Issues pertaining to food, sanitation, overcrowding and exercise were problems that were raised by internees, both in the Free State and Northern Ireland between 1922-4. Denise Klienrichert's

³² Ibid, p. 103.

³³ Ibid, p. 205.

³⁴ Regan, *The Irish Counter Revolution*, p. 68.

³⁵ Mazower (ed), *After the War was Over*; Stanley Payne, *Civil War in Europe 1905-1949*.

study, *Republican Internment and the Prison Ship Argenta* focused on Northern Irish internees during the civil war and her work engaged with the conditions of internment on the prison ship and within the jails of Northern Ireland. She predominately focused on these aspects while providing the general background of internment under the Stormont administration. However, Klienrichert does not explore the similarities and differences between internment in the Free State and Northern Ireland. This thesis sheds some light on this aspect while building on Klienrichert's work.

While these studies have been crucial to our understanding of the political and social dynamics of the Irish Civil War, the exclusion of several thousand internees has, to some extent, ignored how important the experience of revolution and imprisonment had been for both Pro and Anti-Treaty sides up to 1922. Furthermore, the absence of any in-depth study of internment disregards the role prisoners played in shaping government policy in those formative years. Throughout the previous decade, imprisonment had been an important tool for Irish revolutionaries and in some ways, determined how the establishment governed Ireland, with many unruly elements detained or transported to British jails. William Murphy's study of internment 1912-1921, is essential to our understanding of how imprisonment affected Irish political prisoners in these years. He noted how nationalist prisoners used their imprisonment to continue the revolution within the prison system. Sporadic prison riots, escapes and hunger strikes succeeded in destabilising the administration by 1921 and the treatment and conditions of prisoners had become a huge propaganda winner for the Pre-Truce I.R.A.. The campaign for privileges and political prisoner status, which began with the suffragettes in the early twentieth century, had turned 'the English prison system into a political battleground.'³⁶ These tactics were later exploited by Irish nationalists and throughout 1916-21, the prison system in Ireland eventually buckled under the weight of an

³⁶ William Murphy, *Political Imprisonment and the Irish, 1912-1921* (Oxford, 2014), p. 12.

unruly prison population and a sympathetic public.³⁷ The release or funerals of internees became a huge part of the Irish nationalist campaign, which endeavoured to increase pressure on the British administration in Ireland. In addition Seán McConville's work on Irish political prisoners enhances our understanding of imprisonment in Ireland during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. McConville's *Irish Political Prisoners, 1848-1922: Theatres of War* provided an essential background to how the British prison system operated in Ireland, including penal servitude of the nineteenth century and internment of Irish political groups in the post-1916 period. His second book, *Irish Political Prisoners 1920-1962*, provided a much needed analysis of internment after the Truce. While this book included a number of comprehensive chapters on the Irish Civil War, it does not focus heavily on the nuts and bolts of internment, particularly in relation to the daily lives of internees in the civil war period. This thesis attempts to bridge that gap and build on Murphy's work by combining an analysis of internment from the political viewpoint of the native government and by assessing the reality of imprisonment for internees around the country.

The fragile landscape into which internment was introduced was a deeply divided one, in both political and social terms. The onset of civil war unleashed much more than the armed opposition of the Anti-Treaty I.R.A. In his study of European civil wars, Stanley Payne noted that 'the breakdown of law and order in civil war permits, and sometimes encourages, the growth of private violence, involving strictly personal, sometimes totally non-political vindictiveness'.³⁸ In the Free State in 1922, personal animosities and long-standing agrarian discontent thrived in an environment of uncertainty and instability. For this reason, a sizable portion of the entries in the prison and camp ledgers detail personal rather than political attacks.³⁹ In particular, the sharp rise in agrarian crime, as discussed by Gemma

³⁷ Ibid, p. 215.

³⁸ Payne, *Civil War in Europe 1905-1949*, p. 11.

³⁹ See selection at (M.A., CW/P/02/02/01; CW/P/02/02/16; CW/P/03/03; CW/P/03/04, CW/P/03/06.).

Clarke in her book *Everyday Violence in the Irish Civil War*, revealed the extent to which rural offenders played a significant part in destroying the livelihoods and property among certain sections of the community in Tipperary, Limerick and Waterford. In her discussion of arson attacks between 1922-3, Clarke concluded that the majority of assaults were carried out against private property, farm houses and businesses whereas strategic military targets such as RIC barracks accounted for a smaller portion of these attacks.⁴⁰ While political grievances certainly shaped the nature of agrarian crime during the civil war, a grey area emerges in which the historian must decipher between offences carried out by political agitators or local opportunists. As this study is primarily concerned with the internment of the Anti-Treaty I.R.A. and their treatment, a concise breakdown of political and agrarian offenders will not be discussed in detail. Moreover, in order to capture the diverse nature of those interned 1922-4, the broader term of military prisoner/internee will be used throughout when discussing the general body of prisoners.⁴¹ The term 'military' will therefore encompass those committed for both political and agrarian offences during the civil war. The phrase Anti-Treaty I.R.A. internee or simply 'internee' will be used to denote the body of prisoners at the heart of this thesis.

Another feature of imprisonment that inevitably comes to light is the role of convict prisoners in the civil war. In 1922, the Free State administration released a number of convicted prisoners in order to free up accommodation for the rapidly rising 'military' internee population. Additionally, when the state attempted to wind down internment in the latter half of 1923, a portion of those interned for military offences were transferred to the civil authorities for trial and conviction. Where substantial evidence was available, these internees were tried for the destruction of private and public property, robbery, cattle driving,

⁴⁰ Gemma Clarke, *Everyday Violence in the Irish Civil War* (Cambridge, 2014), p. 63.

⁴¹ The term military internee was also adopted by the Free State Government at the time; Max Green, Chairman of the General Prison Board, to Under Secretary, 28 Jan. 1922 (N.A.I., JUS 8/233.).

intimidation, and in some instances, murder.⁴² In doing so, the military internee then became a civil convict. For this reason, there will be reference to convict prisoners throughout this thesis, which are distinctly separate from military internees.

In 1922, there were fourteen prisons available to the Free State and with the onset of civil war the ‘principal prisons’ were transferred to the governorship of the military.⁴³ The General Prisons Board remained ‘responsible for the general administration and maintenance’ of the system while corresponding with the Department of Home Affairs and Finance in this regard.⁴⁴ As early as January 1922, just weeks after the Anglo Irish Treaty was passed in Dáil Éireann, the government set about preparing the prison system for use. Max Green, Chairman of the GPB until his murder in March 1922, provided the government with details of how the prisons (in this particular case, Mountjoy) could be administered by the military.⁴⁵ This correspondence was an early indication that the Free State were organising the prison system for the reception of ‘military’ internees. Sean McConville further noted that a day earlier, ‘On 27 January 1922, the General Prisons Board advised the Provisional Government that it had accommodation for 647 women and 2,038 men’.⁴⁶ The new state was about to adopt a rundown and battered prison service and utilise it for their own ends. The condition of this Pre-Treaty prison system has been extensively researched by William Murphy, who discussed the nature of political imprisonment and how this affected the revolution in Ireland. Irish political prisoners, Murphy stated, were not about to ‘leave politics aside’ and through successive protest, internees 1912-21 ‘took a weapon of the state and turned it back on the

⁴² List of prisoner cases handed over to the Civic Guard 1923-4 (M.A., CW/P/02/02/05.).

⁴³ McConville, *Irish Political Prisoners 1920-62*, p. 168. There were eleven internment centres under military control, Kilmainham; Mountjoy; North Dublin Union, Waterford, Cork, Dundalk, Hare Park, Newbridge, Tintown, Gormanstown, Maryborough; (M.A., CW/P/04-14.)

⁴⁴ Seán McConville, *Irish Political Prisoners 1922-62*, p. 168; (National Archives Ireland, hereafter N.A.I., General Prisons Board Files, hereafter G.P.B, GPB RL 8; GPB RL 9; FIN 1/88.).

⁴⁵ Max Green, son-in-law of John Redmond, was shot during a robbery in St Stephen’s Green, ‘The man who shot him was running from the police, And Mr. Green had made a plucky attempt to stop him’, *Irish Times*, 4 Mar. 1922; Chairman of General Prison Board, Max Green, to Under Secretary, 28 Jan. 1922 (N.A.I., JUS 8/233.).

⁴⁶ Seán McConville, *Irish Political Prisoners 1920-62*, p. 170.

state'.⁴⁷ Countless riots, hunger strikes and escapes reduced the functionality of the system as 'prisoners challenged and repeatedly defeated the state, altering the prison regime, undermining the system, and inflicting propaganda defeats'.⁴⁸ Internees of the Irish Civil War were not about to leave behind such tactics and the native government were not inclined to forget them.

Throughout the six chapters of this thesis, the state's formative years 1922-4 will be examined through the prism of internment and highlight how its implementation affected the wider outcome of the civil war. The first chapter sets out the reasoning behind the introduction of internment in 1922. It will assess why the new government, once in power, sought a return to old British policy and examine the dangers facing the ministers of Dáil Éireann in the first few months of the infant state. The decision to pass emergency legislation dramatically expanded the internee population to over 13,000, larger than any internment figures during the British administration years. Consequently, the Free State struggled to provide adequate accommodation and facilities. The second chapter provides an analysis of internment from the internees' perspective. The general conditions and treatment of prisoners will be discussed in the light of memoirs, personal correspondence, official government documents and parliamentary debates. This chapter endeavours to highlight how both sides projected their own image of internment, be that either through Anti-Treaty propaganda or the Free State censored media. The third chapter is a discussion of how internees continued to utilise the same methods of protest, such as rioting and hunger strike, against the new Irish government in an attempt to destabilise the system. This section reflects on the shared internment experiences of both the Anti-Treaty internees and the ministers in Dáil Éireann during the period 1916-21. Chapter four analyses the counter- insurgency methods adopted by the Free State, such as the introduction of tough emergency legislation, executions and

⁴⁷ Murphy, *Political Imprisonment and the Irish, 1912-1921*, p. 254.

⁴⁸ *Ibid*, p. 255.

censorship, in an effort to suppress armed opposition to the government. In particular, this section will assess how internment was a crucial asset to the new state and ultimately how they fought the civil war. The fifth chapter is a discussion of internment in Northern Ireland, in which comparisons will be made with the implementation of internment in the Free State. The Stormont administration faced similar opposition and both governments opted for internment in an effort to restore peace and stability. The similarities and differences in both jurisdictions will likewise be examined. The final chapter offers an overview of some post-internment issues and the realities that faced ex-internees in the new state. It will discuss how Anti-Treatyites continued to fundraise for the dependents of internees, while problems such as unemployment and emigration became regular pitfalls, for ex-prisoners upon their return to civil society.

Chapter 1

The Politics and Administration of Internment 1922-3

We understand it is now desired to have accommodation for 10,000 prisoners in all, and to vacate Maryborough Jail and all other criminal prisons. This leaves only Newbridge and Gormanstown, holding 2,500 between them at present. We have, therefore, to provide accommodation for 7,500 additional... The most obvious course to meet a part of the demand is to continue the adaptation of Gormanstown up to its full capacity 4,000 prisoners or perhaps 4,500. This is the quickest and cheapest thing to do, because it does not involve a new building but only fencing and the provision of heating and sanitary works. Etc...¹

In October 1922, this letter was sent to the Secretary of the Provisional Government, providing an overview of the internment situation in the country and presenting the alternative methods by which the state could avail of further prison accommodation. In October 1922, the Provisional Government had been in existence for ten months, during which time the Irish public had accepted the Anglo-Irish Treaty, by voting for a majority of Pro-Treaty candidates in June 1922.² Equally as crucial during this ten month period, was the country's descent into civil war. In order to understand why internment was introduced on such a vast scale, one must reflect on the conditions which existed in the aftermath of the Anglo-Irish Treaty. The first three months of 1922 marked a chaotic period both politically and socially for the new state. The cracks that had surfaced during the Treaty debates degenerated rapidly and by March 1922, two distinct groups emerged. John Regan discussed the fragmentation of the Republican movement at both political and army level. Within Sinn Féin, he described how: '...the upper echelons of the movement as represented by the Standing Committees before and after the treaty...were overwhelmingly drawn from the moderate wing of the party. However, from October 1921, to the meeting of the Extraordinary Árd Fheis in February 1922, Sinn Féin branches, as represented by the

¹ Commissioner of Public Works, to Secretary of the Provisional Government, 12 Oct. 1922 (N.A.I., FIN1/1200.).

² Charles Townsend, *The Republic: The Fight for Irish Independence* (London, 2013), p. 403.

delegates present became increasingly doctrinaire and radicalised.³ Likewise at army level, the I.R.A. was similarly divided with some choosing to remain neutral in a bid to stabilise the situation. However, as John Regan noted, the divisions were ultimately too great:

The Army convention met on 26 March and was heavily Anti Treaty in composition. After re-affirming its loyalty to the Republic, a vote was taken reverting control of the army to its own elected executive thereby revoking the authority of the Dáil... The I.R.A. effectively divided four ways: Treatyite forces loyal to G.H.Q; the Anti-Treaty Executive forces; non aligned anti-treaty I.R.A.; and neutrals.⁴

This splintering within the ranks of the I.R.A., Sinn Féin and on the benches of Dáil Éireann was likewise occurring in many homes around the country and after four months of political toing and froing, this fragmentation would ultimately express itself in the seizure of the Four Courts in Dublin. This division propelled the Anti-Treaty side forward in their efforts to establish a Republic, in what Tom Garvin has termed a clash between ‘republican moralism’ and ‘nationalist pragmatism’.⁵ Some opponents of the new government, like Mary MacSwiney, believed the Treaty was a clear choice between ‘right and wrong’.⁶ However, Regan noted that the ‘democrats and dictators model denies a swathe of internal complexities’.⁷ He remarked on the attitudes of some Pro-Treaty deputies, such as Liam de Róiste, who were willing to ‘go beyond the present treaty’ if it could be done along ‘constitutional lines’.⁸ In early 1922, the ideological divisions between Pro and Anti-Treaty factions were not so easily discernible but the subsequent actions on both sides during the civil war diluted aspirations of immediate reconciliation.⁹ Many of the decisions made (whether idealistic or pragmatic), informed the division on both sides. For those who opposed

³ John Regan, *The Irish Counter Revolution 1921-1936: Treatyite Politics and Settlement in Independent Ireland* (Dublin, 1999), p. 52.

⁴ Ibid, p. 58.

⁵ Tom Garvin, *1922 The Birth of Irish Democracy* (Dublin, 1996), p. 146.

⁶ John Regan, *The Irish Counter Revolution*, p. 41.

⁷ Ibid, p. 70; The democrats and dictators model as proposed by Tom Garvin.

⁸ Ibid, p. 70.

⁹ Regan noted Aodh de Blacam, (Anti-Treatyite) and Liam Roiste (Pro-Treaty) illustrated the ‘centre ground of the split’, p. 70. The events which followed through Anti-Treaty attacks and Free State counter attacks widened the ideological divisions, in particular the executions; Regan, *The Irish Counter Revolution*, p. 113.

the treaty, the Republic represented a spiritual holy grail and one which they would follow with an almost instinctual fervour. C.S. Andrews later recollected how his activities during the revolutionary period were an emotional reaction to events. In his memoir, Andrews related how he functioned ‘mainly on emotionalism and enthusiasm. I rarely thought; I felt’.¹⁰ Collectively, the emotional response described by Andrews resulted in armed opposition to the state which left thousands on the Anti-Treaty side interned. Their objectives, however, were at odds with the general feeling of the Irish public, as demonstrated in the general election of June 1922, when ‘Pro Treaty Sinn Féin candidates... outpolled Anti Treaty republicans by 239,000 first preference votes to 130,000 (fifty eight seats to thirty six)’.¹¹ The fracture of the Republican movement, the *realpolitik* approach of the new Provisional Government and the bitter conflict that overshadowed Irish politics for decades, has been hitherto documented.¹² There is, however, a noticeable lack of discourse on the role played by internees during this period. What can be said of those who availed of the ‘accommodation for 10,000’, as mentioned in the report by the Commissioner for Public Works? Locked behind the closed doors of Kilmainham Jail or the huts of Tintown, these internees were isolated from the military skirmishes and ambushes; but they were still very much involved in the politics of civil war. From executions to hunger strikes, riots and prison escapes, internees continued to fight their own battle against the Free State from the confines of their prison cells.

There was, however, nothing distinctly revolutionary about the adoption of such tactics by civil war internees. They merely followed the example set by previous Irish prisoners interned by the British government and in particular, the preceding decade had

¹⁰ C.S. Andrews, *Dublin Made Me: An Autobiography* (Cork, 1979), p. 7.

¹¹ Charles Townsend, *The Republic*, p. 403.

¹² Garvin, 1922 *The Birth of Irish Democracy*; Regan, *The Irish Counter Revolution 1921-1936*; Anne Dolan, *Commemorating the Irish Civil War: History and Memory, 1923-2000* (Cambridge, 2003); Bill Kissane, *The Politics of the Irish Civil War* (Oxford, 2005); Michael Hopkinson *Green Against Green* (Dublin, 2004).

revealed the importance of ‘prison’ in the fight against the establishment in Ireland. William Murphy’s thoroughly researched and insightful study of imprisonment during this period exposed a system plagued by successive prisoner revolts. He stated that for Irish internees, ‘imprisonment provided them with identity, with status, with publicity. More than that, imprisonment provided the Irish activists with another opportunity to rebel, turning the sites that were supposed to ‘quell political dissent’ into places where resistance, even revolution was nurtured and enacted’.¹³ However, in 1922, unlike the previous decade, both the Anti-Treaty internees and the Pro-Treaty government had personal experience of how to wage a politically orientated prison war. So how did the operation of internment change with the institution of a native government?

This chapter endeavours to provide an insight into this transitional phase in Irish politics and discuss how the transfer of power to the new ministers in Dáil Éireann, empowered them with all the responsibilities of governing, most notably, the restoration of law and order. The first section will discuss the harsh realities facing the Provisional Government in the months following the ratification of the Treaty and how internment became an important method of control, in a socially and politically fragile new state. The second section will expose how internment evolved at both political and administrative level and will discuss the various renovations that took place in order to accommodate the large number of prisoners that were arrested following the outbreak of civil war. In addition, there will be an examination of the areas in which internment was most popular and finally an analysis of the problems which the new government faced on a financial and administrative level.

¹³ William Murphy, *Political Imprisonment and the Irish, 1912-1921* (Oxford, 2014), p. 10.

In April 1922, Minister for Defence, Richard Mulcahy, expressed his concern for the growing trend of social unrest. Twelve days after the occupation of the Four Courts, he provided Dáil Éireann with a report on the current situation:

Seceding Volunteers under what is known as the Executive have interfered with our officers and men in their work of organisation by:—Attacks of persons, Shootings of persons, Seizure of posts, Attacks on our transport, Systematic attacks on our military posts, Seizure of stores. They have been helped in this matter by the fact that they are countenanced by a section of the Dáil Opposition, who, in spite of their acts, their repudiations of the authority of the Dáil, and in spite of their declared aims, portray them as the only true followers in Pearse's footsteps. In many districts the difficulty in holding the Organisation in any way intact has been very great. Hundreds of men from Cork, Kerry and Limerick have been intercepted by armed bands while on their way to link up with G.H.Q. at Dublin, and they have been imprisoned and ill-treated.¹⁴

The Anti-Treaty section to which Mulcahy referred had exacerbated an already socially fragile post-treaty environment. In response, Kathleen Callaghan T.D. challenged General Mulcahy's report and in turn blamed the growing unrest on the Provisional Government's incompetency and failure to remain loyal to the pursuit of an 'Irish Republic'. She stated that the Anti-Treaty I.R.A. were in fact exonerated from Dáil authority through their defence of the Republic:

It is clear that the service and obedience that the Irish Republican Army gave to the Dáil was a conditional service and a conditional obedience...conditional on the Dáil itself being faithful to its oath to maintain and defend the Irish Republic. The Dáil has not been faithful to its oath. The Dáil is not supporting and defending the Irish Republic. The Executive of the Dáil, through the Minister of Defence, among others, is now using all its energies and all its resources to subvert the Irish Republic. Therefore, the Army of the Irish Republic is released from obedience to the Dáil.¹⁵

As doctrinaire rhetoric from the Anti-Treaty side enhanced an already tense situation, the subsequent armed opposition to the fledgling state forced the new government to act decisively. Charles Townsend noted how this volatile environment became a source of opportunism for some on the Anti-Treaty side and stated that 'Discipline and control were

¹⁴ D.É.D., Vol. S2, Col. 249-50, 26 Apr. 1922.

¹⁵ D.É.D., Vol. S2, Col. 343-44, 28 Apr. 1922.

hanging by a thread in many areas. Con Moloney, the adjutant general of Ernie O'Malley's 2nd Southern Division, was faced with a spate of robberies in mid Limerick in January. The Brigade Adjutant ...said that the crisis in the Brigade is getting worse every day. Cattle were being seized for non-payment of IRA levies (which had already been prohibited).¹⁶

While the fracturing of the Republican movement quickly translated into social turmoil, it was not just the Anti-Treaty I.R.A. that posed a threat to the maintenance of law and order. Agrarian crime, which had long been an historical feature of the Irish countryside, was also on the rise. Emmet O'Connor noted that from

October 1921, violence and sabotage became more important in farm strikes and played a crucial role in enabling the ITGWU to settle four major disputes in Dublin, Meath, Cork and Waterford. In late January, the first of the about eighty soviets that year took place at Mallow, where the Quartertown Mills were seized.¹⁷

Regan further commented on these social tensions stating that 'unemployment was in the region of 130,000, cattle stealing and land seizures increased and the regional press reported a litany of reprisals and vendettas'.¹⁸ A large number of those interned during the civil war were imprisoned due to agrarian offences.¹⁹ Some of these attacks were carried out as a result of local grievances but a great many were specifically designed to further a broader political agenda.²⁰ Gemma Clarke noted how those in society that represented or symbolised the British ruling elite such as ex-servicemen and Protestants, often suffered continuous attacks on their persons and property during this period.²¹ The Anti-Treaty I.R.A. also turned to agrarian crime to further their agenda and Tom Garvin recorded how they utilised all available methods in their fight against the Provisional Government. Neither personal property nor the state's infrastructure were safe as 'homes and farms were burned in a wages

¹⁶ Townsend, *The Republic*, pp 393-4.

¹⁷ Emmet O'Connor, *A Labour History of Ireland 1824-1960* (Dublin, 1992), p. 112.

¹⁸ Regan, *The Irish Counter Revolution*, p. 58.

¹⁹ See for example a selection in the Internment Camp Files (M.A., CW/P/01/01; CW/02/02/01; CW/P/02/02/16; CW/P/03/02; CW/P/03/03; CW/P/03/04; CW/P/03/06; CW/P/08/11.).

²⁰ Gemma Clarke, *Everyday Violence in the Irish Civil War* (Cambridge, 2014), pp 44-84.

²¹ *Ibid*, pp 98-153.

dispute; haggards burned in a land dispute; trains are attacked; Post offices robbed; Banks raided, individuals robbed without any patriotic pretences or in the name of the Republic, men are murdered for personal reasons or in the name of the Republic'.²² Frequent land seizures and the destruction of public infrastructure was an immediate threat to civil society. The extensive damage to the railways, property of the Great Southern and Western Railway Company, was a sore point for some ministers in the new cabinet.²³ Regan noted that 'for members of the nationalist Victorian class to which O'Higgins and Hogan belonged, the destruction of the railways had a deeply symbolic as well as strategic importance in the war. The wrecking of the country's infrastructure was the ultimate and the most graphic example of Anti-Treaty criminality and of Republican descent into anarchism'.²⁴ Furthermore, these events were closely watched from Downing Street and provoked sentiments of concern from some members of the cabinet. In March 1922, the British administration reported that the 'situation in the Twenty Six Counties was not alarming, although apart from Dublin and the neighbouring counties there was a good deal of lawlessness'.²⁵ Churchill made it clear that the British administration were willing to aid the Free State from an early stage. In February, he noted that the Provisional Government 'have only to ask the Imperial Government and they can have rifles supplied to them...As many as are reasonable to equip the force and prevent raids'.²⁶ By June 1922, tensions had escalated and Churchill became concerned that the bombardment of the Four Courts might enhance sympathy for the Anti-Treaty side.²⁷ He offered Collins further support to quell the unrest and floated the idea of aerial bombing Dublin. He offered the Irish Administration the support of British pilots but suggested that the planes be painted in Free State colours, 'to show that were an essential part of your

²² Garvin, 1922: *The birth of Irish democracy*, p. 103.

²³ Hopkinson, *Green Against Green*, p. 199.

²⁴ Regan, *The Irish Counter Revolution*, p. 110.

²⁵ Meeting regarding Provisional Government of Ireland, 20 Mar. 1922 (T.N.A., CAB 21/254; see also British Government opinion on the civil war, W/O 35/182A.).

²⁶ Hansard Debate Extract, 28 Feb. 1922 (T.N.A., CAB 21/254.).

²⁷ Hopkinson, *Green Against Green*, pp 116-19.

forces'.²⁸ The Free State did accept British aid and 'before the first shots were fired, the Provisional Government had already received from the British nearly 12,000 rifles and 1.7 million rounds of ammunition plus 79 Lewis guns, 6 armoured cars and a large number of trucks; against this, the IRA could pit only 3,000 rifles with 120 rounds apiece and not much else'.²⁹ On 28 June, the same day that the Provisional Government bombarded the Four Courts, the *Daily Telegraph* reported:

It is clear that the message despatched to Dublin by Mr. Churchill on Saturday, with full approval of the Cabinet was firmly worded. It was described in a responsible quarter yesterday as being "to all intents and purposes an ultimatum". Due time will, of course, be given to the Provisional Government...But it is stated that 'due time' is not an elastic phrase that will permit of unreasonable or unnecessary delay.³⁰

With an increase in pressure from the British cabinet and the rising tide of social unrest from both civil and political offenders at home, internment was propelled forward as one of the most viable legislative options. The focus of this policy would be the Anti-Treaty I.R.A. who had openly challenged the fledgling state. In fact, the administration had already considered the possibility of internment as early as January, when preparations began to renovate the prison system.³¹ Although civil war had yet to begin, this was a clear indication that the prison system was set to play an important role in the early months of the new state. Within this brief period, the Dáil cabinet had discovered that self-government presented its own realities and on the top of their list of priorities was the maintenance of law and order. In this vein, they were supported by members of the Irish public, who in some cases seemed genuinely relieved at the sight of Free State soldiers entering their towns. One report stated that, 'there were night long celebrations when the IRA were driven out of Claremorris, County Mayo...At the end of July the Free State Army was welcomed by a huge crowd in

²⁸ Ibid, p. 121.

²⁹ Ronan Fanning, *Independent Ireland* (Dublin, 1983), pp 15-6.

³⁰ *Daily Telegraph*, 28 June 1922 (The British Library, London, hereafter B.L.).

³¹ The new administration was already seeking out the best available prison accommodation; Chairman of the General Prison's Board, Max Green, to Under Secretary, 28 Jan. 1922 (N.A.I., JUS/H 8/23.).

Tipperary Town. This was in part due to the fact that the IRA had burned down such factories as the town possessed, thereby throwing many out of work'.³² The new government acted swiftly to contain the social discontent and as the country slipped into civil war, internment was to prove one of the most useful weapon in the state's arsenal against the Anti-Treaty I.R.A..

The fall of the Four Courts in June 1922, resulted in numerous arrests which were to continue for the next year.³³ By September 1922, members of Dáil Éireann explicitly referred to the crisis in the country as a civil war.³⁴ In order to 'legalise a situation in which thousands had been imprisoned', the Dáil cabinet responded to the Minister for Defence, General Mulcahy's request to extend emergency powers to the National Army.³⁵ Minister for Home Affairs, Kevin O'Higgins called on Dáil Éireann to implement legislation which would combat the Anti-Treaty threat.³⁶ At the heart of this legislation, the government sought to approve 'a certain policy with regard to prisoners to regularise their treatment and the conditions of their internment'.³⁷ On 27 September, the 'Army Emergency Powers Resolution was introduced... and adopted the next day', thereby widening the powers of the army to intern.³⁸ These powers effectively provided the government with the legal authority to intern without trial and introduced the possibility of execution for a number of offences

³² Garvin, 1922: *The Birth of Irish Democracy*, p. 103.

³³ Uinseann MacEoin, *Survivors* (Dublin, 1980), p. 26; Peadar O'Donnell estimated the figure of 180 interned following the fall of the Four Courts. Further arrests were made nationwide before the Emergency Legislation in September; Prison Ledgers (M.A., IE/MA/CW/P.).

³⁴ D.É.D., Vol. 1, Col. 278, 14 Sept. 1922.

³⁵ John P. McCarthy, *Kevin O'Higgins: Builder of the Irish State* (Dublin, 2004), p. 85.

³⁶ 'It is the opinion of the Dáil that a measure should be introduced immediately to legalise and control, with suitable safeguards, such Executive action as may be necessary during the present civil war for curtailing the liberty of the subject', Ceann Comhairle; D.É.D., Vol. 1, Col. 278, 14 Sept. 1922.

³⁷ Ibid; Mary Rogan, *Prison Policy in Ireland: Politics, Penal Welfarism and Political Imprisonment* (New York, 2001), p. 30.

³⁸ 'It is hereby notified that the following resolution was passed by Dáil Éireann on the 28th day of September, 1922... 1) the Government has entrusted to the Army the duty of securing the public safety and restoring order throughout the country and has placed on the Army the responsibility for the establishment of the authority of the Government in all parts of the country in which that authority is challenged by force.'; D.É.D., Vol. 1, Col. 1734-5, 18 Oct. 1922.

including the possession of firearms.³⁹ Military courts were established which allowed the army to try and convict those 'aiding or abetting any attack upon or using force against the National forces, of looting, possession with authority of any bomb...or other explosive substance'.⁴⁰ The legislation was met with inevitable Dáil opposition. Independent T.D., Darrell Figgis, requested that the Minister of Defence, not the army, be granted the use of emergency powers, as the minister was answerable to the elected Dáil.⁴¹ Figgis also wanted a time limit placed on the legislation and spoke out against the use of death penalty. However, members of the government, such as Ernest Blythe, argued that executions were necessary since 'the reluctance to take life had weakened their case'.⁴² Kevin O'Higgins believed that the life of the 'nation' was of the utmost importance and ensured Figgis that the 'severity' of the penalties was calculated to act as a deterrent for those involved in armed opposition to the state.⁴³ In addition to the imposition of military courts and internment, the government also defeated proposals to include 'prisoner of war' treatment for the 'irregular' internees and refused the appointment of 'persons of legal training as presidents of the military courts'.⁴⁴

³⁹ Army Emergency Powers, September 1922; 1) WHEREAS the Government has entrusted to the Army the duty of securing the public safety and restoring order throughout the country and has placed on the Army the responsibility for the establishment of the authority of the Government in all parts of the country in which that authority is challenged by force. 2) AND WHEREAS the Army Council has represented to the Government that in order to discharge effectively the duty and responsibility so placed on them it is essential that the Army Council should have power to set up Military Courts or Committees with full powers of enquiring into charges and inflicting punishments on persons found guilty of acts calculated to interfere with or delay the effective establishment of the authority of the Government, and that the Army Council should have power to authorise the detention in places whether within or without the area of the jurisdiction of the Government of persons in Military custody and power to control the dealing in and possession of fire arms....

4) The breach of any general order or regulation made by the Army Council and the infliction by such Military Courts or Committees of the punishment of death or of penal servitude for any period or of imprisonment for any period or of a fine of any amount either with or without imprisonment on any person found guilty by such Court or Committee of any of the offences aforesaid. Provided that no such sentence of death be executed except under the countersignature of two members of the Army Council'; D.É.D., Vol. 1, Col. 1734-5, 18 Oct. 1922.

⁴⁰ Ibid; McCarthy, *Kevin O'Higgins: Builder of the Irish State*, p. 86.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Hopkinson, *Green Against Green*, p. 181.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ *Irish Times*, 7 Oct. 1922 (N.L.I.).

Instead, it was decided that presidents would be 'officers of senior rank' and that they would be provided with 'legal advisers'. The courts would not be open to the 'press or public'.⁴⁵

In the public domain, the media recorded the staunch opposition of the Labour Party, who decried that the handing over of power to the National Army under the Public Safety Act would create a form of 'military dictatorship'.⁴⁶ The army was described as an 'army of novices- every one of them recruits' and it was feared that they would hold the power of 'life or death' over soldiers and civilians without public trial.⁴⁷ Other sections of the media focused on the Free State's attempt to tackle the crises in law and order and the *Southern Star* triumphed the legislation as the 'Restoration of Order'.⁴⁸ The *Irish Examiner* declared it was a 'step towards public safety'.⁴⁹

By adopting internment measures along these lines, the Irish ministers were simply retracing old ground in new shoes. Of the seven members on the Executive Council of the Provisional Government in 1922, all had been interned by the previous British administration, with every one of them except O'Higgins having been arrested following the 1916 Easter Rising.⁵⁰ Internment was, thus, a template for social control and one which was effective in dealing with political discontent. However, despite its effectiveness, the use of internment against political opponents in Ireland was a double edged sword. The potential stability which the Free State sought to gain from this measure was not without its pitfalls. Historically speaking, Irish political internees were a riotous and difficult group, of which the ministers of

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ *Irish Times*, 28 Sept. 1922 (N.L.I.).

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ *Southern Star*, 7 Oct. 1922 (N.L.I.).

⁴⁹ *Irish Examiner*, 29 Sept. 1922 (N.L.I.).

⁵⁰ W.T. Cosgrave President of the Executive and Minister for Finance, Richard Mulcahy Minister for Defence, Desmond Fitzgerald Minister for External Affairs, Eoin MacNeill Minister for Education, Ernest Blythe Minister for Local Government and Joseph McGrath Minister for Industry and Commerce were all imprisoned after the 1916 Rising; Murphy, *Political Imprisonment and the Irish, 1912-1922*, p. 1; Kevin O'Higgins, Minister for Home Affairs, was unable to get to Dublin to take part in the Rising, due to 'military restricted movement to the city'. He was later imprisoned in 1918; McCarthy, *Kevin O'Higgins Builder of the Irish State*, p. 4.

the new state were well aware. Additionally, internment also provided political opponents with the opportunity for anti-state propaganda. During the final years of the British administration in Ireland, imprisonment for political activity had risen dramatically and reached a high point between 1916-21.⁵¹ Internees during this period were of course, a different breed of prisoner. Seán McConville discussed this point in his study, *Theatres of War: Irish Political Prisoners 1848-1922*. He wrote that Irish political prisoners came ‘from the respectable rather than the criminal classes, these prisoners were far more difficult to handle than ordinary criminals. Refusing to submit to penal discipline, they had no sense of shame for their deeds, displayed no remorse, and could not be subjected to certain disciplinary measures’.⁵² In the aftermath of the rising in Dublin, the British had faced a number of legal difficulties regarding the internment of Irish prisoners. One of these issues was the detention of untried prisoners, as McConville stated, ‘3200 persons were taken by the military and police. Of these, about 1200 were immediately or soon after released. Apart from 183 dealt with by courts martial, 1863 were interned under the Defence of the Realm Act (DORA) Regulation 14b’.⁵³ Legal issues then followed concerning ‘the detention, deportation and internment of untried persons...’ as it ‘proved impossible to bring any great proportion of the detainees to trial, since the nature of the fighting had left the authorities without “sufficient evidence of identification to justify a court in convicting a charge”’.⁵⁴ The solution to this problem was found in regulation 14b of DORA which allowed the Home Secretary to issue an order ‘with regard to a place of residence, restriction of movement, reporting to police or internment. Persons liable to such an order were...those of “hostile

⁵¹ Murphy, *Political Imprisonment and the Irish, 1912-1922*, p. 1.

⁵² Sean McConville, *Irish Political Prisoners 1848-1922: Theatres of War*: (Routledge, 2005), p. 706.

⁵³ Ibid, p. 450; Restoration of Order in Ireland Act 1920 (<http://www.irishstatutebook.ie/isbc/bpstoc.html>, accessed 28 December 2014).

⁵⁴ Ibid.

origin or association”’.⁵⁵ It was with similar legislation that the Provisional Government sought to tackle the ‘hostile’ elements within the Free State and many subsequent internment orders detained individuals under similar safeguarding measures.⁵⁶

Furthermore, each member of the Provisional Government had a working knowledge of how internment operated, at least from the prisoner’s perspective. William Murphy’s account of hunger strikes, riots and escape attempts throughout the previous decade, revealed that the new political class in Dáil Éireann were well versed in the art of prison warfare and propaganda. In particular, during 1917-18, Murphy noted that ‘political prisoners were an important cohort... providing energy, publicity, and practical weight to the effort to overthrow British power in Ireland, but in these months- perhaps more than any other time- being a prisoner was the most effective way to be an Irish revolutionary’.⁵⁷ The ministers of the Free State were fully aware that when political prisoners revolted within the prison system, they held a potent power, a power that could potentially bring about the collapse of the system itself. The new ministers, however, were in the unique position of governing with an understanding of the mindset of those they interned. The Dáil Éireann immediately set about countering the Anti-Treaty threat and as the once imprisoned became the jailors, the Provisional Government found itself emulating aspects of previous British policy in Ireland. In fact, the British media congratulated the new government on the tactics they employed in June 1922, stating that

Mr. Michael Collins was at last showing some firmness in dealing with the rebel executive. An attempt to steal a number of motor cars belonging to a Belfast firm was prevented and the ‘Four Courts Commandant’ who was in charge of the raiding party

⁵⁵ McConville, *Irish Political Prisoners 1848-1922*, p. 453; Restoration of Order in Ireland Act 1920; (<http://www.irishstatutebook.ie/isbc/bpstoc.html>, accessed 28 December 2014).

⁵⁶ Public Safety (Emergency Powers) Act 1923, Order for the Internment of Eamon de Valera by the Minister for Defence (N.A.I., s.1369/14); Copy of Detention Order from Provisional Government to Governor [no date], ‘You are directed by the Provisional Government to receive the following person into your custody and detain in accordance with the rules relating to the detention of persons committed to prison on remand. You are to detain the above person until otherwise directed’ (N.A.I., JUS/ H8/233.).

⁵⁷ Murphy, *Political Imprisonment and the Irish, 1912-1922*, p. 106.

was arrested and taken to Mountjoy Gaol, not as an officer but as an ordinary criminal. This is the first indication on the part of the Provisional Government of an intention to put down indiscriminate looting on the part of the irregular I.R.A., and it is to be hoped that it will be followed by a strong and genuine effort to dispossess the rebels of all the property they illegally hold...⁵⁸

The removal of the Four Courts Commandant as an 'ordinary criminal' was significant, as it revealed the method by which the Free State would implement internment throughout the course of the Irish civil war. The new government sought to undermine the Anti-Treaty agenda by refusing to grant prisoner of war status and criminalising the opposition throughout the country.⁵⁹ However, given the revolutionary background of many TDs elected to the Third Dáil, the various debates surrounding the implementation of internment were intense, particularly on the point of what defined a criminal or political prisoner. Dr. P. McCartan, a Pro-Treaty deputy, spoke out against the state's decision to refuse prisoner-of-war status to Anti-Treaty internees, stating that

If an ambush is wrong in the streets of Dublin to-day, it was wrong when Dick Mulcahy ordered it. If you treat them as Prisoners of War you cannot execute them. The Minister for Defence distinguishes them in three different classes —Politicians, Criminals and Soldiers. I take that as correct. Criminals you can deal with in a criminal manner, but the backbone of the men opposed to you are the soldiers of the former Republic, and we are the traitors to that Republic. Those who voted for the Treaty were traitors to the Republic. We are the rebels, and they are the patriots. I voted for the Treaty, and I submit I swallowed my oath, and every one of you who voted for the Treaty swallowed your oaths for the Republic. Do not disguise the fact, and do not take refuge behind it.⁶⁰

General Mulcahy, Minister for Defence, rejected McCartan's statement. He emphasised that since the signing of the treaty, circumstances had altered their objectives and that the situation (civil war) in the country called for a redefinition of the meaning of words; he effectively called for a rethink of what was now politically acceptable and what was not.

Mulcahy remarked that, 'We have lost, as I said yesterday, the sense of the meaning of words

⁵⁸ *Daily Telegraph*, 28 June 1922 (B.L.).

⁵⁹ For full discussion, see Chapter 4 regarding counter-insurgency measures adopted by the Provisional Government. Bill Kissane discussed the criminalisation of the Anti-Treaty agenda through government legislation; Kissane, *The Politics of the Irish Civil War*, pp 84-98.

⁶⁰ D.É.D., Vol. 1, Col. 923, 28 Sept. 1922.

to-day, and words that it was proper for us to use with regard to certain people and certain actions, it is not proper for us to use them in the changed circumstances. I do not approve of this amendment, and I am not prepared to throw over the material which is inside the prisons now, and which is working outside the prisons, the cloak of prisoners of war'.⁶¹ Mulcahy's sentiments reflected the attitudes of many within the Dáil cabinet and throughout the remainder of the civil war, the government implemented wide-scale internment without granting Prisoner-of-War status. Anti-Treatyites in the new state were thus, arrested as military prisoners, detained under emergency legislation for criminal offences and due to their 'irregular' status, never officially granted the title of 'prisoners of war'.

The introduction of internment ultimately provided the government with the power to enforce the authority of the Dáil and stabilise the growing unrest. The first group of prisoners were arrested in the aftermath of the fighting in Dublin during June and July 1922. McConville noted that these prisoners fell into two categories; military and political prisoners.⁶² In doing so, McConville draws a distinction between those arrested for politically motivated offences and those who were generally trying to capitalise on the social instability that followed in the wake of civil war, through agrarian crimes or robbery. Consequently, throughout this chapter and thesis, the term 'military' will be used to describe the general body of internees imprisoned and where necessary, the term Anti-Treaty IRA internees, will be used to distinguish the politically motivated body of internees within this military category. Those arrested for offences, such as robbery, cattle-driving, destruction of private property etc. and where it is not otherwise apparent that they had a connection with the Anti-Treaty I.R.A., will simply be referred to as military internees.

⁶¹ D.É.D., Vol. 1, Col. 924, 28 Sept. 1922.

⁶² McConville, *Irish Political Prisoners 1920-1962: Pilgrimage of Desolation* (Routledge, 2014) pp 178-9.

The nine prisons that were available to the Free State government were small in size, with the exception of Mountjoy Prison and Maryborough Jail.⁶³ The Department of Public Works was responsible for bringing these prisons up to a reasonable standard in order to meet the growing demand for military internee accommodation.⁶⁴ With the escalation of violent crime in the country, the government 'concluded that the customary administration of the prisons could not meet the challenges of civil war and the influx of its turbulent captives'.⁶⁵ The 'principal prisons' were then placed under military control with soldiers guarding the perimeters and where military police worked alongside regular staff.⁶⁶ The GPB continued to provide payment to civilian prison staff, while the army remained responsible to the military prison guards and officers.⁶⁷ Although many working within the Irish Prison System had been former employees of the British administration, the Free State did not demand retirements within the service and staff remained free to maintain their employment.⁶⁸ Throughout the civil war, the administration and maintenance of the prison system remained under the control of the G.P.B., 'even with the Army in occupation'.⁶⁹ From 1923, the prisons were gradually returned to the civil authorities.⁷⁰ The Free State's open approach towards former employees of the British administration can be contrasted with that of other European countries, where the incoming governments forced former employees to leave in the wake of civil war. The German-Italian occupation of Greece during the Second World War created a political vacuum, in which the Left came to prominence with the Greek government in exile. When the war ended, the balance of power 'swung suddenly and decisively against the Left

⁶³ Ibid, pp 170-2.

⁶⁴ Ibid, p. 171.

⁶⁵ Ibid, p. 168.

⁶⁶ Ibid, p. 172; Mountjoy was under joint civil and military control.

⁶⁷ Ibid, p. 171; Prisons and Internment Camp Staff 1922-3 (M.A., CW/P/02/01/03.).

⁶⁸ Ibid, p.177.

⁶⁹ Ibid, pp 172-3.

⁷⁰ Ibid, p. 172.

for the first time since 1942'.⁷¹ As the Right came to power 'purges now took place in the civil service, and later in the new gendarmerie, but these purges were not, as elsewhere in Europe, of suspected collaborators but rather of suspected leftists and *resistants*'.⁷² No such expulsion of prison staff was enforced in the Free State. Furthermore, the right wing terror that followed in the Greek Civil War stands in stark contrast to the way in which Anti-Treaty internees and their supporters would be treated in the new Irish state.⁷³

In the early months of the Irish Civil War, the National Army began to make significant advances and prison figures rose dramatically. During this period, the highest level of internment took place in Dublin and Cork, since the fighting in these areas was at its height in 1922. In January, before the outbreak of armed confrontation, there were only 462 prisoners in the Free State.⁷⁴ As the months passed, military internees entered the prison system and multiplied this figure tenfold, leaving thousands on the Anti-Treaty side incarcerated. After the fall of the Four Courts, Peadar O'Donnell recalled how some '180 of us were taken prisoner, and all but five that escaped, ended up in Mountjoy afterward'.⁷⁵ In Munster, by the end of August, the Pro-Treaty forces had made a 'dramatic sweep south and south west from Limerick and Kilmallock between 4 August and 19 August' and 'had occupied every significant town and village north of Munster'.⁷⁶ Internment rose significantly in the wake of these successes and the arrests were reflective of this. In June 1922, some 11 military prisoners were arrested in Dublin but in July there were 427 arrests and another 454 in August.⁷⁷ Likewise in Cork, there were only 6 arrests in July but the following month of August saw 166 military prisoners taken into custody and in September another 266.⁷⁸

⁷¹ Stanley Payne, *Civil War in Europe 1905-1949* (Cambridge, 2011) p. 6.

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ See Chapter 6.

⁷⁴ Provisional Government list of prisoners in the 26 Counties, 27 Jan. 1922 (N.A.I., JUS/H8/233.).

⁷⁵ MacEoin, *Survivors*, p. 26.

⁷⁶ Michael Harrington, *The Munster Republic: The Civil War in North Cork* (Cork, 2009), p. 76.

⁷⁷ Prison Ledgers Collection (M.A., IE/MA/CW/P.).

⁷⁸ Ibid.

Overall during 1922, some 1,560 internees were from Dublin and 936 from Cork.⁷⁹ Thus the Free State did set out to implement internment in the most affected areas. Over the course of 1922-24, the counties with the highest internment levels reflected the regions that were most active in military terms, noticeably the south and west of Ireland. The figures below are based on the county of origin of the internee arrested and reflect the prison statistics in the military prisons and camps throughout 1922-4. They are taken from the prison ledgers that survived and show the top ten most active areas for arrests.⁸⁰

Dublin 3357

Cork 2522

Tipperary 1008

Kerry 984

Mayo 881

Galway 805

Limerick 796

Louth 544

Sligo 483

Clare 440⁸¹

It is estimated that some 12,000 Anti Treatyites were interned in the Free State during the civil war,⁸² and according to records, there was a prisoner interned from every county on the island of Ireland.⁸³ However, archival sources would suggest that imprisonment between

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ These ledgers provide a figure of some 11 820 prisoners arrested from the top ten most active counties.

⁸¹ Prison Ledgers Collection (M.A., IE/MA/CW/P).

⁸² Hopkinson, *Green against Green*, p.268.

⁸³ Prison Ledgers Collection (M.A., IE/MA/CW/P); this collection revealed that every county on the island (North and South) had at least one man or woman arrested and interned in the Free State during the civil war. It must be noted that this research reflects the details provided in the prison ledgers. It is important to mention that internees may have given false addresses when arrested.

1922-4 was significantly higher and closer to the region of over 13,000 prisoners.⁸⁴

Internment figures for the Irish Civil War were twice as high as figures from the British administration years, which held 6,129 prisoners on the eve of the Truce in 1921.⁸⁵ The higher internment figures under the Free State government may be reflective of the intense nature of civil war, as argued by Stathis L. Kalyvas in his study, *The Logic of Violence in Civil War*. The divided nature of society during a civil war presents the state with some major security concerns. Of this Kalyvas stated that 'a security dilemma is said to occur when the breakdown of order creates a situation in which individuals coordinating around focal points (primarily ethnic identities) resort to pre-emptive violence, or align with warmongering leaders who do so, because of security fear'.⁸⁶ In this environment, Kalyvas stated that 'elites act instrumentally in pursuit of power'.⁸⁷ Taking the Provisional Government as the 'elites' in this assessment, then the implementation of widespread internment can be viewed not only as a security measure but also as the Free State's assertion of their authority and power. There was a very real security risk to the new state in 1922, from both civil and political offenders and thus the Provisional Government acted to reassert their control and prevent further descent into social anarchy. Another explanation for such high internment levels may be found upon an assessment of what 'prison' and 'imprisonment' represented for the ministers of the new state. William Murphy noted that 'imprisonment was vital to the personal experience of thousands of men and women who had made the revolution... This was an important field upon which the revolution was fought, ensuring that the politics of imprisonment was central not just to the propaganda, but to the wider politics of the Irish

⁸⁴ From the information provided on the prison ledgers, the figure is most likely in the region of 13,000 (or over) Anti-Treatyites interned over the entire period 1922-4. The exact figure would need further research as the details on the ledgers need to be cross checked to ensure that name/address/prison/camp details are not counted twice; Prison Ledgers Collection (M.A., IE/MA/CW/P).

⁸⁵ Murphy, *Imprisonment and the Irish, 1912-1921*, p. 1.

⁸⁶ Stathis L. Kalyvas, *The Logic of Violence in Civil War* (Cambridge, 2006), p. 61.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

revolution'.⁸⁸ Once in power, the Provisional Government returned to this instrument of control and used it to quell discontent, with the additional knowledge and capability of how to shut-down the traditional routes of prison protests and propaganda.⁸⁹ As the national army regained lost territory, Anti-Treatyites returned to old guerrilla war methods and internment became necessary to curtail sporadic outbursts of violence. Kissane remarked that at a political level, during this 'guerrilla phase', there was a drive towards 'the development of a new political programme that drew much of its vigour from the policy of deliberately closing down every avenue of peace in the interests of driving their opposition into the political wilderness'.⁹⁰ Internment was therefore instrumental in depleting the level of opposition outside. In truth, there were few options open to the new administration in 1922. The condition of the newly formed national army revealed that the administration could not entirely rely on the recently recruited soldiers to contain the growing unrest. John Regan noted that 'the treatyite government had to form an army almost from scratch, attempting in the process to transform the treatyite remnants of the I.R.A. into a modern, conventional and centralised army. General Sean Mac Mahon recalled at the Army Inquiry in 1924, that the night before the Four Courts attacks, treatyite troops had to be shown how to assemble and to fire their rifles'.⁹¹ Imprisonment was thus used in the absence of a well organised civil or military defence force.

In 1922, internment differed from the previous years for two reasons: it was implemented by a native government and operated during a civil war. The previous conflict in the country had been fought against the British administration from a united Republican front and when unruly political prisoners presented trouble in Irish jails, the British

⁸⁸ Ibid, p. 266.

⁸⁹ The Provisional Government achieved this through executions, censorship of the press and their policy towards hunger strikers; see chapter 4. They also raided the offices of prisoner support groups and arrested key figures; see Chapter 6.

⁹⁰ Kissane, *The Politics of the Irish Civil War*, p. 84.

⁹¹ Regan, *The Irish Counter Revolution*, p. 102.

Government could simply utilise one of the many prisons at their disposal in Britain to contain the situation.⁹² On one particular occasion, in July 1919, the British government decided to transfer Republicans Piaras Beaslaí and Daniel P. Walsh to Birmingham and Leeds respectively because Dublin Castle considered their ‘continued detention in Mountjoy...difficult’.⁹³ The government feared that these two Republicans had influence over the other prisoners and thus increased the ‘likelihood of their causing trouble’. For this reason, they were promptly removed to Britain. William Murphy remarked on the evolution of the modern prison system from the late eighteenth to nineteenth century and stated that ‘in Britain and Ireland as in the rest of Europe and beyond, these new large penal institutions became important facilities for the control of political troublemakers. The setting aside of special, often “notorious” prisons for this purpose, which happened in many countries, implied an acknowledgement that political prisoners were different, and in some states the law openly recognised this’.⁹⁴ After the withdrawal of the British administration, the Free State did not have the safety valve of U.K. prisons for siphoning off potential trouble makers. Ultimately, internment for the British Government was a method of controlling an unruly part of their empire, while for the Provisional Government it was viewed as an essential method to ensuring the state’s survival. In support of this position, is the fact that the Free State interned more ‘hostile’ opponents than the previous British administration.⁹⁵ In a fledgling state, where the national army was poorly trained, the new police force unarmed and the elected government comprised of many first time politicians, the threat from an ‘irregular’ army was likely to be met with a survivalist’s mentality and wide-spread internment was a by-product of this attitude. These factors may have contributed to the dramatically higher internment

⁹² Murphy, *Imprisonment and the Irish, 1912-1921*; McConville, *Irish Political Prisoners 1848-1922*; These books revealed how the British administration liaised with both Dublin Castle and the General Prisons Board in the running of the Irish prison system during the previous decade.

⁹³ McConville, *Irish Political Prisoners 1848-1922*, p. 707.

⁹⁴ Murphy, *Political Imprisonment and the Irish, 1912-21*, p. 5.

⁹⁵ William Murphy noted this figure as 6,129; Murphy, *Political Imprisonment and the Irish 1912-1922*, p. 1.

figures during the civil war period. Furthermore, internee details revealed that not only were prisoners arrested from every county in the Free State, but also from outside its jurisdiction. The prison ledgers indicated that a number of those interned were originally from Northern Ireland and had been arrested in the south (albeit in lower numbers than internees from other counties).⁹⁶ The introduction of internment by the Stormont administration possibly affected the number of persons from Northern Ireland that were imprisoned in the Free State. It was estimated that some 600 internees passed through Northern Ireland's jails 1922-1923.⁹⁷ Although, in reality, many Northern Irish internees held Pro-Treaty sympathies and it was more likely that they would receive an offer of employment in the Free State rather than an internment order.⁹⁸ Furthermore, there was also a cohort of individuals interned in southern jails who were not residents of either the Free State or Northern Ireland. Most of these internees provided English or Scottish addresses with a large portion of these coming from London, Liverpool and Glasgow. In total, some 215 internees were arrested in Britain.⁹⁹ Here are the top five areas in which arrests were made.

Manchester- 13

London- 38

Liverpool- 34

Glasgow- 53

Lancashire- 9¹⁰⁰

⁹⁶ The following figures are reflective of the number of prisoners interned in the Free State who provided Northern Irish addresses; Antrim 60, Derry 134, Armagh 147, Fermanagh 8, Tyrone 91, Down 52; Prison Ledgers Collection (M.A., IE/MA/CW/P.).

⁹⁷ Northern Ireland Parliamentary Debates (hereafter N.I.P.D.), Vol. III, Col. 443, 19 Apr. 1923.

⁹⁸ Kleinrichert, *Irish Republican Internment and the Prison Ship Argenta 1922* (Dublin, 2001), p. 62; Many internees from Northern Ireland travelled south and found it easier to obtain employment in the Free State as they held Pro-Treaty sympathies. One example of this was Northern internee Andrew Corrigan, who left Northern Ireland upon receiving an exclusion order and received employment in the Free State as a civic guard; (P.R.O.N.I., HA/5/1560.); For a full discussion of Northern Irish internees, see chapter 5.

⁹⁹ Prison Ledgers Collection (M.A., IE/MA/CW/P.).

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

In addition, three men were arrested and interned who claimed to be residents of the U.S.A. These men were: James Dunn, with an address at Academy [Brdgs], Falls River, Massachusetts, U.S.A. He was interned in Newbridge on 1 September 1922 and transferred to Mountjoy on 3 July 1923.¹⁰¹ Joseph Judge from Philadelphia, who was interned in Kilkenny and Tintown until his release in February 1923 and Frank Summers of Michigan, who was detained at Carlow-Athy in October 1922 and finally released from Newbridge in August 1923.¹⁰² These figures and details suggest that the Free State government adopted an extensive internment policy during these years, leaving no county untouched or nationality excluded, in the pursuit of political stability.

As a result of these high internment figures, some members of Dáil Éireann believed that there were now more people in opposition to the native government, than had been in arms against the British establishment. Kevin O'Higgins, Minister for Home Affairs, certainly believed that the prison system had been pushed to its limits as a result of the increasing opposition. He was also quick to point out that the British authorities had far more resources to draw on, than the newly formed Free State:

I have said that I have been promised within a short time all the Civil Prisons in the country for civil prisoners....and it is ridiculous to talk as if we had all the resources at our disposal of an old-established Government; and that the wheels were running in a well-oiled efficient way. That is not the position. The position is that in its infancy this Irish Government is challenged, and challenged more sternly than ever the English Government was challenged here, and challenged by men who never dared to challenge the English Government here, and would not challenge the English Government if it were here for many centuries or many decades. It is a strange thing and it is an unquestionable fact that there are men in arms to-day against this Government who never took arms against the British and never would take arms against the British.¹⁰³

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

¹⁰² Ibid.

¹⁰³ D.É.D., Vol. 1, Col. 2332, 28 Nov. 1922.

The rate at which the Provisional Government pursued internees was central to this sharp increase, which is somewhat reinforced by the fact that the new government interned individuals from every county on the island. Bill Kissane noted how in mid to late 1922, the frequent 'resort to reprisals and ill treatment of prisoners was alienating the general public from the Provisional Government' and he stated that the changing nature of the fighting led to a shift in the government's approach 'driving the Pro-Treaty side to extremes of cruelty'.¹⁰⁴ In some cases, this led to the arrest and detention of individuals on suspicion alone and many were held on very little evidence. The large sweep of arrests of suspected Anti-Treatyites resulted in some questionable detentions, in which prisoners were often coerced into admitting guilt. This was the case for one railway employee, James Kelly, who was arrested and beaten up after C.I.D. men suspected he was running trains for the I.R.A..¹⁰⁵ In his statement he wrote that he was questioned regarding the 'running of trains and replied that my job consisted of lighting of fire on an engine when so instructed and that beyond that I had not information on these matters...'.¹⁰⁶ Upon giving this answer, Kelly was then 'struck in face with clenched fists by C.I.D. men and called a liar...', he stated that 'a cocked revolver was rammed down my throat till my mouth bled freely and another used to dig me in the chest.' He alleged that they threatened to shoot him unless he 'admitted having given information to the IRA about a certain train and that I advocated refusal of men to light fires on troop trains at transport workers meeting that never took place'.¹⁰⁷ Coercing confessions or arresting individuals based on the nature of their employment may have gone some way in accounting for the high portion of Anti-Treatyites interned, rightly or wrongly, during this

¹⁰⁴ Kissane, *The Politics of the Irish Civil War*, p. 85.

¹⁰⁵ Statement James Kelly, GT. S & W. Ry Co Employers, 15 Aug. 1922 (N.A.I., s.1369/3.); attacks on the railways became more frequent during the civil war, see Bernard Share, *In Time of Civil War: The Conflict on the Irish Railways 1922-23* (Cork, 2006); consequently, the Free State would have investigated any potential links between railway employees and the Anti-Treaty I.R.A. .Attacks on the railways included the burning of railway stations, derailing trains and robbery of goods (M.A., Captured Documents, Lot 160; Lot 77, Lot 11.); Some Anti-Treatyites were interned and eventually tried for these attacks (M.A., List of prisoners cases handed over to the Civic Guard, CW/P/02/02/05.).

¹⁰⁶ Statement James Kelly, GT. S & W. Ry Co. Employers, 15 Aug. 1922 (N.A.I., s.1369/3.).

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

period. Stathis N. Kalyvas argued that the ‘high rates of civilian victimisation in civil war, relative to overall fatalities, result from the dearth of military engagement and the deliberate targeting of civilians...the battleground is society itself and civil war is “total war at grassroots level”’.¹⁰⁸ In the Free State, internment was seen as a way of combating this war at grassroots level and thus, the victimisation of civilians, may be seen as one factor that contributed to the rising internment figures. John Regan has argued that the new state’s tactics, in particular the executions, displayed the treatyite government’s intention to ‘liquidate the opposition irrespective of past services or revolutionary records...’.¹⁰⁹ In this sense, mass internment also played a prominent role in liquidating Anti-Treaty hostility, by containing it within the various prisons and internment camps around the country.

It is therefore no surprise that renovations within the prison system were considered almost immediately by the new administration. In January 1922, the Chairman of the General Prisons Board, Max Green, began preparations for the growing number of military prisoners that were expected to fill the country’s prisons during the year. Given that these considerations were being noted four months before the Anti-Treaty occupation of the Four Courts, one must assume that the Provisional Government were expecting, not only internal resistance to their authority, but that necessary action would be required against such opposition. The prisons, thus, seemed the most likely place to start in order to reassert their control. Mountjoy was pinpointed as having sufficient space and Green wrote to the Under Secretary stating that

Regarding accommodation for military prisoners’ arrangements can be made at once to hand over D wing at Mountjoy Prison with its exercise yard as a sectional Prison for the detention of Military prisoners. It can be physically isolated from the rest of the prison and can be taken charge of by the Military Authorities and administered independently of the rest of the prison. I assume that the Military Authorities will not

¹⁰⁸ Kalyvas, *The Logic of Violence in Civil War*, p. 54.

¹⁰⁹ Regan, *The Irish Counter Revolution*, p. 112.

require the services of the Prison warders to ensure safe custody...but of course the civil prison administration will afford every possible assistance.¹¹⁰

The move was officially completed a couple of days later and on 3 February, some eighteen 'military' prisoners were committed to Mountjoy.¹¹¹ Likewise, renovations were carried out at Kilmainham Jail and the Curragh. Kilmainham had been used by the British in the previous years to imprison I.R.A. prisoners and it was again opened for use during the civil war, particularly after the fall of the Four Courts.¹¹² By July 1922, it was decided to repair the jail sufficiently for the occupation of 'military prisoners'.¹¹³ A report stated that the jail should be used as 'a female military prison', to intern women found assisting 'irregulars by carrying communications, munitions or irregular activities'.¹¹⁴ However, the administration's decision to re-open Kilmainham as a place of internment was heavily criticised by the military governor Seán Ó Muirthuile. In fact, he considered the repairs to be a waste of government money. Ó Muirthuile wrote:

You ask for economy. The only way in which proper economy in connection with this prison could be brought about would be to never have re-opened the place. It will be almost as expensive as Mountjoy and its capacity is only 200, and repairs will have to be done every day no matter how long it is used.¹¹⁵

While Ó Muirthuile was preoccupied with the cost of maintaining Kilmainham Jail, there was no particular reference, at least from government sources, as to the use of a prison in which the 1916 Rising leaders had been executed. The link between Kilmainham Jail and the Republican movement would seem to be the most likely point of criticism, since it could become a potential source of anti-state propaganda. Although, with accommodation in the

¹¹⁰ Max Green, Chairman of the General Prison Board, to Under Secretary, 28 Jan. 1922 (N.A.I., JUS 8/233, N.A.I.).

¹¹¹ Adjutant General, to Minister for Home Affairs, 2 Feb. 1922 (N.A.I., JUS 8/233.).

¹¹² Niamh O'Sullivan, *Every Dark Hour: A History of Kilmainham Jail* (Dublin, 2007), p. 126 & 143.

¹¹³ MacDermot, Vice-Chairman General Prisons Board, to Secretary for the Minister for Home Affairs, 11 July 1922 (N.A.I., JUS H78/ 25.).

¹¹⁴ Minister for Home Affairs Kevin O Higgins, to President Cosgrave of Executive Council, 8 Sept. 1922 (N.A.I., s.1369/1.).

¹¹⁵ Ó Muirthuile, to Secretary of the Minister for Home Affairs, 2 Aug. 1922 (N.A.I., JUS H78/ 25.).

country's prisons stretched to the maximum and internment rising fast, the new state could not afford such sentimentalities. From an economic perspective, Governor Ó Muirthuile was correct in his predictions. Repairs were still being carried out in Kilmainham in 1923 when the civil war was coming to an end. In March of that year, the government sanctioned further repair work. The Finance Department wrote:

I am directed by the Minister of Finance to convey to you his authority to effect repairs in B division of Kilmainham prison at an estimated cost of £425 the sum provided in estimates for extraordinary repairs at Kilmainham has been increased to £900 to meet any charge which may arise...¹¹⁶

This revealed that repairs in Kilmainham Jail were continuous and spanned some eight months after the original repairs began (although it could be argued that many of these repairs were a result of the destructive nature of some Anti-Treatyites interned there).¹¹⁷ In 1922, Kilmainham had not functioned as a civil prison in 12 years and had been transferred from the Prisons Board to the British military.¹¹⁸ During this time, the prison was used 'as a barracks' and for 'internees as a military prison'.¹¹⁹ After its occupation by the military the prison was found to be in a state of '...wreck, no locks on cells, no lighting...'.¹²⁰ During the renovation efforts, the administration decided to bring in '20 civil male prisoners from Mountjoy... to assist at whitewashing and cleaning up the cells'.¹²¹ Additionally, beds and mattresses were also in short supply. The Provisional Government approached the British in the Royal Hospital and Richmond barracks for a 'bedding loan' but it was refused.¹²² An application was later sent through the G.H.Q. of the British Military and they obtained some

¹¹⁶ Minister for Finance, to Minister for Home Affairs, 15 Mar. 1923 (N.A.I., FIN 1/3442.).

¹¹⁷ Margaret Buckley recalled that some of her fellow prisoners in Kilmainham would set about 'wrenching off ...locks' and damaging cell 'furniture'; Margaret Buckley, *The Jangle of Keys* (Dublin, 1938), p. 26.

¹¹⁸ MacDermot, Vice-Chairman of General Prisons Board, to Secretary for the Minister for Home Affairs, 11 July 1922 (N.A.I., JUS H78/25.).

¹¹⁹ Ibid.

¹²⁰ Ibid.

¹²¹ Minister for Home Affairs, to President of Executive 23 Sept. 1922, (N.A.I., s.1369/1.).

¹²² MacDermot, Vice-Chairman General Prisons Board, to Secretary for the Minister for Home Affairs, 11 July 1922 (N.A.I., JUS H78/25.).

'150 bed boards, 300 blankets and 200 pillows'.¹²³ Even with these additional provisions, bedding shortages reached critical levels and civil prisoners in Mountjoy were drafted in to make mattresses for the incoming internees. It was reported that '...the prisoners' were 'stopping up all night sewing mattresses and filling them with coir...'.¹²⁴ The use of convict prisoners in the repair of Kilmainham Jail was noted with an element of appreciation by the staff of the G.P.B.. Mr McClure, Secretary to the G.P.B., remarked upon the speedy and efficient efforts of the convict prisoners who helped to restore the jail. He stated that 'Great credit is due in this case also to those who worked so hard. In the case of the prisoners I would recommend that a small gratuity be given on release...or if not a slight remission of their sentence might be considered'.¹²⁵ Renovations were similarly carried out nationwide. In September 1922, repairs began in the Curragh, just as internment figures began to rise. In some cases, unruly military internees contributed to the necessary repairs and in some instances, held up the transfer of Anti-Treayite prisoners. When Commandant General Director of Organisation inquired as to the extent of the repairs required in the Curragh, he received the following response:

I have asked Commandant General Mac Mahon whether he could take your 12 prisoners, but the position in the Curragh is that the Irregular prisoners there destroyed the doors of the cells and committed other breakages which will have to be repaired...¹²⁶

Overall, correspondence revealed that renovations progressed at a slow pace but they were significantly hindered by acts of vandalism and frequent batches of additional prisoners. In the Curragh, the Commandant General noted how The Board of Works were 'proceeding with the repairs and general renovation of the Camp Military prison and at the present time

¹²³ Ibid.

¹²⁴ Ibid.

¹²⁵ McClure, Secretary General Prisons Board, to MacDermot, Vice Chairman of the Prisons Board, 6 July 1922, (N.A.I., JUS H78/25.).

¹²⁶ Commandant General Director of Organisation, to Commandant General Price, 3rd Southern Division, 12 Sept. 1922 (M.A., CW/P/02/01/05.).

accommodation can be found for a dozen extra prisoners as a maximum. As the Board of Works do not carry out repairs with lightning rapidity, it is difficult to estimate when the job will be completed'.¹²⁷ However, progress was made in other prisons and by July 1922, Dundalk and Portlaoighise (Maryboro) Prisons were both ready for the reception of military prisoners.¹²⁸ Similarly, available space was considered in Tullamore, Mullingar, Tralee and Wicklow.¹²⁹

While the administration struggled to meet demand within the prison system, an element of political desperation became apparent in mid-1922, as the government worked to contain an impending overcrowding crisis in the prison system. This political anxiety can be observed in some of the suggestions floated at cabinet level and in one memo, it was suggested that places such as Tallaght Aerodrome and Lambay Island could be made habitable for military internees.¹³⁰ The memo reported that some '10,000' prisoners could be maintained there and added that Mr. Commissioner Robinson, who has a 'personal knowledge of the Island' believed it was capable of accommodating this large quantity of men.¹³¹ While credited as being the largest island on the east coast of Ireland, Lambay was still relatively small at 2.5km squared.¹³² However the water supply was 'assumed to be good'.¹³³ Furthermore, the 'western shore of the island' was 'low and rocky, with some

¹²⁷ Commandant General Commanding Curragh Camp, to Commandant General D. O'Hegarty, Director of Organisation, G.H.Q. Portobello Barracks, 14 Sept 1922 (M.A., CW/P/02/01/05.).

¹²⁸ Government Memo, 18 July 1922, (N.A.I., s.1369/1.).

¹²⁹ This reports stated that Mullingar was not 'immediately available', Tullamore had '130 cells', Tralee had '89 cells...in good repair'. Wicklow Prison was a 'dilapidated building' that had '90 cells and it has not been used for something like 25 years'; Secretary for Provisional Government, to Each Minister, 17 July 1922 (N.A.I., s.1369/1.).

¹³⁰ There appears to be two separate figures provided by government sources for the number of internees to be housed on Lambay. The 10,000 figure suggested can be found in a memo: Secretary of Provisional Government, to Each Minister, 18 July 1922 (N.A.I., s. 1369/1.). Seán Mc Conville provided a different figure of 5,300 internees to be housed on Lambay; *Irish Political Prisoners 1920-1962*, p. 184. He quoted a letter to Michael Collins, 17 July 1922 (N.A.I., s.1369/1.), p. 225.

¹³¹ Secretary of Provisional Government, to Each Minister, 18 July 1922 (N.A.I., s. 1369/1.).

¹³² (http://www.visitdublin.com/Asset/See_and_Do/tours_attractions/Points_of_Interest/Lambay_Island, data accessed 14 July 2014).

¹³³ Secretary of Provisional Government, to Each Minister, 18 July 1922 (N.A.I., s. 1369/1.).

outlying dangers; around the other parts the coast is composed of high bold cliffs'.¹³⁴ This rugged terrain would have made it almost impossible to erect huts for several thousand individuals. In addition to the island's geological pitfalls, Lambay was 4 ¾ miles from Ireland's Eye,¹³⁵ making it somewhat feasible for Anti-Treatyites on the outside to launch a rescue attempt to the island. Fortunately the government had noted that the western side of the island would be conducive to escape.¹³⁶ Internment of such a high portion of military prisoners on Lambay would have been an incredible task indeed and the idea was eventually shelved.¹³⁷ However, Lambay was not the only island within the sights of the Provisional Government. The Free State also considered internment options on St. Helena, the British overseas colony off the western coast of Africa in the south Atlantic.¹³⁸ St Helena had been home to some 5,000 prisoners during the Second Anglo-Boer War 1899-1902.¹³⁹ The island had a tradition of housing political prisoners and had been the place of exile for Napoleon Bonaparte from 1815-1821.¹⁴⁰ In considering such an option, the new state was drawing on the old British tradition of transportation which had been popular in the mid-nineteenth century. McConville noted that, 'In 1848, transportation was the usual penalty for felony; by 1865 the position was reversed. Transportation was being phased out... and only a minority of offenders were removed to Western Australia'.¹⁴¹ However, in the late nineteenth century, the British continued to use transportation for Irish prisoners, in particular the Fenians.¹⁴² During the decade of unrest preceding the Irish Civil War, the British again resumed transporting

¹³⁴ Richard Hoskyn, *Sailing Directions for the coast of Ireland* (London, 1866), p. 106.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 106.

¹³⁶ Secretary of Provisional Government, to Each Minister, 18 July 1922 (N.A.I., s. 1369/1.).

¹³⁷ Report on possibility of Tallaght, Gormanstown, Lambay, Collinstown and Baldonnell as potential internment camps, 21 July 1922. The report was doubtful as to whether 'it would be possible' to renovate Lambay to the appropriate conditions 'within three months' (N.A.I., s.1369/1.).

¹³⁸ Secretary of Provisional Government, to Each Minister, 18 July 1922 (N.A.I., s. 1369/1.).

¹³⁹ Brian Unwin, *Terrible Exile: The Last Days of Napoleon on St Helena* (New York, 2013), p. 56.

¹⁴⁰ Napoleon was exiled to St Helena from 1815 -1821 until his death on 5 May 1821. Lucia Elizabeth Abell, *Napoleon & Betsy: Recollections of the Emperor Napoleon on St Helena* (Fonthill, 2012), p. 96; Sue Steiner, *St Helena: Ascension, Tristan da Cunha* (Connecticut, 2007), p. 15.

¹⁴¹ McConville, *Irish Political Prisoners 1848-1922*, p. 201.

¹⁴² *Ibid.*

prisoners from the mainland, in particular to Spike Island. These individuals were convicted prisoners, not military internees, and after their sentencing they were transferred to the island from the mainland. Murphy noted that 'between February and December 1921, 258 convicts passed through this compound for varying periods of sentences. It is likely that the great majority of this group were I.R.A. members'.¹⁴³ The Free State, therefore, sought the advice of the British Administration regarding the best available methods by which to implement internment on St Helena. British civil servant, Mark Sturgis, corresponded with Desmond FitzGerald in relation to the procedures necessary to undertake such a large scale venture. He outlined the project thus:

...we have been pursuing various enquiries on the lines you suggested, regarding the provision of hutments, lighting etc., for the projected prisoners camp on St Helena, and as regards the transport question. These enquiries are not yet complete...The disposal board have no hutting in a condition for immediate shipment...[they have] hutted camps in Derbyshire for ...2,500-3,000. This would include in addition to sleeping huts, larger buildings for use as recreation rooms, hospitals etc. The re-erection in St. Helena would have to be undertaken by your own people... Though the Disposal Board hutments are cheap...the probability that on arrival in St Helena the consignment would be found to be incomplete in some small detail which would have to be sent out from Europe, would almost inevitably mean a large proportion of unforeseen expense and much vexations...heating, lighting, drainage and water would also have to be dealt with separately.¹⁴⁴

A further report was sent to Desmond FitzGerald detailing the mechanics of internment in relation to the shipping of food, heating, fuel, water and lighting.¹⁴⁵ Ultimately, the idea was shelved given the large scale cost and manpower needed to transport and erect huts for 2,500-3,000 prisoners. The project was officially abandoned in January 1923.¹⁴⁶ Sean McConville further remarked that this form of internment would have evoked 'bitter memories' of transportation and noted T.D. Gavan Duffy's concern that the British military would be used

¹⁴³ Murphy, *Imprisonment and the Irish, 1912-21*, p. 198.

¹⁴⁴ Mark Sturgis, to Mr. FitzGerald, 22 Nov. 1922 (U.C.D.A., Desmond FitzGerald Papers P80/388(1)).

¹⁴⁵ Secret Paper, Report of M.J. Nurke on the possibility of forming 'a large internment camp on St Helena', 26 Nov. 1922 (U.C.D.A., Desmond FitzGerald Papers P80/388(9)).

¹⁴⁶ Mc Conville, *Irish Political Prisoners 1920-1962*, p. 92 & 226; Executive Council, 18 Jan. 1923 (N.A.I., s.1369/1.).

to guard these overseas prisoners.¹⁴⁷ The fact that the Free State actively pursued these possibilities revealed the extent to which accommodation for internees had reached critical levels in the country. It further exposed the government's intentions to intern as many 'hostile' elements as possible through transportation measures if necessary.

As renovations progressed slowly in areas, the dilapidated condition to which the prison system had been reduced gradually became clear. While previous prisoners could be held accountable for a large portion of the repairs,¹⁴⁸ government records also revealed that a substantial amount of the damage had occurred under the management of either the British military or police. In March, a report estimating the damage in Tralee prison was sent to the Under Secretary and recommended that the Prisons Board should hold the R.I.C. accountable since it had occurred under their management. The Deputy Governor of the jail, P.J. Gordon, described the scene upon his arrival:

I found on my arrival at the prison that the cut stone arch over the entrance gate to the prison grounds from the public road is knocked down... All the yards and grounds are strewn over with broken bottles and debris of various kinds. In the yard in which the prison workshops were situated the pan of the W.C. is broken and otherwise damaged. The doors and windows of the workshops are very much damaged and glass broken. In another yard I found a series of lavatories erected... Several of the pans of the lavatories in this place were broken and water escaping... Several panes of glass in the cells windows removed and others broken... From a sanitary point of view I can only describe what I saw by the word filthy and before it is utilised for the detention of prisoners requires a great amount of labour in whitewashing and washing.¹⁴⁹

The estimated cost of repair was £600.¹⁵⁰ Further damage was reported in Maryborough Jail, which occurred while under military control. It was stated that 'the prison was handed over to the Military authorities and while in their hands the deficiency took place- also serious

¹⁴⁷ D.É.D., Vol. 1, Col. 1829, 20 Oct. 1922.

¹⁴⁸ William Murphy has documented the gradual weakening and deterioration of the Irish prison system at the hands of Republicans. This included the wreckage of cells and internal structures through riots and vandalism; Murphy, *Political Imprisonment and the Irish, 1912-1921*, pp 215-53.

¹⁴⁹ S.D. MacDermot, Finance Vice chairman, to Under Secretary, 29 Mar. 1922 [Deputy Governor Statement attached] (N.A.I., FIN1/88.).

¹⁵⁰ Ibid.

damage to the prison building...'.¹⁵¹ The overall estimated cost was £807.0.11.¹⁵² Further accounts of unrepaired damage were documented in Tullamore Prison and the Clerk of Works, B. Abraham, estimated the total repairs to be in the region of '£2017.4.6 in total'.¹⁵³ He stated that the 'walls of cells, corridors and passages throughout the prison are very much disfigured and dirtied and the plaster is damaged and broken away in several places. A number of the window sashes of cells and corridors although not broken are much decayed and the buildings generally are in a very bad condition...'.¹⁵⁴ The previous military residents of Kilmainham had likewise left the staff quarters in a poor state and complaints were forwarded from members of the new national army. The accommodation for the military governor was reported to be 'extremely bad'.¹⁵⁵ With a daily increasing body of internees the new administration did not immediately act to repair staff quarters. This became a point of grievance for military staff operating in Mountjoy. The Adjutant General in G.H.Q. wrote to the Minister for Home Affairs and complained that

I have had a guard at Mountjoy these two months. They are existing under the most filthy conditions and were it not for the personal loyalty of the men there would certainly have been mutiny. This is all because your Department refuses to clear out convicts who occupy portion of the prison which would otherwise be the quarters of the Guard. I presume it is very little good writing on the subject, but I want to remind you that the guard will not remain there after the end of this week if it is not remedied. The Governor of Mountjoy tells me that he has recommended several times the removal of these convicts to Maryboro...¹⁵⁶

Mountjoy certainly seemed to have been one of the worst jails in Dublin and the situation remained unresolved for much of the civil war. In 1923, Military Governor, Phil Cosgrave, filed a further complaint with the Dublin Command in which he detailed the poor condition of food and the eating facilities for the military staff. He wrote:

¹⁵¹ S.D. MacDermot, Finance Vice chairman, to Under Secretary, 7 Mar. 1922 (N.A.I., FIN1/88.).

¹⁵² Ibid.

¹⁵³ B. Abraham, to Chairman of General Prisons Board, 1 Mar. 1922 (N.A.I., FIN1/88.).

¹⁵⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵⁵ Government Report, 15 July 1922 (N.A.I., s. 1369/1.).

¹⁵⁶ Adjutant General, Beggars Bush, G.H.Q. to Minister for Home Affairs, 18 April 1922 (N.A.I., s.1369/1.).

The food supplied to us on numerous occasions has not been fit even for Convicts. In my opinion, the Messing arrangements here are about the worst in Dublin. The Sergeants Mess is far ahead of the Officers Mess. I would be obliged if you would give this matter your immediate and personal attention. There is only sufficient table ware to permit of six persons being served at a time and as there are, on an average, 25 people for meals each day, this causes great discomfort and inconvenience.¹⁵⁷

These haphazard eating arrangements provide us with a glimpse of the poor organisational standards within these prisons and camps and highlight that conditions were inadequate for both internees and Free State officers alike. The administration did, however, manage to make progress in some areas and correspondence revealed that the prison authorities sought to meet the standards that were set for military prisoners. The Vice Chairman of the Prisons Board commented that ‘...we notice from your regulations published to-day that the military prisoners are to be provided with three blankets. We have only made provision for two blankets each (for 150 prisoners), but steps have been taken to supply this deficiency’.¹⁵⁸ As late as September 1923, accounts of deteriorating conditions to G.H.Q. continued. On one occasion, the Prisoners Department reported flawed infrastructure and wrote to the camp quartermaster reporting the following:

I beg to inform you that in the three rooms comprising Prisoners Department, there are no fire places. There are, I understand, some stove fittings belonging to these rooms in the possession of the Works Company. I shall be obliged if you will have the matter of the erection of stoves attended immediately. I also wish to inform you that one of the Windows is badly broken, and that keys are required for three doors. The ADJUTANT GENERAL has called my attention to the fact that a trap door in the roof of the passage way leading to this office leaks rather badly, and he has requested me to inform you, so that if possible it may be repaired before the next wet day.¹⁵⁹

With the introduction of internment in 1922 one issue became blatantly clear. The Provisional Government had inherited a dilapidated and dysfunctional prison system and was ill-prepared

¹⁵⁷ Commandant Cosgrave, Military Governor Mountjoy, to Assistant Quartermaster General, Dublin Command, 16 June 1923 (M.A., CW/P/02/01/06A.).

¹⁵⁸ MacDermot, Vice Chairman of the Prisons Board, to Secretary of the Minister for Home Affairs, 8 July 1922 (N.A.I., s.1369/1.).

¹⁵⁹ Lieut. Officer I.C. Prisoners Dept., to Camp Quartermaster G.H.Q., 20 September 1923 (M.A., CW/P/02/01/06A.).

for the extent of the damage. This may explain why in the early days of civil war, ministers considered alternative options abroad (on a previous penal colony), as one possible route to alleviating some of these difficulties.

By November 1922, the estimated number of military prisoners in jails and camps was 8,338.¹⁶⁰ However, the government had clearly anticipated that internment figures would reach very high levels. During July 1922, as the administration was tackling renovations, moves were made to release a number of convict prisoners in order to make room for internees. This was specifically carried out in Limerick Jail and it was decided that

On account of the present military situation and in view of the necessity of making room for military prisoners, I find it necessary to order the release of all short term prisoners at present confined in Limerick Jail. You will please see that these prisoners are released at once. I will of course accept full responsibility with the Government for this action.¹⁶¹

As a result twenty five men and three women were released on 28 July.¹⁶² The majority of those released were approaching their discharge date, with some of the sentences due to expire within a month and others in five months. However, what is striking about these cases is that many of the prisoners released had committed relatively serious offences and in some instances, they had not even been tried. The majority of the men were in jail for larceny, while one was in for assault. Two of these men, Edmond Lafferty and Patrick Cusack, had committed a bank robbery and both were untried, while another, Denis Conway, was in jail for kidnapping.¹⁶³ The scale of the crimes committed varied but were nonetheless serious. The serious nature of releasing convicted and untried prisoners was noted by the Department of Home Affairs in a letter which stated

¹⁶⁰ Government Report, Nov. 1922 (N.A.I., s. 1369/1.).

¹⁶¹ Commandant General, Commanding Operations in Limerick, to the Governor of Limerick Jail, 15 July 1922 (N.A.I., JUS/H8/327.).

¹⁶² Military Governor Limerick Prison, to Chairman of General Prisons Board, 28 July 1922 (N.A.I., JUS/H8/327.).

¹⁶³ Military Governor of Limerick Prison, to Secretary Minister for Home Affairs, 2 Aug. 1922 (N.A.I., JUS/H8/327.).

Please see and return the attached file. I do not know whether you have previous knowledge of this matter. The release of 36 civil prisoners, most of them charged with rather serious offences, was a grave step for Commandant General Lynch to take. I would not be surprised if it was raised in the Dail hereafter, and consequently I would be glad to have a report from Commandant General Lynch as to the circumstances which rendered this step necessary. These prisoners could have been accommodated in Mountjoy Prison, and if the rails were clear at the time, one could think that the proper course was to charter a special train and send them up.¹⁶⁴

The fact that Commandant General Lynch did not investigate alternative accommodation in Dublin revealed that the military had made an official decision without prior consultation with the administration. Anti-Treaty internees were clearly the priority in terms of who should remain in jail and who should be released. It further exposed how social unrest was perceived primarily as the consequence of the Anti-Treaty agenda, which Richard Mulcahy had highlighted in April, when he stated that ‘seceding volunteers’ had conducted attacks on persons, transport and stores.¹⁶⁵ Mary Rogan commented that between 1922-3, ‘prisoners... incarcerated...for reasons other than those related to the unrest...were almost entirely overlooked by the prison authorities, policy makers and the public during this time’.¹⁶⁶

By late 1922, as a result of the rapidly expanding military internee population, there was a noticeable lack of prison accommodation for civil prisoners (females in particular). In October, accommodation for female civil prisoners in Limerick was put before the Prisons Board and they recommended that ‘for the present, women sentenced to terms of 14 days or upwards, or committed for trial at Assizes or Quarter Sessions, should be sent to Sunday’s Well Prison, Cork’. Furthermore they suggested that those sentenced to a term ‘under 14 days, or remanded for short terms, should be sent to Mountjoy Prison’.¹⁶⁷ However, the Board did acknowledge that accommodation for female prisoners in either Cork or Mountjoy

¹⁶⁴ Acting Minister for Home Affairs, to Commander in Chief, Portobello Barracks, 5 Sept 1922 (N.A.I., JUS/H8/327.).

¹⁶⁵ D.É.D., Vol. S2, Col. 249-250, 26 Apr. 1922.

¹⁶⁶ Mary Rogan, *Prison Policy in Ireland*, p. 27.

¹⁶⁷ Chairman of General Prisons Board to Secretary of Minister of Home Affairs, 10 Oct. 1922 (N.A.I., JUS/H8/405.).

Prison was 'very limited'. Therefore, it was recommended 'that the Justices at Limerick might be asked to deal with women charged with minor offences by fines, cautions, discharge on recognizances ... So as to avoid as far as possible the expense and inconvenience of escorting women sentenced to a few days imprisonment to Cork or Dublin...'.¹⁶⁸

Unfortunately, the issue of overcrowding in Limerick was never successfully addressed during the Irish Civil War. The lack of appropriate prison accommodation was still a serious topic of discussion in Limerick in the latter stages of the conflict and civil prisoners were still suffering in the shadow of an extensive military internee population. In 1923, one local Limerick justice wrote a letter of complaint regarding the issue stating:

May I draw to your attention the serious inconvenience which I and my neighbouring Justices suffer from the fact that there is no accommodation for Civilian Prisoners in Limerick. I had a case recently where a prisoners [*sic*] was sent into custody from Tralee to Limerick Prison, and as there was no place for his reception I had to send him to Mountjoy Gaol in Dublin... This has happened with some other prisoners... and I know that the Civic Guard here have often to detain prisoners for days at Wellington Street Barracks. I may say that I am fully aware of the great difficulties that the ministry have in this matter, but I consider it at the same time to be my duty ... the state of affairs here under notice of the ministry with the hope that something might be done to provide some accommodation for civil prisoners here in Limerick Gaol... This particularly applies to the case of women prisoners.¹⁶⁹

Rising internment was therefore partially combated by a policy of selective releases and transfers, as the administration actively placed a higher priority on the detention of military over convicted civilian prisoners. Even among the civilian prison population, a trend developed that sought the discharge of female convicts in order to accommodate the male civil prisoners, with the express intention of freeing up the male civil wing for military internees. In Sligo Prison, the administration examined the possibility of discharging female convicts and transferring the male civil prisoners to the female wing. The administration intended to utilise the male section as a military wing and 73 cells could hold an average of

¹⁶⁸ Ibid.

¹⁶⁹ J.M. Flood Esq. to Secretary of Minister Home Affairs, 8 Jan 1923 (N.A.I., JUS H8/405.).

three men per cell. They estimated that this could hold 210 military prisoners.¹⁷⁰ However, there was no confirmation that these releases were acted on. In Galway, the administration calculated that if three female prisoners were discharged, they could move male civil prisoners to the female section and then have 95 cells for military prisoners which could hold 270.¹⁷¹ Similar to the situation in Limerick, attempts to discharge convicted prisoners highlighted the extent to which overcrowding affected the prison service and further exposed the priority of military over civilian prisoners in the wake of Anti-Treaty opposition. In Mountjoy, convict prisoners were removed from two wings, which were then allocated for military prisoners until ‘... such time as Maryborough is ready...the carrying out of the repairs authorised should be postponed’.¹⁷² Correspondence between government departments revealed that aside from low funding and accommodation, the administration of the system focused primarily on the Anti-Treaty/military internees. During the civil war, containment of the opposition was vital and military detainees took priority over civil offenders. This was reflected in the number of convicts, kidnappers and bank robbers that were freed in order to accommodate military captives, many of whom had committed lesser offences.¹⁷³

The process of implementing internment in 1922 was not only aggravated by a rundown prison service but it was further hindered by limited space and facilities. The rapid attempts to renovate the existing system exposed further unanticipated difficulties and just like the internal structure of the prisons and camps, the administration of the system was often quite disorganised. Administering for a body of over 13,000 military prisoners in the environment of 1922 was certainly a difficult task and internees often suffered as a consequence. Among some of the problems internees encountered was the loss of personal

¹⁷⁰ Government Report, circa Nov. 1922 (N.A.I., s. 1369/1.).

¹⁷¹ Ibid.

¹⁷² Lieut. General, Portobello Barracks, to Minister for Defence, 14 July 1923 (M.A., CW/P/02/01/06A.).

¹⁷³ Acting Minister for Home Affairs to Commander in Chief Portobello Barracks, 5 Sept. 1922 (N.A.I., JUS/H8/327.); Some of the internee cases in the Prison Ledgers reveal that many military prisoners were detained for lesser offences. An example of one such case was that of a man interned on the suspicion of blocking a roadway; see (M.A., CW/P/02/02/01.).

property. Upon arrest, Anti-Treaty internees (like all military prisoners) had to submit any items in their possession such as money, jewellery etc. In some cases, these items were 'mislaid' during the internees transfer from one prison to the other. On 25 October 1923, the Director of Intelligence in Army G.H.Q. informed all officers in charge of prisons and camps that

When prisoners are being handed over, either to Civil Authorities or other places of internment that prisoners' property including cash taken from them after arrest, be forwarded in each case with the prisoner to his future place of detention.¹⁷⁴

Within a number of days the Director of Intelligence sent out another letter. This time it referred to the number of queries he had received in relation to 'missing' property. The director wrote: '...numerous enquiries have been received in this Department regarding prisoners' property, including cash taken from them after arrest, which is held by the Command Intelligence Officer...'. He then went on to explain that in some circumstances these possessions were '...not forwarded with the prisoner when he was transferred to a recognised prison or Internment Camp, and which in several cases has been lost or mislaid'.¹⁷⁵ In some cases, the failure to transfer possessions may have been down to genuine forgetfulness or the absence of the Officer in Charge. As one Intelligence Officer in Wexford pointed out: '...I have in possession Watch and two chains the property of Myles Roban...one watch the property of Mr Joseph O'Toole...watch religious articles and pocket toilet set the property of John J. Nolan...those prisoners were removed while I was out in the area I was unable to hand them over their property when they were being transferred to Gormanstown'.¹⁷⁶ However the officer also referred to 'missing' money and stated that some seventeen prisoners had their possessions and money stolen. He declared that '...all the

¹⁷⁴ Director of Intelligence, G.H.Q. to Adjutant General, 25 Oct. 1923 (M.A., CW/P/02/01/10.).

¹⁷⁵ Officer in Charge of Prisoners Dept. to All Civil Governors, G.O.C.s and Command I.O.s, 29 Oct. 1923 (M.A., CW/P/02/01/10.).

¹⁷⁶ Battalion Intelligence Officer, G.H.Q., Wexford, to Command I.O., Emmet Barracks, 7 Dec. 1923 (M.A., CW/P/02/01/10.).

money and property was handed into this office in sealed envelopes by Captain Walpole and was stolen from the office as you are aware between 4/5/23 and 25/5/23'.¹⁷⁷ The list also noted that the amount of money stolen was over £9 to 2s 2d. Furthermore, once inside the prison walls or camp wire, the military had the power to confiscate certain 'possessions' indefinitely. One particular Adjutant General refused to return the total sum of money taken from a particular group of prisoners, on the suspicion that it could have been the proceeds of a robbery in the area. The Adjutant wrote:

Meehan...Monaghan...McGroarty three prominent Irregulars were arrested on the 2nd June last, and they had in their possession 28:5:4. The local Post Office which had been robbed some time previously claimed two five pound notes, the number of which corresponded with the number of notes on Meehan. This money was handed by the Command I.O. to you.¹⁷⁸

The Adjutant stated that the remainder of the money, £18:4:4 was returned to Meehan, which the Adjutant surmised would be distributed 'amongst the dependents of irregular prisoners'.¹⁷⁹ This revealed that the military authorities had a certain amount of freedom in making decisions, based on their own personal suspicions. Not much investigation was necessary and property could be confiscated at the whim of an adjutant. These discrepancies were highlighted in Dáil Éireann by Labour Party Leader, Thomas Johnson who stated that

I will leave that with Deputy Gavan Duffy, but I will deal with the case of the property of prisoners which is personal to the prisoner, and which is being retained by the authorities, lost by the authorities, never returned by them, even when men have been released. Members of the various departments, I do not know whether they are C.I.D., Protective Forces, or some secret organisation within the Army, but one or other of these uniformed forces have obtained possession of the property of prisoners. One has a right to expect that that property would be deposited and catalogued and returned at least when the prisoners are released, but many cases have arisen in which no such return has been made. Ministers have no right to speak of these people as though they were criminals and as though what they had on their person was stolen property.¹⁸⁰

¹⁷⁷ Ibid.

¹⁷⁸ Adjutant General Donegal, to Director of Intelligence Dublin, 29 Nov. 1923 (M.A., CW/P/02/01/10.).

¹⁷⁹ Ibid.

¹⁸⁰ D.É.D., Vol. 2, Col. 1302, 30 May 1923.

In response, Kevin O'Higgins stated that

I trust we will get particulars of money taken from prisoners and unaccounted for on their release, and proof that they had it. While the Deputy is prepared to say that no such proof ought to be necessary, I am prepared to say that it is at least as necessary, as it is necessary to support the case that the money was taken from them by some officer of the Government and never returned, never checked, never catalogued. The Deputy is rather insistent that these men should be presumed to be archangels until proved to be nearer to the contrary, but I am rather insistent on this — their mere statement as against people for whom they have naturally a rather venomous mentality should not be accepted without critical examination.¹⁸¹

In this sense, certain attitudes towards internees were based on the assumption that they were guilty until proven innocent and their possessions were treated accordingly. The rapidity with which internees filled the prisons and camps in 1922 was not fully supported at the administrative end of the system as personal details, belongings and prisoner transfers were frequently delayed.¹⁸² Furthermore, the unstable political environment exposed a prison system that was an easy target for manipulation and this undoubtedly increased suspicion among the authorities. On some occasions, false imprisonment became a problem for the government. While the vast majority of military internees were Anti-Treaty, there were a number of Pro-Treaty supporters imprisoned, albeit accidentally. In the months preceding civil war, a number of cases arose in which internees, who were in fact sympathetic to the new government, were committed to jail. The fracture of the Republican movement post-treaty had created much confusion surrounding political loyalties and this was particularly apparent in Co. Sligo. One report related events surrounding the arrest of four men by a 'Republican Party':

It appears from correspondence received in this Department that four men named Cosgrave, Mullen, Collins and Kearns were recently arrested by representatives of the Republican Party in Sligo, apparently for political reasons, and lodged in Sligo Prison, on remand. The Committal Warrant in the case of Cosgrave is signed by James Mulholland, a Justice and addressed to Vice Commander Walker, 1 Battalion, 4th Sligo Brigade. As it is quite possible that in certain districts in future further attempts

¹⁸¹ D.É.D., Vol. 2, Col. 1307-08, 30 May 1923.

¹⁸² For delays in prisoner transfers see (M.A., CW/P/02/01/02; CW/P/02/01/05.); for delay in prisoner belongings see (M.A., CW/P/02/01/10.).

may be made to imprison people on the sole grounds that they are in sympathy with the Provisional Government, it becomes a matter of urgency that the seven Committal Officers, with substitutes, as referred to in this Department's letter of the 5th instant should be nominated by you forthwith for the seven prison areas, so as to prevent the occurrence of further irregularities.¹⁸³

The administration accepted the appointment of 'Committal Officers' to combat these false imprisonments. The Prisons Board confirmed that

Instances have arisen in which persons acting as police under the Provisional Government have requested Governors of prisons to receive for custody prisoners who have not been committed under the usual warrants. The Provisional Government have now appointed the officers... with authority to commit persons to a prison within their area on a warrant... and Governors will in future act upon any such warrant in the same manner as upon the usual warrant... If any prisoner is presented for custody without the production of a warrant... the Governor should then immediately report the facts of the case by telephone or telegraph to the appropriate officer named above...¹⁸⁴

As internment increased over the coming months, these safeguarding measures were put in place in order to limit the frequency of mistakes. Ill-discipline and poor judgement was reported in both the military and civil sections of the prisons. In Mountjoy, a large quantity of laundry was destroyed in a fire due to staff negligence. In May 1923, an investigation into the fire, discovered that on the '... 20th ultimo a fire took place in the Drying Chamber of the Laundry at Mountjoy Civil Prison resulting in the destruction of certain articles of public property to the value of 37:17:0. The Board have caused enquiries to be made into the origin of the fire...'.¹⁸⁵ It was subsequently discovered that both the Warder and Principle Warder in charge had failed to inspect the laundry room correctly before they left for the day. Both officers were duly reprimanded and '...disciplinary action taken by the Board...' was as follows.

¹⁸³ P. O'Siochain, Secretary of Minister for Home Affairs, to Adjutant General, 13 Apr. 1922 (N.A.I., JUS/H8/233.).

¹⁸⁴ Provisional Government, to General Prisons Board, 30 January 1922 (N.A.I., JUS/H8/233.).

¹⁸⁵ MacDermot, Vice Chairman, to Secretary for Minister Home Affairs, 16 May 1923 (N.A.I., JUS H17/7.).

The Supervising Officer (a Principal Warder) fined £1 and severely reprimanded for the perfunctory discharge of his duties which resulted in a great loss of state property... The warder in charge of laundry severely reprimanded with record.¹⁸⁶

These mishaps certainly exposed a lack of adherence to routine policy and highlighted the type of working conditions within the prisons and camps. However, the level of opposition through riots and protests among internees certainly affected the productivity of the staff and would have increased pressure on governors and warders within the system. In this environment mistakes were easily made. Unprofessionalism, too, was at the heart of many internal difficulties. Upon one inspection of Tintown No. 2, the Military Governor found two prisoners attempting to escape and upon approach he found that there were no sentries within the immediate proximity. He wrote

While I was visiting my guard at the hour of 3.30 p.m. on the 12/3/23 as I came near No3 Sentry Box I noticed two prisoners in the act of scaling the dead wire. I at once ran to the scene, and the two prisoners retreated before I could reach them. I then could find no sentries and I began to search and I found four sentries in the Hut of the outpost and none of them could see their post. I then took their names and numbers and reported the matter to the Governor of No. 2 Camp and Capt. Murray. For at least 300 or 400 yards there were no sentries.¹⁸⁷

The speed at which internees entered the camps and prisons did not match the level of preparation among the defence forces. Aside from the presence of some poorly trained sentries in certain military camps, Eunan O'Halpin noted, how the national army during this period, was often the 'source of much of the crime it was to supposed to suppress'.¹⁸⁸ O'Halpin quoted a 1924 intelligence report, which stated that 'a high percentage of the crimes committed during the second half of 1923 have been definitely traced to members or ex-members of the Army',¹⁸⁹ With internal difficulties such as these, the army alone could not combat opposition from the Anti-Treaty I.R.A.. Thus the country's prisons and camps

¹⁸⁶ Ibid.

¹⁸⁷ Comdt. General Military Governor Tintown No. 2, to Camp Comdt. O'Brien, 13 Mar. 1923 (CW/P02/01/06, M.A.).

¹⁸⁸ Eunan O'Halpin, *Defending Ireland: The Irish State and its Enemies Since 1922* (Oxford, 1999), p. 41.

¹⁸⁹ Ibid.

became a fall back measure in lieu of an organised defence force, an effective means of detaining the 'hostile' or 'irregular' element within Irish society. Internment became a method of controlling those who aggravated an already volatile situation. However, the prison system itself, like the national army, suffered from a variety of organisational hiccups often in succession and rarely absent during this period. Employment within the system certainly became the focus of criticism in the early days of the civil war. In Kilmainham Jail the Governor reported in 1922 that

As the Prison Board will not employ any labour other than that necessary for cooking in this establishment, I have had to take on a number of workers. They are working censoring letters and parcels in and out... I now beg to apply for funds to finance the running of this prison...¹⁹⁰

As internment figures rose in July 1922, Governor Ó Muirthuile wrote to the Ministry for Home Affairs requesting that '...something be done with regard to making funds available to cover the cost of running this place as a prison... The staff were paid last week from money I advanced myself. This, of course, cannot be done in future....'.¹⁹¹ The fact that the governor had to provide personal money to pay staff members reflected the climate in which internment operated. However, this situation was hastily remedied by the Ministry for Home Affairs, who confirmed the following day that '...we have to-day given sanction to the General Prisons Board for the employment of these men and the payment of their wages out of the Prisons Board vote...'.¹⁹² It must also be highlighted that the workers in question were important members of the prison staff, such as censors and clerical workers. In fact, administrative problems within the system continued into 1923. After hostilities ended in May, the Free State decided to make 60% of the civilian clerks in the country's internment

¹⁹⁰ Ó Muirthuile, Military Governor Kilmainham Jail, to Secretary Minister for Home Affairs, 17 July 1922 (N.A.I., JUS H78/25.).

¹⁹¹ Ó Muirthuile, Governor Kilmainham Jail, to Secretary Minister Home Affairs, 19 July 1922 (N.A.I., JUS H78/25.).

¹⁹² Secretary of the Minister for Home Affairs, to the Military Governor, Kilmainham Jail, 20 July 1922 (N.A.I., JUS H78/25.).

centres redundant and retain 405 of them.¹⁹³ Military governors lodged a series of complaints, particularly in the camps, highlighting that there was already a constant shortage of administrative staff. In the absence of clerical workers, the administrative work in some prisons subsequently became part of the Governor's 'already' highly pressured responsibilities. In mid-1923, the Governor of Galway Prison reported there was no clerical staff to deal with the '368 prisoners in his custody'.¹⁹⁴ Similarly in March 1923, the Governor of Sligo Jail complained that he had '...no man to look after correspondence and general supervision, but myself and the Deputy Governor. I am in much need of a clerical assistant. There are seventy five Irregular Prisoners (Military) here at the moment'.¹⁹⁵ These administrative issues enhanced the pressure on the prison staff in an already chaotic prison system.

Thus in 1922, internment evolved as a means of controlling the social discontent that had erupted in the wake of the Anglo-Irish Treaty. Legislation for the 'regularisation' of internment was adopted through emergency powers in order to reinforce social stability but this led to a rapid increase in internee figures from late 1922. While internment was an essential means of combating the opposition, its implementation was hampered by a whole host of internal difficulties. In the early months of 1922, the system often operated on an *ad-hoc* basis and this general trend continued for the remainder of the civil war and beyond. While the new administration was finding its political feet, the variety of problems that surfaced regarding inadequate provisions and accommodation was often inevitable. In particular, the financing of the system was often haphazard. Furthermore, the Provisional Government was noticeably disadvantaged by the condition of their inheritance. In 1922, the

¹⁹³ Adjutant General Officer to Military Governor Hayes, Newbridge Internment Camp, 16 June 1923 (M.A., CW/P/02/01/06A.).

¹⁹⁴ Capt. for Adjutant General, to General Officer Commanding Clare Morris Command, 22 May 1923 (M.A., CW/P/02/01/06A.).

¹⁹⁵ Capt. J. McGowan, Military Governor Sligo Prison, to Adjutant General, Portobello, 7 Mar. 1923 (M.A., CW/P/02/01/06A.).

new state was burdened with a broken prison system, one which was dilapidated in places and barely functioning in others, often in need of extensive renovation before internees could even enter.¹⁹⁶ Bill Kissane noted how internment was considered necessary in the politically unstable environment of civil war but this did not end upon the cessation of hostilities in May 1923. Kissane stated that 'In Leitrim, for example, although I.R.A. activity was significant only in the border area with Sligo, most of the country remained in a disturbed condition well into 1924. The Garda report for September 1923 said that the southern portion of the country was 'practically lawless'. In November the whole of the country was in an 'exceedingly unsatisfactory condition'".¹⁹⁷ The men of the Executive Council knew all too well the character and nature of Anti-Treaty I.R.A. prisoners and they continued to enforce internment until 1924. Kissane noted:

In legal terms the civil war came to an end on 31 July 1923 when the High Court ordered the release of certain prisoners in army custody on the grounds of a state of war no longer existed. However, immediately afterwards the Irish parliament passed an internment law that in effect continued in existence until the Emergency Powers Act of 1926. This Act enabled the government both to proclaim a state of emergency and to provide for the further use of internment. The evidence suggests that the powers were necessary. The Garda reported in November 1923 that the suppression of the irregular 'revolt' could not be said to be complete when so many bands of I.R.A. men roamed around the country, some of them under the leadership of men who had been returned to the Dáil as TDs the previous August.¹⁹⁸

While mass internment effectively countered Anti-Treaty opposition, it also enhanced the internal pressure on the officers and governors controlling the camps and further exposed the inadequate levels of training and poor funding. Inefficiency bred confusion and in this environment many internees were able to manipulate the circumstances to their own ends.¹⁹⁹ Over 13,000 internees passed through the country's jails and camps during 1922-24. What was the experience of internment like, for these men and women, who opposed the new state?

¹⁹⁶ By 1921, Murphy noted that 'a persistently rebellious prison population had reduced an ordered system to chaos.'; Murphy, *Political Imprisonment the Irish, 1912-1921*, p. 215.

¹⁹⁷ Kissane, *The Politics of the Irish Civil War*, p. 95.

¹⁹⁸ Ibid, p. 96.

¹⁹⁹ Internees utilised this instability to riot, hunger strike and conduct escape attempts.

Chapter 2

Conditions in Prisons and Camps 1922-4

I whirled round shuffled through the cell in an aimless wander of a sick dog...I emerged from my daze sufficiently to gaze around me and view the cell against the texture of my excited mind; how I loathed it. The walls, hateful; the door, a horror; the torn mattress, filth; the thick, yellow, dirty panes of glass, a diseased condition of light...¹

This was Peadar O'Donnell's first impression of his cell in Mountjoy's D. wing, as recorded in 1932. He had been arrested following the fall of the Four Courts in Dublin and removed to the jail for internment. He would spend the duration of the Civil War in prison until his escape from Newbridge Internment camp in 1924.² The above account was one of the few descriptions O'Donnell gave of his cell in his memoir. He did not comment extensively again until he was transferred to the Curragh Internment Camp, where he wrote that 'our living huts were large and had concrete floors serrated like stable floors and we had spring beds. We could cook and distribute food and organise camp life generally'.³ In between, he wrote mainly of the antagonism between the prisoners and their jailors, riots, executions and plotting prison escapes. Written ten years after the event, his most vivid memories of internment were these major episodes and it may well be that the general conditions of his imprisonment were not so bad as to warrant constant reiteration. Perhaps, O'Donnell's desire to escape was the one memory that most occupied his mind and overshadowed the squalor of his prison cell. However, written 1932, O'Donnell was conscious of the long tradition of nationalist memoirs that focused on themes such as prisoners' ill-treatment and conditions.

¹ Peadar O'Donnell, *The Gates Flew Open: An Irish Civil War Prison Diary* (Cork, 2013 reprint), pp 8-9.

² Ibid, p. 188.

³ Ibid, p. 77.

Tom Clarke in *Glimpses of an Irish Felon's Prison Life*, recalled his time spent as a prisoner in the British Victorian system and 'the indecent and hurtful way some of the officers mauled me'.⁴ There are a variety of memoirs written by Irish nationalist prisoners detailing their time in jail and discussing similar themes.⁵ While these prison memoirs are deeply insightful and often complement archival material, contemporary sources are often more enlightening. Joseph Campbell's diary, written during his internment 1922-3, contained more direct reference to the general prison environment. Living in the moment, Campbell referred to the poor facilities available in Bray and related how things were 'pretty rotten and disorganised' with 'dirty wash basins' and 'upswept'⁶ rooms. He continued in a similar vein about Mountjoy Jail, where as a prisoner in D. wing, he wrote 'The condemned cells-fire place, archway, chairs, distempered unaesthetic green & red walls, water over floors from lavatories; heavy smell. The Hang House outside, Stone steps with iron railing out to exercise yard...Wire, wire everywhere'.⁷ Campbell's regular reference to his surroundings is perhaps not too surprising, given that his diary was written within the confines of his cell, although it could be argued, there was little else to write about. This chapter is an exploration of these combined experiences through a collection of memoirs, prisoners' correspondence and governmental records. It will piece together these sources with the intention of offering an insight into the general experience of internment in the Free State 1922-4, with particular emphasis on conditions such as overcrowding, prison meals, sanitation, bedding, exercise and outlets for recreation. Having assessed the nuts and bolts of internment at an administrative level in chapter one, it is now essential to observe how this played out for the men and women who entered the prison system.

⁴ Tom Clarke, *Glimpses of an Irish Felon's Prison Life* (Cork, 1970), p. 42.

⁵ John Mitchell, *Jail Journal or Five Years in British Prisons* (New York, 1854); Michael Davitt, *Leaves From a Prison Diary; or Lectures to a 'Solitary' Audience* (New York, 1886).

⁶ Eiléan Ní Chuilleanáin (ed), *'As I was Among Captives': Joseph Campbell's Prison Diary 1922-23* (Cork, 2001), pp 19-20.

⁷ Ibid, p.47.

There are a number of problems that arise when considering the conditions of internment in this period. Memoirs, diaries and the letters of Anti-Treaty internees contain their obvious bias and newsletters and pamphlets generally reported not only the worst prison cases but most likely exaggerated them in the process. Republican literature is littered with accounts of appalling conditions, inedible food, ill-health and little or no sanitation within the prison system. *Éire* or *Poblacht na hÉireann* articles were particularly critical and reported that ‘cleanliness is now a matter of impossibility...sickness has already occurred... One hundred and ninety prisoners are huddled together in 71 cells....The bedding is filthy...’ and ‘...prisoners of war are kept in insanitary surroundings and have suffered from cold and want of food for long periods’. ⁸ However while Anti-Treaty literature has its own pitfalls, it cannot be discounted. Neither can the Pro-Free State media be seen as the most accurate gauge since there was blatant censorship of internee conditions. The national newspapers were widely censored within the first few weeks of the civil war. In July 1922, Provisional Government minutes reported that

...the Army Authorities were dissatisfied with comments appearing in the English newspapers on the Army and on the military situation, and it was decided that an order be issued prohibiting the importation, distribution or sale of any newspaper not passed by the official Military Censors. It was decided also that a notice be issued ordering that all press cables and correspondence should be submitted to the official military censor before publication.⁹

Within a couple of days of this decision the minutes then related that ‘... the interview with the Editors of the “Freeman’s Journal” and the “Irish Times” had produced a good effect, and the current numbers of these papers had shown a considerable improvement on previous issues. The attitude of the “Irish Independent” however was still unsatisfactory, and it was arranged that the Publicity Department should prepare a full statement of the case for Mr.

⁸ *Poblacht na h-Éireann*, 2 Nov. 1922; *Eire*, 10 Mar. 1923 (N.L.I.).

⁹ Provisional Government Minutes, 2 July 1922 (N.A.I., G1.2.).

Collins who should see the proprietor, Mr. Lombard Murphy on the matter'.¹⁰ While the national media did report on 'irregular' arrests and detentions, casualties and deaths, there was no detailed coverage on prison conditions.¹¹ Labour Party T.D., Cathal Ó'Shannon, expressed concern about the type censorship prevailing in the national media and specifically mentioned an *Irish Times* editorial which had highlighted an issue that '...concerned the alleged treatment of Republican prisoners...'.¹² In response, Richard Mulcahy noted that while censorship was still in operation, it had been 'relaxed' but material from propagandists was '...not compatible with general public safety'.¹³ The previous decade of imprisonment in Ireland had revealed an organised propaganda campaign by Irish internees, who utilised their conditions to enhance the external agenda. In particular, from 1919 onwards, William Murphy noted that 'the most significant departure of this period, however, was the combination of supporters outside with prisoners inside to organise prison escapes. Over the next three years prison escapes would provide important morale boosts to, and be used to propaganda advantage, by Sinn Féin. Escapes demonstrated the resourcefulness of the rebels while mocking the power and competence of the authorities'.¹⁴ Unsurprisingly, during the first few months of the civil war, the *Irish Independent*, *Irish Times* and *Freemans Journal* reported on the conditions of internees in Northern Ireland, presumably to distract public attention and navigate it north of the border, away from southern jails.¹⁵

By November 1922, internee figures had reached 8,338¹⁶ and the government generally accepted that 'overcrowding in jails' was 'inevitable'.¹⁷ The shortage of appropriate accommodation and funding was an additional hindrance to the new administration. In late

¹⁰ Provisional Government Minutes, 7 July 1922 (N.A.I., G1.2.).

¹¹ Peter Martin, *Censorship in the Two Irelands 1922-39* (Dublin, 2006), p. 17.

¹² D.É.D. Vol.1, Col. 797, 27 Sept. 1922.

¹³ D.É.D. Vol.1, Col. 797, 27 Sept. 1922.

¹⁴ William Murphy, *Political Imprisonment and the Irish* (Oxford, 2014), p. 125.

¹⁵ *Irish Independent*, 8 Jun. 1922; 13 Jul. 1922; 8 Aug. 1922; *Freeman's Journal*, 8 Jun. 1922; 21 Jul. 1922; *Irish Times*, 22 Aug. 1922; 13 Oct 1922 (N.L.I.).

¹⁶ Government Report, Nov. 1922 (N.A.I., s. 1369/1.).

¹⁷ Portobello Barracks, to Secretary of Government, 29 Nov. 1922 (N.A.I., s.1369/1.).

1922, O'Higgins provided an honest observation of imprisonment and the problems which it presented:

There is not a member of this present Government who has not been in jail. We have had the benefit of personal experience and personal study of these problems... Personally I can conceive nothing more brutalising, and nothing more calculated to make a man rather a dangerous member of society, than the existing system. But one does not attempt sweeping reforms in a country situated as this country is at the moment. One does not build or try to build in the path of a forest fire. This question and many other interesting questions will have to be postponed until the situation alters.¹⁸

Effectively, O'Higgins admitted that detention within the present system could be inherently damaging but, in late 1922, conditions throughout the country were also inherently unstable. The majority of the country's prisons were under military control and while O'Higgins was a 'virulent critic of the army on grounds of both efficiency and ill-discipline',¹⁹ he later told Cosgrave 'in April 1923 that it was up to the military to restore order'.²⁰ The prisons became a fundamental instrument of power in the pursuit of this order. O'Higgins' concern for prisoners was therefore tempered by the reality of the situation. In the midst of civil war, the administration and reform of the prison system was undeniably difficult.

However, the Labour Party continued in their criticism of the Provisional Government. The party had opted out of the 1918 general election so that the Irish electorate could have a clear choice on the national question. By 1922, after the split in the Republican movement, Labour became the largest opposition party in Dáil Éireann. They set about highlighting various issues relating to the civil war, particularly in relation to the prisons. Cathal Ó'Shannon posed the following question, in which he reminded the new government of their former revolutionary tactics:

¹⁸ D.É.D., Vol. 1, Col. 2321-2, 28 Nov. 1922.

¹⁹ Eunan O'Halpin, *Defending Ireland: The Irish State and its Enemies Since 1922* (Oxford, 1999), p. 40; There were eleven internment centres under military control, Kilmainham; Mountjoy; North Dublin Union, Waterford, Cork, Dundalk, Hare Park, Newbridge, Tintown, Gormanstown, Maryborough. (M.A., CW/P/04-14.).

²⁰ Ibid.

We asked that something should be said about the jails and barracks. Are they under the Home Office or are they under the Minister of Defence? I should be sorry that the jails and the conditions of the jails were under the Minister for Defence. We all know, particularly those of you who have been in prison that a certain amount of propaganda has always been made about barracks and prisons. We all know that a good deal of that propaganda has been exaggerated; that little incidents have been exaggerated; but there is not a county in the 26 counties, there is not a barracks or jail out of which has not come information which is a disgrace to any Irish Government. These things may not be true. If not true, deny them.²¹

While Ó'Shannon acknowledged the unreliable nature of such propaganda, he still voiced concerns regarding the large number accounts detailing the poor conditions in the country's prisons and camps. Ó'Shannon's enquiries were posed against a backdrop of rising overcrowding which had exacerbated tensions within the system and subsequently generated a list of accusations including poor quality food, lack of bedding, cold cells and bad sanitation. These issues were covered extensively in the Anti-Treaty press and were also regularly referred to in the letters and memoirs of internees.

Additionally, the Provisional Government and the clergy received many letters and telegrams from worried citizens or concerned relatives regarding military internees during the civil war.²² However, despite the Free State's enforced censorship of the press, some accounts of prisoners' conditions did feature in the national media. Mountjoy Jail in particular, became a source of many column inches. The *Irish Examiner* related how visits were disallowed in the prison and that military internees had been fired on by prison staff. The article also stated that 'They are now entirely cut off from communication with the outside world'.²³ A letter from Count Plunkett to the editor of the *Irish Independent* was published in October 1922, highlighting the harsh treatment some prisoners experienced in the jail. Plunkett reported that 'The conditions in Mountjoy are becoming unbearable, and it

²¹ D.É.D., Vol. I, Col. 84, 11 Sept. 1922.

²² See selection of letters at (Dublin Diocesan Archive, hereafter D.D.A., Box, 466) and petitions on behalf of prisoners at (N.A.I., s. 1369/20.).

²³ *Irish Examiner*, 27 July 1922 (N.L.I.).

is desired that members of the public should be made aware of the following facts'.²⁴ Among some of the grievances, he outlined that a 'Large number of prisoners have been eating off the floor for months without either tables or stools'.²⁵ Many internees lacked sufficient supplies such as pillows, basins, towels, or 'change of clothing'.²⁶ In July 1922, Joe McKelvey stated that the internees needed 'suitable accommodation...' and '...adequate food supplies ...'.²⁷ While the Government-censored *Irish Independent*, in the same month, reported a less critical analysis of Mountjoy and stated that there were 'two men to a cell. They have mattress, pillow, three blankets each. Cell doors are opened at 8.30 in morning and remain open till 10 p.m'.²⁸ Mountjoy Prison soon became a subject to which prisoners' regularly referred to in their personal correspondence. Ernie O'Malley remarked on how cold the cells were there and towards the end of the conflict, he complained to Sheila Humphreys that 'I have the rug still and it's lucky I have it; I also have seven blankets...Even with that sometimes I feel cold'.²⁹ On 9 November 1922, Joseph Campbell wrote from his Mountjoy cell that 'Our status is no better than slaves. Many of the men in this wing are in rags, & without books. The pipes in my cell, at the moment of writing, stone cold'.³⁰ There was, perhaps, some element of truth in both O'Malley and Campbell's accusation of a cold cell. Labour T.D., Thomas Johnson, raised a similar concern in Dáil Éireann in November 1922 regarding the reduction in funding within the prison service. He noted that the estimates had been increased for bedding and furniture but not for fuel, lighting and water. He explained that

We find that the estimates for clothing, bedding, furniture, etc., are £11,500 for 1922-23 as against £7,500 for 1921-22, an increase of £4,000. That includes, I take it,

²⁴ *Irish Independent*, 30 Oct. 1922 (N.L.I.).

²⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷ Joe McKelvey, Chief of Staff, I.R.A., to Governor Mountjoy [no date, July 1922] (N.A.I., s.1369/1.).

²⁸ *Irish Independent*, 4 July 1922 (N.L.I.).

²⁹ Ernie O'Malley, to Sighe Humphreys, Mountjoy Prison, 12 Apr. 1923 (U.C.D.A., Sighe Humphreys Papers, P106/754(1-2).).

³⁰ Ní Chuilleanáin, *As I was Among Captives*, p. 31.

renewals, an increased supply of clothing, bedding, furniture, kitchen utensils, crockery, etc., and that is quite understandable. But when we come to the item of fuel, light, water and cleaning articles, etc., we find there has been actually a decrease in the amount of the Estimate. Some explanation is required for instance for a decrease of £9,090 for fuel, light and water, where you have so tremendous an increase in the number of prisoners and a decrease of £610 in the cost of soap, scouring and cleaning articles.³¹

Home Affairs minister, Kevin O'Higgins, responded with an analysis of the situation as he viewed it. Of the internees he stated: 'in face of the fact that they are occupied by people who seem to be bending all their energies to see they are neither clean nor sanitary—occupied by people who ripped the cords out of their mattresses and stuffed them down the lavatories to cause flooding; occupied by people who seem to have lapsed into a degradation and demoralisation which almost makes them have an objection to keeping themselves, or their cells, or their clothes or belongings clean...'.³² O'Higgins and many of his cabinet colleagues were appalled by the destructive acts carried out by many of those interned. Although his response could be interpreted as an attempt to shift attention from the government to the internees, there was an element of truth in his assertions. The destruction of prison property had become commonplace by 1922 and a great many nationalist and socialist prisoners had used these tactics during the previous decade of imprisonment in Ireland. Murphy noted that in 1918, I.R.A. prisoners in Belfast Jail started to sing and shout from the prison windows and refused to stop. In response, the governor, 'Barrows instructed the maintenance warders to fix the windows shut, leading several prisoners to smash these. Next Barrows decided to move the prisoners to a wing that did not overlook Crumlin Road. When the warders began this process there was a riot. Prisoners barricaded themselves in their cells, smashed the furniture, and physically resisted the warders.'³³ These tactics continued to remain popular during the civil war. Memoirs of Anti-Treaty internees revealed how they set about wrecking their

³¹ D.É.D., Vol. 1, Col. 2329, 28 Nov. 1922.

³² D.É.D., Vol. 1, Col. 2331-2332, 28 Nov. 1922.

³³ Murphy, *Political Imprisonment and the Irish, 1912-1921*, p. 133.

general surroundings and Ernie O'Malley commented that the 'destructive spirit could be seen in the broken cell windows which had not been repaired'.³⁴ This riotous element among the general internee body weakened much outstanding sympathy that remained among members of the Free State Government

While reports regarding internee ill-treatment or conditions were published in the media, they were often infrequent and regularly overshadowed by accounts of 'irregular' attacks. Anti-treatyites worked collectively to highlight the conditions within the system and to raise sympathy for their agenda, particularly through propaganda missions. Foremost among them was de Valera, who travelled the country speaking on platforms and promoted 'a propaganda campaign that seemed designed to encourage resistance to the new regime by force of arms'.³⁵ Among those recruited to aid this propaganda campaign were a number of Republican women, including Countess de Markievicz, Linda Kearns and Kathleen Barry, who conducted a series of lecture tours of America and Australia.³⁶ In the prisons, Anti-Treatyites such as Frank Gallagher recorded the various scuffles and encounters between prison guards and the internees. These accounts were then smuggled out to be used in Anti-Treaty literature. Ernie O'Malley related that 'in the Joy, Frank was i/c Publicity in 'B' wing and sent out accurate accounts of events'.³⁷ However, towards the end of 1923, O'Malley began to criticise the exaggerated nature of some Anti-Treaty propaganda as it was simply not 'believable'. From Kilmainham Jail, he wrote to Molly Childers complaining that

I absolutely distrust our own prop[aganda]- none of us believe it, so it is hard for the people to do so. Éire was the worst offender. The tone adopted was one such as if we were all the spoiled darlings of a nation, the majority of whom followed our interest with every action. Total lack of dignity and truth seemed to sum up our own prop.

³⁴ Ernie O'Malley, *The Singing Flame* (Dublin, 1978), p. 230.

³⁵ Raita Merivirta, *The Gun and Irish Politics: Examining Neil Jordan's Michael Collins* (Bern, 2009) p. 112.

³⁶ See chapter 6 for discussion on American tours abroad to fundraise for prisoners and their families. A certain amount of propaganda played its part in raising funds.

³⁷ Ernie O'Malley to Molly Childers, Kilmainham Jail, 5-7 Dec. 1923 (T.C.D., Erskine Childers Papers, MS 7850 909).

Surely we can scrap prop and utilise education. I do not know what our prop was like during the strike, but reports of Kil[mainham] were amusing.³⁸

Throughout the civil war, propaganda sheets such as *Éire* regularly exaggerated the conditions within the jails and camps. As overcrowding continued, it soon became the focus of heated debates and Limerick Prison, in particular, was thrown into the spotlight. The *Freeman's Journal* reported that there were approximately '...600 prisoners, occupying 60 cells...an average of ten persons per cell...'.³⁹ When considering the number of internees arrested in the general area of Limerick, the level of overcrowding was inevitable.⁴⁰ Local clergymen soon waded into the debate to outline their concerns and a telegram from Denis Hallinan, Bishop of Limerick, remarked that 'there is very serious overcrowding in the prison here could it be remedied immediately...'.⁴¹ Limerick Corporation was likewise concerned and called for an investigation into the treatment of the prisoners.⁴² In November 1922, members of Dáil Éireann, particularly Labour Party members, criticised the government for not tackling the situation and expounded the dangers of such living conditions. Deputy Johnson requested that the government honestly report the circumstances of internment and remarked that

We have been kept in the dark from the Government side and are only informed of matters that come out in the way of anti-Government propaganda. That is not satisfactory. I think we ought to be put in possession of the main facts and particulars of the sanitary condition of those prisoners, because the whole city in the case of Dublin and Limerick is dependent upon the health of one spot in the city.⁴³

Similarly, Anti-Treatyite TDs were not about to let circumstances in Limerick continue without criticism. Edmund Roche provided a summary of the prisoner's grievances in Limerick Jail and stated that the '...overcrowded... conditions under which we are compelled

³⁸ Ernie O'Malley to Molly Childers, Kilmainham Jail, 5-7 Dec. 1923 (T.C.D., Erskine Childers Papers, MS 7850 909).

³⁹ *Freeman's Journal*, 21 July. 1922 (N.L.I.).

⁴⁰ The Prison Ledgers collection provides a figure of 796 prisoners arrested in Limerick. Prison Ledgers Collection (M.A., IE/MA/CW/P.).

⁴¹ Telegram Bishop Hallinan, 13 Nov. 1922 (N.A.I., s.1369/1.).

⁴² *Irish Independent*, 18 Oct. 1922 (N.L.I.).

⁴³ D.É.D., Vol. 1, Col. 2189-90, 16 Nov. 1922.

to live are somewhat appalling. Inferior food, no beds or blankets...I was refused a business visit yesterday. Four boys here have collapsed and been removed to prison hospital. One lad J.J. Tierney is unconscious and his mother was refused a visit...'.⁴⁴ The treatment of internees and the inadequate facilities available in Limerick placed the government in the firing line. In October 1922, an article published in the *Irish Independent* appeared to place some of the blame on the internees themselves and the rising overcrowding issue. The article related the experience of one ex-prisoner under the British administration in Limerick. It stated that

Comdt-Gen. M. Brennan, Commanding South-Western District, has sent a letter to the Mayor of Limerick, in which he states that "Limerick prison was certainly overcrowded for a very obvious reason. When I was a prisoner in Limerick Jail for trying to put the English out of the country I always had much more room than I desired. In fact, at one period I spent some months there without a single companion. It was an extraordinary fact that now, when the English are gone, there are so many candidates for admission to Limerick Jail that we are utterly unable to provide proper accommodation for them all..."⁴⁵

The Commandant was correct in his assertion that there were now more internees imprisoned in the Free State. The Provisional Government conducted internment more extensively than the British and often imprisoned military prisoners while renovations were still taking place.⁴⁶ The level of complaints made in relation to Limerick revealed that there was a serious overcrowding problem in the jail. Kevin O'Higgins later admitted to Dáil Éireann, that '...the present condition is bad. It is bad to have too many prisoners crowded into a place such as was the case in Limerick'.⁴⁷ He reported that conditions had improved and stated that some '400 prisoners' had 'been removed from Limerick'.⁴⁸ The removal to which O'Higgins referred had occurred in the autumn of 1922, as the government attempted to reduce

⁴⁴ Edmund Roche Limerick, Report of Limerick Jail, 1922 (U.C.D.A., Sighe Humphreys Papers, P106/1307 (1)).

⁴⁵ *Irish Independent*, 18 Oct. 1922 (N.L.I.).

⁴⁶ This was the case for Kilmainham Jail as mentioned earlier; Minister for Finance to Minister for Home Affairs, 15 Mar. 1923 (N.A.I., FIN 1/3442.).

⁴⁷ D.É.D., Vol. 1, Col. 2322, 28 Nov. 1922.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

overcrowding in the city's jail. They decided to transfer the Limerick internees via sea to Dublin on a prison ship called the S.S. *Arvonía*.⁴⁹ Within days, reports began to emerge that the *Arvonía*, just like Limerick Jail, was overcrowded and lacked basic facilities. One leaflet stated that

By order of the Free State Imperial Authorities, over 600 Irish Republicans are suffering inhuman treatment on board the S.S. *Arvonía*, in Dublin Bay for the 'Crime' of defending the Republic... For the past six weeks prisoners in this coffin ship have been confined in the lower cabin without air, exercise or sufficient food... Many of the prisoners are in a semi-conscious state...⁵⁰

The general wording of the document was intended to incense the local populace, in particular through the use of the term 'coffin' ship, a deliberate reference to the Famine ships of the 1840s. Such emotive imagery was likely to invoke nationalist sympathy for the internees and foster resentment towards the government. In his memoir, *Tomorrow Was Another Day: Irreverent Memoirs of an Irish Rebel Schoolmaster*, Seamus O'Connor related the conditions aboard the ship which appeared to reinforce the comments made by Commandant Mackey. He wrote that

On the *Arvonía*, that evening, when each of us was supplied with a pound tin of Bully Beef, the results were disastrous. Below deck there was not room for all of us to sit on the floor let alone lie down. The night was very rough. The air soon became foul and everybody was sick. The spew of the vomiting rolled hither and thither on the floor under us, and on us and all around.⁵¹

While O'Connor's memoir was written several decades after the civil war, some of his comments reflect not only contemporary Anti-Treaty statements regarding the ship but also somewhat echo the content of an *Irish Independent* article that September. The exact figures of those transferred on the *Arvonía* vary and drift from 500 to 800 internees, depending on

⁴⁹ *Irish Independent*, 11 Sept. 1922 (N.L.I.); Comd. C. Mackey Statement [no date] (D.C.L.A., Birth of the Republic Collection, hereafter B.O.R., F18.02).

⁵⁰ Editors of the *Republican War Bulletin* to Members of the Third Dáil [no date], 'Prison ship in Dublin Bay' (N.L.I., Ms 17,082.).

⁵¹ Seamus O'Connor, *Tomorrow Was Another Day: Irreverent Memoirs of an Irish Rebel Schoolmaster* (Cork, 1970), p. 65.

the source. O'Connor remembered that there were '800' on board while the *Irish Independent* reported that there were some 702 prisoners.⁵² Comdt. C. Mackey, on the other hand, declared that there were some '500' prisoners, held 'in Dublin Bay...confined in the lower cabin for the past three days and nights, without sufficient food, air or exercise. The port holes are closed thereby preventing ventilation of any kind. The majority of them were on hunger strike for some days previous to their leaving Limerick'.⁵³ Regardless of the 'exact' figure, these statements suggest that the number of internees on board the ship was disproportionately high given the amount of space available. O'Connor noted there were only 'two rooms'.⁵⁴ Although censorship of the media was strict, the *Irish Independent* article did provide some details of the internees removal, stating that 'the steamer...Arvonian which had been anchored off Dublin Bay for ten days with 702 prisoners, on Saturday night came to the North Wall...pier to land the last batch of irregulars aboard. Tugs had taken off instalments for several days previously, and the vessel had only 247 left when she reached the Liffey. They were removed by Special train'.⁵⁵ This supported O'Connor's account that internees were close on two weeks aboard the *Arvonian* in cramped conditions. In his memoir, he stated that 'we remained on the boat for nearly a fortnight...conditions on the boat got steadily worse. There was no water even to drink and little sanitary arrangements'.⁵⁶ These statements, however, did reveal that internees were not on board for 'six weeks' as mentioned in the *Republican War Bulletin*.⁵⁷

Furthermore, while the *Irish Independent* article stopped short of commenting on the internal conditions on the ship; contemporary Anti-Treaty accounts appear to corroborate

⁵² O'Connor, *Tomorrow Was Another Day*, p. 65; *Irish Independent*, 11 Sept. 1922 (N.L.I.).

⁵³ Comd. C. Mackey Statement [no date](D.C.L.A., B.O.R., F18.02.).

⁵⁴ O'Connor, *Tomorrow Was Another Day*, p. 65.

⁵⁵ *Irish Independent*, 11 Sept. 1922 (N.L.I.).

⁵⁶ O'Connor, *Tomorrow Was Another Day*, p. 65.

⁵⁷ '...prisoners taken from Limerick Gaol on Wednesday 30th Ult.'; Comd. C. Mackey Statement [no date] (D.C.L.A., B.O.R. F18.02.)

some of the details as set out by Seamus O'Connor in his memoir.⁵⁸ In his statement, Commandant Mackey related that 'no sleeping accommodation of any kind is provided and consequently the men are compelled to sleep on the floor. Most of the men are in a semi-conscious condition...the food consists of tea and dry bread twice daily'.⁵⁹ In other Republican quarters, the Women Prisoners' Defence League claimed that 'Rheumatism and an epidemic of scabies' had broken out. 'The condition of the ship is filthy. Many prisoners are on hunger strike'.⁶⁰ According to O'Connor, a hunger strike had occurred and he stated that 'we had just finished a 10 day hunger strike and many prisoners were weak as a result, as it had ended only a few days before'.⁶¹ The fact that there were internees on board who had just finished a hunger-strike also increased the possibility of illness on the ship. While elements of Mackey's statement may have been exaggerated, there was an increasing level of criticism concerning prison ships at this time. Conditions on the prison ship, the S.S. *Argenta*, docked in Larne harbour, Belfast, received similarly scathing reports. An inspector to the *Argenta* in October 1922, reported that there was 'barely enough room for '150' and there was '310 men' there'.⁶² Among some other grievances raised was that '... men must eat their food off the cage floor...'.⁶³ The media's willingness to report on conditions on the Belfast prison ship certainly highlighted an attempt to distract attention from the *Arvonía* in the Free State and various other conditions in prisons and camps around the country. Ultimately, the necessity to transport internees via a prison ship to Dublin revealed that the Provisional Government were under immense pressure to address the mounting overcrowding problem. It further emphasised that the prison system was struggling to cope with the number of prisoners being interned.

⁵⁸ O'Connor, *Tomorrow Was Another Day*, pp 65-69.

⁵⁹ Comd. C. Mackey Statement, [Aug] 1922, (D.C.L.A., B.O.R., F18.02.).

⁶⁰ Women Prisoners' Defence League to W.T. Cosgrave, n. d. (N.A.I., s.1.369/3.).

⁶¹ O'Connor, *Tomorrow Was Another Day*, p. 65.

⁶² *Freeman's Journal*, 16 Oct. 1922 (N.L.I.).

⁶³ *Ibid.*

During the civil war, overcrowding specifically affected the county jails, with the majority of criticism (in both Anti-Treaty and government sources) reserved for the prisons rather than internment camps. Kilkenny Prison was allegedly severely overcrowded in late 1922 and *Poblacht na hÉireann* reported: 'It is well known that the prison is overcrowded to a dangerous extent. One hundred and ninety prisoners are huddled together in 71 cells....The bedding is filthy...'.⁶⁴ In Wicklow Jail, Labour T.D. James Everett, stated that 'there were 107 prisoners... and only 17 had mattresses, the remainder having to sleep on straw on the floor. One of the prisoners was suffering from double pneumonia; 14 were ill in bed; 24 were ill, but not lying in bed, and 30 were generally unwell.' He earnestly appealed for a medical inspection of the place, and 'for a remedy of the conditions'.⁶⁵ Athlone was also mentioned as not having sufficient space for exercise.⁶⁶ Overcrowding remained an unresolved issue throughout the course of the civil war. Nell Humphreys, writing from Mountjoy in January 1923, stated that there were 'fifty four people where there should be only forty'.⁶⁷ Kilmainham Jail fared little better as Lily O'Brennan reported that 'we have a very poor yard to exercise in and are very overcrowded'.⁶⁸ Although accommodation for female internees was in short supply, particularly in the cities; the Provisional Government deemed it necessary to intern women as well as men. Many ministers believed that women had played an active role in creating and fostering discontent among the general populace and Minister for Local Government, Ernest Blythe, stated that

We have to do our duty. We have to do a thing that we regard as necessary, and it has been necessary to take and to hold women prisoners. We know that a terrible amount of destruction of life and property would not have occurred if it had not been for the active participation of large numbers of women in the struggle. It is as necessary for

⁶⁴ *Poblacht na h-Éireann*, 2 Nov. 1922 (N.L.I.).

⁶⁵ *Irish Times*, 4 July 1923 (N.L.I.).

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

⁶⁷ Nell Humphreys, Mountjoy to Emmet, 19 Jan. 1923 (U.C.D.A., Sighle Humphreys Papers, P.106/394.).

⁶⁸ Lily o'Brennan to Fanny, 14 Mar. 1923 (U.C.D.A., Lily O'Brennan Papers, P13/44.).

us, for the protection of the community, to hold women prisoners as it is to hold men prisoners.⁶⁹

Military internees were not that only body of prisoners to be affected by the overcrowding problem 1922-3. As previously mentioned, the administration had decided to transfer or release a number of civil prisoners in order to accommodate the incoming military internees. For those civil prisoners who remained within the system, issues arose surrounding the lack of 'accommodation' and Limerick city was thrust back into the spotlight. A letter from a local sergeant revealed just how desperate the situation had become and stated

That owing to lack of accommodation for Female Prisoners in the Co. Gaol, we are reluctantly compelled to detain such prisoners in the Town Hall for indefinite periods, which is quite illegal, as well as inhumane. As the prisoners in question are locked down in the cells of the Town Hall from 11 p.m. until 9 a.m. the following morning without any person to supervise or look after them. I have already in custody an old woman since 31 Aug. 1922 sentenced to one calendar month for larceny, and up to the present we cannot remove her to prison for the above reason.⁷⁰

This episode exposed the shockingly inadequate safety procedures in practice for civil prisoners in the city and revealed that overcrowding had driven the authorities to drastic measures. Locking prisoners in a cell without any supervision was potentially dangerous, specifically in the event of a fire or a riot among inmates. By the end of September, the Ministry for Home Affairs suggested that the female convicts, imprisoned in the Town Hall, should be transferred to Cork by boat. The instructions provided to the General Prisons Board were outlined in a letter from the Department:

The Military Authorities in Limerick have informed the Registrar of the District Court that it is quite impossible at the moment to make any part of the County Prison available for female prisoners, as apart from other considerations the cell doors and windows of the female wing are broken. As an alternative they, however, suggest that arrangements should be made for the transmission to Cork by boat of these prisoners

⁶⁹ D.É.D., Vol. 3, Col. 353, 20 Apr. 1923.

⁷⁰ Thomas Ryan Coy Sgt. (For O.C L.C. Police), to Chairman Joint Committee meeting, Town Hall Limerick, 4 Sept. 1922 (N.A.I., JUS H8/405.).

especially those of them who would have sentences of a month or upwards to complete. Please furnish your observations on the subject...⁷¹

The overcrowding matter soon gave way to several other issues of inevitable discontent. The lack of bedding, warm water and generally poor provisions were regular topics among the pages of *Poblacht na hÉireann* and *Éire* and while embellishment was a key factor in propaganda, there was a sufficient overlap between the internees' allegations and official government sources. Anti-Treaty literature continued to focus on these conditions for the duration of the civil war.⁷² The *Daily Bulletin* remarked that cells in Carrack-on-Suir Military Prison were in 'a filthy condition'.⁷³ In Dundalk Jail, it was reported that '...conditions were made....severe for the men...food was bad and... the accommodation for 248 prisoners there were all but 116 cells and 4 lavatories'.⁷⁴ In an effort to counter reports of squalid living conditions, the national press blamed the internees' defiant attitude for the deteriorating prison conditions. The *Freeman's Journal* explained that the prisoners had 'no ground for complaint' since they were provided with the 'disinfectants and facilities for lime-washing and scrubbing cells'.⁷⁵ The *Connaught Tribune* reported that 'sanitation in Galway Jail is the best in Ireland but it has been abused by the prisoners'.⁷⁶ The internees in Galway had apparently disposed of the cleaning materials provided by the prison authorities. On the list of supplies given to them were 'Jeyes fluid, brushes etc' but it was recorded that 'instead of using them, the brushes have been thrown up on the roof...heaps of refuse have been allowed to accumulate in the yards and the prisoners refused to remove it...'.⁷⁷ Internees' attempt to undermine the authorities was primarily based on their belief that they were

⁷¹ Secretary of Minister of Home Affairs to Dr. MacCormack, General Prisons Board, 30 Sept. 1922 (N.A.I., JUS H8/405.).

⁷² Some of these reports can be found in *Poblacht na h Éireann*, 16;19;23;24;31 Jan. 1923, 1;7;9;21;22;25;26 Feb. 1923. When the civil war officially ended reports continued *Éire*, 16;23;30 June, 7 July, 4;11 Aug 1923 (N.L.I.).

⁷³ *Daily Bulletin*, 12 Oct. 1922 (N.A.I., s.1369/3.).

⁷⁴ *The Fenian*, 23 Aug. 1922 (N.L.I.)

⁷⁵ *Freeman's Journal*, 3 Aug. 1922 (NLI)

⁷⁶ *Connaught Tribune*, 30 Sept. 1922 (N.L.I.).

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

prisoners of war and not common criminals.⁷⁸ Anti-Treaty internees, like many I.R.A. prisoners before them, would not co-operate with the administration, particularly on the point of performing cleaning duties. The defiant attitude displayed towards the prison regime made this category of prisoners, according to McConville, 'far more difficult to handle'.⁷⁹ Some would openly refuse to obey their prison guards. Eithne Coyle remembered her contempt at being requested to carry out such tasks while in Mountjoy. She stated that Pauden O'Keefe ordered them 'to clean and scrub the floors' and complained that he wanted them to act as 'char women'.⁸⁰ The reference to 'char women' conjured up images of the labouring class, a class to which many of the prominent female internees did not belong. There was a noticeable contempt among some female prisoners at the notion that they would be considered in such terms.

However, the administration paid little heed to such sentimentalities. As far as the authorities were concerned, the internees were responsible for the upkeep of their cells and living quarters. The Medical Officer in Kilmainham wrote that '...collectively, some cells are in such a state that other conditions must prevail in order to make their occupation tenable...'.⁸¹ He stated that the prisoners must dispose of the accumulated 'urine and excrete' each morning, 'cell floors should be washed daily', and the 'floor on the landing scrubbed three times weekly'.⁸² While internees did little to improve their conditions, some prison cells were already decidedly uncomfortable. Todd Andrews commented on the damp environment of his cell in Cork Jail, stating that there was 'wind and rain and horrible dampness about everything'.⁸³ However, some internees did attempt to maintain, if possible, some level of personal hygiene. Towards the end of the civil war, Andrews wrote to his mother and

⁷⁸ This had been a bone of contention for many years. See, Sean McConville, *Irish Political Prisoners 1848-1922: Theatres of War* (London, 2005) & Murphy, *Political Imprisonment and the Irish, 1912-1921*.

⁷⁹ McConville, *Irish Political Prisoners 1848-1922*, p. 706.

⁸⁰ Eithne Coyle Complete Personal Statement, p. 20 (U.C.D.A., Eithne Coyle Papers, P61/2.).

⁸¹ Report Medical Officer, Kilmainham Jail, 8 Aug. 1922 (N.A.I., JUS H78/25.).

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ Todd Andrews to Mother, 11 June 1922 (U.C.D.A., Todd Andrews Papers, P91/1(48).).

requested that he be sent a ‘toothbrush and toothpaste’, ‘brush and comb’, ‘towel, soap and sponge’ in one parcel.⁸⁴ The request for soap was perhaps not surprising given the low funding provided for cleaning provisions as we saw earlier at government level.⁸⁵ These inadequacies were observed by many working within the prison system and Anti-Treaty complaints were not always dismissed by those in authority. In July 1922, internees sent a list of grievances to Governor Ó Muirthuile in Kilmainham Jail, which outlined the following: ‘no sanitary accommodation’, ‘no proper drainage’, the cells were ‘dilapidated and filthy’, ‘no beds provided’ only ‘mattresses’, ‘no towels’, ‘appears to be no baths’ and as far as they were aware, ‘no proper hospital accommodation exists’.⁸⁶ On this particular occasion, Ó Muirthuile supported the prisoners and wrote to the Minister for Home Affairs stating that there was ‘no hot water supply’ in the jail.⁸⁷ In fact, he spoke outright against the situation arguing that ‘... the sanitary conditions are not adequate, and would like to know what action you would desire me to take. I suggest that you would instruct the Prisons Board regarding the work necessary to put the prison in a proper sanitary condition’.⁸⁸ Ó Muirthuile’s decision to support the internees’ complaints revealed that conditions in Kilmainham were irrefutably inadequate. In a sense, this cast some suspicion over conditions in other prisons and may lend some credibility to accounts published by Anti-Treaty sources. In Kilkenny prison, it was reported that ‘drastic treatment of Republican prisoners ...has been intensified ...The gas which was allowed for lighting and heating purposes has been cut off thus leaving 400 prisoners in total darkness for five hours- from 6 p.m. to 11 p.m. This new order as well as cutting off the light deprives the prisoners of any means of warming water for shaving,

⁸⁴ Todd Andrews, Cork Jail to Mother, 23 Apr. 1923 (U.C.D.A., Todd Andrews Papers, P91/1(53)).

⁸⁵ D.É.D., Vol. 1, Col. 2329, 28 Nov. 1922. Debate referred to low funding for soap and cleaning materials

⁸⁶ Prisoners of Kilmainham Jail to Ó Muirthuile, Military Governor, July 1922 (N.A.I., s.1369/1.).

⁸⁷ Sean Ó Muirthuile, Military Governor Kilmainham Jail, to Minister for Home Affairs, 17 July 1922 (N.A.I., s.1369/1.). This was swiftly remedied as Home Affairs reported the next day that ‘the hot water supply for the prisoners...is in working order...’; Secretary of the Minister for Home Affairs, to Military Governor Kilmainham Jail, 18 July 1922 (N.A.I., s.1369/1.).

⁸⁸ Ibid.

washing clothes...cleanliness is now a matter of impossibility...sickness has already occurred...'.⁸⁹ By the end of 1922, the Anti-Treaty media also began to report on the poor facilities available to the military staff and stated that 'it has been learned on absolutely reliable authority that the sanitary arrangement for the Free State soldiers in Mountjoy are so abominable [*sic*] bad that they may cause fever, in which event there is every prospect of its spreading to the prisoners'.⁹⁰

Even after the dump arms policy in May 1923, conditions continued to remain a priority for the Anti-Treaty side. The I.R.A. G.H.Q. requested details of internment from the Director of Intelligence in particular 'the conditions prevailing in each jail or camp'.⁹¹ Among these accounts were grievances surrounding accommodation, bedding, sanitation, baths, laundry facilities, cleaning utensils, eating and drinking utensils, clothing, food, medical arrangements, exercise and recreation, letters, parcels, terrorism and ill treatment, religion.⁹² From both governmental records and internee correspondence, it would appear that the general conditions and facilities of internment were inadequate in Free State jails during the civil war.

. Unsurprisingly, wide-scale overcrowding and accumulating dirt became a natural breeding ground for infection. In the North Dublin Union, Medical Officer Captain Laverty highlighted the unsanitary conditions as the root cause of infections. He wrote '...it is considered that the outbreak of septic throats which has spread to the soldiers was and is due to the dirty conditions...'.⁹³ In August 1922, before any major hunger strike had taken place, the Medical Officer in Kilmainham reported that '...in my opinion the prisoners with one exception are organically sound and at present in good health. The exception is an old

⁸⁹ *Poblacht na hÉireann*, 2 Nov. 1922 (N.L.I.).

⁹⁰ *Republican War Bulletin*, 4 Aug. 1922 (N.L.I.).

⁹¹ Director of Intelligence, I.R.A. G.H.Q., to O/C jails and camps, 20 Sept. 1923 (U.C.D.A., Ernie O'Malley Papers, P17a/39.).

⁹² *Ibid.*

⁹³ Captain Laverty, M.O Report, 23 May 1923 (U.C.D.A., Elgin O'Rahilly Papers, P20/84(1).).

standing case of Valvular disease of the heart and although this man is not fit for Military service of any kind, detention will not affect him adversely...'.⁹⁴ Despite the large portion of prisoners interned, there were no wide-scale epidemics in the prisons, although there were occasional outbreaks of diseases such as scabies.⁹⁵ Fear of contracting disease had been a feature of imprisonment among Irish internees, particularly during the influenza epidemic of 1918. Murphy noted that prisoners such as 'Figgis in Durham...' "had all sorts of concoctions with which to ward off the flu..."', while Countess Markievicz wrote that 'we are safer from flu than outside'.⁹⁶ During this particular epidemic, one internee, Dick Coleman died and as Murphy highlighted in his study, 'when this happened, however illogically, Sinn Féin and a considerable portion of the Irish public were certain to blame the government'.⁹⁷ As the authorities were eventually 'held culpable', Coleman was 'anointed another martyr' and consequently 'Sinn Féin arranged a public funeral...characterised by the familiar rituals of propaganda'.⁹⁸

However, during the civil war the administration, armed with an awareness of such events, often proceeded with extra caution in their handling of sick internees and attempted to provide the necessary medical provisions, even if the financial cost of such treatment fell on the department itself. In one such case, prisoner James Mooney required the services of a dentist and this was sanctioned by the Ministry of Home Affairs. The department stated that 'If you will please arrange for the services of a dentist the expenses in the matter, if not borne by the prisoner themselves, will be met by the General Prisons Board'.⁹⁹ Therefore, in terms of illness and the facilities available, the Free State did attempt to provide the necessary

⁹⁴ Report Medical Officer, Kilmainham Jail, 8 Aug. 1922 (N.A.I., JUS H78/25.).

⁹⁵ Sighle Humphreys Notebook (recollections), 3 Oct. 1976 (U.C.D.A., Sighle Humphreys Papers, P106/1046 (4).).

⁹⁶ Murphy, *Political Imprisonment and the Irish, 1912-1921*, p. 120.

⁹⁷ Ibid, p. 121.

⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁹⁹ Secretary to the Minister for Home Affairs to Military Governor, Kilmainham Jail, 1 Aug. 1922 (N.A.I., JUS H78/25.).

medical treatment for military internees 1922-4. Conversely, the same cannot be said for many of the prisoners captured and interned during some of the European civil wars in this period. In some respects, the Irish internee experience stands in stark contrast with that of many of their European counterparts. Stanley Payne noted that in the course of the Finnish Civil War, ‘nearly all prisoners remained in special camps, where the conditions were appalling. Finland was on the verge of a Famine in 1918, and the prisoners were little fed. Within four months 11,783 had died, mainly of malnutrition and dysentery’.¹⁰⁰ The Irish case certainly pales in comparison with the high mortality figures in Finnish prisons during the civil war. Military internees in the Free State, thus, turned their attention to other means of promoting their case through propaganda. It was on the issue of food, therefore, that internees and their supporters’ would seek to make serious gains.

Pre-1922, guidelines were set out that prescribed the quantity and type of food that should be served to a prisoner in Irish jails. The regulations for untried prisoners were set out in the Prison Board Rules of 1917 which stated the following:

Breakfast – Bread 8oz

Tea 1 pint

Butter ½ or ¾ oz

Stirabout 1 pint

Milk ½ pint

Six days week dinner

Cooked meat 4oz Potatoes 1lb

Cabbage 4oz

Bread 4oz

Supper

Tea or Cocoa 1 pint

Bread 8oz

Butter ½ or ¾ oz

¹⁰⁰ Stanley Payne, *Civil War in Europe 1905-1949* (Cambridge, 2011), p. 30.

Milk ½ pint

Friday

Bread, potatoes same amount.

Vegetable Soup; one pint or plain boiled rice 2oz

Bread 8oz

Milk 1 pint.¹⁰¹

These portions reflected the diet served to an untried prisoner and the inclusion of meat, potatoes and vegetables, revealed that basic levels of nutritional requirements were met. When the Provisional Government implemented internment in 1922, this diet was also prescribed for Anti-Treatyite internees and other military prisoners, who were, for the most part un-tried detainees. Barbara McDonald assessed nutrition in state institutions at this time and wrote that compared with previous centuries ‘...food in prisons underwent a massive transformation, especially after the first world war. The beginning of the twentieth century became known as the “golden age of nutrition”...In prisons, small amounts of fresh vegetables and beans were introduced into the ration scales...’.¹⁰² The adjustments to the prison menu provided internees with healthy, though possibly not plentiful, portions. However, the main issue concerning meals was not ‘what’ was served to prisoners but the condition in which it arrived. In the first few months of the civil war, reports began to emerge that internees received meagre portions often served in a filthy, half-cooked and generally inedible condition. A number of petitions were sent to the military governors, in an attempt to highlight the issue, and in one case, even went as far as to request a chef for internees. One petition sent to Ó Muirthuile from the prisoners of Kilmainham Jail demanded that

...food for prisoners is cooked under clean and sanitary conditions and in such a manner as to be eatable. The food supplied to prisoners here does not fulfil these conditions...On Sunday vegetables were uneatable...bread and tea...in a filthy

¹⁰¹ Prison Board Recommended Menu for Untried Prisoner, 26 Nov. 1917 (N.A.I., s.1369/2.)

¹⁰² Barbara MacDonald & Maria Cross, *Nutrition in Institutions* (Oxford, 2009), p. 289.

condition...On Monday the meat sent up for dinner was putrid...On Tuesday it was obvious that the dinner vegetables had not been properly washed as they still retained the slugs and worms which had infested them. On Wednesday the dinner was so bad that you yourself condemned it.¹⁰³

Internees went further in their demands and requested that 'meals for the prisoners here be cooked by their own cooks, under supervision of their own officers'. Ó Muirthuile conceded that the food was 'unsatisfactory' and in an effort to resolve the situation he called for an 'immediate report concerning the complaint about unclean food...on one or two occasions bad cabbage was served. The civil cooks are unsatisfactory in this respect but I now have two qualified military cooks... I have no intention of handing over the cooking to the prisoners but I may allow them to appoint a man to inspect the food and cooking...'.¹⁰⁴ By 1923, the condition of food in Kilmainham had reportedly improved as, internee Nell Humphreys remarked in February: 'the food seems to be ever so much better, and the cells are fairly clean, on the whole I think we will be comfortable here'.¹⁰⁵ Two months later fellow prisoner Connie Murphy wrote that the food in Kilmainham was 'adequate'.¹⁰⁶ However, as previously mentioned, class played an important part in shaping the prison experience in these revolutionary years. The correspondence, memoirs and diaries that remain, tend to be the writings of the lower middle to upper middle class internees. Therefore, the documents upon which historians lean for this period detail the experience of the middle-class Anti-Treatyites such as Sighle and Anna Humphreys, Countess de Markievicz, Mary MacSwiney, Eamon de Valera, Ernie O'Malley, Kathleen Barry, Erskine Childers and through the memoirs of Peadar O'Donnell and Frank Gallagher. As William Murphy stated 'class and status were factors likely to engender divergent prisoner experiences and attitudes...Middle

¹⁰³ I.R.A. prisoners to Commandant Kilmainham Detention Barracks, 5 May 1922, signed by Oscar Traynor O/C Dublin Bde, Tomas de Barra (Comdt. Gen. I.R.A. Exe.), Prendergas (Camp Comdt.), Thomas Hanrahan Vice-Com., Seán MacEntee (Camp Adj.), Seán T. O Ceallaigh, Diarmuid Mac Ualarg, Michael Smyth, Edward Bennet (N.A.I., s.1369/3.).

¹⁰⁴ Ó Muirthuile to L.J. Mac Crossan, 7 Aug. 1922 (N.A.I., s.1369/3.).

¹⁰⁵ Nell Humphreys to Aunt Annie Fitzgerald, Kilmainham Jail [c. Feb. 1923] (U.C.D.A., Sighle Humphreys Papers, P106/395.).

¹⁰⁶ Connie to her father, Kilmainham Jail, 23 Apr. 1923 (U.C.D.A., Murphy Family Papers, P141/232.).

class internees often benefited from a degree of deference from prison warders...'.¹⁰⁷ This group of prisoners were also later interned 1922-4. In this sense, the attitudes and opinions of the previous decade were carried forward into the new state and were displayed in the literature of the period.

Writings regarding prison food were generally shaped by these attitudes. While the administration had carried out renovations and 'white-washed' Kilmainham Jail for the arrival of female prisoners, they did not show a similar concern in relation to food provisions. In the North Dublin Union, internees complained that not only was the canteen and kitchen filthy, but the food was also 'poor and scarce'.¹⁰⁸ Margaret Buckley recounted how the food issue became particularly bad; they had lived on 'skilly',¹⁰⁹ in Mountjoy but there was none in the N.D.U..¹¹⁰ Complaints regarding the food in the Union stood in stark contrast to Kilmainham. In April 1923, when a number of female internees were removed from Kilmainham to the North Dublin Union, they criticised the condition of the food there. Buckley related that there were 300 of them in NDU and it '... was hard to feed them on rations...the food was poor and scarce'.¹¹¹ She claimed that at certain times there was so little food that 'we often brushed together the crumbs which fell from the slicing machine, and, having mixed them with a drop of milk, ate them with gusto'.¹¹² The shortage of food was not unusual as internees' food portions were rationed under prison regulations.¹¹³ Buckley's memoir was written in 1938, a good many years after her internment but her account of food in the Union was substantiated by some of her fellow prisoners. In 1923,

¹⁰⁷ Murphy, *Political Imprisonment and the Irish, 1912-1921*, p. 262.

¹⁰⁸ Margaret Buckley, *The Jangle of Keys* (Dublin, 1938), p. 54 & 58.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 58. Skilly was a thin watery porridge (gruel); Harlan Walker (ed.), *Foods on the Move: Proceedings on the Oxford Symposium on Food and Cookery 1996*, (Devon, 1997) p. 314.

¹¹⁰ Margaret Buckley, *The Jangle of Keys*, p. 58.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹¹² *Ibid.*

¹¹³ 'Breakfast: bread 8oz, tea 1pint, butter ½ or ¾ oz, stirabout 1 pint, milk ½ pint. Dinner: cooked meat 4oz, potatoes 1lb, cabbage 4 oz, bread 4oz. Supper: tea or cocoa 1 pint, bread 8oz, butter ½ or ¾ oz, milk ½ pint.' Prison Board Recommended Menu for Untried Prisoners (N.A.I., s.1369/2.).

internee Margaret Burke wrote that 'the meals are not very good but we expect they will be better when we are settled here'.¹¹⁴ Dorothy Macardle also related the food situation in the North Dublin Union:

...we were deprived of porridge, milk, treacle and vegetables. No one was allowed to take food away from the dining room, with the result that some twenty or thirty prisoners' who were ill in bed in the wards although not hospital cases were left to starve. Only hospital cases could have their food carried to them...The overcrowding and other conditions are quite unnecessary as only one part of the institution is at present being used, and they could easily be avoided by cleaning out and preparing some of the many buildings available within the confines of the North Dublin Union.¹¹⁵

Some portion of this letter was confirmed in a Medical Officer's report from the Union in May 1923, which mentioned that female prisoners did carry their 'food from the cookhouse'.¹¹⁶ Anti-Treaty propaganda in this period often focused on female internees, as they were likely to invoke increased sympathy, particularly in relation to Mary MacSwiney, who went on hunger strike during the civil war.¹¹⁷ The pages of the Anti-Treaty press were filled with accounts of starving prisoners and one female internee wrote from the Union: 'I did not receive any foodstuffs since I came here, but two boxes of fruit, the best part rotten...I am nearly barefooted also...I walk now only when I cannot help it, I am so hungry, I cannot walk with weakness. All my clothes are falling off me. I suppose you will not believe it but I am thinner now than when I was real bad at home'.¹¹⁸ In light of the level of

¹¹⁴ Margaret, N.D.U. to Nora, 1 May 1923 (U.C.D.A., Margaret Burke, P30/17.).

¹¹⁵ *Eire*, 2 May 1923 (N.L.I.).

¹¹⁶ Report of Capt. T. Lavery Medical Officer, N.D.U., 23 May 1923 (U.C.D.A., Elgin O'Rahilly Papers, P200/84.).

¹¹⁷ Much use was made of the women's conditions, sanitation, food and their removal from the North Dublin Union in April 1923, particularly in the *Éire* newspaper. Mary Mac Swiney's hunger strike evoked memories of her brother's martyred death on strike in 1920.

¹¹⁸ *Eire*, 11 Aug. 1923 (N.L.I.).

complaints emanating from the Union it is likely that a portion of these grievances were accurate.¹¹⁹

The N.D.U. was not the only internment centre under scrutiny. Reports from Wellington Barracks stated that there was 'insufficient table utensils and cutlery, inadequate washing up facilities, absence of green vegetables and the frequent issue of rancid butter'.¹²⁰ Further accounts from Wellington Barracks recorded that prisoners were being left to 'forage for food',¹²¹ It is worth noting however, that the recorded rations for soldiers in Barracks during the civil war, was not much better than the prisoners' diet.¹²² Some of the inadequate prison facilities were reported by the national media. In reference to Mountjoy, the *Irish Times* recorded that a 'large number of prisoners have been eating off the floor for months...Sean Donovan M.R.C.V.S., inspecting the food on 9 September found abscesses in the meat. Since that date he has been refused permission to inspect it. Gerard Boland, on the same date, found that the regulation allowances for butter for his wing was short by five pounds... margarine is frequently substituted for butter'.¹²³ A further statement by a veterinary surgeon, provided an analysis which stated that the meat was 'dis-coloured fly blown and extensive putrifaction had set in...'.¹²⁴ This report also '... condemned all the meat as unfit for human consumption...'.¹²⁵ However, other internees, like Nanny and Nell

¹¹⁹ Buckley, *The Jangle of Keys*, p.54 & 58; Eithne Coyle also remembered the little amount of food available in the Union, stating 'no one had enough to eat and no one complained', Personal Statement, p. 21 (U.C.D.A., Eithne Coyle Papers, P61/2.).

¹²⁰ *Dublin News*, 9 Dec. 1922 (N.L.I.).

¹²¹ Statement of Chris Ferguson, Wellington Barracks, 15 Aug. 1922 (N.A.I., s. 1369/3.).

¹²² A Soldier's ration which was set out as: '*Breakfast*: Butter 1 ½ oz, Sugar 1, Tea ¾ oz, Flake meal 2 oz, bread 8 oz. *Dinner*; (6 days) Meat 12 oz, Fish Fridays 8 oz, Potatoes 10 oz, Beans 1 oz, Peas 1 oz, Fresh vegetable 3 oz, Bread 4oz. *Tea*; Butter 1 ½ oz, Sugar 1 oz, Tea 1, Fresh Milk 5 pints to 20 men or 8 oz per man'; International Committee of the Red Cross Visit to Ireland, April- May 1923 (N.A.I., s. 1369/3.).

¹²³ *Irish Times*, 4 Nov. 1922 (N.L.I.).

¹²⁴ Veterinary Surgeon, Mountjoy, 6 Aug. 1922 (U.C.D.A., Ernie O'Malley Papers, P17a/41.). See report in *Poblacht na h-Éireann*, 10 Aug. 1922 (N.L.I.); veterinary surgeon, O'Donovan, inspected meat.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*

O’Rahilly, were not as scathing in their criticism and wrote that the food in Mountjoy was ‘excellent’ and ‘not like prison at all’.¹²⁶

Outside Dublin, the condition of prison food was rather similar. One letter to *Eire* revealed that the eating arrangements in Dundalk were poor. Internees there complained that

The meals are meagre and the food of a very poor quality. The milk supplied is frequently sour and unfit for use. The dinner consists of a mug of greasy soup per man, two potatoes and about one ounce of meat. On Fridays and fast days, the ‘soup’ consists of oatmeal or flour and water with potatoes. The prisoners never partake of this and have to rely on parcels received from friends. There are no utensils or vessels supplied for taking meals. In several instances there is only one spoon and one knife to four men, and some tinned vessels which formerly contained tomatoes. A prisoner is forced to use the same vessel for all meals.¹²⁷

In an earlier response to such complaints, Kevin O’Higgins, Minister for Home Affairs, had highlighted the destructive tendencies of some internees as the sole problem leading to such shortages. He stated that ‘all tables, fixtures and cells tables were destroyed by prisoners...’ along with some ‘cutlery’.¹²⁸ While vandalism certainly played its part in the deteriorating prison conditions, some internees claimed that cutlery had never been provided by the authorities. In Cork Jail, internees reported ‘...we never were supplied with knives, forks or spoons. Some got...cans and mugs, and the others have only jam pots or empty salmon tins to take their tea out of, and they are lucky to have a piece of paper to lay on the floor for a plate’.¹²⁹ Other internees were less critical. While in Cork, Todd Andrews remarked that ‘this place is not of course a palace but the food is good and sufficient’.¹³⁰ Internment camps too were often criticised by *Éire*, although not to the same extent as the country’s jails. In the Curragh, internees similarly complained about the condition of meat stating that, ‘...The ‘grub’ I won’t trouble you with. “Meat” (we’ve another name for it but I won’t write it), one

¹²⁶ Nanny and Nell O’Rahilly to Anna O’Rahilly, Mountjoy, November 1922 (U.C.D.A., Sighle Humphreys Papers, P106/391.).

¹²⁷ *Éire*, 7 July 1923 (N.L.I.).

¹²⁸ *Freeman’s Journal*, 21 Jan 1923 (N.L.I.).

¹²⁹ *Éire*, 11 Aug. 1923 (N.L.I.).

¹³⁰ Todd Andrews, Cork Gaol to Mother, 20 April 1923 (U.C.D.A., Todd Andrews Papers, P91/1 (52)).

potato each (and such a one black and wet) such is our dinner for seven days'.¹³¹ Meals served in the military hospital in the Curragh Camp were described as '... invariably badly cooked and cold'.¹³² Internees in Newbridge also reported cases of starvation, complaining that '...all prisoners are in a state of semi-starvation, the food being insufficient and almost uneatable'.¹³³ In Finner Camp, Anti-Treayites reported problems regarding their cutlery stating that '...the knives, forks and spoons taken from us two months ago, have not been returned'.¹³⁴ Reports Hare Park Camp told a similar story:

...Food: We are told we are given army rations so many ounces of this and that. Whatever the theory may be, the fact is we don't get enough to eat, and would be continually hungry were it not from the parcels of food received from friends. The dinner is about half a mug of soup, a potato, about a teaspoonful of cabbage or beans, and a piece of meat, which by the time the gristle and waste are cut away, oftener than not makes but another spoonful. For breakfast there are two oz. of porridge, tea, bread and butter. For supper, tea, bread and butter. This too is limited in quantity. As supper is served at 5 p.m. and there are only three meals per day provided for, the men would be hungry until 9 next morning only that by sparing their already insufficient rations, and with the aid of parcels, they make another meal around 9 p.m.¹³⁵

These accounts were generally exaggerated but even assuming that some of the facts were founded in the truth, the internees did receive most of the traditional nutrients that were necessary for a basic diet, such as, bread, potatoes, meat, vegetables, rice and milk (although there was a noticeable lack of fruit on the menu).¹³⁶ The problems that arose regarding food in 1922 were prevalent for internees during the First World War. German 'enemy alien' prisoners, interned in Knockaloe Camp on the Isle of Man, encountered similar problems

¹³¹ *Éire*, 15 Sept. 1923 (N.L.I.).

¹³² Report on sick Republicans and treatment of wounded prisoners in the Free State: General military and Isolation Hospitals Curragh, 17 Dec. 1923 (N.A.I., s.1369/3.).

¹³³ *Éire*, 29 Sept. 1923 (N.L.I.).

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*

¹³⁵ *Éire*, 1 Sept. 1923 (N.L.I.).

¹³⁶ Internee Ernie O'Malley noted how he found it hard to believe some of the accounts reported in *Éire*. He stated, 'Éire was the worst offender'; Ernie O'Malley to Molly Childers, Kilmainham Jail, 5-7 Dec. 1923 (T.C.D., Erskine Childers Papers, MS 7850 909).

during 1914-19.¹³⁷ Panikos Panayi in his study *German Minorities during the First World War: A Global Comparative Study* stated that in this camp

The official ration dictated that prisoners should receive three meals a day, at breakfast, dinner and supper, with the midday meal providing the most food and nourishment. During the first two years of the war the daily ration included bread, meat, cheese, peas, beans or lentils or rice. As the conflict progressed these rations altered. At the start of 1916, bread decreased and cheese seems to have disappeared. By the end of 1918 bread declined and was supplemented by 4oz of broken biscuit, while meat included beef or horseflesh, Chinese bacon cured, smoked or pickled herring. During 1919, horseflesh became the norm.¹³⁸

A similar three meals a day routine was applied in Ireland, although the food varied in comparison to that served at Knocklaue. A survey carried out at the Isle of Man camp revealed that internees received around '2535 calories per day' and that the food 'may have presented an improvement on the German working class diet of the early twentieth century'.¹³⁹ Internees at Knocklaue similarly complained about the condition of the camp food, stating that 'they did not receive haricot beans or rice, despite the fact that they should have done according to the menu, and instead obtained cabbage and turnips...The substitution of horseflesh for ordinary meat...caused great discontent'.¹⁴⁰ Even still, Panayi found that despite the 'complaints made by prisoners about food, they consumed enough calories to keep them healthy, as the low death rate and disease rates would suggest'.¹⁴¹ However, these German prisoners also received parcels from home to supplement their diet. At Knocklaue, they 'obtained food in the parcels they received, while each camp had its own canteen where internees could buy additional supplies'.¹⁴² In the Free State, internees similarly received food parcels. In 1922, the level of publicity regarding prison meals reached the general public

¹³⁷ Over 20,000 members of the German community in Britain were interned as 'enemy alien' prisoners at Knocklaue during the First World War; David Cesarani & Tony Kushner (eds), *The Internment of Enemy Aliens in Twentieth Century Britain* (London: Routledge, 2009), pp 53-71.

¹³⁸ Panikos Panayi (ed) *Germans as Minorities during the First World War: A Global Comparative Perspective* (Dorchester, 2014), p. 107.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*, p 107.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 108.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 107.

and the *Freeman's Journal* reported: 'owing to propaganda outside, food has been sent in to prisoners to such an extent as to make it necessary for prisoners to request their friends to only send occasional parcels...'.¹⁴³

Highly exaggerated stories in newspapers such as *Éire* were essential for the movement to garner public sympathy and support. In an effort to counter Anti-Treaty prison propaganda, the Department of Publicity set about accumulating more satisfactory reports. In July 1923, the Department published a report which included statements 'apparently' made by internees in their correspondence to relatives. These statements completely refuted the accusations of ill-treatment in particular the condition of prison meals. The Free State directly accused the Anti-Treaty side of exaggerating their situation for the benefit of their cause. The Publicity Office claimed that

"Prison Propaganda" is a recognised weapon in the variegated armoury of the Irish Irregulars. That is to say, complaints about the treatment of prisoners are not the genuine expression of humanitarian feeling, nor are they directed to obtaining any remedy for the conditions alleged, but they are part of a policy deliberately intended to bring discredit upon the Government...¹⁴⁴

The government's statement included a number of accounts, apparently extracted from prisoners' letters. One internee in Mountjoy stated: 'Don't mind what you see in the papers about the treatment of prisoners. I was never so well fed...'.¹⁴⁵ Additional statements claimed that some Anti-Treatyites had little objection to the quality of the prison food. Aodh de Blacam wrote to his wife '...the meat at dinner would do either of us at home...'.¹⁴⁶ Throughout some of these Department of Publicity statements, prisoners were eager to convey how plentiful and good the food was: '...I must say we are treated the very best-plenty to eat. For our breakfast we have tea, bread and butter, porridge. For dinner we get

¹⁴³ *Freeman's journal*, 3 Aug. 1922 (N.L.I.).

¹⁴⁴ Sean Lester, Director Publicity, to Mr. Bannon, President's Office, 27 July 1923, Attached Memo 'Treatment of prisoners in the Free State' (N.A.I., s. 1369/3.).

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

potatoes, meat, cabbage, bread, soup. For Tea:-tea bread and butter. There is no doubt we have plenty to eat'.¹⁴⁷ Another internee Clancy wrote: 'There is no mistake about it but we are well looked after here; the food we get is excellent'.¹⁴⁸ Another stated that 'we have plenty of everything don't trouble to send anything in'.¹⁴⁹ However, reportage of 'excellent' food angered many Anti-Treaty internees. One prisoner dismissed the notion of plentiful food and cited worried relatives as the main reason that internees' omitted reference to inadequate supplies. The prisoner proclaimed: 'How often when I am absolutely starving have I written in a similar strain, knowing how hard it is for my mother to provide for herself and my young brothers and sisters...'.¹⁵⁰ It may well be that internees were concerned about placing additional worry on poor relatives, who were already struggling to feed existing families outside. Furthermore, by omitting harsh criticism of internment, including prison meals, they were ensuring that their letter would be forwarded 'untouched' to the intended friend or relative. Censorship of letters and parcels was widespread and many letters were often sent with large sections blacked out. As Oonagh Walsh stated:

No correspondence was permitted to pass either in or out of the prison if it contained any reference to the Free State authority, or commentary on current political situation. Censorship ranged from the simple editing of words and sentences with heavy pen, to the removal of whole pieces of text.¹⁵¹

This level of censorship may have affected the extent to which the internees would criticise their conditions. Unlike the overcrowding issue, the standard of prison meals appeared to improve in certain prisons by 1923. In July, Labour T.D. James Everett, speaking in the Dáil declared that the food situation had recovered significantly:

¹⁴⁷ Ibid.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid.

¹⁵⁰ *Eire*, 23 June 1923 (N.L.I.).

¹⁵¹ Oonagh Walsh, 'Testimony from Imprisoned Women' in David Fitzpatrick (ed), *Revolution in Ireland 1917-23* (Dublin, 1990), p. 69.

I hope I made myself perfectly clear that most friendly relations exist between the prisoners and their guard. They have no complaint but on the question of food. In other places the treatment may be different, but in Wicklow Jail the food is of the best and their relationship with the guard is of the very best. They only complain that the food is too coarse for sick men.¹⁵²

However, as previously stated, many internees were not entirely dependent on the prison menu for their nutrients and the availability of food parcels heavily supplemented their diet. Internees Nell and Annie O’Rahilly wrote: ‘we have... bacon and eggs for breakfast’, which had been forwarded by relatives. Neither bacon nor eggs were provided to internees in Free State prisons or camps.¹⁵³ The difference of opinion among internees may be attributed to the class of the individual in question as the Anti-Treaty movement consisted of members from both middle and working-class backgrounds. Those internees who hailed from middle income families were generally the sons and daughters of farmers. In Dáil Éireann, Farmer’s Party, T.D. Denis Gorey, highlighted the social makeup of the ‘irregular’ movement, stating that

The vast majority of the Regulars are labouring people, but 95 per cent. of the Irregulars are, as I have said, the sons of small farmers. And Mr. Figgis can take that bee out of his bonnet altogether. Let him deal with figures and facts and cite them for us. I don't know much about figures, but I am only talking about the Irregulars. And it is the farmers' sons, who have plenty of work to do at home, who are the Irregulars.¹⁵⁴

Thus, the conflicting reports regarding food may be attributed to the substantial portion of internees from farming backgrounds who would have been accustomed to fresh produce. Peter Hart’s study, *The I.R.A. and its Enemies: Violence and Community in Cork 1916-23*, commented on the middle class nature of the I.R.A. during the War of Independence and argued that the ‘I.R.A. did not enrol corner boys...’.¹⁵⁵ He further revealed that the I.R.A. had a large urban base ‘...as well as the persistent gap between farmer’s sons and their employees. Skilled and white-collar workers formed a large part of the membership

¹⁵² D.É.D., Vol. 4, Col. 99, 3 July 1923.

¹⁵³ Nanny and Nell O’Rahilly to Anna O’Rahilly, Mountjoy, Nov. 1922 (U.C.D.A., Sighle Humphreys, P106/391.); Diet for military prisoners under Prisons Board Administration; Breakfast; Bread 8oz, tea 1 pint, butter or stirabout 1 pint, milk 1 pint (N.A.I., s.1369/2.)

¹⁵⁴ D.É.D., Vol. 1, Col.1872, 20 Oct. 1922.

¹⁵⁵ Peter Hart, *The I.R.A. and its Enemies: Violence and Community in Cork 1916-23* (Oxford, 1999), p. 164.

everywhere, especially among the officers...The only exception to this was the Dublin Brigade...which did have a strong labouring component at all levels'.¹⁵⁶ Taking into account Hart's assessment of this section of the movement and the fact internees in this social bracket left behind a substantial amount of literature,¹⁵⁷ the level of criticism regarding prison meals may not be too surprising. Middle class prisoners benefited greatly from parcels which supplemented their prison diet, a routine which had developed in the years preceding the civil war. Murphy noted how, 'In addition, class could, and did, divide prisoners, as when poorer men resented the middle-class colleagues who received food parcels or cash from home.'¹⁵⁸ However issues surrounding food were greatly enhanced during the civil war, not only due to the higher internment levels but also as a by-product of a larger proletariat based I.R.A.. Peter Hart noted that between '1922 and 1923, as membership and the prospect of victory rapidly receded, farmers and white-collar workers among the rank and file dropped out in large numbers, as did many city officers that worked in shops and offices. Some manual labourers also left the movement, but a greater portion stayed: as a result the army became more proletarian. The size and value of officers' family farms declined'.¹⁵⁹ The more socialist leaning nature of some within the ranks of the I.R.A. can be observed in some of the accounts of confrontation between Anti-Treatyites and the Free State army. In one episode in Clifden, Galway, it was reported that there was considerable firing 'from the Railway Station Hotel, which was occupied by Republicans. Out of the chimney of the hotel floated the Red flag...'.¹⁶⁰ The proletariat element within I.R.A. during the civil war would ultimately lead to greater division when impoverished Anti-Treaty internees returned to their families.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid*, p. 162.

¹⁵⁷ Some of the collections in UCDA are those of Ernie O'Malley, Eamon de Valera, Sighe Humphreys, Kathleen Barry, Maude Gonne, Countess Markievicz to name a few.

¹⁵⁸ Murphy, *Political Imprisonment and the Irish, 1912-1921*, p. 262.

¹⁵⁹ Hart, *The I.R.A. and its Enemies*, p. 160.

¹⁶⁰ *Irish Times*, 2 Nov. 1922 (N.L.I.).

Hart's research further revealed that there was an urban-rural divide among some members of the I.R.A..¹⁶¹ In essence, this divide transferred to the prison system. In order to understand this division, which is noticeable in the literature, it is necessary to consider the living conditions at this time. During the early twentieth century, the condition of the food served in the average tenement household resembled something similar to that served in the prisons of 1922-3. Kevin C. Kearns in his study noted that

The basic diet of Dublin's poor was deficient in essential nutrients and caloric levels. For breakfast it consisted, in some combinations, of tea, cocoa, bread, margarine, jam and porridge. For dinner it was mostly stews and soups made from cheap meat scraps called "parings", which are very fatty. Women would buy sheep's heads, cattle's heads, rabbits, fish heads... Also popular were pig feet, pig's cheek... Margaret Byrne is not ashamed to admit that there were days when she knew real hunger: "Some days we didn't really have a meal, maybe just bread and butter. On a bad day she'd (mother) get half a dozen eggs and that'd have to do for the father, mother and four children. A boiled egg for dinner – and that would be that."¹⁶²

The fatty meat eaten by tenement dwellers may not have been that different to the meat served in the camps and prisons. Anti-Treatyite propaganda often highlighted the poor quality of the food and one *Eire* article complained that in Athlone, '...For dinner we got two potatoes each, about two to three ounces of corned beef with a little sauce or soup, sometimes four to a plate on the floor.'¹⁶³ Another Republican propaganda sheet complained that in Dundalk Jail '...the bread is sour and ...the soup is watery...'.¹⁶⁴ These accounts appear remarkably similar to the situation in the Dublin tenements where '...buying scraps and inferior meat parings...was a common practice. And children were regularly sent down to the local bakery to buy stale bread'.¹⁶⁵ Furthermore, military internees received regular meals which some poorer sections of Irish society, particularly in the city areas, would not have

¹⁶¹ Hart, *The I.R.A. and its Enemies*, p. 162.

¹⁶² Kevin C. Kearns, *Dublin Tenement Life: An Oral History* (Dublin, 1994), p. 33.

¹⁶³ *Éire*, 30 June 1923 (N.L.I.).

¹⁶⁴ *Éire*, 7 July 1923 (N.L.I.).

¹⁶⁵ Kearns, *Dublin Tenement Life*, p. 33.

been accustomed to. This may explain some of the discontent, although in the confines of a prison cell, there was little else to obsess about.

The contribution of food parcels to the internees' diet has been noted by Niamh O'Sullivan in her history of Kilmainham Jail, *Every Dark Hour*. She related how '...parcels were dearly held lifelines with news from home, small items of luxury, and even food to supplement the meagre prison diet'.¹⁶⁶ Parcels became so essential that internees could recall when parcels were frequent, as Margaret Buckley noted, in Kilmainham 'our letters and parcels were never stopped...'.¹⁶⁷ The level of luxury items sent to prisoners in parcels certainly confirms their importance to internees. Newbridge internee, J. Heffernan received 'cakes, tea, sugar, butter, cigs...',¹⁶⁸ while Lily O'Brennan received rashers and tea.¹⁶⁹ Among other items she received were fresh eggs, cigarettes and magazines.¹⁷⁰ The contents of these food parcels would suggest that many prisoners were accustomed to nutritious food and the meagre prison menu would have been quite unpalatable. Siobhán and Mairéad De Paor wrote of how some women in Kilmainham '...did not touch the food and may as well have been on hunger strike...'.¹⁷¹ While, in contrast to this, Connie Murphy considered the food 'adequate'.¹⁷² The class difference between internees was even more noticeable in the contents of these parcels and how often internees received them. Ernie O'Malley was a regular recipient of food parcels while interned, particularly from Molly Childers. Judging by O'Malley's correspondence, it was quite clear that he (and others like him), did not rely too

¹⁶⁶ Niamh O'Sullivan, *Every Dark Hour: A History of Kilmainham Jail* (Dublin, 2007), p.166.

¹⁶⁷ Buckley, *The Jangle of Keys*, p.101 (except in March 1923- the women went on hunger strike in Kilmainham when their parcels and letters were stopped as a result of an attack outside on unarmed Free State soldiers);

O'Sullivan, *Every Dark Hour*, p.166.

¹⁶⁸ Newbridge Parcel Book, J. Heffernan Entry, 11 Nov. 1922 (M.A., CW/P/10/11.).

¹⁶⁹ Lily to Fanny Ceannt, 25 Apr. 1923 (U.C.D.A., Lily O'Brennan Papers, P13/60.).

¹⁷⁰ Lily to Fanny Ceannt, Kilmainham Jail, cell no. 79, 12 Apr. 1923 (U.C.D.A., Lily O'Brennan Papers, P13/52.).

¹⁷¹ *Blaze Away with your Little Gun*, p. 7 (U.C.D.A., De Paor Papers, P140.); There was a hunger strike in Kilmainham at this time.

¹⁷² Connie to her father, Kilmainham Jail, 23 Apr. 1923 (U.C.D.A., Murphy Family Papers, P141/232.).

heavily on the prison menu. In January 1924, two months after the end of the hunger strike, he seemed quite unconcerned about prison food as he wrote:

I gave all my stuff away as only my books can fit in my bags and I did not want to be bothered with food. Could you please forward me ½ doz. Eggs, a jar of meat? ...If I am left here could you please, forward me weekly 1 Packet Force, 1 doz. Eggs, ½ lb tea, 1 lb sugar, and some kind of meat in a jar? Also I had cream daily and I liked it very much so if you could forward a small jar every two days it would be more than ample. The tinned meat would do for dinner.¹⁷³

Parcels often brought other luxuries apart from food and among some of the other items received were extra clothes or bedding. While in Kilmainham, Austin Stack wrote to Winnie 'I am a regular swell these times- what with a magnificent dressing gown, an eider down quilt and a pillow'.¹⁷⁴ Stack's parcels from home meant that he was 'now fully supplied'.¹⁷⁵ In reality, not every prisoner could make such requests or demands and this was to become even more obvious as internees were released to struggling families, destitution and unemployment.¹⁷⁶ For those who had neither wealthy relatives nor affluent friends, the prison diet provided their sole nutrition for long periods or until family members could scrape together the contents of a prison parcel. For many prisoners' families even the basic necessities were hard to come by.¹⁷⁷ There were many internees who were not as fortunate as Austin Stack. In the Curragh, it was reported that some 100 prisoners were in need of basic essentials such as trousers. The Deputy Military Governor wrote:

I take it that we are to supply prisoners with clothes, boots, & as was done in the British Internment Camps. There are at the present in here upwards of 100 prisoners who are in immediate need of clothing, especially trousers, the majority of these do not leave their rooms owing to being insufficiently clad. We have taken up this matter with the O.C and Quartermaster, Curragh Command from whom we draw all supplies

¹⁷³ Ernie O Malley to Molly Childers, Kilmainham Jail, 5 Jan. 1924 in Anne Dolan & Cormac O Malley (eds), *No Surrender Here: The Civil War Papers of Ernie O Malley* (Dublin, 2007), 1922-24, p. 478.

¹⁷⁴ Austin to Winnie, Kilmainham, 24 Oct. 1923 (N.L.I., Austin Stack Papers, MS 22,398.).

¹⁷⁵ Austin to Winnie, Kilmainham, 30 Oct. 1923 (N.L.I., Austin Stack Papers, MS 22,398.).

¹⁷⁶ For full discussion of destitution and unemployment among ex-prisoners see chapter 6.

¹⁷⁷ One prisoner wrote of the hardship his mother would suffer if she had to send him in food parcels. 'How often when I am absolutely starving... knowing how hard it is for my mother to provide for herself and my young brothers and sisters...'; *Éire*, 23 June 1923 (N.L.I.).

for this barracks but they inform us they have no instructions to supply clothing for prisoners.¹⁷⁸

Unfortunately, on a number of occasions, the valuable contents of these parcels were reportedly stolen and some internees alleged that their packages had been tampered with by prison guards. The Anti-Treaty newspaper *Eire* accused Free State prison guards of robbing food from the prisoners' parcels, stating that internees are '...treated wretchedly, parcels pilfered and looted and foodstuffs sold much under value...'.¹⁷⁹ For those who did receive their parcels intact, the contents alleviated some of the hardship in the way of food and other commodities.

As internment continued well into 1923, the mounting grievances voiced by internees came to a climax when a delegation of the International Committee of the Red Cross (I.C.R.C.) was sent to the Free State to inspect the conditions in the prisons and camps. After months of Anti-Treatyite protestations and a growing concern among the international community,¹⁸⁰ the I.C.R.C. received a submission regarding the condition of internees in Free State jails and camps by the 'Irish Republic's representative in Paris and by the Irish Womens' Republican Federation'.¹⁸¹ However, when the I.C.R.C. eventually visited the Free State, they never made official contact with the 'anti treaty' side, presumably to avoid a publicity campaign.¹⁸² A chance encounter between Kathleen Lynn and the Red Cross delegate M. Haccius while in Dublin proved unrewarding. Lynn requested that the delegation inspect Maryboro prison and Kilmainham jail (where 300 women were held). Haccius urged Kathleen Lynn, Madeline Ffrench Mullen and Áine Ceannt to 'keep the Red Cross presence

¹⁷⁸ Deputy Military Governor Newbridge to Adjutant Gen., Portobello, 28 Oct. 1922 (M.A., CW/P/10/02.)

¹⁷⁹ *Éire*, 24 Mar. 1923 (N.L.I.).

¹⁸⁰ Throughout 1922-23, a large number of letters and telegrams were sent to the Provisional Government voicing serious concerns about the prison service. These included not only Republican sympathisers but a number of local county councillors around the country. There was also a large quantity of complaints from citizens in Europe, America and Australia (N.A.I., s. 1369/3.).

¹⁸¹ Sean McConville, *Irish Political Prisoners 1920-1962: Pilgrimage of Desolation* (London, 2014), p. 260.

¹⁸² *Ibid.*

in Dublin a secret for a few days, in order to avoid prisoners' relatives calling at the delegates' hotel'.¹⁸³ They never heard from the delegation afterwards and the I.C.R.C. published their findings in May 1923. McConville noted how this report actually enhanced rather than diminished the reputation of the Free State.¹⁸⁴ The result of the committee's inquiry refuted a substantial amount of Anti-Treaty accusations, particularly those concerning the condition of food. The committee visited the internment camps at Gormanstown, Tintown and Newbridge along with Mountjoy Prison. The report failed to mention the remaining prisons but its assessment of the above institutions revealed that prison meals were not as inadequate as previously reported. In Mountjoy, the I.C.R.C. found that the 'kitchens' were in a '...special building situated in the enclosure. The rations were communicated to me by the Commissariat officer'.¹⁸⁵ The report also stated that prisoners in Mountjoy each had their own mattress and three blankets. There were six W.C.s, wash house and baths along with a special building for the kitchen. The I.C.R.C. noted that the 700 prisoners received two letters weekly and they were entitled to parcels and newspapers. The authorities provided the prisoners with soap and cleaning materials and the Committee noted that while some internees scoured the floors, others took 'no care to clean their cells'.¹⁸⁶ The commission further found similar circumstances in the Newbridge Internment camp stating that the kitchens were '...well regulated...with refectories containing tables and benches. The rations (see annex) were made known to me by the Governor of the camp. The stores are well kept'.¹⁸⁷ At the camp in Tintown, they found similar circumstances: '... The kitchens are well run (one kitchen for four barracks) with a concrete floor. A dining hall with tables and benches adjoining the kitchen. I was informed about the rations by the Q.M. of the camp. I was able to see for myself in the stores that the provisions are of good quality. Judging from

¹⁸³ Ibid, p. 261.

¹⁸⁴ Ibid, p. 260.

¹⁸⁵ Red Cross report on visit to Mountjoy Jail, 19 Apr. 1923 (N.A.I., s. 1369/3.).

¹⁸⁶ Ibid.

¹⁸⁷ Red Cross report on visit to Newbridge Internment Camp, 18 April 1923 (N.A.I., s. 1369/3.).

remains on the table after the mid-day meal, it is evident that the quantity of food supplied is amply sufficient'.¹⁸⁸ In Gormanstown Camp the report found '...The Kitchens and Dining halls in a special building. Same rations as the army'.¹⁸⁹ This revealed that in some camps, prisoners were treated no differently to the national army, in that they received a soldier's ration which was set out as: '*Breakfast*: Butter 1 ½ oz, Sugar 1, Tea ¾ oz, Flake meal 2 oz, bread 8 oz. *Dinner*; (6 days) Meat 12 oz, Fish Fridays 8 oz, Potatoes 10 oz, Beans 1 oz, Peas 1 oz, Fresh vegetable 3 oz, Bread 4oz. *Tea*; Butter 1 ½ oz, Sugar 1 oz, Tea 1, Fresh Milk 5 pints to 20 men or 8 oz per man'.¹⁹⁰ Overall, the Red Cross report of May 1923 concluded that 'complaints regarding the prohibition of correspondence with prisoners' families...' in relation to the 'sanitary conditions and food in the camp are unfounded'.¹⁹¹ The delegation's decision not to visit Kilmainham was apparently due to the hunger strike of Mary MacSwiney and Mrs O'Callaghan.¹⁹²

The I.C.R.C. report was undoubtedly a blow to the Anti-Treaty side and a victory for the government. Seán McConville, in his study, queried the delegation's decision to visit the still vacant N.D.U. in lieu of other prisons and stated that 'exactly how the delegates thought they could inspect and evaluate empty premises to any degree of reliability is unclear, but the impression such a procedure created inevitably looked biased towards authority and dismissive of prison campaigners and republicans'.¹⁹³ The unreliable nature of their investigation became evident in the months that followed, as various criticisms emerged in relation to the Union, most notably from the Medical Officer T. Lavery, who inspected the

¹⁸⁸ Red Cross report on visit to Tintown, 20 April 1923 (N.A.I., s. 1369/3.).

¹⁸⁹ Red Cross report on visit to Ireland, April- May 1923 (N.A.I., s. 1369/3.).

¹⁹⁰ Ibid.

¹⁹¹ Ibid.

¹⁹² The Red Cross report stated that the delegation 'was not able to visit... Kilmainham ...250 women detained, but has no reason to believe that the treatment there is different to that adopted in Mountjoy.'; (N.A.I., s. 1369/3.).

¹⁹³ McConville, *Irish Political Prisoners 1920-1962*, p. 261.

premises.¹⁹⁴ The I.C.R.C. decision not to visit certain jails or contact prisoners' rights campaigners certainly revealed a reluctance to court unwanted publicity or, as McConville stated, 'to become a rallying point in the post-war bitterness then enveloping the country'.¹⁹⁵ He noted that for internees and the prison activists, it would have been better had the I.C.R.C. never visited since now the Free State could point to an official report to reinforce their position.¹⁹⁶ Despite the anti-climax of the I.C.R.C. report, accounts of prison conditions continued after hostilities had ended in May 1923. However, while the correspondence and memoirs of Anti-Treatyites regularly highlighted their bleak surroundings, many prisoners also embarked on a number of creative endeavours and leisurely pursuits.

Although rarely highlighted by the Anti-Treaty press, internees derived great pleasure from certain pastimes, which included knitting, painting, writing, organising dances, dramas and educational classes. The products of these activities still survive today in the form of painted walls, colourful concert programmes and knitted or crocheted pieces.¹⁹⁷ Eithne Coyle remembered that her favourite pastimes in Mountjoy were rounders and Irish classes, while Nell Humphreys related a similar account of the North Dublin Union.¹⁹⁸ She stated how they would '... be out in the sun all day, and sew and all the young girls used to play rounders'.¹⁹⁹ Nell described how the prisoners played 'charades...' and enjoyed 'a dance...', while cell doors were 'open till 12 o'clock'.²⁰⁰ Life, was therefore not entirely bleak for civil war prisoners and as Nell recounted in one letter; 'we really had a great time...'.²⁰¹ Upon her

¹⁹⁴ Captain Lavery M.O Report, 23 May 1923 (U.C.D.A., Elgin O'Rahilly Papers, P20/84(1)). Lavery's report noted the dirty conditions in the Union and an outbreak of septic throats.

¹⁹⁵ McConville, *Irish Political Prisoners 1920-1962*, p. 262.

¹⁹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁹⁷ Kilmainham Jail Archive & Museum contains a large quantity of artwork made by prisoners during the civil war period.

¹⁹⁸ Eithne Coyle Personal Statement, p. 22 (U.C.D.A., Eithne Coyle Papers, P61/2.); Nell to Emmet, Kilmainham Jail, 15 June 1923 (U.C.D.A., Sighle Humphreys Papers P106/397.).

¹⁹⁹ Nell to Emmet, Kilmainham Jail, 15 June 1923 (U.C.D.A., Sighle Humphreys Papers P106/397.).

²⁰⁰ Nell to Emmet, Mountjoy, 4 Jan. 1923 (U.C.D.A., Sighle Humphreys Papers, P106/393.).

²⁰¹ Ibid.

transfer to Kilmainham Jail, these recreational endeavours continued and internees were also provided the opportunity to mingle. She wrote:

Pity Sighle was left in Mountjoy, I miss her and she would have a great time here there are so many girls she knows here now, and we have dance classes and Irish, German, French, shorthand...in fact she would leave Kilmainham the most accomplished women in Ireland. I believe they have the same in all the camps as Emmet says he has taken up Spanish and shorthand and is already drawing.²⁰²

Additionally, many of the prisoners were avid readers. Ernie O'Malley, in particular, compiled a booklist of literature he intended to read whilst interned. Writing to Mabel Fitzgerald after the 1923 hunger strike, he stated that

Reading has helped me kill the pain and I read particularly all day when in the 'Joy. I worked out a course which would require little mental effort with refreshing variety- thus each day I did some philosophy, poetry, prose, fiction, history and languages. I began Greek and Spanish. I did not get very far with either as my head would not permit it but I am very fond of both languages.²⁰³

On this list were works by Shakespeare, Jonathan Swift, Homer, Sophocles, Plato, Joseph Conrad, Mark Twain, Leo Tolstoy and Edmund Spenser to name a few. Drama, too, added much variety to the mundane prison environment of 1922-3, as internees organised a number of plays, particularly Irish themed ones. 'The Singer', originally written by Padraig Pearse, was performed in Kilmainham and the programme mentioned Mary MacSwiney, Miss Hannah O'Connor and Lily O'Brennan among the performers.²⁰⁴ Creativity was a welcome outlet and as Christmas 1922 approached, some internees designed their own Christmas cards.²⁰⁵ Furthermore, cell paintings such as Grace Plunkett's depiction of the Madonna and Child, soon became part of the fabric of Kilmainham Jail, along with a variety of names etched upon the plastered walls. Austin Stack commented on this pastime in a letter to

²⁰² Nell to Aunt Annie, Kilmainham, 26 Feb. 1923 (U.C.D.A., Sighle Humphreys Papers, P106/396.).

²⁰³ Ernie O'Malley to Mabel Fitzgerald, Kilmainham Jail, 1 Dec. 1923 (U.C.D.A., Desmond Fitzgerald Papers, P80/1650 (1-4).).

²⁰⁴ Programme of Play 'The Singer', Kilmainham Jail (Kilmainham Jail Archive, hereafter K.J.A., 20 MS 1B 53 12.).

²⁰⁵ Display of Christmas cards, 1922 (K.J.A., 20 LR 1B 23 01.).

Winnie, and remarked that: 'I appear to be in your old domicile...it is a dank cell...you left no inscription after you. Good taste that. Writing on cell walls never appealed to me, whatever about painting.'²⁰⁶ The etchings and paintings that illuminated cell walls left a visual reminder of internment in this period. Perhaps in some way, these drawings, along with wood carvings, embroidery sets and other creative outlets, speak just as profoundly as the opinions documented in prisoner correspondence. Collectively, they represent the multifaceted experience of internment, where the diary entry or the letter home would not suffice. They reflect the boredom and banality of incarceration, the use of creativity to counter monotony, raw emotion combined with intimate thought and the camaraderie internees found in their mutual predicament. They embody the prisoners' experience, free of censorship and public scrutiny.

Therefore, in assessing the reality of internment in the Free State during the civil war, it is fair to assume that while conditions were inadequate, military prisoners were certainly provided with a good deal of leeway in terms of parcels, letters, recreation and general interaction. The unpleasant conditions referred to in correspondence were mainly due to wide-scale overcrowding, poor food provisions and the shortage of basic amenities such as running water, bedding or heating. The new government struggled to administer an already dysfunctional prison service and the lack of available prison accommodation only served to enhance existing grievances. These various issues were regularly recorded in the letters and memoirs of internees and while exaggeration could be said to have played a part, they undoubtedly revealed some of the harsh realities facing those imprisoned during the civil war. However, internees too made a substantial contribution to their own misery by vandalising their surroundings through the breaking of windows, doors, refusing to clean their cells and burning bedding. On a number of occasions, this led the Provisional Government to view

²⁰⁶ Austin Stack to Winnie, Kilmainham Jail, 30 Oct. 1923 (N.L.I., Ms 22, 398.).

internee complaints with contempt, since they were in many ways, contributing to their own misery. Thus, while the administration was responsible for a great many discomforts that befell those interned 1922-4, the prisoners' conduct did little to aid matters. As complaints accumulated, many internees responded aggressively and the process by which they sought to undermine the system would create havoc for the new government and ultimately lead to more restrictive measures throughout the civil war.

Chapter 3

Revolt from Within: Riots, Escapes and Hunger strikes 1922-3

The Irish revolutionary years effectively produced a body of prisoners well versed in the ways and means of opposing the prison administration. William Murphy's thorough research into imprisonment from 1912-21 revealed the various methods through which a whole host of different political groups such as Nationalists, Suffragettes and Labour prisoners, sought to undermine the functionality of the system. Through the use of successive hunger strikes, riots and planned prison escapes, these prisoners attacked the system from within the system and by the final years of the British administration in Ireland, the governing of the country's jails had become unmanageable. Murphy noted that

By the spring of 1921, the erosion of the Irish prison system in the face of the revolution was undeniable. It was not just that the volume of prisoners had become far too large for the system to handle...a persistently rebellious prison population had reduced an ordered system to chaos, seemingly without classification, and prisons to sites where venerable governors were retired when prisoners rioted because of perceived slights.¹

Fostering discontent and instability within the country's jails and camps was another feature of internment which continued during the Irish Civil War. This chapter will explore how internees resumed these old tactics in order to oppose the establishment from within the system. Over the previous decade, they had learned to use their prison environment as a weapon against the state through violent opposition and adopting the passive protest of hunger strike. All these methods were tactically different but carried equally devastating consequences. The first section will analyse the various riots and escape attempts carried out and reveal how these strategies placed a considerable strain, both financially and politically,

¹ William Murphy, *Political Imprisonment the Irish, 1912-1921* (Oxford, 2014), p. 215.

on the new state. The second part will focus on a series of hunger strikes which provoked significant upheaval both inside and outside of the prison system during the civil war. Hunger strike placed substantial psychological pressure on the government, particularly in the wake of Terence MacSwiney's death in 1920 after seventy four days.² The re-appearance of the hunger strike under a native government certainly rekindled old sentiment and in 1923, a number of telegrams and letters supporting the strikers were sent by members of the Irish public and international community. This only served to enhance pressure on the ministers of the new state as the spotlight returned once more to the issue of internment.

As chapter one discussed, renovations and repairs were widespread in 1922, while the government were under immense pressure to suppress frequent attacks from the Anti-Treaty I.R.A. outside. When mass internment was introduced, the prison system had not yet recovered from its previous wave of rebellious prisoners. Into the midst of disorganisation and tension, entered a large cohort of military internees, many with the aforementioned knowledge of how to achieve severe levels of destruction and internal breakdown. The strain placed on the Irish prison service over the preceding years as documented by William Murphy, resumed once more with a second wave of hostile internees during the civil war.³ In July 1922, a government report highlighted the growing unrest in Mountjoy prison. Military Governor, Colm Ó Murchadha, was 'feeling the strain of his responsibilities'.⁴ He stated that he would resign if not given extra help.⁵ In considering the tensions that plagued the prison system at this time, it is easy to understand why Ó Murchadha was prepared to leave. A month previously, a number of threatening letters had been sent to members of the prison staff in Mountjoy; the Principal Warder Grace and the Deputy Governor. It was suspected

² Murphy, *Political Imprisonment and the Irish, 1912-21*, p. 174.

³ Ibid, pp 215-53.

⁴ Government Report, 15 July 1922 (N.A.I., s. 1369/1.).

⁵ Ibid.

that the letters were written by 'some member of the Prison Staff'.⁶ Instances of abuse or intimidation within the prison service did not arrive in the Ireland in 1922.⁷ Under the British establishment, prison staff in Ireland often requested transfers due to fear of IRA reprisals.⁸ On one occasion, prison warder Thomas Griffin was abducted by armed men and held captive for a month. He had apparently encouraged IRA prisoners to take food during the 1920 hunger strike.⁹ Seán McConville further noted how the British experienced similar difficulties when 'staff could be suborned or intimidated, or sympathetic to the Republican cause'.¹⁰ During the civil war, the new administration was duly aware of the potential dangers that faced prison officials. In the aftermath of the Anti-Treaty ceasefire, the Military Governor of Newbridge expressed concern for a number of civilian clerks, who he believed, should remain employed in the camp. The clerks were unable to return to their 'homes' due to their association with internment in the country. He stated that

I should like to point out that it would be very real hardship on the Civilian Clerks to be dispensed with at this time. These men have given loyal service, and as well as having, if dispensed with, no prospect of employment...further disadvantage of not being in a position to return to their own homes because of their association with a Camp of Prisoners.¹¹

Civilian clerks were predominantly responsible for administrative duties in the various prisons or camps 1922-4¹² but there were other staff members, such as guards and warders, who were in direct contact with the military internees. In some instances, the authorities were forced to reconsider certain appointments, as some employees were not capable of managing the unruly internees. This was the case in Kilmainham Jail, when 'Captain Corrie', Acting Commanding Officer at the prison, requested that Principal Wardress, Miss Higgins 'be

⁶ General Prisons Board, McDermott to Secretary for the Minister for Home Affairs, 26 June 1922 (N.A.I., JUS H410.).

⁷ Murphy, *Political Imprisonment the Irish, 1912-1921*, p. 179.

⁸ Ibid, pp 179-80.

⁹ Ibid, p. 179.

¹⁰ Seán McConville, *Irish Political Prisoners 1848-1922: Theatres of War* (London, 2005), p. 705.

¹¹ Military Governor of Newbridge to Adjutant General, 1 June 1923 (M.A., CW/P/01/02/06A.).

¹² Nominal Male and Female Roll of Civilian Staff employed in Camps (M.A., CW/P/02/01/04).

transferred elsewhere'.¹³ Among some of the reasons he cited for his decision was Miss O'Higgins' 'nervous' disposition and that she was '...afraid of the Irregular Female Prisoners'.¹⁴ 'Commandant O'Neill, who up until recently was in charge of Kilmainham', was also of the 'opinion that she is not suitable for the post...Miss Wilson, second in charge, would, it is thought, make an efficient Chief Wardress and her appointment to this position is suggested'.¹⁵

Aside from intimidation from within the prisons, the Anti-Treaty I.R.A. outside remained a persistent threat to the stability of the system. In Kilkenny, only two months earlier, a group of armed 'irregulars' robbed a large quantity of whiskey and then proceeded to seize the local prison. The *Irish Times* reported that 'on Friday evening a party of irregular forces from the police barracks in Parliament Street Kilkenny, entered the bonded stores, and seized a quantity of whiskey and other goods... entry was then effected to Kilkenny Prison in the early hours of Saturday morning ...A guard of irregular forces was stationed at the prison'.¹⁶ The situation was resolved when Colonel Prout of the 'regular I.R.A.' forces offered an ultimatum to the 'irregulars' to leave before 5.45pm, which they accepted. Subsequently the Governor of Kilkenny Prison, fearing a second attack, requested that 'a guard be placed in the building' and Prout accepted his request.¹⁷ These acts placed additional pressure on an already overburdened prison system and heightened the tension between prisoners and their jailors. In this environment, Anti-Treaty internees could utilise the situation for their own ends and throughout 1922-3, internees resumed old habits in order to re-create the disruption of previous years; one of the most popular of these tactics was that of non-cooperation. This involved the blatant refusal to carry out prison guard instructions

¹³ Adjutant General, Portobello Barracks, to the Minister of Defence, 18 May 1923 (M.A., CW/P/01/02/06A.).

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ *Irish Times*, 1 May 1922 (N.L.I.).

¹⁷ Ibid.

and it had been adopted several times before 1922. On one occasion in 1916, guards in Frongoch 'sought labour from prisoners that did not relate to maintaining themselves in the camp. This included the clearing out of the guards' ash pits'.¹⁸ These orders, along with an attempt to remove internees liable for conscription led prisoners to orchestrate a hunger strike, 'the first, albeit brief, large-scale co-ordinated hunger-strike by nationalist political prisoners between 2 and 4 November'.¹⁹ As a result, the authorities eventually '...conceded the issue of internee labour in early October, but they continued to pursue potential conscripts', which led to a further deterioration in relations between the staff and the prisoners.²⁰ Anti-Treaty internees resumed this tactic of non-co-operation and some were prepared to go further than simply ignoring their prison guards. After the fall of the Four Courts, a number of Anti-Treatyites, including Rory O'Connor, were taken to Mountjoy to be interned. Upon arrival, it was recorded that they 'lay on the grass...and refused to enter the building...'.²¹ The prisoners were later 'removed by force to their cells', where 'they proceeded to destroy the furniture, to break the windows and gain possession of crow bars which they used for the demolition of masonry around the windows'.²²

No prison or camp was immune to this type of behaviour. In previous years, the British administration had countered these tactics, by removing the undesirable and riotous elements from Irish prisons and transferring them to British jails.²³ Here the prisoners were held in what Murphy aptly described as a 'political quarantine' away from the immediate Irish public and with access to fewer prison visits. In 1922, the withdrawal of the British administration from southern Ireland also eliminated this much relied on safety valve and the riotous element within the system was left to fester within the country's jails and camps. With

¹⁸ Murphy, *Political Imprisonment and the Irish, 1912-1921*, p. 64.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid, pp 64-5.

²¹ *Irish Independent*, 15 July 1922 (N.L.I.).

²² Ibid.

²³ Murphy, *Political Imprisonment and the Irish, 1912-1921*, p. 113.

increased overcrowding and a prison population larger than any previously held 1916-21, this tension often degenerated into violent conflict. One such incident occurred in Cork Jail when internees carried out a similar protest of non-co-operation. On the morning of 24 September 1922, Lieut. F.S. Hurly 1st Cork Reserve was the officer in charge of the internees. At around 11.00 am he asked the prisoners' leader to tell the men to return to their cells.²⁴ They informed him 'that they had no intention of obeying orders and absolutely refused to leave the exercise yard...'.²⁵ Hurly then enlisted the help of 'Lieut. Casey', who with 'a party of men, forced the prisoners in with butt rifles [*sic*]'.²⁶ There, the internees 'continued the destruction in the corridors outside the cells- tearing down doors, windows, railings etc. At 11.50 the sentries were ordered to fire to frighten them into their cells.' In doing so, they managed to disperse the internees and most returned thereafter. However, a small number remained defiantly in the corridor.²⁷ The sentry fired again and one prisoner, named Patrick Mangan, fell down wounded and later died of his injuries.²⁸ The loss of life left the Free State open to allegations of 'murder' from the Anti-Treaty side which was further aggravated by strict censorship of the national media. The *Fenian* reported the incident stating that the

Daily press gives some particulars of the murder in Cork Jail of a Republican prisoner named Patrick Mangan who was killed by the guards. Slave state Army Authorities issued an order forbidding all inquests in Cork. Then they held a military inquiry into their own murder and said themselves fully justified in committing it. All in...Black and Tan style...²⁹

Censorship of reports regarding prisoner deaths and inquests was not uncommon. Peter Martin noted, in his study of *Censorship in the Two Irelands 1922-39*, that Piaras Béaslaí (under the supervision of the Minister for Publicity, Desmond Fitzgerald) had 'ordered the press not to print full accounts of the inquest of Patrick Mannion, a Republican shot dead by

²⁴ *Freeman's Journal*, 28 Sept. 1922 (N.L.I.).

²⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷ *Freeman's Journal*, 28 Sept. 1922.

²⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁹ *The Fenian*, 28 Sept. 1922 (N.L.I.).

Free State forces. Béaslaí believed the government had not presented its case well at the inquest and wanted to buy it time to give its side of the story in the Dáil'.³⁰ However, in the case of Mangan a military inquiry did indeed take place and the proceedings were reported in the national media:

The court is of the opinion that the prisoner, Mangan, met his death as the result of a shot fired by a Sentry in the execution of his duty, and that the officer who gave the order to fire was justified, as the prisoners had sufficient warnings and ample time to comply with the order to return to their cells.³¹

Aside from the tragic loss of life, serious damage had been done to the jail. The financial cost of restoring the prison was estimated to be in the region of £3,000 as 'doors were torn down and the interior fittings of the cells and corridors were wrecked'.³² All in all, this incident successfully fed the Anti-Treaty propaganda machine and provided them with a greater opportunity to highlight perceived ill-treatment in prisons elsewhere.³³ The destruction of prison cells and camp dormitories was effective in escalating tensions within the system. Before the outbreak of civil war, the administration had acknowledged this possibility. One particular letter related how previous occupants had destroyed the bedding in Maryborough and the Curragh

You are aware, that it was the custom of internees to cut up blankets both for clothing and to stop up broken windows etc. In this manner both at the Curragh and Maryborough a very large number of blankets became deficient. Also the articles which are easily consumed by fire were constantly burned, either for firewood or for the satisfaction of doing malicious damage. A certain amount of thefts occurred when the Internees were released, and the remaining deficiencies are due to breakages, or to misuse for various unauthorised purposes.³⁴

³⁰ Peter Martin, *Censorship in the Two Irelands 1922-1939* (Dublin, 2006), p. 18.

³¹ *Southern Star*, 30 Sept. 1922 (N.L.I.).

³² *Freeman's Journal*, 28 Sept. 1922 (N.L.I.).

³³ Anti-Treaty propaganda commented widely on prison conditions in September, for some examples see *Poblacht na h-Éireann*, 9 Sept. 1922; 16 Sept. 1922; 19 Sept. 1922; 16 Sept 1922, (N.L.I.).

³⁴ F. Dalrymple Lt. Colonel, A.Q.M.G. for Lieut. General Commanding 5th Div. Curragh, to General G.H.Q., 27 Jan. 1922 (N.A.I., FIN1/88.).

Fire was a useful tool of distraction for prisoners but when used in unmanageable circumstances the results were devastating. On 29 August 1922, a fire was started by internees in Maryborough but the subsequent efforts to subdue them resulted in the shooting of one prisoner, Patrick Hickey.³⁵ At his inquest, the details presented revealed that the internees had started the blaze, as a means of creating a diversion to aid their escape. The *Irish Times* reported that

Mr C Wyse Power (instructed by Messrs Meehan and Byrne), for the Irish Government and the military authorities, said that upon the Sunday previous to this occurrence a tunnel was discovered in the prison, made from one of the cells, obviously with the intention of affording means of escape for the prisoners. At about 3 o'clock in the afternoon of Tuesday, when some of the prisoners were proceeding from the cells...a whistle was sounded, whereupon all the prisoners rushed for the compound, and simultaneously every cell which the prisoners had occupied was found to be on fire...The bell wire in several cells was taken from the door and tied to the window, and upon it was hung the blankets and mattress, the result was that the entire prison became ablaze...When the prisoners went into the compound...the object of rushing the wires could only have been part of the plan to escape. The guard fired. There were in or about seven hundred prisoners. The suggestion that the shooting of Hickey was deliberate. Only five prisoners were hit out of several hundred and the other four are almost out of hospital treatment.³⁶

Like the incident in Cork Jail which ended in the death of Mangan, this further highlighted the tragic consequences of prison riots. In many cases, these episodes only served to hinder not aid their predicament. In Kilkenny Jail, one internee reported that guards pursued similar measures when prisoners refused to obey orders. He stated that

On the 15th, Staters got mixed up with names and wanted us to supply them, but we refused. The result was that all of us were placed in front of a firing party for identification purposes. Names were called out but no one answered...After much arguing with officers we were allowed back into our wing...Shooting in through cells windows continues nightly...One of the lads was wounded in the hand...A notice has been posted up to-day saying that no parcels or letters will be allowed in or out until we give the names of all in the Wing- which will be a long time.³⁷

³⁵ Government Memo, 29 Aug. 1922, (N.A.I., s.1369/1.).

³⁶ *Irish Times*, 9 Sept. 1922 (N.L.I.).

³⁷ *Poblacht na hÉireann*, 28 Feb. 1923 (N.L.I.).

Violent confrontation was a regular feature of the Anti-Treaty press but despite the high level of articles published depicting trigger happy prison guards; the level of fatal casualties was actually quite low during the civil war. Aside from the outright refusal to obey orders, internees also embarked on a series of attacks on the internal structure of the prisons, in order to vent their frustration towards the administration. Ernie O'Malley noted that the 'destructive spirit could be seen in the broken cell windows which had not been repaired. In the winter time many must have cursed the former occupants who had smashed the glass for want of something better to do'.³⁸ In one sense, these destructive acts could be viewed as the internees' attempts to control their prison environment in the face of a prolonged incarceration. Margaret Buckley in her memoir recorded the exploits of Sighe Humphreys and Máire Comerford, after their release from solitary confinement in March 1923. Buckley related how they renewed their old activities 'wrenching off locks' and damaging 'cell furniture'.³⁹ The destruction of prison property resulted in feelings of indignation at government level. Minister for Home Affairs, Kevin O'Higgins, believed that the prisons were occupied by people who had lapsed into 'degradation and demoralization... You will not have, and you cannot expect perfection, absolute machine-like perfection, in a state of affairs such as we are confronted with at the moment'.⁴⁰ In 1923, Richard Mulcahy stated that the destructive tendency among some internees had actually exacerbated the high levels of overcrowding. He stated:

If there are any places in which prisoners are housed in anything like unsuitable conditions it is principally as a result of the shortage of accommodation produced by the destruction carried out by the prisoners themselves in other places... An idea of the shortening of accommodation for prisoners produced by destruction by prisoners is given by the figures which I have here. In Newbridge damage to the premises was

³⁸ Ernie O'Malley, *The Singing Flame* (Dublin, 1978), p.230.

³⁹ Margaret Buckley, *The Jangle of Keys* (Dublin, 1938), p.26.

⁴⁰ D.É.D., Vol. 1, Col. 2332, 28 Nov. 1922.

£8,500; at Maryborough damage to the extent of £5,500 was done; at Mountjoy to the extent of £9,000, and at Hare Park Camp to the extent of £130.⁴¹

The high financial cost of repairs revealed the extent to which the prisoners were intent on damaging the system. Ultimately, these actions were nothing more than an outlet to vent frustration towards the Pro-Treaty authorities. In the mind of the internee, an attack on the prison system was an attack on the administration and its institutions and provided them with some small victory in their own internal prison war. For the Anti-Treatyites outside, these events were naturally used to the benefit of anti-state propaganda. Unfortunately for the internees, this was the only measure of success they could claim, as rioting and vandalism generally led to the withdrawal of privileges or worse still, death. Ultimately, this method of protest was regressive and damaging. Not only did it result in more uncomfortable living conditions but often led to the loss of prisoner lives. While it burdened the authorities with unnecessary extra expense, it was an ineffective method of obtaining release as internment levels remained high for the duration of the civil war.

In these circumstances, the level of discipline and order within jails and camps was dubious to say the least. In the aftermath of the Treaty, the truce ‘never effectively extended to the prisons and camps’.⁴² William Murphy’s discussion of the gradual breakdown within the Irish prison system, in the year leading up to the truce, revealed that the culmination of successive hunger strikes, regular prison riots and sympathetic prison warders had reduced the system to a barely functioning shell.⁴³ In some cases, the lack of discipline resulted in the mental breakdown of some staff members. Murphy noted that in Londonderry, the governor ‘William Morton, reached the end of his tether. His angry and ill-considered response led to the wide-spread destruction of prison property and his suspension. Morton had suffered a

⁴¹ D.É.D., Vol. 4, Col. 101, 3 July 1923.

⁴² Murphy, *Political Imprisonment and the Irish, 1912-1921*, p. 251.

⁴³ Ibid, pp 210-15.

mental collapse after thirty eight years of service'.⁴⁴ During the civil war, internees utilised similar instability to their advantage and subsequently a series of escape attempts were made in 1922-3. Some of the most daring escapes occurred when internment was at a tentative stage, before Dáil Éireann had passed the Emergency Powers legislation or began a policy of executions. In August 1922, Anti-Treatyites outside attempted to blow up a portion of the Custume Barracks in Athlone. The *Irish Times* recorded that 'An attempt was made on Monday night to blow up a portion of the boundary wall at Custume Barracks, Athlone, near the detention camp...The damage is estimated at £200'.⁴⁵ The media believed that this was carried out in an attempt to aid the escape of Republicans within the jail. The *Irish Times* reported that 'Owing to the fire having occurred simultaneously with the bomb explosion, it is believed locally that the place was fired to divert soldiers' attention from the barrack during an attempt of the prisoners to escape if the explosion was successful'.⁴⁶ Anti-Treatyites in Athlone may have been trying to emulate the success of a similar bomb-based prison escape which occurred in Dundalk only a couple of weeks before. In this instance, the prison wall was successfully blown off and 105 prisoners escaped. The *Irish Times* recorded:

One hundred and five irregular prisoners were released from Dundalk, on Thursday 27th of July, under extraordinary circumstances. A gelignite bomb was exploded alongside the prison wall, and the prisoners...enabled to escape from custody...Immediately after the explosion, attempts were made to ambush national forces at two points...The search by national troops for the escaped prisoners was continued on Friday, when about 50 of the 105 who got away were taken into custody.⁴⁷

Prisoners could often rely on their comrades outside to concoct a plan of escape but not all were successful in their endeavours. In Maryborough Jail, Anti-Treatyites attempted to gain access to the prison by cutting the telephone wires to the jail. A report from the prison

⁴⁴ Ibid, p. 210.

⁴⁵ *Irish Times*, 26 Aug. 1922 (N.L.I.).

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ *Irish Times*, 5 Aug. 1922 (N.L.I.).

recounted that on 4 May 1922 'all telephone wires were cut during the night'.⁴⁸ The governor stated that a 'loud knocking was heard at the gate and admittance to the prison was demanded professing to be an army order. Admittance was refused, shots were fired at the gate, some windows were broken, and after about an hour's time the party withdrew'.⁴⁹ This was an outright attempt to attack the prison and presumably rescue internees inside. These escape attempts had been a notable feature of internment for many years among Irish internees who fostered tension within the system and then capitalised on the instability that followed.

William Murphy discussed this trend during the previous decade and in 1919 at Cork Prison

an ex-hunger striker, Michael Burke, attempted to overpower a warder, with the assistance of a sympathetic regular prisoner. They were foiled, but according to the Chief Warder, if they had made it to the prison yard there were 150 men waiting at the west wall with ladders. These men had held up a large number of civilians on nearby streets and put the telephone exchange out of order so as to prevent anyone raising the alarm.⁵⁰

Throughout the civil war, internees continued to adopt these tactic and in Cork Jail, internees swapped the noisy and attention grabbing explosives used in Dundalk, for the quieter and more secretive method of tunnel digging. In September 1922, thirty-nine prisoners escaped from Cork Jail in this fashion. A report of the event read as follows:

Thirty nine prisoners escaped from Cork Jail early last Friday morning. Two of them were recaptured at Ballinhassig in the evening, but no trace has been found of the other thirty-seven...The prisoners affected [*sic*] their escape by means of a tunnel which they made from one of the cells to a ventilating shaft. They emerged from a manhole in the centre of the path which approaches the jail walk, getting out one by one.⁵¹

Tunnel digging was quite common since it could be exercised in secret and hidden beneath furniture or floorboards. However, some prisoners were not so fortunate in their methods of concealment, particularly if they were under the supervision of a very astute and perceptive

⁴⁸ Telephone message from Governor Maryborough, to Secretary Ministry for Home Affairs, 4 May 1922 (N.A.I., JUS/H/176.).

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Murphy, *Political Imprisonment and the Irish, 1912-1921*, p. 211.

⁵¹ *Irish Times*, 25 Sept. 1922 (N.L.I.).

guard. This was the case in Kilkenny Prison, where a number of internees dug a tunnel in late autumn 1922. At the time the *Freeman's Journal* reported that the escape attempt was thwarted

... owing to the vigilance of the guard. At about 8.30 o'clock, when the prisoners were at Mass, Captain O'Connell, who was in charge of the prison and who was accompanied by Lieut. T. Healy, had the cells searched and it was discovered that two of the prisoners were in bed in a cell on the ground floor. The officers directed them to get out of the bed. A search was made underneath the bed and it was found that a number of boards had been removed. A further examination revealed an opening into a tunnel the excavation being 7ft deep. The tunnel extended for a distance of about 30ft., or practically to the outer wall of the prison. The officer also found a metal scoop, which was attached to a rope and which was apparently used for the purpose of removing the earth in the course of the investigation.⁵²

One of the most successful escapes of the civil war occurred in Kildare, when internees dug a tunnel that ran into the sewer below the camp. In October 1922, internees at Newbridge Internment Camp realised the benefit of their position as the 'sewer traps ran in line across the quadrangle by the married quarters in the direction of the River Liffey, which flowed near the barracks...if they got to the sewer there was a good chance of escape'.⁵³ The internees, many of whom were veterans of the British regime, set to work 'on a ground floor of a block near the tower...with many narrow escapes from discovery as...some of the guards were in the room, whilst the 'miners' were at work beneath the floor'.⁵⁴ On 14 and 15 October, the prisoners at Newbridge made one of the most successful prison escapes in 'Irish penal history'.⁵⁵ The *Irish Times* reported that

A sensational escape of interned prisoners at Newbridge, Co. Kildare, is reported. In the camp there are about 1,000 prisoners. A daring bid for liberty was made... and actually 110 got away. Thirty seven others were recaptured. It appears that between midnight on Sunday and one o'clock on Monday morning the guards noticed a suspicious movement, and a few shots were fired, one of which wounded one of the

⁵² *The Freeman's Journal*, 10 Oct. 1922 (N.L.I.).

⁵³ James Durney, *The Civil War in Kildare* (Cork, 2011), pp 112-13.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 109 & p. 113.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 109.

escaping prisoners. The escapes were made through a sewer which connected the camp with the River Liffey nearby.⁵⁶

Five decades later, Seamus O'Connor writing in his memoir *Tomorrow Was Another Day*, recalled the particulars of the Newbridge escape. He wrote:

We crawled out in single file. All was quiet. When outside we turned right, along the river bank for perhaps a hundred yards, in order to avoid getting too close to where we knew there was an outpost in our left, and then struck straight across the river. The river was not too deep and quite fordable at that point, and helped to cleanse us after the sewers...On the other side of the river there was a steep bank. We climbed it and into a large field. Then we were free. Never have I experienced such delight which that sense of freedom gave me when going up that hill.⁵⁷

The pursuit of freedom and staying free was one of the most fundamental objectives of Anti-Treaty internees during the civil war. The opening months of 1923 brought with them further emergency legislation and revealed that the new state was willing to arrest and execute prisoners with greater frequency. Those who had escaped now had to work hard to remain at liberty and this involved constant movement throughout the countryside between safe-houses and dugouts.⁵⁸ Escaped internees lived by their nerves, under constant threat of recapture and, as O'Connor noted, 'there was no point in allowing ourselves to be captured- no matter what the difficulties- there would be a worse future there'.⁵⁹ Male prisoners were not alone in their attempts to escape prison during this period. Although there were no female internees executed during the civil war, they similarly conspired to escape the confines of their prison cells. In August 1923, when the North Dublin Union Governor, Commandant T. O'Neill, inspected the prisoners' wing, he discovered a tunnel '6 feet deep'.⁶⁰ In fact there was one lady, Bridie Kelly, working in the tunnel at the time of O'Neill's discovery.⁶¹ Miss Kelly was

⁵⁶ *Irish Times*, 21 Oct. 1922 (N.L.I.).

⁵⁷ Seamus O'Connor, *Tomorrow Was Another Day: Irreverent Memoirs of an Irish Rebel Schoolmaster* (Cork, 1987), p. 71.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, pp 73-87.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 95.

⁶⁰ T. O'Neill, Military Governor, North Dublin Union, to Adjutant General, 20 Aug. 1923 (M.A., CW/P/02/01/06A.).

⁶¹ *Ibid.*

hastily removed and the fifteen other prisoners in the dormitory were transferred to another dorm until the tunnel was 'filled'.

In some cases, prisoners did not wait until they were fully incarcerated to make their bid for freedom. Ernie O'Malley recalled his escape from prison guards after the fall of the Four Courts, after which he later fled to Sighle Humphreys' home.⁶² O'Malley's comrades were eventually incarcerated in Mountjoy and from there some internees conducted their own escape bid. The *Northern Whig* recorded in October 1922 that

Yesterday's sensation in Dublin was the armed outbreak in Mountjoy Gaol, where Rory O'Connor, the leader of the fallen garrison of the Four Courts, and about 600 other Irregulars are held prisoner. From time to time attempts on the part of these to escape, and on the part of the Irregulars outside to rescue them, have been made, and several prisoners had actually succeeded in getting free.⁶³

Internees were always on the lookout for suitable opportunities to mount a bid for freedom. On one occasion, Máire Comerford attempted to escape her captors by jumping out of a car they were travelling but she was unsuccessful.⁶⁴ While internees conducted riots primarily to inflict financial damage and foster instability, the success of prison escapes was calculated to embarrass the Free State administration, while simultaneously achieving freedom for internees. A Government Publicity Statement, published in the *Irish Independent* in early 1923, remarked on this attitude:

The conditions laid down by the Government and Army Authorities are strikingly lenient, but the prisoners adopt a systematic attempt to make their places of detention

⁶² O'Malley, *The Singing Flame*, p. 125; 'we opened the small gate. There were two Staters standing nearby but they did not seem to notice. We opened the back door of the house and walked through the kitchen into the hall... The armoured car was moving back slowly towards the crowd of people but no one looked twice at us as we crossed the large square. As we turned the corner we heard a shot but we did not look back. We ran when we were out of sight'.

⁶³ *Northern Whig*, 11 Oct. 1922 (N.L.I.).

⁶⁴ *Freeman's Journal*, 9 Jan. 1923 (N.L.I.); 'troops proceeded on Sunday to Loughlinstown Co Dublin, where three men found in charge of a motor car on the road side were arrested. A fourth man and a woman Miss Comerford, who came from the city in a second car... While being removed to Dublin, Miss Comerford made an unsuccessful attempt to escape by jumping out of a car. The lady referred to in the official statement is a well-known member of the Cumann na mBan'.

uninhabitable, chiefly for propaganda purposes, but also to embarrass the Authorities and to facilitate escapes.⁶⁵

In a prison system destabilised by riotous internees, the military staff dealt with opposition harshly. In late 1922, an escape attempt in Mountjoy Jail resulted in the death of two prison officers and one prisoner. The tragedy sparked media attention north of the border and was reported in the conservative *Northern Whig*. The paper reported the events as follows:

Yesterday...for the first time there was a general resort in one wing of the gaol to open violence in a determined effort to break out of prison. Arms and ammunition had in some mysterious way been smuggled into the prison quarters ... The Official account of the affair issued by Free State Headquarters last evening states:

“This morning when three of the prisoners, representing a larger body of prisoners detained in Mountjoy Military Prison, came to supervise the distribution of breakfast ration, one of their number fired at the guard, one policeman being wounded. The guard returned the fire ...As a result of the exchange, Police Officer James Kearnes, and Private Thomas Gaffney from near Lusk, were killed, and Private P. Gallagher, of Burtonport, was seriously wounded. Private W. Wilson, of Swords, was also wounded. One of the prisoners named Peter Breslin, of 9, Mount Temple Road, Arbour Hill, Dublin, was killed and another prisoner named John Harbourne, wounded.”⁶⁶

This episode further underlined the tragic consequences of armed revolt and escape bids within the prison system. Internment camps imposed procedures, which allowed the guards to search dormitories or huts so that any security issues could be identified before they progressed to a detrimental stage. The Internment camp regulations can be observed in the following paragraph regarding ‘prison escape’:

23. The most important point to guard against is to prevent means of escapes. Systematic searches of all huts, or cells, is to be made at least weekly in order to ensure that there is no tunnelling, or destruction, and an Officer will examine the barbed wire defences daily in order to ensure that the wire fences are intact. Nobody from outside is to be permitted to communicate with the Internees on any account.⁶⁷

⁶⁵ *Irish Independent*, 17 Jan. 1923 (N.L.I.).

⁶⁶ *Northern Whig*, 11 Oct. 1922 (N.L.I.).

⁶⁷ Regulations for Internment Camps and Military Prisons other than convict Prisons, no date (M.A., CW/P/02/01/01.).

In Newbridge, sentries were given orders to shoot at any prisoner suspected of an escape attempt. The instructions read as follows: 'Prisoners may go where they wish inside the "Dead wire of prisoners" enclosure. A prisoner touching the "Dead" wire should be warned three times... If it is clear that the prisoner is trying escape, the sentry is to fire to wound, but if possible not to kill...'.⁶⁸ This particular policy was adopted in order to act as a deterrent to military internees contemplating escape. Security was naturally a priority and it thus became necessary to censor any material coming in or out of internment camps or jails. Further regulations set down by the military declared that

When letters and parcels to and from prisoners are permitted an Officer not under the rank of Lieutenant is to be placed in charge of censoring. He is to be given sufficient staff to handle the censoring of all letters and parcels, and he is directly responsible to the camp O/C... The handing over of cash cheques, or postal orders, should be done by the Chief Censor at a given hour daily.⁶⁹

These measures and regulations were enforced in order to prevent the transfer of vital information between Anti-Treaty internees and their comrades outside. However, prisoners often sought alternative lines of communication in order to convey information regarding the prison, such as staff numbers, maps etc. Peadar O'Donnell recalled how internees would befriend sympathetic prison guards in the hope they would carry-out letters to colleagues. O'Donnell wrote of one such 'policeman', whom he described as a 'mountain man of good, strong fibre'.⁷⁰ O'Donnell noted how prisoners would assess these potential dispatchers and recollected that '...before I risk a communication in his hand I must talk to him and assemble his mind for him. The mistakes many prisoners make with friendly jailers is that they move

⁶⁸ Military Governor Newbridge Internment Camp: Instructions to sentries around prisoners' compound, 3 Sept. 1922 (M.A., CW/P/10/01.).

⁶⁹ Captain J. McGowan, Military Governor Sligo Prison, to Adjutant General Portobello, 7 March 1923 (M.A., CW/P/02/01/06A.).

⁷⁰ Peadar O'Donnell, *The Gates Flew Open: An Irish Civil War Prison Diary* (Cork, 2013 reprint), p. 114.

too quickly'.⁷¹ O'Donnell remembered that one particular policeman 'agreed to get a note through from me to my brother Frank, on the hills outside'.⁷²

The presence of such amiable 'jailors' was essential in the transfer of orders from the I.R.A. Executive to internees within the system. One such order was sent to the Prison Commanders, instructing them to gather information, 'for the purpose of facilitating escapes and the transmission of intelligence reports...'.⁷³ This despatch further outlined the type of information that prisoners should aim to acquire:

Information is required from prisoners on strength and armament of garrison, numbers and position of guards and sentries, weak points, slack hours, visits of tradesmen workmen, corporation men, friendly persons, accurate sketch map, plans, departures arrival of troops...list of prisoner arrivals and removals, names of suspected spy prisoners and other information.⁷⁴

It is difficult to assess how often, if at all, the I.R.A. H.Q. received reports from internees regarding prisons and camps. In some areas, contact with prisoners appears to have been non-existent. This was the case in the Dublin Command area and G.H.Q. complained that

Jails and internment camps have been transferred to the Intelligence Dept. You will please make arrangements immediately whereby we can get frequent and regular touch with our prisoners who are in enemy hands in Dublin Bde. area. At the moment my only information of Dublin Bde. is that there are prisoners in Mountjoy and Beggars Bush and Kilmainham (women). There may be some in Wellington and Collins. Will you please prepare all the information you have on this matter.⁷⁵

The letters that reached internees varied in content and often outlined ways to improve the line of communication. Instructions were given to one internee, Patrick McGrath in Mountjoy, that 'all outgoing information...must pass through your hands ...all communication must be between you and me...for my part I am doing my best to ensure that

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² Ibid, p. 120.

⁷³ Director of Operations IRA to each Prison Commander, General Prison Despatch no. 2, 1 Aug. 1922 (U.C.D.A., Moss Twomey Papers, P69/13 (140).).

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ I.R.A., G.H.Q. to Brigade I.O., Dublin 1st, 21 Feb. 1923 (M.A., Lyons Papers Captured Documents, A/1032.).

all inward communications pass through my department...'.⁷⁶ Ernie O'Malley referred to this uncensored 'underground' arrangement for prisoners throughout his prison correspondence. He even referenced this network in a letter to Mabel FitzGerald, the wife of Desmond FitzGerald, then a minister in the new Free State government to which O'Malley was opposed. He provided Mabel with some advice on how to correspond with him while in prison and stated that 'if writing through the post, please, tell me how all my friends are. When writing underground, please write at length and 'booky'.⁷⁷ O'Malley also noted that he 'seldom' received such 'booky' letters, suggesting that this underground arrangement was neither swift nor active in forwarding mail. Anti-Treaty internees adopted a variety of imaginative methods to smuggle their correspondence in and out of prison, including through 'laundry, soap...tobacco, or occasionally, the crust of a pie'.⁷⁸ These underground channels were often utilised by prisoners as a means of seeking information about relatives outside, much to the displeasure of some I.R.A. officers, who were awaiting intelligence information regarding their internment. The prospect of an uncensored line of communication through the prison system was an opportunity not to be missed. On one occasion, I.R.A. Intelligence informed internee Patrick McGrath that 'official lines ...are not to be used for personal letters. We cannot presume to act as a G.P.O. The letter for Rita I have sent on but the others I am holding until hear further from you...'.⁷⁹

The level of instability and violence which existed within the prisons and camps before and after the Truce eventually ended in one final act of passive protest; the hunger strike. This approach had been adopted on numerous occasions and played a significant role

⁷⁶ M/D of Intelligence to O/C Prisoners, Mountjoy, 30 Mar. 1923.(M.A., Captured Documents of Patrick McGrath, A/1054.).

⁷⁷ Ernie O'Malley to Mabel Fitzgerald, Kilmainham Jail, 1 Dec. 1923 (U.C.D.A., Desmond FitzGerald Papers, P80/1650 (1-4).).

⁷⁸ Mary Rogan, *Prison Policy in Ireland: Politics, Penal Welfarism and Political Imprisonment* (New York, 2001), p. 27

⁷⁹ M/D Intelligence to O/C Prisoners, Mountjoy, 30 Mar. 1923 (M.A., Captured Documents of Patrick McGrath, A/1054.).

in the release of previous internees. While the administration controlled the freedom of movement within the jails and camps, prisoners still maintained control over their body and could choose when and when not to eat, as an open act of defiance. Throughout 1922-3, Anti-Treatyites resumed the hunger strike as a means of increasing pressure on the authorities to either grant releases or sanction special privileges. William Murphy discussed the evolution of the hunger strike in the preceding years, with specific emphasis on the suffragette, trade unionist and nationalist movements. In particular, Murphy highlighted the striking methods of the suffragettes in 1912, when members of the Irish Womens' Franchise League went on hunger strike in sympathy with their British counterparts from the Womens' Social and Political Union in Mountjoy.⁸⁰ The solidarity displayed during this strike was in fact later emulated by nationalist hunger strikers in the following years, as they too sought ameliorated conditions and release (though many nationalists were reluctant to acknowledge the suffragette influence).⁸¹ This use of hunger strike had evolved over the previous decade and by the early 1920s, this inherently passive form of protest had become one of the most effective ways of destabilising the prison service in Ireland. Murphy noted that this method forced the authorities to change policy stating that 'each prison was not an isolated site of attack and counter attack. Instead, on several occasions, the GPB altered policy across the entire system, retreating before concerted prisoner and public pressure'.⁸² Murphy also discussed the general attitude towards hunger strike and the mentality which drove many internees to adopt such extreme measures. He stated that 'crucial to the mind-set of the successful hunger strike appeared to have been a moral or political cause and the support of comrades who shared the ordeal. Ordinary convicts rarely possessed either and so tended to break down...'.⁸³ By the

⁸⁰ Murphy, *Political Imprisonment and the Irish 1912-1921*, p. 19.

⁸¹ Ibid, p. 19 & pp 82-107; the strikes of 1917 and 1918 revealed the success of co-ordinated attempts by nationalist prisoners to improve their conditions or secure release through hunger strike.

⁸² Ibid, p. 107.

⁸³ Ibid, p. 99.

time civil war had broken out in the country, many internees such as Austin Stack were veteran hunger strikers.⁸⁴

In August 1922, the governor of Kilmainham Jail received a list of grievances from internees seeking improved treatment. The list contained the usual requests such as prison visits and better quality food. If not granted, the Anti-Treaty internees were prepared to hunger strike for these concessions.⁸⁵ They also reminded the Governor of Kilmainham that past generations of Irish prisoners' had fought and died for such privileges and stated that 'to secure them many hunger strikes have been fought...Tom Ashe and many of our comrades gave their lives. They were granted invariably by the English in all prison camps under their control...'.⁸⁶ By 1922, internees were well aware that hunger strike was a potent weapon against the government and had proved successful on several occasions. During 1917, I.R.A. prisoners, convicted under DORA, collectively went on strike demanding better treatment and this strike subsequently resulted in the death of Republican Thomas Ashe. In the aftermath of the strike, on 28 September, 'Dublin Castle buckled' and 'the authorities decided to concede *de facto* political status, in the form of improved conditions'.⁸⁷

These past hunger strike successes were fresh in the minds of both the internees and the new administration. Governor Ó Muirthuile was understandably concerned about the predicament in Kilmainham and he wrote to the chairman of the Provisional Government, Michael Collins. He informed him of the prisoners' intentions and also instituted an investigation into the condition of the food.⁸⁸ This investigation considered the possibility of

⁸⁴ Murphy, *Political Imprisonment and the Irish, 1912-1921*, p. 84; Stack, in particular, was involved in a number of hunger strikes.

⁸⁵ I.R.A. prisoners Kilmainham to Commandant of Kilmainham Barracks S. Ó'Muirthuile, 5 Aug. 1922 (N.A.I., s.1369/1.).

⁸⁶ I.R.A. prisoners Kilmainham to S. Ó'Muirthuile, Commandant of Kilmainham Barracks, 5 Aug. 1922 (N.A.I., s.1369/1.).

⁸⁷ Murphy, *Political Imprisonment and the Irish, 1912-1921*, p. 92.

⁸⁸ S. Ó'Muirthuile to Chairman Provisional Government, 5 Aug. 1922 (N.A.I., s.1369.); S. Ó'Murthuile to L.J. MacCossan, 7 Aug.1922 (N.A.I., s.1369/1.).

allowing the prisoners to appoint a man to inspect the cooking. The Provisional Government responded with an outline of the system regarding food parcels and stated that prisoners had been allowed a representative while parcels were being censored. They further noted ‘... that this is the practice in Mountjoy prison so it would be as well to adopt this arrangement in Kilmainham...no objection to the military governor arranging that a representative of the prisoners should be present at the opening of parcels’.⁸⁹ However, the internees were not satisfied and a hunger strike subsequently occurred in Kilmainham. It was reported by the Anti-Treaty organ *Poblacht na h-Éireann* stating that ‘a strike against the scandalous conditions under which Republican prisoners are forced to live began in Kilmainham Jail on August 7th’.⁹⁰ The strike was not reported in the national newspapers but public attention must have been sufficiently piqued as the *Irish Times* ran an article three days later, countering the allegations of poor conditions in Kilmainham. The article in fact referred to the ‘propaganda outside’ and then set forth the general conditions for prisoners in the way of exercise, diet, bedding, letter writing, parcels, sanitation and recreation.⁹¹ This hunger strike subsequently dwindled from Anti Treaty headlines, as tensions regarding emergency legislation and executions came to dominate the latter half of 1922. The internees’ next tactic was the use of hunger strike in a bid to secure release. The suffragettes had successfully adopted the hunger strike for this purpose under the British administration which led to the passing of the Temporary Discharge for Ill-Health Act 1912 (Cat and Mouse Act) and nationalists subsequently followed their example.⁹² In September 1922, Mary MacSwiney was arrested and interned at Mountjoy Jail. While there, she decided to embark on a hunger strike for release. A sister of the hunger striker Terence MacSwiney, Mary was well aware of

⁸⁹ Provisional Government Memorandum, 10 Aug. 1922 (N.A.I., s. 1369/1.).

⁹⁰ *Poblacht na h-Éireann*, 9 Aug. 1922 (N.L.I.).

⁹¹ *Irish Times*, 12 Aug. 1922 (N.L.I.).

⁹² Murphy, *Political Imprisonment and the Irish, 1912-1921*, p. 27.

the sufferings and dangers involved in striking.⁹³ Furthermore, her high profile name was likely to attract attention, both at home and abroad, and could potentially embarrass the Free State government. The Anti-Treaty media, quick to highlight her familial connections, stated that ‘...Mary MacSwiney emulating her martyred brother went on hunger strike as a protest against her illegal arrest...she is presently in a critical condition...’.⁹⁴ MacSwiney’s experience of her brother’s strike at Brixton Jail had undoubtedly provided her with an education in the politics of hunger strike. She set about writing letters to members of Dáil Éireann and further requested to see her sister before ‘getting too weak to transact business with her’.⁹⁵ This request was continuously denied by the military governor at Portobello Barracks.⁹⁶ As a result, her sister Annie decided to position herself outside Mountjoy and remain there until she was granted the permission to visit. The *Irish Times* reported that Annie was keeping a ‘strange vigil at the gate of Mountjoy... Sitting in a deck chair, wearing a fur coat with a rug about her knees, she remains throughout the day and night, supported by relays of women friends’.⁹⁷ This continued for over a week until 28 November when the Free State decided to release Mary on her 23rd day of hunger strike.⁹⁸ Annie MacSwiney, who had begun her own solidarity strike with Mary on 17 November, was overwhelmed when she heard the news.⁹⁹ She stated that it ‘took some time before she was convinced of the truth’, and after being transferred to the same nursing home as Mary, she reportedly collapsed upon seeing her sister in bed.¹⁰⁰

The refusal to allow Annie MacSwiney visit her sister was a departure from previous British policy. While in Brixton, the MacSwiney sisters had been permitted to visit Terence,

⁹³ David Hannigan, *Terence MacSwiney: The Hunger Strike that rocked an Empire* (Dublin, 2010), pp 198-217.

⁹⁴ *Poblacht na h-Éireann*, 10 Nov. 1922 (N.L.I.).

⁹⁵ D.É.D., Vol. 1, Col. 2323, 28 Nov. 1922. Kevin O Higgins described these letters as ‘rather abusive’; Mary MacSwiney to Director of Intelligence, Portobello Barracks, 15 Nov. 1922 (N.A.I., s.1369/9.).

⁹⁶ ‘the visit cannot be allowed’; Director of Intelligence to Mary MacSwiney, 19 Nov.1922 (N.A.I., s.1369/9.).

⁹⁷ *Irish Times*, 21 Nov. 1922.

⁹⁸ *Irish Times*, 28 Nov. 1922.

⁹⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

although their confrontational manner had resulted in the sisters' removal 'from the prison during the final hours of their brother's ordeal'.¹⁰¹ They had in turn 'mounted a day-long vigil at the prison gate,' a tactic which Annie later employed in November 1922. Annie adopted this measure as she knew it would create publicity for the hunger strike and her sister's plight in Mountjoy.¹⁰² In the tradition of prisoner solidarity, fellow internees wrote a letter to the Archbishop of Dublin, supporting Mary's request to see her sister. They stated that

Since Friday last her sister has been at the prison gate demanding admission, and has been forced at last to the same desperation ... Since 3pm Friday she has taken no food. The anxiety and stress occasioned to Miss MacSwiney by the refusal to admit her sister has affected her condition ... and has forced her to make the last protest in her power, she refuses the attendance of nurses or doctors until her sister is admitted...¹⁰³

However, members of the Provisional Government suspected that Mary MacSwiney's motivations were far more practical than the 'anxiety and stress' outlined by Humphreys and Macardle. Kevin O'Higgins remarked of her suspected agenda in Dáil Éireann, stating that

Miss Mac Swiney was in a state of revolt and in a state of insubordination. She favoured myself and other members of the Ministry with rather abusive letters demanding, not requesting, that her sister should be admitted to see her to deal with purely business matters. She did not base that demand on any extreme illness or on any feeling that death was imminent. She simply said she demanded to see her sister to deal with certain business matters... I assume that that visit was a visit purely to transact certain business, presumably family business. Now, military prisoners, even those not in a state of revolt or insubordination, are not allowed these kinds of visits to transact business. They are not allowed such facilities.¹⁰⁴

It could be argued, that the government were simply unwilling to release MacSwiney, who had been vitriolic in her condemnation of the Treaty and those who supported it. Perhaps this influenced the ministers' decision not to grant her early release or visits. However, this tactic was to become part of government policy and the decision to deny visits, in particular, was a

¹⁰¹ David Hannigan, *Terence MacSwiney*, p. 204; William Murphy, *Political Imprisonment and the Irish, 1912-1921*, p. 187.

¹⁰² Murphy, *Political Imprisonment and the Irish 1912-1921*, p. 187.

¹⁰³ Letter signed by 15 women in Mountjoy, to Archbishop of Dublin Dr. Byrne, 19 Nov. 1922 (D.D.A., 'Government 1922-39', Box 467.); signatories of this letter included Dorothy Macardle and Sighle Humphreys.

¹⁰⁴ D.É.D., Vol. 1, Col. 2323, 28 Nov. 1922.

departure from previous policy towards Irish prisoners. The Provisional Government's decision to adopt this policy was a direct attempt to counter the political sympathy that surrounded hunger strikes in Ireland and the potential propaganda that could be made from reports of those who visited strikers. The ministers of Dáil Éireann had themselves utilised hunger strike as a weapon against the British administration during the previous decade, which had 'provided Irish activists with another opportunity to rebel, turning the sites that were supposed to quell political 'dissent', into places where resistance, even revolution, was nurtured and enacted'.¹⁰⁵ The Provisional Government were not about to allow a similar situation develop within the prisons of the new state under their control.

By October 1923, tensions were running high with some 9,697 interned and no guaranteed release policy in place.¹⁰⁶ The civil war ended in May 1923 but Anti-Treaty prisoners, just like the internees of the Truce period, were left in political limbo.¹⁰⁷ Their release from jail remained uncertain and this resulted in a hardening of attitudes among the prisoner population. A 'Special Report' in June 1923, detailed the growing unrest and defiant nature of some internees:

Reports to hand indicate a general hardening in the attitude of prisoners. Refusal to sign the Undertaking Form is now becoming general even on the part of men who would have signed some time ago. This attitude is apparently the result of definite instructions which have been conveyed to all prisons from Irregular Headquarters.¹⁰⁸

The lack of releases fuelled an atmosphere of discontent among the internee population and within a few months, hunger strike was on the cards again. James Healy, in his article 'The Civil War Hunger Strike: October 1923', declared that the decision to strike at this time was a

¹⁰⁵ Murphy, *Political Imprisonment and the Irish, 1912-1921*, p. 10.

¹⁰⁶ President Cosgrave to Most Rev. James Duhig, Brisbane, Australia, 3 Jan. 1924 (N.A.I., s.1369/21.); President Cosgrave quoted this figure retrospectively in this letter to Duhig.

¹⁰⁷ 'While the truce facilitated the release of the political elite among the prisoners, a rather agitated mass remained in the overcrowded places of detention'; Murphy, *Political Imprisonment and the Irish, 1912-1921*, pp 217-18.

¹⁰⁸ Col. Costello to Chief of Staff, 15 June 1923 (M.A., CW/P/02/02/34.).

final act of 'desperation'.¹⁰⁹ Peadar O'Donnell, reflecting upon this strike in his 1932 memoir, appears to confirm Healy's observation. As a prisoner in Mountjoy, where the instigators of the strike were interned, O'Donnell remembered that there was a feeling of 'defeat in the jails'.¹¹⁰ In the aftermath of the ceasefire, some believed that the 'collapse of resistance in the field had taken the heart out of things'.¹¹¹ When the decision to strike was announced, O'Donnell was keen on the idea and he was certain that a 'strike would give the resistance outside something to rally around'.¹¹² He remarked that hunger strike had the power to gather momentum and stated that 'once a group of prisoners go on strike there is a sort of moral conscription which sweeps the others into it'.¹¹³ There were, of course, some prisoners who were not so keen to partake but for those who wanted to embark on hunger strike, the 'moral conscription' to which O'Donnell referred, had certainly reached its peak by 1923.¹¹⁴ After a decade of successive hunger striking, the largest strike in Irish history began on 14 October 1923.¹¹⁵ However, in the months preceding the strike, there was some confusion within the ranks of the I.R.A. Executive regarding the possibility of further hunger strikes. In July, a letter from G.H.Q. stated that 'considering all the dangers and difficulties' and in view of 'the state of public feeling and the control of the press, it would not recommend hunger striking'.¹¹⁶ However, as it became clear that the Free State were not willing to grant prisoners' releases, the I.R.A. Executive later issued another letter which stated that, G.H.Q. 'would leave it to the prisoners themselves' to decide whether or not to

¹⁰⁹ James Healy, 'The Civil War Hunger Strike: October 1923' in *Studies: An Irish Quarterly Review*, Vol. 71, No. 282 (Autumn, 1982), p. 216.

¹¹⁰ O'Donnell, *The Gates Flew Open*, p. 140.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹¹² *Ibid.*, p. 152.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁴ Healy, 'The Civil War Hunger Strike: October 1923', p. 214; Internees such as Eamon de Valera and Frank O'Connor refused to strike.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁶ I.R.A. GHQ to O/Cs of Divisions & Independent Brigades, 14 Jul. 1923 (U.C.D.A., Ernie O'Malley Papers, P17a/(26).).

partake in hunger-strike.¹¹⁷ Thus on 12 October 1923, four months after the civil war had ended and with no confirmed release date, internees in Mountjoy's D. wing decided to go on hunger strike. Prisoners O/C Michéal Mac Gollaruaid notified his fellow internees that an 'immediate hunger strike for unconditional release was unanimously approved of...I rely on other wings to give the fullest possible measure of support...'.¹¹⁸ He asked prisoners to begin their strike 'by refusing breakfast on Sunday morning' and he concluded that this was the one remaining course of action open to them. He cited a variety of issues influencing their decision, in particular how the authorities had sanctioned '...the hosing of prisoners...the saturating of prisoners[sic] clothing and the flooding of their cells, the dragging out of the prisoners in their soaking clothes, and leaving them thus in the open exercise ground in cold weather for thirty hours...' He now felt that the prisoners had '... no option but to adopt the last weapon of passive resistance, the hunger strike'.¹¹⁹

The strike quickly snowballed and by 28 October, President Cosgrave wrote to the Archbishop of Dublin stating that, '7400 were on strike a week ago...'.¹²⁰ He did, however, lament that he would be 'sorry to see or hear of any death from a hunger strike'.¹²¹ Nevertheless the Government's official stance was to refuse strikers release until they agreed to cease their present opposition to the state. On 31 October, the official government position was that 'hunger strike can be settled immediately if these prisoners will act as citizens, accept majority rule and obey the laws of their native land'.¹²² The government also stated that the wilful starvation of irregulars could not be allowed to outweigh public safety.¹²³ The Free State ministers, as John Healy pointed out, '...had an advantage which has since been

¹¹⁷ Chief of Staff of I.R.A. G.H.Q. to O/Cs of Divisions & Independent Brigades, 4 Aug. 1923 (Ernie O'Malley Papers, P17a/(17), U.C.D.A.).

¹¹⁸ O/C D. wing Micheal Gollaruaid to O/C B. wing, Mountjoy, 12 Oct. 1923 (N.A.I., s.1369/10.).

¹¹⁹ Ibid.

¹²⁰ Cosgrave to Archbishop of Dublin, 28 Oct. 1923 (N.A.I., s.1369/10.).

¹²¹ Ibid.

¹²² Official Government Statement on Hunger Strike, 31 Oct. 1923 (N.A.I., s.1369/10.).

¹²³ Ibid.

shared by other ex-colonial regimes. Its members had experience of prisons, internment camps, hunger strikes...In 1923, it was easy for these government members to recall that when British authority had allowed three prisoners to die on hunger strike in October 1920, the other nine hunger strikers in Cork had come off their strike on the 94th day'.¹²⁴ The ministers of the new state were aware of the consequences of conceding to strikers' demands. The government's attitude towards strikers had gradually hardened over the course of the civil war. Censorship of the national press also aided this agenda, as reports that were sympathetic to the internees were not published. This in turn, weakened any potential support from the general Irish public. Hunger-strike, by its very nature, was calculated to force the administration to act on releases or grant ameliorations.¹²⁵ Earlier in the civil war, the government had bowed down to the strikers demands and released Mary MacSwiney in November 1922. Although, it could be argued, that this decision was prompted as much by MacSwiney's gender as by her high profile name. The death of a male Irish hunger striker often generated widespread sympathy, but the death of a female striker would likely have caused massive outrage. In this sense, the government could not risk another MacSwiney death and her release may have been an attempt to placate potential sympathisers, who were likely to support her endeavour given her revolutionary background. Following her release, there was a shift in policy at cabinet level. In November 1922, O'Higgins put internment figures at '7,000' or 'very close on it'.¹²⁶ These were later to exceed 13,000 and by October 1923, there were still some 9,697 interned.¹²⁷ In earlier years, the British authorities had complied with strikers' demands for release through the Cat and Mouse Act which facilitated the release of sick or dying internees. In 1923, thousands of prisoners remained interned throughout the country and the administration had little time to release and re-arrest active

¹²⁴ Healy, 'The Civil War Hunger Strike: October 1923', p. 214.

¹²⁵ Murphy, *Political Imprisonment and the Irish, 1912-1921*, pp 80-107.

¹²⁶ D.É.D, Vol.1, Col. 2190, 16 Nov. 1922.

¹²⁷ President Cosgrave to Most Rev. James Duhig, Brisbane, Australia, 3 Jan. 1924 (N.A.I., s.1369/21.).

strikers on the same scale as the British administration. The Free State's resolute approach became apparent in April 1923, when Mary MacSwiney and Kathleen O'Callaghan went on hunger strike to secure release. The government vehemently opposed the strike and Ernest Blythe expressed his concern that such a trend would become popular noting that, '... We cannot allow a claim to be set up that prisoners have only to go on hunger-strike and we must release them'.¹²⁸ O'Higgins also forewarned of the potentially disastrous situation that would likely ensue, if the government released prisoners every time they took it into their heads to strike. He stated that

I was interested to note that by two Deputies who spoke we have been reminded of previous releases. Doctor McCartan reminded us of Miss MacSwiney, and Deputy O'Shannon spoke of others. That is true— it is progressive. Every time you give way it becomes harder to take a stand. I have no doubt that it was a factor in the minds of the women who are prisoners that Miss MacSwiney was released on hunger-strike, and I have no doubt that if these women are released it will be a factor in the minds of future hunger-strikers and it will become more and more difficult for the Government to take a stand on any future case. We are not faced with the question of four prisoners, but with the big general question of whether we could hold any prisoner who goes on hunger-strike.¹²⁹

O'Higgins also reminded Dáil Éireann that tough decisions were made for the good of the country and he stated that: 'It becomes, therefore, a sheer question of the Government's right, in defence of the State, to intern people, and if the Dáil says that people must be interned and must be held by the Government in defence of social order and civilisation here, then it ought not to come in and say in the case of particular prisoners, because these prisoners have challenged, via the hunger strike, your right to intern them'.¹³⁰ During the April 1923 hunger strike in Kilmainham, the government attempted to break up morale and decided to remove the remaining female internees to the North Dublin Union. This action resulted in a wide-scale riot and standoff between the prison staff and the internees. After the dramatic removal,

¹²⁸ D.É.D., Vol. 3, Col. 353, 20 Apr. 1922.

¹²⁹ D.É.D., Vol. 3, Col. 355-56, 20 Apr. 1922.

¹³⁰ D.É.D., Vol. 3, Col. 355, 20 Apr. 1922.

Mary MacSwiney was released 'the following afternoon, as a result of the events being made public'.¹³¹ This once again proved that the 'MacSwiney' name held significant sway when the government was faced with a potential public backlash.

However, by October 1923, the civil war had ended and the Free State government were no longer willing to sanction releases so readily. That is not to say that the new administration was unsympathetic to the needs of hunger strikers. During the early weeks of the strike, the Adjutant General at G.H.Q., reported that conditions in Mountjoy had improved and that '...all prisoners are now supplied with spring beds and mattresses... air cushions and water beds are supplied to those who are weak...'.¹³² He also noted that the treatment of prisoners in the hands of medical services was costing the government 'upwards of £100,000 per annum'.¹³³ This was not the first time that extra provisions were made available to hunger strikers. In April 1923, the prison authorities provided additional items to ensure the strikers' comfort. MacCormack of the General Prisons Board informed the Ministry for Home Affairs, that

...two water beds and two air cushions which were supplied by this Department for the use of prisoners on hunger strike at Kilmainham Prison on the 9th April last, were taken over by Dr Delaney of St Bricin's Hospital on the removal of prisoners to the North Dublin Union on the 1st inst...¹³⁴

The authorities kept a close eye on those participating and it was observed that the 'general state' of the prisoners' health was 'slightly lower'.¹³⁵ While the government attempted to make strikers as comfortable as possible, Anti-Treaty sources only reported on ill-treatment or the condition of sick prisoners.¹³⁶

¹³¹ Margaret Ward, *Unmanageable Revolutionaries: Women and Irish Nationalism* (London. 1989), p. 194.

¹³² Adjutant General, Gearoid O'Sullivan G.H.Q. to President Cosgrave, 20 Oct 1923 (N.A.I., s.1369/10.).

¹³³ Ibid.

¹³⁴ Mr MacCormack G.P.B., to Secretary Minister for Home Affairs, 24 May 1923 (N.A.I., JUS H18/8.).

¹³⁵ Adjutant General, Gearoid O'Sullivan G.H.Q. to President Cosgrave, 20 Oct 1923 (N.A.I., s.1369/10.).

¹³⁶ An example of this can be found in the *Daily Sheet*, 1 Nov. 1923, 'All reports to hand state that the men on hunger strike are in a very weak condition in the jails and camps.'

This became a matter of concern for some internees, who were reluctant to enter the strike on the basis of previous illness. The Adjutant General of the National Army at G.H.Q. remarked that Austin Stack ‘refrained from hunger strike until 48 hours ...’ after it commenced, even though the medical officer’s report on Stack was ‘not an unfavourable one.’¹³⁷ This prompted the Adjutant General to conclude that Stack had been ‘shamed into it by his fellow prisoners’.¹³⁸ However, Stack’s ill health may have been a by-product of various prison strikes and protests of which he had become the chief orchestrator.¹³⁹ While the numbers joining the strike swiftly multiplied into thousands, not all internees were willing to join. Well-known figures such as Frank O’Connor and Eamon de Valera refused to enter the strike at all.¹⁴⁰ However, by and large, internees joined fairly quickly once the decision to strike was made official. For example, the Anti-Treatyites in Mountjoy began their strike on 14 October and they were later joined on 19 October by the prisoners at Tintown A. After that the numbers rapidly escalated, with Hare Park, Gormanstown, Kilkenny, Castlebar, Cork, Dundalk, the remainder of the Curragh Camp and prison in Tralee following suit.¹⁴¹ Initial figures in October suggested that there were about 1,000 internees not on strike. On 25 October 1923, just eleven days after the strike was officially declared, reports documented that there were 8,207 people in custody, of which some 7,003 were on hunger strike.¹⁴² The ‘moral conscription’, to which Peadar O’Donnell referred, was clearly at its optimum in the early days of the strike. The number of those participating represented the vast majority of the military internee population at the time. However, momentum of this kind was likely to come to a speedy halt and by November the figures started to dwindle rapidly. On 2 November 1923, Newbridge Internment Camp recorded that some 239 prisoners had abandoned the

¹³⁷ Gearoid O’Sullivan G.H.Q., Adjutant General, to President Cosgrave, 20 Oct. 1923 (N.A.I., s.1369/10.).

¹³⁸ Ibid.

¹³⁹ Stack had been on a series of hunger strikes in the previous period; see Murphy, *Political Imprisonment and the Irish, 1912-1921*, p. 82.

¹⁴⁰ Healy, ‘The Civil War Hunger Strike: October 1923’, p. 215.

¹⁴¹ Report on Hunger Strike, 25 Oct. 1923 (N.A.I., s. 1369/10.).

¹⁴² Ibid.

strike and another 66 prisoners in Tintown A.¹⁴³ On 3 November the number of those on hunger strike was recorded as 5,067.¹⁴⁴ The prisoners' decision to conduct a mass hunger strike, as opposed to a staggered one, resulted in a rapid drop in the numbers on strike. This did little for the strikers' morale which was compounded by the Free State's resolute refusal to allow visits or grant release.

As word of the hunger strike reached the Irish public, many citizens wrote to the government regarding the welfare of the strikers and demanded their release. The Macroom Rural District Council passed a resolution on the 18 October 1923, which stated that they condemned '... in the strongest possible manner the treatment of the republican prisoners in Mountjoy...'.¹⁴⁵ They announced that they would refuse '...to transact the business of this council until such time as these prisoners are unconditionally released...'.¹⁴⁶ Killarney Urban Council similarly called for the release of the strikers on 27 October.¹⁴⁷ Around the country, various county councils followed a similar lead, with many passing resolutions calling on the Free State government to release the strikers.¹⁴⁸ The Government acknowledged the rising level of opposition amongst the councils stating '...resolutions have been passed by several public bodies asking for the immediate release of the interned Irregulars'.¹⁴⁹ However, the Free State remained resolute in the face of council opposition. The cabinet concluded that the maintenance of peace must take priority and affirmed their determination 'to fulfil its trust'.¹⁵⁰ During October and November 1923, the Department of the President received various letters of protest from relatives of hunger strikers. The grim tone of the correspondence was clearly apparent and many openly informed W.T. Cosgrave that he

¹⁴³ List of prisoners who are not on strike in Tintown A, 2 Nov. 1923 (M.A., CW/P/02/02/20.).

¹⁴⁴ Hunger Strike figures for Jails and Camps, Morning 3 Nov. 1923 (N.A.I., s.1369/10.).

¹⁴⁵ Resolution of Macroom Urban District Council, 18 Oct. 1923 (N.A.I., s. 1369/10.)

¹⁴⁶ Ibid.

¹⁴⁷ Killarney Urban Council, 27 Oct. 1923 (N.A.I., s.1369/10.).

¹⁴⁸ For a selection of these resolutions see (N.A.I., s. 1369/10.)

¹⁴⁹ Official Statement of Government on Hunger Strike, 31 Oct. 1923 (N.A.I., s.1369/10.).

¹⁵⁰ Ibid.

would be held responsible for any tragedy that occurred. In a letter to Cosgrave, Mary Barry mother of executed Kevin Barry, demanded that her daughter Eileen be released, as she was now on her third week of hunger strike. She stated 'I wish to remind you that my daughter Eileen Barry is at present on her twenty first day of hunger strike in the NDU' and she asked Cosgrave if it was 'the determination of your government that she dies'.¹⁵¹ Mrs Barry informed the President that she would hold him 'personally responsible' in the event of her death.¹⁵² Towards the end of the November, the government did make some concessions towards the strikers and the occasional release did occur. Mrs Barry was clearly frustrated by this policy and at the government's refusal to release her daughter. In a letter to Eileen, she complained that Leo Henderson had been released 'from the Joy on hunger strike...it's awful to think of you all waiting in there...'.¹⁵³

Aside from correspondence from relatives, there were also letters from individual citizens who were greatly concerned for the welfare of the strikers. Mr. Walsh from Cork implored Cosgrave to show sympathy to the men and women on hunger strike and requested that the President 'release those unfortunate wretches...' some of whom have been incarcerated '...for 18 months'.¹⁵⁴ Letters, of course, were sent from the more vocal sections of the Anti-Treaty movement. Mary MacSwiney and Dr Lynn wrote to President Cosgrave, highlighting that the strike was a result of the conditions of internment and the criminal status which the government had conferred upon the internees. They wrote '...the conditions of filth ...and utter neglect of men ...are almost incredible...their request is refused unless the men accept criminal status'.¹⁵⁵ *The Daily Sheet* reaffirmed that these poor conditions were a

¹⁵¹ Mary Barry to W.T. Cosgrave, 17 Nov. 1923 (N.A.I., s.1369/10.).

¹⁵² Ibid.

¹⁵³ Mary to Elgin, 16 & 17 Nov. 1923 (U.C.D.A., Elgin O'Rahilly Papers, P200/117.).

¹⁵⁴ Mr. Walsh to President Cosgrave, 26 Oct. 1923 (N.A.I., s.1369/10.).

¹⁵⁵ Mary MacSwiney and Kathleen Lynn to President Cosgrave, 12 Nov. 1923 (N.A.I., s.1369.10.).

contributing factor in the strikers' demand for release.¹⁵⁶ Likewise, the *Republican Bulletin* expressed their support and called for an 'All Ireland Hunger Strike'.¹⁵⁷ The bulletin believed that 'the national and religious oppression under which the Republic has been suffering this last year has brought Republicans even closer to their countrymen'.¹⁵⁸ Furthermore, Anti-Treatyite sympathisers abroad were particularly vocal in their support for the hunger strikers. The National Executive Council of Cumann na Poblachta na h-Éireann n-Alban, which was held in Glasgow, passed a resolution on the 25 October. It stated that they considered '... it a national disgrace' that '...soldiers and citizens of the Irish Republic should be compelled by other Irishmen ... to travel the same path as he [Terence Mac Swiney]...to safeguard the Republic...'.¹⁵⁹ In addition, Archbishop Mannix forwarded a resolution, passed by the Irish Australia Society in Victoria, demanding their release and Mannix stated that he 'wholeheartedly' endorsed 'the following resolution'.¹⁶⁰ Although releases were not part of official government policy, some were recorded, similar to that of Leo Henderson. On 31 October 1923, in a letter to Cosgrave, the Minister for Home Affairs, Kevin O'Higgins, highlighted that one internee Baird had been released during the strike. O'Higgins was particularly concerned and wrote that 'it is difficult to understand the release of Baird without any previous consultation with this ministry, as to the desirability of such course'.¹⁶¹ He then went on to say that Baird was an 'agitator of the most extreme type' and explained that 'there is the general question of the political wisdom or unwisdom [*sic*] of releasing any persons when on hunger strike at time when thousands of internees are challenging the law and the fabric of the state by that weapon'.¹⁶² The correspondence relating to Baird provided little

¹⁵⁶ *Daily Sheet*, 13 Nov. 1923 (N.L.I.).

¹⁵⁷ *Republican Bulletin*, 16 Nov. 1923 (N.L.I.).

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁹ Resolution of the National Executive of Cumann Poblachta na h-Éireann n-Alban, 25 Oct. 1923 (N.A.I., s.1369/10.).

¹⁶⁰ Telegram of Resolution passed by Irish Australian Society of Victoria, 31 Oct. 1923 (N.A.I., s.1369/10.).

¹⁶¹ Minister of Home Affairs to President Cosgrave, 26 Oct. 1923 (N.A.I., s.1369/10.).

¹⁶² *Ibid.*

indication as to why he was released but ill-health may have been a factor. Therefore, some releases did occur during the hunger strike, albeit without the prior consultation of the Minister of Home Affairs, which exposed a level of confusion among certain government departments.

For the internees on hunger strike, the monotony of their daily routine became even more pronounced. The prison day, which was normally punctuated by meal times, became one of reading and conversing, with little else to distract internees from their surroundings. O'Malley, in particular stated that 'the strike is monotonous. The 'Joy with all its drawbacks was a much more homely place as we had two or three in each cell, doors in such a manner as could not be locked, so that up to 7 p.m. one could stroll about'.¹⁶³ Hunger strike was not only a physically gruelling journey but also an arduous psychological test. O'Malley's correspondence, in particular, provided us with an insight into the mind of a hunger striker during the civil war. When his health permitted, O'Malley read extensively stating that

I have been much better for the past two days and am able to read quite well again...Since Friday I have read the *Adelphi*, a new review, some articles good I thought as editor likes many of the books I like; [John] Buchan's *Power-House*, *The Nigger of the Narcissus*, *Sea Dogs*, portion of Mark Twain's [*Saint*] *Joan of Arc*, a little of [Walter] Scott, two editions of the *Outline of Lit[erature]* and a few copies of *Punch* etc. so that is real good.¹⁶⁴

In some of his writing, O'Malley would abruptly shift the topic of conversation and change from a serious matter to a more light hearted one. After some time on strike, he wrote to Molly Childers that 'two weeks ago the doctor gave me two days to live; evidently there is something wrong with my heart. Could you please send me more Jane Austen, *The Ingoldsby Legends* and any good humorous books?'.¹⁶⁵ Such a dramatic shift reflected O'Malley's

¹⁶³ Ernie O'Malley, Kilmainham Jail, to Molly Childers, 27 Oct. 1923 (T.C.D., Erskine Childers Papers, Ms 7850/886.).

¹⁶⁴ Ernie O'Malley Kilmainham Jail, to Molly Childers, 11 Nov. 1923 (T.C.D., Erskine Childers Paper, Ms 7850/890.).

¹⁶⁵ Ernie O'Malley, Kilmainham Jail, to Molly Childers, 7 Nov. 1923 (T.C.D., Erskine Childers Papers, Ms 7850/889.).

immediate thoughts and mental state. It ultimately revealed that while internees willingly starved, they were still going through the motions of their daily routine and in many ways, clinging to whatever sane and rational thought they still possessed after many weeks without food. Often, the most mundane events were written about in detail since there was little else to discuss with friends or family. O'Malley's letters certainly captured the boredom and restlessness that prevailed within the prisons and camps at this time. Throughout his correspondence with Molly Childers, he casually related the daily details of matters such as 'my bowels have just moved and I feel in good form'.¹⁶⁶ It is possible that the mere description of a regular routine actually reassured concerned relatives that internees, though on hunger strike, were at least, still functioning. Writing to Josephine Plunkett, O'Malley stated that 'Seoirse Plunkett is in good form, walked out for a bath some days ago and says the Rosary every night in Irish'.¹⁶⁷ These minor and trivial details were clearly important for internees in the midst of such physical and emotional stress. It was perhaps a way of maintaining a sense of normality in a very abnormal situation, so that prisoners such as O'Malley could write, 'I am rather weak but my spirit is strong'.¹⁶⁸

The process of hunger strike allowed them to ponder certain aspects of the human condition which they had not hitherto considered. O'Malley realised during his hunger strike that 'Jail had been a constant struggle, a determined effort to recover health, a fight against drabness, the lack of colour, the oppressive brutality of the stones. Jail life is a slow poison ...a poison more of the mind than of the body...The mind would suffer more than the

¹⁶⁶ Ernie O'Malley, Kilmainham Jail, to Molly Childers, 12 Nov. 1923 (T.C.D., Erskine Childers Papers, MS 7850/893.).

¹⁶⁷ Ernie O'Malley, Kilmainham Jail, to Countess Josephine Plunkett, 15 Nov. 1923 (N.L.I., MS 11, 376 (6)).

¹⁶⁸ Ernie O'Malley, Kilmainham Jail, to Molly Childers, 27 Oct. 1923 (T.C.D., Erskine Childers Papers, MS 7850/886.).

body'.¹⁶⁹ Peadar O'Donnell recounted that, during the hunger strike, he remembered how he felt an increased mental exhilaration. He explained that

The greatest sensation of a hunger-strike is the exhilaration that the mind achieves; it becomes so lit up that you cannot but be aware of its blaze and brilliance. Mine seemed to rustle like flames and sweep the approaches to new thought with unblinking clarity...Life was revealed in new beauty; I knew that life had not been lived; that there are qualities in our nature that are never stirred, that we thin our lives down and starve in a world of riches ...¹⁷⁰

Aside from the literary reminiscences of O'Donnell and O'Malley, the harsh reality of hunger strike was somewhat different. The atmosphere of tension which it provoked within the system was contagious. Even those who did not partake in the strike were affected by the grim and depressing environment that enveloped the prisons and camps. During the earlier strike of April 1923, Lily O'Brennan described some of the scenes in Kilmainham from the viewpoint of a prisoner not on hunger strike. In a letter to Fanny she wrote:

Things are rather dreary here owing to the detention of hunger strikers... They are having a hard time vomiting now...Nellie looks so thin. K Costello is like a little child... just imagine any man enjoying himself over the week and these women going on the 32nd day of hunger strike....Mrs Callaghan and Madame MacBride are already very wasted and Mary Mac S [*sic*] is the same grand spirit ever so much weaker...¹⁷¹

Within a couple of weeks, the rapid decline in numbers reflected the dwindling morale among the strikers. Ernie O'Malley published a brief note of encouragement in the *Sinn Féin Bulletin*, reminding the prisoners that 'it is a spiritual and mental test not a physical one so my message to the lads is to "Keep your hearts up; so long as you are not beaten in your heart you win"'.¹⁷² There were, of course, instances of mental breakdown during the strike and one account revealed that 'two men in Mountjoy are reported to be in a serious condition...one

¹⁶⁹ O'Malley, *The Singing Flame*, p.253.

¹⁷⁰ O'Donnell, *The Gates Flew Open*, p. 95.

¹⁷¹ Lily to Fanny, Kilmainham Jail, 22 April 1923 (U.C.D.A., Lily O'Brennan, P13/58.).

¹⁷² *Sinn Féin Bulletin*, 7 Nov. 1923 (N.A.I., s.1369/10.).

has been removed to Grange Gorman Asylum...'.¹⁷³ As early as October, Cosgrave noted a sharp decline in figures and appeared optimistic about the persistent level of drop offs. In a letter to the Archbishop of Dublin in October 1923, he highlighted the extent to which the numbers were already in rapid decline. He stated '7,400 were on strike a week ago, 425 came off today leaving 6,400...we had, I think, about 13,000 prisoners in all, and a week ago we had 9,600...'.¹⁷⁴

Ultimately, the participation of thousands of internees in the 1923 hunger strike was counter-productive. The reality of maintaining such large numbers, for a long period of time was unrealistic. On 25 October, there were some 7,004 prisoners participating in the strike but a month later there were only 295 individuals remaining.¹⁷⁵ As a result, this was a massive blow to the prison morale. I.R.A. Chief of Staff, Frank Aiken, who had initially refused to support hunger strike action, now attempted to lift the internees' spirits.¹⁷⁶ He stated that the government were lying to the prisoners' and that '...lies will be told to you about one another...lies will be told to you of your friends and fellow citizens outside, in an attempt to shake your confidence...'.¹⁷⁷ In another letter he sympathised with the internees who remained on strike, stating 'your fight has been made harder by the defections of those who have broken the strike'.¹⁷⁸ He explained that the enemy 'has played on their weaknesses'.¹⁷⁹ Although issued with the strikers in mind, Aiken may also have been referring to those who had signed the undertaking form. In Newbridge, some internees' decided to sign the form and on 5 November, a report revealed that four men had in one day

¹⁷³ *Sinn Féin* Publicity Department Notice, 4 Dec. 1923 (N.A.I., s. 1369/10.).

¹⁷⁴ Cosgrave to Archbishop of Dublin, 28 Oct. 1923 (N.A.I., s.1369/10.).

¹⁷⁵ Position of the Hunger Strike, 25 Oct. 1923 (N.A.I., s.1369/10.); Position of the Hunger strike, 20 Nov. 1923 (N.A.I., s.1369/10.).

¹⁷⁶ In July 1923, Aiken stated that the I.R.A. Executive could not 'recommend hunger-striking'; Frank Aiken to O/C's of all prisons and camps, 31 July 1923 (M.A., Madame Gira Collection, CD/186/7/1.).

¹⁷⁷ Frank Aiken to 'All Volunteers on Hunger Strike', 25 Oct. 1923 (U.C.D.A., Frank Aiken Papers, P104/1314.).

¹⁷⁸ Frank Aiken to All Volunteers on Strike, 5 Nov. 1923 (U.C.D.A., Frank Aiken Papers, P104/1314.).

¹⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

signed.¹⁸⁰ A list from Tintown showed that some 42 men had signed the form during the hunger strike.¹⁸¹ This revealed that not all prisoners were able to sustain the mental and physical anguish of hunger strike and the conflicting personalities ultimately led to the strike's downfall. The 1923 strike ended as many often do, with the death of some of the participants involved. On 20 November, Denis Barry, who had taken ill while on strike, died in the Curragh Military Hospital.¹⁸² Three days later, Andrew O'Sullivan also lost his life, on the final day of the strike.¹⁸³ These were the only fatalities of the 1923 Hunger-Strike.¹⁸⁴

While internees had received sympathy from some county councils, the government vehemently opposed it and they adopted a 'not an inch' policy. The physical and psychological pressure of hunger strike became ever more poignant in November, when two prisoners died on strike.¹⁸⁵ Ultimately, the general strike of 1923 proved that the new Irish state would not concede to strikers' demands, even in the face of prisoner deaths. While the release of prisoners accelerated in the months following the strike's end,¹⁸⁶ the resolute position of the new government towards the strikers, fundamentally re-affirmed their commitment to the Free State, its institutions and the re-introduction of law and order. It further exposed yet another gradual shift away from their former revolutionary past. By the end of 1923, the ideological differences between the Free State and the Anti-Treatyite internees were certainly irreparable. The hunger strike of 1920, which began in Cork Prison and led to the deaths of Terence MacSwiney, Michael FitzGerald and Joseph Murphy had been different on a number of levels. Firstly, MacSwiney had been transferred out of Ireland

¹⁸⁰ List of prisoners who signed the Undertaking Form in Newbridge Internment Camp while on Hunger Strike, 5 Nov. 1923 (M.A., CW/P/02/02/13.).

¹⁸¹ List from Tintown, Nov. 1923 (M.A., CW/P/02/02/13.).

¹⁸² Report on the Hunger Strike, 20 Nov. 1923 (N.A.I., s.1369/10.).

¹⁸³ Barry Denis, *The Unknown Commandant: The Life and Times of Denis Barry 1883-1923* (Cork, 2010), p. 221.

¹⁸⁴ Healy, James 'The Civil War Hunger Strike-October 1923', p.213.

¹⁸⁵ Report on the Hunger Strike, 20 Nov. 1923 (N.A.I., s.1369/10.); J Anthony Gaughan, *Austin Stack Portrait of a Separatist*, (Michigan, 1977) p. 239.

¹⁸⁶ By June 1924 there were only '123' internees in Free State jails; D.É.D., Vol. 8, Col. 76, 27 June 1924.

to Brixton Prison. It had become a common 'practice to transfer hunger strikers from Ireland in the early days of their fast. The hope, almost always well founded, was that this would precipitate an end to the strike'.¹⁸⁷ In Ireland in 1922, no such option was open to the Free State government and in a massive display of prisoner solidarity thousands of internees joined the strike of 1923. Also in 1920, the general public were sympathetic to the plight of the hunger strikers. Murphy noted that

At popular level, mass religious observance was the most common medium used to express solidarity with the strikers. On 24 August, for instance, the labour movement in Cork organised an hour long stoppage to facilitate workers attending Mass to pray for the strikers...There was controversy in Donnybrook, County Dublin, when Monsignor Dunne became the only parish priest in the archdiocese to refuse to make his church available for regular mass in support of MacSwiney.¹⁸⁸

In the aftermath of the civil war, the general mood of the Irish public had changed and while a number of local county councils did pass resolutions of sympathy, there was no mass display of religious fervour or support for dying hunger strikers in churches across the country. Anti-Treatyites and the Republican agenda were now criminal offences in the eyes of both church and state. Additionally the strict censorship of Pro-Free State press made it difficult to circulate reports coming from prisons and camps.

The reaction of the clergy to the 1923 hunger strike was also dramatically different to that of the 1920 strike. The death of Terence MacSwiney, had attracted widespread media attention and his body was viewed by some '30,000 approving or curious people ...at Southwark Cathedral London,' while 'thousands followed his coffin in procession to Euston'.¹⁸⁹ When MacSwiney's body returned to Ireland the family were initially ordered to go straight to Cork in order to avoid crowds congregating in Dublin. The family did attend requiem mass there before going onto Cork'.¹⁹⁰ At MacSwiney's funeral mass in the North

¹⁸⁷ Murphy, *Political Imprisonment and the Irish, 1912-1921*, p. 176.

¹⁸⁸ Ibid. p. 189.

¹⁸⁹ Ibid.

¹⁹⁰ Ibid p. 190.

Cathedral, crowds filled ‘the ground and nearby streets’.¹⁹¹ The chief celebrant at the mass was Bishop Colohan, who, only a couple of days earlier had written in the *Cork Examiner* that ‘Terence MacSwiney takes his place among the martyrs in the sacred cause of the freedom of Ireland. We bow in respect of his heroic sacrifice. We pray the Lord have mercy on his soul’.¹⁹² By 1923, the political landscape had changed dramatically and the deaths of Barry and O’Sullivan on hunger strike provoked no such clerical response. Bishop Colohan, in particular, ‘took a hard line against hunger striker, Denis Barry, for whose funeral he refused the use of any church in his diocese. For him, Barry’s act was suicide, the ultimate sin. But for hunger striker Terence MacSwiney it was a form of passive resistance which was the best weapon against tyranny’.¹⁹³ Denis Barry’s body was not allowed enter any church in Cork, nor were any clergy permitted to attend the service.¹⁹⁴ In the space of three years, public and clerical opinion had changed dramatically and internees were on the wrong side of the political divide.

This chapter sought to explore the different modes of protest open to Anti-Treaty prisoners during their internment 1922-3. The process of attacking the administration from within the system was developed over the previous decade by various political internees. During the Irish Civil War, Anti-Treatyites attempted to reproduce past successes and raise similar support among the Irish public for their agenda. However, with the native government, came the introduction of new policies and the Free State ministers knew how to resist such prison tactics. The government held its ground and fought the prisoners from the mindset of former prisoners, stunting their outlets for propaganda and proving that they would not so easily bend to the whim of an unruly internee population. While rioting and

¹⁹¹ Ibid, p. 270.

¹⁹² Hannigan, *Terence MacSwiney*, p. 271.

¹⁹³ Brenda Niall, *The Riddel of Father Hackett: A Life in Ireland and Australia* (Canberra, 2009), p. 91.

¹⁹⁴ Muriel MacSwiney, *Letters to Angela Clifford* (Athol, 1996), pp 153-6; although it was reported to have been a large funeral.

prison escapes formed the basis of active protest, escapes were often foiled and riots often ended in injury or death. Internees who did manage to escape were often re-arrested thereafter.¹⁹⁵ Ultimately, these protests effected more damage than success and in some extreme cases, resulted in the loss of life. The passive protest of hunger strike did not physically target the prison staff but it certainly imposed a psychological drain on the administration. Pressure mounted as letters and telegrams supporting the internees came from abroad and Co. Councils passed resolutions calling on the Free State to grant releases. However, the new government remained committed to its 'not an inch' policy and mass hunger strike inevitably proved ineffective as prisoner morale dropped as rapidly as the numbers of those participating. The deaths of two prisoners smothered any remaining enthusiasm amongst the internee population and as a result the strike was abandoned. However, while hunger striking was a perilous venture, it statistically claimed fewer lives during the civil war than any other form of protest such as rioting or open confrontation with prison staff. Ultimately, the use of such aggressive protests only served to harden administrative attitudes and in order to counter internal opposition, the Free State adopted far more draconian measures.

¹⁹⁵ *Irish Independent*, 22 Aug. 1922 (N.L.I.). This paper recorded the escape of some 105 prisoners on 27 July 1922. However many of these prisoners were re-captured. The paper stated '...The search by national troops for the escaped prisoners was continued on Friday, when about 50 of the 105 who got away were taken into custody.'

Chapter 4

‘As a race we are made up of utter light and utter darkness-saints and devils-children of extremes’: The effect of Free State counter-insurgency measures on Anti-Treaty I.R.A. internees.¹

By September 1922, Kevin O’Higgins estimated that the prison figures had reached 5,000 in the Free State.² This growing body of internees had challenged the prison system through systemic attacks and co-ordinated prison escapes. By late 1922, the Anti-Treaty I.R.A. had returned once more to guerrilla war tactics, specifically targeting the new army and destroying national infrastructure. In assessing the Anti-Treaty perspective during the civil war, Bill Kissane pointed to John Regan’s analysis, in which he highlighted that ‘although the Anti-Treaty position in 1922 was not democratic, neither was it exclusively undemocratic, and the implementation of the Treaty was a violation of Ireland’s right to freely determine its own future’.³ As chapter one outlined, the British had exerted pressure on the Provisional Government in the early months of 1922. This, coupled with the growing Anti-Treatyite threat, forced the government to act and they responded with swift counter-insurgency measures. Kissane maintained that ‘the pro-treaty elite countered the revolution precisely at the point in which it threatened to jeopardise the existing social order...the new government institutions were then established, a counter revolution took place, albeit in the name of constitutional politics’.⁴ In June 1922, the Irish public had met the new state half way by voting for a Pro-Treaty majority thereby reflecting a desire for peace and stability. Garvin outlined how the Anti-Treaty campaign during 1922-3 only served to widen the gap between

¹ Eiléan Ní Cuilleánáin (ed), *‘As I was Among Captives’ Joseph Campbell Prison Diaries 1922-23* (Cork, 2001), p. 33.

² D.É.D., Vol .1, Col. 277, 14 Sept. 1922.

³ Bill Kissane, *The Politics of the Irish Civil War* (Oxford, 2005), p. 237.

⁴ *Ibid*, p. 235.

members of the Irish public and the movement.⁵ This chapter will explore the various methods through which the Free State sought to reinforce control of the country through the arrest and internment of the Anti-Treaty I.R.A.. It will assess how the government effectively used the prison population as a tool in its bid to end the civil war and strangle any potential sympathy for the Anti-Treaty agenda through censorship and counter-propaganda. The first section will discuss the government's refusal to grant prisoner-of-war status to military internees and assess the political drive to criminalise the actions of the Anti-Treaty I.R.A. through emergency powers legislation, the support of the Catholic Church and media censorship. The second section will assess how prison guards and officers attempted to maintain order, through the withdrawal of privileges and the use of solitary confinement. There will be a further examination of how the administration allowed certain members of the army and police force to operate using less than acceptable methods, often unsanctioned, to enforce the rule of law among the prison population. The final section will present an analysis of how the government's execution policy was adopted in an effort to reinforce their authority in the face of Anti-Treaty I.R.A. threat operating outside and inside of the prisons. Internally, these executions were utilised to reinforce control within the system by instilling fear among the internee population, as prisoners' became pawns, casualties of war, in the government's attempts to restore peace.

In considering the measures adopted by the new government, it is necessary to examine how the Free State perceived the Anti-Treaty threat in 1922. Tom Garvin has noted how 'disorder increased throughout 1922 and early 1923. The establishment of the Irish Free State coincided with perhaps three thousand violent deaths during this period'.⁶ The levels of violence in the country, as previously mentioned, had indeed escalated in the early months of 1922. At government level, ministers quickly denounced all those perpetrating violence as

⁵ Tom Garvin, *1922: The Birth of Irish Democracy* (Dublin, 1997), p. 103.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 101.

criminals. On 26 April, a report of the situation by Richard Mulcahy, Minister for Defence, revealed the type of crimes being committed. He stated that 'from the period 23rd March to 19th April inclusive raids on Post Offices to the number of 331 were carried out. Of these raids 234 took place over the 10 days 29th March to the 7th April inclusive, the counties particularly concerned being Cork, 30; Clare 35; Tipperary, 29; Galway 64; Mayo, 32; Leitrim 18; Roscommon 17'.⁷ Among other crimes he included attacks on the railways and he blamed much of the disorder on the 'seceding volunteers'.⁸ Mary MacSwiney denounced Mulcahy for suggesting that Anti-Treaty I.R.A. activities were criminal offences. She stated that

It is with a great regret I do so—a word of strong condemnation, in which I ask every Teachta present to join, against the report of the Minister for Defence. I do so because it is the worst and the most abominable piece of felon-setting that an Irishman has ever been guilty of. It is unthinkable that the Minister of Defence could have so maligned his brother Irishmen as to give a list of what he calls "crimes," mixing up very probably common crimes with acts which were carried out to maintain the Republic.⁹

However, by September 1922, it was clear that government attitudes were firmly focused on denouncing armed opposition to the state as criminal, rather than political acts. President Cosgrave provided his observations on the immediate danger posed by the Anti-Treaty I.R.A. In the course of the Emergency Powers legislation he stated:

This motion is regarded by the Government and the Army as of very great importance.... In entering into the reasons why this motion is put down one must enquire what the cause was and what the effect of the irregulars' armed opposition to the National Army really means at this moment. It is an attempt to overthrow Parliament, and it is a direct challenge to the authority of the people; and one of the reasons put forward for this armed opposition is that the Treaty was accepted under duress, and the question naturally arises as to whether or not the people had a right under the circumstances to accept the Treaty. It was open to them to accept war if that was the alternative; but the minority in the country had no right to say that the people were bound to accept war, or bound to accept their opinions, when their opinions were not the opinions of the majority of the people...If this armed minority were to succeed

⁷ D.É.D., Vol. S2, Col. 255, 26 Apr. 1922.

⁸ Mulcahy mentioned attacks on railways in Wexford, Waterford, Dundalk, Drogheda, Wicklow; D.É.D., Vol. S2, Cols. 256-257, 26 Apr. 1922; D.É.D., Vol. S2, Col. 250, 26 Apr. 1922.

⁹ D.É.D., Vol. S2, Col. 337, 28 Apr. 1922.

in their attacks on the National forces, in other words if they were to succeed, the liberties of the people would be entirely at the mercy of the gun.¹⁰

Cosgrave viewed the Anti-Treaty faction as 'irregular' since their armed resistance threatened the very existence of the state. David Fitzpatrick has noted that after the Army Convention, the 'dissidents were termed 'Irregulars' by those loyal to the national forces'.¹¹ By the end of the year, the Catholic Church waded into the debate defending the democratic rights of the new state. The Bishops' Pastoral, published in October 1922 condemned the Anti-Treaty side and supported the government's position that these activities were criminal acts. The Pastoral, read to Irish congregations on 22 October 1922,¹² stated that

A section of the community, refusing to acknowledge the government...set out to make our Motherland, as far as they could, a heap of ruins. ...They have wrecked Ireland from end to end, burning and destroying national property of enormous value, breaking roads, bridges and railways, seeking by an insensate blockade to starve the people, or bury them in social stagnation... When we think of what these men young men were only a few months ago, so many of them generous, kind-hearted and good, and see them now involved in this network of crime, our hearts are filled with the bitterest anguish.¹³

Bill Kissane, in his study of the civil war, remarked that '...the civil war had been seen by the government primarily in terms of the reassertion of law and order, and I.R.A. activity as essentially criminal in nature'.¹⁴ The destruction of bridges, railways, barracks and personal property were condemned by both political and religious figures alike. However, as Bill Kissane noted, the Free State or 'enthusiastic democrats' were more than 'willing to resort to drastic methods' to confront the 'reluctant democrats' in 1922-3.¹⁵ The policies and subsequent legislation adopted by the new state, in particular the executions, were certainly draconian. For extreme measures to be accepted by the Irish public, it was essential to criminalise and shun the actions of the Anti-Treaty I.R.A.. With ecclesiastical backing, the

¹⁰ D.É.D., Vol. 1, Col. 804-5, 27 Sept. 1922.

¹¹ David Fitzpatrick, *The Two Irelands 1912-1939* (Oxford, 1998), p. 126.

¹² Seán McConville, *Irish Political Prisoners 1920-1962: Pilgrimage of Desolation* (London, 2014), p. 258.

¹³ Pastoral Letter of his Eminence Cardinal Logue, the Archbishops and Bishops of Ireland to the Priests and People of Ireland (Browne and Nolan Ltd., Dublin, 1922) (D.D.A., MGR. M. Curran Dublin, Box 2660.).

¹⁴ Kissane, *Politics of the Irish Civil War*, p. 97.

¹⁵ Ibid.

Provisional Government sought to enhance their counter-insurgency measures and reinforce stability in the country. Ashley Jackson has noted that an insurgent is a ‘rebel; a revolutionary’ and the tactics employed to defeat said ‘rebel’ has been defined as ‘counter insurgency: action against insurrection, military, paramilitary, political, economic, psychological and civic actions taken by a government to defeat insurgency’.¹⁶ It was with these tactics that the Free State government suppressed Anti-Treaty opposition across 1922-3. The insurgency element of any civil war is generally tackled through force and to do so, the ‘beating’ of ‘insurgency requires the full sources of national power – political, economic and cultural as well as military...’.¹⁷ Throughout the civil war, measures such as counter-propaganda, censorship, executions and emergency powers directly affected the internee population in the Free State. These measures were familiar to the new Irish cabinet, many of whom had personal experience of such tactics. The British administration had adopted a similar strategy to counter I.R.A. attacks in 1919,¹⁸ although it was not until the autumn of 1920 that the British government began to seriously consider ‘counter insurgency measures’.¹⁹ However, the introduction of the ‘Treaty, had altered the political climate in Ireland and this permitted the Free State to adopt sweeping counter-insurgency measures without incurring the same negative political consequences experienced by the British in the previous two years of fighting’.²⁰ Fundamental to the government’s method of countering the Anti-Treaty forces was the practice of criminalising their agenda. It has been noted that ‘an act of violence can be criminal and political at the same time, making it a political crime or a

¹⁶ Ashley Jackson, ‘Global Insurgency and the New Foreign Policy’, in *Defence Studies*, Vol. 10, 2010, p. 75.

¹⁷ David Guala, *Counter Insurgency Warfare: Theory and Practice* (Westport, 2006), p. 2; Ashley Jackson, ‘Global Insurgency and the New Foreign Policy’, p. 75.

¹⁸ Seán McConville, *Irish Political Prisoners 1848-1922: Theatres of War* (London, 2005) p. 663. ‘Soloheadbeg provided a telling foretaste of how things would develop. The authorities immediately proclaimed South Tipperary a ‘Military Area’ and prohibited fairs, markets in villages which previously had rarely seen a policeman’. Apparently even internees condemned the incident ‘and deplored it as injurious to the cause by alienating public sympathy’, p. 664.

¹⁹ Tom Bowden, ‘The Irish Underground and the War of Independence 1919-21’, in *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol. 8, No. 2, Apr., 1973, p. 22.

²⁰ M.R.L. Smith, *Fighting for Ireland? The Military Strategy of the Irish Republican Movement* (New York, 1995), p. 52.

criminal offence with political repercussions'.²¹ The Free State viewed the internees as having committed a 'criminal offence' but the repercussions were politically motivated. This motivation focused on the elimination of the Anti-Treaty threat. The new government, therefore, refused to grant prisoner-of-war status to the growing number of internees, since the conferral of such status could potentially legitimise the Anti-Treatyite agenda. In addition, this legitimisation may have likely fostered an element of support among the general population for 'irregular' actions.²² As a mainly guerrilla outfit, the Anti-Treaty side needed to 'capture the sympathy and support of the general populace they intend to govern'.²³ The Free State used the prison system and its internees as one way of countering this sympathy and achieved this by conducting wide-scale arrests, de-politicising their agenda and denying them official prisoner-of-war status. However, the controversy that surrounded P.O.W. status had long been a bone of contention for Irish internees. Previous British administrations had similarly denied this status to prisoners (suffragette, nationalist, socialist) and only somewhat resolved the issue by granting them a form of special category status.²⁴ In the years 1919-22, the British Government granted political 'privileges' to some Irish internees and Seán McConville related how these special category prisoners were generally transferred to British jails.²⁵ He stated that 'the Irish government continued to send over small batches of men- always for special reasons- some of whom they chose to designate as 'political'.²⁶ As with previous waves of Irish agitators in Britain, 'the more prisoners there were with political

²¹ Alex P. Schmid, 'Frameworks for Conceptualising Terrorism' in *Terrorism and Political Violence*, Vol. 16, No. 2 (Summer, 2004), p. 213.

²² Guerrilla movement's use the popularity among the citizens to gain support see; Paul J. Vanderwood, 'Response to Revolt: The Counter Guerrilla Strategy of Porfirio Díaz' in *The Hispanic American Historical Review*, Vol. 56, No. 4 (Nov. 1976), p. 552. 'The combatants normally employ a blend of promise and terror to achieve their goals. Military supremacy is essential more to convince the population at large that sufficient force exists to protect their interest.' p.552.

²³ Paul J. Vanderwood, 'Response to Revolt: The Counter Guerrilla Strategy of Porfirio Díaz' in *The Hispanic American Historical Review*, Vol. 56, No. 4, (Nov. 1976), p. 552.

²⁴ Murphy, *Imprisonment and the Irish 1912-1921*, p. 13. 'following the advice of the Home Office officials, Churchill broadened the scope for affording some prisoners privileged treatment by empowering the Home Secretary to grant first class misdemeanant condition to 'prisoners (in the Second Division)...'.

²⁵ McConville, *Irish Political Prisoners 1848-1922: Theatres of War*, pp 755-6.

²⁶ *Ibid*, p. 755.

privileges, the greater the danger'.²⁷ Ministers of the new government were acutely aware of the dangers I.R.A. prisoners posed but by 1922, they did not have the safety valve of prisons abroad to transfer the more unruly element outside of Ireland. The government thus refused to grant any official 'political' privileges, thereby denying internees the right to ameliorated conditions. This was a source of much contempt among Anti-Treatyites, many of whom viewed their objectives as staunchly political. As a prisoner-of-war, the internees would have been entitled to the following:

Prisoner-of -War Status

1. One visit per day
2. A letter per day
3. Right to receive newspapers and books
4. Right to receive parcels
5. No compulsory labour
6. Right to associate freely with fellow prisoners
7. Right to have classes for study
8. Right to smoke
9. Cells to remain open 7am to 10pm
10. Light in cells all night
11. Improved diet.²⁸

In reality, a number of these privileges were granted at certain stages throughout the civil war but not always on a continuous basis and never with the official title. Mary Rogan suggested that a form of '*de facto* prisoners-of-war status was granted'.²⁹ The administration did, however, place internees in the military category and eleven internment centres were under military control.³⁰ With such a high portion of individuals interned, the military would have provided additional security within the prisons. Kevin O'Higgins stated that 'prisoners

²⁷ Ibid, p. 756.

²⁸ Report on Limerick Gaol by Edmund Roche, T.D. for Kerry-Limerick West, [no date] Oct. 1922 (N.A.I., s.1369/3.).

²⁹ Mary Rogan, *Prison Policy in Ireland: Politics, Penal Welfarism and Political Imprisonment* (New York, 2001), p. 27.

³⁰ There were eleven internment centres under military control; Kilmainham, Mountjoy, North Dublin Union, Waterford, Cork, Dundalk, Hare Park, Newbridge, Tintown, Gormanstown, Maryborough (M.A., CW/P/04-14.).

arrested in an area in which hostilities are not definitely ended must be regarded as military prisoners in the war zone, and the question of concessions which can be extended to them is one concerning which the government is bound to give very great consideration to the views of its military advisers'.³¹ However, while they were viewed as military internees, the right to prison visits were not granted as freely by the Provisional Government, as it had been under the British administration. Seán McConville related how Irish prisoners in the previous years, were granted visits and stated that 'the Irish Office was to be...involved in censoring letters and to have lists of visitors (other than near relatives), who had to receive its prior approval'.³² The Provisional Government initially approved visits to internees but in July 1922, a government report stated that no 'visits' were allowed until 'further notice'.³³ In Kilmainham, internees immediately raised objections, stating that they wanted 'permission to receive visitors...this privilege has been freely granted to prisoners held elsewhere by forces of provisional government...'.³⁴ From September 1922 onwards, the government's attitude towards prison visits was noticeably shaped by the conflict outside, which by then had degenerated into guerrilla warfare. Ministers in Dáil Éireann discussed the issue of prison visits and highlighted some very practical reasons in support of their decision. Kevin O'Higgins noted that

I may say that members of the Government have personal experience of the danger of allowing visits of that kind. The Minister for Defence has admitted to me rather reluctantly that he himself, as a solicitor, visited Mr. Robert Barton in Mountjoy at one time, and handed him a hack-saw. He might just as well have handed him a bomb...in view of the danger to the State and to the public of allowing visits to persons in military custody, it is felt that there is no particular hardship in expecting such persons to communicate in writing with their solicitors.³⁵

³¹ D.É.D., Vol. 1, Col. 207, 13 Sept. 1922.

³² Mc Conville, *Irish Political Prisoners 1848-1922*, p. 757.

³³ Provisional Government Memo, 15 July 1922 (N.A.I., s.1369/1.).

³⁴ I.R.A. prisoners to Commandant Kilmainham Detention Barracks, 5 Aug. 1922 (N.A.I., s.1369/1.).

³⁵ D.É.D., Vol. 1, Col. 207-8, 13 Sept. 1922.

Incidents like this, such as reported by Mulcahy, had often resulted in prison escapes. Seán McConville recorded that in Britain, 'since there had been escapes through visitors overpowering staff at the prison gate, and in the visiting boxes, the number allowed in the sallyport (the space between the outer and inner gates) was to be limited and indeed not too many visitors were to be allowed into the prison at once'.³⁶ However, in 1922 with prison figures higher than any previous British administration, the Free State could ill-afford such visits. A number of reports issued by the staff in the country's jails and camps revealed that little leeway was provided on this issue. In Newbridge, the governor wrote 'it has frequently happened that persons have called here fairly confident of being allowed to see friends ... we have not as per instruction allowed visits to prisoners'.³⁷ When the civil war had officially ended, the administration continued to refuse prison visits with many reports referring to the present 'circumstances' as the chief cause. One report stated '...regarding a visit to your son, who is detained as a prisoner in the Curragh. I have to inform you that visits to prisoners cannot be allowed under any circumstances at present'.³⁸ Further difficulties arose for the administration when they decided to deny hunger strikers visits from relatives, another departure from previous British policy in Ireland. This happened in the case of Mary MacSwiney in November 1922 and during the later mass hunger strike of October 1923. Some TDs were particularly critical of this policy, as it was not only hunger strikers, but sick internees who were similarly denied visits from relatives. Sean Lyons, Labour T.D. for Longford-Westmeath, criticised this policy in Dáil Éireann and stated that 'I know a particular gentleman in the town of Moate who went to Athlone last Saturday week to see his son—a boy of 19 years of age—who was in hospital. He would not be allowed to see him. I also went there and I was refused permission to see the boy'.³⁹ Furthermore, Lyons astutely

³⁶ McConville, *Irish Political Prisoners 1848-1922*, p. 758.

³⁷ Military Governor Newbridge to Adjutant General, Portobello, 27 Dec. 1922 (M.A., CW/P/10/02.).

³⁸ Lieut. Officer I/C Prisoners to Mrs. M. Smyth, Co Wicklow, 22 Sept. 1923 (M.A., CW/P/02/01/06.).

³⁹ D.É.D., Vol. 1, Col. 2325, 28 Nov. 1922.

highlighted the hypocritical nature of the new policy and in doing so referred to the past prison record of some government members. He stated that

We were prisoners and you were prisoners, and you would very much like to have seen friends when you were locked up. Why now deny the right to others which you yourself demanded? I appeal to the Ministers to allow these prisoners in the country and in the city to see their friends at least once a week, and to receive letters. No communications are now allowed, and they are treated just the same as if they were criminals. If they are political prisoners, let them be treated as such.⁴⁰

This was however, the crux upon which the new policy hung. In the new Irish state, Anti-Treaty internees were not recognised as political prisoners. The government refused to acknowledge any political grievance and through the refusal of prison visits, they denied internees political leverage. In the socially unstable environment of 1922, the pendulum of power swung precariously as it sought equilibrium and with 130,000 of the Irish electorate⁴¹ supporting Anti-Treaty candidates in June 1922, the new ministers feared that granting additional concessions to internees would provide them with greater freedom to foster propaganda, discontent and potentially garner support. There was plenty of propaganda already in circulation regarding the military situation in the country. Giving relatives access to internees and the prison service would likely generate further reports of discontent and fan the flames of unrest. In Dáil Éireann, Darrell Figgis remarked of one such propaganda sheet:

As I came into this building, a friend of mine stepped out into the road and handed me an important sheet of paper. It was propaganda conducted by the Irregular forces, who are producing disorder in the country. I read this document, and found a paragraph in it which referred to a body “calling itself the Provisional Government,” and then it adds in a bracket “really a Military Junta.” Now, I am convinced that the Executive which this legislative sets up is not a military junta, and that it will not assume any of the powers of a “military junta.” And I hope I am equally confident in saying that it will not want to do so. But it is important that the criticism of this kind made by those who are acting criminally in the country should not be supported by action taken here or taken or permitted to be taken by this Government.⁴²

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Charles Townsend, *The Republic: The Fight for Irish Independence* (London, 2013), p. 403.

⁴² D.É.D., Vol. 1, Col. 40, 9 Sept. 1922.

In this environment, the Free State maintained an iron grip on the prisons and camps and refused to grant concessions. There was another reason behind such strict internment policy. By 1922, there had developed a general trend by which internees created discontent within the system to win concessions from the administration and as former prisoners, the ministers in Dáil Éireann knew all too well the effectiveness of prison warfare. William Murphy noted in his study that ‘...political imprisonment did not arrive in Ireland in 1912. Again and again...patterns appeared in the twentieth century that were shadows or amplifications of patterns established during the nineteenth century’.⁴³ He further noted that the tactics adopted by internees, in particular rioting and hunger strikes meant that the ‘prison was transformed into a pulpit, a soapbox, a stage and, provided one survived, time served as a political prisoner became an important qualification for public life in Ireland, as in many European countries’.⁴⁴ Essentially, Irish internees knew how to play the system but by 1922, so too, did members of the Provisional Government. In order to combat unrest both inside and outside of the prisons, the Free State thus adopted measures that were often considerably harsher than those adopted by the British. This, of course, led to a swathe of heavy criticism from government opponents. Anti-Treatyites remarked that such tactics revealed a ‘degree of treachery on the part of Richard Mulcahy never equalled by any man during the entire British Regime in Ireland’.⁴⁵ Moreover, they attacked the political foundations of the new state stating

But now, you say, it’s different. We have secured our independence, and the English force have left Ireland. I fear you are deceiving yourself...I am (according to your press) a blackguard, or a madman, or a fool, or a freebooter. But (according to the same press) we were both the same a year ago. The “Daily Mail” considers you quite a respectable person now. Why?⁴⁶

⁴³ Murphy, *Political Imprisonment and the Irish, 1912-1921*, p. 10.

⁴⁴ Ibid, p. 9.

⁴⁵ ‘Why Rory O’Connor Was Shot’ Pamphlet (D.C.L.A., B.O.R. F15-02.).

⁴⁶ ‘Open Letter from Pádraig O’Brien “Irregular” Forces to his former friend and Comrade Pat O’Brien of the National Army’ (D.C.L.A., B.O.R., F17-01.).

While this letter was fused with emotive language and hyperbole, there was some basis for this argument. The counter-insurgency measures of internment, emergency powers and executions were almost a mirror image of the tactics utilised by the British government. However, while Anti-Treatyites were keen to highlight perceived Free State brutality, they rarely paid heed to the overall majority which Pro-Treaty candidates had won in the 1922 election. With both sides in the midst of a propaganda war, the administration thus decided to limit contact between the internees and their counterparts outside. The government's resolute decision to deny visits to hunger strikers, once the symbol of passive resistance for the Republican movement was an attempt to undermine any support for the Anti-Treaty agenda. Ultimately, the adoption of such methods further enhanced the division between the new Irish ministers and their ex-colleagues. John Regan remarked that the Provisional Government's attitude was to serve as a reminder to the Anti-Treatyites that there 'would be no going back to revolutionary unity'. Similarly, the decision to deny visits to hunger strikers and sick prisoners 1922-3 marked just another of the many gradual shifts away from their former revolutionary past and from future reconciliation.⁴⁷ The nature of the state's new policy was centred on the complete isolation of the Anti-Treaty agenda by containing it within the prison system and limiting their association with the movement outside and consequently the Irish public.

In this endeavour, the Free State was supported by the Catholic Church, who publicly condemned Anti-Treaty actions as 'criminal' in the Bishops' Pastoral of October 1922 and effectively isolated internees and the movement outside. Within Free State prisons and camps, internees quickly became disillusioned with the Catholic Church, which they believed was blatantly using its spiritual power in the secular domain. In the early months of civil war,

⁴⁷ D.É.D., Vol. 1, Col. 207-8, 13 Sept. 1922.

Aodh de Blacam, who was later interned by the Free State, wrote of the changing sympathies towards the clergy among Anti-Treaty supporters:

Is feeling in Dublin turning at all? The Green and Tans are terrible up here. A lonely girl was nearly assassinated by them last Monday, shots being fired through her window...We have only 4 Pro-Republican priests in all the diocese, and of course they are silenced, while our lads are denied the sacraments...I feel very strongly over this, because every day I see more clearly that our movement broke over bishops, as the cause did many times before in history. And there never was a finer spiritual movement in Ireland than when Kevin Barry and MacSwiney were winning for us. The defeat is due to the bishops siding with perjury and badness against truth and charity, and as the fight was a spiritual one, their causing a schism in the spirit of the nation broke us. We will never be free until the people revolt against the bishops as well as England, or the Church gets pure and sides with the fight. If the Church had blessed the movement we could have smashed all the empires might... JUST as we beat it in the conscription year without 'bloodshed'.⁴⁸

Only a couple of months later, de Blacam again noted this disillusionment with the Catholic Church for their outright condemnation of the Anti-Treaty side. Writing from Newbridge Camp, de Blacam complained

I wish you could see this camp for the answer- moral anarchy. The better men here go to confession, are refused absolution. The weaker types don't risk the rebuff. The bad types scoff. We are deserted by the religious no holy water, no scapulars, not a holy picture; only a weekly visit by the priest...men who left home good Catholics now have to be dragged out by the commandants for Sunday mass.⁴⁹

These sentiments were echoed in the prisons and camps around the country. Internee Joseph Campbell, upon hearing of prisoner executions, noted that the Catholic Church must share some of the blame for the treatment of Anti-Treatyites.⁵⁰ Relatives of internees wrote to the Archbishop of Dublin, requesting that prisoners be allowed to receive the sacrament. Conn Murphy pleaded on behalf of his son, interned in Newbridge and stated that

Lest your grace may be unaware of it, what the deprivation of the sacraments means to faithful Irish Catholics, even though they are Republicans. I may be allowed,

⁴⁸ Aodh de Blacam, Falcarragh, to Father Caineach, Dublin, 27 July 1922 (U.C.D.A., Hugh Kennedy Papers, P4/292 (11)).

⁴⁹ Aodh de Blacam, Newbridge, to Professor O'Rahilly, 14 Oct. 1922 (D.D.A., File 1 'General Politics 1922', Box 466.).

⁵⁰ Ní Chilleanáin, *As I was Among Captives*, p.41.

perhaps to illustrate by quoting one sentence from the last letter which I received from my son Fergus...“Much I miss the consolations of confession and Holy communion not that I am a very religious person, but these consolations keep to make life at any time a lot easier, but particularly here”.⁵¹

However, there were some lay clergymen who were, on occasion, sympathetic to the Anti-Treaty side. Escaped Newbridge internee, Seamus O'Connor, recalled that on one occasion four of his companions found 'refuge in Haybarn of Orlagh College with the aid of a friendly priest (his name was Doyle also) who resided there'.⁵² The Church's decision to deny internees the sacraments was challenged by members of the public and the Bishops' Pastoral of October 1922 was criticised by some elements of the laity. One woman wrote: 'Will you permit me to appeal to you in the name of god our common father that you will remove the cruel restrictions placed on the republicans of Ireland and allow them the rites of their church, even if you give your acquiescence to their murder by the free state.'⁵³ She further highlighted the fact that Terence MacSwiney, while in Brixton, had received a priest during his hunger strike and compared this with the treatment of Erskine Childers, who was refused a priest the evening before his execution.⁵⁴ Another letter from Catherine Moran, stated that the Catholic Church had no right to interfere in political matters and suggested that if the church had known our '...motives, our ideals, our sacrifices in the cause of justice and truth, you would never consent to...the pastoral, which I assure you has shocked and hurt many of your people...'.⁵⁵ She concluded that 'We the Irish people respect our bishops and our priests and are quite prepared to accept their teaching as regards Religion, but certainly not in politics. We do not believe ye are infallible, ye are human and liable to ere- very often in your political ideas...'.⁵⁶ While the Bishops' Pastoral was a hierarchical denunciation of Anti-

⁵¹ Conn Murphy to Lord Archbishop, 3 Feb. 1923 (D.D.A., File 3 'General Politics 1923', Box 466.).

⁵² Seamus O'Connor, *Tomorrow Was Another Day*, p. 73.

⁵³ Elizabeth Agnes Moran to Lord Archbishop, 26 Nov. 1922 (D.D.A., File 1 'General Politics 1922', Box 466.).

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Catherine Moran to Lord Archbishop, 11 Oct. 1922 (D.D.A., File 1 'General Politics 1922', Box 466.).

⁵⁶ Ibid.

Treaty activities, there had been a growing sense of disillusionment amongst prisoners earlier in the war, many of whom felt abandoned by the Catholic Church. These sentiments can be observed in a letter of Count Plunkett to Archbishop Byrne early. His correspondence revealed, that the sacraments had been denied to known Anti-Treatyites months before the Bishops' Pastoral letter had been issued. Writing from Mountjoy Prison in July 1922, Plunkett claimed that:

We were all refused absolution today here by chaplain; it was the first time he came since we are here, that is 3 weeks. He asked us to give an understanding that we wouldn't fight against the Provisional Government! He said he had been ordered to do so by the Archbishop. Of course out of 600 to 700 men here none gave this undertaking. This is very serious as the result is that a lot of the men here will drop away from religion altogether.⁵⁷

By 1923, letters of protestation became more frequent as official state executions rose and hunger strikes among prisoners became more frequent. During Mary MacSwiney's hunger strike in April 1923, she wrote to Archbishop Byrne in protest against the chaplains' decision to refuse prisoners Holy Communion. She stated that she was arrested

A week ago for attempting to attend the funeral of the chief of staff of the Irish Republican army...unless and until I am brought to the point of death...I shall answer no political questions from any priest...your grace is assuming a heavy responsibility in depriving all the prisoners here of the sacraments. I am shocked to see the carelessness...amongst them... chaplain has not even thought it worth his while to enquire if I needed anything. I need one thing only- the sacraments of the Church.⁵⁸

The Catholic Hierarchy's support for the government and their unwillingness to accommodate Anti-Treaty internees who wanted to receive the sacraments eventually fostered suspicions among the prisoners. At one stage in Kilmainham, internees began to suspect that the chaplain was spying on the prisoners and Eithne MacSwiney related to the Archbishop that one chaplain 'asked some of the girls their names, addresses and where they were arrested and what they were carrying. After such an Oriel House investigation, it is

⁵⁷ Count Plunkett to Lord Archbishop Dublin, 26 July 1922 (D.D.A., File 1 'General Politics 1922', Box 466.).

⁵⁸ Mary MacSwiney to Lord Archbishop, 19 Apr. 1923 (D.D.A., 'Government 1922-39', Box 467.).

hardly to be wondered at if the girls were suspicious of such a chaplain'.⁵⁹ She noted that some thought him a 'spy'.⁶⁰ The Church remained resolute in their support for the Free State throughout the civil war and in a devotedly Catholic country, the hierarchy held great influence over public opinion. The support of the clergy in conjunction with press censorship certainly went part of the way in stemming the flow of sympathy for prisoners and the Anti-Treaty agenda.

In addition to limiting support for internees' in the public domain, the new government sought to control the expanding internee population through other methods. At various times throughout the civil war, the administration used 'prisoners' privileges' as a means of keeping them in check and countering the actions of the riotous and unruly elements. One of the most important of these prisoners' rights was the granting of parcels and letters to internees. This allowed the prisoners to maintain a small level of contact with relatives and the parcels provided them with some home comforts while interned.⁶¹ However this privilege was quickly snatched away when internees stepped out of line. On arriving at Mountjoy Jail in 1922, Fanny Ceannt was informed that parcels were not being accepted.⁶² Lily Brennan, in response to Fanny, outlined one possible reason for this refusal. She stated '...it is announced that the girls are in solitary confinement and that may account for the non-arrival of a letter from you...'.⁶³ Again in March, the prison guards adopted similar tactics as a way of controlling unruly internees. Lily wrote: 'All our rights were stopped on St. Patrick's day...no letter, parcels, newspapers etc...after making a ...protest to revoke the order, there was nothing left but to strike'.⁶⁴ The Anti-Treaty media often utilised these

⁵⁹ Eithne MacSwiney to Lord Archbishop, 21 Feb. 1923 (D.D.A, File 3 'General Politics 1923', Box 466.).

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Many prison parcels contained food stuffs, books and cigarettes. See Fanny Ceannt to Lily O'Brennan, 7 Dec. 1922 (U.C.D.A., Lily O Brennan Papers, P13/14.); Newbridge Parcel Book, J. Heffernan Entry, 11 Nov. 1922 (M.A., CW/P/10/11.).

⁶² Fanny to Lily, 12 Feb. 1923 (U.C.D.A., Lily O'Brennan Papers P13/31.).

⁶³ Lily to Fanny, 23 Feb. 1923 (U.C.D.A., Lily O'Brennan Papers P13/33.).

⁶⁴ Lily to Fanny, 30 Mar. 1923 (U.C.D.A., Lily O'Brennan Papers P13/45.).

restrictive measures and denial of privileges as a means of enhancing propaganda. On one occasion it was reported that the prison guards in Buncrana had withdrawn prisoner privileges after an unfavourable remark was passed. A female prisoner in the Jail wrote to her parents:

I have no longer permission to get letters or parcels or newspapers. The right was denied to me because I accused the Staters of the murder of poor Charlie Daly and his comrades... We are slammed into this place and giving [*sic*] wet clothing, and still wetter planks to lie on.⁶⁵

One cannot be sure if exaggeration played a part in this report but there were certainly instances in which the withdrawal of privileges was enforced for rather minor dissent. This can be seen in Mountjoy Prison in 1922, when the Governor threatened to suspend internee parcels after prison property was stolen. He reported that stoppers had been robbed from 'reception baths' and that he had informed leaders of B and C wing to replace the stoppers at once.⁶⁶ The prisoners had refused to return them and he threatened that they 'would receive no letters or parcels until this was done'.⁶⁷ This revealed that internees were reprimanded for the most trivial incidents and this highlighted the serious nature with which some staff members viewed the maintenance of law and order within the system. As violence increased in early 1923, the government sought to use the prison population as a means of countering (or retaliating) against Anti-Treaty violence. Minister for Defence, Richard Mulcahy, informed President Cosgrave that due to the 'continuance of outrages in Dublin...privileges enjoyed by irregular prisoners in City prisons should be drastically curtailed...letters to prisoners to one per week and to prohibit the admission of parcels altogether'.⁶⁸ Set against the backdrop of thirty four government sanctioned executions, January was also an active month in military terms. On 6 January, the *Freeman's Journal* reported the success of the

⁶⁵ *Eire*, 9 June, 1923 (N.L.I.).

⁶⁶ Military Governor Mountjoy to President of Dáil, 6 Oct. 1922 (N.A.I., s.1369/1.).

⁶⁷ *Ibid*.

⁶⁸ Minister for Defence to President Cosgrave, 14 Jan. 1923 (N.A.I., s.1639/3.).

National forces after an attack in 'Millstreet' Cork when 'Irregulars made simultaneous attacks upon all the Free State posts in the Town'.⁶⁹ The irregular force was '150 strong' and the losses were reported as 'seven killed and 19 wounded'.⁷⁰ Also in January, historian John Bagwell was kidnapped and his home in Clonmel burned for the sole reason that he was 'a member of the Free State Senate'.⁷¹ This attack resulted in the destruction of his 'library...antique furniture...and works of art'. A railway station in Sligo was attacked when '...a group, or groups of armed men, seized the station and proceeded to destroy it...'.⁷²

While governors and officers continued to withdraw privileges as a way of maintaining order, solitary confinement was also used by the military authorities. Austin Stack complained about the lack of communication with other prisoners in a letter which read: 'This fellow insists on our cell doors being kept locked save for a short interval or two in the day. We are not to get newspapers'.⁷³ The psychological effect of solitary confinement was one way to weaken prisoner morale. James O'Donovan, the IRA Director of Chemicals, was arrested in 1923 and sent into solitary confinement during his imprisonment. In a letter to his mother, he described the conditions under which he lived. He admitted that he was unsure whether the prison guards wanted to 'break us in health or spirit...'.⁷⁴ The number of restrictions which he listed revealed that solitary confinement could break an internee both psychologically and physically. He recorded that 'I am writing on my thirteenth day of solitary confinement...even the guards cannot talk to us...' and he further maintained that he had 'not had one seconds [*sic*] exercise in the 13 days...'.⁷⁵ He noted that his cell was small and he had 'not even been conceded the opportunity to see the governor and learn the cause

⁶⁹ *Freeman's Journal*, 6 Jan. 1923 (N.L.I.).

⁷⁰ *Freeman's Journal*, 8 Jan. 1923 (N.L.I.).

⁷¹ Michael Hopkinson, *Green against Green: The Irish Civil War* (Dublin, 1988), p. 223; *Irish Times*, 13 Jan. 1923 (N.L.I.).

⁷² *Irish Times*, 12 Jan. 1923 (N.L.I.).

⁷³ Austin Stack to Winnie, Mountjoy Jail, 22 Oct. 1923 (N.L.I., MS 22 398.).

⁷⁴ James O'Donovan to his mother, 4 Oct. 1923 (N.L.I., James L. O'Donovan Papers, MS. 22, 306.).

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

of this unique and unnatural treatment...'.⁷⁶ The availability of exercise was another grievance raised by internees and one female prisoner wrote: 'I only get exercise for four hours a day...I am locked up unless at exercise time'.⁷⁷ In addition, the prison authorities often set about breaking up certain groups of prisoners by transferring them from one prison to the next. Prison memoirs and correspondence revealed that certain internees rarely stayed in one internment centre. Margaret Buckley, Peadar O'Donnell, Joseph Campbell and Ernie O'Malley refer to their internment in a number of different prisons during the civil war.⁷⁸ Generally, prisoners were transferred if deemed unruly by the authorities or if their transfer would lower their comrades' morale. On one occasion, Marion O'Malley (Ernie's mother), wrote to Desmond FitzGerald after her son's transfer stating that 'I have heard since his change to 'A' wing was on the account of Some Captured Document here- he knew as much about that simple letter as I did'.⁷⁹ Internees were often transferred in the early days of the hunger strike, particularly the well-known agitators. In October 1922, Michael Kilroy, O/C prisoners in Kilmainham, stated that 'I acted as Officer in Charge of Mountjoy Jail when the hunger strike began and until our removal here on Saturday last, Austin Stack lived in the cell next to me'.⁸⁰ Kilroy continued his letter by denying that Stack had ever refused to go on hunger strike and accused the Free State of peddling lies akin to 'British propaganda'.⁸¹ During the preceding years, the British had transferred unruly prisoners to alleviate unrest and the Free State similarly adopted this measure, albeit with fewer internment facilities.⁸² However, there were occasions when the prison staff complied with the wishes of internees.

⁷⁶ O'Donovan to unknown, 28 Sept. 1923 (N.L.I., James L. O'Donovan Papers, MS. 22, 306.).

⁷⁷ Moll to 'unknown', no date (M.A., MacDonald Papers, A/1033.).

⁷⁸ Margaret Buckley, *The Jangle of the Keys* (Dublin, 1938); Peadar O'Donnell, *The Gates Flew Open* (Cork, 1965); Eileán Ní Chuilleanáin (ed), *Joseph Campbell Prison Diaries 1922-23*, (Cork, 2001); Ernie O'Malley, *The Singing Flame* (Anvil, 1978).

⁷⁹ Marion K. O'Malley to Desmond FitzGerald, 22 May 1923 (U.C.D.A., Desmond FitzGerald Papers, P80/313(6).).

⁸⁰ Michael Kilroy, Prisoners O/C Kilmainham, to Tim Harrington, Editor of the *Irish Independent*, 22 Oct. 1923 (U.C.D.A., Ernie O'Malley Papers, P17a/43.).

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² McConville, *Irish Political Prisoners 1848-1922*, p. 706; The British generally transferred unruly internees outside Ireland to British jails.

In a letter to the mother of a recently deceased orderly, Ernie O'Malley related that 'I first met him in hospital...On removal to 'A' wing he insisted on accompanying me, and the Deputy [Governor] allowed it. He was later removed with me to 'C' wing. He had been very attentive to me...' ⁸³

Legislation and censorship were therefore essential in shaping the new government's control over the internee population. Emergency legislation introduced in September 1922 saw a sharp rise in prison figures and an element of brutality crept into the system.⁸⁴ However, the Free State's censorship of the media and counter-propaganda tactics affected how accounts of prisoner ill-treatment were reported. As Peter Martin noted, the national press were unable to print material considered sensitive during the civil war:

The new government was to be called the 'Irish government' not the 'Provisional Government' while the Republicans were never to be called the 'Executive forces'. The ranks of Republican officers were not to be printed. Neither were stories about the treatment of Republican prisoners to be printed... Despite at least one private complaint against a paper on moral grounds, there is no evidence that censorship in this period was motivated by anything other than military or propaganda considerations.⁸⁵

In this strict media environment, reports of irresponsible guards were not likely to be printed. That is not to say, however, that instances of abuse did not reach the Irish public. Anti-Treaty newspapers and pamphlets were teeming with stories of ill-treatment as they attempted to generate sympathy and support for internees among the general populace. In response, the Provisional Government implemented counter-propaganda efforts under Desmond FitzGerald in the Department of Publicity. This department was specifically formed to target these damning accounts as the new government needed to keep their citizenry on side. In order to understand the necessity for this department, it is worth noting the nature of accounts

⁸³ Anne Dolan & Cormac O'Malley (eds), *No Surrender here: The Civil War Papers of Ernie O'Malley 1922-24* (Dublin, 2007), p. 381.

⁸⁴ Townsend, *The Republic*, p. 441. Emergency Powers were passed in September 1922.

⁸⁵ Peter Martin, *Censorship in the Two Irelands, 1922-1939* (Dublin, 2006), p. 17.

emanating from Anti-Treaty sources. In late 1922, a number of internees sent personal statements to President Cosgrave which highlighted the ill-treatment of internees in Wellington Barracks. In September of that year, Thomas McCartan recorded in his statement that while in Wellington Barracks, a C.I.D. man named Creighton who was 'under influence of drink,' took him from his cell and punched him around the stomach with a loaded rifle.⁸⁶ According to his account, the attack was completely unprovoked. *Poblacht na h-Eireann* reported similar incidents in the barracks. In one letter, a prisoner in Wellington Barracks wrote to his mother:

They threaten to blow out our brains if we did not tell them where our guns and ammunition were. The Civic guard twisted the arms and legs of one of our boys then beat him, knocking out his teeth and giving him two black eyes.⁸⁷

Censorship of the national media was not entirely unrecognised by the Irish public. Eventually an investigation was conducted by the Dublin Corporation to inquire into the 'treatment of prisoners'.⁸⁸ The extensive level of complaints regarding Wellington Barracks (and in other prisons around the country) was the subject of an inquiry which began in late 1922 and concluded in January 1923. However, the report 'could not' be 'printed for general information' until given authority to do so.⁸⁹ The Corporation then voted against its publication as 'the necessary two thirds of the council had not voted in favour of it'.⁹⁰ By conducting the inquiry, Dublin Corporation at least appeared to be doing something about the complaints regarding prison conditions. However the refusal to print the final report was indicative of the climate of censorship which prevailed in 1922-3. What the inquiry did reveal was that Anti-Treaty prison propaganda was making some inroads into the public psyche while censorship of the national press only served to increase suspicion. Additionally, the

⁸⁶ Statement Thomas McCartan, Sept. 1922 (N.A.I., s.1369/3.).

⁸⁷ *Poblacht na h-Éireann*, 7 Aug. 1922 (N.L.I.).

⁸⁸ Final sitting in Mansion House on 1 Dec. 1922; *Irish Independent*, 2 Dec. 1922 (N.L.I.).

⁸⁹ *Irish Times*, 9 Jan. 1923 (N.L.I.).

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

high internment levels further increased tension among internees and their warders and in this environment, mistakes were often made, as William Murphy highlighted during the British administration years.⁹¹ In 1920, Max Green, then Chairman of the General Prisons Board, stated that it 'is the easiest thing possible at the present time to cause an *emeute* in our prisons as the atmosphere is electric'.⁹² Throughout the Irish Civil War, this tense environment was accentuated by higher internment figures and emergency legislation. By late 1923, the system was under severe strain with a cohort of riotous internees and very few releases in sight. In September, a report from Mountjoy recorded that 'police and military' reinforcements had rushed into B wing and opened fire to 'drive men out of cells'.⁹³ The officers also hosed the prisoners in their cells before they were driven outside.⁹⁴ Peadar O'Donnell, a prisoner in Mountjoy at the time, recalled the episode stating:

I am not quite sure what brought matters to a head between ourselves and the Governor...My recollection is that Dermot [*governor*] lost patience one day with our slow movements while he was demanding that we go outside for a count and tried to rush us out...Dermot and his police came in fiercely. Seán Buckley ...was struck early and that drew the prisoners up angrily against the police...The next morning the hose pipes were turned on the prisoners on the bottom landing and a big body of police set to work to drag the men out as the hosing exhausted them.⁹⁵

That same day, one internee, Mac Aodhagháin, wrote in a fellow prisoner's autograph book 'the page on which I write is wet, but we're by no means beaten...'.⁹⁶ The Anti-Treaty organ, *Éire*, reported the incident, albeit nearly a month after it occurred:

... the new Governor and Deputy Governor of the prison, Messrs McManus and Fitzpatrick, refused to recognise the prisoners [*sic*] officers and ordered the men out of the wings; the men refused to leave. They were subsequently savagely beaten and

⁹¹ Murphy, *Imprisonment and the Irish, 1912-1921*, p. 210; Murphy noted how Governor Morton in Londonderry Jail was suspended after an 'ill-considered response to a minor offence' in October 1920.

⁹² *Ibid.*

⁹³ Mountjoy Report, Sept. 1923 (N.A.I., s. 1369/3.).

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

⁹⁵ O'Donnell, *The Gates Flew Open*, pp 143-7.

⁹⁶ Padraic White's Autograph book, 15 Sept. 1923 (Fergus White Private Collection).

hosed out individually, many of the men being roughly man-handled, including Messrs Dan Breen, Austin Stack and Sean Buckley...⁹⁷

This episode reflected the high level of opposition among internees in the post-civil war environment. The administration had no clear release policy in place and military internees became restless in the interim. Conflict within the prisons generated much needed propaganda since in the aftermath of the May 1923 ceasefire, internees could easily be forgotten.

In July 1923, J.G. Douglas reported to the Attorney General that now the government 'had defeated the I.R.A.', it must 'press forward with building a structure of order which was winning the respect of the people'.⁹⁸ Although hostilities had subsided outside, conditions within the prison system further deteriorated. Some members of the military observed this trend in late 1923. A report sent to the Director of Intelligence stated the following:

A man named Reilly from the Metropole Hotel, Waterford, rang 24 Eccles Street and spoke to Miss O'Donnell and said "I sent a wire to Mrs Brugha to 23 Suffolk Street stating there are no arrangements made to meet the prisoners from Tintown and got no reply, and that six prisoners arrived here from the Curragh in a deplorable condition." Told ... "arrangements are being made to have somebody at the gates of all the prisons and she thinks there is a Doctor and Nurse will probably arrive down there tomorrow" and also said "some prisoners had arrived here in Dublin in a deplorable condition, they were given nothing but a voucher, and they had to walk a couple of miles to the station, the poor fellows" Also said "Did you ever hear of such treatment, we never expected such barbarous conduct, they are treating them worse than dogs, however we must only do our best".⁹⁹

Throughout 1922-3, the tense environment of civil war produced an attitude of indifference among certain prison guards towards the internee population. Instances of indiscipline and unprofessionalism were often reported among members of the Free State prison guards and army. In a letter to Cosgrave, Maude Gonne, writing on behalf of the Women Prisoners'

⁹⁷ *Eire*, 6 Oct. 1923 (N.L.I.). This newspaper dated the hosing incident as 13 September. It actually occurred on 15 Sept. 1922; see Padraic White's Autograph book, 15 Sept. 1923 (Fergus White Private Collection).

⁹⁸ Garvin, 1922: *Birth of Irish Democracy*, p. 111.

⁹⁹ Crown Alley Report by Capt Costello, 10.20 pm, 25 Oct. 1923 (M.A., CW/P/02/02/34.).

Defence League, stated that Free State jails and camps were dangerous with overcrowding and ‘unsanitary’ conditions prevalent. Furthermore she declared that prisoners were ‘under charge of drunken and irresponsible guards’.¹⁰⁰ Drunkenness and firing on prisoners were among the most common accusations levelled at the prison administration. While Anti-Treaty propaganda revelled in highlighting instability within the system, their concern was not entirely misplaced. Tom Garvin noted: ‘The ready availability of drink, often produced at gunpoint, contributed mightily to the discipline problems of both the IRA and the Free State army during the civil war. The guards themselves were certainly not immune to the corrosive effects of drink. Eamon Coogan...transferred to the guards in 1922 and gave a vivid account of a station in Corofin, Co. Clare, in early 1923. The police had seized poitín and were drunk on it. Three women were kidnapped by the guards “for purposes better left imagined than described”’.¹⁰¹ In Mountjoy, the *Fenian* reported a similar drunken incident. It read:

Mountjoy prisoner has[sic] got out the following letter from which we take the following extracts: ‘We had right sport here one night last week. The prison was attacked ...they fired thousands of rounds. Once they fired up and down the passages and now they do it every night. Of course it is a good thing in the daytime...One of the real convicts was badly wounded in his cell again last week. The Free Staters here are never sober. Last night we had the Deputy Governor in our passage hopelessly drunk, firing his revolver all over the place and two sentries with him.’¹⁰²

The Deputy Governor, referred to in the article, was Paudeen O’Keeffe of Mountjoy Jail, who developed something of a reputation among the jail’s internee population. He was remembered by Peadar O’Donnell as ‘a restless little man with a fine pair of eyes and a waspish tongue’.¹⁰³ Ernie O’Malley recalled that O’Keeffe would often drink while on duty and on one occasion he wrote that ‘O’Keeffe accompanied our OC of the wing, checked the

¹⁰⁰ Maude Gonne, Women Prisoners’ Defence League to President Cosgrave [Sept. 1922] (N.A.I., s.1369.).

¹⁰¹ Garvin, 1922: *Birth of Irish Democracy* 1922, p. 113.

¹⁰² *The Fenian*, 19 Aug. 1922 (N.L.I.).

¹⁰³ O Donnell, *The Gates Flew Open*, p. 31.

number of men. Often his count was inaccurate. A heavy smell of liquor and a slight roll would betray the cause'.¹⁰⁴ The level of allegations against O'Keefe's conduct would suggest that there was some element of truth in these reports. O'Malley noted that 'He had a vocabulary of obscene words which he used on every possible occasion, but he was not brutal. He threatened, but never to my knowledge did he beat up prisoners himself'.¹⁰⁵ Several other reports also singled out O'Keefe. In a statement of Maude Gonne and Charlotte Despard in October 1922, it was recorded that Despard demanded to see Paudeen O'Keefe in Mountjoy. After gaining access to the jail she recorded that 'Everything was very confused O'Keefe was so drunk'.¹⁰⁶ Gonne and Despard were not the only women to comment on O'Keefe's unprofessional behaviour. He was also criticised by some of the deportee internees, who had been transferred from the United Kingdom to Dublin, in March 1923.¹⁰⁷ These prisoners were transported by the Royal Navy to the Free State and later sent to Mountjoy.¹⁰⁸ There, they were held until May 1923, when ninety were eventually released and returned to Britain.¹⁰⁹ During their internment, various allegations of ill-treatment arose, in particular, accusations of torture in the basement cells of Mountjoy.¹¹⁰ Councillor Purcell accused the authorities of tying up prisoners 'seven feet from the ground' and leaving them 'for five hours hanging by their hands'.¹¹¹ The Irish administration refuted these claims.¹¹² Another internee, Kathleen Brookes, alleged that '...Deputy Governor Mr O'Keefe visited the women's cell at midnight. He was under the influence of drink, and had with him eight or nine soldiers. Torches were flashed and revolvers brandished in the women's faces and

¹⁰⁴ O'Malley, *The Singing Flame*, p. 208.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 207.

¹⁰⁶ Statement of Madame Gonne MacBride and Mrs Despard; Re Mountjoy shooting 10 Oct. 1922 (U.C.D.A., Ernie O'Malley P17a/41.).

¹⁰⁷ *Irish Times*, 18 May 1923 (N.L.I.).

¹⁰⁸ The Royal Navy guarded the prisoners while on board and food and medical comforts were provided; result of discussion with Capt. Parker of the Admiralty, 4 Mar. 1923 (T.N.A., HO/144/3746.)

¹⁰⁹ *Manchester Guardian*, 18 May 1923 (B.L.).

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹¹ *Manchester Guardian*, 19 May 1923 (B.L.).

¹¹² *Ibid.*

generally there was a terrible scene'.¹¹³ In considering the numerous reports concerning drunken officers, it is likely that some were factually accurate. The administration was certainly aware of some cases and responded by transferring such men to other departments. In September 1923, the Camp Commandant at G.H.Q., recommended that Pte. O'Callaghan be transferred after his 'seven days detention for...being drunk'.¹¹⁴ Anti-Treaty sources indicated that episodes of drunkenness among prison guards often resulted in violent clashes with internees.¹¹⁵

To some extent, reports of ill-discipline and drunkenness suggest that the administration had lost control over some sections of the prison system during the civil war. It reflected an atmosphere in which 'disorder' thrived among both internees and staff alike. Republican literature exposed some of these tensions. In January 1923, an article in *Éire* reported that one of the worst guards was 'Sergeant McGrath.' On one occasion he told the prisoners to kneel down, pointed 'rifles' at them and then proceeded to taunt them using 'filthy language'. The paper then declared that 'not a week goes but incidents like the foregoing occur: in fact they are part of the regular treatment here'.¹¹⁶ Frequent reports concerning the failings of the Free State administration did not go unnoticed. In Northern Ireland, the press reported that 'the Free State is at once threatened with complete collapse. The whole jerry-built structure...would come down by the run'.¹¹⁷ Anti-Treaty reportage of such stories, while holding some element of truth, was seen as wholly propagandist by the ministers of the new government, many of whom were no strangers to the art of persuasion, having indulged in

¹¹³ *Westminster Gazette*, 16 Oct. 1923 (B.L.).

¹¹⁴ Camp Commandant to Lieut. Murphy, Prisoners Dept. G.H.Q., 9 Sept. 1923 (M.A., CW/P/02/01/06.).

¹¹⁵ Drunken C.I.D. men clash with prisoners in Kilkenny Jail; *Eire*, 10 Nov. 1923 (N.L.I.).

¹¹⁶ *Éire*, 27 Jan. 1923 (N.L.I.).

¹¹⁷ As quoted in Tom Garvin, *1922: Birth of Irish Democracy 1922*, p. 118.

similar tactics themselves.¹¹⁸ O'Higgins discussed the nature of the Anti-Treatyite campaign which targeted prison guards and officers in Dáil Éireann. He stated that:

Now as to the question of physical ill-treatment—you see, we are children in some matters, but not in matters of this kind—in a matter of just what takes place in a gaol. Some of us were there ourselves and some of us were through what we call prison-rows ourselves, and we know, we always considered it good business to force our guards to take action against us which we could use as propaganda against the Government that the guards were responsible to. That is going on now. The men in the jails consider it a point of honour and principle and other high-sounding things to regularly force their guards to take measures against them, which their lady-friends outside can write up on the walls...It is the duty of the guards to take strong measures to enforce discipline, to enforce prison regulations, and above all, to prevent escape.¹¹⁹

As Minister for Home Affairs, O'Higgins highlighted these propaganda tactics but also acknowledged that 'real' cases of prisoner ill-treatment would not be tolerated. The Free State's Department of Publicity, under the auspices of Desmond FitzGerald, thus began to publish certain excerpts from internees' correspondence.¹²⁰ Some letters revealed that the relationship between the prisoners and their guards was often quite amicable. S. Grogan wrote: '...The Free Staters are very good to us, and we are on very good terms with them'.¹²¹ Prisoner Patrick Hurley wrote: '...I must say we are getting very good treatment here...'.¹²² Another prisoner informed his sister that '...The officers here are gentlemen. Anything the prisoners want they get...'.¹²³ Other prisoners were even more positive in their assessment of their jailors. C. Kearney wrote:

The guards who are over us are Tip-Top; They are under very good officers which makes it all the better for us. One of the senior officers is a Cork man and the other a

¹¹⁸ Murphy, *Imprisonment and the Irish, 1912-1921*, pp 156-73. Murphy's discussion on prisoner protests 1912-21, exposed how effective prison conflict could be in raising sympathy. His account of hunger strikes, in particular, revealed how the Republican movement used this to their advantage and he noted that 'The strikes affected the prisons and prisoners, public opinion and the way Ireland was governed.'; *Ibid*, p. 157.

¹¹⁹ D.É.D., Vol. 1 Col. 1198, 4 Oct. 1923.

¹²⁰ Martin, *Censorship and the Two Irelands 1922-1939*, p. 16.

¹²¹ S. Grogan to Mrs M.E. Grogan, no date (N.A.I., s.1369/3.).

¹²² Patrick Hurley to Mrs A. Hurley, no date (N.A.I., s.1369/3.).

¹²³ Michael Hayden to his sister, no date (N.A.I., s.1369/3.).

Kerry man. I think the only difference between the guards and ourselves is that they get out to town and we don't...¹²⁴

This form of counter-propaganda was a direct attempt to deflate the accusations made against the new administration, in particular its treatment of prisoners. However, despite such measures, the Free State slowly drifted towards a more draconian policy in late 1922 and 1923.

To what extent were these accusations against prison guards and staff true? After all, it was in the best interest of both the internees and the Anti-Treaty side to exaggerate any minor report of ill-treatment. However, official government records for this period corroborate some of these accusations. A report from Mountjoy in 1922, recorded that prisoners were fired upon by prison guards for their refusal to cease signalling from cell windows to the public outside. The guard gave them three chances to get down from the window and then fired three shots into the air. After receiving no response the guard fired a volley of shots and the prisoners retired from the window. The report noted that the 'only casualties among prisoners are two slight flesh wounds...'.¹²⁵ Rough or abusive treatment was certainly prevalent in certain prisons or camps. In September 1922, Present Cosgrave was informed by the Commandant of Cork prison that violence was used against the internee population. On Wednesday evening, 6 September at 4.30pm one of four prisoners, Seán McGuirken, of Cork was taken out of Wing 4 'by ten or twelve staff officers ...and conveyed to prison O.C.'s for examination'.¹²⁶ The prisoner was asked "are you an Irregular", to which he responded, "No". He was then asked, "What are you then", he replied "an IRA man...". At this reply 'the officer struck the prisoner with the butt end of his revolver, on the lip splitting the same...'.¹²⁷ The violent beating of internees, to obtain information regarding the Anti-Treaty I.R.A.,

¹²⁴ C. Kearney to Miss May Kearney, no date (N.A.I., s.1369/3.).

¹²⁵ Report Mountjoy 1922 [no month given] (N.A.I., s.1369/1.).

¹²⁶ Letter on behalf of Commandant, Cork Male Prison to President Cosgrave, 13 Sept. 1922 (N.A.I., s. 1369/3.).

¹²⁷ Ibid.

certainly occurred in some prisons more than others but there was one particular group of the new state's police force that used this method readily.

In response to the external threat posed by the Anti-Treaty I.R.A., the government formed an intelligence unit, the Criminal Investigations Department. Fitzpatrick noted that 'the civic guard was backed up by a medley of less savoury paramilitary forces, armed, undisciplined, and often outrageous in their methods of interrogation. These detective and intelligence units included the C.I.D. based at Oriel House, the Protective Officers Corps and the Citizens Defence Force'.¹²⁸ During the civil war, the officers of the C.I.D. utilised brutal methods of interrogation in order to coerce internees into admitting guilt. A number of complaints were made regarding the unit, which revealed they abused the power they commanded and displayed a manner of being above the law. Internees provided testimonies to the government which highlighted the lack of authority commanded by the military governors once they were in the hands of the C.I.D. unit. In the case of Thomas McCartan, (previously mentioned), he was returned to his cell by the military governor and then removed again by a C.I.D. man and beaten. He also stated how 'a Commandant and civilian hearing me shout... came into the office and sent me back to cell. Shortly after the Commandant came over to my cell and told me I was the luckiest man in the world that I was not shot the night before, as he did not know how I escaped death. He told me I was safe for the night...'.¹²⁹ The following night, McCartan was put in a different cell and kept away from the 'murder gang' although he claimed 'they came over to my first cell after I was hidden away by the sergeant of the guard, who told me not to think bad of him for shifting me, for if the CID men got me they would plug me alright'.¹³⁰ This revealed that even some of the 'higher' ranking prison staff were unable to control the violent actions of the C.I.D. within

¹²⁸ Fitzpatrick, *The Two Irelands 1912-1939*, p. 127.

¹²⁹ McCartan Statement, Sept. 1922 (N.A.I., s.1369/3.).

¹³⁰ Ibid.

their own prisons. In addition, reports of drunken officers interrogating prisoners revealed the lack of discipline among C.I.D. men and the prison staff. Although, McCartan's accusation that Creighton was 'drunk' on the job cannot be completely verified, this particular type of conduct was mentioned in other reports relating to Republicans in jail at the time.¹³¹ The C.I.D. was transferred to the authority of the Minister for Home Affairs, Kevin O'Higgins, who stated that '... the C.I.D... within the past three or four months...has passed to the supervision of the Ministry of Home Affairs'.¹³² From these statements and reports, it is evident that the actions of C.I.D. towards internees were often violent, extreme and uncontrollable. The severity of some cases revealed that the C.I.D. were not concerned about the consequences and gave little thought to fatally injuring military internees. O'Halpin maintained that 'many suspects talked freely rather than experience its methods. Amongst those Republicans lucky to survive C.I.D. attentions was Tom Derrig...who had one eye shot out in custody...'.¹³³ Furthermore, O'Halpin believed that 'there is little doubt that the Oriel House men sometimes killed prisoners in Dublin during the Civil War. In some cases there was considerable eyewitnesses and other evidence...'.¹³⁴ The statements sent to Cosgrave and the sworn evidence given to the Dublin Corporation committee, revealed that the President and the Minister for Home Affairs were enlightened as to the extent of the violence 'allegedly' perpetrated by government defence forces. There was little action taken, (with the

¹³¹ The W.P.D.L. reported that prisoners were living in 'unsanitary conditions of dirt, overcrowding and under the charge of drunken and irresponsible officers'; report of the Women Prisoners' Defence League, Maude Gonne to Cosgrave, [no date] (N.A.I., s.1369/3.).

¹³² The 'taking over of Criminal Investigation Department by the Minister for Home Affairs...'; J. Walsh to Secretary of Minister for Finance 28 Aug. 1922; (N.A.I., FIN 1/1267.); D.É.D., Vol. 1, Col. 2314, 28 Nov. 1922.

¹³³ Eunan O'Halpin, *Defending Ireland : The Irish State and its Enemies Since 1922* (Oxford, 1999), p.13.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*, p.13. O'Halpin lists a string of suspected C.I.D. killings, example; Patrick Mannion, Bobby Bondfield and Noel Lemass. Further reference to the brutality of the C.I.D. can be found in the correspondence of Lily O'Brennan and Sighle Humphreys. Reference to C.I.D. raid on Fanny's house; Lilly to Fanny Ceannt 30 Mar. 1923 (U.C.D.A., Lily O'Brennan Papers, P13/45.); C.I.D. raid on Humphreys' house, in which O'Malley was captured, Sighle's Diary entry October 1922 (U.C.D.A., Sighle Humphreys Papers P106/1409.).

exception of the Red Cross Report), until the unit was disbanded in October 1923.¹³⁵ It would therefore appear that their exploits were either wilfully ignored or not investigated thoroughly by the prison staff or the government during 1922-3.

One of the most widely publicised incidents involving the C.I.D. occurred in Kilmainham in 1923. On Monday 30 April 1923, a number of women were removed from Kilmainham Jail and taken to the North Dublin Union. The manner in which these women were transferred to the Union became a matter of great controversy as reports emerged that they were physically, if not brutally, removed from Kilmainham. A number of written statements provided by the internees presented a rather disturbing picture. Annie Hogan explained how 'several prisoners, notably Mrs Gordon of Dublin were dragged to the foot of the stairs by their hair and along the stone floors to the door. Others were dragged by their feet, their heads beating each iron-bound step...'.¹³⁶ Sinead McCoole observed how the 'C.I.D. men and military police had blackened faces in order to avoid recognition'.¹³⁷ McCoole referenced accounts from Dorothy Macardle, Hanna O'Connor and Annie Hogan to explain how women were dragged down the stairs by members of the C.I.D.. Mrs Gordon was unconscious by the time she was removed from the prison.¹³⁸ However, a letter sent to the Adjutant General from the Military Governor of Kilmainham Jail in April 1923, related a less detailed version of the event. His report appeared to be an attempt to justify the actions of the C.I.D., in which he indirectly hinted that 'gentleness' during the removal was not

¹³⁵ O'Halpin, *Defending Ireland*, p.13. Report of the International Committee of the Red Cross, Statement of Department of Publicity, May 1923; 'propaganda has been conducted against the Free State of Ireland on the grounds that the prisoners who had taken part in the recent disturbances were not well treated. So widespread were these statements that the International Red Cross Commission sent a delegation to Ireland to investigate...', May 1923 (N.A.I., s.1369/3.).

¹³⁶ Removal of female prisoners from Kilmainham to North Dublin Union, Statement Annie Hogan, 1 May 1923 (N.A.I., s.1369/3.).

¹³⁷ Sinead McCoole, *No Ordinary Women; Irish Female Activists in the Revolutionary Years 1900-23* (Dublin, 2003), p.122.

¹³⁸ *Ibid*, p. 123.

possible. The governor related that he had been asked to move around eighty female prisoners from Kilmainham to NDU, on 30 April. He maintained that

This was done as gentle as was compatible with efficiency. But if you consider that the prisoners had to be dragged or carried down two flights of stairs you will realise that gentleness was not possible...Mrs Gordon and Miss Mullane assaulted the police and female searchers... the removal of 79 prisoners occupied about 11.50 till 5am ... none of the prisoners were injured.¹³⁹

Although the governor stated that the female internees were not injured, it is unlikely that this was the case. Two local residents later wrote to Cosgrave regarding the incident and their statement appeared to confirm that some form of a scuffle had taken place. Madge and Kathleen Jenkins, who resided at 27 Old Kilmainham declared that 'we the undersigned heard the women prisoners in Kilmainham jail scream out of their cell this morning between 1 and 3 am ...' and 'thought that they were being strangled by members of the CID'.¹⁴⁰ This would appear to reinforce Annie's statement and the timeframe did correspond with the military governor's report.¹⁴¹ In truth, the authorities had used excessive force against female internees and while there were many who suffered only minor injuries,¹⁴² some never recovered.¹⁴³ The *Irish Times* reported the incident the following day but as a result of press censorship, it did not mention the controversial methods used during the removal.¹⁴⁴ This incident revealed that the Free State government was prepared to use physical force against female internees who refused to obey orders. Although they stopped short of executing

¹³⁹ Military Governor, Commandant T. O'Neill of N.D.U. to Adjutant General, 6 June 1923 (N.A.I., s.1369/3.).

¹⁴⁰ Madge and Kathleen Jenkins, 37 Old Kilmainham [undated] (N.A.I., s1369/3.).

¹⁴¹ Military Governor to Adjutant General, 9 June 1923 (N.A.I., s1369/3.).

¹⁴² It was reported that Miss Clery's 'finger' was bitten; *Daily Bulletin* as quoted in Government Memo, 9 May 1923 (N.A.I., s.1369/3.).

¹⁴³ Christina Brooks' pension statement in 1933 revealed that she was still receiving treatment for injuries she had sustained during her internment in 1923. 'Applicant claims for sciatica in left leg and hip and paralysis of left upper eyelid contracted as a result of ill-treatment during imprisonment in March and April 1923. Treated in Mater Hospital June 1924, and in the Eye and Ear Hospital in 1925/6. She has been under the care of Dr. Fitzpatrick, 25 Lr. Drumcondra Road, Dublin, since 1923 and is at present attending as an extern patient at the Richmond Hospital on his advice'; Christina Brooks' Pension Statement, 30 June 1933 (M.A., Military Service Pensions, MSP34REF8968.).

¹⁴⁴ 'Mrs. Callaghan... TD of Limerick released from Kilmainham with medical certificate saying she was in dangerous condition of health...Miss MacSwiney only one of the hunger strikers still in prison...'; *Irish Times*, 1 May 1923 (N.L.I.).

women during the eleven months of civil war, the government was willing to impose the same restrictions on female prisoners as their male counterparts; this included physical force, denying visits to hunger strikers or sick prisoners and the withdrawal of privileges such as parcels and letters. For some on the Pro-Treaty side, Republican women were viewed as equally dangerous as their male colleagues. P.S. O'Hegarty wrote a rather scathing condemnation of the Irishwomen who partook in revolutionary politics stating: 'The women were the implacable and irrational upholders of death and destruction...We know that with women in power there would be no more peace'.¹⁴⁵ This criticism likely stemmed from the Treaty debates, during which a majority of the female T.D.'s (many relatives of dead or living Republicans) were willing to reject the Treaty in the face of war. Mary MacSwiney criticised the Pro-Treaty members of parliament and asked Mulcahy, Minister for Defence, to 'send the women as your officers next time'.¹⁴⁶ Countess Markievicz remarked that women during the previous years of fighting had taken a 'man's part in the Terror' and Joseph McGrath, Minister for Labour, had referred to them as 'women in men's clothing'.¹⁴⁷ This attitude may reveal why the Free State were willing to arrest a higher number of women prisoners than the British authorities.¹⁴⁸ In terms of food, exercise, recreation and rioting, the administration adopted the same policy as they did for male internees.

The C.I.D. was thus allowed to operate aggressively towards internees but their behaviour began to raise questions about the type of procedures in place to safeguard prisoners from overtly violent officers. The long lists of reports regarding ill-treatment and ill-discipline highlighted the indifference, if not outright contempt, of some prison guards for

¹⁴⁵ Margaret Ward, *Unmanageable Revolutionaries: Women and Irish Nationalism* (Bandon, 1983) p. 178.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p.167.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 178.

¹⁴⁸ In the aftermath of the Rising 80 women were arrested as opposed to 3,500 men; Oonagh Walsh, *Ireland's Independence 1880-1923* (London, 2001), p. 50. 'There were 645 women interned during the civil war'; Ann Matthews, *Dissidents: Irish Republican Women 1923-1941* (Cork, 2012), p. 50.

‘irregulars’ internees.¹⁴⁹ It would appear that the Free State authorities chose to ignore the high level of complaints regarding C.I.D. activities, while officially rejecting the physical abuse of internees. The military authorities stated that:

It is instructed that no personal violence or threats be used against any prisoners or suspect, on any excuse whatsoever. On such being reported to the Minister of Defence, the Officer implicated is liable to a severe penalty.¹⁵⁰

Despite this, there was little reference to the methods of interrogation utilised by the C.I.D. during Dáil debates of late 1922 and early 1923. When the C.I.D. was mentioned, it was often to commend their service to the public. However, some opposition deputies did not let the matter slide. Cathal O’Shannon, Labour T.D., voiced his concern in November 1922, that the ‘G’ division of the D.M.P. (which was the term he used to describe the C.I.D.), had ‘run amok’.¹⁵¹ O’Higgins responded positively about the force saying that:

...the “G” Division exists and functions: at the moment it does exist, and is dealing with ordinary petty crime, that is more or less incidental to the life of any city—petty larcenies, inspection of pawnbroking establishments and so on.... As to the possibility of the higher officialdom of that particular force running amok and breaking common law...Certainly I have perceived no disposition on the part of the higher officials of that force to do anything of the kind.¹⁵²

However, by May 1923 Gavan Duffy was openly questioning the kind of individuals employed in the force. He asserted to the Dáil:

...I have a good deal of sympathy with the normal decent detective as such, because he has a very unpleasant job and a very difficult task, but I cannot help feeling that a

¹⁴⁹ Statement of Seán McGuirken, Cork Prison, September 1922. He reported that an Army Officer asked him if he was an ‘irregular’. He replied that he was ‘an IRA man’ and he was then ‘struck ...with the butt end of a revolver...’ He was then ‘beaten and kicked and pushed through a window which was closed. He dropped on the steps outside and remained there in a semi-conscious state...’ (N.A.I., s.1369/3.); statement of Chris Ferguson, Wellington Barracks 15 Aug. 1922. On his arrival at Wellington Barracks Chris shouted ‘Up the Republic’ to a spectator and was then struck by the Intelligence Officer who said ‘I’ll give you up the ----- Republic, you ----- little Robert Emmett.’ (N.A.I., s.1369/3.).

¹⁵⁰ Director of Intelligence to Command I.O., Dublin Command, 8 Oct. 1923 (M.A., CW/P/02/01/02.).

¹⁵¹ D.É.D. Vol. 1, Col. 2316, 28 Nov. 1922

¹⁵² D.É.D. Vol. 1, Col. 2317, 28 Nov. 1922.

section of the present detective force has not been recruited in the right place or from the right source...¹⁵³

The government therefore appeared to occupy a 'middle ground position' on how internees and unruly prisoners should be treated. They accepted that some prison guards may have to adopt ruthless tactics in order to maintain control of the prisons. However, O'Higgins also wanted C.I.D. officers to maintain a certain level of respect. He stated:

We assure Deputies and the people that we do not stand for cruelty to prisoners that wanton cruelty to prisoners, wherever it is traced, will be dealt with in a disciplinary way. But on the other hand, we do not stand for allowing prisoners to force a situation where discipline or all rules within a prison can be smashed so that they can escape. The soldiers and guards may be confronted with a position where they have to deal very strongly and very sternly with the prisoners or else allow discipline in a camp or a prison to disappear. They cannot allow that. Neither can they allow prisoners to escape or do things which, if continued and enlarged, would lead generally to their escape. If prisoners in the camps and jails settle down and obey the rules of the camps and jails, you would hear very little talk about dark deeds and ill-treatment and all the rest.¹⁵⁴

In the midst of a civil war and wider army indiscipline, the C.I.D. was allowed to operate but was eventually disbanded in October 1923, after much controversy.¹⁵⁵

Prison beatings and violent threats against internees were set against a backdrop of state sanctioned executions. In truth, violence had become a regular component of the state's counter-insurgency measures against Anti-Treaty violence. Execution, or the threat of execution, loomed in the background for many internees and violence, in some prisons, became a regular means of control over the restless internee population. The arrest of Liam Deasy in January 1923 and his subsequent call for surrender,¹⁵⁶ created further problems within the prison system. In Limerick Jail, one prisoner wrote that the prison guards had, in an attempt to force a ceasefire, '... tried to intimidate us into signing that we agreed with Deasy, a pistol was held to our heads and these words used... Sign or there will be a

¹⁵³ D.É.D. Vol. 3, Col. 1291, 30 May 1923.

¹⁵⁴ D.É.D., Vol., 1, Col. 1198, 4 Oct. 1923.

¹⁵⁵ O'Halpin, *Defending Ireland*, p.13.

¹⁵⁶ Hopkinson, *Green Against Green*, p. 230.

wholesale execution of your men'.¹⁵⁷ By 1923, the threat of execution was a stark reality for those interned in the country's jails and camps and as these became more frequent, so too, did violence within the system. On a political level, this policy was to have a dramatic effect on the internees and the Anti-Treaty side. Michael Hopkinson stated that the 'prison population...was ruthlessly used by the Free State to influence the situation outside' as they became subject to the will of the government.¹⁵⁸ The emergency powers passed in the September 1922, would certainly support this, since it resulted in a liberal execution policy, providing the new government with the power to execute for possession of firearms.¹⁵⁹ Charles Townsend indicated that following the death of Michael Collins and Arthur Griffith, the government's attitudes hardened towards the opposition. He noted that by the end of 1922, 'there were signs that a vicious spiral might overwhelm the restraints that had so far kept the civil war within bounds avoiding what Collins had called "unnecessary destruction and loss of life"'.¹⁶⁰ Kissane similarly commented on this change in policy following the death of Collins, stating that in dealing with the Anti-Treatyites 'the government quickly moved to the view that drastic measures were needed to meet their challenge. Collins himself had been against the executions, but his death removed the one brake on his colleagues' desire for sterner measures against the I.R.A.'. ¹⁶¹ John Regan, in his assessment of the government's draconian tactics, remarked that the Free State's victory in the 1922 election was seen as justification for these policies and the decision to wage war. He stated that the government believed they were vindicating 'the democratic majority rule and the policies that employed... the criminalisation of the anti-treaty combatants; the judicial and extra-judicial execution of prisoners of war- and the foundation of the new state on those acts.'¹⁶² In the

¹⁵⁷ *Éire*, 3 Mar. 1923 (N.L.I.).

¹⁵⁸ Hopkinson, *Green against Green*, p. 229.

¹⁵⁹ D.E.D., Vol. 1, Col. 802-5, 27 Sept. 1922.

¹⁶⁰ Townsend, *The Republic*, p. 441.

¹⁶¹ Kissane, *The Politics of the Irish Civil War*, p. 86.

¹⁶² Regan, *The Irish Counter Revolution*, p. 67.

month leading up to the executions, two events occurred which could be seen as preparing the Irish public for the prospect of internee executions. Firstly, the Provisional Government offered the Anti-Treaty I.R.A. an amnesty and requested the surrender of ammunition by 15 October. Secondly, the Pastoral issued by Irish Bishops in the same month, condemned 'irregular' activities as purely criminal acts. When the Anti-Treaty I.R.A. refused to surrender their arms in October, the government now enforced their right to pursue such individuals in arms through Emergency Powers, with the Catholic Church providing a spiritual backing for government policies. The support of the church was crucial, given the macabre nature of what was to come in the months ahead. Bill Kissane noted that 'to the end of the conflict...there is no record of a specific Episcopal condemnation of any of the Free State misdemeanours during the civil war, and the Church-State alliance survived the executions and the further reprisal killings that were to take place...'.¹⁶³ Many on the opposition benches, however, were not so willing to support the state's new policies without criticism. The legislation which paved the way for executions was openly denounced by members of the opposition in Dáil Éireann.¹⁶⁴ Some Labour T.D.s believed that the Public Safety Bill itself possessed many aspects of a 'military dictatorship'.¹⁶⁵ Nevertheless, despite condemnation and warnings that executions could 'swell' the ranks of the 'irregular' I.R.A., the first execution of prisoners took place on 17 November.¹⁶⁶ James Fisher, Peter Twohig, James Gaffney and Peter Cassidy were executed by firing squad in Kilmainham Jail.¹⁶⁷ The 'first news the men's relatives received was an unofficial form with the wording 'Remains of ___ confined and buried' with the name of the dead man inserted in the blank'.¹⁶⁸ The *Irish Times* headline covering the

¹⁶³ Kissane, *The Politics of the Irish Civil War*, p. 89.

¹⁶⁴ Hopkinson, *Green Against Green*, p.189.

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 181.

¹⁶⁶ D.É.D., Vol. 1, Col. 830, 27 Sept.1922, Cathal O'Shannon T.D.; Townsend, *The Republic*, p. 441.

¹⁶⁷ *Irish Times*, 18 Nov. 1922 (N.L.I.).

¹⁶⁸ Kissane, *The Politics of the Irish Civil War*, p. 87.

executions read, 'The government will restore order or abdicate'.¹⁶⁹ In 1922, the political reality for the new administration was viewed with Machiavellian eyes and the state's survival was the ultimate goal. Regan noted that 'From September 1922 the treatyite National Government came to see the war against the IRA as a battle against time for the survival of the new state and came increasingly to rely on Draconian measures as its army continued to prove itself incapable of overwhelming the IRA'.¹⁷⁰ Those who were interned by the Free State would suffer the brunt of these draconian measures. In a climate of political expediency, executions countered insurgency and it was a declaration of the government's fundamental priority to restore order. There was little time to consider the morals of such actions. Internee Joseph Campbell, captured his conflicted emotions upon hearing of the first executions from his Mountjoy cell: 'Irishmen...guilty of killing Irishmen-honourable men. Oh God! As a race we are made up of utter light and utter darkness-saints and devils-children of extremes'.¹⁷¹ Campbell's response appeared to encapsulate the drastic shift of the past year; the Republican movement had fragmented and the turmoil that followed had left the new government in an unenviable position. The execution of internees was seen as an essential 'extreme' in the pursuit of peace and stability.

However, it was the execution of Erskine Childers that provoked a widespread backlash from both Pro-and Anti-Treaty factions. John Regan remarked that Childers' execution, in particular, signified the moment at which the 'uncompromising counter revolution was crystallised'.¹⁷² On 24 November 1922, Childers was executed for being in possession of a pistol (a gift from Michael Collins).¹⁷³ Free State opinion had been staunchly anti-Childers and he had become the target of a propaganda campaign. Ernie O'Malley

¹⁶⁹ *Irish Times*, 18 Nov. 1922 (N.L.I.).

¹⁷⁰ Regan, *The Irish Counter Revolution*, p. 103.

¹⁷¹ Ní Cuilleanáin, 'As I was Among Captives', p. 33.

¹⁷² Regan, *The Irish Counter Revolution*, p. 113.

¹⁷³ *Poblacht na h-Éireann*, 28 Nov 1922; *Irish Times*, 28 Nov. 1922 (N.L.I); Townsend, *The Republic*, p. 441.

recalled in his memoir how 'They hated him, many of these ex-soldiers from British regiments, yet they knew nothing of him, except what their officers told them and what propaganda directed by Piaras Beasláí they had read...'.¹⁷⁴ In Dáil Éireann, Gavin Duffy T.D. defended Childers following his death stating that

Erskine Childers was a great Irishman, and I emphasise that because he was an Irishman, not merely in law, but also in fact, and because it has been so unscrupulously denied up and down the country, unscrupulously, or ignorantly, if you like... So let us have no more of this cant about Erskine Childers being an Englishman, as if that were an excuse.¹⁷⁵

Before the execution, Anti-Treatyites officially attempted to counter the allegations against Childers. I.R.A. G.H.Q. issued a statement:

Your vile propaganda has loaded the dice against him...You have stated or insinuated that he is an Englishman inspired by hatred of Ireland...you stated that he is in the pay of England...Erskine Childers is no more an Englishman than was Padraig Pearse or Thomas Davis. Since 1914 he has been labouring and suffering in the cause of Ireland...¹⁷⁶

When the news of Childers' execution broke in the jails and camps, Joseph Campbell critically noted that the first 'four young men were done to death...to prepare the public to take the edge off the shock', of Childers' death sentence.¹⁷⁷ However, the shock evoked by the execution of Childers was followed swiftly by another devastating blow to the internee population. By the end of November, it became clear that the government would continue its execution policy and thus on the 30 November, Liam Lynch issued orders to Anti-Treaty units that T.D.s who had voted for the Special Act or 'Murder Bill' were to be shot on sight.¹⁷⁸ On the 7 December, this was acted upon, when Seán Hales T.D. was shot dead and Pádraic O'Máille T.D. left injured. In retaliation, the administration executed Liam Mellowes, Rory O'Connor, Dick Barrett and Joe McKelvey the next day in Mountjoy.

¹⁷⁴ O Malley, *The Singing Flame*, p. 193.

¹⁷⁵ D.E.D., Vol. 1, Col. 2357, 28 Nov. 1922.

¹⁷⁶ I.R.A. G.H.Q. Statement, 15 Nov. 1922 (U.C.D.A., Desmond FitzGerald Papers, P80/304.).

¹⁷⁷ Ní Cuilleánáin, 'As I was Among Captives', p. 37.

¹⁷⁸ Regan, *The Irish Counter Revolution*, p. 114.

Members of the Free State government had been violently targeted and the state was prepared to fight violence with violence. This revealed the government's willingness to apply any level of force, legal or otherwise, in their endeavours to fight 'terror with terror'.¹⁷⁹ Regan remarked that it was a 'brutal and utterly ruthless act without any pretence of legality'.¹⁸⁰ Townsend believed that these 'executions were not intended to be even pseudo-legal'.¹⁸¹ Since Mellowes, Barrett, O'Connor and McKelvey had been arrested after the fall of the Four Courts; they had been interned before the introduction of the emergency powers legislation, which allowed for the execution of individuals in possession of weapons. The Four Court's men had been neither tried nor found guilty by court-martial. A government statement reported that the internees were executed to serve as a '...solemn warning to those associated with them who are engaged in a conspiracy of assassination'.¹⁸² Unlike the Childers' execution which was personally motivated, this execution signified that the Free State's counter-insurgency policy had taken advantage of the internment situation and was indeed utilising the internees as 'pawns', in order to win the civil war.¹⁸³ Even Ernest Blythe, Minister for Local Government, admitted that the executions were 'simple counter-terrorism'.¹⁸⁴ It was therefore difficult for the Free State to shroud the element of revenge that hung so darkly over these executions. They had boldly used the word 'reprisal',¹⁸⁵ as an open justification for their action (although some ministers, such as Kevin O'Higgins, were reluctant to use this phrase).¹⁸⁶ However, the government neither wished nor sought to hide their vendetta. If anything, they wanted to make it clear that 'irregular' dissent would not be tolerated and that the consequences would be bloody for Anti-Treaty internees. The

¹⁷⁹ The *Irish Times* covered Cosgrave's reaction to the executions reporting that he had said of the executions 'Terror must be met with terror.'; *Irish Times*, 9 Dec. 1922 (N.L.I.).

¹⁸⁰ Regan, *The Irish Counter Revolution*, p. 116.

¹⁸¹ Townsend, *The Republic*, p. 442.

¹⁸² *Irish Times*, 9 Dec. 1922 (N.L.I.).

¹⁸³ Hopinson, *Green against Green*, p. 229.

¹⁸⁴ Townsend, *The Republic*, p. 442.

¹⁸⁵ *Irish Times*, 9 Dec. 1922 (N.L.I.).

¹⁸⁶ Townsend, *The Republic*, p. 442.

executions thus allowed the Free State to use the prison population as expendable ammunition in the pursuit of national stability. In the midst of civil war, 'pseudo-legal' was sufficient. The general public apparently provided the government with their silent backing, as Tom Garvin noted 'republican atrocities' had the effect of 'making people indifferent to Free State ruthlessness and the electorate seem to have consented quietly to the executions'.¹⁸⁷ However, the extent of censorship in the national media certainly went some way in softening the blow for the Irish public as it presented a government that was fighting 'terror with terror'. However, it is worth noting, that in the context of international civil wars, the Free State's execution policy pales in comparison to countries like Russia and Finland. During the Finish civil war, there were '8,000 irregular executions, 67,000 convictions and 265 official executions'.¹⁸⁸ In Russia, during the Red Terror, the figures vary but are reported to be in the region of 50,000-200,000, depending on the source.¹⁸⁹ The Irish experience of civil war executions was not nearly as extreme as this, although that is not to say that the executions policy did not have a particularly negative effect on military prisoners around the country.

The executions or the impending threat of execution instilled considerably fear into the internee population and created a sombre atmosphere in many of the prisons and camps. In this sense, the executions aided the Free State in their attempts to suppress the unruly and rebellious element within the prison system. Internee correspondence highlighted how the execution of O'Connor, Mellowes, Barrett and McKelvey, in particular, affected internee morale, as it stood out for its retaliatory undertones. Joseph Campbell who was imprisoned in Mountjoy at the time of the executions, related how afterwards there were 'prisoners going around in aimless depressed groups, talking over the morning's work in low voices. General

¹⁸⁷ Garvin, 1922: *The Birth of Irish democracy*, p. 103.

¹⁸⁸ Payne, *Civil War in Europe 1905-1949*, pp 31-2.

¹⁸⁹ Geoffrey Swain, *The Origins of the Russian Civil War* (Routledge, 1996) p. 252; Helen Rappaport, *Joseph Stalin: A Biographical Companion* (ABC-CLIO Inc., 1999), p. 35.

opinion that the Republic will not be beaten by such methods blame of the Church etc...'.¹⁹⁰

Peadar O'Donnell, who was also imprisoned in Mountjoy, wrote how 'I got the news in the door of the chapel. I just went wooden. I was completely dried of all feeling. I saw men sob and I heard men curse...The wind that day was a grave we were wordless, soulless movement of lives suddenly empty...That night I spent the only sleepless night I was ever to know in prison...'.¹⁹¹ However, internee executions continued into 1923, as the government attempted to reassert control over Anti-Treatyites, both inside and outside of the prison system. In January, Hogan and O'Higgins established committees of officers at 'battalion level throughout the country to sentence prisoners, resulting in more localised executions'.¹⁹²

Kissane noted how the 'executions policy continued to be applied in a selective way' but methods were particularly extreme in Kerry, where internees figures and dissent was higher. Ultimately, the Free State's countering of 'terror with terror' was believed to have stopped the Anti-Treaty policy of targeting T.D.s as Frank Henderson in the Dublin No.1 Brigade related:

I think the execution of Rory O'Connor and the others may have stopped a continuation of our shooting. It was very hard to get men to do the shooting and I don't think they would have done anymore shooting.¹⁹³

The sharp rise in executions in January 1923 was a direct result of the escalation of violent confrontations that month. On 11 January 1923, the government met with the army council to discuss a memorandum which could resolve the growing 'lawless situation'.¹⁹⁴ Aside from the political opposition posed by the Anti-Treatyites, 'ordinary' crime had risen since the beginning of the civil war. Regan remarked that Hogan in particular was pessimistic and prophesied an 'impending land war'. The Minister for Agriculture believed the 'population at

¹⁹⁰ Ní Chilleanáin, *As I was Among Captives*, p.41.

¹⁹¹ O'Donnell, *The Gates Flew Open*, p.40.

¹⁹² Kissane, *The Politics of the Irish Civil War*, p. 92.

¹⁹³ Hopkinson, *Green Against Green*, p. 190.

¹⁹⁴ Regan, *The Irish Counter Revolution*, p. 120.

large...convinced that the government was incapable of functioning, would throw their lot in with the irregulars'.¹⁹⁵ Crime rates during the year 1923 were in fact higher than the previous year. In 1922, the number of 'ordinary' criminals imprisoned (that is non military/ Anti-Treaty I.R.A.) was 1,832.¹⁹⁶ In 1923, the figures for the imprisonment of 'ordinary' criminals rose to 2,702.¹⁹⁷ Effectively the 'regular' crime rate had almost doubled and the year 1923 would reveal a rise in the counter-insurgency measures adopted by the new government. In January, the internee population would again become the primary target of these counter-insurgency measures. The hardening of political attitudes during this month indicated that the government were using executions as a means of stifling, if not, ending the civil war. Hogan argued that the government should give the army a 'free hand to stop the national destruction...executions should be implemented with machine-like regularity'.¹⁹⁸ Similarly in January, Kevin O Higgins stated 'I am of the opinion that there should be for executions in every county'.¹⁹⁹ The sense of urgency to reinforce order, even through multiple executions, may be attributed to the level of control still within the scope of the Anti-Treaty side. Garvin noted how in January 1923, the southern part of the country was under 'I.R.A. terror rule, whose main objective was to smash the new state by physical destruction of the infrastructure and by looting'.²⁰⁰ In order to counter the rise in 'irregular' crime, Townsend argued that from 'January 1923 the army's emergency powers were enlarged to impose the death penalty for swathes of offences including carrying of messages for irregulars, assisting in escapes, using military or police uniforms, and desertion from the national army'.²⁰¹ The majority of these offences specifically related to those arrested for Anti-Treaty offences and as a result

¹⁹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁹⁶ O'Donnell, O'Sullivan, Healy (eds), *Crime and Punishment in Ireland 1922-2000* (Dublin, 2005), p. 212.

¹⁹⁷ Ibid, p. 214.

¹⁹⁸ Hogan Memorandum, 11 Jan. 1923 (U.C.D.A., Richard Mulcahy Papers, P7b/96.).

¹⁹⁹ O'Higgins' memorandum for the January conference, Jan. 1923 (U.C.D.A., Richard Mulcahy papers, P7b/96.).

²⁰⁰ Garvin, 1922; *Birth of Irish Democracy*, p. 102.

²⁰¹ D.É.D. Vol. 2, Col. 877-9, 17 Jan. 1923; Townsend, *The Republic*, p. 442.

the month of January saw thirty four executions.²⁰² Censorship of the press did not afford much criticism of government policies but in Dáil Éireann, opposition T.D.s, particularly those from the Labour Party, denounced the new legislation and questioned the necessity of such draconian measures. In January, Thomas Johnson stated that:

The Minister for Defence claimed that these courts should be set up because of military necessity. I ask is it a military necessity that these powers should be extended? Does the military necessity still exist? Is it a military necessity that all these new offenders should be brought under the purview of a secret court and that the power of life or death should be held over the alleged offenders...I insist now, as I have done all along, that the Army is not a body qualified to deal with this kind of offence...that the Army would be better occupied in doing Army work rather than judicial work. Very great powers were granted last September and something approaching 30 men have been executed under those powers....Some, no doubt, have been deterred...Rightly or wrongly...the people of the country have been taught in the last few years to be heedless of the consequences of their person, and to face death fearlessly, and they are doing it and will continue to do it.²⁰³

The new native government, however, deemed it necessary to continue. The outcome of this legislation was that within the country's prisons and camps, the threat of execution was a daily reality. Peadar O'Donnell related that 'Mountjoy Jail in 1923 was an uncanny place in many ways. There must have been a hundred men actually sentenced to death, and then there were the selected ones of the jails held ready for reprisals...We had no illusions about what lay before us'.²⁰⁴ O'Donnell also related how 'every command had been forced to carry out executions', which was a clear reminder to the internee population, that regardless of who you were or where you were interned, the possibility of execution was always likely.²⁰⁵

In the public domain, the execution of internees was opposed in many quarters. Telegrams of protest were sent from amongst others, the University of Liverpool and the Reverend Eugene Owens, condemning the government's actions.²⁰⁶ Waterford Co. Council

²⁰² Hopkinson, *Green against Green*, p. 222.

²⁰³ D.E.D. Vol. 2, Col. 884-5, 17 Jan. 1923.

²⁰⁴ O'Donnell, *The Gates Flew Open*, p. 100.

²⁰⁵ Ibid.

²⁰⁶ Telegram University of Liverpool to Cosgrave, 23 Nov. 1922 (N.A.I., s. 1369/5.); Eugene Owens to Cosgrave, 23 Nov. 1922 (N.A.I., s. 1369/5.).

also passed a resolution condemning the policy and stated that they viewed ‘...with horror and indignation the action of the Provisional Government in executing men of the Irish Republican Army...’.²⁰⁷ Roscommon Co. Council passed similar resolutions.²⁰⁸ The government’s decision to execute their former comrades in arms was viewed ‘with dismay’.²⁰⁹ The executions certainly provided the Anti-Treaty side with the opportunity to condemn the Free State, as they labelled their actions as worse than any British government (who had, in fact, executed fewer prisoners during the period 1916-21).²¹⁰

However, Anti-Treaty forces were also guilty of using executions to control the political situation. On 18 January 1923, Liam Deasy, Commander in the Southern I.R.A., was captured by Free State forces. He was tried by court martial, found guilty of having possession of a revolver, ‘and sentenced to death’.²¹¹ In response to his sentence, Dinny (Denis) Lacey, Southern Tipperary I.R.A. commander, ‘ordered the arrest of five farmers who were brothers of the Free State army’s ex I.R.A. Commanders’. He then threatened to ‘execute the five brothers in the event of Deasy’s executions’.²¹² The situation was effectively defused following Deasy’s decision to sign a ‘surrender’ form but this episode revealed that an ‘eye for eye’ style approach to execution was adopted by both sides during the civil war.²¹³

There were, of course, the now infamous un-official execution of internees committed by members of the Free State Army and the Criminal Investigations Department. Stanley Payne discussed how the breakdown of law and order in civil wars led to episodes of private

²⁰⁷ Resolution of Waterford Co. Council, 21 Nov. 1922 (N.A.I., s. 1369/5.).

²⁰⁸ ‘Roscommon Co. Council passed a resolution viewing with horror and indignation the recent executions and called for ‘a stoppage of executions’; *Irish Independent*, 24 Nov. 1922 (N.A.I., s. 1369/5.).

²⁰⁹ Resolution of Waterford Co. Council, 21 Nov. 1922 (N.A.I., s.1369/5.).

²¹⁰ ‘The British authorities had executed twenty four Volunteers up to the Truce’; Townsend, *The Republic*, p. 443

²¹¹ *Irish Times*, 9 Feb. 1923 (N.L.I.).

²¹² Garvin, 1922: *The Birth of Irish democracy*, p. 119.

²¹³ *Irish Times*, 9 Feb. 1923 (N.L.I.).

violence.²¹⁴ He noted how Carl Schmitt ‘emphasised that civil war is especially cruel because it has a tendency to overturn the legal system, justifying extreme means and demanding total triumph...and sometimes the physical, elimination of the enemy, to show pity for whom is held to be a sign of weakness and lack of commitment’.²¹⁵ During the Irish Civil War, Kerry was to become the backdrop for some of the most the most extreme violence, in particular a series of unofficial executions. The most well-known of these occurred in Ballyseedy and was widely believed to have been a retaliation killing for the murder of five ‘free state soldiers’ by ‘a booby trapped landmine the previous day at knocknagoshel’.²¹⁶ Ex-internee, Seamus O’Connor related his version of the Knocknagoshel event, stating that the Free State soldier in question, Lieutenant O’Connor, was disliked by the Anti-Treaty I.R.A. in the area for his alleged mistreatment of prisoners.²¹⁷ Consequently, one of the local ‘officers (ill-advised I thought) decided on his removal by trap mine’.²¹⁸ By this stage of the civil war, in Kerry alone, O’Connor stated that ‘more than a dozen men had been killed after being taken prisoner’.²¹⁹ The Anti-Treatyites laid the mine for Lieutenant O’Connor and killed not only their intended target, but two other officers and two prisoners.²²⁰ As a result on 7 March, in what has come to be seen as a retaliation killing, eight Anti-Treaty internees died clearing a roadblock in Ballyseedy when a mine exploded. The survival of one prisoner, Stephen Fuller, was fundamental to the story’s infamy. His account of events differed greatly from the national army’s contention that the prisoners had died while clearing a roadblock. Fuller stated that

²¹⁴ Payne, *Civil War in Europe 1905-1949*, p. 11

²¹⁵ Ibid.

²¹⁶ Regan, *The Irish Counter Revolution*, p. 174.

²¹⁷ O’Connor stated that Lieutenant O’Connor was in his twenties and had joined the Free State army as a result of a grudge against the Anti-Treaty IRA, who had fined his father for divulging information regarding the Anti-Treatyites in the area. Lieut. O’Connor’s father couldn’t pay the fine so his cows were sold off as compensation; Seamus O’Connor, *Tomorrow Was Another Day*, p. 88.

²¹⁸ Ibid, p. 90.

²¹⁹ Ibid, p. 88.

²²⁰ Ibid, p. 89.

I was a prisoner in Tralee having been arrested in February. On Tuesday night the 6th of March, I with two companions was brought from the Workhouse to the road. Five other prisoners were left in the room after us. We were put into lorries with six other prisoners from the jail. We were brought to Ballyseedy cross ...We were all placed round a lock of timber on the roads and tied together with a big rope. Our hands were tied together AND OUR ANKLES? And another rope was tied around our knees. We were then told that we were to be blown to atoms as a reprisal for the deaths of F.S. officers in Castleisland...The soldiers then withdrew to a distance ...Then the explosion occurred and I remembered no more. I was blown away to some distance and my clothes were blown off me. I escaped through the fields.²²¹

A few days later, on 12 March, a further five Anti-Treaty prisoners died in Cahirciveen, in a strikingly similar incident. The *Irish Independent* reported that 'Five prisoners were killed by an explosion of a trapped-mine hidden in a barricade of stones on the road. Prior to the tragedy, troops approaching the barricade were ambushed, and after a sharp fight the prisoners were captured'.²²² The National Army reported the event as follows: 'In the course of operations this morning, troops from Cahirciveen came across a barricade north-east of the town. Rifle and machine gun fire was opened on the troops from concealed positions and an engagement lasting two hours followed, when seven irregulars were captured...The troops then proceeded to have the barricade removed, when a trap mine exploded killing five prisoners and wounding Comdt. J.J. Delaney, Lieut. W. McEaldy and seven other ranks'.²²³ Around the same time as the Cahirciveen and the Ballyseedy incidents, another 'version of this massacre' was also re-enacted in 'Killarney, where five were killed'.²²⁴ These incidents were widely believed to be the work of the Dublin Guards in the Free State Army in Kerry. Tom Garvin noted how these guards had been part of Michael Collins' 'old active service unit' and were disliked by the army which 'generally treated prisoners well and got on well with the local population'.²²⁵ Fuller's account of events, along with the deaths of a further

²²¹ *Daily Bulletin*, 22 Mar. 1923 (U.C.D.A., Hugh Kennedy Papers, P4/655.).

²²² *Irish Independent*, 13 Mar. 1923 (N.L.I.).

²²³ *Ibid.*

²²⁴ Townsend, *The Republic*, p. 443.

²²⁵ Garvin, 1922: *The Birth of Irish Democracy*, p. 53.

seventeen Anti-Treaty prisoners 'clearing mines in Kerry',²²⁶ led to an inquiry which later found in favour of the national army.²²⁷ This was hardly surprising since the court of inquiry was 'presided over by Daly' who was G.O.C. of the Kerry Command.²²⁸ On 6 March, the day before the Ballyseedy killings, General Paddy Daly had issued a statement which read:

The tragedy of Knocknagoshel must not be repeated. Since the Four Courts Fight mines have been used indiscriminately by irregulars. The taking out of prisoners is not to be regarded as a reprisal but as the only attempts left to us to prevent the whole sale slaughter of our men.²²⁹

Daly had effectively provided excuses before the event. The suspicious nature of the deaths in Kerry led to further concern at cabinet level and Minister for Defence, Richard Mulcahy, tendered his resignation in the wake of the violence but it was refused.²³⁰ Ultimately, Mulcahy had to defend the army's actions stating to Dáil Éireann that

We have seen officers here, we have seen Major-General Daly train—for a few months, perhaps, in Dublin here, before we were called upon to defend this new State in arms—a handful of men whose discipline, quite as much as their daring, made it possible for us to tackle effectively in Dublin the root of what has been such a terrible disturbance. They have my fullest confidence from that point of view. I have the fullest confidence that the honour of the Army is as deeply rooted in them as it is in any of us here at Headquarters or in any member of the Government...On the question of the charges that are being levied in connection with this matter, I am convinced that there is no foundation in fact for them; and on the question of using prisoners for this particular class of work, we cannot avoid using prisoners for this particular class of work if we are going to make the roads in Kerry safe for the people; but we shall take all the precautions that we can to prevent that even in the clearing of those mine obstructions, many of which are still there, that the lives of prisoners will not be risked unnecessarily.²³¹

Similar to the government's official execution policy, cabinet ministers had effectively accepted that some prisoners might have to be casualties of war in order to restore peace.

²²⁶ Regan, *The Irish Counter Revolution*, p. 174.

²²⁷ *Irish Independent*, 18 Apr. 1923 (N.L.I.).

²²⁸ Regan, *The Irish Counter Revolution*, p. 174.

²²⁹ Major General Paddy Daly, G.O.C. Kerry Command, to all Officers of Kerry command, 6 Mar. 1923 printed in *Irish Times*, 21 Apr. 1923 (N.L.I.).

²³⁰ Regan, *The Irish Counter Revolution*, p. 174.

²³¹ D.É.D., Vol. 3, Col. 188-90, 17 Apr. 1923.

Mulcahy's reference to General Daly as having the discipline and daring 'to tackle' the 'terrible disturbance' in Dublin may be seen as an acknowledgment that certain methods, however objectionable, were necessary to overcome the situation. Dorothy Macardle, in her Republican book, *The Tragedies of Kerry*, noted that 'the killing of prisoners seemed to have become practice in Kerry in March and April of nineteen twenty three'.²³² Internment and the execution of prisoners in custody was, for Macardle, the biggest hurdle for the I.R.A. during the civil war. The use of internees in the clearing of booby trapped roadblocks was a grisly deterrent to the Anti-Treaty side and a further reminder that reconciliation was not part of the government's plans for ending civil war. In this sense, the internees were indeed treated like 'pawns' and the Free State had over 13,000 at their disposal.

The Irish Civil War ended on 24 May 1923 but internment figures remained high in the immediate aftermath, with some 11, 989 prisoners interned in June 1923.²³³ The Free State maintained their counter-insurgency tactics post-civil war, by staggering the release policy. The government most likely feared a return to armed conflict if prisoners were released too soon or in large numbers. Additionally, delaying release stifled any public display of sympathy for the returning prisoners which had been the case in previous years.²³⁴ In the pre-1921 period, released prisoners were welcomed home with much pomp and circumstance and this trend soon became a necessary part of Republican propaganda. Murphy noted how 'crowds waited outside' the prisons as releases had become something of a fan fare for internees and their supporters.²³⁵ Upon the signing of the Treaty, similar scenes were recorded in Mayo which hinted at the division that was set to grip the country. Patrick Francis Ferran, Anti-Treaty Sinn Féin for Sligo-Mayo East recounted to Dáil Éireann

²³² Dorothy Macardle, *Tragedies of Kerry* (1924), p. 69.

²³³ Cosgrave to Rev. James Duhig, Australia, 3 Jan. 1924 (N.A.I., s.1369/21.).

²³⁴ There had been a general trend within the Republican movement of celebrating prisoner releases. Murphy recorded that in 1921 newspaper stories 'demanding the release of internees were replaced by stories of crowds gathered at Amiens Street station, Dublin, to greet the internees who might be aboard the train from Belfast'; Murphy, *Imprisonment and the Irish, 1912-1921*, p.223.

²³⁵ Ibid, p.242-3.

Over there in Mayo—and God bless Mayo as always— over there now there were no joybells. There were no fires. There was not a candle lit to celebrate the Emancipation—the Emancipation of the Irish nation after seven hundred years. But when one poor prisoner who had been suffering was liberated and returned to the home that he knew, the whole countryside would be ablaze. One was liberation, the other was not...²³⁶

Prisoner releases were an emotive occasion and in the midst of civil war, the ministers of the Free State were fully aware of the propaganda value to the Anti-Treaty side. The government, therefore, attempted to separate the moderates from the hard liners in the jails and camps. The new administration introduced an undertaking form, which was designed to offer internees the opportunity of release, on condition that they would not to bear arms against the government. This tactic was also adopted in Greece against Communists prisoners 1946-9, but with much more virulence. Greece faced a similar problem in the aftermath of their civil war, as a large number of political prisoners remained in jail. Mazower remarked that by ‘September 1949, the total number of prisoners and exiles was nearly 50,000; almost one year later, in August 1950...23,457 were still in prison and 3,407 in exile’. As a result, ‘declarations of repentance, in which the detainees recanted their political beliefs and the Communist Party, constituted a particular and important feature’ of imprisonment.²³⁷ Declarations in Greece were forced on detainees through interrogation, solitary confinement, torments and humiliation. After recanting their beliefs, the repentees had ‘to give talks to their colleagues’ while others ‘had to write letters’ to the national and local newspapers or deliver a lecture against the Communist Party.²³⁸ In the Irish Free State, no such measures were inflicted on Anti-Treaty I.R.A. prisoners once they signed an undertaking form. In fact, it was soon discovered that many internees actually broke the arrangement and returned to their I.R.A. units once they were released. Within a couple of months, the government decided that the prisoners’ release files must be reviewed by the Army Intelligence

²³⁶ D.É.D., Vol. T., Col. 283, 6 Jan. 1922.

²³⁷ Mark Mazower (ed) *After the War was Over: Reconstructing the Family, Nation and, State in Greece 1943-1960* (Princeton, 2000), p. 75.

²³⁸ Ibid, p. 77.

Department, in order to combat this issue. As early as September 1922, Kevin O'Higgins detailed that

The military authorities, by permission of the Government, have released from their custody prisoners who gave an undertaking not to take arms against the Government and Parliament, and not to interfere unlawfully with the personal property of their fellow-citizens. Because of the number of cases in which this undertaking was broken, it has been found, necessary to make the holes of the sieve somewhat smaller, and a recommendation from the Army Intelligence Department is now awaited in each case, after which each petition gets prompt attention.²³⁹

However, a large section of the prison population refused to sign the form. Senior figures in the national army believed that a more plausible reason for the large number of unsigned forms was the presence of hard line I.R.A. persons within the jails. Internees faced the prospect of being court martialed if they signed the form and towards the end of the civil war I.R.A. Chief of Staff, Liam Lynch, warned prisoners against such action.²⁴⁰ Liam Deasy's decision to submit his name to a document calling for surrender prompted the following response from I.R.A. G.H.Q.. Upon Deasy's transfer to Arbour Hill., G.H.Q. noted he was most likely sent 'with the intention of undermining the men's faith...I have already sent in word that he is to be ostracised but they probably know this already'.²⁴¹ Earlier in the civil war, some prisoners willingly agreed to sign the form. In Limerick Jail in 1922, Mossie Harnett recalled how the internees had pressured a fellow prisoner, Dan Collins, into forgoing release after he signed an undertaking form. However, in this instance, the prisoners had an ulterior motive; they wanted their Brigade Adjutant, Jimmy Collins, to take Dan's place. In his memoir, Harnett remembered:

Dan Collins had already applied for his release, and had signed a form repudiating his allegiance to the Republican Army...We were to persuade Dan to hand over his release form to our mutual comrade, Jimmy Collins. Jimmy was to answer to the name of Dan Collins, march up to the office and present his form, and walk out a free

²³⁹ D.É.D., Vol. 1, Col. 207, 13 Sept. 1922.

²⁴⁰ Chief of Staff I.R.A., to Director of Intelligence, 2 Apr. 1923 (U.C.D.A., Moss Twomey Papers, P69/167.).

²⁴¹ I.R.A., G.H.Q. to C/S & D/I, 21 Mar. 1923 (U.C.D.A., Moss Twomey Papers, P69/11(181).).

man...We spent a few trying minutes trying to persuading Dan to agree...By sheer luck we succeeded...For Jimmy Collins, luck held, and he coolly marched out of the jail gates a free man...Poor Dan was very irritable and dissatisfied until the intercession of his brother Con Collins, T.D., opened the gates for him.²⁴²

As the war progressed, internees became reluctant to sign the form as it did not always lead to release. As a result, many questioned its validity. The Curragh Intelligence Officer explained the situation in July 1923:

You will notice that in my reports of prisoners very many of them refuse to sign Form. These refusals though cannot be taken as meaning that they are still opposed to the Government, many of them who refused to sign did so only for fear of other fellows in the Camp and many others who refused to sign did so because they have signed so many times before and are still detained. When some releases in each camp have been granted there will be no difficulty in getting fellows to sign the 'Form of Undertaking'...convinced we have no intention of releasing them but simply want them to sign Form which may be used in propaganda against them.²⁴³

Naturally, the Anti-Treaty I.R.A. maintained that those who did sign the form only did so due to intimidation and violent beatings. The newspaper *Eire* reported that internees were abused by their prison guards if they did not sign the form:

Reports from all the prisons show that the severest pressure was brought to bear recently on the prisoners to obtain from them a declaration of peace, preferably on the lines of the Deasy proposal. In many of the prisons when the prisoners refused...they were subjected to brutal ill treatment...²⁴⁴

However, as the months passed, this measure did not bring about the desired level of releases. In August 1923, some of the military governors complained that even the internees who had complied and signed the form; had not being granted released.²⁴⁵ In September, the government decided to abandon the undertaking form as a system of implementing release. The official line stated:

²⁴² Mossie Harnett, *Victory and Woe: The West Limerick Brigade in the War of Independence* (Dublin, 2001), pp 145-46

²⁴³ Command I.O., Curragh Command, to Director of Intelligence, Parkgate Street, 3 July 1923 (M.A., CW/P/02/02/34.).

²⁴⁴ *Eire*, 21 Apr. 1923 (N.L.I.).

²⁴⁵ Correspondence regarding un-released prisoners who signed the undertaking form (M.A., CW/P/02/02/11.).

It was decided at a Conference between the Minister for Defence; Chief of Staff; Adjutant General and Director Intelligence on the 21st of Sept., that Form of Undertaking and Guarantors' Forms were to be discontinued as a precedent to the release of prisoners.²⁴⁶

The decision to abandon the undertaking form was a consequence of its poor success rate. Towards the end of 1923, the government set about a policy of releasing prisoners based on their perceived 'threat' level to the state. Internee releases moved rather slowly in the months following the end of civil war. In December, Richard Mulcahy, Minister for Defence, recommended that no further releases were to be carried out in Leitrim, Clare, Tipperary, Cork (but not Cork City), 'County Roscommon between the Shannon and the Boyle, Elphin, Strokestown, Cloondara' and 'County Galway south of the railway line Athlone'.²⁴⁷ This can be somewhat attributed to a fear of renewed hostiles prevalent among senior army and government officials. Many parts of the West of Ireland posed significant difficulties for the National Army throughout 1923. Hopkinson discussed that in Spring 1923, North and West Mayo, Sligo and Leitrim remained unclear of Republicans. Furthermore, large parts of the South and West of Ireland remained lawless as late as 1924. Kissane remarked that south Leitrim was 'completely lawless'.²⁴⁸ Therefore, the release of a large number of anti-Free State internees back into civil society was more likely to enhance social unrest rather than subdue it. Following the ceasefire in May, official correspondence revealed the level of suspicion among members of the National Army regarding military internees. The Director of Intelligence wrote:

We have 75% of the enemies of the state within prison at the moment and our object should be break down their irregular mentality in such a way as to provide against revolutionary reactions on their release. At the moment the irregulars have turned their prisons into camps in which to a certain extent they are reviving their irregular

²⁴⁶ Col. Costello Note, 21 Sept. 1923 (M.A., CW/P/02/02/34.).

²⁴⁷ Minister of Defence to Adj. General and Director of Intelligence, 18 Dec. 1923 (M.A., CW/P/02/01/02).

²⁴⁸ Kissane, *The Politics of the Irish Civil War*, p. 95.

mentality, and in which internal arrangements are conducted on a semi military basis.²⁴⁹

One way of breaking this 'irregular' mentality was to divide the prisoners into different groups. These were set along the lines of those with a 'dangerous' or 'moderate' nature. The authorities sought to do this by adopting the following procedures:

- 1) to concentrate the prisoners as soon as possible in Internment Camps proper
- 2) To weed out all purely civil criminals and hand them over to the civil authorities.
- 3) To isolate leaders and organisers
- 4) To refuse recognition to military organisations within camps- not dealing with prisoners as we are at the moment through their leaders and committees, dealing with prisoners individually.

As soon as we have broken their organisation and are dealing solely with individuals, who have to consult only their own personal wishes, we will be able to judge exactly the appropriate moment of release, and will also be able to gather information as to the location of irregular dumps and stores throughout the country.²⁵⁰

From mid-1923, the government set about clearing the prisons with vigour and a great many internees were transferred to camps.²⁵¹ The transfer of internees had been quite regular throughout the civil war, as it allowed the Free State government to stifle prisoner morale.²⁵² This British had first employed this tactic in the previous years in order to separate the more unruly prisoners from the general prisoner body. William Murphy remarked that, 'in 1919 there had been twelve such transfers, in 1920 there were 424 and in the first half of 1921 there were 502...Between November 1920 and the truce in July 1921 the numbers of Irish nationalist prisoners in English prisons climbed to unprecedented levels'.²⁵³ The transfer of

²⁴⁹ Director of Intelligence to Chief of Staff, 25 May 1923 (M.A., CW/P/02/02/34.).

²⁵⁰ Ibid.

²⁵¹ Lists of prisoners transferred from jails to camps (M.A., CW/P/07/02 & CW/P/10/05.).

²⁵² For instance see the transfer of prisoners in the memoirs of Ernie O'Malley *The Singing Flame*; Peadar O'Donnell *The Gates Flew Open*; Margaret Buckley; *Jangle of the Keys*; Mossie Harnett, *Victory and Woe* & C.S. Andrews *Dublin Made Me* (Dublin, 1979).

²⁵³ Murphy, *Political Imprisonment and the Irish, 1912-1921*, pp 212-13.

unruly prisoners often enhanced pressure on prison staff.²⁵⁴ In mid-1923, as civil war in the country wound down and eventually ended, transfers became more regular. The government shifted large bodies of detainees to internment camps in order to regain control of the civil prisons. Mountjoy became a holding centre for military internees whom the authorities were reluctant to release but lacked the necessary space in the country's internment camps. The prison also accommodated convict prisoners, as Mountjoy held both civil and military functions throughout the civil war.²⁵⁵ In fact, by 1923 Mountjoy was considered the 'most dangerous prison in Dublin'. Deputy Governor Paudeen O'Keefe wrote to the Adjutant General specifying this fact:

The conditions prevailing when I took up duty as Deputy Military Governor of Mountjoy Prison, have not, so far as I am aware, undergone any changes, except an increase of prisoners, and also the assembling in Mountjoy of all dangerous prisoners taken throughout the country.²⁵⁶

Phil Cosgrave, the Military Governor of Mountjoy, was in complete agreement.²⁵⁷ Governor Cosgrave reiterated a similar message to the Adjutant a month later, stating that 'If, as it seems probable, it is the intention of the authorities to fill two of the four Wings in Mountjoy with Convicted and "dangerous" Military prisoners there will be accommodation for about

²⁵⁴ Murphy described the reasons for transfers and the pressure placed on governors and staff by unruly internees; *Ibid*, pp 208-11.

²⁵⁵ McConville, *Irish Political Prisoners 1920-1962*, p. 172.

²⁵⁶ Deputy Military Governor, Paudeen O'Keefe, to Adjutant General, Parkgate Street, 10 May 1923 (M.A., CW/P/02/01/02.).

²⁵⁷ Philip Cosgrave was the brother of W.T. Cosgrave, President of the Executive Council and leader of Cumann na nGaedheal. 'He joined the Irish Volunteers in 1914 and took part in the Rising at Marrowbow Lane Distillery. For his part in the Rising, he received a death sentence which was later commuted to penal servitude. He was released in the General Amnesty in 1917 and was appointed quarter-master of the 4th Dublin Battalion during the War of Independence. He was the 'nominally governor of Mountjoy Jail (October 1922-August 1923) he left its running to his deputy Paudeen O'Keefe'. He was elected Cumann na nGaedheal T.D. for Dublin South in the 1923 General Election and died suddenly in October 1923; *Dictionary of Irish Biography* (<http://dib.cambridge.org.elib.tcd.ie/quicksearch.do?jsessionid51376083EAF0780E6CDD7F0F9316AB1E>, accessed 28 December 2014).

450 prisoners, provided that two are allotted to each cell'.²⁵⁸ These prisoners were specifically transferred to Mountjoy until the refurbishment at Maryborough was complete.²⁵⁹

By July 1923, some of the most over-populated prisons were cleared and Anti-Treatites sent to local internment camps. Orders to clear Mountjoy, Limerick, Waterford and Sligo Jails were well under way by this time.

Two wings of Mountjoy were evacuated during the last week and were handed over to the Civil Governor. It will not be possible to evacuate it entirely for about two months, because the Prisons Board have just informed me that it will take at least that time to put Maryborough into the desired state of repair. Limerick Jail, which it was hoped to evacuate during the week end, still holds 250 Prisoners. Only 100 were sent to the Curragh in reply to wirelessly instructions... Waterford is also still occupied by the Military as the case of the Prisoners are apparently being examined with a view to seeing who is to go to Internment Camps... Sligo Jail cannot be evacuated until it is seen what space is available in Tintown after Limerick is cleared. Galway Jail will also probably be cleared very soon, and I have given general direction that the Camps at the Curragh should, if necessary, be crowded so as to clear as many jails as possible.²⁶⁰

Throughout the remainder of 1923, the government continued to transfer internees from jails such as Kilmainham, Mountjoy, Galway, Castlebar, Limerick, and Dundalk to the internment camps at Newbridge, Hare Park, and Tintown.²⁶¹ From the Lieutenant General's report above, it was quite clear that overcrowding would be overlooked in an effort to re-organise the system. The government's main priority in 1923 was to return prisons to their civilian governors.

The administration therefore began to transfer certain 'military' prisoners (with criminal charges pending), over to the Civic Guard. Between 1923 and early 1924, 511

²⁵⁸ Military Governor Mountjoy, Commandant Cosgrave to Adjutant General Portobello Barracks, 15 June 1923 (M.A., CW/P/02/01/02.).

²⁵⁹ 'I have just learned from the Prisons Board that it will take at least two months before Maryborough Jail will be ready for 100 Convicted Military Prisoners and that another month or so may elapse before the whole place is put into the desired state of repair.... This means that we will have to hold on to Two Wings of Mountjoy for their period mentioned'; Captain Records Office, to Adjutant General, 14 June 1923 (M.A., CW/P/02/01/02.).

²⁶⁰ Lieut. General to Commander in Chief 18 June 1923 (M.A., CW/P/02/01/06A.).

²⁶¹ This folder contains a variety of transfer orders from the Prisoners Department. The transfers were from jails to camps (M.A., CW/P/02/01/09.).

military internee cases were handed over to the civil authorities for prosecution.²⁶² The bulk of the charges against this group of internees involved the destruction of private and public property, larceny, the burning or destruction of railway stations, armed robbery, shooting of National Army soldiers, illegal possession of private cars or motorcycles and murder.²⁶³ From November 1922, in the wake of the government's emergency legislation, military trials became more frequent. In terms of sentencing, government records reveal that by December 1923, a number of sentences had been handed out. The following figures are of military internees who were tried and sentenced in the different command areas:

Athlone	26
Cork	50
Claremorris	57
Donegal	24
Dublin	90
Kerry	12
Limerick	55
Waterford	92 ²⁶⁴

Many of these trials took place in the early months of 1923.²⁶⁵ When convicted, prisoners were handed sentences ranging from 1-20 years penal servitude, with many death sentences commuted for longer time served in prison.²⁶⁶

²⁶² List of prisoners transferred to Civil Authorities, 1923-4 (M.A., CW/P/02/02/05.).

²⁶³ Ibid.

²⁶⁴ List of sentenced prisoners, 7 Dec. 1923 (M.A., CW/P/02/02/18.).

²⁶⁵ List of convicted and tried prisoners, December 1923 (M.A., CW/P/02/02/23.).

²⁶⁶ Ibid.

For internees without convictions pending, the authorities set in motion a release policy but this process was considerably delayed due to administrative incompetence. The Army noted in December 1923 that

...considerable delay and difficulty will arise in making arrangements for the transfer of prisoners to civil custody. The investigation of charges by the local civic Guard and Military is taking a great deal of time and in the majority of cases takes place without results. In view of this and in view of the fact that a great deal of correspondence takes place in regards to these prisoners, I beg to suggest that such persons should be released in the ordinary way, provided the Civic Guard will be in a position to re-arrest them when enquiries are completed. It would also be more satisfactory from point of view of the Guards to effect [*sic*] the arrest of a lot of these individuals rather than to take them over from Military custody. While so many important men are being released every day, it seems ridiculous to hold minor individuals for weeks, and in some cases months, while charges against them are being investigated. I should be obliged if I could have a ruling on this matter...²⁶⁷

While senior members of the national army were providing alternative measures to expedite internee releases, some ministers at cabinet were devising new ways of prolonging it. Some of the blame may be attributed to the Minister for Home Affairs, Kevin O'Higgins, who instructed Mulcahy to withhold certain internee releases. O'Higgins had little faith in the efficiency or capability of the army.²⁶⁸ It was unlikely that the army alone could be relied upon to counter the Anti-Treaty threat. Therefore, his insistence on prolonging internment may have been due, in part, to this viewpoint. Regan emphasised the tension arose between Mulcahy and O'Higgins over the release of prisoners and came to a head in November 1923. Mulcahy provided a 'strategy for early release' and placed it before the Executive Council and O'Higgins objected to the idea on the basis that the 'country was not stable enough to receive such an outflow of prisoners'.²⁶⁹ As a result, Mulcahy wrote to the Adjutant General in early December 1923 requesting:

²⁶⁷ Director of Intelligence to Minister for Defence, Chief of General Staff, and Adjutant General, 8 Dec. 1923 (M.A., CW/P/02/01/02.).

²⁶⁸ O'Halpin, *Defending Ireland*, p. 40.

²⁶⁹ Regan, *The Irish Counter Revolution*, p. 177.

Will you consider the question of marking that all prisoners arrested, even for very old crimes, or on very old suspicions-who are being arrested now-will be put into a separate camp, with a view of preventing them being absorbed into the present Camp organisations with a consequent strengthening of their morale which might, left to themselves, be not very good.²⁷⁰

By late 1923, the Free State still maintained this reserved approach to prison releases. The ministry of Home Affairs denied various release appeals on the basis that if the internees re-offended, it would be difficult to re-arrest them. This was clearly reflected in the correspondence at Army G.H.Q. which related that

with regard to the suggestion that these prisoners should be released in the ordinary way and re-arrested if desired by the Civil Guard it appears to the Minister that there is a likelihood that the “wanted” persons would be not available in this country when the Civil Authorities had arrived at a decision to bring them before the Civil Courts for trial...the Minister of Home Affairs cannot agree to such prisoners being released while the investigation of possible criminal charges is proceeding...²⁷¹

As a result internment figures remained high in the aftermath of the Anti-Treaty dump-arms policy in May.²⁷² The fear of renewed hostilities ensured that thousands remained in the country’s jails and camps.

1st June 11,989

1st July 11,480

1st August 11,039

1st September 10,476

1st October 9,697

1st November 8,023²⁷³

Eventually, in late 1923, the lack of prison releases led to the largest hunger strike in the history of Irish political imprisonment. In the months following the strike, the administration began to release prisoners with more vigour and as the year 1923 came to a close, the internee

²⁷⁰ Aire Chosanta to Adjutant General, 5 Dec. 1923 (M.A., CW/P/02/01/02.).

²⁷¹ Secretary Adjutant General to Director of Intelligence, 11 Dec. 1923 (M.A., CW/P/02/01/02.).

²⁷² Peter Cottrell, *The Irish Civil War* (Oxford, 2008), p. 59.

²⁷³ Cosgrave to Most Rev. James Duhig, Brisbane, Australia, 3 Jan. 1924 (N.A.I., s.1369/21.).

population had been significantly reduced to 1,851 in the country's jails and camps.²⁷⁴ By June 1924, there was only '123 persons' interned in the Free State.²⁷⁵ This fact, however, still brought the issue of internment to the government table. Joe McGrath T.D., along with many others, called for their release. In June 1924, he stated: 'It cannot be that the Government are afraid that the release of individuals such as the Stack type will cause any outburst in the country. If that is the case I must say that they are being wrongly and badly advised'.²⁷⁶ On 8 November 1924, Cosgrave announced a 'general amnesty for political prisoners'. Charlotte Despard received this as 'joyful news'.²⁷⁷ The media noted:

In the Dáil on Friday, President Cosgrave announced that the Executive Council had decided that prosecutions and apprehensions should cease in connection with the crimes or alleged crimes committed during the period December, 1921, and May, 1923, and arising out of the state of disturbance that then existed.²⁷⁸

Bill Kissane maintained that 'the Free State's governing attitude during the Civil War was that force was necessary in order to vindicate the rights of its citizens'.²⁷⁹ The measures adopted and implemented against the internee population would certainly support this assumption. The use of counter-insurgency methods such as emergency legislation, the implementation of widespread internment and 81 official executions, allowed the government to manipulate and enforce some element of control over the political situation. It provided the Free State with the authority to pursue a policy of fighting 'terror with terror'. Furthermore, strict censorship of the media and counter-propaganda allowed the government to monitor how the political situation was viewed by the general Irish public. Newspaper articles relating to prisoners were banned since these reports could potentially foster an element of sympathy for the 'irregulars'. In the midst of civil war, faced with armed opposition to the state and the

²⁷⁴ Daily Return of Prisoners, 31 Dec. 1923 (M.A., CW/P/02/02/25.).

²⁷⁵ D.É.D., Vol. 8, Col. 76, 27 June 1924.

²⁷⁶ Ibid.

²⁷⁷ Diary Entry, 8 Nov. 1924 (P.R.O.N.I., Charlotte Despard Diary, D.2479/1/8.)

²⁷⁸ *Kerryman*, 15 Nov. 1924 (N.L.I.).

²⁷⁹ Bill Kissane, 'Defending Democracy? The legislative response to political extremism in the Irish Free State, 1922-39' in *Irish Historical Studies*, XXXIV, no. 134 (Nov. 2004), p. 157.

destruction of public infrastructure, Anti-Treaty supporters were censored, interned, beaten and in extreme circumstances executed. Throughout these endeavours, the new government was given the moral support of the Catholic Church through the Bishops' Pastoral, which condemned Anti-Treaty atrocities and withdrew the sacraments from known members. From the government's perspective, counter-insurgency measures were necessary to end the civil war and these tactics were implemented extensively, though not exclusively, against internees. By 1924, intelligence reports within the I.R.A. recorded that the morale among the remaining internees had indeed been broken. A letter to I.R.A., G.H.Q. from Maryboro Jail recorded that 'a campaign of violence would be as unthinkable as hunger-strike... the lads have not the same spirit as of yore'.²⁸⁰ Mass internment and draconian legislation in the Free State had successfully tamed a once unruly prison population. William Murphy noted how the British government imprisoned a large portion of the 'literary' minded Republicans during the previous years, leaving the 'military minded men' at large to increase their influence.²⁸¹ The Free State was not about to repeat past mistakes and through high internment and counter-insurgency measures in the prisons, they brought the Anti-Treaty I.R.A. to a ceasefire in April 1923.

²⁸⁰ Paddy O'Brien, Prisoners O/C Maryboro Jail, to I.R.A., G.H.Q., 17 Sept. 1924 (U.C.D.A., Moss Twomey Papers, P69/11 (20-30)).

²⁸¹ Murphy, *Imprisonment and the Irish, 1912-1921*, pp 108-30 & p. 129.

Chapter 5

Northern Ireland and Internment 1922-5

It is becoming evident...that unless there is a greater spirit of co-operation between the Northern and Southern Governments a critical situation will develop along the border which at any time might lead to a renewal of disturbances...Colonel Spender, Secretary of the Northern Cabinet, told me that they looked upon the border Liaison Commission as purely concerned with the restoration of public confidence in both sides of the border, by ensuring that there is no big concentration of force anywhere....

Irish Times, 6 Mar 1922

This prophetic warning referred to the tense environment in the border region and Northern Ireland in March 1922. The establishment of the predominantly nationalist Free State and the inclusion of a boundary commission clause within the Anglo-Irish Treaty, threatened the very existence of Northern Ireland. The Belfast pogroms of a year-and-a-half earlier had further highlighted the sectarian nature of Northern Ireland society with many Catholic families seeking refuge in shelters. The call for a Belfast Boycott from the First Dáil reminded their northern brethren that southern attitudes were distinctly different to their own. In March 1922, the Craig-Collins pact was signed in what was a co-ordinated attempt to alleviate some of the tension that existed between North and South. Both governments had hoped to evade the ‘critical situation’ alluded to in the *Irish Times*. This chapter will assess the nature of internment in Northern Ireland in this politically and socially diverse environment. Stormont politicians were confronted with a similar propaganda campaign from Irish Republicans, which also targeted the treatment of internees while in state custody. Internees in the North of Ireland, like those in the Free State, were interned for prolonged periods, in some cases longer than those in the south. Conditions and treatment were major issues of contention among prisoners and the problem of overcrowding was not confined to southern jails alone.

Throughout this chapter, there will be a comparative analysis of internment in both the Free State and Northern Ireland.

A month before the outbreak of Civil War, the Stormont administration was in the process of arresting and interning men and women who were suspected of acting in a 'manner' prejudicial to the state. While internment figures in the south escalated during the months of July and August, Northern Ireland had decided to implement sweeping arrests in May. As early as March 1922, politicians forewarned of the growing tensions among Northern communities. Ulster Unionist Party M.P., Robert Lynn, addressed the Parliament outlining what he considered to be the failings of the present administration. He remarked that

...it is the business of every loyal man and woman to rally around the Government...I have told my constituents often when they complained of what was happening before the 21st November to "wait until our own parliament gets control." We have got control, and I am sorry to say the position is not better but worse...it is time it should end...¹

The situation to which Lynn referred was the downward spiral of law and order in Northern Ireland. The social and political change that engulfed the island from 1919-21 had resulted in a rapid escalation of violence. David Fitzpatrick remarked how 'riots, killings, burnings, and economic conflicts initiated in the mid-1920 resumed with increased ferocity after the truce...Sectarian and political violence peaked in 1922, when nearly 300 murders were officially enumerated in Northern Ireland. The murder count exceeded 30 in each month between February and June, rising to 80 in May before subsiding to a trickle after September'.² Similar to the Free State, crime rates rose dramatically. In response to the growing unrest, the Stormont administration introduced internment and 'raids and arrests

¹ N.I.P.D., Vol. II, Col. 24-5, 14 Mar. 1922.

² David Fitzpatrick, *The Two Irelands 1912-1939* (Oxford, 1998), pp 118-9.

commenced on the night of 22/23 May. That night, 202 people were picked up, and within a few weeks almost 300 persons- almost all Roman Catholic males- were detained, most to be served with internment orders'.³ The spate of arrests often led to violent confrontation within the divided communities of Northern Ireland and the nationalist *Irish News* reported; 'The campaign of searches and arrests was continued yesterday. In the glens of Antrim there seems to have been a serious encounter with "Specials", in which two men have reportedly been killed.... Since Saturday evening last a number of "B" Specials have been called up, and are doing duty through Lurgan, and groups of these are stationed at various places in the town.'⁴

By April 1923, the administration reported that some 600 internees had passed through the system,⁵ compared with over 13,000 in the Free State. Sean McConville stated that 'within two and a half years, a total of 732 persons were interned. They were drawn from across Northern Ireland as follows: Belfast, 217; Antrim, twenty six; Armagh, seventy two; Down, ninety eight; Fermanagh, sixty four; Derry, seventy five; Tyrone, 180'.⁶ Internment figures were therefore much lower in Northern Ireland, reflecting the population disparity. However, the Stormont government had only three prisons at its disposal (Londonderry, Belfast Jail and Armagh Prison) and later acquired a prison ship, the *S.S. Argenta* and Larne Workhouse as an internment camp.⁷ The accommodation available for interning prisoners was much less than that available to the Free State. However, unlike the southern administration, Stormont had the opportunity to avail of U.K. prisons although they had to pay for this facility.

Similar to the Free State, the administration arrested the well-known Republicans in Northern Ireland. Instances of false imprisonment also occurred and there were many

³ Sean McConville, *Irish Political Prisoners 1920-62: Pilgrimage of Desolation* (London, 2014), p. 327.

⁴ *Irish News*, 25 May 1922 (N.L.I.).

⁵ N.I.P.D., Vol. III, Col. 443, 19 Apr. 1923.

⁶ McConville, *Irish Political Prisoners 1920-62*, p. 327.

⁷ Denise Kleinrichert, *Irish Republican Internment and the Prison Ship Argenta 1922* (Dublin, 2001) p. 74; Home Affairs Minute Sheet, 26 July 1922 (P.R.O.N.I., HA/5/2028.).

individuals interned even though their families had little to do with national politics. These persons may have been singled out for simply living in a predominantly nationalist area or being associated with well-known I.R.A. men. Ulster Unionist Party M.P. for East Belfast, Thomas McDonald, highlighted one particular case in Stormont. He had received a letter from parents of one such internee which read:

...I have two sons who were taken from their home on 22nd May and have been kept in prison for months on the "Argenta" and they are now transferred, they say, to Larne Prison...Me and my family never took any part whatsoever in politics and we think it is heart-rending to have our boys locked up there without a specific charge being lodged against them...⁸

McDonald called on the Government to consider a 'free pardon' to this category of prisoners, so that '... some of these young men will be able to return to their homes and become good citizens without being made criminals'.⁹ The introduction of internment in Northern Ireland produced a number of practical difficulties and the state similarly struggled to renovate a poorly equipped prison system. The administration had much in common with the Free State in terms of renovations and repairs and many Stormont politicians likewise believed that much of the damage to the prison system had been carried out by the previous wave of rebellious prisoners. The government were similarly ill-prepared for the sudden influx of internees that entered the system. From June 1922, the large number of internment orders issued in Northern Ireland resulted in a steep rise in the prison population throughout the year.¹⁰ The majority of those arrested in Belfast were sent to the *S.S. Argenta* and then sent to Larne Workhouse or Belfast Prison and on some occasions these men were then sent to Londonderry. Armagh Jail was used solely for the purpose of female internees, along similar lines as the North Dublin Union in the Free State. In 1922, Dawson Bates, Minister for Home

⁸ N.I.P.D., Vol. II, Col. 1014, 12 Oct. 1922.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ HA/5 series contains internment files for this period. Many individual files begin in May/June 1922 (P.R.O.N.I.); see also, Klienrichert, *Irish Republican Internment and the Prison Ship Argenta*, pp 18-20.

Affairs, outlined how the Northern Government had only three prisons for their convicts and internees: 'Belfast, Londonderry and Armagh, the last named being used for female prisoners only'.¹¹ He further outlined that the prison service in Northern Ireland was in a poor condition due to a combination of meagre funding from the British Exchequer and the destructive nature of Republican internees. In a speech to parliament on 17 May he stated that

These prisons were handed over to the Northern Government in a very poor condition. Belfast and Derry, as you are aware, had suffered severely from the damage done by Sinn Féiners, while none of the three prisons are at all up to modern requirements... The Imperial Government, which spent large sums on bringing the Scotch prisons up to date, spent nothing on the Irish prisons, most of which, according to the antiquated type devised for an obsolete system of discipline...¹²

As a result of the escalating internment figures, the prison system became the focus of political debate in Stormont. Dawson Bates continued to highlight the inadequacies of the prison system, in particular, the burden of financing extra accommodation and provisions for the growing internee population. He noted how this situation caused a considerable amount of expense for the Northern Ireland exchequer stating that '...the stocks of requisites in these prisons, such as clothing, bedding, etc., had fallen to such a low level... that this government has to incur extra expenses in bringing the stocks up again...'.¹³ Dawson Bates then provided a rough outline of the internment situation and estimated the cost of provisions for internees:

The provision for clothing, etc., is increased owing to some extent by the renewals rendered necessary by the malicious destruction of property by Sinn Féin prisoners... repairs and new buildings... also increased... I am referring to the time prior to the period we took over.¹⁴

As part of these renovations, Home Affairs used prison labour to clean and re-organise the old prisons. This was similar to the policy adopted in the Free State where renovations also

¹¹ N.I.P.D., Vol. II, Col. 514, 17 May 1922.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ N.I.P.D., Vol. II, Col. 515, 17 May 1922.

took place, particularly at Kilmainham, for the internment of 'irregular' women in September 1922.¹⁵ In Northern Ireland, Dawson Bates told the parliament that

...one wing in Belfast Jail, which was completely wrecked, has been completely restored...it was done by prison labour under the supervision of artisan warders... I am glad to say that practically all the prisoners in the jails are now working. ...from the prisoners [*sic*] point of view, I think it is most necessary that they should be engaged in carrying out useful work in the jail...¹⁶

Renovations and repairs were necessary in order to accommodate the internees but the cost of maintaining the prisoner body was another matter entirely. This became an issue of concern for some politicians who were confounded by the variation in price, which seemed to differ depending on the internment centre. Robert Lynn, Unionist Party M.P. for West Belfast, aptly pointed out this anomaly to Dawson Bates in May 1922: 'In Belfast and Londonderry the cost is £18 per head, whereas in Armagh it only costs £15. I wonder can the Right Hon.

Gentlemen tell us why the cost is £3 per head less in Armagh to feed 75 prisoners, whereas, with the large number of 275 in Belfast it costs £18 per head...also like him to tell us whether he does not think this £145 per head under the head 0 to 50 prisoners who are accommodated outside Northern Ireland is rather high...'.¹⁷ In his explanation, Dawson Bates highlighted gender as the most likely cause, stating that '...the comparison in cost between the prison in Belfast and the prison in Armagh I can only suggest that in Armagh they are ladies and not men, and it may be that they consume less food...'.¹⁸ Similar lines were drawn in the south, as the female populated North Dublin Union appeared to be noticeably under stocked and many internees complained that the food 'was poor and scarce'.¹⁹

¹⁵ Minister for Home Affairs to President Cosgrave, 22 Sept. 1922 (N.A.I., s.1369/1.); Minister for Home Affairs, to President Cosgrave, 23 Sept. 1922 (N.A.I., s.1369.).

¹⁶ N.I.P.D., Vol. II, Col. 515-16, 17 May 1922.

¹⁷ N.I.P.D., Vol. II, Col. 516, 17 May 1922.

¹⁸ N.I.P.D., Vol. II, Col. 522, 17 May 1922.

¹⁹ Margaret Buckley, *The Jangle of Keys* (Dublin, 1938), p. 54 & 58.

The higher cost of financing internment meant that the annual estimates for the prison budget became a hotly contested issue in the first few years. Many within the parliament took exception to the cost of maintaining internees, which they believed to be far above the normal expense. Ulster Unionist Party M.P., Robert Crawford, highlighted some of the shortcomings:

I would like to know is his estimate based on last year...I find for fuel, light and water for these prisoners they spend £10 per head. My experience of that before going to jail these prisoners are not very fond of water for washing purposes, and when they come out of jail they are not much improved. Ten pounds...is far too much and instead of the jails being made more comfortable for these prisoners they should be made more punitive...²⁰

These attitudes were not uncommon among Stormont politicians at the time, many of whom were greatly irritated at the idea of making prisons ‘comfortable’ for internees. While T.D.s like Kevin O’Higgins philosophically questioned the benefit of the prison system in the south, there were no such sentiments uttered in the Unionist dominated Stormont.²¹ In fact, there was a real sense of animosity among Northern Ireland’s politicians towards the internee body and the use of tax-payers’ money in the maintenance of such individuals, who threatened the very existence of the Northern Ireland. Crawford bluntly captured these sentiments when he informed the Minister that the estimates were more than enough for the prisoners. He stated: ‘... I do not know what he is going to spend when we make the present jails palaces for these prisoners’.²² The cost to the exchequer overshadowed debate around internee conditions or treatment in parliament. One strong point of contention in this area was the use of the *S.S. Argenta*, as a prison. M.P.s questioned the rationale behind the purchase of the ship and what the government proposed to do with it once internment was over. Lynn M.P. queried the price of maintaining the *Argenta* and stated that he wanted to ‘...draw his

²⁰ N.I.P.D., Vol. II, Col. 517, 17 May 1922.

²¹ O’Higgins highlighted the problems to Dáil Éireann in 1922 stating: ‘...There is not a member of this present Government who has not been in jail. We have had the benefit of personal experience and personal study of these problems... Personally I can conceive nothing more brutalising, and nothing more calculated to make a man rather a dangerous member of society, than the existing system.’ D.É.D., Vol. 1, Col. 2321-2, 28 Nov. 1922.

²² N.I.P.D., Vol. II, Col. 517, 17 May 1922.

attention to the price of the *Argenta* ...it strikes me as rather high- £19,000... the amount of coal required for a stationary boat must be pretty small...'.²³ Lynn was not the only M.P. to find fault with the cost of maintaining the *Argenta* and its internees. The Unionist Party M.P. for Down, Captain Hon. Harry Mulholland, set out his own reasons against the ship's purchase and claimed that '...the economical thing to have done would have been to have hired a suitable ship just to overcome the temporary difficulties...'.²⁴ His proposed remedy for the situation was to adopt the previous policy of 'erecting a barbed wire camp with army huts for the guard over them...'.²⁵ However, Mulholland accepted that internment was a 'necessary expense' in order to ensure the safety of the citizens of Northern Ireland. Dawson Bates defended his decision to purchase the *Argenta*. He argued that the ship was necessary in the wake of rising prison figures following the introduction of the Civil Authorities Act 1922. Northern Ireland had similarly resorted to emergency legislation and the Special Powers Act had been passed as a means of curbing the rising tide of social unrest. Laura Donohue stated that 'in its initial use of regulations the unionist government drew most heavily on measures aimed at averting immediate violence and unrest. Thus, orders for curfews, the closure of roads and passageways, restrictions on licensed premises, detention, internment, restriction and exclusion were most heavily levied in the years following partition'.²⁶ Similar to the Free State's Emergency Powers legislation, this act led to an expansion of the prison population, in a system with an inadequate level of accommodation. Home Affairs attempts to resolve this issue resulted in the purchase of the *Argenta*. Dawson Bates related that

...we have something like 500 prisoners who are interned under the Civil Authorities Act... we were dangerously near to breaking point, but when the Civil Authorities Act

²³ N.I.P.D., Vol. II, Col. 1013-14, 12 Oct. 1922.

²⁴ N.I.P.D., Vol. II, Col. 1021, 12 Oct. 1922.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Laura K. Donohue, 'Regulating Northern Ireland: The Special Powers Acts, 1922-1972', in *The Historical Journal*, Vol. 41, No. 4 (Dec. 1998), p. 1091.

came into operation we had to look around for further accommodation. After very careful consideration in regards to this extremely difficult subject we came to the conclusion that the most efficient way to deal with the case was to put these prisoners on to a ship...government purchase a vessel known as the 'Argenta' ...Horrible tales were told of the atrocities perpetrated against the prisoners and their awful sufferings, but imitation is the sincerest form of flattery, and we find now that the Provisional Government who were perhaps our most hostile critics have now adopted the same methods...the Argenta was at first moored in Belfast Lough...²⁷

Bates provided the cost of converting Larne Workhouse into a prison, a figure of £5,000 and revealed that this allowed for the sufficient accommodation of some '500' extra internees.²⁸ He also noted that he had to increase the number of staff in the male prisons at Belfast and Londonderry, the *Argenta* and Larne workhouse. Within these estimates, he included the 20 internees from Northern Ireland, imprisoned in the United Kingdom.²⁹

Political and practical considerations were at the heart of Bates' internment policy. He decided not to reopen internment camps on the basis that they were more convenient for internees, as it allowed prisoners considerable freedom of movement. Thus the prison ship, was seen as a greater deterrent and Bates stated that 'many of these internees have been accustomed to enjoying the luxury of an internment camp, but I think they find that things on board a ship are not quite so pleasant, and many of them try to avoid going on a ship...'.³⁰ There were, however, exceptions to the rule. Some internees preferred to be imprisoned within the wire cages of the *Argenta* than in the closed confines of a prison cell. One internee actually asked to go back to the ship, as the regime there had been more open. He wrote to the Minister for Home Affairs pleading:

I beg to be transferred from Derry Prison to the S.S. Argenta or Larne Internment Camp. I have been removed from the Argenta three months ago, and I do not know

²⁷ N.I.P.D., Vol. II, Col. 1010, 12 Oct. 1922.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ N.I.P.D., Vol. II, Col. 1012, 12 Oct. 1922.

³⁰ Ibid.

why I have been removed, no charge having been preferred against me...Also I am very depressed having to spend 20 hours out of the 24 in confinement.³¹

One advantage of using a ship as a place of internment was that it allowed the government to completely isolate the internees from the mainland which ultimately separated the men from the immediate community. This greatly reduced the possibility of internees interacting with members of the public by shouting from their cell windows or putting their hands through bars. It also lessened the chances of escape attempts, as reported by Klienrichert in her study of internment. Wire fencing was erected around the *Argenta* deck to prevent internees jumping ship and swimming ashore. One disastrous but memorable escape attempt occurred when internee, Chuck Brown, decided to bore a hole in the side of the ship, only to discover he had made this hole below sea level. Fellow internees had to hold him 'against the deluge until the warders could get it repaired'.³² The *Argenta* effectively limited the number of possible escapes which were specific to the prison environment. Thus by 1923, Dawson Bates was able to report some measure of success with regard to the *Argenta*. He reiterated his observations of the previous year, that 'the experience of the Imperial Government was that internment camps had proved a failure in many ways, and at the time we arrested those prisoners we did not know what was going to happen...'.³³ He stated that they had come to accept that the ship was well organised and that '...Representatives of the Imperial Government ...many of whom visited the ship-they were opponents of this Government-all came to the conclusion that the ship is carried on in a fit and proper way... the religious proportions of the inmates of the jails are not necessarily the same as the religious proportions of the Six Counties'.³⁴ However, Bates was conscious of how internment would be perceived politically and realised that the government needed to deal reasonably with the internees. In Stormont, he noted that as a parliament they would 'have to govern people who

³¹ Joseph McClure to Minister for Home Affairs, 13 Mar. 1923 (P.R.O.N.I., HA/5/1502.).

³² Klienrichert, *Irish Republican Internment and the Prison Ship Argenta*, p. 162.

³³ N.I.P.D., Vol. III, Col. 457, 19 Apr. 1923.

³⁴ Ibid.

differ from us politically’, adding that they must be ‘scrupulously careful to see that we act fairly towards everyone’.³⁵ While the majority of internees were interned in Northern Ireland, the Stormont administration continued to send ‘difficult’ internees to the United Kingdom, a trend which had developed within the Irish Prison system prior to 1922.³⁶ In parliament, Bates confirmed that some of the most dangerous prisoners in Northern Ireland were being transferred to English and Scottish jails.³⁷ Those who were removed were generally internees who revolted against their jailors or created friction in the prisons. This was merely a continuation of British policy, when hostile internees were transferred outside of Ireland to the U.K..

As previously mentioned, the government of Northern Ireland had few native prisons to fall back on. In the Free State, the government had moved and released various civil prisoners in an attempt to provide space for the rising internee population. In Northern Ireland, the administration now sought additional means of accommodation and turned to some of the country’s other institutions. In preparation for the expected influx of prisoners, inmates of the ‘Larne infirmary’ were transferred to Ballymena Hospital Committee so that the workhouse could accommodate new internees.³⁸ Similar renovations were made in the Free State, such as the North Dublin Union and Kilmainham Jail in order to transform them into suitable internment centres. The Stormont administration estimated that some 140-180 prisoners could be maintained in each wing of Larne Workhouse, once the correct renovations were made. This involved installing basic items such as extra ‘latrines’.³⁹ The Workhouse was a nineteenth century building and its internal furnishings had naturally succumbed to the passage of time. The Deputy Director of Maintenance for the Home Affairs

³⁵ N.I.P.D., Vol. III, Col. 457, 19 Apr. 1923.

³⁶ Sean McConville, *Irish Political Prisoners 1848-1922: Theatres of War* (London, 2005), p. 707.

³⁷ N.I.P.D., Vol. III, Col. 457, 19 Apr. 1923.

³⁸ Inspector to Assistant Secretary, 30 July 1922 (P.R.O.N.I., HA/5 2028.).

³⁹ Report of Col. F. Pountney, 18 July 1922 (P.R.O.N.I., HA/5 2028.).

Department highlighted some of these physical flaws stating that ‘the main gate has rotted completely away. A new one must be provided and I strongly recommend that the contractor who is carrying out the alterations should be ordered to do the job’.⁴⁰ Iron doors were fitted in their place so as to prevent the opportunity for escape attempts.⁴¹ Recommendations were made that the authorities occupy parts of the surrounding field in order to erect ‘a barbed wire fence’ for defensive purposes.⁴² However, the Deputy Director of Maintenance expressed deep concern regarding the funding available for the restoration of the workhouse. He wrote to the Ministry for Home Affairs that

I have, as a matter of fact, given much weight to considerations of economy in my plans for Larne, and I am by no means satisfied- as I shall put on record later on- that adequate precautions have been taken for securing the prisoners incarcerated there against attempts at rescue or escape.⁴³

He did, however, acknowledge that with ‘proper vigilance on the part of the guard the place should be secure against any action by the prisoners or their friends outside which-taking local conditions into consideration- may be reasonably anticipated’.⁴⁴ Renovations carried out in Larne Workhouse would allow the administration to transfer internees from the prison ship *Argenta*. This would reduce the ship’s running cost, in terms of manpower and facilities. It was estimated that ‘when the S.S. *Argenta* is brought into Larne Harbour and the number of internees on board her is reduced. It should be possible to cut down the guard to two officers and 25 men’ and that Larne Workhouse ‘...would require ‘a guard of 2 officers and 50 men’.⁴⁵ Overall, it was calculated that the Workhouse in Larne could safely hold ‘210’

⁴⁰ Col. F. Pountney, Deputy Director of maintenance, to S. Watt Esq., 21 July 1922 (P.R.O.N.I., HA/5 2028.).

⁴¹ Col. F. Pountney to Col. Toppin, Ministry Home Affairs, 9 Aug 1922 (P.R.O.N.I., HA/5 2028.).

⁴² Col. Toppin to Inspector General, 22 July 1922 (P.R.O.N.I., HA/5 2028.).

⁴³ Col. F. Pountney to Col. Toppin, Ministry Home Affairs, 9 Aug. 1922 (P.R.O.N.I., HA/5 2028.).

⁴⁴ Col. F. Pountney to Secretary, Minister Home Affairs, 30 Aug. 1922 (P.R.O.N.I., HA/5 2028.).

⁴⁵ Col. F. Pountney to Secretary, Ministry Home Affairs, 21 Aug. 1922 (P.R.O.N.I., HA/5 2028.).

internees.⁴⁶ Pountney described this accommodation as ‘very generous’ and mentioned that the attics could be fitted in order to ‘...take another 80 or 100 men’.⁴⁷

While the administration legislated and prepared for rising internment figures, criticism of conditions soon followed from nationalists in both the Free State and Northern Ireland. Before the outbreak of civil war, newspaper reported the inadequate conditions in Northern Ireland’s jails. The treatment of internees was one of the most topical issues and Londonderry Jail came under fire. The *Irish News* reported:

Alarming reports are prevalent as to the treatment in Derry Jail of the political prisoners arrested in the Six County raids. It is stated that they are subjected to conditions worse than those of convicted criminals. Over twenty of the prisoners were transferred to the jail on Monday. Since then their friends have not been permitted to see them. The wife of one prisoner, Mr Gilligan, member for Derry County Council, was refused admission to the prison.⁴⁸

The article continued to list the various injustices ranging from ‘...No parcels of food... and with the exception of the hours exercise, the men, it is alleged, are kept in solitary confinement and are deprived of proper toilet facilities; the use of tobacco and cigarettes is prohibited; and reading material denied’.⁴⁹ Time and again, the same issues arose concerning food, exercise and sanitation. Internees in Londonderry complained that the ‘lack of adequate exercise, close confinement, deprivation of facilities for reading or communicating with friends, except one written message weekly, is having a detrimental effect on the prisoners...’.⁵⁰ Their daily meals were often ‘scant’ and ‘ill-cooked’.⁵¹ The *Irish News* covered prison conditions extensively in this period. On the *Argenta*, the men were reportedly huddled ‘...into seven “pens” or cages on the middle deck’.⁵² Food was apparently ‘the

⁴⁶ Home Affairs Secretary note, 7 Sept. 1922 (P.R.O.N.I., HA/5 2028.).

⁴⁷ Col.F. Pountney to Secretary, Minister Home Affairs, 19 Sept. 1922 (P.R.O.N.I., HA/5 2028.).

⁴⁸ *Irish News*, 2 June 1922 (N.L.I.).

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Ibid

⁵² *Irish News*, 12 July (N.L.I.).

coarsest possible description; badly cooked, and served to the men as if they were so many animals...the cages at meal times present a zoo like spectacle'.⁵³ The 'lanterns and urinals' were 'open at each end of this deck, and there is an inadequate water supply'. As a result, the internees succumbed to a variety of ailments, ranging from '...constipation, diarrhoea, vomiting, violent headaches etc.'. ⁵⁴ When internees requested a 'dietary system', it was denied and the article remarked that 'no visitors are allowed...correspondence too is restricted...Up to the present no adequate accommodation has been provided for the Chaplain who, on the three occasions he has celebrated Mass on board...had to arrange...with the aid of men to fix up an altar on the upper deck ...'.⁵⁵ Treatment and conditions remained a major topic of discussion among nationalist communities and within the Stormont administration. In Londonderry Jail, a number of men who were arrested for the offence of being '300 yards over the border'⁵⁶ were reportedly confined to their cells for 'six weeks'.⁵⁷ They had refused to 'walk five yards apart on exercise or to do any work' and as a result their privileges had been withdrawn. The letter related that when they initially arrived at the prison they were

allowed parcels, papers and cigarettes, and could walk and run about any way we liked for two hours a day...the next thing was that they would only allow us whatever cigarettes we could smoke on exercise. Next we were ordered to walk in single file. We considered that going too far, and refused, with the result that we were deprived of all exercise until we obey...there are a lot of convicted prisoners in here who are allowed to walk any way they like... The food we get is unfit for a dog, and sanitary arrangements are a scandal. A week ago 20 more prisoners refused the single order and are also confined to their cells.⁵⁸

The authorities, both in Northern Ireland and the Free State, often used confinement as a means of punishing internees, particularly those who presented obstacles for the administration. The inadequate facilities at prisons such as Londonderry provided additional opportunities for dissent and in order to combat this unruly element, the administration

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ *Irish News*, 23 May 1922 (N.L.I.).

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

withdrew privileges for bad behaviour.⁵⁹ Therefore the discontinuation of parcels, letters and cigarettes, as reported in the *Irish News*, may have stemmed from the internees misconduct and not from abusive prison guards. However, Republican sympathisers were likely to omit the full particulars of individual cases, especially if it aided their propaganda campaign. In order to counter this strategy, the administration attempted to highlight occasions when internees utilised blatant propaganda. In late 1922, a raid on a house in Belfast provided the perfect opportunity. During the raid, a letter was discovered in which the author related a rather pleasant image of internment on the *Argenta*.⁶⁰ The writer, who remained nameless, described their daily routine:

The boys here are in the best possible form. We are honestly having a good time. The beds are splendid. I have three blankets besides yours. The food is far better than we got in Drumcondra...bread...cheese...porridge and meat and soup...we don't need to get up at all if we don't like...warders are only here to prevent us from escaping and lighting our cigarettes...have nothing to do with us...we have our own command...we spend from 7 am (if we are awake) till 8pm on deck, only going down for meals. Except eating we do nothing but smoke, play cards, make ladies [*sic*] handbags...weather lovely at present... we have hot baths and everything we want...In fact for the unemployed Belfast man it is more of a home than a prison. It is far better than Ballykinlar. For propaganda purposes we have to describe ourselves as being badly treated, so don't expect anything or feel sorry for me when you read the ordinary letters. It is part of the game...tell everyone else that the ARGENTA IS A FLOATING HELL...⁶¹

The Stormont administration immediately reported the existence of the letter to parliament. Dawson Bates used the letter to reaffirm his position that internees were not treated as poorly as many people believed. He related that there were 'over 300 on the ship at the present time. I must say that the health of the prisoners is the best answer to the charges which have been

⁵⁹ See internee misconduct file (P.R.O.N.I., HA/5 2207.); this file relates the various ways in which internees were punished for disobedience. Many unruly men were transferred to Londonderry Jail for causing havoc in places such as the *SS Argenta* and Larne Workhouse. Authorities punished internees by withdrawing their untried prisoners' diet, placing them in solitary confinement and disallowing certain privileges including letters, parcels and cigarettes. Some of these cases were reported in the nationalist media, but with a different political slant.

⁶⁰ R.U.C. Department to District Inspector 'B', 15 Dec.1922 (P.R.O.N.I., HA/5/290.); The R.U.C. stated that a letter was found in a house addressed to Peg Sherwin.

⁶¹ Unknown to Peg, *S.S. Argenta*, Thursday n/d (P.R.O.N.I., HA/5/290.).

levelled at the government. I came across the other day a letter ...which was sent by one of the internees. I would like to read a portion of it to the House'.⁶² Dawson Bates read the last segment of the letter to parliament, in which the prisoner asked the reader to describe the *Argenta* as a 'Floating Hell'. It is difficult to confirm the authenticity of the letter but if the content was genuine, it revealed the extent to which the nationalist side would go to exaggerate reports of deprivation on board the ship. There were many conflicting reports from the *Argenta* and internees regularly acknowledged that it was overcrowded with inadequate facilities.⁶³ Either way, Bates believed that 'the letter' showed '...the real opinion ... as to their treatment'. He stated that the writer '...admits that complaints are merely made for propaganda purposes. I think a copy should be given to the press, though it may lead to criticism that we treat them too well'.⁶⁴ In one sense, this exposed the level of pressure on the Stormont government from members of the public, both nationalist and unionist.

Prisoners' conditions were subject to Section 23 of the Special Powers Act (Northern Ireland) 1922. The act outlined the conditions of internment for untried persons which specified that they could receive letters and parcels. In addition, they would have to make their own beds, clean their room and passageway and keep their furniture and kitchen utensils in order. They were permitted to smoke in certain areas and were allowed to obtain newspapers and books at their own expense.⁶⁵ The food available in Northern Ireland's jails was rationed along similar lines as the Free State. The recommended diet for internees was as follows:

For Breakfast: Bread (Brown or white) 8oz; Tea 1 pint; Margarine $\frac{3}{4}$ oz; Stirabout 1 pint; Milk $\frac{1}{2}$ pint. *Dinner: 3 days a week* –cooked meat served with 6oz; potatoes (cooked) 1 lb; cabbage 4oz; Bread 4 oz. *2 days a week-* Pea soup 1 pint; Boiled Bacon

⁶² N.I.P.D., Vol. III Col. 443, 19 Apr. 1923.

⁶³ Klienrichert, *Irish Republican Internment and the Prison Ship Argenta*, pp 88-112.

⁶⁴ Minister for Home Affairs Minute Sheet, 1 Jan. 1923 (P.R.O.N.I., HA/5/290.).

⁶⁵ Civil Authorities (Special Powers) Act (Northern Ireland), 1922, regulation 23 b& c (P.R.O.N.I., HA 5/2207.).

or Corned Beef 6oz; potatoes (cooked) 1 lb; cabbage 4oz; Bread 4 oz. *1 day a week*-cooked meat served with pea soup 6oz; potatoes (cooked) 1 lb; cabbage 4oz; Bread 4 oz. *1 day a week Friday*: Boiled fish with sauce 12 oz; Potatoes 1 lb; Bread 4oz or plain boiled rice 2 oz; bread 8 oz; Milk 1 pint. Supper: Tea or Cocoa 1 Pint; Cheese or Golden Syrup 2 oz; Bread 8 oz; Margarine ½ oz; Milk ½ pint.⁶⁶

In the south, the menu was almost identical except that prisoners in the Free State were provided with butter as opposed to margarine in the North. Furthermore, in a move that was clearly a concession to the predominately Catholic nationalist internees, the prison system in Northern Ireland served fish on Fridays while internees in the south only received bread and vegetable soup for dinner.⁶⁷

In addition, illness aboard the *Argenta* was reportedly widespread and Klienrichert highlighted some of the possible reasons for the diseases. She noted that the poor provision of soap and water on the ship and the unlaundered linen led to an infestation of lice and the outbreak of scabies.⁶⁸ Some men were too embarrassed to report their infections, which in turn, increased the level of contagion.⁶⁹ Pulmonary disease, tuberculosis, kidney infection and pneumonia were among some of the illnesses affecting the internee population in Northern Ireland. Infectious disease rose as the number of those imprisoned increased and by early 1923, Dawson Bates had to defend the administration in parliament. He stated that Northern Ireland had interned around 600 Republican internees over the course of the year. He told Stormont that

Certain charges have been made against the Government of Northern Ireland in regard to the treatment meted out to internees, and that as a result the health of the prisoners has suffered. I have before me certain figures which show that the health of the prisoners- and we have passed through our hands something like 600 has been extremely good. We have had no deaths. Where prisoners require operative treatment they are at once removed to the Victoria Barracks where, through courtesy of the

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Prison Menu for Untried Prisoner, 26 Nov. 1917 (N.A.I., s. 1369/2.).

⁶⁸ Klienrichert, *Irish Republican Internment and the Prison Ship Argenta*, p. 111.

⁶⁹ Ibid, p. 112.

General Officer Commanding, facilities have been placed at the disposal of my department, where the best possible surgical treatment is available.⁷⁰

Once internment was well under way, the scourge of overcrowding was not far behind. This problem became the subject of many newspaper articles in the Free State and in this sense; internees in Northern Ireland were no different. In Belfast Jail, reports emerged:

At the moment the prison in Belfast is overcrowded, and several cells contain three prisoners. No visits are allowed, no parcels or food, and only two postcards are permitted to be written weekly. The internees include, Dr. Moore, Downpatrick; Dr. Lavery, Rathfriland; Dr. McKee, Banbridge; Cahir Healy, County Councillor; John Cassidy, Co. Councillor and Sean Nethercott, U.D.C., with John O Dolan, surgeon-dentist, and Sean Sheehan Inland Revenue from Fermanagh. Only one exercise is allowed, and some of the prisoners, on complaining to the Governor that their beds were dirty, were informed that they had no further beds as the prison was unexpectedly overtaxed. In the Austin Stack ward a number are sleeping on the bare floor without bed boards; many have no tables or stools, and are doing with one blanket...⁷¹

Overcrowding in Northern Ireland was not limited to the prisons alone. The *Argenta* also came under scrutiny when an inspector, who visited the ship in October 1922, stated that there was 'barely enough room for '150' and there was '310 men' there.⁷² The article alleged that the internees were not adequately provided for and in some instances, men had to eat their meals from the cage floor.⁷³ These reports were actually confirmed by some prisoners whose accounts revealed that '...there were no tables or chairs within the cages, meals were divided and meat and bread were cut on the bare floors for distribution'.⁷⁴ In Omagh, reports began to surface that internees were being held in 'cells beneath the courthouse' and were in bad health. The nationalist media related that 'at present three of them are in hospital

⁷⁰ N.I.P.D., Vol. III, Col. 443, 19 Apr. 1923.

⁷¹ *Freemans Journal*, 8 June 1922, (N.L.I.).

⁷² *Freeman's Journal*, 16 Oct. 1922 (N.L.I.).

⁷³ *Ibid.*

⁷⁴ Klienrichert, *Irish Republican Internment and the Prison Ship Argenta*, p. 89.

suffering from an illness contracted while in custody...Several prisoners are also confined in the Omagh Specials Barracks...'.⁷⁵

As in the Free State, general overcrowding created tension among the prison population and in turn created opportunity for dissent. Vandalism and hostile tactics were used by prisoners in Northern Ireland in a similar vein to those in the Free State, as prisoners sought to undermine the system. By late 1922, the number of internees creating disorder was on the rise in Northern Ireland. In September 1922, Governor Drysdale wrote a letter of complaint to Home Affairs requesting that some *Argenta* internees be removed and taken to a prison for 'causing a good deal of trouble on this ship and rendering the lives of the other men almost intolerable by their aggressive and threatening attitude towards them'.⁷⁶ The internees in question were five men from Belfast, John Boyle, Arthur McLarnon, George McCann, James Nolan and George Hamill. Home Affairs responded by asking the Governor to refer to rule 11 of the Rules for Internees, in which they could be treated as ordinary convicted prisoners, if their behaviour did not improve.⁷⁷ A couple of weeks later, after the warning had been issued, internees Boyle and Taylor were abusive towards a warder saying they would '...fucking choke' him and that they would do for him on the outside.⁷⁸ These five internees continued to create trouble for Governor Drysdale and in late October, he wrote another letter to Home Affairs detailing their recent actions. Boyle, Hamill, Taylor, Nolan and McLarnon were now inciting the other men on the ship to acts of non co-operation and Drysdale accused them of instigating the refusal to clean '...the pens and decks' and noted that 'ordinary domestic service has been scuppered'.⁷⁹ The Stormont administration regularly countered this behaviour by transferring the unruly prisoners to secure jails in the U.K.

⁷⁵ *Irish News*, 1 June 1922 (N.L.I.).

⁷⁶ Governor Drysdale to Sec. of Home Affairs, 26 Sept. 1922 (P.R.O.N.I., HA 5/2207.).

⁷⁷ Sec. of Home Affairs to Governor Drysdale, 30 Sept. 1922 (P.R.O.N.I., HA 5/2207.).

⁷⁸ Warder Hoey to Governor Drysdale, 17 Oct. 1922 (P.R.O.N.I., HA 5/2207.).

⁷⁹ Governor Drysdale to Sec. Home Affairs, 23 Oct. 1922 (P.R.O.N.I., HA 5/2207.).

thereby depriving them of certain privileges that untried internees were entitled to under the Special Powers Act. In October 1922, Dawson Bates transferred one such prisoner. Bryan O'Neill, was removed from Larne where he was causing a great deal of trouble for the guards. He was sent to H.M. Belfast Jail and there he was not permitted to 'smoke', nor 'supplied with books or newspapers', 'allowed 2 hours exercise a day', 'not permitted to send or receive any communication or parcels or to be visited by any persons except with permission of the Minister'.⁸⁰ Drysdale strongly recommended that action be taken against the men in question⁸¹ and within a week they were recommended for a transfer to Belfast jail.⁸² However, prison politics played a part in delaying the transfer, when the Governor of Belfast Jail lodged a strong protest with the ministry on the basis that the men's presence would 'upset prison discipline'.⁸³ As a result, Governor Drysdale was asked to hold back on the transfer.⁸⁴ However by mid-November, internees presented further problems and Governor Drysdale advised on their 'removal from the ship' as quickly as possible.⁸⁵ The transfer was arranged and on 16 November the men were removed to Londonderry Prison.⁸⁶ Consequently, Nolan, Boyle, Hamil and Burns went on hunger strike on 19/20 November in the jail. In the first few days of the strike, the prison administration re-considered the old issue of force feeding but made no moves to act on it.⁸⁷ By 23 November, the prisoners were showing signs of weakening, in particular prisoner Boyle, whose pulse had diminished.⁸⁸ On 26 November, the prisoners agreed to take food again and the strike was called off without the internees gaining their concessions.⁸⁹ In the aftermath, they applied to return to the *Argenta* but Governor Drysdale was adamant that their return to the ship would have an

⁸⁰ Internment Order for Bryan O'Neill, 7 Oct. 1922 (P.R.O.N.I., HA 5/2207.).

⁸¹ Sec. Home Affairs to Col. Toppin, 26 Nov. 1922 (P.R.O.N.I., HA 5/2207.).

⁸² Sec. Home Affairs to Inspector General R.U.C., 1 Nov. 1922 (P.R.O.N.I., HA 5/2207.).

⁸³ Memo Home Affairs, 3 Nov. 1922 (P.R.O.N.I., HA 5/2207.).

⁸⁴ Sec. of Home Affairs to Governor Drysdale, 6 Nov. 1922 (P.R.O.N.I., HA 5/2207.).

⁸⁵ Governor Drysdale to Col. Toppin, 11 Nov 1922 (P.R.O.N.I., HA 5/2207.).

⁸⁶ Captain Long, *S.S. Argenta*, to Sec. Home Affairs, 16 Nov. 1922 (P.R.O.N.I., HA 5/2207.).

⁸⁷ Home Affairs Memo, 21 Nov. 1922 (P.R.O.N.I., HA 5/2207.).

⁸⁸ Extract from Medical Officers Journal, Londonderry Prison, 23 Nov. 1922 (P.R.O.N.I., HA 5/2207.).

⁸⁹ Home Affairs Memo, 24 Nov. 1922 (P.R.O.N.I., HA 5/2207.).

adverse effect on the other internees. He wrote that ‘there is no prospect that they would carry out their promise...On the contrary I consider that their presence on the ship would be a distinct danger at the present time. There is a hostile spirit among the internees on the ship...’.⁹⁰ He did, however, recommend relaxing some of the orders against them such as providing them with newspapers and a return to the untried prisoner diet. Ultimately, Dawson Bates refused their request to return to the *Argenta* revealing that Northern Ireland took an equally strict stance on hunger strikers.⁹¹

Prisoner transfers became more frequent in late 1922 and early 1923 as internee misconduct increased. Within a month of the hunger strike in Londonderry Prison, Governor Drysdale again wrote to the Ministry of Home Affairs. He appealed for the removal of another internee ‘Patrick Brummey’ and asked for his transfer to one of H.M. Prisons, on the grounds that he ‘...persistently incites the younger and rougher element among the internees to insubordination and acts of destruction...’.⁹² Throughout January 1923, Governor Drysdale witnessed an increase in aggressive behaviour and a break-down in prison discipline.⁹³ Two particular internees on the *Argenta*, Frank and Eugene Gallagher, were found with an empty whiskey bottle in their cell ‘given to them by one of the two warders dismissed...’ the previous week. On the ‘11th instant, a parcel containing whiskey, cigarettes and food was intercepted before it had reached them’.⁹⁴ The administration sought to have eight more men removed from the *Argenta* to Londonderry but acknowledged that this would probably mean closing the female wing in Londonderry Jail in order to house the internees.⁹⁵

In both the Free State and Northern Ireland, the administrations transferred troublesome prisoners in order to break up specific groups. In the case of the unruly *Argenta*

⁹⁰ Governor Drysdale to Sec. Home Affairs, 28 Nov. 1922 (P.R.O.N.I., HA 5/2207.).

⁹¹ Sec. Home Affairs to Governor of Londonderry Prison, 5 Dec. 1922 (P.R.O.N.I., HA 5/2207.).

⁹² Governor Drysdale to Sec. Ministry Home Affairs, 12 Jan. 1923 (P.R.O.N.I., HA 5/2207.).

⁹³ Governor Drysdale to Home Affairs recommending transfers; 12 & 16 Jan. 1923 (P.R.O.N.I., HA 5/2207.).

⁹⁴ Drysdale to Sec Home Affairs, 16 Jan. 1923 (P.R.O.N.I., HA 5/2207.).

⁹⁵ Sec. Home Affairs to Mr Magill, 19 Jan. 1923 (P.R.O.N.I., HA 5/2207.).

prisoners, Home Affairs suggested that the Governor of Belfast Gaol take the prisoners as there were only 11 in this prison and they were 'mostly invalids'.⁹⁶ However, this idea was scrapped and the eight men in question were later transferred to Londonderry on 1 February 1923 and deprived of special privileges. Within a couple of days, Mr. Crummy and Francis and Eugene Gallagher lodged a petition.⁹⁷ Governor Drysdale wrote to the Ministry and stated that internees 'Gallagher, Cox and Robinson' could be 'brought back to the ship' and their return was eventually arranged.⁹⁸ Depriving internees of their 'special privileges' generated further problems for the administration and by March 1923 Home Affairs recommended the restoration of privileges to the internees in Londonderry.⁹⁹ Governor Drysdale continued to report disturbances on the *Argenta* and a further nine internees were removed to Larne internment camp for their own safety.¹⁰⁰

However, as one group of unruly internees were removed, another group emerged to take their place. In September 1923, official correspondence from the governor and deputy governor of the *Argenta*, reported on the existence of a new disobedient faction. One letter stated that 'Creaney, Woods, Doran and Connolly are the worst...'. They had started a fire in their 'cage',¹⁰¹ and their excuse was '...that they lit the fires to warm some tea, where the matches come from is unknown and must be brought in by somebody'.¹⁰² Vandalism took various forms from damaging 'window glass' to destroying 'electric fittings'. One internee Peter Dougan threw a piece of slate '...from the exercise yard of the Workhouse in the direction of a Conservatory in Mr Fleming's garden...A large piece of glass was broken in

⁹⁶ Sec. Home Affairs to Mr Magill, 15 Jan. 1923 (P.R.O.N.I., HA 5/2207.).

⁹⁷ Sec. Home Affairs to Governor Londonderry Prison, 3 Feb. 1923 (P.R.O.N.I., HA 5/2207.).

⁹⁸ Sec. Home Affairs to Inspector of R.U.C., 8 Mar. 1923 (P.R.O.N.I., HA 5/2207.).

⁹⁹ Memo Home Affairs, 3 Mar. 1923 (P.R.O.N.I., HA 5/2207.).

¹⁰⁰ Governor Drysdale to Min Home Affairs, 9 Mar. 1923 (P.R.O.N.I., HA 5/2207.).

¹⁰¹ S.S. *Argenta* Memo, 14 Aug. 1923 (P.R.O.N.I., HA 5/2207.).

¹⁰² Captain Long, Deputy Governor S.S. *Argenta*, to Governor Larne Internment Camp, 17 Aug. 1923; Sec. Home Affairs to Mr. Magill, 15 Jan. 1923 (P.R.O.N.I., HA 5/2207.).

the conservatory and a piece of slate found beside it with Dougan's name scratched on it'.¹⁰³ Dougan was transferred to another prison for this misdemeanour and Mr Fleming '...lodged a claim for 7/- for the damage done to his window'.¹⁰⁴ The *Argenta* experienced a wave of disruption in September 1923 and along with internees Creaney and Doran,¹⁰⁵ a further seven men were transferred highlighting the tense situation on the ship.¹⁰⁶ On the morning of their removal, the internees blocked the doors so that they '...could not be opened and access had to be made by the ventilators'.¹⁰⁷ When the staff eventually entered the pens, the 'wanted' men refused to leave their beds and the assistance of the Constabulary guard had to be obtained. The prisoners were finally removed and taken to the upper deck practically at the point of bayonet'.¹⁰⁸ The men were transferred to Londonderry Prison and were surprisingly well behaved. By 13 October, Governor Stephenson recommended that their privileges be restored.¹⁰⁹ However, Londonderry Prison had its own cohort of disobedient prisoners. Internees, McClure, Gibson, Campbell, Burns and McCurry, were named by Stephenson as very unruly and he recommended that they be 'deprived of all privileges and placed on No. II scale of diet until such time as their conduct improves'.¹¹⁰ The following day, six of the internees were on hunger strike in Londonderry for a return of their privileges.¹¹¹ On 18 October, it was reported that four of the five men (Burke, Campbell, Taylor and Teague) had left the hunger strike with only McCurry still on.¹¹² Within a couple of days, the privileges had been restored to the men.¹¹³

¹⁰³ Governor Drysdale to Sec. Home Affairs, 12 Sept. 1923 (P.R.O.N.I., HA 5/2207.).

¹⁰⁴ Sec. Home Affairs to Sec. Finance, 1 Jan. 1924 (P.R.O.N.I., HA 5/2207.).

¹⁰⁵ Sec. Home Affairs to Inspector R.U.C., 3 Sept. 1923 (P.R.O.N.I., HA 5/2207.).

¹⁰⁶ Sec. Home Affairs to Inspector R.U.C., 12 Sept. 1923 (P.R.O.N.I., HA 5/2207.).

¹⁰⁷ Governor Drysdale to Sec. Home Affairs, 14 Sept. 1923 (P.R.O.N.I., HA 5/2207.).

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

¹⁰⁹ Governor Stephenson Londonderry to Sec. Home Affairs, 13 Oct. 1923 (P.R.O.N.I., HA 5/2207.).

¹¹⁰ Governor Stephenson Londonderry to Sec. Home Affairs, 15 Oct. 1923 (P.R.O.N.I., HA 5/2207.).

¹¹¹ Sec Home Affairs to Capt. Pountney, 16 Oct. 1923 (P.R.O.N.I., HA 5/2207.).

¹¹² Sec. Home Affairs to Capt. Pountney, 18 Oct. 1923 (P.R.O.N.I., HA 5/2207.).

¹¹³ Sec. Home Affairs to Capt. Pountney, 19 Oct. 1923 (P.R.O.N.I., HA 5/2207.).

The volatile nature of internment in Northern Ireland continued into 1924. Governor Drysdale complained that Thomas Corrigan and Robert Graham were 'lying in bed during the day and encouraging others to do the same' and he recommended that they be dealt with under section 11 of the regulations.¹¹⁴ Over a week later, he also recommended the transfer of another three prisoners to Londonderry.¹¹⁵ In June 1924, John and Thomas Haughey were deprived of privileges for being 'persistently defiant in discharging the rules of the camp'. Governor Drysdale reported that '...it is not desirable to use force in presence of the other men, except in case of actual necessity, otherwise they would have been dragged out of their beds'.¹¹⁶ The Haughey brothers were eventually transferred to Londonderry and deprived of their untried prisoner privileges.¹¹⁷ However, punishments were not used indiscriminately in Northern Ireland and the administration assessed each case as it was presented. Under the Civil Authorities Act, regulation 23, rule II, the withdrawal of privileges could only be applied if an internee was persistently disobedient and the recommendations of a governor were not always taken on face value. In one such case, Captain Stephenson in Larne Internment Camp, recommended that internee Charles Stewart should lose his untried prisoner privileges when he threatened a warder and used bad language.¹¹⁸ However, Home Affairs were reluctant to pursue this avenue of punishment before determining if there was '....anything to show that Stewarts [*sic*] misconduct has been persistent...'.¹¹⁹ Since this could not be proven, the ministry decided to transfer Stewart to Londonderry instead but allowed him to keep his special privileges.¹²⁰ This decision revealed that while the administration withdrew privileges from certain prisoners, they only targeted internees who were particularly troublesome. However, opposition often came from citizens within the

¹¹⁴ Governor Drysdale to Sec. Home Affairs, 10 Mar. 1924 (P.R.O.N.I., HA 5/2207.).

¹¹⁵ Governor Drysdale to Sec. Home Affairs, 19 Mar. 1924 (P.R.O.N.I., HA 5/2207.).

¹¹⁶ Governor Drysdale to Sec. Home Affairs, 3 June 1924 (P.R.O.N.I., HA 5/2207.).

¹¹⁷ Sec. Home Affairs to Governor, Londonderry, 5 June 1924 (P.R.O.N.I., HA 5/2207.).

¹¹⁸ Warder Flanagan to Governor, Larne Workhouse, 23 Aug. 1924 (P.R.O.N.I., HA 5/2207.).

¹¹⁹ Sec. Home Affairs to Governor, Larne Workhouse, 27 Aug. 1924 (P.R.O.N.I., HA 5/2207.).

¹²⁰ Sec. Home Affairs to Capt. Pountney, 29 June 1924 (P.R.O.N.I., HA 5/2207.).

Unionist tradition. Home Affairs raised particular concern regarding one specific group, which the Secretary stated was ‘...25...some very troublesome men from the *Argenta* and the equally troublesome U.P.A. [*Ulster Protestant Association*] internees and I do not think we should ask Captain Stephenson to take this batch’.¹²¹ The U.P.A. prisoners had also been arrested under the Special Powers Act which sought to maintain peace and order in Northern Ireland. David Bonner noted that in 1922 ‘there was a spate of sectarian assassinations attributed to the Ulster Protestant Association (UPA)’.¹²² Of the 700 prisoners that were interned in Northern Ireland 1922-4, ‘less than 20 were Loyalist (UPA members), the vast remainder republicans/nationalist’.¹²³ Bonner revealed that there were two categories of prisoners interned in Northern Ireland. The first of these were interned for offences such as organising and perpetrating serious crime. The second were ‘important rebels’ who admitted membership of an illegal organisation or opposition to the crown. This second category of prisoner could be released if they agreed to leave or be deported and ‘apparently most of the loyalists interned did so, emigrating to Canada and Australia’.¹²⁴ The internment of Loyalists in Northern Ireland echoed the decision made by the Free State to intern Anti-Treatyites, although the internment figures were dramatically higher in the south. In 1922, both states faced armed opposition from different ideological groups, (Unionist/Nationalist) and factions with comparable political backgrounds (Free State/Anti-Treaty and UUP/UPA). In both cases, the new states choose to contain the threat through internment.

By 1923, the high cost of maintaining internees became an issue of contention in Northern Ireland, as M.P.s increased pressure on Home Affairs for prisoner releases. An Advisory Committee was established by Dawson Bates, in order to assess those seeking

¹²¹ Sec. Home Affairs to Mr Magill, 15 Jan. 1923 (P.R.O.N.I., HA 5/2207.).

¹²² David Bonner, *Executive Measures, Terrorism and National Security: Have the rules of the Game changed* (Hampshire, 2007) p. 77.

¹²³ *Ibid.*, p. 78.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*

release.¹²⁵ This Committee examined prisoners' applications in conjunction with R.U.C. reports detailing the general character of the internee and petitions from supporters. Ulster Unionist Party M.P., Thomas Lavery, suggested caution rather than haste and reminded the parliament that 'now they are incarcerated, the people of the Six Counties can sleep soundly in their beds without fear of being murdered or of having their homes burned... I do not care how many years we have got to keep these people, they should be kept until they learn better manners'.¹²⁶ Another Unionist M.P., William Coote even suggested deporting some internees from Northern Ireland and stated that

If there are citizens who will not obey by the laws of the state, who will not comply with any loyal sentiment...the Government has the right to ask them to leave... We ... ought to ask these people to sign some declaration of loyalty, or to take powers to march them over the Border to the Free State...it is intolerable that we should keep these people incarcerated at such a cost to the taxpayer...if they will not undertake to be good citizens, the time has come to get rid of them...¹²⁷

On a political level, marching ex-internees over the 'Border' was a much more complex scenario than Coote envisaged. Megaw, Parliamentary Secretary for Home Affairs, quickly pointed out the anomalies in the system. He stated that while it was possible to send citizens to another part of Britain, the Government of Ireland Act provided no such powers of deportation outside the jurisdiction of the United Kingdom. He explained the situation thus:

It has been said that we have the power to put these people outside the country altogether. We have no power to do that... We have no power to deport...under the Act of 1920... We can send convicts from one part of the United Kingdom to another... under the Alienation Act itself a country cannot deport a citizen unless there has been a conviction....¹²⁸

The Government of Ireland Act, which established the state of Northern Ireland, restrained the Stormont administration from deporting any of its citizens who had not being legally tried

¹²⁵ Committee consisted of Deputy Recorder of Belfast, a Roman Catholic Barrister and a retired officer; Klienrichert, *Irish Republican Internment and Prison Ship Argenta*, p. 177.

¹²⁶ N.I.P.D., Vol. III, Col. 455, 19 Apr. 1923.

¹²⁷ N.I.P.D., Vol. IV, Col. 632, 9 Apr. 1924.

¹²⁸ N.I.P.D., Vol. IV, Col. 634-5, & Col. 650, 9 Apr. 1924.

and convicted. Essentially, if a prisoner was convicted in Northern Ireland, they could be transferred to another part of the United Kingdom, just like any other convict. However, given that the majority of these men and women were internees, held without trial, they could not be removed from Northern Ireland. Furthermore, internees could not be transferred to the Free State, as this was a separate jurisdiction by 1922. This legal loophole left the government with few options as regards the best method to adopt in winding down internment. As a result, the advisory committee decided to release some internees unconditionally while the 'more dangerous' internees were subject to restrictive conditions. These stipulations generally included exclusion orders which effectively controlled their movements in certain counties or excluded them from Northern Ireland completely.¹²⁹

Internment in Northern Ireland thus revealed a great deal of similarities with the Free State. Emergency legislation was enforced which resulted in a sweep of arrests of dangerous or 'potentially' dangerous individuals in May and June 1922. The Stormont administration was likewise ill-prepared for the level of prisoners that entered the system and in an attempt to accommodate the overflow of internees, the government purchased a prison ship as a temporary measure. The Free State government's approach was somewhat different, as large swathes of prisoners were detained in internment camps and the administration considered penal colonies as a means of stemming overcrowding. Eventually, the Free State sanctioned the release of civil prisoners in order to accommodate military internees. In Northern Ireland, as in the Free State, the government had to arrest persons of similar ideology in order to preserve the peace and this could be seen in the internment of 25 U.P.A. internees that were held in Londonderry. Both governments pursued peace and stability even when faced with difficult choices.

¹²⁹ A more detailed analysis of this is included in chapter 6.

Politicians in Northern Ireland were regularly criticised by both nationalist and unionist sympathisers. Those on the nationalist side believed internees were living in deprived conditions, while Stormont politicians criticised the administration for being too lenient. Like their fellow internees in the south, prisoners in Northern Ireland rioted against their treatment, as they had done in previous years and ultimately exacerbated the tension within the system. However, one noticeable difference in how these two states approached internment was on the policy of executions. In Northern Ireland, retaliatory executions (such as those which transpired in the Free State) did not occur. One possible reason may be that Dawson Bates erred on the side of caution in dealing with internees, since the adoption of an execution policy, may have further aggravated the divisions in Northern Ireland. He indicated this approach in a parliamentary speech stating that Stormont would 'have to govern people who differ from us politically', noting that they must be 'scrupulously careful to see that we act fairly towards everyone'.¹³⁰ An execution policy could have potentially hardened nationalist attitudes in Northern Ireland, thereby exacerbating existing tensions. Furthermore, unlike the Free State, Northern Ireland contained a unionist majority population that were unlikely to be swayed by nationalist sentiment. However, no such distinct division existed in the Free State; both Anti and Pro-Treaty supporters were in the nationalist majority and if provided enough political lee-way, Anti-Treaty sympathy could potentially increase. The deterrent of execution was therefore considered necessary by politicians in the Free State while Dawson Bates pursued no such policy in Northern Ireland. Instead, he opted to juggle the diverse opinions within the community. In terms of renovations, overcrowding, vandalism and hunger strikes, both the Free State and Northern Ireland experienced these problems when dealing with internees. Additionally, internment in both states resulted in some questionable detentions. In Northern Ireland, the sweep of arrests in 1922 was often

¹³⁰ N.I.P.D., Vol. III, Col. 457, 19 Apr. 1923.

manipulated by local grievances and further facilitated by a restrictive release policy.¹³¹ In the Free State, internees were requested to sign an 'Undertaking form' but were not issued with long term exclusion orders.¹³² Furthermore, the Stormont parliament never issued a general amnesty such as President Cosgrave did in the south for Anti-Treaty prisoners in 1924.¹³³ Once released from prison, internees both North and South experienced problems such as unemployment and emigration. The internee body in Northern Ireland was also noticeably different from that of the Free State. Kleinrichert remarked that the prison population was almost exclusively composed of Pro-Treaty, middle class professionals.¹³⁴ These nationalist sympathies were clearly a push factor for those who decided to migrate south of the border. This was in direct contrast to the Anti-Treaty internees, who experienced difficulties when seeking employment, when their political sympathies were not in line with the establishment. A genuine sense of fear pervaded the Stormont parliamentary debates at this time, as M.P.s earnestly questioned the consequences of releasing prisoners back into a fragile society. This attitude revealed that Stormont M.P.s were socially and politically distanced from the mindset of those they interned. While T.D.s in the Free State could somewhat sympathise with their Anti-Treaty internees (many of whom were their former comrades), the unionist-dominated Stormont had no such empathy with the 'Sinn Féiners' in their midst. This suspicion ultimately led to elongated internments or conditional releases based on exclusion orders, from a portion, if not all of Northern Ireland. The prospect of the looming boundary commission in 1924 may also have swayed political decisions in determining who was released, when they were released and where they were sent to. Many of the internees released before the boundary commission, accepted exclusion orders from

¹³¹ This is discussed in relation to post-internment issues such as poverty and unemployment in chapter 6.

¹³² Exclusion orders became a condition of release for some prisoners in Northern Ireland; see HA/5 series (P.R.O.N.I.).

¹³³ *Kerryman*, 15 Nov. 1924 (N.L.I.).

¹³⁴ Kleinrichert, *Irish Republican Internment and the Prison Ship Argenta* 1922, p. 62.

Northern Ireland, presumably to minimise potential political friction in their locality.¹³⁵ It was far better for Republicans to be outside Northern Ireland while its political existence hung in the balance. Harsh critics such as Coote were eager to transfer their Republican problem south of 'the border' by marching the disloyal internees into the Free State. While this scenario was impossible from a legal perspective, the level of exclusion orders incorporated into Northern Ireland's release policy went part of the way to achieving this outcome. The inherent division between nationalist and unionist communities was by far the most obvious political difference in how internment operated in Northern Ireland.

¹³⁵ The HA/5 series contain various individual files of prisoners who accepted exclusion orders from specific areas of Northern Ireland or the whole six county region. See a selection at (P.R.O.N.I., HA/5/1525 Michael Hanratty, HA/5/1573 A.K. Dooris, HA/5/1583 Terence Fitzpatrick, HA/5/2012 Harry McKeown, HA/5/2269 James Ryan, Michael Watters HA/5/2022, George Hamill HA/5/2024, Hugh Harper HA/5/2026.).

Chapter 6

The Consequences of Internment: Families, Fundraising and the Irish Republican Prisoners' Dependents Fund.

By May 1923, the Free State had succeeded in bringing about an end to hostilities with the Anti-Treaty I.R.A. and one of their most effective weapons in achieving this was the introduction of internment. The extent to which internment was implemented signified that the new government was not prepared, militarily or administratively, for the immediate threat posed by Anti-Treatyites in 1922. With a poorly trained army and unarmed civic guard comprising the extent of their defence forces, other measures were deemed necessary to enforce peace and order. In the Free State, as in Northern Ireland, the administration managed to dilute support for the opposition through internment. However, wide-scale imprisonment, on both sides of the border, had left many relatives of those interned destitute in their absence. This chapter will consider the financial and social aid provided to these struggling families and analyse the various fundraising endeavours operated by the Anti-Treaty side in an attempt to alleviate the poverty that existed among dependents. This chapter will focus on a series of marches and meetings conducted in the Free State in order to raise awareness for the plight of struggling internees' families. At an international level, missions were organised to America and Australia to raise money for the Anti-Treaty cause and the Irish Republican Prisoners' Dependents Fund played a significant role in these missions.¹ The final section will consider how successful these fundraising efforts were, both domestically and internationally, and assess the level of poverty, unemployment and emigration which affected the newly released internees in the Free State.

¹ Henceforth referred to as the I.R.P.D.F., or the Dependents Fund/Fund.

The I.R.P.D.F. was established by Kathleen Clarke to aid the relatives of those killed or imprisoned as a result of the 1916 Rising.² During the War of Independence, it continued to provide financial aid to the dependents of I.R.A. volunteers who were destitute as a result of their national activities. However, the Dependents Fund was not immune to the trend that had splintered the Republican movement and in early 1922, in a pattern similar to that of the I.R.A. and Sinn Féin, the Irish Republican Prisoners' Dependents Fund split following the Anglo- Irish Treaty.³ Cumann na mBan continued the work of the Dependents Fund in April 1922 under the Anti-Treaty leadership.⁴ The Fund's records suggest that the majority of those who received aid were overwhelmingly Anti-Treaty dependents in the Free State with fewer cases originating from Northern Ireland.⁵ However the Fund did, on occasion, provide some financial assistance to the relatives of those interned by the Stormont government.⁶

Fundraising missions were organised by the Irish Anti-Treaty delegation to the U.S.A. in 1922-4, often through the American Association for Recognition of the Irish Republic.⁷ The long period of fighting and continuous attempts to evade capture had taken its toll on the I.R.A. and had created a significant dent in the coffers of the Dependents Fund. During 1922-4, the movement attempted to raise money through fundraisers at home and abroad in support of the prisoners' dependents. In the aftermath of the Anglo-Irish Treaty, 'Downing Street issued an order releasing all those detained under ROIA, Regulation 14b'.⁸ Following its ratification, the Home Office then sanctioned the release of prisoners convicted of 'political

² Pension Statement of Kathleen Clarke, June 1950 (M.A., Military Service Pensions, MSP34REF61087.); Senia Plaseta, *Irish Nationalist Women 1900-1918* (Cambridge, 2013), p.202.

³ Anne Matthews, *Dissidents: Irish Republican Women 1923-1941* (Cork, 2012), p. 36.

⁴ 'The remit of the first IRPDF was to supply support to the families of men on active service during the Irish War of Independence and it did not escape the fall out of the Treaty'; Ibid.

⁵ See Kathleen Barry Moloney Papers for an overview of the cases handled by the I.R.P.D.F. (U.C.D.A., Kathleen Barry Moloney Papers, P94/46)

⁶ Denise Klienrichert, *Republican Internment on the Prison Ship Argenta 1922* (Dublin, 2001), p. 59.

⁷ Henceforth referred to as the A.A.R.I.R..

⁸ Sean McConville, *Irish Political Prisoners 1848-1922: Theatres of War* (London, 2005), p. 764.

offences in Ireland'.⁹ As releases proceeded, there appeared to be genuine sympathy among various sections of society for returning prisoners. McConville noted how 'political events ...accelerated' and there were 'scenes of great rejoicing in Ireland as 220 men were released from Kilmainham and 1,700 from Ballykinlar Camp...'.¹⁰ In March, just before the Collins-Craig Pact was signed, a general meeting was called by the Irish Republican Soldiers and Prisoners of War Association to discuss the steps which might be taken to obtain 'employment and financial aid for the member'.¹¹ The association had the support of a number of public bodies such as 'the county councils and other public bodies, including the G.A.A. and had got a sympathetic hearing'.¹² There were a number of prominent women, such as Charlotte Despard, who worked through the I.R.P.D.F. to raise support for internees' dependents. It was stated that '...some members had been helped by the Dublin White Cross through Mr Figgis and Mrs Despard' who 'had made them a very generous offer'.¹³ Fundraising events were organised in an effort to publicise their goals and it was reported that 'on Sunday they would have a Flag Day... the public on realising the situation would do their utmost to assist in alleviating the distress that existed amongst the members of the Association'.¹⁴ In previous years, these fundraising efforts received a positive response since many Irish citizens were sympathetic to the plight of internees who had fought the British administration. However, during the early months of 1922, there was a significant drop in financial contributions to the I.R.P.D.F.. A notice referring to Republican collections appeared in the *Irish Independent* and stated that 'Owing to the falling off of the weekly

⁹ However there were still some prisoners who were not included in these initial releases. McConville noted that 'Other groups remained. One comprised those who had been convicted of offences committed in England-especially during the IRA arson and destruction campaign. These divided again into those guilty of offences committed pre and post Truce'; Ibid, p. 765.

¹⁰ Mc Conville noted this in *Manchester Guardian*, 8 Dec. 1921; Ibid, p. 764.

¹¹ *Freeman's Journal*, 23 Mar. 1922 (N.L.I.).

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Ibid.

house to house collections they will be discontinued from this date. All future subscriptions can be sent to office. Authorisation cards are to be sent to secretaries'.¹⁵

The drop in contributions may be attributed to the support for the treaty but the onset of civil war would soon harden the views of the general populace. By the end of 1922, the activities of the Anti-Treaty I.R.A. altered public attitudes and internees soon became an object of suspicion and contempt. In December 1922, a letter written to the *Freeman's Journal*, encapsulated this change and revealed that some sections of Irish society had little sympathy for Anti-Treaty internees. Mr. Charles Nixon was compelled to take up his pen when he discovered that the Corporation had proposed to pay a 'half-wage' to 'Irregular' internees who worked for the council. He wrote:

The Corporation will at next Mondays [*sic*] meeting consider a proposal to vote half pay to such of its employees who are imprisoned for their activities on behalf of the irregulars. This is a shameless and most irresponsible effort to flout and fleece the citizens, who are almost unanimously opposed to the campaign of the Irregulars, and are intensely indignant at the proposal that they should be made pay for their own destruction...¹⁶

Mr Nixon then raised an issue which certainly presented problems for those fundraising for the Dependents' Fund during 1922-3. He referred to the Republican movement pre-1922 and stated that: 'In the report of the Committee an attempt is made to draw a parallel with the payment of the 1916 men and others who waged a war against foreign invaders. There is no comparison...for the irregulars are waging a war against the people themselves'.¹⁷ It was this fundamental difference that presented major challenges for the I.R.P.D.F. operating during the civil war period. The Anti-Treaty I.R.A. opposed the new government, despite the clear Pro-Treaty majority of the June 1922 election. The tragic loss of life and the continuous damage to property and infrastructure did little to endear their campaign to many Irish

¹⁵ *Irish Independent*, 14 Jan. 1922 (N.L.I.).

¹⁶ *Irish Independent*, 11 Dec. 1922 (N.L.I.).

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

citizens. The I.R.P.D.F. would later encounter this lack of sympathy at the collection box.

When fundraising resumed in 1922, Seán McConville noted how in ‘a tradition going back to the Anglo-Irish War activists leafleted and made collections at Sunday masses’,¹⁸ since ‘those who had been at religious devotion were perhaps more inclined to compassionate reflection’.¹⁹ Staging collections outside local churches had proved a successful way of accumulating funds. The Irish public of the 1920s were renowned for their religious fervour and dedication. Mass attendance in the majority of towns and villages remained high. Horace Plunkett writing in the early part of the twentieth century declared that ‘In no other country in the world, probably, is religion so dominant an element in the daily life of the people as in Ireland’.²⁰ Church collections were thus an easy and effective means of gathering extra income for the Fund. These collections were held outside church gates on a Sunday and many were publicized in local newspapers. One such advert in the *Westmeath Examiner* read:

A Collection will be taken outside the gates at all the masses in the different churches of this district **on Sunday October 21**, in aid of the Prisoners and their Dependents. You are asked to give in the name of **Christian Charity**, and your respectful tolerance towards the voluntary workers, who have entered into this noble project from a humane point of view.²¹

However, the publication of the Bishops’ Pastoral in October 1922 condemned Anti-Treaty activities and church collections suffered dramatically. The Pastoral outlined a hardening of attitudes among the clergy against the Republican campaign and this was confirmed when the collections for internee dependents were deemed ‘unlawful by the bishops’.²² Bishop Colohan of Cork informed his ‘flock’ that ‘no one would turn them away. Indeed, the Saint Vincent de Paul Society (a Roman Catholic charity) “will not refuse to make provision for

¹⁸ Sean McConville, *Irish Political Prisoners 1920-1962: Pilgrimage of Desolation* (London, 2014) p. 258.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Sir Horace Plunkett, *Ireland in the New Century* (London, 1904), p. 94.

²¹ *Westmeath Examiner*, 20 Oct. 1922 (N.L.I.).

²² Mc Conville, *Irish Political Prisoners 1920-1962*, p. 258.

anyone in need, be he Free State or Republican”²³ He thus directed them not to contribute to these ‘women collectors’.²⁴ Soon after, church collections were officially banned by the clergy and in November 1922, the *Irish Times* reported Colohan’s statement: ‘It is forbidden by the laws of the National Synod in Maynooth No. 114 to collect money for secular purposes at the church doors or on the church grounds, or at the gates opening to the church grounds, and priests are reminded of their duty of preventing, as far as they can, such collections from being held in the vicinity of the church, even outside the church grounds, where they are objectionable’.²⁵ The church labelled Anti-Treaty atrocities as ‘criminal’ and their opposition proved effective. By 1923, there were growing concerns regarding the reduction in financial aid to the I.R.P.D.F. and on 13 April, *Éire* published a copy of a memo submitted to, Monsignor Luzio, peace envoy for the Holy See. The article stated that the fund was a charitable organisation and that church policy towards collections was stifling their fundraising efforts for poverty stricken dependents.

1. To bring to the notice of his Excellency, the Papal Legate, the particular persecution directed by the Government of the Irish Free State against this Fund- a purely charitable one...
2. To protest against the action of His Lordship, the Bishop of Cork, in publicly forbidding a collection for this fund at the doors of churches in his diocese.
3. To ask that your Excellency bring this matter to the attention of the Holy Father²⁶

As a result of church opposition to the Anti-Treatyites, these collections remained low throughout the civil war. There were of course other routes through which supporters sought donations for dependents. When the civil war officially ended on 24 May, there were renewed efforts in Ireland to raise awareness for those still interned.²⁷ A series of meetings were held on behalf of the internees and their families, who were without their main

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ *Irish Times*, 17 Nov. 1922 (N.L.I.).

²⁶ *Éire*, 5 May 1923 (N.L.I.).

²⁷ Funds had run pretty low by the end of the Irish Civil War and from June 1923 a series of requests were sent to the I.R.P.D.F. See (U.C.D.A., Kathleen Barry Moloney Papers, P94/46.).

breadwinners (mainly husbands, wives, sons, daughter, brother, daughters etc.). Prominent Anti-Treatyites spoke on different platforms as this drew larger crowds of potential contributors. On 17 July 1923, a public meeting was held in Mall, Waterford. ‘Mrs Brugha, widow of the late member of East Waterford...appealed to all to subscribe as generously as possible towards the dependents fund’.²⁸ On the very same day, another such meeting was held in the Mansion House, Dublin, and was said to have a ‘...very large attendance and much enthusiasm was displayed during the progress of the meeting...the chairman concluded the proceedings with an appeal on behalf of the prisoners’ dependents’.²⁹ On 30 September, a meeting was held on Camden Street and the various internee issues were highlighted. ‘Miss O’Mullane, who had been released from Kilmainham Prison, thanked the people for their effort on her account...Miss Markievicz wound up by asking for a collection for the prisoners’ dependents’.³⁰ On 21 October 1923, another such meeting took place on Upper Sackville Street (now O’Connell Street). At this meeting, ‘organised by the Trade’s Council’, there were a number of speakers including ‘Mr. B. Conway, Mr. P.T. Daly and Mr. Larkin’.³¹ Mr Larkin spoke in sympathy with the prisoners’ dependents and asked the crowd ‘...if a strike was called who would support the women and children who would be affected by it? During the last fourteen months, he was informed that only £1000 had been collected in aid of the Prisoners’ Dependents Fund...He knew what the men were enduring because he had been on hunger strike himself’.³² Larkin’s remark provoked a response from Ms Kathleen Barry, the I.R.P.D.F. Secretary, who wrote to the *Irish Times* and stated:

He is reported as having said that he understood that only £1,000 had been raised in Ireland for the Irish Republican Prisoners Dependents Fund. I take it that this statement of Mr. Larkin’s is based on my remark at the Ard Fheis that only £1000 had been subscribed in Ireland for the Central Fund. This £1,000 does not include the

²⁸ *Irish Times*, 18 July 1923 (Ibid).

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ *Irish Times*, 1 Oct. 1923 (N.L.I.).

³¹ Ibid., 22 Oct. 1923 (N.L.I.).

³² Ibid.

amounts raised by the different committees all over Ireland- or by the Dublin District Committee- for distribution locally.³³

Barry's letter revealed that while collections were low in 1923, the fund still had some regular contributors. Supporters of the I.R.P.D.F. utilized a number of different avenues as a means of gathering financial aid. The newspaper *Éire* was one source of revenue for the movement as highlighted by the Anti-Treaty Chief of Staff:

I got a circulation list from D/Publicity which I shall ask him to forward you. You will see from the list that this paper only reaches comparatively few places. If the circulation was good it would help your work greatly. I am asking volunteers to push its sale and if you would ask the branches of the I.R.P.D.F. and Cumann na mBan to do likewise it would be much easier to canvass for the Dependents Fund. D/P recommends canvassing for quarterly subscriptions. I agree with him because if they had some capital they could improve the paper and probably get print [*sic*] in Ireland and thereby be more in touch with the views of the I.R.A. and Cumann na mBan, etc.³⁴

However, while Frank Aiken, Chief of Staff from May 1923, did encourage the Fund to promote *Eire*, he was also conscious of the various other duties which the group held. He indicated that the I.R.P.D.F. should not get too involved in propaganda work and stated that '...I do not want you to turn your Committee into ÉIRE Canvassing Societies but going about in the ordinary way they should encourage it being bought by dependents and encourage subscribers and people generally to forward quarterly subscribers. D/P will, I am sure, ask Sinn Fein to do likewise...'.³⁵ However, *Eire* did secure some domestic income and the Director of Publicity estimated that 'The sum of 4/- insures a three months supply by post...'. He asked Barry if she could '...have the subscriptions sent on to yourself and then you could

³³ *Irish Times*, 23 Oct. 1923 (N.L.I.).

³⁴ Chief of Staff, G.H.Q., Dublin, to Secretary, I.R.P.D.F., 25 June 1923 (U.C.D.A., Kathleen Barry Moloney Papers, P94/46.).

³⁵ Chief of Staff, G.H.Q., Dublin, to Secretary, I.R.P.D.F., 29 June 1923 (U.C.D.A., Kathleen Barry Moloney Papers, P94/46.).

have them turned over to me'.³⁶ However, by mid-1923 the Fund experienced severe financial difficulty as the regular pool of contributors decreased. Barry remarked that

Your letter on collections received herewith receipt for £20...don't think the outlook ...is very easy as the people who will contribute have already given money several times within the past few months, however we shall do our very best...³⁷

Furthermore, *Éire* operated as a voice of prisoners' issues, in particular their dependents. One notice encouraged subscriptions to the Fund on the basis that 'those who suffer most for Irish Independence are the Republican Prisoners and their Dependents'.³⁸ By the end of 1923, the national press advertised some fundraising events in aid of the I.R.P.D.F. The *Sunday Independent* printed a notice for a concert in November 1923, at which Dan Breen was to give an oration. This was to be held in the 'Mansion House on next Friday night...proceeds in aid of I.R.P.D.F.'. ³⁹

Aside from rare media attention, the I.R.P.D.F. faced considerable opposition from both the church and the state during the civil war. Free State forces raided the Fund's offices at 6 Harcourt Street and seized the funds inside the building. In one instance, '...on January 6 1923, a raid on a larger scale took place and £116 of the relief funds were seized, in addition to a typewriter and all books and documents belonging to the committee'.⁴⁰ This was not the first raid on the I.R.P.D.F. premises and it was reported that '...Since January the Dublin offices at 6, Harcourt Street, have been raided on four different occasions by the Free State military in uniform, by plain clothes intelligence forces, and by the C.I.D....On one occasion the raiders covered the walls with inscriptions such as "Beware the Murder Gang is on the

³⁶ Director of Publicity to Secretary I.R.P.D.F., 25 June 1923 (U.C.D.A., Kathleen Barry Moloney Papers, P94/46.).

³⁷ Kathleen Barry, Secretary I.R.P.D.F. Dublin, 2 July 1923 (U.C.D.A., Kathleen Barry Moloney Papers, P94/46.).

³⁸ *Éire*, 24 Feb. 1923 (N.L.I.).

³⁹ *Sunday Independent*, 18 Nov. 1923 (N.L.I.).

⁴⁰ *Éire*, 5 May 1923 (N.L.I.).

War Path".⁴¹ These raids resulted in fewer resources available to struggling prisoners' families. *Éire* stated that '...the Dublin District Committee secretary was taken into custody, and with her two ladies reporting cases of families in need of relief'.⁴² The seizure of funds further aggravated poverty among internees' dependents, in particular for a number of '...poor women who had come in search of relief' and were 'kept several hours leaving no one in charge of their homes...'.⁴³ The Fund accused the Government of deliberately targeting the premises as a means of breaking the 'republican' movement both inside and outside the prison. They declared that it was 'evidently the policy of this Government, who hoped that by bringing their dependents' to the verge of starvation they may succeed in forcing Republican prisoners to sign against their conscience the form for release'.⁴⁴ They implored the Bishops to allow the Fund to collect at churches again reiterating their belief that if '...a collection' were '...to be made at all church doors in their diocese...', it would greatly benefit dependents' families. It was observed that the fund in '...its present condition, is able only to afford the meagre dole of £1,500 a week among the poorer families of close in 16,000 prisoners, which it tries to save from starvation'.⁴⁵ A further raid on the Fund's office in May 1923 was criticised by Gavan Duffy T.D., who stated:

In the course of their investigations the military or civil agents of the Government have, on three or four occasions, I think, seized sums of money which had been collected for dependents of the prisoners, and these seizures would probably be justified on the allegation that the money was intended for something else. But, in fact, funds that were destined for prisoners' dependents, and for no other purpose.⁴⁶

However, as Seán McConville noted, the 'new Irish state had demonstrated that it would use its powers, civil and military, to protect itself'.⁴⁷ This also included raiding the offices of the

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² *Éire*, 5 May 1923 (N.L.I.).

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ D.E.D., Vol.3, Col. 1298, 30 May 1923.

⁴⁷ Seán McConville, *Irish Political Prisoners 1920-1962*, p. 218.

I.R.P.D.F., regardless of whether their aims were charitable. The aim of the new government was to suppress Anti-Treaty opposition by whatever means necessary and these methods directly affected struggling internees' families. The new government was naturally suspicious of the Fund's objectives and suspected the money was collected to maintain ex-internees while they reorganised their opposition to the state. One report to the Director of Intelligence stated:

A number of men from Armagh and Down who until recently were interned in the Saorstát, are living in the house of a man called GARLAND, near Drumbilla Border. They are continually coming and going but there are always about six staying there. It is believed that they are being maintained by the I.R.P.D.F. They do not move about much amongst the local population. I could not ascertain the name of the men ... it was only in the course of conversation that it came about and I was not in a position to ask questions.⁴⁸

In these circumstances, the I.R.P.D.F. was an obvious target and the subsequent raids on its premises were based solely on its political affiliations; affiliations which the new government could not allow to propagate. The continuation of I.R.P.D.F. activities was a source of much contempt in government circles and in 1924 President Cosgrave declared that 'the so-called Irish Republican Prisoners' Dependents Fund is very much more an irregular than a charitable institution, and any subscriptions to it would be translated by irregular propagandists into evidence of hostility towards the established Government...'.⁴⁹ In order to further qualify his position, Cosgrave emphasized the fact that there was now a large group of Irish citizens near destitution as a result of Anti-Treatyite activities during the civil war. He stated: '...with regard to unemployment, the position in the Free State is undoubtedly serious, but it is largely due to the irregulars, and the prisoners dependents are in no greater plight than the many families who either lost their breadwinners or had their businesses ruined by

⁴⁸ Captain McG, Officer of D.I., to Director of Intelligence [no date] (M.A., CW/P/02/01/11).

⁴⁹ *Irish Times*, 26 Jan. 1924.

the irregular tactics'.⁵⁰ Cosgrave's statement naturally provoked a strongly worded reaction from the Secretary of the I.R.P.D.F., Kathleen Barry, who defended the organization's interests and the recipients of the fund. She declared that 'the I.R.P.D.F. is purely a relief organization and none of its funds have been spent otherwise than for relief of dependents and released prisoners, nor have its energies been directed towards any other end than relief...'.⁵¹ The attack on the fund by President Cosgrave did not deter the organization's efforts to support ex-internees and their families. Charitable events in aid of the Dependents' Fund continued and in January 1924, the *Nenagh Guardian* printed an advertisement for a 'Grand Dance', to be held in 'Dromineer...in aid of the Irish Republican Prisoners' Dependents Fund'.⁵² In September 1924, Eamon de Valera appeared at a number of meetings in support of the Fund. The *Irish Independent* reported that de Valera spoke at 'a fete in aid of the Irish Republican Prisoners Dependents Fund, which is being held in Saint Enda's College in Rathfarnham, Dublin, Mr. De Valera....said that there was no thinking man or woman in Ireland who agreed to classify the men in prison as criminals...'.⁵³ He further noted that '...these men and their dependents...required attention...'.⁵⁴

In addition to fundraising, the Anti-Treaty side sought the release of those still imprisoned. A handful of internees remained in custody and in 1924, they became a rallying point for the I.R.A. Executive. In Munster, the GAA became a route through which the executive could reach the Irish people and consequently Free State politicians. During the civil war, 'the G.A.A. found itself in the middle of the conflict. As an official body, it carefully avoided affiliation to either camp, but the association's membership was riven by Pro-Treaty and Anti-Treaty factions, and throughout 1922 and 1923 sporting competitions

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² *Nenagh Guardian*, 19 Jan. 1924 (N.L.I.).

⁵³ *Irish Times*, 1 Sept. 1924 (N.L.I.).

⁵⁴ Ibid.

were largely suspended as sporting interests were subsumed by the civil war'.⁵⁵ It was therefore, of little surprise, when the Anti-Treaty leadership attempted to coerce the G.A.A. into making a political statement on behalf of the thousands of prisoners still interned in the Free State. In one letter, Frank Aiken, Chief of Staff wrote to Joe Griffin stating 'If the Kerry team can force the postponement of the final until the release of the prisoners they should do so. As far as we can learn in no other county have our people a majority on the county boards...'.⁵⁶ The message also noted that 'Paddy has asked me to write to you and enclose a letter which he has sent to the *Kerry News* relative to requesting the Kerry Boards to call upon the Central council to postpone the All Ireland final until the prisoners are released...'.⁵⁷ This publicity brought some measure of success as Leix GAA refused to play, in support of the internees. The I.R.A. Executive reported that

Kerry by refusing to play the Final of the All Ireland Football Championship while our prisoners are still detained has brought the question of the release of prisoners to a position not previously reached. Their action has suddenly awakened everyone to the fact that our prisoners are unjustly detained...As a result of their effort Leix has refused to play the Leinster Senior Hurling tie you will arrange to have all members of your county teams approached at once with a view to securing their non-participation in any inter county matches as a protest against the detention of our prisoners...a united and organised effort, on our part to gain control of the G.A.A. will help us considerably to ensure that the boycott of the Tailteann Games will be successful⁵⁸

The final, however, did take place but the attempt to delay the match revealed the length to which the Anti-Treaty side were willing to go to secure internee releases.⁵⁹

In addition, Charlotte Despard of the Women Prisoners' Defence League continued to work towards securing releases both North and South. At the end of March 1924, she wrote of the plight of sick internees and stated: '...calls for released prisoners ...news of prisoners –

⁵⁵ John Sugden & Alan Baimar, *Sport, Sectarianism and Society in a Divided Ireland* (London, 1995), p. 33.

⁵⁶ Chief of Staff I.R.A., to Joe Griffin, 10 June 1924 (U.C.D.A., Moss Twomey Papers, P69/ 43(57).).

⁵⁷ [S.R.] to Joe, 6 June 1924 (U.C.D.A., Moss Twomey Papers P69/ 43(59).).

⁵⁸ Adjutant, to All O/Cs & Brigades, I.R.A. G.H.Q., Midland Div. 24 June 1924 (U.C.D.A., Ernie O' Malley Papers P17a/(27).).

⁵⁹ *Irish Times*, 29 Sept. 1924 (N.L.I.). Dublin beat Kerry in this All-Ireland final by two points.

hospital, suffering terrible from neglected wounds...'.⁶⁰ Despard often visited prisoners in hospital after their release and found that some of their injuries had indeed been neglected.⁶¹ At a demonstration for prisoner releases in Sackville Street, Charlotte Despard 'referred to the alleged torture of prisoners...'.⁶² In September 1924, she sent a resolution to the League of Nations to intervene in their 'illegal trial and detention'.⁶³ The *Irish Times* reported that

At the weekly meeting held in Sackville Street, Dublin, yesterday, to demand the release of all political prisoners, a resolution was passed on, on the motion of Miss Maloney, seconded by Mrs Despard, calling on the League of Nations to demand that all Irish political prisoners held by the Free State and British Governments be released at once.⁶⁴

The Free State eventually issued a general amnesty to prisoners in November 1924.⁶⁵ Despite this, collections for dependents in Ireland continued into 1925, possibly due to continued internment in Northern Ireland. A notice in the *Irish Independent* revealed that some supporters still attempted to make church collections, even when the individual collecting had no permit. This was the case for '...Henry Wortington' who was 'summoned before Mr Collins by Guard Leonard (87A) for collecting for the Republican Dependents' Fund outside Whitefriar Street Church on Sunday was fined 5s. Defendant had no permit and his name was not on the box. He said there was no annoyance as anyone who gave anything knew what they were giving it for. Inspector Long stated that the police had many complaints about these collections'.⁶⁶

Domestic fundraising by the I.R.P.D.F. was coupled with missions abroad to seek financial aid. However, the civil war had naturally tainted international perceptions of the I.R.P.D.F. agenda, as stories of Anti-Treaty atrocities reached the foreign press. Fundraising

⁶⁰ *Irish Times*, 26 Mar. 1924 (N.L.I.).

⁶¹ *Irish Times*, 27 Mar. 1924 (N.L.I.).

⁶² *Irish Times*, 24 March 1924 (N.L.I.).

⁶³ Diary Entry, 14 Sept 1924 (P.R.O.N.I., Charlotte Despard Diary, D.2479/1/8.).

⁶⁴ *Irish Times*, 15 Sept. 1924 (N.L.I.).

⁶⁵ *Kerryman*, 15 Nov. 1924 (N.L.I.).

⁶⁶ *Irish Independent*, 23 June 1925 (N.L.I.).

missions to America and Australia were conducted in the early 1920s and while the first tour of April 1922 escaped the division of civil war, subsequent trips were not so lucky.⁶⁷ The April tour in the U.S.A. was organised by Eamon de Valera, through the American Association of Recognition for the Irish Republic (A.A.R.I.R.) and was led by Countess Markievicz and Kathleen Barry.⁶⁸ The mission aimed to raise awareness and support for the Anti-Treatyite side, financial or otherwise, among the American people. The delegation arrived on 7 April 1922. The *New York Tribune* reported:

Countess Constance Markievicz who, despite her Polish name, is Irish, arrived yesterday on the Aquitania to speak to this country on behalf of the American Association for recognition of the Irish Republic. Miss Kathleen Barry, another fiery Irish speaker, whose brother was executed by the British, came with her. A number of supporters of the Irish Republic, with American and Irish Republic flags, met the two women at the Cunard Pier...The visitors went to the Waldorf. The Countess, who twice was sentenced to be executed for her activity in the Irish cause said: "We will explain the real situation in Ireland to the American people. I will go from one end of the country to the other."⁶⁹

The tour lasted until the end of May and the atmosphere was decidedly different to the missions that took place in the latter half of 1922 and 1923.⁷⁰ The speeches and lectures of the April 1922 tour, focused on gathering support for the Republic and denouncing the Treaty and Free State. One of Kathleen Barry's speech's during this tour revealed the extent to which the Republican movement was trying to capture the American mind and secure financial assistance:

We have been sent over here to ask you to continue to help us in our struggle for the recognition of the Irish Republic Ireland is not a British colony...We are not going to give in, and we want you to help us to hold on. You have been very generous in the past. You have made it possible for us to keep going...We want your help now, moral and financial, we are going straight ahead with the Republic...I am sure whatever happens you, in America, will continue to back the struggle. You will help

⁶⁷ Joanne Mooney Eichacker, *Irish Republican Women in America, Lecture Tours, 1916-1925* (Dublin, 2003), pp 156-80; Prionnsíós Ó Duigneáin, *Linda Kearns A Revolutionary Irish Woman* (Leitrim, 2002) pp 71-97.

⁶⁸ Mooney Eichacker, *Irish Republican Women in America*, p. 141.

⁶⁹ *New York Tribune*, 8 April 1922 (U.C.D.A., Kathleen Barry Moloney Papers, P94/40.).

⁷⁰ Mooney Eichacker, *Irish Republican Women in America*, p. 142.

us here by your money and your encouragement, and we shall work in Ireland by every means in our power to see that the dead who died for Ireland are not let down, and that no future generation will be able to say that we who have been privileged to live under the Irish Republic gave the game away.⁷¹

The A.A.R.I.R. started to hold meetings even before the arrival of the Irish Delegation. The *Irish Nation: New York City* reported the previous week that one such meeting occurred in the Academy of Music, Brooklyn New York. A significant amount of money was pledged by the American public to the Anti-Treatyite cause and revealed just how popular the Republic still was within the U.S.A in April 1922:

A great mass meeting was held at the Academy of Music,...Brooklyn New York., last Sunday afternoon, under the auspices of the different Brooklyn councils of the American Association for the Recognition of the Irish Republic for the purpose of greeting the Irish Envoys, Austin Stack and John J. O'Kelly, and Rev. Father O'Flanagan, Vice President of Sinn Fein, to bear from them the true facts about the Irish cause....\$21, 500, pledged by the Councils, and several substantial amounts were pledged by private individuals...With such types of Irish Americans and Irish American backing how can he, or the Republic lose...⁷²

Local newspaper coverage of the trip revealed that the American public was incredibly generous towards the Irish delegation. In Philadelphia it was reported that '...before the Countess spoke, Peter Golden, national head of the Association for the Recognition for the Irish Republic, called on the audience for pledges of money to support the work in Ireland. Something over \$40,000 was pledged'.⁷³ During one meeting, lingering memories of World War One were resurrected, which caused some disturbance in Philadelphia. The newspaper recorded that

On one or two occasions the speakers were 'heckled'The most serious outbreak came when one of the speakers, after referring to England's futile attempt to "make Irish soldiers fight for England in France" was told by some man in the audience that the soldiers who fought in France "fought for the world". Immediate cries of throw

⁷¹ Typescript speech of Kathleen Barry during her tour of the USA as a member of the delegation 1922 (U.C.D.A., Kathleen Barry Moloney Papers, P94/36.).

⁷² *Irish Nation: New York City*, 8 April 1922 (U.C.D.A., Kathleen Barry Moloney Papers, P94/40.).

⁷³ *The North American Philadelphia*, 17 April 1922 (U.C.D.A., Kathleen Barry Moloney Papers, P94/40.).

him out ...Police immediately rushed to the man's assistance...Austin Stack...who was speaking at the time, held up his hand in silence. "That's perfectly alright" he said "That's the man's opinion"...⁷⁴

The delegation was very well received by various communities. In Akron, Ohio the delegation '...spoke in the afternoon at a meeting in Marian Auditorium. They held a public reception at the Portage hotel at 6 o'clock and were honoured guests at a banquet ...'.⁷⁵ They were also '... honoured at a Luncheon at the Ryan hotel ... and will speak at 8 p.m. at the peoples church. Its visit is under the auspices of the American Association for Recognition of the Irish Republic...'.⁷⁶ However, the tour was decidedly propagandist in nature and contained inflammatory speeches which openly criticised the new Provisional Government. In particular, Countess Markievicz provided a highly censored and factually inaccurate interpretation of events surrounding the Anglo-Irish Treaty, suggesting that the 'border' between north and south had somehow come about due to the 'talk' of certain Pro-Treaty deputies. She stated 'we were going to let Ulster tactfully alone...We felt that she would come in by herself if we gave her time. But after the utterance of Collins about the places the Free State was going to take- well, you see the result in the new barricaded Ulster frontier, something that never existed before'.⁷⁷ She also portrayed an optimistic outlook for the Anti-Treaty side. In Akron, the media reported that

Both the Countess and O'Kelly stated that no civil war exists in Ireland and that the press reports of troubles are greatly exaggerated. They claimed that 90 per cent of the Irish Army was with the Republicans....⁷⁸

When Markievicz mentioned the Irish Army, she did not make it clear whether she was referring to the I.R.A. or the newly founded National Army of the Free State. The split in the I.R.A. had fractured the movement and many Pro-Treaty I.R.A. members joined the National

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ *Akron Evening Times*, 22 April 1922 (U.C.D.A., Kathleen Barry Moloney Papers, P94/40.).

⁷⁶ *St Paul's Daily News*, 24 April 1922 (U.C.D.A., Kathleen Barry Moloney Papers, P94/40.).

⁷⁷ *Irish Press Philadelphia*, 15 April 1922 (U.C.D.A., Kathleen Barry Moloney Papers, P94/40.).

⁷⁸ Ibid.

Army. Markievicz may have been suggesting that 90% of the National Army had Anti-Treaty sympathies but such a statement was not factually accurate. Recruitment to the national army multiplied throughout the course of the civil war, when the army's primary objective was to squash the Anti-Treaty threat.⁷⁹ The April-May tour 1922, focused on the 'unjust' Anglo-Irish Treaty and how it had been forced on the Irish public. Countess de Markievicz was particularly vocal in her condemnation of the Treaty and the *Anaconda Standard* reported that

Declaring that the Treaty for the establishment of the Irish Free State was a violation of every right of the Irish people: that its proponents were attempting to force an election at a time when a majority of the Irish people were disfranchised and that the pact would never be ratified...Countess De Markievicz...Miss Kathleen Barry and J.J. O'Kelly...presented the Republican side of the present controversy to an audience that completely filled the A.O.H. hall in Anaconda last night. The speakers were unanimous in their declaration that nothing less than complete independence would satisfy the aspirations of the Irish nation.⁸⁰

In California, it was reported that the Countess 'rode slowly up Marke Street from the ferry building... On the question of Irish politics and the war for freedom frailty drops from her and the spirit that has made her a leader shines from her blue eyes... "We will never accept the treaty which is nothing but a mutilated edition of the constitution of Canada..."'.⁸¹ The delegation's trip to the U.S.A. in April and May 1922 appeared to be an all-round success, with large quantities of money pledged by the American public. However, fundraising missions conducted from the latter half of 1922 onwards were not so successful. The split amongst Republicans in Ireland had influenced opinion abroad and subsequent fundraisers experienced opposition from the clergy and local media in the United States.⁸² They strongly

⁷⁹ John Regan stated that at the time of the attack on the Four Courts the National Army stood at '8,000 men' and '30,000' by November 1922 and '53,000 by the end of the war'; John Regan, *The Irish Counter Revolution: Treatyite Politics and Settlement in Independent Ireland* (Dublin, 1999), p. 102.

⁸⁰ *Anaconda Standard*, 29 Apr. 1923 (U.C.D.A., Kathleen Barry Moloney Papers, P94/40.).

⁸¹ *The Bulletin San Francisco*, 6 May 1922 (U.C.D.A., Kathleen Barry Moloney Papers, P94/40.).

⁸² Mooney Eichacker, *Irish Republican Women in America*, p. 159; Eichacker noted the reaction to the first tour during the civil war in September 1922. 'The division in the Irish American Organisations over the Anglo Irish Treaty and their reaction to the Free State government reduced overall support for this and future tours of

suspected that fundraising missions were a front for ‘gun money’ to continue the war against the Free State. In some respects, the clergy and media were justified to be cautious of certain Anti-Treaty supporters. In 1923, Joseph McGarrity of Clan na nGael,⁸³ had planned to run a series of fundraisers for weapons on the American east coast before the end of hostilities called a halt to the arrangement.⁸⁴ The presence of both military and social fundraisers attached to the same ‘cause’ would have created enough general suspicion to affect donations. In September 1922, the I.R.P.D.F. tour placed less emphasis on the Treaty and was specifically organised to obtain funds in support of internees and their dependents, (undoubtedly the plight of struggling wives and children was a less controversial topic than the Treaty).⁸⁵ However, the loss of support from certain members in the Friends of Irish Freedom, such as ‘Judge Daniel Cohalan and John Devoy and a large number of AARIR members’ had directly affected ‘the cohesiveness of their organisation’.⁸⁶ Joseph McGarrity who ‘remained loyal to the Republican cause...’ found that he did not have ‘...the resources to back this tour on the scale of the previous ones’.⁸⁷ A subsequent fundraising mission to Australia in the autumn of 1924, by Linda Kearns and Kathleen Barry Moloney, was likewise tainted by the actions of the Anti-Treaty I.R.A. during the civil war.⁸⁸ Earlier that January, de

Republican women’; on September 1922 tour of the United States, Muriel MacSwiney and Linda Kearns, experienced opposition to their fundraising efforts. Dr. Michael Curley Archbishop of Baltimore had ‘denounced the men and women of America, “who are sending money and munitions to de Valera and his followers”’; Ó Duígneáin, *Linda Kearns: A Revolutionary Irish Woman*, p 73.

⁸³ Joseph McGarrity, native of Co. Tyrone, joined Clan na nGael in Philadelphia in 1893 and remained committed to a thirty two county Irish Republic. ‘McGarrity also gave some \$17,000 to the Irish Republican Army and was confirmed as the leader of the reorganised Clan na Gael by the Irish Republican Brotherhood. However, with the breakdown of the election pact and the beginning of the civil war, and particularly the re emergence of de Valera as the head of the ‘republican government’, McGarrity came out strongly in opposition to the treaty and the Irish Free State, bringing the Clan executive with him in August 1922’; *Dictionary of Irish Biography* (<http://dib.cambridge.org.elib.tcd.ie/viewReadPage.do?articleId=a5675&prev=prev>, accessed 20 July 2014, accessed 15 July 2014.).

⁸⁴ Sean Cronin, *The McGarrity Papers* (Kerry 1972), pp 134-5.

⁸⁵ Ó Duígneáin, *Linda Kearns A Revolutionary Irish Woman*, pp 71-97; Mooney Eichacker, *Irish Republican Women in America*, pp 156-80. Muriel MacSwiney and Linda Kearns went to the U.S.A. in September 1922 to ‘tour the United States in support of Republican Soldiers’ and Prisoners’ Dependents’ Fund.’ Mooney Eichacker, *Irish Republican Women in America*, p. 156.

⁸⁶ Mooney Eichacker, *Irish Republican Women in America*, p. 159.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸⁸ Kathleen Barry had married before this tour and will now be referred to as Kathleen Barry Moloney; see Kev to Kathleen, West Wyoming, 24 Oct. 1924: ‘...Here you are again...Welcome to Australia...you are Kathy no

Valera appealed to 'Australia...and elsewhere to supply funds ostensibly for the purpose of relieving distress in Ireland particularly amongst the dependents of prisoners held by the National Government...'.⁸⁹ In response to de Valera's appeal, a number of questions were raised as to the necessity of the tour, given that the civil war had ceased the previous year. It was stated that 'inquiries...' were made '...from distinguished ecclesiasts and other friends of Ireland abroad as to whether this appeal was necessary...'.⁹⁰ These suspicions clearly filtered down to public opinion in Australia. While there, Barry Moloney remarked that 'we found things difficult at first'.⁹¹ This was partly due to the fact that 'Irish Australians had become very disillusioned by the Treaty and the civil war' and 'interest in the movement was almost killed'.⁹² However, Barry Moloney acknowledged that the support of 'Catholic papers in Sydney, Melbourne and Brisbane had been vital to the success of the mission' and that 'without them we would have had terrible difficulties'.⁹³

Besides the missions to America and Australia, Madame Markievicz also conducted her own tour of the United Kingdom in 1923, in order to raise awareness for the Anti-Treaty cause and the plight of internees. In February, she spoke at a meeting in Scotland 'under the auspices of the Scottish Branch of the Irish Republican Organisation'.⁹⁴ It was reported that

A truly great start was made on the fourth anniversary of Ireland's Declaration of Independence when Madam Markievicz visited Dumbarton...So effective was her explanation of the present situation in Ireland that many of those who had hitherto been led astray by the propaganda that appears in the English and so called Irish press have decided to renew their support to the only cause worthy of a great nation-Independence. Her accounts of the tortures inflicted on Republican prisoners by the so called Government of the Irish Free State moved many of the audience to tears....For the remainder of her visit Madam will be busy visiting the centres where the exiles of

longer...you are Mrs Jimmy Maloney now...Congratulations galore...' (U.C.D.A., Kathleen Barry Moloney Papers, P94/56.).

⁸⁹ *Irish Times*, 26 Jan. 1924 (N.L.I.).

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

⁹¹ Ó Duígneáin, *Linda Kearns A Revolutionary Irish Woman*, p. 97

⁹² *Ibid.*

⁹³ *Ibid.*

⁹⁴ *Éire*, 3 Feb. 1923 (N.L.I.)

Erin are most populous, including Motherwell, Coatbridge and Dundee. In all these places great demonstrations are being arranged...⁹⁵

These demonstrations revealed that there was some minor support for internees and the 'Republic' among some sections of society in the United Kingdom. A month later the Countess was in Twickenham, where she briefly spoke at a meeting.⁹⁶ Later in March, she was in London where it was said that 'Countess Markievicz is arousing great enthusiasm for the cause of the Republic in London. Her meetings have all been largely attended ...'.⁹⁷

In addition to these organised meetings, private donations were also sent from Irish communities abroad to family members on the Anti-Treaty side. One case was that of John McGowan who had been taken prisoner at the end of the civil war and was interned in Gormanstown since 1923. He wrote to his American cousin in November 1923 stating that 'after twelve months on the hills I was taken prisoner with three others'.⁹⁸ McGowan had managed to escape before the hunger strike and related the circumstances to his relatives stating that 'his majesty's Green and Tans failed to keep me prisoner. The [*sic*] counted me in Tintown No. 3 for nineteen nights after I had gone from there. I left my overcoat and suitcase in the bed and they thought it was a sick man'.⁹⁹ McGowan now wrote to his cousin thanking him for his financial aid and 'the true hearted friends of the Republic in Buffalo, who have given us such wonderful assistance during the last twelve months. You have done something which will not be forgotten by the firesides in the days to come'.¹⁰⁰ He informed his cousin that at a recent 'committee' meeting the secretary agreed to forward him 'full report of everything' that was spent. In September 1923, it was recorded that £96:15:0 had been received from the O'Gormans in Buffalo for the Anti-Treaty side. A breakdown of the

⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁹⁶ Ibid, 3 Mar. 1923 (N.L.I.).

⁹⁷ Ibid, 17 Mar. 1923 (N.L.I.).

⁹⁸ John McGowan, Miltown Malbay, to 'Cousin' [Mr. O'Gorman], Buffalo, New York, 16 Nov. 1923 (Ned O'Brien Private Collection, Buffalo, N.Y., U.S.A.).

⁹⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

finances revealed that the money had been distributed for military and social purposes, but not quite evenly. Some £35:0:0 was given to the Active Service Unit, while only £ 8:16:3 was provided to prisoners and other 'items' accounted for £12:10:0. Another category for 'prisoners still interned' stated they received £30:10:0, leaving an outstanding balance of £9:18:9.¹⁰¹ The £8:16:3 supplied to prisoners had been used to buy food and cigarettes (the most popular items in food parcels) and had been sent to the Curragh, Gormanstown, Limerick Jail, Mountjoy Jail and Ennis Gaol.¹⁰² In November 1923, a further £12:10:0 from the O'Gormans in Buffalo was provided to prisoners' dependents.¹⁰³

As funds dribbled in from members of the Irish public and abroad, the families of internees were immediately affected by the substantial decline in contributions. From June 1923, the I.R.P.D.F. was inundated with letters from local I.R.A. commanders, particularly in the south of the country, complaining about the lack of assistance available to prisoners' dependents.¹⁰⁴ One letter read:

I must point out to you that the Prisoners' Dependents and those of the men on the run in this are very bad. This in particular applies to Kerry and West Cork. In these places at the best of times the economic position is not good, at present it is awful. In Kerry men are living in the mountainous districts on one meal a day the people who for the most part have sons, husbands or brothers in jail are too poor to support them. Then you must realize that the number of prisoners from this area, nearly as much as the rest of the 26 counties. The area also taken all round is the poorest. The D. ADJ informs me only £200 are received weekly, this amount has to provide for the dependents of Cork, Kerry and a portion of Limerick in all brigade. You will of course see for yourself that it is entirely inadequate. Miss K Barry promised me that this Division would receive special treatment owing to its normally bad economic

¹⁰¹ Receipt Entry, 10 Sept. 1923 (Ned O'Brien Private Collection, Buffalo, N.Y., U.S.A.).

¹⁰² Receipt book entries, 22 May to 25 June 1923 (Ned O'Brien Private Collection, Buffalo, N.Y., U.S.A.).

¹⁰³ Receipt book entry, 9 Nov. 1923 (Ned O'Brien Private Collection, Buffalo, N.Y., U.S.A.).

¹⁰⁴ See (U.C.D.A., Kathleen Barry Papers, P94/46.); Internment figures were highest in the southern half of the country which would explain the high level of claims. Additionally, the agricultural decline in Ireland in the 1920s further exacerbated the hardship; see Gavin Foster, "No Wild Geese this time?" IRA Emigration after the Irish Civil war', in *Ireland*, Vol. 47, Issue 1&2 (Spring/Summer 2012), pp. 98-107.

position and extremely large no. of dependents. Please give this matter your personal attention...¹⁰⁵

Correspondence between the Fund and G.H.Q. revealed that the families of internees along the southern and western seaboard suffered more acutely than others. This was mainly due to the fact that the rank and file of the I.R.A. in this region had been drawn from the labouring classes. One Kerry Adjutant remarked that the ‘...supporters, i.e. our soldiers are for the most part of the agricultural labourer class of very small farmers’.¹⁰⁶ This particular group of Irish society were already suffering in the wake of an agricultural depression which had hit the country in the 1920s. Emmet O’Connor in his study, *A Labour History of Ireland* remarked on this changing economic climate:

Massive expansion of the world’s productive capacity during World War 1, followed by a further increase in output to meet the first demands of a peace-time market, led to a crisis of overproduction in the autumn of 1920. Food prices were the first to tumble, causing a severe depression in agriculture. During 1921, Irish manufacturing trade was almost halved. By December over 26 percent of the workers were idle. Rising unemployment depressed consumer demand, sending the economy tail spinning into long term recession.¹⁰⁷

The prisoners’ role in the recent civil war when combined with the gloomy economic climate, only served to further increase social poverty. Ex-internees particularly, suffered a considerable amount of bias when seeking employment in the new state. In his discussion on Anti-Treaty emigration after the civil war, Gavin Foster highlighted some of the problems facing ex-internees when seeking employment. He stated ‘given their experience of internment and defeat and continued fraught relationship with the new state, republicans faced unique pressures and conditions which shaped their collective identity as exiles rather than as emigrant per se. These push factors included police harassment and government repression, poor unemployment and poverty due to blacklisting and a broader sense of post

¹⁰⁵ T.C. to Hon. Sec. I.R.P.D.F. 18 June 1923 (U.C.D.A., Kathleen Barry Moloney Papers, P94/46.).

¹⁰⁶ Brigade Adjutant of Kerry No. 2 Brigade, to I.R.P.D.F. Central Committee, 13 June 1923 (U.C.D.A., Kathleen Barry Moloney Papers, P94/46.).

¹⁰⁷ Emmet O’Connor, *A Labour History of Ireland 1848-1960* (Dublin, 1992), p. 109.

revolutionary disillusionment'.¹⁰⁸ While the I.R.P.D.F. tried to support as many families as possible, the financial aid provided was often entirely inadequate. The fund relied heavily on charitable donations and as financial support decreased, there was an inevitable reduction in the amount of assistance available. In these circumstances it became necessary to cut the rate of pay available. In mid 1923 one Kerry Adjutant wrote:

I have already written several times in connection with this matter pointing out the need for immediate sufficient relief some months ago. I held a consultation with Div Sec and owing to the ...number of claims received, it is compulsory to pay only a fraction in each pound roughly amounting to a little over 3/-. Naturally this sum is totally inadequate. In some cases where large families exist, only fortnightly or monthly payments can be made as it would seem ridiculous to hand to any family 3/- or 5/-. Is it possible to give a special grant to this case to obviate present distress...Div. Sec. informed me that grants from H.Q. are waived regularly as we have no complaint now, on those grounds.¹⁰⁹

This problem was not confined to Kerry. Other Munster counties were forced to reduce the rates of pay accordingly. The third southern division wrote that

Tipp No 1 and Offaly No 2 Brigades held Committee meetings recently at which was decided that owing to failure of collections Dependents be only paid two third of amount...I shall do my very best to make collections a success. Should the army give the promised assistance efforts will be more fruitful than before. Herewith copy of balance amount save £10 and £5 to Tipp No 1 and Offaly II Brigades for relief of very needy case in their respective areas. Leix and Offaly I brigades have only renewed regular payments recently.¹¹⁰

As previously mentioned, civil war had hindered fundraising efforts and the banning of church collections in conjunction with divided American and Australian loyalties only served to exacerbate the I.R.P.D.F.'s financial troubles. In this tense atmosphere, aggravated by unemployment and poverty, an element of resentment set in amongst internees' dependents, between those who were helped by the I.R.P.D.F and those who were not. One Kerry

¹⁰⁸ Foster, "No Wild Geese this time?", pp. 96-7.

¹⁰⁹ Div. Adjutant 1st Southern Division, to Central Committee I.R.P.D.F., 21 June 1923 (U.C.D.A., Kathleen Barry Moloney Papers, P94/46.).

¹¹⁰ C. F. [Commander Forces] 3d Southern Div., to Sec. I.R.P.D.F, 29 June 1923 (U.C.D.A., Kathleen Barry Moloney Papers, P94/46.).

Adjutant wrote that ‘...a small amount distributed in one area tends to cause jealousy among some people when cases just as needy are left unattended to...the suffering being so acute in very many cases would make it difficult for us to receive the old spirit among the ranks’.¹¹¹ Fundraising efforts were additionally hindered in areas that were predominantly Pro-Treaty and providing assistance to ex-internees in these districts was often difficult. In Tipperary one Battalion commented on this problem:

I think those very needy cases should be looked at after Batt. 23rd Tipp Bde where Mrs Tierney belongs ...there are five or [so] very hard cases and it is nearly all on the enemy side and that makes it harder still. It might not be so hard now to carry on a collection as they are gone out of nearly all the villages and county places (the military I mean)...¹¹²

In an effort to alleviate some of the financial burden, the Irish ‘Republican Government’ provided a loan to the I.R.P.D.F. in mid-1923. The Acting Department of Finance wrote to Miss Barry in June stating: ‘I have great pleasure endorsing £200 loan from Government towards expenses of re-organizing Relief Fund...’.¹¹³ By October 1923, the I.R.P.D.F. decided to reorganise the fund’s structure in order to combat the low levels of funding now available. They noted that the ‘main reason for reorganisation is the need for collections over all Ireland’.¹¹⁴ The dramatic fall off in subscriptions from abroad affected the level of funding available, which had been tainted by ‘collections’ for other ‘Republican’ purposes.¹¹⁵ Unfortunately for dependents, suspicion cast on one was cast on all and the relatives of internees were guilty by association. In order to stretch an already low budget, the fund decided to establish a standard rate of pay for dependents. It concluded that the maximum

¹¹¹ Brigade Adjutant of Kerry No 2 Brigade, to I.R.P.D.F. Central Committee, 13 June 1923 (U.C.D.A., Kathleen Barry Papers, P94/46.). The disaffection ‘among the ranks’ to which the adjutant referred worried the I.R.A. Executive and they introduced a ban emigration without a permit a month later in order to keep I.R.A. rank in file in Ireland. Gavin Foster noted de Valera’s statement in July 1923 stating that ‘The soldiers of the Irish Republic have been ordered to live and die in Ireland’; Foster, “No Wild Geese this time?”, p. 96.

¹¹² G.P. to ‘A Cara’ at I.R.P.D.F., 21 June 1923 (U.C.D.A., Kathleen Barry Moloney Papers, P94/46.).

¹¹³ Acting D/Finance, Government of Irish Republic to Secretary of I.R.P.D.F., 30 June 1923 (U.C.D.A., Kathleen Barry Moloney Papers, P94/46.).

¹¹⁴ Memo of General Secretary I.R.P.D.F., RE: Scheme of Organisation, 4 Oct. 1923 (U.C.D.A., Kathleen Barry Moloney Papers, P94/46.).

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

amount which could be provided was '£1 per week' for a dependent wife and '2/6 per week' up to a maximum of '30/-' per child.¹¹⁶ Payments made to mothers, sisters and other 'partial dependents' were at the discretion of the local committee due to the 'inadequacy of funds to deal with absolute dependents'.¹¹⁷ Since the I.R.P.D.F. could only relieve distress among prisoners' families '...cases coming under any other heading' were to 'be relieved from funds other than those raised for Irish Republican Prisoners Dependents Fund'.¹¹⁸ This effectively excluded the newly released internees as the Fund concluded that 'no grant can be made from the I.R.P.D.F. to released prisoners as such- our Funds not being equal to relieving adequately the needs of dependents. Where the need is very apparent the local Committee should consider retaining for four weeks on their lists the dependents of such men as fail to get employment immediately on release'.¹¹⁹ In the case of ex-internees, Sinn Féin was to provide clothing etc. to these prisoners.¹²⁰

These conditions only served to further aggravate the tension and poverty which already existed among ex-internees. Sean McConville noted in his study that 'since most of the prisoners were young men, their loss of earning power often affected a wider group of dependents. In the absence of any but the most rudimentary social provisions, extreme hardship would affect all. Where there were children or the elderly, other charities might provide relief, but these were small and uncertain doles'.¹²¹ It was therefore no surprise that in mid-1923, a flood of 'hardship cases' were sent to the I.R.P.D.F. Committee. One Adjutant argued that the poor families of deceased I.R.A. members should receive special attention, particularly in the way of funeral expenses. He requested that '...you send us something specially[sic] for the dependents of men killed and murdered in this area. We have lost 20

¹¹⁶ Ibid.

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

¹¹⁸ Ibid.

¹¹⁹ Ibid.

¹²⁰ Ibid.

¹²¹ McConville, *Irish Political Prisoners, 1920-1962*, p. 217.

men and their funeral expenses would entail at least £30 each. Such cases require special attention therefore I expect Central Committee will do something in this respect'.¹²² Another I.R.A. Commander asked Barry Moloney, if she could assist the wife and children of an Anti-Treatyite who had recently passed away. The Commander wrote 'since our discussion or should I say my explanation of the case of Tom Larkin, things have altered considerably and perhaps you could now do something in the matter. The poor fellow died on Sunday last and now leaves a widow and orphan. Of course he died of consumption probably contracted on active service with the I.R.A. before 1922'.¹²³ There were many hardship cases like Tom Larkin.¹²⁴ Aside from loss of a family's breadwinner, unemployment similarly contributed to high levels of poverty among ex-internees. Some relatives had suffered in silence during their relative's internment and had not applied to the fund for aid. One such case was highlighted:

I have just come across a matter that I think should be attended to...Patrick Connoll, Ballineen has been released from jail after 6 months. His wife and 4 children got nothing the whole time and they have suffered very much from want. He is now unemployed- will you refer the matter to whoever is responsible and see if...an allowance should be made. Mrs Connoll looks terribly ill and altogether it seems to me that you could not do more in making some arrangement for him...¹²⁵

Even for those on the periphery of the Anti-Treaty movement, the onset of civil war and internment took its toll. Constable Jeremiah Mee, a former R.I.C. member from Kerry, left the force in 1920 and aided the organisation of the Belfast Boycott in Northern Ireland, although he never officially joined the I.R.A..¹²⁶ Following the Treaty split and the cessation of the boycott, Mee was transferred to work with the Irish White Cross, 'a charitable organisation which had been established some years previously in order to alleviate the

¹²² Brigade Adjutant of Kerry No. 2 Brigade, to I.R.P.D.F. Central Committee, 13 June 1923 (U.C.D.A., Kathleen Barry Moloney Papers, P94/46.).

¹²³ Bill C. Divisional Commander of 2nd Southern, to Kathleen Barry, 18 Aug. 1924, (U.C.D.A., Kathleen Barry Moloney Papers, P94/46.).

¹²⁴ See (U.C.D.A., Kathleen Barry Moloney Papers, P94/46).

¹²⁵ Máire, Cork, to Kathleen Barry, 16 Aug. 1923 (U.C.D.A., P94/46, Kathleen Barry Moloney Papers.).

¹²⁶ Anthony Gaughan, *Memoirs Of Constable Jermiah Mee* (Kildare, 1975), p. 225 & Foreword.

distress of the victims of the Anglo-Irish War'.¹²⁷ However as the tension of civil war further increased, the 'distribution of the Irish-White Cross funds petered out and eventually the whole operation ground to a halt'.¹²⁸ Mee who was strongly 'anti-treaty in sentiment...had kept aloof from the civil war yet on 12 August 1922 he was interned in Custume Barracks, Athlone, by the Free State forces'.¹²⁹ Although he was only interned for four weeks, Mee remarked that following his release, the year 1922-3 was 'probably the most difficult of his life'.¹³⁰ Mee 'found it impossible to obtain suitable employment' but resisted the urge to emigrate or become embittered.¹³¹ Luckily for Mee, he found employment in the British Petroleum (B.P.) Company in September 1923 overseeing the distribution of oil from the Sligo depot.¹³² Many ex-internees were not so lucky. As social conditions further deteriorated, the situation in Munster by 1924 had reached a critical point for prisoners' dependents. A large number of cases were sent to the branches of the I.R.P.D.F. and some often reflected the events related by Dorothy Macardle in her staunchly Republican *The Tragedies of Kerry*. Many of the internees' families were now poverty stricken and in her book Macardle wrote that in 'Bahaghs workhouse six prisoners were punished day and night for a week...Denis Daly received a blow on the head...Peter Brady...was shot while asleep...his face was scarred and his thumb was shattered'.¹³³

The process of internment had sought to politically demoralise the movement. Consequently, the dependents of those interned became socially marginalised through the poverty and destitution that followed. The Committee Book for the Limerick area recorded

¹²⁷ Ibid, p. 228.

¹²⁸ Ibid, p. 229.

¹²⁹ Ibid.

¹³⁰ Ibid.

¹³¹ Ibid.

¹³² Ibid.

¹³³ Dorothy Macardle, *Tragedies of Kerry* (1924), p. 39.

some of the hardship cases that arose as a result of internment or deaths in custody during those months:¹³⁴

Captain Michael Bradford 'Wife and family taken over by white cross...Capt. Bradford...was murdered while in hands of F.S. soldiers...even a small grant would help.'

James Foley IRA 'murdered while in hands of F.S. soldiers. Mrs Foley has a small shop and is very self helpful and does her best to look after the children and keeps going...the children had nothing to fall back on when he was killed...a grant would help her greatly...'

B Butler IRA 'Taking very poor, a grant would help'

Edward and Denis Durguee IRA Brothers. 'One killed in fighting and the other murdered by his guards after arrest...suffered greatly both in pre-Truce and Free State ...one sister keeps the family going, one sister has no health and can do nothing and there is a younger sister...this case badly needs a grant or some help.'¹³⁵

Mrs M Harvey, Cumann na mBan, ...killed by a shell in the Hotel Adare...has two girls about 15 and 12 years. Husband was a painter. I believe he has left Limerick ...¹³⁶

Denis Maher I do not know if your committee give him anything at present...white crossgiving him 30/- a week ...besides the White Cross has allocated him sum of £20 to cover arrears in rent...I have charge of this...and receipts in connection with it...D. Maher got hospital treatment in Dublin...¹³⁷

Denis Maher Enclosed receipt signed by Mrs Moore his landlady shows disposal of £17 of it. The remaining £23 I have in my ...account and with it I have guaranteed Mrs Moore that, in consideration of her agreement to drop her ejectment proceedings, Maher's rent will be paid up to December 1925...¹³⁸

In 1924, in an effort to boost funds, the I.R.P.D.F. decided to reorganise for a second time.

On this occasion, the fund was regrouped under a reconstruction committee and continued in its fundraising capacity.¹³⁹ A letter issued by the Reconstruction Committee outlined its

¹³⁴ Committee book of Marie O'Donovan Secretary of the I.R.P.D.F. Committee Limerick (U.C.D.A., Kathleen Barry Moloney Papers, P94/49.).

¹³⁵ Ibid, p. 87 (U.C.D.A., Kathleen Barry Moloney Papers, P94/49.).

¹³⁶ Ibid, p. 88 (U.C.D.A., Kathleen Barry Moloney Papers, P94/49.).

¹³⁷ Ibid, p. 64; O'Donovan to Sec. I.R.P.D.F. Mid-Limerick [Feb 1924] (U.C.D.A., Kathleen Barry Moloney Papers, P94/49.).

¹³⁸ Ibid, p. 66; Máire O'Donovan to Mr. Kennedy, Limerick 31 March 1924 (U.C.D.A., Kathleen Barry Moloney Papers, P94/49.).

¹³⁹ Letter issued by the Reconstruction Committee of the I.R.P.D.F., 6 Sept. 1924 (U.C.D.A., Kathleen Barry Moloney Papers, P94/54.).

objectives and announced that there would be a fundraising mission to Australia that year. It stated that

Mrs Moloney (nee Kathleen Barry) and Miss Linda Kearns, have been delegated to collect funds in Australia for and on behalf of the I.R.P.D.F. Reconstruction Committee. The Committee is directing its efforts towards restoring to civilian occupations men and women on the Republican side who, by direct participation in the...Republican cause, lost opportunities of education or training to fit them for permanent productive effort or found their means of living destroyed... The work of the Reconstruction Committee is an extension of activities carried on up to the present by the I.R.P.D.F....¹⁴⁰

This mission was one of the last attempts of the Anti-Treaty side to fundraise abroad for dependents of civil war internees.¹⁴¹

In Northern Ireland, internees and their dependents faced similar hardships. Those who had been arrested were predominantly Pro-Treaty but the Stormont administration made little differentiation between Pro and Anti-Treaty prisoners in 1922; they were all nationalists in the eyes of the Northern Irish state. Upon release a number of these internees found themselves facing similar problems of poverty, unemployment and emigration. This created a good deal of tension along the border region as the poor level of financial aid reportedly led some ex-internees to conduct robberies in order to survive. In December 1923, a series of raids, suspected of being carried out by ex-prisoners were related by the Commandant of Dundalk Barracks, who wrote to G.H.Q:

During the past week from the 10th inst there have been vague rumours floating around this area regarding petty larcenies, etc. in country districts. Encouraged by the initial success the perpetrators have come to Dundalk town and on the 17th and 18th inst. they succeed in getting large sums of money by armed robbery...the serious features of these moves is that a number of ex-prisoners whose homes are situated in Six Co. territory have been released.¹⁴²

¹⁴⁰ Ibid.

¹⁴¹ Mooney Eichacker, *Irish Republican Women in America*, pp 139-80.

¹⁴² Comdt. I.O. Military Customs Brigade Dundalk Barracks, to Director of Intelligence, G.H.Q., 20 Dec. 1923, (M.A., CW/P/02/01/11.).

The volatile situation which existed in Northern Ireland was noted by Charlotte Despard, who campaigned for the release of the internees through the Women Prisoners' Defence League (W.P.D.L.). In 1924, she wrote about the plight of Northern internees upon release and stated that 'we are having much difficulty in finding work, food and shelter for our ex-prisoners, especially the six county men...'.¹⁴³ A few days later, she wrote along similar lines and highlighted the desperation felt among these internees and noted that '...the great labour especially for the 6 county men is that they can neither return home nor get work here. Some are literally starving'.¹⁴⁴ Despard's comments were a direct reference to the way in which the release policy in Northern Ireland operated from 1923 onward. The method by which Northern Irish internees were released was through assessment by an advisory committee. Throughout 1923-4, a pattern emerged by which some prisoners were released 'unconditionally', while others were only granted release on certain conditions. These conditions were outlined in an undertaking, to be signed by the internee, in which the prisoner provided assurances to remain within the boundaries of certain counties or leave Northern Ireland completely. These internees tended to fall into the category of 'dangerous' prisoners and it was these individuals, according to Despard, that could 'neither return home nor get work...'.¹⁴⁵ In some instances, these internees agreed to stay within the boundaries of certain counties while others migrated to the newly established Free State.¹⁴⁶ This destination may have been desirable due to the high level of Pro-Treaty sentiment among Northern Irish internees. As a result, some ex-prisoners obtained jobs in a number of public services such as the post office or the civic guard while Anti-Treaty internees in the Free State emigrated or

¹⁴³ Diary Entry, 11 Jan. 1924 (P.R.O.N.I., Charlotte Despard Diaries, D.2479/1/8.).

¹⁴⁴ Ibid, 14 Jan. 1924 (P.R.O.N.I., Charlotte Despard Diaries, D.2479/1/8.).

¹⁴⁵ Ibid.

¹⁴⁶ The following internees signed exclusion orders, either to remain in certain counties or leave Northern Ireland for a period of two years. See selection at (P.R.O.N.I., HA/5/1525 Michael Hanratty; HA/5/1555 John Corr; HA/5/1559 John Cox; HA/5 1560 Andrew Corrigan; HA 5/51573 AK Dorris; HA/5/1583 Terence Fitzpatrick; HA 5/ 2012 Harry McKeown; HA 5/2022 Michael Watters.).

struggled to find employment.¹⁴⁷ For the Stormont administration, this method of release proved effective in limiting the number of ex-internees that could potentially create conflict in Northern Ireland. However, there were occasions when exclusion orders were unjustly handed out. This was the case for one internee, Michael Hanratty, who was arrested in June 1922 and placed on the *Argenta* in Larne Harbour.¹⁴⁸ He was detained on the suspicion of being an I.R.A. member and for the additional misfortune of being a postman. The R.U.C. believed Hanratty to be particularly dangerous and stated, 'his position as postman renders him even more so, he being in the position to have direct contact with official correspondence passing through the post'.¹⁴⁹ Hanratty went before the advisory committee in November 1922 but the committee refused his application.¹⁵⁰ During his internment, his wife and children fell into destitution. After further appeals, he was eventually released in 1923 on the condition that he would not travel outside a 'three mile radius,' of his hometown, Markethill. Consequently, he could not continue his job as a postman since the restrictions on his movement prevented him from carrying out his duties. With little option, Hanratty agreed to travel south to work in a Post Office in Athboy and signed an exclusion order from Northern Ireland for two years. Local M.P., John Nugent, highlighted Hanratty's case with the Ministry of Home Affairs and argued that it was quite likely he had been the victim of local prejudice. He stated that Hanratty's transfer to a Post Office in Athboy was on the suggestion of the Post Mistress, saying that 'He (Hanratty) made no application for the transfer. Evidently the object was to retain the man who had been appointed in his absence, who was a Protestant,

¹⁴⁷ Michael Hanratty found employment in the postal service, see file of Michael Hanratty (P.R.O.N.I., HA/5/1525.); Internee Andrew Corrigan left Northern Ireland under an exclusion order and joined the civic guard in the Free State. He later requested to return to the Northern Ireland due to failing health but this was declined. Home Affairs stated that there was lack of evidence for his failing health claim, notably that he had signed the Civic guard only a few months previously and he was also an IRA captain; Note of Pountney Home Affairs, 23 July 1924 (P.R.O.N.I., Andrew Corrigan, HA/5 1560.).

¹⁴⁸ Internment Order for Hanratty, *S.S. Argenta* Larne, 28 June 1922 (P.R.O.N.I., Michael Hanratty, HA 5 1525.).

¹⁴⁹ District Inspector, R.U.C., to County Inspector, Armagh, 26 July 1922 (P.R.O.N.I., Michael Hanratty, HA 5 1525.).

¹⁵⁰ Minster for Home Affairs, to Gertrude Hanratty, 9 Nov. 1922 (P.R.O.N.I., Michael Hanratty, HA 5 1525.).

and deprive Hanratty, who was a Catholic, of his position'.¹⁵¹ Over the next two years, the Ministry of Home Affairs, began to question the 'dangerous' label that had been placed on Hanratty. A Chief Inspector of the R.U.C. wrote in 1925, that 'I have been informed by several people, both Unionist and others that Hanratty was not in any way dangerous...I do not think there was sufficient ground for the suspicion that existed against him...'.¹⁵² In addition, the Secretary of Home Affairs wrote:

It is unfortunate for Hanratty that the Co. Insp[ector] did not have the reports on which the suspicion was based...until 2 ½ years after his internment. I do not think however that this report necessitates any action on our part...until he makes any request for permission to return.¹⁵³

Hanratty was eventually relieved of his exclusion order in 1926 but not until he had spent two years in the Free State.¹⁵⁴ Whether Catholicism was the overriding cause of Hanratty's arrest or not, the fact remains that he was interned for a year and exiled for practically two more after his release, on very little evidence. From the police reports, government memoranda and parliamentary debates, it would appear that a number of internees were encouraged to leave Northern Ireland. The administration recommended prisoner releases in return for their guarantee to migrate or emigrate. This was the case for internee A.K. Dooris, who the R.U.C. initially refused to release but later stated in a report that '...there was.... however no objection to this man's release if he leaves for America afterward'.¹⁵⁵

In the midst of social turmoil, the government of Northern Ireland, like the Free State, had neither the time nor the resources to decipher the dangerous republican from the moderate or the innocent bystander. Once a person was interned, they were assumed guilty

¹⁵¹ Nugent to Sir Dawson Bates, Minister Home Affairs, 7 Feb. 1924 (P.R.O.N.I., Michael Hanratty, HA 5 1525).

¹⁵² Chief Inspector, R.U.C., Armagh, to Inspector General, 13 Feb. 1925 (P.R.O.N.I., Michael Hanratty, HA 5 1525.).

¹⁵³ Sec. Home Affairs to Capt. Poynting, 16 Feb. 1925 (P.R.O.N.I., Michael Hanratty, HA 5 1525.).

¹⁵⁴ District Inspector, R.U.C., to Minister Home Affairs, 19 Mar. 1926 (P.R.O.N.I., Michael Hanratty, HA 5 1525.).

¹⁵⁵ District Inspector R.U.C., to Minister Home Affairs, 23 Apr. 1924 (P.R.O.N.I., A.K. Dooris, HA/5/ 1573.).

and treated accordingly. However, one cannot forget that the Stormont parliament was fighting for its very survival and as David Fitzpatrick's figures suggest violence, crime and murder escalated during these years.¹⁵⁶ It is therefore quite likely that in their haste to arrest Republicans, innocent people were caught up in the confusion. In general, they did intern the well-known agitators and those who posed the greatest threat to state security. One such internee was Andrew Corrigan, who was described by authorities as a dangerous individual, terrorising people in his local area, so much so that 'they were afraid to give any information as to his movements...'.¹⁵⁷ It was men like this and not Hanratty, that the Stormont government feared would collectively topple the state. For internees who were caught up in the fear and suspicion of these years, emigration became a necessary if unwelcome option.

In the Free State, high unemployment and poor financial aid also led a whole section of these newly released internees down the well-trodden path of emigration. Seamus O'Connor, who escaped from Newbridge in 1922, later emigrated to England and afterwards to the United States, as a result of the social and political climate in post-civil war Ireland.¹⁵⁸ While O'Connor himself had little difficulty finding employment, he remarked that a great number of Irish emigrants, 'to a large extent from Kerry and the Western Seaboard' were more or less 'down and outs' and spent their day purchasing cheap liquor.¹⁵⁹ O'Connor, who was a schoolteacher, was in the fortunate position of returning to the Free State in 1924, after he received a letter from his sister stating that some of the teachers who had been 'out', intended to return after the holidays.¹⁶⁰ O'Connor worked as an unrecognised teacher 'until a

¹⁵⁶ 'Sectarian and political violence peaked in 1922, when nearly 300 murders were officially enumerated in Northern Ireland.' David Fitzpatrick, *The Two Irelands 1912-1939* (Oxford, 1998), pp 118-9.

¹⁵⁷ District Inspector to Chief Inspector, 15 Sept. 1923 (P.R.O.N.I., Andrew Corrigan, HA/5 1560.).

¹⁵⁸ In a conversation with his employer, O'Connor was asked why he had come to America. O'Connor simply stated 'Politics'. His employer asked no further questions; Seamus O'Connor, *Tomorrow Was Another Day: Irreverent Memoirs of a Rebel Irish Schoolmaster* (Cork, 1970), p. 127.

¹⁵⁹ It must be noted that O'Connor does not specifically state that these emigrants were ex-internees, although Kerry and the Western Seaboard was some of the worst affected areas in terms of unemployment and poverty in the aftermath of the civil war; *Ibid*, p. 125.

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid*, p. 129.

year or two...had passed away, and we the untouchables, became touchable again'.¹⁶¹

However, despite the hardships faced by those on the Anti-Treaty side in the Irish Civil War, their treatment on release never reached the excesses of countries such as Russia or Greece.

Political prisoners in Greece were not only forced to recant their Communist views but to

disown members of their family who refused to do so. In one case, 'a father publicly

renounced his whole family (his wife, his two sons and his daughter) because "the family lost

its way and turned against the interests of my country"'.¹⁶² The royalist Right had triumphed

in the Greek elections of March 1946, and 'despite the fact that the new government was led

by a liberal, power chiefly in lay hands of anti-communists...right wing violence intensified

to the point where the government itself scarcely controlled what was happening in the

provinces'.¹⁶³ Leftists were forced to flee their homes and villages as armed bands formed in

the mountain areas of the Peloponnese and Central Greece.¹⁶⁴ From the end of the civil war

until 1974, Greece remained at peace but maintained its continued repression and persecution

of the Left with 'armed violence on the fringes of society'.¹⁶⁵ In the aftermath of the Russian

Civil War, 'it has been calculated that the combination of military deaths, political

executions, economic destruction, deportation and famine may have cost the lives as many as

2 million of the 4.5 million Cossacks...Finally a considerable number permanently fled the

country; estimates range from 2 million to 3.5 million'.¹⁶⁶ Extreme measures, such as the

deportation of government opponents, were never instituted in the Free State against the Anti-

Treaty side.

¹⁶¹ Ibid, p. 132.

¹⁶² Mark Mazower (ed), *After the War Was Over: Reconstructing the Family, Nation, and State in Greece, 1943-1960* (Princeton, 2000), p. 81.

¹⁶³ Ibid, p. 7.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶⁶ Stanley Payne, *Civil War in Europe 1905-1949* (Cambridge, 2011), p. 66.

Unfortunately, in some cases, poverty forced the recently released internees to emigrate, where they often faced worse deprivation. One recently released internee, Patrick Cooney, wrote to Barry Moloney in 1923 detailing his conditions in England. He wrote:

I again most respectfully beg to draw your attention to my case as I am in awful circumstances with no means of any kind to exist on or purchase some clothes etc which I need most badly and return home. Owing to my disablement and ill health I can get nothing done for me here and am present living on kindness of manager of this hostel who is giving me food and lodging for few days on credit owing to the position I am placed in for serving my country I humbly prey you will do something for me by return post...'.¹⁶⁷

Cooney wrote again a few days later stating

I owed manager of this hostel 11 shillings for food and lodging given to me on credit since last Wednesday and I have now got a balance of 9 shillings...Of course I wish to get home at once but I am unable to travel as the fare from this city on boat and train to north Tipperary is £1.3.9 altogether and owing to rough time I had in Prison etc for past 11 months all my clothes boots etc are very bad. And I would not like to go back home in this condition as I left it respectfully owing to relations positions. They are unable to assist me and I have cost them a lot of money for necessary articles of life while in Prison and my father is heavily in debt over me. I beg to thank you for taking my case up and trust you will do your best for me as an Irishman is not liked in this country now and I wish to get out of it as quietly as possible.'¹⁶⁸

Financial assistance was afforded to Cooney but within a year, in April 1924, his case came up again mainly due to the nature of his pleas for help. It would appear that he had taken advantage of 'republican charity' on a number of occasions. Having requested and received money for a return trip to Ireland, he had instead decided to stay on in England with the finances. Cooney's case may well have been one of genuine hardship but his failure to act honestly with the funds cast a dubious shadow over his future claims for assistance. What his case did reveal was that it was possible to claim assistance underhandedly and this raised suspicion as to whether many more ex-internees took advantage of charitable donations. In April 1924, Barry Moloney remarked of the episode:

¹⁶⁷ Patrick J. Cooney, Bevington House Hostel, Liverpool, to Madam 'Kathleen Barry', 28 June 1923 (U.C.D.A., Kathleen Barry Moloney Papers, P94/46.).

¹⁶⁸ Patrick J. Cooney, Bevington Bush, Liverpool, to 'Madam', 30 June 1923 (U.C.D.A., Kathleen Barry Moloney Papers, P94/46.).

In June 1923 P.J. Cooney applied to the I.R.P.D.F. from Liverpool for money. He stated that he had been wounded and in prison in Limerick and that he was released but could not return to his area for fear of re-arrest. He was told repeatedly that the I.R.P.D.F. could not help him as he did not come within its scope. He wrote piteous letters (specimen attached) from a Liverpool Hospital and as a result received £5 from Army Medical Funds to enable him to come home. He went on to Manchester instead- from which place he wrote again appealing for help. Sometimes two letters [unstamped] would arrive the same day... Eventually he came to Dublin and received money from various Republican sympathisers there to help him to go home to Nenagh. He was most troublesome and deceitful. He wired and wrote the I.R.P.D.F. from Clare and Tipperary asking for more money which was not sent as he was not an I.R.P.D.F. case. In October he came to Dublin and he stated that he had got a job in Mullingar and wanted his fare there. Although it was felt by this time that he was “wrong” the fare to Mullingar was given him (out of personal money) in order to get him out of Dublin where his constant begging from Republicans had become notorious. During the hunger strike it was reported in Dublin that he had been a spy in Limerick Jail and had been beaten by the prisoners there prior to his release.¹⁶⁹

Whether Cooney was a spy or not, he at least had the opportunity to emigrate, a choice which was later denied many ex internees upon release.¹⁷⁰ A statement made by de Valera in July 1923, banned emigration unless ex-internees received a permit from the I.R.A. allowing them to leave.¹⁷¹ Furthermore, the I.R.A. enforced additional stipulations in the weeks after the cessation of civil war. The new policy revealed that in many circumstances, these changes directly affected prisoners in the immediate aftermath of internment. An I.R.A. Executive document stated:

There were only three general orders issued since the “cease fire order”: one limiting emigration; one setting out penalties of volunteers found guilty of robbery, and one limiting recruiting to men who are not over 19 years on the 12th July 1923. A number of memos were issued urging Volunteers to join Sinn Fein work with I.R.P.D.F. etc etc. and a number of Routine Orders were issued setting out details as to how General Order No. 8. (which forbid Volunteers to accept release conditionally from enemy) was put into effect. Other routine orders covered the return of reports and attitude of Volunteers in Free State County Courts.¹⁷²

¹⁶⁹ Memo of Kathleen Barry, 7 April 1924 (U.C.D.A., Kathleen Barry Moloney Papers, P94/46.).

¹⁷⁰ Cooney was already in England in June 1923 and the I.R.A. executive issued an order on 12 July 1923 banning emigration for ex prisoners without permit; Chief of Staff to S.R. [Seamus Robinson], 6 Feb. 1924 (U.C.D.A., Moss Twomey Papers, P69/43(98)).

¹⁷¹ Foster, “No Wild Geese this time?”, p. 96; Chief of Staff to S.R. [Seamus Robinson], 6 Feb. 1924 (U.C.D.A., Moss Twomey Papers, P69/43(98)).

¹⁷² Chief of Staff to S.R. [Seamus Robinson], 6 Feb. 1924 (U.C.D.A., Moss Twomey Papers, P69/43(98)).

Effectively, this order further aggravated undue hardship by debarring the safety valve of emigration to struggling breadwinners. Some members did manage to emigrate as the army council later noted that a 'large number of volunteers from all along the west coast emigrated, and a considerable number also from other parts of the country. The reason for which most of these men emigrated was because there was no hope of their obtaining a livelihood in Ireland in the near future'.¹⁷³ However, not all internees were so lucky and later correspondence revealed that as a result of this general order, some ex-prisoners were denied the freedom to travel abroad. In one case, a letter from internee Paddy Fleming revealed how his circumstances had been consistently precarious:

I should be obliged if you would grant me permission to absent myself from the country for a couple of years...to return any time that duty demands it. My reason for this application is that I cannot find any work to do here and I have been living on my friends mostly for eight years. If permitted it is my intention to go to the U.S.A. I was there for 10 months before and worked with the Irish [mission] while there so that I have reasonable hope of getting some kind of employment.¹⁷⁴

The response provided to Fleming by the I.R.A. Executive, revealed that their post-civil war priorities now lay in reorganising the 'volunteers' and the financial circumstances of ex-internees were not actively considered. The reply read:

You are of course aware of the executive decision of July 1923 regarding emigration. These are still in force so consequently we cannot issue a permit to you to emigrate for the purpose you state...I am glad that I have heard from you. I wrote to you last November and until now I have received no reply or acknowledgement...Please let me know what your intentions are regarding future army work or have you been in touch with any of the volunteers since you were released.¹⁷⁵

In the aftermath of the civil war, there was a sharp drop in the membership of the I.R.A..

Brian Hanley noted that in August 1924 figures dropped to 14,541 and were to decrease

¹⁷³ Brian Hanley, *I.R.A. 1926-1936* (Dublin, 2002), p. 12.

¹⁷⁴ P. Fleming to Chief of Staff, 8 Apr. 1924 (U.C.D.A., Moss Twomey Papers, P69/43 (104)).

¹⁷⁵ Chief of Staff to P. Fleming, 11 Apr. 1924 (U.C.D.A., Moss Twomey Papers, P69/43 (104)).

further over the coming years.¹⁷⁶ The outlook of the Executive, in the immediate aftermath of the civil war, was aimed at maintaining and regrouping old I.R.A. units and battalions. Hanley noted how one senior I.R.A. officer remarked that the movement must ‘train for war...otherwise we can never hope to keep anything but a semblance of an Army together’.¹⁷⁷ In order to ‘train for war’, ex-internees had to stay in Ireland, if not by choice then by force of Executive order. The restrictions placed on emigration by the post-civil I.R.A. amounted to nothing more than an act of self-preservation, an act that was financially and socially damaging to the general rank and file. It undoubtedly contributed to the ‘disillusionment’ element which Hanley highlighted as a likely factor in the steady decline in I.R.A. membership.¹⁷⁸ Various refusal letters issued to ex-prisoners consistently returned to the subject of building the ‘organisation’ and keeping in touch with ‘the volunteers’. The following is a sample of some correspondence on the issue:

Permits cannot be issued to emigrate unless it is absolutely necessary for your health. If you are in middling health and can recover completely in this country it is your duty to stay in it... Orders were issued to all prisoners to proceed to their own areas when released. Practically all of the Six County men released from F.S. jails have returned to their homes. Some of them who thought they were very much on the run are getting on all right. I hope you will proceed to Tyrone without delay and get in touch with the volunteers there and help to build up the organisation.¹⁷⁹

To acknowledge yours of the 28th ulto. We have no power to give you leave to emigrate for the purpose you state. The old 1st Northern Division is in a bad state of organisation and we are doing our best to pull it together at present...it is your duty to remain in your area and try and pull it together...I know it is hard on men not to be able to get work but an existence can be eked out by every man until times improve. I am sure when you think it over you will realise that if we have to fight again we will need well- trained officers...¹⁸⁰

¹⁷⁶ Brian Hanley, *The I.R.A. 1926-1936*, p. 11.

¹⁷⁷ Ibid.

¹⁷⁸ Ibid, p. 12.

¹⁷⁹ Chief of Staff to Sean Gallagher, 6 June 1924 (U.C.D.A., Moss Twomey, P69/43 (107)).

¹⁸⁰ Chief Staff to Alfred Mc Callion, 1 Mar. 1924 (U.C.D.A., Moss Twomey Papers P69/ 2(122)).

The Adjutant General being out of town your reply to his circular of all released G.H.Q. officers was passed on to me. I enclose herewith your reply. ..You can, of course again forward your original reply if it is your wish to make things more difficult for the men who did their best to carry on when the original G.H.Q. staff were put on the casualty list...¹⁸¹

However, despite the permit conditions put in place by the executive, it is estimated that some 'several thousand' internees emigrated in the aftermath of the civil war.¹⁸² Foster remarked on how some of these émigré 'left Ireland surreptitiously without securing a visa (or character reference), or by means of step migration to the United States via Britain and Canada'.¹⁸³ The Free State was an unwelcome home for destitute ex-internees and the meagre financial aid available from Anti-Treaty sources was certainly a push factor for many.

For those who did remain in the Free State, unemployment soon led to poverty and social unrest. By 1925, reports began to emerge of disruptive ex-prisoners, particularly in the border region. The suspected reason was attributed to the inappropriate level of support from the 'Irregular' fund. A government report, shed some light on the general feeling among the ex-internees of the Anti-Treaty I.R.A.. The Director of Intelligence in the Free State Army wrote:

I believe that there is a good deal of jealousy and ill feeling amongst the Irregular element of the ex-Six County Internees over the distribution of the White Cross Reconstruction Grants. It appears that in the 3rd Northern Divisional Area all were instructed to forward claims through Divisional H.Q. and so far as is known all claims, with the exception of Thornberry's and Croyn's, were turned down. Many of these ex-internees are practically destitute and are voicing their grievances continually. I was speaking to one such yesterday and he said it wasn't any wonder that it was found impossible to organise the Six Counties. This individual came specifically to Dublin to place the case of his companions before Irregular H.Q. but so far as I could ascertain he got very little sympathy. I also learn that practically 75

¹⁸¹ C/Staff to L.H., 24 Jan. 1924 (U.C.D.A., Moss Twomey Papers P69/2 (134)).

¹⁸² Gavin Foster, "No Wild Geese this time?", p. 100. Foster also mentioned how C.S. Andrew put the figure at the remarkably higher number of 100,000 Republicans (military, activists and civilians) leaving the Free State between 1924 and 1927; *Ibid*, p.101.

¹⁸³ *Ibid*, p. 101.

percent of those who were of strong Irregular views whilst interned cannot now be induced to take part in the movement.¹⁸⁴

The figure of 75% reluctant to now ‘take part in the movement’ was possibly quite accurate.

Brian Hanley recorded that by November 1926, I.R.A. membership fell to 5,042 which he noted was the ‘effect of emigration from the Free State and the loss of members who drifted out of the organisation through disillusionment’.¹⁸⁵ The post-civil war environment of both the Free State and Northern Ireland was hostile towards internees at many levels of society. Ex-prisoners found it difficult to find employment due to local biases and the operation of fundraising in the new state was opposed by both the Catholic Church and some members of the public. The substantial drop in contributors to the Fund, both in Ireland and abroad, provoked further financial hardship for dependents of internees. Furthermore, when assistance was raised by the I.R.P.D.F., their offices were often raided and their funds seized. High unemployment and low assistance only served to further enhance poverty along the southern and western seaboard, the area from which the majority of poorer internees hailed. Destitution was further exacerbated by the I.R.A. Executive’s decision to ban emigration without permit. ‘Despite the anti-treaty movement’s best efforts to prevent a replay of the historic cycle of revolution-defeat-exile, thousands of republican soldiers had little choice but to leave Ireland following their defeat by the Free State’.¹⁸⁶ It could, therefore be argued, that the significant drop in I.R.A membership post-civil war was in part, a by-product of how internees were treated by both the Free State and the I.R.A. Executive upon release. By 1924, in both military and social terms, the government had successfully brought the Anti-Treaty I.R.A. to a ceasefire and diluted the level of opposition they faced. When internees were

¹⁸⁴ Report No. 70, Director of Intelligence, 19 March 1925 (M.A., CW/P/02/01/11.).

¹⁸⁵ Brian Hanley discussed the decline in I.R.A. membership in the post-civil war years. Among other reasons, he noted how the ‘new Fianna Fáil party had been formed in May 1926 and included many of the I.R.A. leadership of 1924’; Hanley, *I.R.A. 1926-1936*, p. 12.

¹⁸⁶ Gavin M. Foster, *The Irish Civil War and Society: Politics, Class, and Conflict* (Hampshire, 2015), p. 220.

finally released by the new state, they had few options available and many obstacles to overcome.

Conclusion

In 1922, the governing of the new Irish state fell to a revolutionary generation, many of whom had been former prisoners. The ministers of the first native government had been interned by the British administration in Ireland, walked the corridors of Kilmainham and Mountjoy, engaged in hunger strikes and prisons riots, planned and conducted various escapes and had borne witness to the fear evoked by the threat of execution. Such past experience was an invaluable asset to the ministers of the Irish Free State during the socially and politically unstable climate of 1922-4. Internment, however, had been a shared experience and the thousands of Anti-Treaty I.R.A. prisoners detained during the civil war were similarly prepared for imprisonment. For these men and women, the revolution did not stop upon arrest and many continued their opposition to the state behind prison walls. Tactics such as riots, hunger-strikes and escapes continued to beleaguer the Irish prison system during the civil war. Many internees sought to make the administration of the country's jails and camps as dysfunctional as possible while their colleagues outside attempted to topple the native government. Prison escapes were a particular propaganda coup since they embarrassed the new state while simultaneously gaining freedom for the internees. Riots, while dangerous, inflicted massive financial damage, forcing the administration to invest extra time and money into an already run-down prison service. The hunger strike, regularly burdened the government with additional paper work, as extra doctors and medical supplies were essential to prevent immediate internee deaths. Additionally, the state's national and international reputation came into question, as local Co. Councils, members of the public at home and abroad, Irish societies and activists inundated the new administration with resolutions and pleas of sympathy. Collectively, these tactics presented the first Irish government, in the

midst of civil war, with a whole host of internal difficulties. Despite these issues, the Free State continued to arrest and intern thousands of military prisoners. The national army and unarmed civic guard was a poor match for some on the Anti-Treaty side. The new army contained many first time recruits, who were often poorly trained and ill-prepared for war. The government therefore implemented internment as a means of ending civil war, by containing its combatants within the prison system. Internees were detained for a variety of offences which reflected the level of instability throughout the country. The diverse nature of this military internee body can be observed in the prison ledgers, where besides the Anti-Treaty I.R.A., many others were arrested for agrarian offences with little or no reference to the Republican agenda. Both political and rural offenders were predominantly active in the south and west of the country, where the highest level of military internees hailed from. Additionally, a number of English, Scottish, Northern Irish and American internees were also among the lists of those interned for military offences in this period. Over 13,000, in total, passed through the new state's prison system before the end of 1924.

From the outset, the Provisional Government set about countering the unruly internee population. With the experience and knowledge of former prisoners, the government implemented internment wholesale, instilling fear into the internee population through the threat of execution and locking down communication between prisoners and their relatives. In order to stem the internal disintegration of the prison system as had occurred 1912-1921, the new state attempted to close off the potential avenues of unrest by refusing to release hunger strikers, regularly moving unruly groups of prisoners and instituting strict censorship of the national media. When rioting sprang up, the prison authorities fought force with force, similar to previous years. Unlike the British establishment, visits to internees were suspended and censorship of correspondence continued in order to inhibit the wide-spread circulation of anti-state propaganda. Executions were used as a warning to the Anti-Treaty I.R.A. outside

that the murder of government officials would not be tolerated and that prisoners would be used in retaliation for the movement's atrocities. Emergency legislation specifically targeted Anti-Treatyites so that support or potential sympathy for the movement was suppressed immediately. The new state could ill-afford such sympathy and internment became a fast and effective means of containing the Anti-Treaty threat, both outside and inside the prisons. The Provisional Government also refused to grant prisoner-of-war status to internees and was provided the moral backing of the Irish Catholic hierarchy, which supported the administration's decision to de-politicise the Anti-Treaty agenda. Ultimately, the new government used their knowledge of internment extensively to end the civil war.

However, while the native government were well-versed in the nature of prison warfare, the new Dáil Cabinet had no practical experience of administering a prison system. As military internee figures soared, the state struggled to tackle the various renovations that were necessary to provide for such a large body of prisoners. The damage caused by the previous decade of unrest had taken its toll on Irish jail's, with many in need of replacement windows, door, locks and lavatories. To combat shortages, the administration began to prioritise military internees over civil offenders, often to such an extent that convicted prisoners were released to make room for the former. As the military situation outside intensified, the government discussed the possibility of erecting internment centres on Lambay Island and even suggested the transportation of internees to St Helena. Panic and uncertainty brought these proposals to the cabinet table in 1922, but common sense eventually shelved them. The new state subsequently focused their attention on renovations in the country's internment camps and in late 1922, they began the transfer of various batches of prisoners to places such as the Curragh, Newbridge, Gormanstown and Finner Camp.

In Northern Ireland, a similar image emerged whereby Stormont passed the Civil Authorities Act providing for the internment of 'hostile' or dangerous agitators. The body of internees detained in Northern Ireland were overwhelmingly Pro-Treaty when compared with the decisively Anti-Treaty cohort in the Free State. The government arrested and interned some 25 Ulster Protestant Association internees who were suspected of carrying out sectarian assassinations. Internment figures in Northern Ireland were noticeably smaller and only 600 were interned compared with 13,000 in southern jails. The administration of the system remained in the hands of the Home Affairs Minister, Dawson Bates, who spent considerable time and money renovating the *Argenta* in Larne Harbour for the detention of internees. It was believed that a prison ship would act as a greater deterrent, since internees often enjoyed more comfort and freedom in internment camps. Northern Ireland had fewer prisons than the Free State and similar issues arose regarding overcrowding, food provisions, exercise and sanitation. Likewise internees continued to make their presence known through riots, hunger-strikes and prison escapes as did the southern internee body. The inclusion of exclusion orders for certain internees upon release was an attempt by the Stormont administration to remove the more 'hostile' elements from Northern Ireland until the political climate stabilised. In the Free State, no such orders were included, but the undertaking form was an attempt to separate the die-hard Republicans from the more moderate internees.

Between late 1923 and early 1924, as the Free State began to accelerate releases, internees were faced with a number of social problems. Unemployment and poverty were amongst the biggest obstacles facing the Anti-Treaty I.R.A and their families in the aftermath of civil war. The significant drop in donations to the I.R.P.D.F. and the frequent government raids on its offices reduced the level of financial aid available to internees' dependents. Seeking employment in the new Irish state was a difficult task, as noted by Anti-Treatyite Seamus O'Connor and sympathiser Jeremiah Mee. Upon release many ex-internees emigrated

rather than live in the politically hostile Free State. However, I.R.A. G.H.Q. made little easy for the returning prisoners and in July 1923, the Executive decided to ban emigration for I.R.A. members, which in turn led to further social deprivation.

Nevertheless, despite the various social barriers encountered by Anti-Treaty internees in the new state, the civil war in Ireland never unleashed the level of persecution against government opponents, as was the case in other European countries. Communist ex-prisoners and their families in Greece were forced to publicly recant their political allegiance and the civil service was purged of sympathisers. The persecution of the Left continued until the fall of the Greek military junta in 1974. Stanley Payne noted that, 'the human misery, destruction, and loss of life caused by the Russian war were beyond comparison to other European civil wars...'.¹ It was estimated that 'more than half a million peasants died in the continuing and widespread peasant revolts. Estimates of the number of victims of the Red Terror and continuing Bolshevik repression rage up to 400,000'.² The Soviet regime, in its 'political and institutional development...' was 'the first modern regime permanently structured for war even in peacetime'.³ In the Free State, ex-prisoners and their families never experienced such excessive violent repression. Much of this can be attributed to the fact that the Irish Civil War was not a dramatic power struggle between right and left. As Michael Hayes reflected in 1969, 'the burden of a post-revolutionary government is always heavy- usually an old authority has been overthrown and there is no new one ready to replace it... The members of Dáil Éireann 1919-21 were not revolutionary in the European sense- they did not seek to

¹ Stanley Payne, *Civil War in Europe 1905-1949* (Cambridge, 2011), p. 65.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid, p 66.

smash an existing order and remould it nearer to their hearts desires. Many of their leaders, including de Valera himself, were more conservative than revolutionaries'.⁴

Although the level of violence in the Irish Civil War was not comparable to other European wars, it still brought forth all the bitterness of internal conflict. Anne Dolan commented on the Free State's position at the end of the civil war stating that 'on 24 May 1923, the republicans stopped fighting. The Free State had won. In winning it had proved itself as brutal as any British army. It had executed seventy-seven men, sacrificed two leaders, hundreds of soldiers and countless civilians. On 24 May, the Free State had little to celebrate'.⁵ The Free State had indeed proved itself as brutal and the ministers of the new state had used internment to their advantage, ushering forth a ceasefire within eleven months. However, while internment was simply the reintroduction of old methods, the fact that it was used against former comrades, revealed the level of panic and emergency among government circles in 1922. As chapter one demonstrated, crime rates and violent acts, whether political or non-political, escalated during 1922-3. The first task facing the Provisional Government was the restoration of law and order and with a poorly trained army and inadequate police force, the ministers of the Dáil cabinet returned to the method of internment in order to suppress a full scale descent into social anarchy. As Kevin O'Higgins famously stated 'the Provisional Government was simply eight young men in the City Hall standing amidst the ruins of one administration with the foundations of another not yet laid, and with wild men screaming through the keyhole. No police force was functioning through the country, no system of justice was operating, the wheels of administration hung idle battered out of recognition by the clash of rival jurisdictions'.⁶ The victory of Pro-Treaty candidates in the

⁴ Michael Hayes, 'Dáil Éireann and the Irish Civil War' in *Studies: An Irish Quarterly Review*, Vol. 58, No. 229 (Spring, 1969), pp 20-1.

⁵ Anne Dolan, *Commemorating the Irish Civil War: History and Memory, 1923-2000* (Cambridge, 2003), p. 6.

⁶ Kevin O'Higgins, *Three Years Hard Labour; an address delivered to the Irish Society at Oxford University on 31st October, 1924* (Dublin), p. 7.

1922 General Election reflected the public's desire for peace. Not every citizen was Anti-Treaty and the majority of the Irish public had voted against the prospect of another war. With the eyes of the British cabinet on the Free State, the government could not afford to lose political support and imprisonment became a mechanism of power, a necessary means of reinforcing control. Internment, regardless of the right or wrong, was instrumental to the way in which the government fought the civil war. It became the foremost counter-insurgency measure, directly affecting thousands of Anti-Treatyites and their families. Its consequences were heard in the local community halls of America and Australia, as those who remained sympathetic to the 'Republic' continued to provide financial support. At home, the native government worked diligently towards keeping the Irish public disconnected from the Anti-Treaty agenda by interning twice as many individuals as the British administration. It may very well be that the Free State succeeded in bringing the Anti-Treaty I.R.A. to a ceasefire in April 1923, not through any military prowess but by removing its armed opposition and hiding them behind prison walls.

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