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THE IRISH REPUBLICAN ARMY AND ITS ENEMIES

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The Irish Republican Army and its Enemies

Violence and Community in County Cork, 1917-1923

Peter Hart

Submitted as a Ph.D Thesis to Trinity College,
Department of Modern History
1992

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Declarations

This thesis has not been submitted as an exercise for a degree at any other university and is entirely my own work.

Peter Hart

This thesis is based primarily on documentary evidence, newspapers, personal interviews and on statistics assembled from these sources and from Census and Land Valuation data.

The nature and incidence of revolutionary violence in Cork and Ireland was analyzed using case studies and statistics of riots, casualties and the destruction of property. Violence escalated into guerrilla war following a cyclical pattern of reciprocal reprisals. Revenge appears to have been the primary motive in most of these killings and became an end in itself for both sides. Most engagements were extremely one-sided and most victims in the Tan War were shot outside of combat, unarmed and helpless. The Civil War was much less violent in Cork, due to I.R.A. weakness, National Army restraint and the lack of ethnic tension between combatants.

The Volunteers thought of themselves as respectable plain men; their enemies generally considered them to be lower class `corner boys' and irresponsible youths. Statistical analysis of their ages, occupations and family land holdings shows them to have been overwhelmingly young, unmarried, literate and disproportionately skilled and urban-dwelling. Those who lived on farms tended to be substantially better off than their neighbours. Officers also tended to be slightly older and of higher social rank. Their youth made the Volunteers appear to many as a generational revolt. They were indeed self-consciously youthful and the I.R.A. can be seen in part as an extension of this (exclusively male) youth culture.

Most men became Volunteers out of a collective sense of patriotic enthusiasm; most also (as interviews and I.R.A. unit records show) joined in groups, with friends, neighbours and relatives. Companies were formed locally, by small, tightly-knit groups led by self-nominated organisers. As a result, I.R.A. units tended to put local loyalties first, and to be both parochial and territorial. However,

case studies and further unit records also show that, while these core neighbourhood networks usually remained active, as violence increased, the I.R.A's reliable membership decreased. Well over 50% of nominal Volunteers were inactive in 1920-21 (thus forcing guerrilla flying columns to coerce reluctant members). In the 1922 Treaty split, surviving unit records confirm that many men followed their officers but most veteran guerrillas actively opposed the Treaty. During the Civil War most units were reduced to a handful of core members besides these die-hard flying columns.

The I.R.A.'s archetypal enemy was `the informer', of whom scores were shot in the revolution. I.R.A. lists of suspected informers formed a broad cross-section of Cork society; a statistical analysis of those shot, on the other hand, show that a considerable majority were outsiders - the largest group of victims being Protestants. This apparent bias cannot be accounted for on the basis of case evidence: most victims were shot on suspicion alone. In fact, it was insiders - men within the I.R.A. or respectable neighbours - who gave the British the most damaging information. It would appear that these `enemies' reflected communal prejudices.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The staffs of the following libraries and archives were enormously hospitable and helpful in guiding me through their collections: the University College Dublin Departments of Archives and of Irish Folklore, the National Library of Ireland, the Irish Military Archives, the National Archives, the Irish Valuation Office, the Trinity College Record Office, the Imperial War Museum, the Liddell Hart Centre for Military Archives, the House of Lords Record Department, the Public Record Office, the Cork Archives Institute, the Cork County Museum, the County Cork Library, the Public Record Office of Northern Ireland, Queen's University Special Collections, the Buffs Regimental Museum and the Boston Public Library. I would particularly like to acknowledge A. O'Tuama, Patricia Barry, Peter Young, Victor Lang and Gerry Lyne.

The following all provided crucial pieces of the puzzle. Donal O'Donovan, George O'Mahony, Dr. John Chisholm (who allowed me to listen to and quote taped interviews in their possession), Richard Moylan, Anita Begley and Eithne Barry.

The twelve anonymous ex-Volunteers who remembered the revolution with me made this thesis a wholly different and better work, and made each interview fascinating and enjoyable. I will never forget their hospitality.

I would especially like to thank Marion and Jim O'Driscoll for all their help, and for introducing me to Cork.

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Finally, the greatest debt I owe is to Dr. David Fitzpatrick, my supervisor. His book, Politics and Irish Life, was one of the primary sources of my original interest in Irish history and I feel very fortunate to have had him as a teacher and supervisor as well. This thesis would not have been possible without his constant advice, criticism and encouragement.

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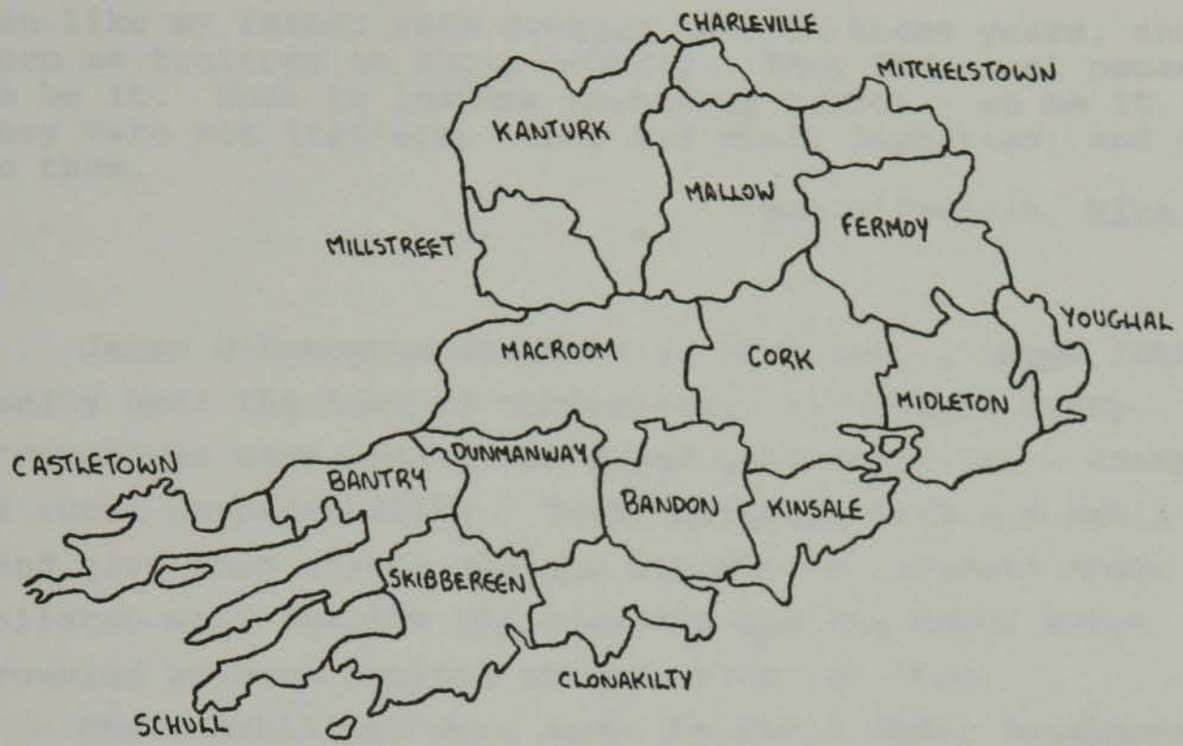
Districts and Towns in Cork[1]



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[1] The boundaries shown are those of the Rural/Union Districts.

INTRODUCTION

The Killing of Sergeant O'Donoghue

Men like my father were dragged out, in those years, and shot down as traitors to their country. Shot for cruel necessity - so be it. Shot to inspire necessary terror - so be it. But they were not traitors. They had their loyalties, and stuck to them.

Sean O'Faolain, Vive Moi![1]

James O'Donoghue was born in 1877 into a large farming family near the town of Cahirciveen, in western Kerry. The O'Donoghues were good tenants and good Catholics - exemplars of rural respectability. Their hillside farm was small but land gave them status and the security to educate their children well despite the economic ups and downs which troubled western Ireland in the 1870s and '80s.

Their ambitions were aided by their older daughters, Mary, Julia, Ellen and Nora, who emigrated to the United States and sent money home to provide for the training of their younger brothers and sisters. These efforts were repaid by the new generation's rapid advancement up the professional ladder, primarily through service to church and state. One sister entered a convent in America, another sister became a nurse and one brother became a doctor. Another, Michael, entered the priesthood, thus fulfilling the dream of nearly every rural Irish family ('There was the old tradition of respectability with its three hallmarks - a pump in the yard; a bull for your cows, and a priest in the family'[2]). At age 21, James joined the Royal Irish Constabulary, another avenue

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[1] O'Faolain, Vive Moi! (Boston, 1963), p.39.

[2] Peter Somerville-Large, Cappaghglass (Dublin, 1984), p.325. This is a book of interviews about life in the west of Ireland in the twentieth century, the majority of which appear to have been done in west Cork and Kerry. The social benefits and financial costs of having a son enter the priesthood is vividly portrayed in T.C. Murray's 1912 play Maurice Harte, set in rural west Cork.

of social mobility popular among the farming people of Kerry (and a further guarantor of the family's rising social status).[3] James'career progressed well (as did his brothers'). He was stationed in county Cork and, after more than a decade of service, was promoted to Sergeant and transferred to Cork city.[4]

James married and settled with his wife on Tower Street, on the south side of the city. They lived on the edge of the old and densely populated working class and commercial district centred on nearby Barrack Street. A number of other policemen lived close by and their children grew up together, with much of the families' everyday life revolving around the barracks. Their immediate neighbours were artisans, shopkeepers and clerks who lived in decent houses but the other end of the road was considerably rougher, with more labourers and lodgers and fewer family homes.[5]

Whether he knew it or not, James was following in the footsteps of generations of his people, who moved east to Cork from their hill and valley homes. Barrack Street - 'Barracka' - the main artery of the area, had traditionally been the city's road to the west, and the neighbourhood had thus been heavily settled by migrants from west Cork and Kerry, James O'Donoghue and several of his comrades among them (three out of seven constables at O'Donoghue's station were Kerrymen in

---

[3] Patrick O'Shea, Voices and the Sound of Drums (Belfast, 1981) is the memoir of a son of another Kerry policeman, a contemporary of O'Donoghue's, and a valuable insight into their values and attitudes.

[4] This account of the O'Donoghues is based on information from the granddaughter of James O'Donoghue and on the Marie O'Donoghue Papers (in private possession). These include the detailed diary she kept between October 1968 and April 1970 while searching for her fathers' killers in Cork city [hereafter referred to as O'Donoghue Diary]. This extraordinary document includes interviews with old I.R.A. men, their relatives and other witnesses.

[5] This information, and the description of Tower and Barrack streets, came from the manuscript Census returns for 1911 located in the Public Record Office (Dublin), and from Sean Beecher, The Story of Cork (Cork, 1971), pp 60, 62-63.

1911).[6] Here was one of Cork's 'unacknowledged Irishtowns.'[7] These settlers helped create a distinctive communal identity around such local institutions as St. Finbar's hurling club with its networks of pubs and supporters. As with all such strong neighbourhoods in the city, it was frequently at odds with the others over politics, sports and everything else.[8]

James O'Donoghue was a typical Irish policeman. Most of his comrades had similarly decent upbringings on small Catholic farms. When James joined in 1898, the R.I.C. was at the height of its status and popularity as a career, both in Ireland as a whole and in Kerry in particular. 'In Kerry you could hardly go into a house without a son on the police or if they hadn't they had a brother': neighbouring boys with the right qualifications often vied for a place on the force.[9]

James did well. He passed his exams and was promoted to sergeant after less than twenty years of service, a better than average record.[10] With luck he could look forward to being made a Head Constable before his time was up.

The sergeant's role was an important one, with substantial prestige and authority. He was in charge of his

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[6] Manuscript census return, Tuckey Street barracks, 1911.

[7] Sean O'Faolain, An Irish Journey (New York, 1943), p.81.

[8] See Con O'Leary, Wayfarer in Ireland (London, 1935), p.162 and Anthony Griffin, The Origins, Growth and Influence of the G.A.A. in Cork City (B.A. Thesis, University College Cork, 1988), pp 14-15. For some fascinating reflections on the social geography of the cit, see William J. Smyth, 'Explorations of Space' in Joseph Lee, ed., Ireland: Towards a Sense of Place (Cork, 1985), pp 9-12.

[9] John D. Brewer, The Royal Irish Constabulary: an Oral History (Belfast, 1990), p.66. For the social background of police recruits, see Brewer, pp.33-43, 53-54, and Minutes of the Committee of Inquiry into the Royal Irish Constabulary and the Dublin Metropolitan Police (Cd.7637, 1914), pp 18, 31 and 126.

[10] Minutes of the Committee of Inquiry, p.11.

constables and barracks on a day to day basis and was also the symbol of the government in his district. 'A sergeant of the police, they all went to him for everything, nearly, he was the chief advisor and all like - even in 1921 and 1922'; 'the sergeant was the main man in the constabulary, he was the pivot man.'[11] In return for this advancement and authority, O'Donoghue remained steadfastly loyal to the system - not just to the Crown and the constabulary, but also to the traditional way of doing things: with discipline and moderation.

Loyalty to the service was also underlined by the tight-knit camaraderie of the men and their families - the police lived in their own social world - and by the distance between this world and the rest of Irish society, which increased after the turn of the century. In the decade after O'Donoghue joined the quality and quantity of recruits began to go down, a consequence of government neglect and better opportunities elsewhere. This was accompanied by a rise in hostility towards the force and its officers. Southern County, District and Municipal Councils, now in the hands of the nationalist Irish party, discriminated against serving and retired policemen over jobs and housing. Some trade unions followed suit. The increasingly important Gaelic Athletic Association refused to admit policemen, and these sentiments were echoed by other groups. It was generally felt by such organisations and many of their members that the R.I.C. was anti-nationalist. This may have had little impact on local popular attitudes - the sergeant's authority was still intact in many places well into the revolution - but it certainly intensified the sense of isolation within the R.I.C.. When a Royal Commission was created in 1914 to investigate the condition of the force, witness after witness told of the anxiety about their place in Irish society which permeated the Constabulary and their fears for the future.[12]

It was worse than they could have imagined. Sinn Fein's

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[11] Brewer, pp 56, 81.

[12] See the Minutes of the Committee of Inquiry, pp 25, 75, 83, 102.

victory at the polls in 1918 paved the way for confrontation, revolution and a gradual descent into guerrilla war, with the men of the R.I.C. on the front lines. In 1920 Cork became one of the main battlefields.

Sergeant O'Donoghue was stationed on Tuckey street in 'the flat of the city' from before the Great War, and became well known and respected there. He had little to do with political policing and by all accounts 'was good to the Sinn Feiners around the city.'[13] The I.R.A. considered him neither an active enemy nor a 'spy' and even his superiors considered him a 'harmless unoffending man.'[14] He and his family remained on good terms with their neighbours, despite the fact that a good number of these were sympathizers or members of the republican movement.

O'Donoghue remained committed to his job and the force, but after the summer of 1920 the stolid Constabulary to which he had devoted his life began to change rapidly and for the worse. His constables were given rifles, grenades and machine guns and were put on a war footing to face the aggresive young guerrillas of the Irish Republican Army. Irish recruits had dwindled almost to nothing and resignations had risen sharply. New English recruits began to pour in, belligerent, badly trained and ignorant of the country. They were veterans of the Great War ready to fight another.

These men - dubbed the 'Black and Tans' - were hard to manage and had little respect for the older officers. The discipline and restraint which were so much a part of O'Donoghue and his force began to disintegrate along with the old order. Police riots and killings became routine. One old Irish policemen said of the new men: 'They weren't as disciplined as the R.I.C., not at all. They were on their

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[13] Interview with Charlie O'Brien in O'Donoghue Diary, 13 Feb. 1969. See also interview with Elizabeth O'Connor, 6 Feb. 1969 and with two unnamed witnesses to the shooting, 31 Oct. 1968.

[14] Monthly Report of the County Inspector for the East Riding of Co. Cork [hereafter: C.I. Monthly Report, East Cork], Nov. 1920. (P.R.O.L., CO/904/113).

own, hurt one and you hurt them all.'[15]

O'Donoghue himself had to contend with more than one drunken outburst or brawl. On Saturday, October 2nd, for example, two drunken Auxiliary Cadets being taunted by a crowd on Patrick Street, opened fire on their tormentors and wounded two civilians. In the fracas that followed, one of the Auxiliaries was also wounded but constables from Tuckey Street, led by O'Donoghue, arrived in time to prevent further trouble.[16] A similar incident involving 'a drunken Tan' took place on October 31st.[17]

October also saw the war move decisively into the city: it was the worst month by far for I.R.A. ambushes. One policeman was killed and three were wounded, along with one soldier killed and two wounded (in an ambush on Barrack Street).[18]

O'Donoghue nevertheless still felt safe following the usual habits of the neighbourhood policeman, although his wife grew increasingly worried. He wore his uniform openly, never carried a gun, and continued to live on Tower Street, walking to work every day (many other policemen moved into barracks). Such was his routine on Wednesday, November 17th, as his daughter Marie later recalled:[19]

My father came home from duty about 3.15 p.m.. He was in uniform: no coat...It was a mild day with a touch of frost later. I asked my father when he was returning to Tuckey Street police station, intending to accompany him - it had been a practice of mine in dangerous times - but my father detested it and only agreed to it because it relieved mother's anxiety. He said he would leave at 5.50.

I went out after tea and spent some time at Timmins'

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[15] Brewer, p.111.

[16] Cork Examiner [hereater referred to as the Examiner], 4 Oct. 1920.

[17] O'Donoghue Diary, 31 Oct. 1968.

[18] The sources for these figures are detailed in Appendix 6.

[19] Marie O'Donoghue, Ms. account of the events of 17 Nov. 1920 (Marie O'Donoghue Papers).

house. The ringing of the Angelus - as I believed - made me rush out and when I reached the house I found that my father had left. "He is gone only a few minutes." I was terribly disappointed. I had arranged to call for groceries at Union Quay police station and Kitty Keating was to accompany me. At the gate I heard shots - there seemed to be six. I told my mother and she came out. There were no further reports. I made my way towards Union Quay with Kitty Keating.

I collected the provisions and returned with Keating. I met Nellie O'Connell in Douglas street. She stopped me and told me. There I learned that it was my father who was shot. "Your father was shot in White Street this evening and your mother is in Tuckey Street." Mrs. Mary A. Hayes, the wife of Sgt. Mick Hayes, had brought the news. She had heard the shots and rushed out as Sgt. Hayes had just left the house on Eastview Terrace. She kept saying he (my father) was only wounded. I knew he was dead.

I went with my mother to Tuckey Street station to get further information. "Nothing definite" said Head Constable Brown, being evasive.

There were some Tans present. Someone declared that somebody would pay for the night. My mother begged that no further violence or vengeance should follow.

We returned home sick at heart. I found my brother and we spent the night praying. My mother did not know that my father was dead. Mrs. Timmins brought the news in the morning. My mother was overcome.

We awaited the arrival of Father Michael O'Donoghue and he and my mother went to the Military Hospital to identify my father. We - my brother and I - spent the day in -----. We never saw our father again.

Sergeant O'Donoghue was shot three times as he walked down White Street on his way back to work - twice in the back and once in the head. Dusk and the gloom of an oncoming storm allowed the killers to fire at very close range. An ambulance and a priest were quickly on the scene but James O'Donoghue was already dead.[20]

His body was brought to the military hospital in Victoria Barracks where his wife and brother identified him, and then to church. As no undertaker would handle a policeman's body because of the Sinn Fein boycott, a car had to be rented outside the city to take James' remains to his family plot

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[20] Examiner, 18, 24 Nov. 1920; eyewitness accounts in O'Donoghue Diary, 31 Oct. 1968. See also Cork Constitution, 18 Nov. 1920 which suggests that O'Donoghue fell after the first two shots and was then finished off with a bullet in the back of the head.

near Cahirciveen.[21]

Who shot James O'Donoghue? Some of his enraged comrades at Tuckey Street thought they knew. The night of November 17th was an extremely stormy one. Cork was lashed by high winds and heavy gusts of rain.[22] As the Corporation had retaliated against the military-imposed curfew by shutting off the street lights, the city was in complete darkness - a haven and stalking ground for killers. On this terrible night, six hours after Sgt. O'Donoghue's death, two armed and disguised men made their way through a dark warren of streets to an old and crowded tenement house in the poorest part of downtown Cork, known as 'the Marsh':[23]

Mrs. Coleman, wife of Stephen Coleman, 2 Broad Street, said she was awakened about 11.45 p.m. by the noise of the front door being broken open. The next thing she heard was the sound of a man running up the stairs, and there and then a crash at the bedroom door. The door was kicked open, it being forced on its hinges, and in rushed a man in police uniform, a policeman's cap, and goggles. He came over towards the bedside, and she saw he had a flash lamp in one hand and a revolver in the other...The man merely exclaimed "Hallo!" and flashing the lamp on the bed, he raised his revolver and fired point blank into the bed. The bullet wounded her husband in the arm. The assailant then turned and walked out of the room, leaving Mrs. Coleman screaming...

Mr. John Kenny, who was sleeping upstairs with Mr. Patrick Hanley, stated that Hanley opened the door when he heard a man rushing up the stairs. The man, in police uniform, had just come from Mrs. Coleman's room. Hanley, standing at his bedroom door, said "Don't shoot! I am an orphan and my mother's chief support!" "Very well!" replied the man, and, raising his revolver, he fired at Hanley. The bullet missed him, but the man fired a second time, and the bullet struck Hanley just above the heart, killing him instantly...The rooms occupied by Mrs. Long and her mother on the same landing as Mr. Coleman were also broken into by the same assailant, but

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[21] O'Donoghue account.

[22] See Celia Saunders' Diary, 18 Nov. 1920 (Trinity College Record Office, Frank Gallagher Papers, Ms.10055).

[23] Examiner, 19 Nov. 1920. There is little doubt about the accuracy of these accounts, which were corroborated by witnesses both at the time and at the subsequent inquest, and repeated in the Unionist Cork Constitution.

seeing there was nobody there only two women, he went out without discharging any shots. The man in police uniform also rushed into the bedroom of Mr. Collins, who was sleeping with his wife and child in a room adjoining that in which Hanley was killed. "The man... carried a revolver in one hand and a flash lamp in the other. He flashed the light on the bed and fired point blank at us. The bullet grazed my head, and passed through the bedclothes and bed. I found it under the bed the next morning." Mr. Collins said he remained perfectly still, and by doing so probably saved his life, for his assailant rushed out of the room, leaving him for dead.

As the two masked men left the house, one turned and, in a final gesture of rage, threw a grenade which exploded and wrecked the hall. From Broad Street the pair walked around the corner to No.17 Broad Lane:[24]

The front door was broken in about midnight, and a man in police uniform with a policeman's cap, and wearing goggles, burst into the hall...He rushed straight up the stairs, and [Eugene] O'Connell, who was sleeping with his wife and child in a room on the first floor, came out to the landing to see what all the noise was about. Just before he reached the landing, the man flashed his lamp on O'Connell, and raising his revolver, fired point-blank at him. The bullet struck O'Connell in the wrist. He ran into the bedroom, where his wife and child were in bed, and was followed relentlessly by his assailant, who shot him dead in the bedroom in the presence of his wife. The man then came out of the bedroom and ran up another flight of stairs.

Mrs. O'Brien...hearing the shots downstairs, came out of her room. She states she was met half-way down the stairs by the man, revolver in hand, rushing up. She called to him that there was no one above only two children, but he paid no attention to her, and when she endeavoured to prevent him from going up, he pushed her roughly aside, and continued towards Charles O'Brien's room. She heard a shot above them, and in a half-fainting condition she saw the policeman hurry downstairs past her. When she got to the room, she found her son Charles, stretched on the floor near the bed, bleeding from the mouth.

Her other son, Michael, a boy of ten years was in bed in the same room. He told her Charles had gone to the landing and was shot there by a man. He managed to crawl in to where he had fallen. He also said the assailant had come over to the bedside and flashing the lamp on him, raised his revolver. The boy exclaimed, "Don't shoot me. I am too young." The man then lowered his revolver and hurrying downstairs went out of the house.

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[24] Examiner, 19 Nov. 1920.

Patrick Hanley had been shot in the heart and killed. Eugene O'Connell had been hit three times and killed. Stephen Coleman had been wounded in the arm. Charles O'Brien had been shot in the face and critically wounded. Minutes later, despite continued wild shooting and the presence of police in the area, 'a number of women [from Broad Lane] came screaming and calling for the ambulance to the Grattan Street Fire Station.' O'Brien and O'Connell were taken to the Mercy Hospital. The residents of Broad Street were not so brave, and did not venture into the dark streets for two hours, by which time Hanley was beyond help.

If Mrs. O'Brien had waited this long her son would have died as well. Charlie O'Brien was lucky and survived. However, he had to endure constant pain and the loss of an eye and much of his jaw. He took months to recover and was kept hidden in the meantime. When he finally left the hospital he was smuggled out in a laundry basket.[25]

The final act of the night took place at No.15, North Mall, just across the north channel of the Lee from 'the Marsh', at around four o'clock in the morning. Here James Coleman (no relation to Stephen, one of the victims on Broad Street) and his family were awakened by a loud knocking and shouts of 'Military!'. Such raids had become commonplace in Cork as the police and army were constantly searching for arms and wanted men. Mrs. Coleman's account follows:[26]

When my husband opened the door a tall man, wearing a policeman's cap and a heavy overcoat, stepped in, and asked "Are you Coleman?" My husband said "yes." This man then fired two shots point blank at my husband, and he fell on the chair beside the door. The man then swung around as if to leave, but he again turned and fired two or three shots more.

I rushed to my husband's assistance, but he never spoke. The man who had murdered him left, and pulled the door quickly after him. Ten minutes later a 'Black and Tan' whom I know by appearance came to the door and the maid who had come down to me, opened it for him. He had a revolver in his hand, and

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[25] Interviews with Elizabeth O'Connor and Charlie O'Brien (O'Donoghue Diary).

[26] Examiner, 19 Nov. 1920. See also the report of the inquest on Nov. 26 for a slightly different account.

when he came inside the door, I said to him: "There is enough done." The maid, who knows him, said: "He is alright; he will do nothing." I then said to him: "Why did ye kill him?" He answered: "We didn't do it." I said: "Ye did it: I saw it being done" and he replied "Perhaps it was Sinn Feiners dressed in our uniforms." I repeated that I knew who did it, and asked what would I do. He felt my husband's pulse and said he was dead.

No one was ever brought to trial for the killings on White Street, Broad Street, Broad Lane and the North Mall. The police made perfunctory enquiries about the civilian deaths, but they were refused admittance to No.2 Broad Lane. Hannah O'Brien, the mother of Charlie and mother-in-law of Eugene O'Connell, refused to testify at the inquest.

At James O'Donoghue's funeral Father Michael was told by another policeman that 'We got one of the men who killed your brother Wednesday night.'[27] He was right. Three men had shot the sergeant: Charlie O'Brien, his older brother William and their neighbour (and future brother-in-law) Justin O'Connor. The police knew that the O'Brien brothers were 'deep in the movement.'[28] In fact the whole family was.

William (Willie Joe), a hairdresser, 21, was a junior officer in the local I.R.A. company (G Company, 1st Battalion). He had been arrested and imprisoned twice before and had taken part in hunger strikes. He was now on the run from a third arrest and usually slept away from home, and was thus not there on the night of the 17th. William was the main target of the police reprisals - the one that got away.

Charlie, an apprentice mechanic aged 17, was officially a member of the Fianna Eireann, the republican boy scouts. More importantly, both he and William were part of the small,

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[27] Quoted in 'Private Investigations into Murder', a ms. account by Marie O'Donoghue's brother of his own researches (Marie O'Donoghue Papers).

[28] Interview with Elizabeth O'Connor (O'Donoghue Diary). The following biographical information comes from these interviews with Elizabeth O'Connor and Charlie O'Brien, manuscript census returns and an I.R.A. Register of Cork Civil War prisoners in the Irish Military Archives [hereafter: M.A.] (A/1135).

informal 'active squad' of gunmen who took most of the risks and did most of the dirty work.[29] These men and boys formed the cutting edge of the organisation's guerrilla campaign.

Tom O'Brien, 29, Charlie and William's older brother, was an official of the Seaman's and Fireman's Union. He was somewhat too old and established for 'active service' and so was not a fighter like the other two. In any case he was too important a part of the arms pipeline from Liverpool and Germany to be rised in gunplay. Going by the name of Fitzgerald, and living away from Broad Lane, he managed to evade police notice.

Hannah O'Brien, 53, was a native of the 'Marsh'. Her husband had died while working on a Cork Steampacket Company ship torpedoed during the war, but she had been the effective head of the family for many years before that. Hannah was the great political influence in her children's lives. She was a longtime friend of Liz Walsh, an ardent Gaelic Leaguer and republican and the wife of Tomas MacCurtain, the Sinn Fein Lord Mayor of Cork and commander of its I.R.A. brigade until his death (at the hands of policemen) in March 1920. Mrs. MacCurtain was Charlie's godmother and Hannah named her only daughter after her.

Mrs. O'Brien was a determined and active rebel who brought her children up to be as ardently republican as she. She carried arms and messages for the I.R.A. (she wore a long fur coat to cover the bandoliers of bullets) and encouraged her sons in their fight. When they went to prison she brought them food and laundry every day. Inevitably her family was marked down by both the British and Free State authorities and her house became a frequent target for raids. Hannah's defiance of the enemy, whether English or Irish, was uncompromising; on the night of November 17th she was the only person to stand up to the intruders and she refused to cooperate in any way with the police or the inquest.

Elizabeth (Lizzie) O'Brien, her daughter of 25, shared the family politics and helped her brothers as best she could.

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[29] Interview with Charlie O'Brien (O'Donoghue Diary).

In 1919 she married Eugene O'Connell, who was to fall victim to the shootings in Broad Lane a year later. Eugene was a veteran of the Royal Munster Fusiliers, whose family belonged to a very different tradition of service in the British army. Eugene's father, two uncles, and two of his brothers had all served in the ranks, and he himself had been wounded in the war. He and Elizabeth now lived with their baby girl in the flat below the O'Briens.[30]

For the O'Briens, family and politics were inextricably linked and Eugene was swiftly drawn into his in-laws' circle. 'He did not join the I.R.A., but drilled them in the use of guns, manoeuvres etc., and helped them whenever necessary.'[31] Ex-soldiers were generally considered enemies by the I.R.A. and were rarely allowed to join. However, once the organisation became embroiled in a shooting war in 1920, activists like the O'Briens sought out veterans to help them with weapons and training. Nevertheless, considerable suspicion of these men remained, and O'Connell's ambiguous status with the I.R.A. may reflect this. After Eugene O'Connell's death Elizabeth married Justin O'Connor, the third member of the party that shot Sgt. O'Donoghue. Once again marriage and politics went hand in hand.

The other fatal victim in the 'Marsh' that night was Patrick Hanley, a manual labourer and a close friend of Charlie O'Brien. They were the same age and had joined the Fianna together. Patrick was no O'Brien however, being neither militant nor bright. 'Hanley's mother and sister were simple. He had a want, but not quite as bad as they. He never handled a gun. He would run from one. The Fianna movement made him happy.' He joined to belong and be with friends - 'it would not have mattered to what party he belonged.'[32]

Hanley and O'Connell were targets by association;

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[30] Examiner, 19, 24 Nov. 1920.

[31] Interview with Elizabeth O'Connor (O'Donoghue Diary).

[32] Interview with Elizabeth O'Connor (O'Donoghue Diary).

whatever information the police received about the O'Briens presumably also linked them with Hanley and O'Connell (who was thought by some neighbours to be in the I.R.A.).

Stephen Coleman and Mr. Collins had no connection with the O'Briens, as far as can be discovered. They were both ex-Munster Fusiliers like Eugene O'Connell and simply had the misfortune to live at No.2 Broad Street with Patrick Hanley and his family. They became targets by proximity.

James Coleman was a different case altogether. A highly successful and progressive businessman at 43, Mr. Coleman owned a mineral water factory and several pubs, and was the Treasurer of the Cork Industrial Development Association and a prominent member of the Chamber of Commerce, one of many active new members who joined during the war years.[33]

Coleman had had several confrontations with the newly arrived English policemen. He had refused to serve them in one of his pubs when they got rowdy, and complained to the military authorities about their behaviour. He had been threatened several times on this account but he was no Sinn Feiner. His clashes with the Tans and Auxies were probably enough to mark him out as being 'disloyal' and an enemy, and perhaps the drunken killer also wanted personal revenge for his slights.

It is unclear whether James Coleman's killer was one of the men who shot up Broad Street and Broad Lane. Certainly all of those involved were policemen and probably Black and Tans - one witness repoted hearing English accents. Such reprisals were growing increasingly common as the R.I.C. became more and more beleaguered and frustrated. In October, soldiers and policemen had shot five people and (illegally) bombed a home and a shop, and set fire to the City Hall. In the first two weeks of November Christie Lucey, an active I.R.A. officer, was gunned down and two more civilians were shot. The dark hours after curfew were dangerous ones.

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[33] See the 1919 Annual Report of the Cork Industrial Development Association (C.A.I., U141) and Thomas Linehan, The Development of Cork's Economy and Business Attitudes 1910-1939 (M.A. Thesis, University College Cork, 1985), p.41.

These murders were also becoming more organised. There is some evidence that, as republicans asserted then and ever since, some sort of death squads had emerged within the police force by late 1920. There may well have been a regular group of men in Cork, the counterpart of the I.R.A.'s 'active squad', who carried out extrajudicial killings. They even adopted a name: the Anti-Sinn Fein Society. This mysterious body attempted to present itself as a widespread secret society and sent out threatening letters and notices in apparent imitation of the I.R.A..

These government vigilantes had little reason to fear getting caught. Their superiors usually turned a blind eye or even encouraged them to take the law into their own hands. The shootings of November 17th and 18th, although the killers probably acted on their own initiative, were at least tacitly approved of by the local District Inspector: he told Father Michael O'Donoghue that "we got one of the men" who shot the sergeant.[34]

Such groups and their activities were an outgrowth of the seige mentality and accompanying sense of desperate comradeship that prevailed in police barracks, especially among the British newcomers. They had to put their faith in their friends and comrades alone, in the face of a hostile population and a judicial system and political leadership which had completely failed to stop the guerrillas. Even when dangerous men like William O'Brien had been caught, they were soon let go to serve popular opinion and political game-playing. Policemen could not help feeling frustrated and afraid for their lives, and it is not suprising that they reacted so violently when attacked. 'Hurt one and you hurt them all.'

Some, like Sgt. O'Donoghue, tried to keep a low profile and maintain the old routines. 'In County Cork you just fluffed your way through the streets as well as you could

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[34] O'Donoghue Diary, 6, 13 Feb. 1969.

without drawing any attention.'[35] Others, like those who avenged O'Donoghue's death, hit back - against suspected guerrillas, their sympathisers and the Irish as a whole. One survivor recalled: 'you were at war, you had to try and make the best of it, and if you didn't kill someone, someone was going to kill you.'[36]

Broad Lane was run-down, very poor and very crowded, a dense and tightly knit little world held together by families and a common workplace. Like other streets and lanes in the city it had been colonised by a particular occupational group - in this case, dock labourers and seamen. Most of the men of Broad Lane worked on ships or quays, including Hannah O'Brien's husband and her son Tom.[37]

The Lane was a jumble of ancient, once grand, tenement houses and tiny shops, the inhabitants of which lived three to a room on average. Illiteracy and infant mortality were both high - two of Hannah O'Brien's children had not survived childhood. Working on the docks occasionally paid well but it was hard labour with little job security. The army and navy offered one way out of unemployment and distress and it is not surprising that the Munster Fusiliers gained so many recruits like Eugene O'Connell from these streets.[38]

This was a 'rough', overwhelmingly Catholic neighbourhood inhabited by the oft-reviled 'laneys' and 'shawlies', looked down on by more respectable working class and middle class

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[35] Brewer, pp 89-90.

[36] Brewer, p.103.

[37] Manuscript Census returns for Broad Lane, 1901 and 1911.

[38] See Martin Staunton, The Royal Munster Fusiliers in the Great War, 1914-19 (M.A. Thesis, U.C.D., 1986), pp 22-3, 82. The description of Broad Lane is based on manuscript census returns for 1901 and 1911, the Examiner, 18, 19 Nov. 1920 and Sean Beecher, The Story of Cork (Cork, 1971), p.70. A lengthy portrait of tenement life in 'the Marsh' can be found in Frank O'Connor's novel The Saint and Mary Kate (London, 1932).

areas located above the flat of the city (such as the one in which Sgt. O'Donoghue lived). It did not have a G.A.A. club but it did produce strong loyalties, at least among the women. This solidarity was demonstrated by those who helped Hannah O'Brien and Lizzie O'Connell on the night of November 17th, and who paid their respects to Eugene O'Connell and Patrick Hanley at the mortuary and the funeral.[39]

Having lived in Broad Lane for over 20 years, the O'Briens were very much a part of this community - but they were moving up, and, eventually, out. Even in 'the Marsh' there were many degrees of poverty and Hannah's family was rising steadily through the ranks. In the decade after 1901 the O'Briens moved from living nine to a room in No.8 to five rooms for seven people in No.7. This represented a great leap forward in their standard of living and made them much better off than most of their neighbours. By 1920 they had even more space and no longer needed to take in a lodger.[40]

Due in large part to Hannah, the O'Brien children all had secondary educations, a signal achievement in the slums of Edwardian Cork. Tom, Willie and Charlie were all upwardly mobile and learning trades or, in Tom's case, moving from manual labour to office work and union organising.

In their youth and social and family background, the O'Brien brothers were typical of many of their fellow I.R.A. activists in the city (and elsewhere). Drawn almost entirely from the working and lower middle classes but disproportionately literate, skilled and employed - more so than their fathers or neighbours - the guerrillas tended to be young men getting ahead in the world: the 'finest young men in the country.'[41] The way in which kinship and politics

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[39] Examiner, 19, 22 Nov. 1920. See also Lil Conlon, Cumann na mBan and the Women of Ireland (Kilkenny, 1969), p.138.

[40] These changes can be seen by comparing the manuscript census returns for 1910 and 1911 with the descriptions of the O'Briens given in the Examiner, 19, 24 Nov. 1920.

[41] Trinity College Record Office [hereafter: Trinity College], Erskine Childers Papers, Ms. 7808/29, p.8.

were intertwined in the O'Brien household was also very common, as the I.R.A. usually ran in families. Even Hannah's role was not unusual. Almost a quarter of the Army's membership had absent fathers, and mothers were frequently - perhaps even usually - the main political influence in the family.

Therefore, while James O'Donoghue's son denounced his father's killers as 'punks, canaille from the back lanes'[42], this reveals more about his - and general - attitudes to the poor than it does about the O'Briens, who were hard-working, religious, and no doubt entirely 'respectable' in their own eyes. Their patriotism and familial spirit of loyalty, self-improvement and self-sacrifice testifies to this.[43] Indeed, their republicanism reflected these determinedly middle class virtues. Just as the O'Donoghues of Cahirciveen gained prestige by having a priest and a policeman in the family so the O'Briens used their fight for Ireland as a badge of respectability. The two families seem to have shared many of the same values, virtues and ambitions. If the O'Brien brothers had been born twenty years earlier, they too might have aspired to positions in the church or the constabulary, while James O'Donoghue might well have joined the I.R.A. if he had been born twenty years later. The divisions between them had more to do with generation and circumstance than with ideology or personality.

So why did they shoot Sgt. O'Donoghue who was unarmed and known for being 'too good to the boys'? This question is particularly interesting in light of the fact that the Cork I.R.A. officially apologised in writing to the O'Donoghues a week after the shooting and stated that the killing had nothing to do with them. People in the White Street neighbourhood thought the same thing and attributed it to the

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[42] Undated, undelivered letter to Charlie O'Brien (Marie O'Donoghue Papers).

[43] The quotation is from an undated letter in the O'Donoghue papers.

Tans, because of their run-ins with the Sergeant. Another explanation was that the O'Briens and O'Connor had panicked and shot O'Donoghue because Desmond's Yard on White Street was an important arms dump. Against this it must be pointed out that O'Donoghue walked to and from Tuckey Street every day and that he must have passed the Yard scores of times before.

Fifty years later, Charlie O'Brien accounted for his actions as follows:[44]

> The reason for that shooting dates back to a funeral in Macroom in 1918. Macroom was a town that was hanging back in the movement, showing no interest. At this particular funeral it was decided that six officers of Cork City No. 1 Battalion should attend in full uniform, carrying rifles. O'Donoghue attended that funeral. Within a few weeks, every one of the six officers was arrested.[45] O'Donoghue was good to the Sinn Feiners round the city, but he had those officers arrested...
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> It was a dark, cold, wet November evening. The three were standing in Desmond's small gateway...They were 'on a job', meaning waiting for someone whom they were to kill. It was getting on for 5.30 and the man had not turned up. They were thinking of going away, but O'Donoghue came along, and they decided to get him then. It sounds horrible, awful, but we did not think so at the time. It was just part of the day's job. We gave as much as we got, or even more. The people to be pitied were those who had no defence. We hit back.

This seems a rather meagre (and dated) reason to kill someone, perhaps cobbled together afterwards by the gunmen to defend their action to their superiors. Another I.R.A. man told Sgt. O'Donoghue's son that O'Donoghue had identified an army deserter in Watergrasshill in 1920 but O'Brien made no mention of this.

The real reason may lie in the phrase 'we hit back'. Terence MacSwiney, MacCurtain's successor as Mayor and I.R.A. commander, had died on October 25th after a 73 day hunger

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[44] Interview with Charlie O'Brien (O'Donoghue Diary).

[45] I can find no record of these events in newspapers, police records or I.R.A. documents or memoirs. However, other accounts of Macroom at this time suggest that the I.R.A. there was quite active. See Charlie Browne, The Story of the 7th (Macroom, n.d.).

strike. His highly public death and funeral (which took place on November 14th) had convulsed Cork but the young militants' plans for revenge attacks were forbidden.[46] On top of this, the arrival of large numbers of young and trigger-happy British ex-soldiers added a new edge to the violence as vandalism, beatings and shootings became increasingly common, especially during the curfew. Known guerrillas were in great danger and could expect terrible consequences if caught, as demonstrated by the killing of Christie Lucey only a week before O'Donoghue's death. Willie - and later Charlie - O'Brien were forced to go on the run and their house became a target for frequent raids. In this atmosphere of fear and anger, every policeman and soldier was an enemy, and on November 17th O'Donoghue was a suddenly opportune target with an old mark against him. He died because he was in the wrong place at the wrong time.

Whatever the reason, the assassins acted on their own initiative, to the fury of their superiors. The I.R.A. issued an apology and the O'Briens and O'Connor were court-martialled 'but they managed to bully the officers in charge and get out of it.'[47]

The O'Briens and their comrades did what they liked and got away with it, convinced that they were the vanguard of the revolution. This rebellious mixture of initiative and independence grew out of the subculture to which the O'Briens belonged - not just republican but also young, male and tough. Theirs was a world in which cliques and friendships, charged with a youthful intensity, merged with political loyalties and helped sustain a passionate devotion to 'the cause'. These were the true believers who kept on fighting the government even after it became Irish. The O'Briens were staunchly anti-Treaty and resumed their underground activities in opposition to the Free State. Broad Lane became the site of a bomb

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[46] P.S. O'Hegarty, The Victory of Sinn Fein (Dublin, 1924), pp 46-47.

[47] Interview with Charlie O'Brien (O'Donoghue Diary).

factory[48], the brothers went on the run in August 1922 and Willie and Charlie went to prison (and on hunger strike) again shortly thereafter.[49] Hannah and Elizabeth also remained committed to the wearying struggle. 'Oh God, how we have suffered' exclaimed Elizabeth, looking back over her family's history. 'The Tans came to kill us, the Free State came to torture us. For months [in the Civil War] my brothers were in...prison in Cork, when meals and laundry etc. had to be brought to them every day.'[50] Charlie O'Brien looked back more in anger than in sorrow, however, his youthful convictions undimmed even after fifty years: 'My one regret was that more was not done.'[51]

There remains one question: who informed on the O'Briens? The police knew who shot O'Donoghue within hours of the event and also apparently knew of their connection with Patrick Hanley and Eugene O'Connell. This suggests that the information, no doubt exaggerated or distorted as such intelligence usually is by rumour and personal enmities, came from a friend or neighbour and one who had some inside knowledge of the local I.R.A.. The O'Briens were thinking along the same lines and suspicion soon fell on 'Din-Din' O'Riordan. O'Riordan was a gunman and a comrade of the O'Briens but also apparently a heavy drinker and a relative newcomer to the city from Kerry. He was seized and held while his alibi was checked. This proved to be false. Frank Busteed, an I.R.A. officer from Blarney, with relatives who lived near the O'Briens, recounted what happened next:[52]

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[48] Examiner, 14 July 1922.

[49] William O'Brien appears in an I.R.A. register of Cork prisoners (M.A., A/1135).

[50] Interview with Elizabeth O'Connor (O'Donoghue Papers).

[51] Interview with Charlie O'Brien (O'Donoghue Diary).

[52] Sean O'Callaghan, Execution (London, 1974), pp 59-60. Despite its bad reputation among Cork I.R.A. veterans, much of this book appears to be substantially accurate, although marred by the egotism of O'Callaghan's chief informant, Frank

They bundled Din-Din into a car and again drove him out to the Viaduct. It was a cold drizzly night, and Din-Din was shivering, but not from cold...When they got to the Viaduct Jim Grey stopped the car.

"All right Din-Din, get out," [Dick] Murphy ordered. "You are a proven informer, in fact you are worse than an informer, you are a traitor. You are on our side, and you are with them at the same time. The O'Briens[53] were killed by the Auxies the night before you cashed the ten pound note in Mrs. Riordan's [a local pub]. Who gave it to you?"

Din-Din remained silent. "You know why we're here. But we will give you a chance. If you will tell us who gave it to you we will book your passage to England and give you fifty pounds."

Din-Din talked. He got the money from Mr. Nicholson of Woodford Bournes, the wine and spirit merchants. He had been recruited a month before by another I.R.A. man who told him there was easy money to be earned. He was desperate for drink at the time and took it. He gave the name of the other I.R.A. man.

They shot him and buried him at the Viaduct. Next night they shot the other I.R.A. contact.

Elizabeth O'Connor remembered the events somewhat differently, with a greater role being played by the O'Briens. O'Riordan was 'very courageous in a tight corner, but they began to suspect him, set a trap for him, and found he was selling information. They finished his career in the Lee fields.'[54]

Also suspected of spying was a member of the Hawkins family of No.6A Broad Street, long-time neighbours of the O'Briens. On the evening of May 20th, 1921 Daniel Hawkins, a chairmaker, and his son Edward, a labourer in the military

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Busteed.

[53] Busteed clearly misremembered the exact circumstances of the killings and just recalled the involvement of the O'Briens.

[54] Interview with Elizabeth O'Connor (O'Donoghue Diary). There is no police or newspaper report of O'Riordan's killing. The only evidence he was killed comes from Frank Busteed and Elizabeth O'Connor. Like other victims, he was alone in the city and simply disappeared.

barracks, had just left their house when (in Daniel's words):[55]

Two civilians came upon them and called out "halt there; put your hands up" at the same time placing revolvers to their breasts. The armed men then said "come along" and marched them to Mardyke. Opposite St. Joseph's School three more men joined them and the whole party proceeded to the quarry at Mountdesert. Witness and his son were ordered to sit down and two of the armed civilians remained on guard over them while the other three went round the corner of the quarry returning in about two minutes. On coming back they searched a man who had been in the quarry with several others when witness arrived there. When [Edward] saw them searching this man he tore up all the papers in his possession, including a barrack permit and army discharge papers...After this the witness, his son and the man who had been searched were forced to sit in a row with about a foot between each man. The deceased said "Spare my father." Three of the armed civilians then fired on them from a distance of a few feet each man firing four times. Witness was wounded in right elbow and left ear and fell forward. He remained down without moving and distinctly heard one of the murderers say "Skeet now." When they had gone he got up and saw that his son was dying. He at once ran to the Lee Road and attempted to swim the river but finding himself too weak he asked a man with a horse and cart to drive him to the institution. Arriving there he requested them to telephone for an ambulance.

When the ambulance arrived Edward was dead.

The third man, who also died, was John Sherlock, another ex-soldier from the tenements of Devonshire Lane, a few streets to the north of Broad Lane. Sherlock worked as a driver in the barracks. All three men were Catholics.[56]

Unlike O'Riordan, who was tricked but who may well have been guilty, the Hawkins' and Sherlock were not interrogated or 'tried' as official I.R.A. policy demanded.[57] They were

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[55] Military Inquiry in lieu of an inquest (P.R.O.L., CO/904/189).

[56] Information on the victims comes from their manuscript census returns for 1901 and 1911, and from the Examiner, 21 May 1921.

[57] It is possible that none of these men were guilty. Busteed later shot at least one other innocent man, and his account of the interrogation of O'Riordan may not be too reliable. Marie O'Donoghue remembered seeing officers questioning a boy at Tuckey Street station after her father's

condemned by suspicion alone; because they were ex-soldiers and (in the case of Edward and John) military employees - and perhaps because of their politics. Many ex-soldiers in Cork remained loyal to the Crown, if only passively so, and most were anti-Sinn Fein.

Such men had a hard time in the new Ireland dominated by the republicans. They had gone to war as heroes in 1914 and returned in 1919 as traitors. The Home Rule party that they had believed in and voted for (most soldiers' votes in Cork had gone to the Irish Party in 1918[58]) had been swept away. Jobs were scarce and local councils and trade unions were hostile, just as they were to policemen. Many turned to drink and crime. Scores of ex-soldiers passed through the Cork police court for fighting, neglecting or abusing their families, or theft. Veterans did try to organise themselves politically but this had little impact in the midst of civil war.

Thus, ex-soldiers in Cork prized those jobs given by the government and the army and they often hung on to old friends and loyalties. Men like Edward Hawkins and John Sherlock would have naturally gravitated to the company of servicemen and old comrades - and thereby damned themselves by association in the eyes of Republicans like the O'Briens.

Many veterans like Eugene O'Connell and his family or Mr. Collins of Broad Street quietly reimmersed themselves in civilian life and managed to escape persecution. A great many others who were unwilling to give up their old political or social ties or who fell under suspicion were shot, beaten up or driven out of the city. A very few were actual informers. Most were innocent victims.

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death. Perhaps he was a witness to the shooting. Could he have pointed the finger at the O'Briens?

[58] One small indication of this is the sample (the only one available, and presumably more or less random) of accidentally spoiled soldiers' and sailors' ballots in the Cork city district. Out of 66 such ballots, only 6 first-place votes went to Sinn Fein candidates. 56 of these men cast both their votes for Irish Party candidates. Examiner, 31 Dec. 1918.

The three men shot on May 20th were considered enemies of the Republic and informers not because of what they did but because of who they were. This seems particularly true of Daniel Hawkins who, according to Elizabeth O'Connor, was not personally suspected of informing and was not connected to the army. He was probably shot because he was Edward's father just as Eugene O'Connell was shot by the police for being the O'Briens' brother-in-law.

If the murders of Hawkins and Sherlock demonstrate the plight of war veterans in Cork, they also confirm the importance of the war itself in shaping the lives of all the actors in these events. Among the victims, most - Edward Hawkins, John Sherlock, Eugene O'Connell, Stephen Coleman and Mr. Collins - were ex-soldiers. The British policemen who terrorised 'the Marsh' had fought in the same armies, against a common foe. Mr. O'Brien, Charlie's and Willie's father, had died in a German torpedo attack. All of these people and their families had been touched and scarred by war long before the I.R.A. took up arms.

This story unites two families at opposite political poles - the O'Briens and the O'Donoghues - in tragedy. As statistics, symbols or members of organisations, the deaths of O'Donoghue, Hanley, Coleman, O'Riordan, Hawkins and Sherlock, and the maiming of O'Brien, make some kind of sense, but on an individual level they do not. O'Donoghue did not even carry a gun and was liked and respected by Republicans. Why was he shot and his family's lives shattered? Why Hanley and O'Connell, who probably had no idea why they were singled out and gunned down? Coleman's death was equally senseless. O'Brien, definitely, and O'Riordan, very likely, were 'guilty' as suspected but the Hawkins' and Sherlock may have been guilty only of being loyal ex-soldiers living in a Republican neighbourhood.

Ultimately, individual identities were irrelevent in the face of politically imposed labels and the ever-widening division between 'us' and 'them'. Violence was directed not at people so much as categories. Coleman, Hanley and O'Connell

were 'Shinners' and 'rebels' along with O'Brien; Sherlock and the Hawkins' were 'spies' and 'informers' like O'Riordan. O'Donoghue was just another uniform.

This little cycle of killings reveals the runaway tit-for-tat logic of the guerrilla war in Cork, driven by fear and the overwhelming need to respond. 'Hurt one and you hurt them all.' 'If you didn't kill someone, someone was going to kill you.' 'We gave as much as we got, or even more.' 'We hit back.'

All of the victims were unarmed and helpless when shot and all were killed or kidnapped near home. The revolution produced many skirmishes and casualties by combat, but many more people died without a gun in their hands, in quarries or empty fields or at their doors, shot in the back by masked men. Murder was more common than battle.

This dirty war was waged largely by small bands of gunmen, young, tough and barely under the control of their superiors. The 'active squads' on both sides did what they liked, undeterred by orders or discipline from further up the organisation. Although the I.R.A., the R.I.C. and the army numbered in the hundreds and thousands in Cork, most of the killing was done by a few hard men like the O'Briens or the anonymous Black and Tans who shot up Broad Lane, Broad Street and the North Mall. It was these men who forced the pace and, in a sense, the struggle was in the main a confrontation between these groups, even if its victims were often innocents or outsiders.

It was an intimate war, played out within homes and neighbourhoods, often between people who knew one another. The O'Briens were acquainted with everyone they shot. James O'Donoghue was the local sergeant. Din Din O'Riordan was a fellow I.R.A. man. Edward and Daniel Hawkins and John Sherlock were neighbours.

It was a civil war, fought not just between Irish people, but between rival visions of Ireland as well. James O'Donoghue loved and served his country - he was a good Catholic and a good Irishman. The same could be said of the O'Briens. The sergeant's death represented a clash between

the loyalties of the old policemen and the new certainties embraced by the gunmen.

We know about the events of November 17th because Marie O'Donoghue wanted to find out who shot her father. However, asking who shot whom and why leads inevitably to broader questions of motive and identity. How did the killing begin and why did it escalate? Who joined the I.R.A. and why? How did they think of themselves and how did they justify their actions -to themselves and to others? Who were their victims and enemies?

The following chapters will explore these questions in detail but, as in this account, I also want to put a human face on my analysis of violence and revolution and to give the participants and victims as much of a voice as possible. Individuals were often obscured, and sometimes blotted out, by other people's fears and myths. It is part of the purpose of this study to elucidate the mythologies and understand the fear, but it is also necessary to save the participants, and especially the victims, from obscurity.

PART ONE

Revolution

The Kilmichael Ambush

Then here's to the boys of Kilmichael
Who feared not the might of the foe,
The day they marched into battle
And laid all the Black and Tans low.
'The Boys of Kilmichael'[1]

If Barry is a murderer, he's a damn good murderer.
Sean Hayes, T.D., October 1921.[2]

On November 28th, 1920, the Flying Column of the West Cork Brigade ambushed a police patrol near the village of Kilmichael, just south of Macroom. Three Volunteers and seventeen Auxiliary Cadets, members of an elite anti-I.R.A. force, were killed. Only one Auxiliary survived, crippled and comatose.

The Kilmichael ambush delivered a profound shock to the British system, coming only a week after the 'Bloody Sunday' assassination of a dozen army officers in Dublin, and days after a large section of the Liverpool docklands was burned down. Dublin and Liverpool revealed British vulnerabilities, but Kilmichael showed that the I.R.A. could beat British officers in the field. The guerrillas were not just a 'murder gang', they were also a military threat. On December 1st the Cabinet decided, in view of 'the recent outrage near Cork, which partook of a more definitely military character than its predecessors', that martial law would be introduced wherever

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[1] This song was written shortly after the ambush and became hugely popular in Cork and throughout Ireland. Its author is unknown, although it may have been a local teacher, Jeremiah O'Mahony (see Flor Crowley, In West Cork Long Ago [Cork, 1979], pp.18-19). Several slightly different versions exist - the one quoted here is the one I have heard sung most often, which is printed in Ewan Butler, Barry's Flying Column (London, 1971), pp.173-174.

[2] The 'Barry' referred to is Tom Barry, the leader of 'the boys of Kilmichael'. Hayes was speaking in Skibbereen. R.I.C. Report, n.d. (CO/904/152).

it was considered necessary. Cork headed the list.[3]

In west Cork, and in Ireland as a whole, Kilmichael became the most celebrated victory of rebel arms, the archetypal ambush. Tom Barry, the column commander, became a folk hero and a revolutionary celebrity.[4] Barry's, and Kilmichael's, fame even reached beyond the borders of Ireland, at least in the vivid imaginations of west Cork. It is said that the German army studied the ambush in the Second World War, and that Lord Haw-Haw (himself an ex-Black and Tan) mentioned Barry in his radio broadcasts. Even more intriguingly, it has been reported that when the Japanese army took over Singapore, they marched in singing 'the Boys of Kilmichael'.[5]

The classic account of Kilmichael appeared in Tom Barry's memoirs, Guerrilla Days in Ireland (first published in 1949), a version of events which he repeated on numerous occasions thereafter, in print and on radio and television. The following is taken from one of his last interviews:[6]

The Auxiliaries first arrived in Cork late in the summer

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[3] Cabinet minute quoted in Charles Townshend, The British Campaign in Ireland 1919-1921 (Oxford, 1975), p.133. On November 29th (after the arson attacks in Liverpool but before news of Kilmichael had reached London) Sir Henry Wilson asked Winston Churchill if the government was going to declare martial law: 'He replied no.' The next day they were discussing its implementation: 'They now want to try it in Cork and Cork city.' Wilson Diary excerpts in Martin Gilbert, ed., Winston S. Churchill Companion Volume IV, Part 2 (Boston, 1978), pp 1256-1257.

[4] See, for example, Examiner, 25 Aug. 1921 and Southern Star, 14 Jan. 1922.

[5] I have been told the first two stories several times while in Cork (the one about the German army studying Kilmichael is also printed on the back of the paperback edition of Butler's book). The Singapore story is mentioned in P.J. Twohig, Green Tears for Hecuba (Dublin, 1979), p.59.

[6] Kenneth Griffith and Timothy O'Grady, Curious Journey: An Oral History of Ireland's Unfinished Revolution (London, 1982), pp 181-182.

of 1920 and from that day on they spent their time driving into villages and terrorizing everybody. They'd beat people and strip them and shoot the place up, and then go back to their barracks drunk on stuff they'd looted. We knew we had to stop them, and that was what the fight at Kilmichael was all about.

We nearly had to call it off before it happened. I'd selected a spot near Macroom - the only spot we were sure they'd pass - and we had a long march there all night through the rain. We didn't know when they'd come, and we had to wait lying low in the ditches all day without food. By four o'clock...it was getting dark, and I nearly called it off then. But then we heard two lorries of them coming.

There was a bend in the road there, and we had to make sure they'd slow up. So I had an I.R.A. officer's tunic, and the idea was that when they came along the road they'd see an officer standing in the ditch facing them, they'd see this man in a trench coat and leggings and they'd slow down to see who it was. They might even think it one of themselves...And that's what they did, they slowed down about fifty yards away and kept coming, very slow, until they got to about fifty yards away and a Mills bomb was thrown from our side. It landed right in the driver's seat and killed him. Fire was opened up then and it became a hand-to-hand fight. It was so close that one of our fellows caught a spurt of blood full in the mouth from a severed artery of one of the Auxies. We had the better of them there because they were screaming and yelling and our fellows just kept quiet and wiped them all out. There were nine of them dead on the road and all our men were still alive.

In the meantime the second lorry had come along, and another section of our men was up the road giving battle to them. So I went along the side of the road with some of the men from the command post and as we got up behind them - they didn't see us - they threw away their rifles and we heard them shouting, 'We surrender! We surrender!' Three of our men stood up then from their positions to take the surrender, but the minute they did the others opened fire on them and killed two of them. So we continued up behind them and I gave the order to keep firing until I said to stop, and then after we killed a couple more of them and they saw they were sandwiched in between two lines of fire they started shouting 'We surrender!' again. But having seen the false surrender I told the men to keep firing and we did until the last of them was dead. I blame myself of course for our own losses, because I should have seen through the false surrender trick.

Afterwards some of our men were shaken by the whole thing and I had to drill them in the road, march them up and down, to preserve discipline...it was a strange sight, with the lorries burning in the night and these men marching along, back and forth between the blood and the corpses...But if they didn't keep their discipline we might lose everything. Discipline was all we had.

The key episode here is clearly the 'false surrender',

which caused the deaths of the three I.R.A. men and doomed the remaining Auxiliaries to annihilation.

The official British report, 'prepared by a senior officer of police in the Cork neighbourhood from evidence available' gave a completely different story:[7]

> District Inspector Crake took out a patrol in the ordinary course of duty. They were going in search of a man wanted in the Dunmanway direction, and had been previously working in cooperation with the Essex Regiment at Dunmanway. When dusk was falling, at about 5 p.m., the patrol was proceeding along the Macroom-Dunmanway road and reached a point where the road curves. Low stone walls flank the road and there are narrow strips of tussocky bogland, rising to boulder-covered slopes of high ground on either side.
>
> It is surmised from an examination of the site and from inquires that the attackers, who were all clad in khaki and trench coats, and wore steel helmets, had drawn their motor lorry across the road and were mistaken by the first car of cadets for military. The first car halted, and the cadets, unsuspecting, got out and approached the motor lorry... shooting began, and three were killed instantaneously. Others began to run back to the first car. The cadets in the second car ran along the road to the help of their comrades. Then from a depression in the hillside behind the second car came a devastating fire at close range. The cadets were shot down by concealed men from the walls, and all around a direct fire from the ambushers' lorry also swept down the road. After firing had continued for some time, and many men were wounded, overwhelming forces of the ambushers came out and forcibly disarmed the survivors.
>
> There followed a brutal massacre, the policy of the murder gang being apparently to allow no survivor to disclose their methods. The dead and wounded were hacked about the head with axes, shot guns were fired into their bodies, and they were savagely mutilated. The one survivor, who was wounded, was hit about the head and left for dead. He had also two bullet wounds...terrible treachery on the part of local inhabitants is indicated by the fact that, although many people attending Mass on Sunday morning were diverted from their route by the murder gang, no word was sent to the police, and the ambush sat there until dusk.

Here the treachery is Irish. British uniforms were falsely worn (an act punishable by death under international legal conventions) and wounded and disarmed men were butchered: 'every law of civilized warfare was thrown to the

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[7] Times, 2 Dec. 1920.

winds.'[8]

In his memoirs, Barry dismissed these charges as a pack of lies, a typical example of 'atrocity' propaganda.[9] And, indeed, it is his account which has come to be accepted as authoritative and has been retold as such by other authors.[10] It is now more or less the 'official' Irish history of the event, as commemorated every year at the ambush site and in several museums.

However, the British story should not be so completely dismissed. Even at first glance we can see that some of its details agree with Barry's story. The men of the Column were not disguised as soldiers, but some of them were wearing steel helmets and Barry was wearing something very like an officer's uniform. Both accounts agree that it was this ruse which enabled the I.R.A. to catch the Auxiliaries by surprise. The British investigators were also right about the ambushers being in position from early morning and ordering churchgoers to return home.[11]

Clearly, Intelligence officers had been able to piece together some of what happened from local witnesses or rumours, from the wounded survivor and possibly even from lower echelon I.R.A. informants. They were certainly able to quickly identify many of the participants. If police officials got this much right, how can we simply dismiss the

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[8] Gen. Sir Nevil Macready, Annals of an Active Life (London, 1924), ii, p.17. The Martial Law Proclamation itself, issued by the Lord Lieutenant on December 10th, gave the character of the attack as its main rationale:

Because of attacks on Crown forces culminating in an ambush, massacre, mutilation with axes of sixteen cadets, by a large body of men wearing trench helmets and disguised in the uniform of British soldiers, and who are still at large, now I do declare Martial Law proclaimed.

[9] Tom Barry, Guerilla Days in Ireland (Dublin, 1981), pp 50-51.

[10] See, for example, Butler, pp 66-71 and John McCann, War by the Irish (Tralee, 1946), pp 128-129.

[11] Interviews with E.Y., 3 April 1988 and H.J., 19 Nov., 1989.

rest of their account?

There is also the evidence of Dr. Kelleher, the Macroom Coroner. His examination found that most of the Cadets had been riddled with bullets. Three had been shot at point-blank range (probably by guns held to their heads), several had been shot after death, and another had his head smashed open, apparently with a club or axe.[12] The lone survivor had been both shot and hit in the head - the doctors were amazed that he was still living.[13]

In other words, while the medical evidence does not support the accusations of mutilation, it does raise further questions about Barry's story.

Since the police very likely got a good deal of their information from people living in the neighbourhood, it is interesting to see what local oral tradition has made of the ambush. Two accounts were collected by the Folklore Commission in the 1930s. The first is from Dunmanway:[14]

> In the year 1916 the old I.R.A. ambushed the 'Black and Tans' at Kilmichael. They sent a false letter to Dublin telling them that a certain man from Coppeen wanted them. The British had to pass Kilmichael to go to Coppeen. The I.R.A. made preparations. They set a bomb under a bridge there.
> When the 'Tans' came the bomb exploded and a lorry of them was blown up. They were all shocked. Then the I.R.A. attacked them with their guns. Three of the I.R.A. were shot.

The second comes from Deshure:

> They had mines laid on the road which blew up the last lorry. The Republicans fired on the survivors and there was a

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[12] Examiner and Irish Times, 12 Jan. 1921. See also the Report of the Military Court of Inquiry (P.R.O.L., WO/35/152).

[13] See Examiner, 18 Jan. 1921 and James Gleeson, Bloody Sunday (London, 1962), pp 73-74. This book includes the invaluable reminiscences of Bill Munro, an Auxiliary Cadet stationed in Macroom at the time. It is his account that I shall be referring to in the following pages. Gleeson, incidentally, also accepts Barry's story as the correct one: see pp 79-81.

[14] U.C.D., Dept. of Irish Folklore, Schools Mss 307, p.53, 339, p.60.

counter-attack. The whole thing lasted about half an hour but the shots could be heard miles away.

Much has been changed in the telling but the details are intriguing. The first version does contain an element of trickery, although not the I.R.A. in disguise. It also states that the patrol was searching for a wanted man near Dunmanway, just as the police said. Was this a trap? The mines mentioned are presumably references to the Mills bomb that Barry threw.

Most importantly, these storytellers make no mention of a false surrender, despite Tom Barry's later claim that 'there was hardly a Volunteer in West Cork who did not know' of it.[15]

To further muddy the waters, Barry wrote earlier descriptions of the ambush which seem to undermine his later claims. To begin with, there is his original after-action report written for his superiors:[16]

The column paraded at 3.15 a.m. on Sunday morning. It comprised 32 men armed with rifles, bayonets, five revolvers, and 100 rounds of ammunition per man. We marched for four hours, and reached a position on the Macroom-Dunmanway road...We camped in that position until 4.15 p.m., and then decided that as the enemy searches were completed, that it would be safe to return to our camp. Accordingly, we started

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[15] Tom Barry, The Reality of the Anglo-Irish War 1920-21 in West Cork: Refutations, Corrections and Comments on Liam Deasy's Towards Ireland Free (Dublin, 1974), p.17.

[16] General Staff 6th Division, The Irish Rebellion in the 6th Divisional Area From After 1916 Rebellion to December 1921, (I.W.M., General Sir Peter Strickland Papers, P.362) pp 63-64 [hereafter referred to as '6th Division History']. That this is an authentic captured document seems unquestionable. It contains details such as the division of the column into three sections and their deployment, the length of the march to Kilmichael, the time the ambush took place, and the fact that two of the three I.R.A. casualties died of wounds, which could hardly be known by the British military. Moreover, this report was only printed in an unpublished and confidential history to demonstrate its falsehood. If it had been forged for propaganda reasons it would presumably would have reflected the official story and would have been publicly released. In fact, there are no known cases of I.R.A. documents being forged.

the return journey About five minutes after the start we sighted two enemy lorries moving at a distance of about 1,900 yards from us. The country in that particular district is of a hilly and rocky nature, and, although suitable to fighting, it is not at all suitable to retiring without being seen. I decided to attack the lorries...The action was carried out successfully. Sixteen of the enemy who were belonging to the Auxiliary Police from Macroom Castle being killed, one wounded and escaped, and is now missing...

P.S.:- I attribute our casualties to the fact that those three men were too anxious to get into close quarters with the enemy. They were our best men, and did not know danger in this or any previous actions. They discarded their cover, and it was not until the finish of the action that P.Deasy was killed by a revolver bullet from one of the enemy whom he thought dead.

Barry provides remarkably little information about the engagement (in contrast to his later accounts), but he still manages to contradict his later description in several places. No false surrender occurred by this account; the Irish deaths are attributed to their own carelessness. Curiously, he also suggests that the Column was not seeking action but evading it and that the ambush was an unavoidable last-minute affair.

Barry wrote another account of Kilmichael in 1932. After bombing the first lorry:[17]

[the] I.R.A. and Auxiliaries were engaged in a death struggle. After eight or ten minutes of terrific fighting the first lorry of the enemy was overcome and a party of three men...advanced up the road to help their second section. They were firing as they advanced to the relief of their sorely pressed comrades, three of whom had already fallen. The end was at hand and in a short time the remainder of the Auxiliaries fighting the second section were dead. They like the I.R.A. had fought to a finish.

Again, no trick surrender. The three I.R.A. casualties had already been hit by the time Barry and his party ran to help and the Auxiliaries then manfully 'fought to a finish' - a direct contradiction, in substance and tone, of what he wrote in 1949.

What makes these accounts doubly interesting is Barry's reaction to Paddy O'Brien's recollections of Kilmichael,

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[17] Tom Barry, 'The Story of the Kilmichael Ambush', Irish Press, 26 Nov. 1932.

published in Liam Deasy's memoirs, Towards Ireland Free in 1974. O'Brien describes the battle around the second lorry as follows:[18]

> The Auxies had jumped out...We then opened fire from their rear and when they realised that they were caught between two fires they knew that they were doomed. It was then realised that three of our men had been killed.

Barry was infuriated at this 'fantastic' story which he felt 'depicted me as a bloody-minded commander who exterminated the Auxiliaries without reason.' It was, he insisted, 'the false surrender after which I.R.A. freedom fighters were treacherously killed' which 'ensured the extermination of the Auxiliaries concerned.'[19]

These wild denunciations are not very convincing, but they are revealing. O'Brien's account does not paint Barry as 'bloodthirsty', it simply describes a 'short but grim fight' in which (as in Barry's 1932 article) the I.R.A. and police 'fought to a finish.' It is Barry who introduces the issue of 'extermination' and who clearly feels very defensive about it. Why? Because in the interview quoted above (and in his memoirs) he says that after the bogus surrender, several Cadets shouted 'We surrender' a second time, but that the guerrillas kept on firing until all had been killed. So, if there was no trick, the Auxiliaries were gunned down 'for no reason'. Yet we know that Barry himself made no mention of a false surrender in 1920 or 1932. What really happened at Kilmichael?

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[18] Liam Deasy, Towards Ireland Free (Cork, 1973), p.172.

[19] Barry, The Reality of the Anglo-Irish War, pp 15-18. It should be noted that Stephen O'Neill was the first Kilmichael veteran to mention the false surrender in 'The Ambush at Kilmichael', The Kerryman Christmas Number, Dec. 1937. The first writer to do so, however, was F.P. Crozier in Ireland For Ever (London, 1932), p.128 (see note 62 below). O'Neill's and Barry's subsequent accounts may in part have been prompted by Crozier. However, as Crozier demonstrates, and interviews confirm, the 'false surrender' story was circulating within the I.R.A. as early as 1921.

The eighteen ambushed Auxiliary Cadets belonged to 'C' Company, stationed at Macroom Castle. These men were ex-army and R.A.F. officers, discharged veterans of the Great War. Most of the patrol were young junior officers (their average age was 27), one had been a Major in the Indian Army (O.B.E.) and their commander had been a Lieutenant Colonel in the Bedford Regiment. All of them had been decorated in wartime - three had Military Crosses, one held the Distinguished Flying Cross.[20]

They came from all over Britain in the summer of 1920 in response to advertisements offering £1 a day and the rank of Sergeant to join an elite police corps. Most had jumped at the chance. The job offered very good money and potential excitement, an escape from the chronic unemployment and boredom of post-war Britain. Perhaps best of all, it meant a return to the fellowship of active service.[21]

'C' Company was one of the first to be raised. Its personnel (who numbered 115 in late November) were recruited in July and August and sent to the Curragh for a hasty six week training course in police methods.[22] By the end of September they were in Macroom.

The Auxiliaries' ill-defined task was to hunt the I.R.A. in the areas where it was most active. In Macroom they found themselves in a district whose police chief declared it to be 'practically in a state of war.'[23] Almost all the outlying police barracks had been evacuated and burned down, along with local courthouses.

The army had stepped in in May to try and restore order

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[20] Personal details of the ambushees can be found in the Dublin Castle Press Statement (P.R.O.L., CO/904/168), the Report of the Military Court of Inquiry (WO/35/152) and in Irish Times, 12 Jan. 1921.

[21] These circumstances and motives are described by Bill Munro in Gleeson, pp 56-59. See also Townshend, pp 110-112.

[22] For company strength see Townshend, p.210.

[23] C.I. Monthly Report, Cork West Riding, August 1920 (CO/904/112).

and found itself embroiled in a vicious little war in the hill country west of the town. After trading lethal ambushes and counter-ambushes with the Ballyvourney I.R.A., the infantry detachments (two platoons of the Hampshires) were withdrawn in early September.[24] When the new force arrived, the R.I.C. garrison had 'ceased to function' and control of the countryside had been ceded to the rebels.[25] One Macroom I.R.A. officer described it as 'a hinterland unpoliced and unwatched'.[26]

The Auxiliaries' presence transformed the situation. They raided constantly and aggressively. Where previously rural Volunteers might not have seen a policeman for weeks or months at a time, now there were no safe havens. An Auxiliary patrol might appear at any time, day or night. They were fast, well-armed and strong in numbers. There were no small bicycle patrols to provide easy targets. Micheal O'Suilleabhain remembered them as:[27]

A tough crowd. I knew them well. I had seen them jump walls with their rifles in their hands, hampered by their revolvers and other equipment. They travelled by night and day on bye roads, and came from totally unexpected directions. I had plenty experience of their physical fitness when I had to run from them on several occasions, and when, were it not for darkness, they would have had me.

Barry has vividly described their activities as a 'terror

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[24] Twohig, pp 22-30; Browne, The Story of the 7th, pp 17-25 and Michael O'Suilleabhain, Where Mountainy Men Have Sown (Tralee, 1965), pp 70-87 give the Irish side of this struggle. For the British version of one notorious incident, see H., D.F., 'A Side Show in Southern Ireland, 1920' (I.W.M., k.37957). For unit locations, see GS2/183, 17th Infantry Bde., 26 May 1920 (M.A., A/0413). 6th Division History (Appendix 2) and Townshend (p.218) each list a different regiment as being in Ballyvourney.

[25] C.I. Monthly Report, Cork W.R., July 1920 (CO/904/112).

[26] Browne, p.18.

[27] O'Suilleabhain, p.90.

campaign.'[28] This label may well apply to other units or to the record of the Auxiliary Division as a whole, but it does not fit 'C' Company. Its commanders were responsible men who kept their Cadets under control and prevented serious reprisals. According to General Crozier, the commander of the Auxiliary Division (and in contrast to most other companies), they drank only moderately.[29] Liam Deasy remembered Lieutenant Colonel Crake - who died in the ambush - for his 'soldierly humanity'; other I.R.A. men recalled their decency and restraint.[30] The caretaker at Macroom Castle, who was adamantly opposed to their presence, found them to be 'very nice boys indeed.'[31]

Their first and only victim before Kilmichael was James Lehane, a married labourer from Ballymakeera, shot and killed on October 17th. Like the previous two men killed by the army in that neighbourhood, he was not a Volunteer. Bill Munro, a member of 'C' Company, wrote: 'This incident depressed us, especially as it was a stupid and unnecessary death and it had, so to speak, opened war, which we had not wanted.'[32]

The real war was yet to come, however. In fact, the Auxiliaries had cowed the Macroom and Ballyvourney Volunteers and not a single ambush was mounted against the force until November 28th. I.R.A. activity in the area stopped almost completely.[33]

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[28] Barry, Guerilla Days in Ireland, pp 36-37.

[29] F.P. Crozier, Ireland For Ever (London, 1932), p.198.

[30] Charlie Browne, interview (O'Malley Papers, P17b/112) and The Story of the 7th, pp 26-27; Deasy, p.167; O'Suilleabhain, pp 91-92. Neither the Examiner - usually reliable in reporting police excesses - (see Appendix 6) nor other newspapers in this period have any record of a 'reign of terror'.

[31] Katherine Everett, Bricks and Flowers (London, 1949), p.153 and Twohig, p.61.

[32] Gleeson, p.70. There are several different accounts of this incident - see Twohig, p.30; Examiner, 18 Oct. 1920.

[33] Twohig (p.34) claims that this cessation of hostilities was ordered by Brigade Headquarters.

The County Inspector for Cork's West Riding was delighted. His end-of-the-month report for October declared Macroom to be 'now about the quietest part of the County.' His November report, written just before hearing of the disaster at Kilmichael and heavy with unintended irony, crowed that 'C' Company had had 'a most beneficial effect' and that 'the I.R.A. has also appreciated their presence and doubtless will do so more later on.'[34]

The Auxiliaries themselves did not feel quite so sanguine. They spent all their time either on patrol or in their barracks, isolated in an unknown, unfriendly landscape. The farmers and townspeople who saw them as a indomitable force were seen in turn as hostile and unfathomable. Their Intelligence was usually weak so they could only grope in the dark against their foes, who refused to show themselves. They made few arrests.[35]

The I.R.A. drew first blood in early November. Two Auxiliaries, probably Intelligence officers, disappeared while travelling from Macroom to Cork. They had been kidnapped, interrogated and executed, their bodies secretly buried.[36] The police never found out what happened.

As winter approached, patrols became colder, wetter and more perfunctory. The Auxiliaries had no real protection from the weather. They had been equipped as hastily as they were trained, did not have proper overcoats and still travelled in open-topped lorries (one Volunteer at Kilmichael was astonished at how poorly dressed they were):[37]

> our patrols were no longer looked forward to, indeed they were becoming unpleasant. We finished each patrol soaked to the skin despite our mackintoshes. This discomfort I think may

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[34] C.I. Monthly Reports, Cork W.R., Oct.- Nov. 1920 (CO/904/112).

[35] Gleeson, pp 62-69. Their poor arrest record can be deduced from newspaper reports.

[36] I/O Cork Command to D/I, 9 July 1923 (M.A., A/0909); Browne, p.34; Gleeson, p.69; Examiner, 5 Nov. 1921.

[37] Gleeson, p.70.

have been responsible for our disinclination to deviate from known roads. We would take patrols which we knew would only last so long; then we would be back to the dubious comfort of the Castle. However it came about, it is certain that each section officer got into the habit of doing the same patrol each time he was on duty. so much so was this the case that, knowing which one was on duty on any particular day, we knew where his patrol was going.

So did the I.R.A.. When the eighteen men of No.2 section, left the Castle on the bleak Sunday afternoon of November 28th, the West Cork Flying Column was waiting. The hunters had become the hunted.

The object of that day's patrol was a nighttime search for a suspected guerrilla to the south near Dunmanway, in cooperation with troops of the Essex Regiment. The day had been a frosty one and now threatened rain, the storm clouds adding to the gloom of dusk. Dulled and overconfident after months of inaction, huddled together against the cold, the Cadets looked ahead to one more routine mission. They had no reason or inclination to suspect a trap. When the first lorry rounded a corner and the driver and District Inspector Crake ('not a quick thinker although sound enough'[38]) saw what appeared to be a British officer ahead waving them down, no suspicions were aroused. The man in the uniform was Tom Barry.

Thomas Bernardine Barry was, in many ways, an unlikely revolutionary. The third son of a policeman turned publican, he had grown up in a large, prosperous and loyal household in two loyalist towns, Rosscarbery and Bandon. Despite his later identification with the 'plain people' of west Cork, he had been well educated and well provided for. The Barrys even had a live-in maid.

When war came in 1914, Barry was as carried away with excitement and patriotism as any other young man of Bandon. In order to join up, he had to lie about his age, which was 16 at the time. His enthusiasm, family connections and

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[38] Gleeson, p.71.

respectable background soon earned him the offer of a commission in the Munster Fusiliers, but he turned it down to remain an artilleryman. By Easter 1916 Bombardier (later Sergeant) T.B. Barry was in Mesopotamia.[39]

Sergeant Barry returned home in early 1919. Like his fellow veterans who ended up in the Auxiliary Division, Barry did not adjust easily to civilian life. Contemporaries describe him as a restless man looking for somewhere to fit in. He 'palled around' with other ex-soldiers but also sought out Volunteers and tried several times to join the Bandon I.R.A.. This and other units refused to have him however, mistrusting his military service, associations, family - and intentions. He disliked, and was disliked by, two of the most important I.R.A. families in the district. It was even rumoured that he was a spy (although the same was said of many blameless ex-soldiers).[40]

Barry has said that his nationalism was first awakened by the 1916 Rising, deepened by his reading of Irish history and

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[39] This biographical information comes from a variety of sources, but primarily from the Barry family's manuscript Census return for 1911 (P.R.O.D.) and from interviews with several I.R.A. comrades and Bandon contemporaries, especially with M.C., 28 April 1989, C.D., 19 Nov. 1989 and B.M., 6 April 1990. See also Meda Ryan, The Tom Barry Story (Cork, 1982), pp 12-15. His patriotism and the offer of a commission are mentioned in the Examiner, 10 Nov. 1915, beneath a picture of him in uniform. I am grateful to Martin Staunton for this reference.

[40] Interviews with M.C. and J.S., 2 April 1988. Ted O'Sullivan told Ernie O'Malley (O'Malley Papers, P17b/108) that:

Tom Barry was in touch with the anti-Sinn Fein Society in Bandon when he came back from the army. The Society in Bandon consisted of the loyalists and the Essex Regiment. Barry brought up before the Board [whether I.R.A. or I.R.B. is unclear] three men who held no rank at the time to prove that he had been training men before he joined the Volunteers.

It should be noted that O'Sullivan's testimony, like that of some other west Cork veterans, was coloured by considerable personal animosity. However, see also Ryan (a highly sympathetic biographer), p.17, which states that Barry personally raised the Union Jack over the Bandon Y.M.C.A. on November 11, 1919.

aroused by the 'terrible arrogance' of the British forces.[41] This may well be true but local Volunteers felt that he 'could have gone either way' and that his turn towards Republicanism was occasioned by a break with the veterans' association in Bandon. Apparently he felt slighted over his pension.[42]

Local prejudice kept him out of the movement until the late summer of 1920, by which time he was enrolled at a teacher training college in Cork City. Times were changing, however, and the onset of outright guerrilla warfare was making new demands on the West (3rd) Cork Brigade. Men were needed who could shoot a rifle and teach others to do the same. Barry was approached, this time by the Brigade staff rather than local battalion or company commanders, and he was finally given the post of Brigade Training Officer (and later, Flying Column leader). It was also no coincidence that Barry was suddenly recruited immediately after Tom Hales, the first O/C West Cork Brigade, was captured and replaced by Charlie Hurley, who had not previously known him.

In the end, though, it might have been his family connections which got him in. Barry had several cousins who were prominent in the Republican Army and who vouched for him. None of his brothers joined him in the movement and his parents' politics apparently remained unchanged. For him, as for many others, the rebellion against Britain may also have served as a rebellion against his father.[43]

Barry's personality - vain, angry and ruthless - dominated events at Kilmichael just as his version of those events has dominated their history. He was a harsh disciplinarian and a tough commander; he imposed his rule by force of personality, which could be withering. Some who

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[41] Griffith and O'Grady, pp 86-87, 125 and Barry, Guerilla Days in Ireland, pp 2-3.

[42] Interviews with C.D. and M.C..

[43] Barry has not once publicly referred to his parents or siblings in connection with his revolutionary career. I was told several times by contemporaries that Barry and his father did not get along and that this was part of the reason he ran away to join the army in 1914.

served under him became fiercely loyal and remained so for the rest of their lives. Others disliked him. Everyone respected his fighting abilities. To Tom Barry, revolution meant combat and killing, and he used this yardstick to judge everyone else.[44] He was a hard man obsessed with his own hardness.

This ruthlessness was well demonstrated in his planning for Kilmichael.[45] The terrain at the ambush site was rocky and barren and the Column was placed very close to the road, allowing only for attack and not retreat. Everything was staked on achieving surprise - if the Auxiliaries were alert and gained the upper hand, the Column would be trapped. Barry was intent on total victory. He gave an order to fix bayonets and posted men to prevent any Auxiliaries escaping. It was to be a fight to the finish, he declared.

Barry did not tell his men the plan (or his choice of target) until the last minute and he did not tell his superiors at all. They might well have stopped him if they had known (and this may account for his claim in the 1920 report that the encounter was unplanned). Kilmichael was not only risky, it was also outside Brigade boundaries, in the 1st Cork Brigade area. This was a matter of great sensitivity where I.R.A. units, and particularly Cork 1, were concerned. The Macroom and Ballyvourney Battalions had in fact been planning their own assault on Macroom Castle, which had to be cancelled after Kilmichael to their considerable annoyance.[46]

Barry 'made his name out of Kilmichael' and this was probably one of his aims from the outset.[47] He had a lot to prove. He was still under suspicion and 'watched day and

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[44] See, for example, Barry, The Reality of the Anglo-Irish War, pp 14, 58-59; C.S. Andrews, Dublin Made Me (Cork, 1979), p.280.

[45] It is clear that, contrary to Barry's initial report, the ambush was planned: the positions had been previously reconnoitred, scouts were called up from a nearby company, and the column itself was in position, waiting, all day.

[46] Mick Sullivan (O'Malley Papers, P17b/111); Browne, p.32.

[47] Interview with M.C..

night whilst he was helping at training'.[48] His first attempted ambush at Fanlobus did not come off although part of the Column did score a success at Newcestown in his absence on October 9th. The second ambush in which he participated, at Toureen on October 24th, found its mark but Barry was not the planner and only commanded a section. Each of these actions had followed a training camp. The third camp, however, did not even try an ambush. Barry also attempted two assassinations with the Brigade O/C, Charlie Hurley, but neither came off.[49]

KIlmichael, then, represented Barry's first independent command (a fact he ensured by keeping it a secret) and his main chance to prove himself. Hence, perhaps, the risk-taking and ruthlessness. To his men, on the morning of the ambush, his intentions were clear. There could be no retreat for either side.

As the first lorry slowed to a halt, Barry threw a grenade into the window of the cab and gave the signal to begin firing. The grenade exploded on top of the driver and District Inspector Crake. Both men were killed or badly wounded and the tender lurched off the road and into the ditch (see Figure 1)[50].

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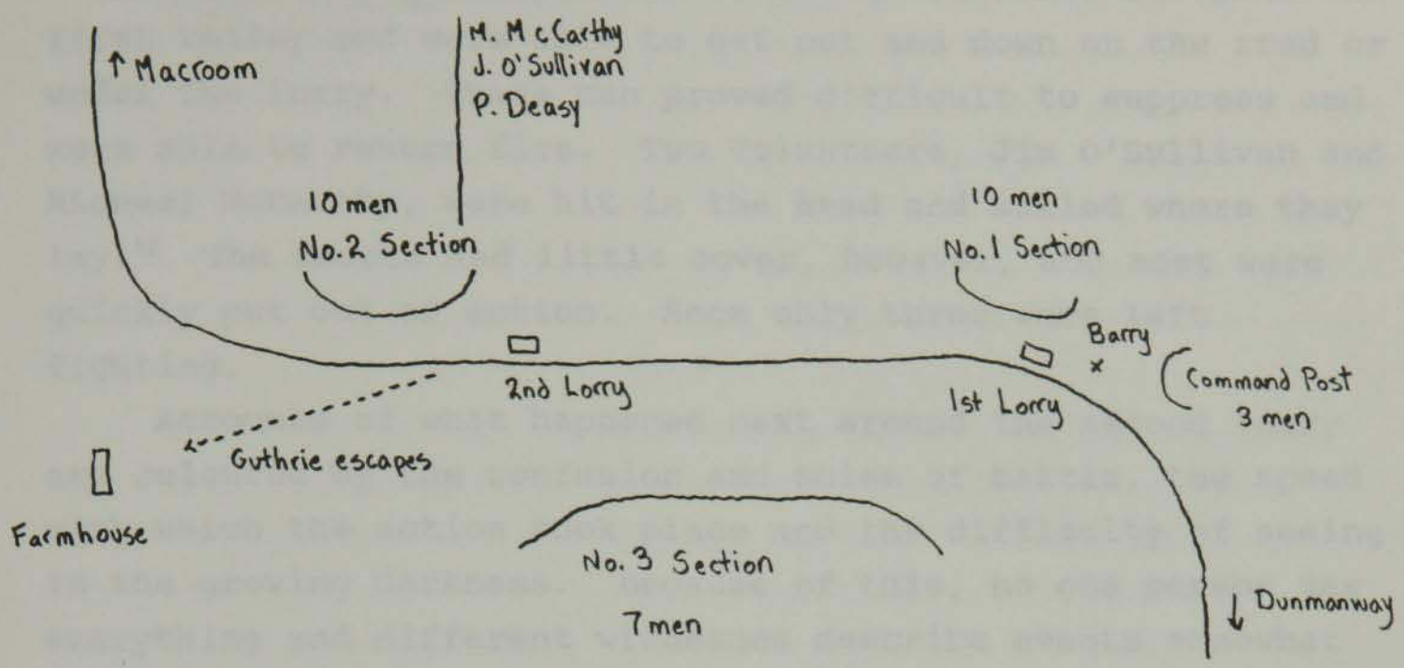
[48] Ted O'Sullivan (O'Malley Papers, P17b/108).

[49] Barry, Guerilla Days in Ireland, pp 24-35; Deasy, pp 141-147, 154-160; Con Crowley, 'West Cork Column Taught the Essex a Lesson at Toureen', Rebel Cork's Fighting Story, pp 102-103.

[50] The following reconstruction is primarily based on five detailed interviews carried out with Kilmichael veterans, three of them conducted by Dr. John Chisholm and two by myself (interviews with E.Y., 3 April, 25 June 1988; H.J., 19 Nov., 1989). I was also fortunate enough to be given a tour of the ambush site by the latter.

Dr. Chisholm recorded extensive interviews in the late 1960's while researching and editing Liam Deasy's memoirs, and I am very grateful to him for allowing me to listen to his tapes. These will be referred to hereafter as 'Chisholm Interview'. Names have been withheld to protect confidentiality: several interviewees were extremely nervous about discussing Kilmichael in detail.

Figure 1: The Kilmichael Ambush



The remaining passengers were caught completely by surprise. Some of these seven Auxiliaries were too shocked or did not have enough time to return fire before being mown down. The lorry itself offered no protection. Several tried to run up a nearby lane but did not get very far. All were shot at very close range, in some cases, face-to-face. One at least was bayonetted to death, according to Tom Barry, who was in the thick of the action.[51]

Within a few minutes all of the first lorry's occupants were dead or incapacitated. Events happened so fast that no coherent account can be assembled; the dominant impressions that remain are the Auxiliaries' panic and the furious shooting of the guerrillas.

The second lorry was about a hundred yards behind the first when the ambush began. The driver reacted immediately and tried to turn around. The road was narrow, however, and he reversed into a bog and became stuck.

At this point the second section of guerrillas began firing but they were farther away from their targets than

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[51] Barry, Guerilla Days in Ireland, p.44.

Barry's section and did not have quite the same advantage of surprise. Consequently, most of the Auxiliaries survived the first volley and were able to get out and down on the road or under the lorry. These men proved difficult to suppress and were able to return fire. Two Volunteers, Jim O'Sullivan and Michael McCarthy, were hit in the head and killed where they lay.[52] The Cadets had little cover, however, and most were quickly put out of action. Soon only three were left fighting.

Accounts of what happened next around the second lorry are coloured by the confusion and noise of battle, the speed with which the action took place and the difficulty of seeing in the growing darkness. Because of this, no one person saw everything and different witnesses describe events somewhat differently.

Nevertheless, certain facts are agreed upon by several independently interviewed witnesses. At least two Auxiliaries stood with their hands up and surrendered:[53]

There was a Tan under the lorry - I came up behind him. He was firing down the road. I fired at him, told him to put his hands up. He came out and laid down his arms and said 'what am I going to do?' I told him to go down the road to the others and they'll tell you...I saw [an I.R.A. man] with another surrendered Tan.

Two were left - I don't believe they were ever wounded. They got up with their hands in the air and approached [Michael] McCarthy's section.

One of these men was shot in the head. The other was

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[52] All of the men interviewed agree on this point: McCarthy and O'Sullivan did not stand up and did not die because of a fake surrender. Two of these veterans considered Barry's account to be an insult to the memory of these men.

[53] The following five quotes are from Chisholm Interviews.

clubbed down and then shot several times.[54]

Another Auxiliary ran away towards the only visible farmhouse: 'Some began to surrender. The driver of the lorry tried to run. I ran after him. He could have shot me as well as I could have shot him...[he was] shot down with his hands up.'

At about the same time Pat Deasy was shot in the stomach and mortally wounded. It is not clear whether this occurred before or after the surrenders. Two witnesses saw him get up from his position but no one remembers seeing him get shot. The Auxiliaries were spread out and it seems likely that, while the others were giving up, another wounded Cadet (whom Deasy thought was dead) did not see or care, and fired at Deasy when he approached (as Barry reported in 1920).[55]

Possibly even before this took place, Volunteers at the first lorry had begun finishing off wounded Auxiliaries. One man pulled from the lorry pleaded 'Don't shoot me, I'm a Catholic' but was immediately 'shot off'. All were given the same treatment: one guerrilla observed 'I saw the first lorry below and men shooting Tans' (and added 'I suppose I shouldn't be saying that now').

After Barry came up to the second lorry and the surrendered Englishmen had been executed, the same procedure was followed. One I.R.A. man came upon a wounded Auxiliary

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[54] Meda Ryan (p.35) states that: 'one Volunteer told me that he had come behind a man and ordered him to drop his gun which he did. He was walking him up the road as a prisoner when a shot dropped him at his feet.' This may have been the encounter described in the first quotation above.

[55] In Guerilla Days in Ireland, Barry tells this story as having happened to him (p.44). One witness (H.J.) saw several Auxiliaries surrender after the three Volunteers were hit, but then heard further firing, some of which he believed came from the Englishmen. Because of this, he says there was a sort of false surrender, but that no I.R.A. men died as a result.

To confuse things further, Meda Ryan (p.34) concluded from her investigation that Deasy died before any Auxiliaries surrendered, falsely or otherwise (although it should be mentioned that Ryan is a firm believer in the 'false surrender' story). If anything, this underlines just how difficult it is to reconcile the various personal accounts and perceptions.

'crying after me', and told Barry. He said, 'finish him', placed his revolver to the man's head and pulled the trigger. 'Barry made us' said another. 'He shot one, then we shot one.' Eventually each man was shot in the head. Some of the Volunteers apparently refused to take part and several 'were getting hysterical' from the shock of so much death on both sides.[56] To regain discipline and control, Barry then drilled his men amid the bodies and past the burning lorries.

Cadet H.F. Forde survived being clubbed and shot in the head, but remained paralysed with brain damage for the remainder of his life. He was fortunate in a sense that his condition so approximated death. If he were more obviously alive he would undoubtedly have been shot again.

Another Auxiliary, C.J. Guthrie, actually managed to escape. He was the driver who had run and been 'shot down'. This was in fact an error as the man who had done the shooting forgot to check the body. Guthrie survived and slipped away in the darkness towards Macroom. He got to within two miles of town before being spotted and recaptured by two local Volunteers pretending to be armed. C.J. Guthrie was executed and buried secretly in a bog somewhere in west Cork.[57]

Finally, perhaps one more death should be added to the Kilmichael list: that of the commander of 'C' Company, Ex-Colonel Buxton Smith. Shortly after his unit was disbanded in January 1922 he committed suicide in London. It was said at the inquest that he had been constantly depressed over the

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[56] The preceding three quotes are from the interview with H.J.. Barry, in one of his many about-faces, seems to have admitted what happened to Meda Ryan (p.35):

At this stage Barry didn't want prisoners - especially men who used deceptive tactics...Barry himself said he accepted full responsibility for shooting them outright. "Soldiers who had cheated in war deserved to die."

[57] I/O Cork Command to D/I, 9 July 1923; Browne, p.34. Barry claimed that 'after he had been shot, he crawled to the bog hole near the side of the road, where he died and his body sank out of sight.' Guerilla Days in Ireland, p.51.

deaths of his men, for which he held himself responsible.[58] A week after Kilmichael, Buxton Smith told a visitor:[59]

> When I first came here I little knew what I was in for. I can trust no one. Already I have lost twenty-five of my men, and they are getting hard to hold. I can't give them any exercise - can't even allow them to knock a ball about in the park, lest they are sniped at from over the wall. They can't walk a yard or go into a shop without danger, and they are savage for revenge.

Buxton Smith did manage to hold them: 'he kept his own men in order which was something.'[60] Only a few half-hearted reprisals against houses and haysheds were carried out around Macroom, belying their reputation as terrorists. Nevertheless, the Company was too badly mauled to continue effectively. Within a month they were moved to Dublin where they ceased to act as an independent unit.[61]

The account which emerges from detailed interviews with survivors supports much of the official British story. The Auxiliaries were decoyed by what appeared to be a British officer and attacked by men wearing steel helmets and carrying service rifles with fixed bayonets. Helpless wounded men and prisoners were killed after the battle was over. Axes and shotguns were not used but bayonets and revolvers at point-blank range were. In retrospect, British information seems to have been remarkably accurate.

Barry's 'history' of Kilmichael, on the other hand, is riddled with lies and evasions. There was no false surrender as he described it. The surviving Auxiliaries were simply 'exterminated'.

The question remains: why? It may well be that Deasy's shooting, on top of the deaths of O'Sullivan and McCarthy, enraged some of their comrades enough to seek revenge.

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[58] Star, 11 Feb. 1922. See also Crozier's (largely inaccurate) account in Ireland For Ever, p.196.

[59] Everett, p.154.

[60] Crozier, p.196.

[61] Gleeson, pp.75-76.

General Crozier, after resigning and becoming a vocal critic of the Auxiliary Division and British policy in Ireland, asserted that:[62]

> It was perfectly true that the wounded had been put to death after the ambush, but the reason for this barbarous inhumanity became understandable although inexcusable...Arms were supposed to have been surrendered, but a wounded Auxiliary whipped out a revolver while lying on the ground and shot a 'Shinner' with the result that all his comrades were put to death with him, the rebels 'seeing red', a condition akin to going mad.

Perhaps Deasy <u>was</u> shot after the other policemen surrendered and this was perceived as a trick. On the other hand, why execute all the wounded men and Cadet Guthrie? Presumably 'to allow no survivor to disclose their methods' [or identities] as British investigators suggested.

There is also a strong possibility that Barry intended to wipe the Auxiliaries out from the very beginning to ensure total victory and to impress both the British and his detractors. It was he who ordered the wounded to be killed and made sure it was done. Taken together with the shooting of prisoners and the original order to let no one escape, the killings appear to be part of a premeditated plan. It certainly seems significant that in previous attacks where Barry was not the only Brigade officer present - such as at Toureen - enemy prisoners were treated decently but at KIlmichael and subsequent actions they were liable to be

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[62] Crozier, p.128. Crozier stated that 'I journeyed to Cork to find out the truth about this carnage, and as I was in mufti and unknown, learned a great deal, not only about the ambush.' That a senior British police officer (and an Ulster protestant to boot) could have infiltrated the west Cork I.R.A. to such an extent is simply incredible. It is almost certain that Crozier picked up this information - which certainly does have an authentic ring to it - <u>after</u> he had resigned and after he had become <u>persona grata</u> to republican leaders such as Michael Collins (see pp 219-224). Much of the material in his book clearly came from this source.

summarily executed.[63]

Kilmichael is important not just because of its effect on the course of the revolution in Cork but also because it has helped define the revolution in military and moral terms. This is how Barry and other I.R.A. chroniclers wanted it to be seen: as a 'formal engagement', the centrepiece of a heroic military campaign.[64] The I.R.A. fought fairly and won a brilliant victory. The Auxiliaries were terrorists. They acted treacherously and deserved to be annihilated.

Kilmichael was a brave, daring and even brilliant ambush, but it turned into a massacre. In the end, it belonged to the same world of 'disappearances' and revenge killings as the shootings on White Street and Broad Lane (which happened only a week before). Such events shared a common language, used by all sides: the victim is always a 'terrorist' or 'spy', he is often killed 'attempting to escape' or after a false surrender.[65] Or he is simply 'the enemy' and must be killed to avenge a past killing or deter a future one: 'If we didn't

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[63] For example, two of three captured British soldiers were shot in Bandon on February 22, 1921 in revenge for previous British killings (Column Report No.4: Mulcahy Papers, P7/A/38). The famous attack on Rosscarbery barracks on March 23, 1921 is another interesting case. In Guerilla Days in Ireland Barry stated that the R.I.C. garrison fought well and that no revenge was sought (p.151). In his initial report, however, he claimed that 'the enemy' had opened fire after offering their surrender and that he then burned the building and set guards to prevent any escape. He concluded that 'I was under the impression that all the enemy forces there...were either dead by our fire or burnt in the building' (Column Report, 6 April 1921: Mulcahy Papers, P7/A/38). In other words, he thought he had wiped the police force out following yet another false surrender. Ted O'Sullivan (Brigade Quartermaster) said that 'Barry wanted to get me away from the action' but he refused (O'Malley Papers, P17b/108).

[64] Tom Barry's foreword to Butler, Barry's Flying Column.

[65] This was the British claim after 13 guerrillas were killed at Clonmult in February 1921 - a sort of Kilmichael in reverse.

wipe them out, they'd wipe us out.'[66]

The reality of Kilmichael shows how difficult it is to categorise acts of violence or give them moral and military coherence. It also raises important questions about the nature and dynamics of the guerrilla war in Cork, which is the subject of the next chapter.

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[66] Michael O'Sullivan, a veteran of Kilmichael, Star, 16 Jan. 1971.

The Dynamics of Violence

> When the Auxiliaries had blood in their eyes they spared neither age nor sex. They were ex-British officers but no gentlemen. War-crazed drunkards many of them were, and capable of the most fiendish cruelty and diabolical deeds.
>
> Patrick J. Power, Rebel Cork's Fighting Story[1]

> You probably can imagine, but very few all-English people can, with what a burning hatred for the unutterableness of these beasts one is absolutely consumed. I'd do anything to get a chance to kill them and destroy their country, in fact I would not leave one stone upon another from end to end of it.
>
> Lt. E.N. Evelegh to his mother, 1921[2]

> 'Revenge'
>
> Written on the house of a dead 'spy', March 1921[3]

Violence was a familiar part of Cork's political landscape in the early twentieth century. 'They are a very divided race' said one exasperated Head Constable of the county in 1914.[4] O'Brienites and Redmondites had succeeded Parnellites and Anti-Parnellites but faction fights remained a constant feature of elections and disputes: the last great brawl between 'All For Irelanders' and 'Mollies' (as the latter two parties were known) took place in Bantry in December 1916.[5] By this time, however, it was clear to most observers that there had been a sea change in Irish nationalist sentiment and that the old factions were suddenly

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[1] Patrick J. Power, 'Night of Murder and Arson in Fermoy', Rebel Cork's Fighting Story, p.114.

[2] Undated letter (National Army Museum [London], Lt.Col. E.N. Evelegh Papers, Acc.7807-58).

[3] The victim was John Cathcart of Youghal. Irish Times, 26 May 1921.

[4] Minutes of the Committee of Inquiry into the Royal Irish Constabulary and the Dublin Metropolitan Police, p.103.

[5] Examiner, 5 Jan. 1917.

deemed obsolete:[6]

> Old landmarks in the form of names such as 'Mollies', 'Redmondites', 'All For Irelanders', so much in evidence before the war, are almost now obliterated. One seldom hears them now. An excursion, for instance, which before would be called either a 'Molly' or 'All-for-Ireland' excursion, is now a 'Sinn Fein' one, or else not known by any political name at all.

What direction would the new politics take? The Easter Rising in Cork had been limited to one family, the Kents of Castlelyons, whose 'blood sacrifice' of May 2 left three dead.[7] There were rumours of a second rising within weeks[8] but the first manifestations of 'Sinn Fein' took encouragingly conventional forms. In June 1916 Sinn Feiners broke up a meeting in the city and prevented William O'Brien from speaking. In July there were marches and fights with opponents and police in the city and Charleville (where a constable had been shot at in May). City council meetings were disrupted by rowdy youths. The offices of the Cork Examiner were attacked on several occasions.

Such events were a customary part of normal political proceedings; attacking the Redmondite Examiner and council meetings were practically local traditions.[9] Flag-waving, singing, fighting and even gunfire and rioting were hardly revolutionary acts by Cork standards, whatever alarmist

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[6] C.I. Monthly Report, West Cork, Aug. 1916 (CO/904/100).

[7] One policeman, a Head Constable (shot while reading the Riot Act), and Richard Kent died in the fight. Richard's brother, David, was wounded and another brother, Tom, was subsequently executed. See Patrick J. Power, 'The Kents of Bawnard, Castlelyons' in Rebel Cork's Fighting Story, pp 33-38.

[8] C.I. Monthly Report, West Cork, May 1916.

[9] See Examiner, 13, 20, 22 July, 5 August 1916; C.I. Report, East Cork, June 1916; Muriel Murphy to Tomas MacCurtain, 27 June 1916 (Cork County Museum, L330) - who complained that the Examiner was too well protected to damage effectively.

English journalists might think.[10] The West Cork by-election, held in December, was conducted in the usual manner by the usual parties and was won by the Irish Party. By June 1917 the County Inspector for West Cork concluded that 'this Sinn Feinism is of a very undefined sort. It is anti-British, anti-recruiting, and above all, anti-Redmondite: it is a voting, a shouting, a marching Sinn Feinism, but it is not a fighting one.'[11] Cork politics would, he hoped, settle back into its old grooves with only the names of the parties and excursions changed.

This assessment was at least partly correct with regard to electoral politics. Sinn Fein won and guarded its new political turf with the obligatory minimum of street-fighting and gunplay. However, in the course of the revolution the familiar exuberance of party competition turned into killing on an unprecedented, unimagined scale. The political landscape was transformed into a nightmare world of anonymous killers and victims, of disappearances, massacres, midnight executions, bullets in the back of the head, bodies dumped in fields or ditches. Over 700 people died in Cork in shootings or bombings between 1917 and 1923, 400 of them at the hands of the Irish Republican Army. 165 Volunteers were killed and 27 more died accidentally or on hunger strike. More than a third of the dead were civilians, neither soldiers, policemen or guerrillas. Over 800 others were more or less seriously wounded, for a total revolutionary casualty list of nearly 1600 victims:[12]

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[10] In February 1917 a reporter for the London Daily Mail described Cork as 'the chief city of Sinn Fein and its many ramifications. It is a modern Bagdad for romantic and astonishing happenings.' The report described Patrick Street on a saturday night. Examiner, 27 Feb., 2 March 1917.

[11] C.I. Report, West Cork, June 1917 (CO/904/103).

[12] For the sources of these figures, see Appendix 4. 'K' means killed, 'W' means wounded. Table 1 only includes the victims of shootings or bombings (except those described as merely slightly injured) and does not include those members of the I.R.A. or the Crown forces who died accidentally or by

Table 1: Victims of the Revolution in Cork, 1917-23

R.I.C.		British Army		National Army		I.R.A.		Civilians		Total	
K	W	K	W	K	W	K	W	K	W	K	W
107	156	93	155	67	171	165	96	276	303	708	881

Measured against the county's 1911 population, this amounted to one victim for every 250 people, making Cork the most violent part of Ireland (see Maps 15 and 16).[13]

The numbers of dead and wounded were only the most visible and terrible aspect of the new politics of violence created by the guns and gunmen. Submerged beneath the assassinations and ambushes, recognised but largely unreported, was a vast everyday traffic in terror and destruction. Beatings, raids, kidnappings, torture, arson, robbery and vandalism left few families or communities untouched. Hundreds of people fled or were driven out of their homes to become refugees and exiles. Many lives were destroyed other than by bullets.

Here, however, we cross a statistical boundary. The victims of Kilmichael are included in the figures in Table 1 but many others are not. Destroyed buildings and bridges can be counted with reasonable accuracy[14] -

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starvation. An interesting statistical analysis of the victims of another Irish revolution is Michael McKeown, Two Seven Six Three: An analysis of fatalities attributable to civil disturbances in Northern Ireland in the twenty years between July 13, 1969 and July 12, 1989 (Lucan, 1989).

[13] By comparison, two people were shot dead and 9 others wounded in fights between O'Brienites and Redmondites in 1910 and 1914. See C.I. Monthly Reports for East and West Cork (CO/904/80-94). Between 1969 and 1975, Northern Ireland experienced 1 'political' death for every 1100 people. Over the same length of time, Cork experienced 1 death for every 550 people. W.D. Flackes, Northern Ireland: A Political Directory (London, 1983).

[14] For the sources of these figures, see Appendix 4. The numbers are categorised by those responsible. The National Army did not destroy any houses in Cork during the Civil War.

Table 2: Destruction of Property in Cork, 1917-23

Buildings by I.R.A.	Crown Forces	Unknown	Bridges by I.R.A.
301	237	8	211

- but robbery, extortion and intimidation cannot. These activities were too pervasive and too little reported to be properly rendered into numbers.

Tables 1 and 2 in fact describe only a fraction of the revolution's violence. The casualty list could be considerably extended if we included those who were killed or injured other than by bullets or bombs, in beatings, fires or riots. Scores of I.R.A. men suffered terrible injuries after being arrested or imprisoned and dozens of people received - sometimes fatal - bayonet wounds or broken bones from R.I.C. or military riot squads. The Volunteers administered their own punishments to their enemies, uniformed or otherwise: for example, two ex-soldiers (not included in these figures) were stabbed to death in Cork city.

I have limited my human statistics to the victims of guns and explosives because these are reliable and comparable. Such incidents were nearly always reported in one way or another (see Appendix 4). The use of guns indicates a certain threshold of violence below which it is very difficult to judge the effect of an incident. A bullet almost always produces a serious wound but how do we judge the severity of an assault?[15] As detailed in chapter 6, Tom Hales and Pat Harte, the commander and quartermaster of the West Cork Brigade, were tortured to such an extent in 1920 that Hales' mouth and hands were crippled and Harte became deranged. Two R.I.C. constables who were kidnapped near Macroom in February 1922 were flogged nearly to death with wire whips.[16] These were serious injuries by any standard but what are we to make

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[15] I have not included those victims who were described as 'lightly wounded'.

[16] Examiner, 11 Feb. 1922.

of the I.R.A.'s attack on Con O'Driscoll of Drinagh in December 1920 in which he was forcibly shaved?[17] This was a painful, fearful and humiliating episode but O'Driscoll was not badly hurt. O'Driscoll's willingness to bring his case to court was also rare; most such events remained hidden and so cannot be counted or classified.[18]

The statistics on the destruction of property follow the same logic. Burning down a house or blowing up a bridge will always be considered a serious act, and will almost always attract attention. Acts of vandalism, sabotage or arson on a lesser scale, of roads, telephone or rail lines, hayricks, sheds, cars, crops and so on, were far more numerous but they too were usually ignored or unreported. Broken windows must have numbered in the thousands. Some activities were so numerous that they were simply lumped together in descriptions like: 'last night many roads were trenched around Timoleague' or 'raiders visited a large number of homes in Riverstown searching for arms'. The same was true of raids, searches and detentions carried out by government forces, British or Irish. Nine-tenths of the violence occurred beneath the visible (or documented) surface of the revolution.

Tables 1 and 2 also raise the question of motive. Which acts are to be considered 'revolutionary' and which are not? Most of the I.R.A. veterans I interviewed defined their actions in strictly military terms and drew a strong distinction between 'real' I.R.A. operations and actions they disapproved of, particularly attacks on civilians.[19] Often when I asked about a specific incident I was told 'that wasn't

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[17] See note 172.

[18] The files of the Irish Grants Committee (P.R.O.L., CO/904/762) give some indication of the number of unreported attacks. The Committee received nearly 800 compensation claims from declared Cork loyalists (mostly Protestants) who suffered injury after the truce of July 1921. Even within this limited -albiet significant - sample, there were thousands of violent incidents which were never mentioned in police or newspaper reports.

[19] Many condemned the contemporary Provisional I.R.A. on this ground.

the real I.R.A.' or 'that wasn't official'. The 'real war' was the war against the British. As one veteran put it (in an argument I encountered many times): 'there'll always be people to take advantage or do the wrong thing, but that had nothing to do with us.'[20] The same person saw murder and looting as typical of British forces.[21] The accounts of Kilmichael discussed in the previous chapter are a good illustration of this exclusive definition of the revolution.

The same selective arguments were used in reverse by British forces and their apologists and historians. The British army's official histories of the guerrilla war, like the contemporary police reports, ignored the systematic use of illegal violence by their own soldiers while highlighting the I.R.A.'s reign of terror.[22] Similarly, published police statistics were usually limited to 'Sinn Fein outrages'.[23]

So where did 'the revolution' end and other forms of violence begin? These rival narratives of the revolution were not simply cynical propaganda; they genuinely reflected the attitudes of those involved. Nevertheless, while this polarisation of perceptions was important in itself, any such distinctions are misleading. Motives and outcomes were so often mixed or indecipherable that many incidents can be assigned more than one meaning. Was Kilmichael an ambush or a massacre? How should we describe the death of Cadet Guthrie that same night, shot and buried in a bog? Can we differentiate between the shootings of Sgt. O'Donoghue and

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[20] Interview with E.B., 9 May 1989.

[21] Compare, for example, the following entries in the index of Dorothy Macardle's The Irish Republic (London, 1937): 'Lindsay, Mrs., Coachford, Co.Cork, executed, 1921'; 'MacCurtain, Tomas, murder of, March 20th, 1920'.

[22] This is true of G.H.Q. Ireland, Record of the Rebellion in Ireland in 1920-21, and the Part Played by the Army in Dealing With it, vol.1 [Operations] (I.W.M., Sir Hugh Jeudwine Papers) and 6th Division History (Strickland Papers).

[23] See, for example, Fatalities in Irish Outrages (Murders) 1st Jan. 1919-31st March 1921, H.C. 1921, 140, cols. 463-4.

Charlie O'Brien? If a Protestant farmer was attacked, was it because of his religion, his politics or his land, or all three? Was personal spite involved?

Because of this uncertainty I will not attempt to define 'political' or 'revolutionary' violence or try to divide incidents into detailed categories. As we have seen in the Introduction and Chapter 1, the politics of an event depended on the observer's point of view. The aim of this chapter is to explore the relationship between perception and action - between the culture and dynamics of violence.

I

The cautious optimism of the Cork police in early 1917 that Sinn Fein would shout, march and vote but not fight - that local politics was resuming its normal bumptious course - was quick to fade. The aggressive rise of republicanism and the Irish state's apparently equivocal responses left the officers and men of the R.I.C. feeling uncertain and insecure. Words like 'uneasiness', 'anxiety', 'unrest' and 'unsettled' began to appear in the Inspectors' reports with growing frequency, reflecting the state of the constables as well as the country.[24] Nationalist hostility was directed less and less towards rival factions. More and more, it was focused on the R.I.C. themselves. Violence followed in its wake.

For the first time since the 1880s, violence, or the threat of violence, became a constant feature of regular police work. Every arrest or patrol carried the risk of a fight, every brush with the young men and women of Sinn Fein meant trouble. No longer could constables walk their districts without fear of challenge. The spread of rioting across the county provides a gauge of political feeling:[25]

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[24] See C.I. Monthly Reports, West Cork, Jan. 1917, April 1918 (CO/904/102, 105); East Cork, Jan., Feb. 1918 (CO/904/105).

[25] Most of the riots in 1916 occurred in the second half of the year. The statistical definition of 'riots' can be found in Appendix 4. These figures do not include reprisals carried out by crowds of soldiers or policemen.

Table 3: Riots in Cork, 1915-19

1915	1916	1917	1918	1919
2	7	24	16	23

The experience of Mallow in the tension-filled summer of 1917 demonstrates the genesis of such figures. Sparring between 'the movement' and the R.I.C. began in May when Volunteers illegally put up republican flags around the town. Whenever the police tore one down, a crowd would gather, scuffles would break out and a new one would immediately appear.[26] In town, their steps were dogged by jeering youths who took to marching after them banging tin cans.[27] Feelings came to a head during a Sinn Fein demonstration on May 22. Shouts of 'Up the rebels', cat-calls and the appearance of a tricolour led to a baton charge and brawl. By most accounts, the constables were out for revenge and showed no mercy.[28] They claimed they were provoked but to locals it was straightforward police brutality.[29]

When another patrol tried to stop the youthful tin-can drummers two weeks later, onlookers intervened and a crowd drove them into their barracks, where they remained until reinforcements arrived the next day.[30] The barracks' humiliation was completed in court where they were condemned by lawyers and magistrates alike.[31] Their frustration was

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[26] Examiner, 8, 26 May 1917; Bartholomew Walsh, My Memoirs, pp 1-3 (County Cork Library); Siobhan Lankford, The Hope and the Sadness (Cork, 1980), pp 97-98.

[27] Examiner, 19 May, 4 June 1917.

[28] Examiner, 13 July 1917; Lankford, p.98.

[29] Siobhan Lankford quotes a commemorative song (p.99):

> There was Kennedy the brute
> He used his baton and his boot,
> Sinn Feiners he would like to shoot
> For flying flags in Mallow.

[30] Examiner, 4 June 1917.

[31] Examiner, 26 May, 13 June 1917.

revealed in an incident in November when a farmer refused to shake hands with a constable in a pub. The policeman, later summoned for assault, tried to force him, exclaiming 'I'm just as good an Irishman as you.'[32]

The Inspector General of the R.I.C. reported in July that 'where some of the smaller fry have been prosecuted for drilling or unlawful assembly, the attitude of Sinn Feiners towards the police is distinctly hostile, and they will hardly speak to a policeman.'[33] In north Tipperary, Volunteers were 'distinctly insolent and menacing. Men of principle are getting afraid.'[34]

Confrontations followed one upon another in a growing number of hot spots. The most routine police work could provoke hostility:[35]

> The Sinn Feiners entertain a bitter hostility towards the police. On Sunday night, at Newmarket, a police patrol, while holding up two men for not having a light on a donkey-cart, were attacked. The two men shouted for the Sinn Feiners to come and assist them. A big crowd gathered round and the police had to draw their batons, which they used with effect in dispersing their assailants. This, though small in itself, shows the spirit and the power that the police have to contend with.

The government responded to incidents such as these, and to the increasingly visible activities of the Volunteers, with military orders banning drilling, wearing uniforms or carrying weapons (including hurleys).[36] Almost any overt act, including singing nationalist songs and waving flags might now be considered disorderly. In the wake of the rising all such displays had acquired revolutionary significance, in the eyes of the authorities at any rate. Even 'voting, marching, and

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[32] Examiner, 16 Nov. 1917.

[33] I.G. Monthly Report, July 1917 (CO/904/103).

[34] C.I. Monthly Report, North Tipperary, July 1917 (CO/904/103).

[35] D.I. Report, Newmarket, 20 Nov. 1917 (CO/904/122).

[36] Irish Times, 30 July 1917.

shouting' were not to be tolerated. In this atmosphere every move made by one side was considered aggressive by their opponents.

Arrests soon followed. All of the remaining rebellion prisoners and the more recent deportees had been released in June as part of a general amnesty but prisons soon began filling up again with recalcitrant Volunteers who refused to recognise the courts. Irish prison authorities (unlike those in England) refused to treat them as political prisoners. A hunger strike in Mountjoy prison was met with force-feeding, which led to the death of Thomas Ashe in September. After this, the Irish government backed down and granted their demands.[37]

The continued influx of convicts and officials' attempts to re-assert their authority kept the prison wars raging through October and November. Each new hunger strike sent Dublin Castle scrambling to placate public opinion but the strikers remained obdurate. The Deputy Governor of Cork Gaol plaintively reported that 'I tried to reason with them and practically asked them what treatment they wanted...they are difficult to deal with.'[38] The Chairman of the Prisons Board echoed his protest at the beginning of November: 'the practice of granting concessions piecemeal as the pressure by the prisoners increases...is calculated to undermine not only the discipline of the prisoners but also that of the prison staff.'[39]

The Constabulary were equally dismayed when the administration finally capitulated two weeks later and

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[37] Irish Times, 19 Nov. 1917. The best account of these prison battles is found in J. Anthony Gaughan, Austin Stack: Portrait of a Separatist (Mount Merrion, 1977), pp 75-82. See also Fionan Lynch, 'Recollections of Jail Riots and Hunger Strikes - Grim Times in Mountjoy, Dundalk and Belfast Jails' in Sworn to be Free: the Complete Book of I.R.A. Jailbreaks 1918-1921 (Tralee, 1971), pp 63-76.

[38] Deputy Gov., Cork Prison to Chairman, General Prisons Board, 31 Oct. 1917 (S.P.O., G.P.B. Papers, Carton 7).

[39] Chairman, G.P.B. to Under Secretary, 2 Nov. 1917 (G.P.B. Papers, Carton 7).

released all of the prisoners, tried and untried, well over 100 in all. At least seventy were Corkmen. They returned home to victory celebrations, demonstrations and, inevitably, riots.[40] The June amnesty had produced disturbances in Cork city but these were worse. The police had endured threats, abuse and assaults to arrest these men and now they were back as heroes, carrying on exactly as they had done before. Further arrests and re-arrests were followed in the new year by more hunger strikes, which were almost automatically rewarded by early release.[41] To the demoralised police, the same futile cycle was simply being repeated again and again.

After one group of prisoners - arrested only weeks before - returned home to Newmarket, the District Inspector observed that 'the quick release of these Sinn Feiners has given them a false conception of the strength of their cause, while the law-abiding are becoming despondent and say there is no protection for themselves or their property.'[42] Inspectors throughout Munster and Connaught held the same glum opinions:[43]

> the fact that men whom the police have had great difficulty and danger in arresting and bringing to justice should be a few days afterward released and enabled to defy and sneer at them has had a most discouraging effect on the force.

The army's intelligence officer for Munster sympathised. 'It is really very little use arresting them.'[44]

In many cases, however, even arrests and convictions were problematic as the paralysis of the prison system was compounded by a wavering judiciary and undependable jurors.

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[40] Irish Times, 19 Nov.; Examiner, 1, 13, 20 Nov. 1917.

[41] See Examiner, 11 Feb.; 2,9 March 1918.

[42] D.I. Report, Newmarket, 20 Nov. 1917.

[43] C.I. Monthly Report, Kerry, Feb. 1918 (CO/904/105).

[44] Quoted in Townshend, The British Campaign in Ireland, p.5. See also C.I. Monthly Report, Clare, Nov. 1917 (CO/904/104) and I.G. Monthly Report, Feb. 1918 (CO/904/105).

As early as January 1916 the R.I.C. had pointed out that magistrates and juries could not be depended on to enforce the Defence of the Realm Act, the main legal weapon against the republican movement.[45]

The first signs of this breakdown appeared in Clare - where the Petty Sessions had become 'useless and more or less of a farce' by July 1917 - and quickly spread throughout the Munster circuit.[46] Cork courts reached the same point a few months later. A typical case was that of Pat Harnedy, a Drimoleague I.R.A. officer arrested for bombing the local barracks in February 1918. He went on hunger strike and was discharged by a sympathetic jury.[47] In March a member of Cumann na mBan who refused to answer questions in a Bandon court was discharged to cheers from the gallery.[48] After this no convictions were forthcoming there until a Special Court was established in September.[49] At the Cork city assizes that summer, carefully picked juries still failed to convict on what the County Inspector felt were 'clear cases'.[50]

The Attorney General removed all but one case from the Grand Jury's jurisdiction in Kerry in anticipation of the same problem.[51] In Tuam, Galway, two Resident Magistrates were heckled by Justices of the Peace as they sentenced a group of Volunteers.[52] The most notorious case of all was that against some Volunteers accused of killing a man during an

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[45] Report of the Royal Commission on the Rebellion in Ireland [Cd.8311], H.C. 1916, p.10.

[46] C.I. Monthly Report, Clare, July 1917 (CO/904/103).

[47] Eagle, 23 Feb., 9 Mar. 1918.

[48] Eagle, 16 Mar. 1918.

[49] C.I. Monthly Report, Sept. 1918 (CO/904/107).

[50] C.I. Monthly Report, East Cork, July 1918 (CO/904/106).

[51] Irish Times, 13 July 1918.

[52] Notes From Ireland, Aug. 1918.

arms raid in Silvermines, Tipperary. The government brought them to trial three times, but no Irish jury would convict and they eventually had to be released.[53] The institutions of government had become a political battleground and Sinn Fein was winning. Increasingly, courts were simply a stage for nationalist rhetoric and abuse of the police.

As convictions grew harder to obtain fewer cases were brought to trial. The main problem was evidence. Out of fear, prudence or patriotism, few witnesses were willing to testify against republican defendents. In Ireland in 1917, 'in all cases of violent outrages, no one has been arrested as witnesses refuse to come forward.'[54] Mr. Justice Moore, speaking at the Cork County Assizes the following summer, remarked: 'when one reads the police reports of all these matters...one could not but be struck with the statement in nearly every case: "The police have been unable to procure sufficient evidence to bring the perpetrators to justice."'[55] In August the County Inspector for west Cork bemoaned the fact that all 'ordinary sources of information are closed.'[56] A typical example of unsolved crime was the savage beating of two naval seamen in a Bantry pub in September. When the local police went to investigate, 'No one in the place would give the slightest information about the occurrence.'[57]

Thus, as judicial statistics reveal, the arrest rate for the Cork R.I.C. fell precipitously after 1917 as crime rose:[58]

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[53] I.G. Monthly Report, July 1918 (CO/904/106); 6th Division History, p.9 (Strickland Papers).

[54] I.G. Monthly Report, Dec. 1917 (CO/904/104).

[55] Notes From Ireland, Aug. 1918.

[56] C.I. Report, West Cork, Aug. 1918 (CO/904/107).

[57] Examiner, 5 Feb. 1919.

[58] Table 4 is based on Judicial Statistics, Ireland 1917/18 (Cd.8636); 1918 (Cd.9066); 1919 (Cd.43, 438); 1921 (Cd.1431). For a comparison with Clare and Ireland as a whole, see David Fitzpatrick, Politics and Irish Life 1913-1921: Provincial Experience of War and Revolution (Dublin,

Table 4: Indictable Offences in Cork, 1915-19

	1915	16	17	18	19
1) Reported offences	498	413	392	562	676
2) Persons proceeded against	476	357	324	351	306
3) Percentage of 2) convicted	66	56	60	48	63
4) Ratio of 2) to 1)	96	86	83	62	45

And, although the conviction rate rebounded to its 1917 level in 1919, the number of actual convictions remained about the same due to the decline in indictments.

Police anger over government vacillation and lack of support merged with a long list of other grievances, low pay, poor conditions and lack of promotion chief among them.[59] With their foes gaining the upper hand, neglect seemed to border on betrayal.

For those arrested, the early success of the hunger strikes did represent a clear victory and inspired an easy contempt for the law. 'Mere boys now commonly defy the Police, and when charged in Court declare themselves citizens of the Irish Republic, or soldiers of the I.R.A., and refuse to acknowledge jurisdiction.'[60] J.W. Reid, a Cobh Volunteer, wrote home from Belfast that 'I never spent such a good Hallows Eve as I did this time in jail...Tell Leahy he is losing the time of his life.'[61] A Clare Volunteer expressed the views of many of his fellows when he referred to his sentence as 'a holiday at the expense of the crown.'[62]

1977), p.13 and 'The Geography of Irish Nationalism 1910-1921' in Past and Present, Feb. 1978, pp 121-2.

[59] For conditions within the R.I.C., see Richard Hawkins, 'Dublin Castle and the R.I.C. (1916-1922)' in T. Desmond Williams, ed., The Irish Struggle 1916-1926 (London, 1966), pp 167-82 and Fitzpatrick, pp 4-16.

[60] I.G. Monthly Report, March 1918 (CO/904/105).

[61] J.W. Reid to Miss Hawkins, 1 Nov. 1917 (G.P.B. Papers, Carton 7).

[62] Irish Times, 5 March 1918.

However, militant high spirits were coupled with the constant threat of arrest and suppression. Prison victories were often short-lived. Each prison had to be conquered separately and gains made were frequently withdrawn, so the same battles had to be fought over again. Hunger strikers released under the Temporary Discharges Act (the 'Cat and Mouse Act') could be re-arrested at any time. In fact, by the end of April 1918 many of the heroes of the previous autumn were back inside to complete their terms.[63] By this point the same cadre of activists had been arrested three or four times since the Rising.

On the outside, most public activities were now illegal without express police permission so most of 'the movement' were liable for prosecution.[64] Most activists experienced violence as a never-ending confrontation with policemen and warders for what they saw as their basic rights to expression, association and political status. And behind it all was a sense of imminent danger. The prospect of conscription loomed larger as the war in Europe dragged on and the memory of the 1916 executions haunted many republicans. Michael Collins (who himself had left London to avoid being called up) wrote to a colleague in the summer of 1918 that 'there is no knowing what they may do after all.'[65]

While republicans were afraid of a 1916-style crackdown, Dublin Castle's policies arose from their fear of provoking a

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[63] See C.I. Monthly Report, Clare, Feb. 1918; Examiner, 4,5,10 April 1918.

[64] By June 1918 a meeting was illegal if marching took place, if 'seditious emblems' were displayed, if disloyal language was used or if police were refused admittance. I.G. Circular, 5 July 1918 (N.L.I., Ms.10,472). Under these conditions any Sinn Fein or Volunteer gathering could be suppressed.

[65] Michael Collins to Joseph McDonagh, May 1918 (G.P.B. Papers, Carton 7).

second rising.[66] The events of 1916 cast a long shadow over the Irish administration. Rumours and predictions of renewed rebellion came thick and fast in 1917 and 1918 and were taken seriously. Troops were hurriedly deployed to Munster in November 1917 in the belief that the Sinn Fein Ard-Fheis signalled an uprising[67] and the 'German Plot' arrests of the following spring were based on reports indicating another attempt at German-sponsored rebellion would be made in June.[68]

The announcement in April that conscription would be extended to Ireland intensified these fears. Both the Irish Command and R.I.C. headquarters continued to expect a 'spectacular revolution' along Dublin lines well into 1919.[69] Few if any officials or soldiers saw the seeds of revolution in the local raids and riots now becoming a constant feature of provincial police reports (despite the warnings being sounded by some provincial Unionists).

Faced with the prospect of being overwhelmed by 'superior force' or 'sheer numbers' while trying to enforce conscription, the County Inspectors of Munster panicked.[70] In north Tipperary 'Police can do nothing and they are practically always confined to their barracks fearing an attack.' The stations in the south of the county were equally paralysed with apprehension. Limerick was 'seething with

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[66] For differing analyses of British policy, see D.G. Boyce and Cameron Hazlehurst, 'The Unknown Chief Secretary: H.E. Duke and Ireland, 1916-18' and Eunan O'Halpin, 'H.E. Duke and the Irish Administration, 1916-18' in Irish Historical Studies, Mar. 1977, pp 286-311 and Sept. 1981, pp 362-76.

[67] Irish Times, 3, 5 Nov. 1917.

[68] See Eunan O'Halpin, The Decline of the Union: British Government in Ireland 1892-1920 (Dublin, 1987), pp 159-161.

[69] I.G. Monthly Report, May 1918 (CO/904/109). See also the report for January 1919 (CO/904/108); Irish Command Weekly Intelligence Summaries, 21 Aug., 11 Oct., 6 Nov. 1918 (I.W.M., Lord Loch Papers, 71/12/9).

[70] Both phrases were used by the Irish Chief Secretary in cabinet meetings; see Boyce and Hazlehurst, p.300 and O'Halpin, 'H.E. Duke and the Irish Administration', p.370.

hatred for the government.'[71]

West Cork was also seething but the Inspector, fifty men short of his 'fixed strength' (250 men), felt no confidence in his ability to keep control:[72]

> As a result of the general unrest, the rancour versus the police, the probability of attacks on them and their barracks, the raids for arms, it has been found necessary to concentrate the police, and with this objective in view eight permanent stations, protection posts and one coast-watching post have been discontinued.

This withdrawal tipped the moral balance even further against the beleaguered force. Three constables in Bandon resigned rather than carry out an arrest order and two others were dismissed in Castletownbere .[73] In one evacuated district a local republican exulted that 'there are no policemen in Drinagh nor in Ballygurteen, they were afraid of the Sinn Feiners and the priest too for he said to put a mark on anyone they saw talking and telling stories to any one that would side with conscription.'[74]

Where before policemen had felt isolated, now they were ostracised. 'A movement to boycott the police seems to be in general contemplation throughout the [West Cork] Riding'[75], often spearheaded by priests like Father O'Keefe in Drinagh or Father Dennehy in Eyeries. The latter told his flock that 'any Catholic policeman...who assisted in conscription would be excommunicated and cursed...that the curse of God would

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[71] C.I. Monthly Reports, North and South Tipperary, Limerick, April 1918 (CO/904/105). See also 6th Division History, p.21.

[72] C.I. Monthly Report, April 1918 (CO/904/105). For R.I.C. strength in west Cork, see C.I. West Cork to I.G., 7 Oct. 1918 (CO/904/169/3).

[73] Examiner, 16, 20 May 1918. For the former incident, see chapter 9.

[74] Letter from Co.Cork, 20 May 1918 (Censorship Summaries and Precis, CO/904/164).

[75] C.I. Monthly Report, West Cork, April 1918.

follow them in every land.'[76]

In material terms, the boycott manifested itself in a general refusal to drive the R.I.C. (who did not have their own cars) or supply their barracks. Those that did were themselves boycotted or attacked. A number of barrack servants were also forced to leave.[77]

Public antipathy did not diminish even after the threat of conscription receded. In August the Bandon headquarters wrote of 'the strong and bitter feeling which prevails generally'.[78] In September 'ill feeling towards the police still continues almost everywhere'; 'The attitude of the people varies from complete indifference to active hostility.'[79]

For the first time, hostility was accompanied by direct action as police barracks and patrols came under attack. In March 1918 raiders seized four rifles from the Eyeries barracks. In July Ballyvourney Volunteers ambushed two armed constables, shooting one and beating the other senseless ('an attack calculated to shake to its foundations all sense of public security'[80]). In August men of the Eyeries station were again attacked and beaten. In September a two man patrol in Bantry were disarmed and so badly mauled that both men were hospitalised and forced to retire. Ballyvourney police were again assaulted on patrol in October. In November the first police death in west Cork was recorded when a constable pretending to be a raider as a practical joke was shot by one

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[76] Quoted in A.W. Samuels to Lloyd George, April 1918 (I.W.M., Sir John French Papers, 75/46/12). See also Philip Bagenal, 'The Royal Irish Constabulary; and Sinn Fein' in The Nineteenth Century and After, July 1922, p.122.

[77] See the report from west Cork in the Weekly Intelligence Survey, 6 Nov. 1918 (Loch Papers).

[78] C.I. Monthly Report, Aug. 1918 (CO/904/107).

[79] C.I. Monthly Report, West Cork, Sept. 1918 (CO/904/107); C.I. West Cork to I.G. 26 Sept. 1918 (CO/904/169/3).

of his barracks-mates.

These attacks continued into the new year - accompanied by numerous minor assaults - and culminated in yet another ambush by the hyperactive Eyeries volunteers, who wounded three constables. When the District Inspector from Bandon arrived to investigate, he reported that 'as far as I can ascertain no one in Castletownbere denounced the recent outrage either in public or private, on the contrary...a great number regretted that they were not shot dead.'[81] Along the rugged western fringes of the county, unrest was taking on the appearance of guerrilla war.

Declining morale was stopped short of free fall in west Cork by the arrival of a battalion of troops in mid-May. Detachments of cyclists were stationed throughout the riding. This garrison was reinforced by two more battalions when the riding was declared a Special Military Area in September, in response to the second Ballyvourney ambush. Cork was not alone: other battalions had been sent to Special Military Areas in Clare and Kerry in February and June.

Military intervention restored a sense of stability and allowed the police to carry out a new wave of raids and arrests.[82] After the initial impact had been absorbed, however, little seemed to have changed. The army entered the fray with reluctance and soon found itself with the same problems and complaints as the R.I.C.. One senior officer who toured the military areas in August reported that the people were 'sullenly resentful and were only keeping quiet because they are obliged to.' Soldiers were being jeered at and harassed: he himself had his tires slashed.[83] A General Staff memo drafted in October remarked upon:[84]

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[81] D.I. Bandon Report, 13 May 1919 (CO/904/169). The report concluded that 'the police have been attacked, boycotted and impeded in every possible maner.'

[82] C.I. Monthly Report, July 1918 (CO/904/106).

[83] Lt.Col.G.S., Report on Special Military Areas in Clare and Tralee, Aug. 1918 (Loch Papers).

[84] General Staff Memo, Oct. 1918 (Loch Papers).

the bitter feeling there is amongst the soldiers for the Irish. Many of them are being taunted by young Irishmen and are getting in such a state that they may take the law into their own hands. The situation would be perfectly simple to deal with if the Government only had a policy and stuck to that Policy, but where there is no Policy or at least a Policy that changes like a weather cock with every breath of air, it is quite impossible to form any military plans.

The military presence had an immediate calming effect but violence was reduced rather than halted, public opinion was not reversed and convictions were no more forthcoming. Moreover, the army itself became a target. In September 1918 two officers were beaten up in Bantry and two soldiers were held up in Castletownbere. Such attacks became commonplace in 1919.

Soldiers' frustrations with this situation could not be contained indefinitely. After an attack on a church party in Fermoy in September 1919 - and the subsequent refusal by the Coroner's jury to bring a verdict of murder - their enraged comrades rioted and wrecked many of the town's shops. A week later, off-duty members of the same regiment were fighting in the streets of Cork city. Both Fermoy and the city saw further riots and reprisals that year, but most ominous of all was the arrival of the Essex Regiment (soon to become notorious in west Cork) in Kinsale in October. On the day they arrived parties of Essex soldiers paraded the town, intimidating the residents and smashing windows. Their Colonel reluctantly apologised but defended his men by saying they had been provoked.[85] Such official permissiveness and appeals to the logic of reprisal would be heard more and more in the coming months.

The army had little faith in either the Irish administration or the long term efficacy of the Special Military Areas.[86] Officers and men alike were eager to have done with their new duties. However, the R.I.C. in Cork and

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[85] Examiner, 23 Oct.; 5 Nov. 1919.

[86] Brig.Gen. J. Brind, Note on the Present Situation in Ireland, 28 April 1919 (French Papers).

elsewhere were now dependent on military aid to do their jobs; these detachments were seen as the only barrier between them and a complete breakdown in law and order. 'It is due to the activity of the military cyclists...that things are not a good deal worse'; 'without them the police could do nothing.'[87] When troops were temporarily withdrawn from outlying posts in late 1918 (over strenuous police objections) the denuded District Inspectors predicted disaster.[88] Once again they had been abandoned. If the force was to continue to operate, declared Bantry's District Inspector, emergency measures were required 'clearly indicating to the rank and file...that the Government view attacks on them as a very serious matter.'[89]

Military withdrawal and demobilisation drew the same reactions in February 1919. To make matters worse, when the 'German Plot' deportees were released later that spring, many other political sentences were also remitted in an apparent replay of the disastrous amnesties of 1917 and 1918.[90] Police requests for military assistance continued unabated[91] and west Cork's military regime, lifted in that month, was reimposed in April after further ambushes had taken place.[92] In June the Inspector General admitted that popular feeling against the R.I.C. was so strong that the army's help was

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[87] C.I. Monthly Reports, West Cork, Aug., Dec. 1918 (CO/904/107).

[88] See Draft Memo from G.O.C. Irish Command to Lord Lt., Feb. 1919 (Loch Papers).

[89] D.I. Report, Bantry, 24 Sept. 1918 (CO/904/169/3). See also, in the same file [and the same vein]: D.I. Macroom to I.G., 25 Sept. 1918; D.I. Millstreet to I.G., 24 Sept. 1918; C.I. West Cork to I.G., 26 Sept. 1918.

[90] See the files on D.O.R.A. prisoners in the G.P.B. Papers, Cartons 4-6.

[91] The Irish Command's Weekly Intelligence Surveys between 30 May 1918 and 5 March 1919 show that police requests for military assistance remained roughly constant.

[92] C.I. West Cork to I.G., 10 April 1919 (CO/904/169/3).

needed in every political case.[93] The last army detachment in west Cork, in Kilbrittain, did not leave until August.[94]

The Cork constabulary on their own were no match for the moral and physical campaign being waged against them. They were undermanned and poorly paid, inadequately armed, isolated, immobile and spread thinly across the countryside. The traditional emergency apparatus of Crimes Acts, Special Courts and Resident Magistrates was useless without information or witnesses. Barracks were issued with army surplus towards the end of 1919 - sandbags, barbed wire, steel shutters, rifles and grenades - but these defensive measures did nothing to offset their occupants' sense of helplessness.[95]

The ambush of two constables in the village of Berrings (near Dripsey) made plain these dilemmas. On Sunday morning, September 28, 1919, Constables Sweeney and Walsh were jumped by a group of Volunteers as they left church.[96] Walsh gave up his gun without a fight, crying 'don't shoot me.'[97] Sweeney resisted and was wrestled to the ground by several attackers. He called out for help but Walsh told him to 'give it up Michael.'[98] Sweeney continued to struggle and was shot twice before being disarmed.

Initial police investigations revealed little. Nobody

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[93] I.G. Monthly Report, June 1919 (CO/904/109).

[94] C.I. Monthly Report, West Cork, Aug. 1919 (CO/904/109).

[95] Irish Times, 19 July; 25 Sept. 1919.

[96] See Examiner, 29, 30 Sept. 1919. The following account of the ambush and subsequent investigation is based on the complete police and judicial files on the incident (CO/904/177). 'Statements' quoted below are those of witnesses called before the criminal inquiry in 1920. These documents are doubly valuable as very few records of individual investigations and prosecutions have survived. Because of this they allow an almost unique insight into the workings of the Irish criminal justice system.

[97] Statement of John Collins.

[98] C.I. Report, 6 Oct. 1919.

would publicly admit to knowing the attackers. The County Inspector for East Cork, who took personal charge of the case, was told by 'several respectable nationalists' that 'the people are in a state of terror from the Sinn Feiners and afraid to speak to, or have any communication with, the police.'[99]

Nevertheless, someone must have secretly informed. Two days after the attack six men were arrested in Donoughmore (six miles north of Berrings), members of a militant Volunteer company already well known to the police. By the authority of the local Resident Magistrate they were remanded in custody for eight days. The police actually missed the two men suspected of shooting Sweeney. They had gone on the run; only one was found a week later. Sweeney, still recovering in hospital, was unable to recognise any of the men. Walsh identified only one, to the disgust of his superiors who believed he was afraid to name the others.[100]

The Resident Magistrate renewed the suspects' detention for several more eight day periods but no more evidence was forthcoming. The County Inspector gloomily reported that 'the people are in such an abject state of terrorism that I believe they would rather go to prison than identify any of the gang.'[101] The prisoners were finally discharged on October 23.[102] The missing man whom the police believed to be the organiser of the raid had still not been found and the Inspector doubted if a Special Crimes Inquiry (which had the power to compel attendance) would do any good.[103]

The Resident Magistrate disagreed. On January 5, 1920, over three months after the shooting, he issued a Certificate for Preliminary Inquiry under the 1887 Crimes Act. Twenty

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[99] C.I. Report, 1 Oct. 1919.

[100] C.I. Reports, 30 Sept.; 6 Oct. 1919.

[101] C.I. Report, 23 Oct. 1919.

[102] Examiner, 24 Oct. 1919.

[103] C.I. Reports, 20 Oct.; 3 Nov. 1919.

three local witnesses were summoned to appear before him. Their statements provide a good illustration of the state of public opinion in Cork on the verge of guerrilla war.

As usual on a Sunday morning, the young people of Berrings had quickly retreated to crossroads, dances, coursing meets and hurling games while the older church-goers from the village and nearby farms had stayed to talk or discuss business in the church yard or the pub across the road. There were thus about fifty people present when Sweeney and Walsh were ambushed. The attackers, who 'looked hardy young men' all wore 'caps and brown suits' - no doubt their own Sunday best.[104]

When the fight commenced 'the crowd closed in' to watch; 'there were a good many people looking on.'[105] Some called out to 'mind the other policeman' when Walsh appeared.[106] One man, Michael Sullivan, told the Volunteers that it was 'a shame to harm the man.'[107] Others hurried away to avoid trouble. 'I went away as I never like to see rows going on, and I would rather have nothing to do with them'; 'I turned my back when I saw that and faced the hill to my own house.'[108] 'Come out of this place, there's some desperate work going on' said one man to another.[109]

Among the crowd were John Concannon, a failed R.I.C. candidate (whose father had served in the British army), Patrick Dilworth, a retired policeman and Michael Mullane, a recently demobilised soldier. All three watched but none of them helped the constables in any way. Mullane explained why:[110]

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[104] Statement of John Collins.

[105] Statements of Jeremiah McCarthy and John Concannon.

[106] Statement of John Collins.

[107] Statement of Michael Sullivan.

[108] Statements of Jeremiah McCarthy and Maurice Murphy.

[109] Statement of Patrick Dilworth.

[110] Statement of Michael Mullane.

A. [Mullane] 'Well of course through being a demobilised soldier I didn't want to interfere.

Q. 'That is the reason you should interfere.'

A. 'Maybe I might get shot.'

The rest of the onlookers watched passively until the two shots were fired. They then scattered and ran: 'The women and children were screeching and the people running hither and thither.'[111] Several men carried Sweeney to the pub but one, John Collins, 'heard a voice that I had no right to remove him. I was nervous and got away as soon as I could.'[112] As the Volunteers marched away down the Millstreet road at an even pace, one onlooker cried 'Oh look at the boys who done the damage' - although whether in admiration or just amazement is unclear.[113] Not one of these witnesses was willing to identify any of the hardy young men in brown suits and the inquiry was soon closed with no charges laid.

In Berrings and a hundred other vilages in Cork most people were keeping quiet and out of trouble. Uneasy ambivalence seems to have been the dominant feeling of most communities. If support for Volunteers operations was far from universal, fear provided a more than adequate motive for acquiescence and silence. Michael Mullane, already suspect because of his war service, was afraid of getting shot. All around him people like John Collins feared the anonymous voices who could label him a traitor if he stepped out of line.

Police and judicial inquiries merely succeeded in laying bare the dangers faced by small and isolated barracks, the demoralisation personified by Constable Walsh and the inefficiency and futility of the legal system. The end-of-year report from the west Cork R.I.C. reflected this sense of

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[111] Statement of William Regan.

[112] Statement of John Collins.

[113] Statement of John Herlihy.

frustration and foreboding:[114]

> A system of universal terrorism exists, and this prevents the law-abiding section of the community from asserting itself. The principal efforts of Sinn Fein and the Irish Volunteers are directed against the R.I.C., whom they regard as the chief obstacle in their path, and who are now working under a strain which is almost unbearable. Their numbers are too small to deal with the existing state of things, and everything possible is being done to break their spirit. The ordinary processes of the law are useless now. The people in general will not give evidence in criminal cases, fearing attack...and police inquires are met with a refusal to answer any questions or make any statements. Under these circumstances the police are fighting with their hands tied and can achieve very little in spite of much hard work. No hope of any improvement under present conditions is anticipated.

The Berrings attack was typical not just for the public response and the legal outcome but also for the motives which inspired it. The Donoughmore Volunteers were not out to shoot policemen but to seize their arms; Sweeney was shot only because he resisted. Nearly every I.R.A. operation in 1918 and 1919 had the same objective.

Raids for arms were not uncommon in 1917. In February 1917 the Special Branch of the R.I.C. estimated that, in the whole of Cork, the Volunteers had 19 modern magazine rifles, 68 obsolescent rifles and several hundred shot guns and hand guns.[115] After a year this was supplemented by several dozen purchased or stolen Lee-Enfields, although the main source for this was cut off in January 1918 when soldiers were forbidden to bring their personal weapons home with them.[116]

The drive to acquire weapons gained sudden urgency with the threat of conscription in April 1918. May brought a new regime in Dublin Castle and a new round of arrests, deportations and restrictions, including an unprecedented

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[114] 'I.O.'[C.J.C. Street], The Administration of Ireland 1920 (London, 1921), p.66.

[115] Return of Arms in Cork, 28 Feb. 1917 (CO/904/29/2).

[116] Townshend, p.7.

program of raids and searches.[117]

Previous R.I.C. raids had been limited in number and purpose. From the spring of 1918 onwards, Crown forces were engaged in a more or less constant search for fugitives, arms or incriminating evidence. Private homes and rooms were repeatedly invaded and searched. For a large number of Volunteer activists, whose families were increasingly subject to police harassment, the only option was to go on the run.

These budding guerrillas soon felt almost as beleaguered and isolated as their opponents cooped up in their barracks. Popular support seemed as elusive for one as the other. The same householders who wanted nothing to do with the police usually had no time for the disorderly young rebels either. Frank Busteed of Blarney received such a hostile reception from the country people he visited that he returned home a few weeks after going on the run and later grumbled that 'there were few people to depend on.'[118] A north Cork officer, perpetually in prison or on the run after May 1918, wrote that 'we organisers depended on a narrow circle of faithful to support us.'[119] He, like many others, fell ill from exhaustion and exposure. 'The hardships incurred...were very great' remembered Liam Deasy of Bandon: 'Life "on the run" was considered very difficult and trying by many of my comrades.'[120] Armed and wanted men were almost universally unwelcome. Dan Breen bitterly recalled that, after the Soloheadbeg ambush of January 1919, 'our former friends shunned us...even from the Irish Volunteers we got no support...many whom we thought we could trust would not let us sleep even in their cattle-byres.'[121]

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[117] For contemporary republican perceptions and statistics, see Irish Bulletin, 18 Oct. 1920.

[118] Frank Busteed (O'Malley Papers, P17b/112).

[119] Unpublished memoir (anonymous source).

[120] Deasy, Towards Ireland Free, pp 22, 78.

[121] Dan Breen, My Fight for Irish Freedom (Tralee, 1964), pp 40-41.

The response of active Volunteers was to arm themselves by any means possible. The main targets of Volunteer raids were farmers, whose shotguns were rounded up by the score. The Ballinadee Company, for example, seized about thirty guns while the Grenagh Company's arsenal went from six to fifteen weapons in one night.[122]

All of these operations were undertaken on local initiative: necessarily so, since both the Dublin and Cork headquarters forbade most of these activities. On March 2 the Volunteer Executive and the Cork Brigade declared that 'raiding of police, soldiers and private houses for arms must not be allowed.'[123] These general orders were widely ignored, just as had earlier orders to desist from rioting.[124]

Policemen and soldiers were attacked whenever the opportunity presented itself. In most cases the victims were quickly overpowered and disarmed without any shooting (although many were badly beaten). Indeed, most ordinary Volunteers were very reluctant to open fire: almost all the veterans I interviewed remember their first enemy casualties with regret. 'Nobody wanted to kill anybody.'[125] Mick Leahy of Cobh declared that 'any time we went into a scrap we wanted to get arms first, but we did not want to kill anyone, only to save our own men.'[126] When shots were fired, it was sometimes by accident. At the Coolea ambush near Ballyvourney in July 1918, the two constables were not holding their carbines but one was shot anyway. 'Just a reflex action of a

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[122] Cornelius Flynn, 'My Part in Irish Independence' in Bandon Historical Journal, 1988, p.57; John J. Duggan, Grenagh and Courtbrack During the Struggle for Independence 1914-1924, p.33.

[123] Irish Times, Mar. 26, 1918.

[124] See chapter 11.

[125] Interview with M.J..

[126] Mick Leahy (O'Malley Papers, P17b/108).

nervous kind' one of the ambushers later ruefully admitted.[127]

In fact this sort of accident harmed more Volunteers than policemen, as most had never handled guns or explosives before. In May 1918 Denis Quinlan, the Captain of the Inchigeela company, shot himself; in December 1918 Joseph Reed and William Murphy killed themselves, in Cobh and Clogheen respectively. In April 1919 a secret I.R.B. bomb factory in Cork city blew up (the first of many), killing two Volunteers and injuring three others. In the famous Fermoy ambush of September 1919, the only I.R.A. casualty - Liam Lynch, the brigade commandant - was shot by his own side.[128]

Newly acquired arms were used to resist arrest (two city policemen were shot in this way in 1918 and 1919) and to seize more arms. Beyond these immediate goals lay that of defeating conscription; the guns would ultimately be required 'for the next rising.'[129] Like the County Inspectors, most Volunteer leaders in Cork thought of future rebellion in terms of 1916. According to a number of plans drawn up by brigade and battalion officers and captured by the police, in the event of conscription, 'the whole force would be called out on active service.'[130] Upon mobilisation, each unit would seize public buildings, block or destroy roads, bridges and rail lines and attack police barracks. Loyalists would be confined to their homes or, if necessary, shot.[131] Similar orders were issued throughout Ireland.[132]

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[127] Twohig, p.14.

[128] Jim Gosse (O'Malley Papers, P17b/123).

[129] These were the words of a raider in Galway. Notes From Ireland, Feb. 1918.

[130] Florence O'Donoghue, No Other Law (Dublin, 1986), p.23.

[131] For the Beara Battalion's plans, see Examiner, 19 Dec. 1918; for Mallow see Examiner, 14 Mar. 1919.

[132] For rising plans in north Dublin see Irish Times, 2 Jan.; 2 April 1919. For Galway see the same paper, 20 Oct. 1919. For the Baltinglass Battalion in Carlow, see the Weekly

The vision of a second rising persisted well beyond the end of the Great War. Tomas MacCurtain of the First Cork Brigade and Michael Brennan in East Clare both planned sudden, all-out assaults on police barracks in their brigade areas before being restrained by a nervous Dublin headquarters.[133] MacCurtain himself later vetoed a like plan proposed by the Ballyvourney Battalion.[134] Terence MacSwiney continued to think in the same vein, to the dismay of more cautious leaders in Dublin.[135] He revived this idea after he replaced MacCurtain as commander of the 1st Cork Brigade but was again countermanded - this time by Arthur Griffith. He was arrested and went on hunger strike shortly thereafter and the plan died with him.[136]

As nationalist violence accelerated in 1918 and 1919 it began to encompass the I.R.A.'s perceived enemies within their own communities. Under the threat of conscription a 'dead set' was made against loyalists, and especially

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Intelligence Survey, 6 Nov. 1918 (Loch Papers).

[133] Florence O'Donoghue, Tomas MacCurtain: Soldier and Patriot (Tralee, 1971), pp 156-7; Michael Brennan, The War in Clare 1911-1921: Personal Memoirs of the War of Independence (Dublin, 1980), p.38.

[134] Twohig, p.18.

[135] According to Richard Mulcahy, the Chief of Staff, MacSwiney claimed 'they could last for a fortnight and in six weeks time the same could happen in Galway...I said to him you can't have a travelling rising like that.' Notes of Conversations with Joe Sweeney (U.C.D., Richard Mulcahy Papers, P7D/43). MacSwiney may well have suggested this scheme as an alternative to the uncontrolled violence he saw sprouting up all around him. He had little contact with the gunmen and never participated in any operations; he thought of violence primarily in romantic terms, as gesture and self-sacrifice. The description of MacSwiney as 'blood-thirsty' is thus misplaced: David Fitzpatrick, 'Ireland Since 1870' in R.F. Foster, ed., The Oxford Illustrated History of Ireland (Oxford, 1989), p.249.

[136] See O'Hegarty, The Victory of Sinn Fein, pp 46-7; Moiron Chavasse, Terence MacSwiney (Dublin, 1961), pp 139, 213.

Protestants.[137] Many of the raids for arms were directed against 'local loyalist families', as much to intimidate and disarm them as to arm the Volunteers.[138] Anyone stubborn enough not to sign the anti-conscription pledge or donate to their local anti-conscription fund could be singled out for abuse, boycott or attack. One group of anti-republican farmers in Lisheen, Skibbereen, were humiliated, bombed and shot at in 1919 for refusing the pledge.[139] Another man was wounded in Newmarket that December after he refused to pay money to Sinn Fein collectors.[140] Others were shot for resisting arms raids. Nationalist unity and resistance implied coercion: 'they are making the Protestants join in now, or if not they will be boycotted or go to England's war.'[141]

The year 1919 ended in Cork with the first assassination of a policeman (other such killings had already taken place in Tipperary and Dublin). On Sunday, December 14, Constable Edward Bolger was shot dead as he walked from his home to the barracks in the village of Kilbrittain. The two killers made sure of the job by shooting him several times after he had fallen. He was unarmed. His comrades replied by firing blindly in the direction of the assassins but did not venture out to help Bolger until his daughter came knocking at the barracks door.[142]

Bolger was shot because of his zeal in 'suppressing' the republican movement in his district, one of the most militant

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[137] C.I. Monthly Report, West Cork, May 1918 (CO/904/106).

[138] Curtin, p.33. See also Geoge Power's statement (N.L.I., Florence O'Donoghue Papers, Ms.31,335).

[139] Examiner, 16 Aug., 30 Oct. 1919.

[140] Examiner, 6 Dec. 1919.

[141] Letter from Co.Cork, 20 May 1918 (Censorship Summaries and Precis, CO/904/164).

[142] Irish Times, 16 Dec. 1919.

in the county.[143] Most recently he had arrested seven Volunteers in October and was the principal witness at their trial in November, the occasion for a serious riot at the courthouse.[144] Significantly, the men he had arrested were released on the Friday before the shooting.Bolger had gained a reputation as a'political' and a brutal officer: a declared enemy of the Volunteers.

This unauthorised killing infuriated Cathal Brugha, the Dail's Minister of Defence, who demanded that those responsible be punished. Tom Hales, the West Cork Brigade commander, replied that it had been an accident - 'a brush' - but that it had succeeded in cowing the previously aggressive barracks.[145] Jack Fitzgerald, one of the men Bolger had arrested and beaten up, remembers that the killing was deliberate and based on the policy that 'we would only be allowed to shoot bad R.I.C. men.' But he also acknowledged an element of revenge: 'in practice, however, the ones shot were ones people didn't like.'[146]

Table 5: Victims of the Revolution in Cork, 1917-19[147]

				Civilians									
R.I.C.		Army		I.R.A.		By I.R.A.		By Crown Forces		Unknown		Total	
K	W	K	W	K	W	K	W	K	W	K	W	K	W
1	11	1	6		4		4	1	11		5	3	41

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[143] C.I. Monthly Report, West Cork, Dec. 1919 (CO/904/110).

[144] Examiner, 14 Oct., 6 Nov. 1919.

[145] Liam Deasy, 'Notes on the "Innishannon" Recollection', 16 Jan. 1963 (Mulcahy Papers, P7D/45).

[146] Jack Fitzgerald (O'Malley Papers, P17b/112). See also Jim Bromagh (P17b/123).

[147] For the sources and construction of these statistics, see Appendix 4. The 'Unknown' category refers to shootings which cannot be definitely attributed to any organisation - including those people inadvertently caught in a crossfire or an explosion. These figures also do not include victims of accidents.

In three years forty four people had been shot but only three had died. Fifteen of these casualties occurred during riots, the majority in one night in the city in July 1917. Nearly half of the total were soldiers or policemen but there was little opportunity for them to shoot back. Most I.R.A. casualties were the result of accidents; seven were killed or wounded in this way. The chronology of shootings is shown in Figure 2 (at the end of the chapter).

Crowd violence fluctuated in response to public events but remained fairly constant from late 1916 onwards, reflecting the rise of republicanism as a mass movement. Meetings, marches, demonstrations and drilling were ubiquitous and frequently led to clashes. These statistics also reflect the growth of public antipathy toward the police, and later the army. Armed violence followed a different curve, rising from an average of two shootings per quarter in the winter of 1918-19 to six per quarter in the remainder of 1919.

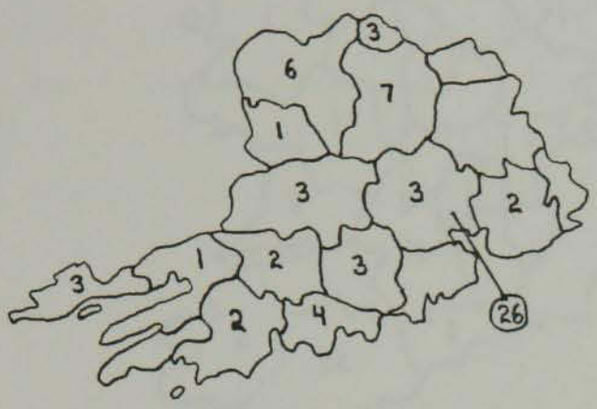
The geography of the nascent uprising is shown in Maps 1 to 4. Judging from Maps 1 and 2 rebellious sentiments and local revolutionary enterprise were fairly widely dispersed around the county and well concentrated in the city. The key role played by the city Volunteers is underscored by Maps 3 and 4: about 40% of both Crown force and total casualties were incurred there. Riots were an entirely urban phenomenon, taking place either in the city or in the larger towns.

The shooting war so far was largely confined to central Cork (and again, to towns). The maps show no clear pattern, however. Neither riots nor arms seizures were necessary precursors of ambushes, and the attacks that did take place were mounted in a wide variety of settings, from mountain paths to city streets. Most attackers used revolvers or shotguns, which were more effective weapons than rifles at close range or at night.

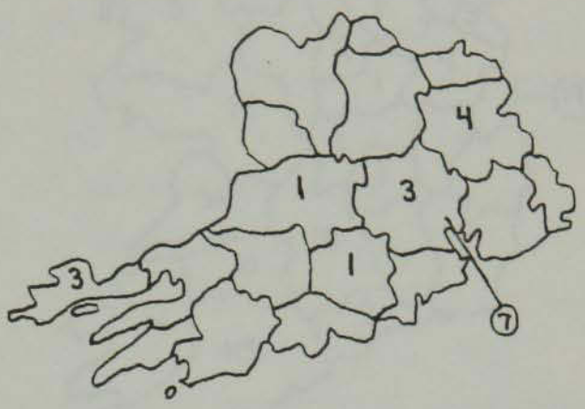
Maps 5 to 8 put Cork in an Irish context. Clearly, Munster, Galway and Dublin city were the most violent parts of the county, with Munster and Dublin units in the vanguard of the war on the police. Agrarian violence was heavily concentrated in a western littoral running from Kerry to

Donegal. In many of these areas, land disputes and the anti-grazier movement helped form the local I.R.A.. Not so in Cork, which saw comparatively little trouble. Nor was west Cork more prone to agrarian outrage than the east of the county. In this and other respects, Tipperary and Limerick were the counties which most resembled Cork in this period.

By the end of 1919 all the ingredients of guerrilla war were in place. The civil law had broken down and the overextended and demoralised police force had lost much of their legitimacy and authority. The revolutionaries, forced underground, were rapidly arming themselves and now posed a threat to every small post or patrol. Neither side's leaders had a coherent policy or any real control over the drift of events. In this political vacuum the direction of events devolved to those who were willing to act ruthlessly, the emerging players of the new politics of violence. In their hands, the war began to acquire its own momentum.

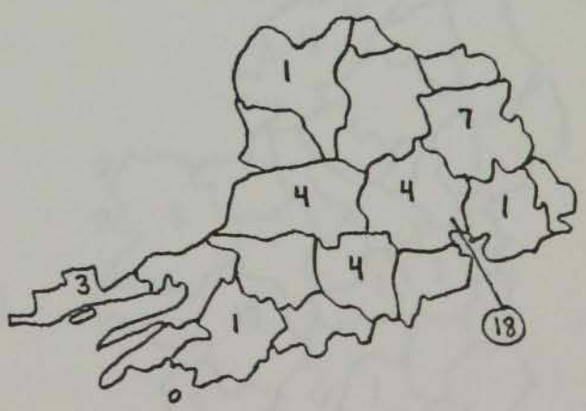


1: Riots
1917-19

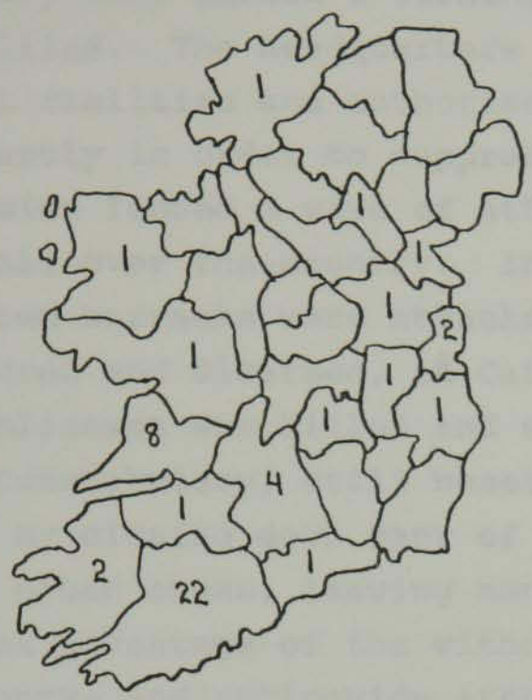


3: Crown Force Casualties
1917-19

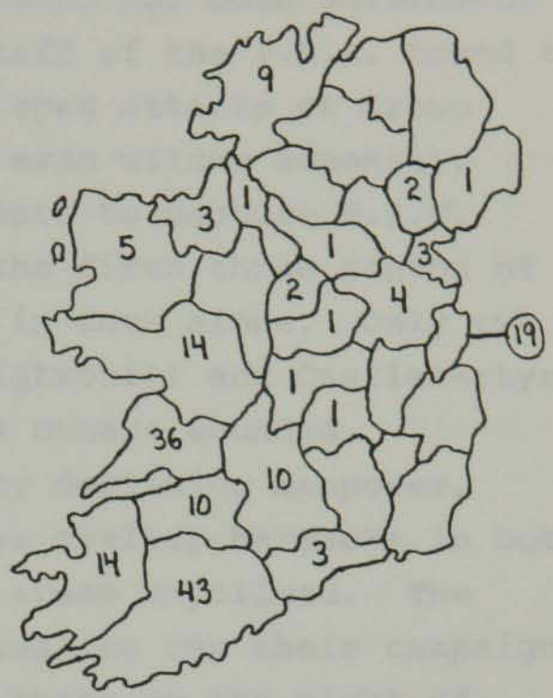
2: Arms Seizures From
Crown Forces
1917-19



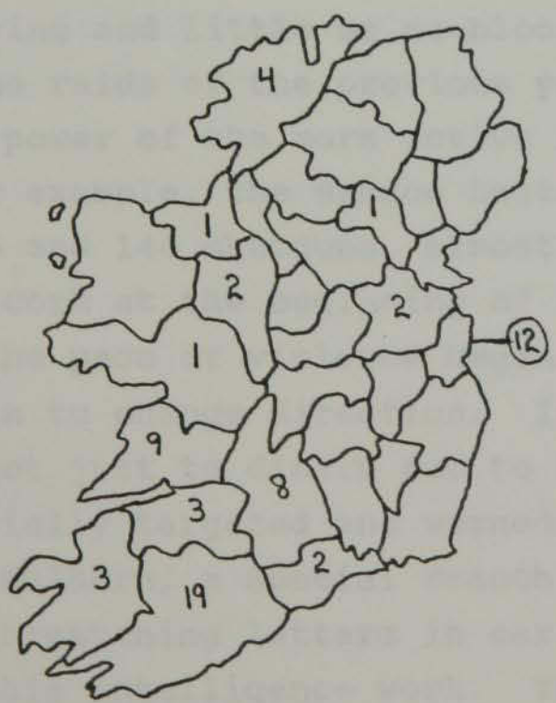
4: Total Casualties
1917-19



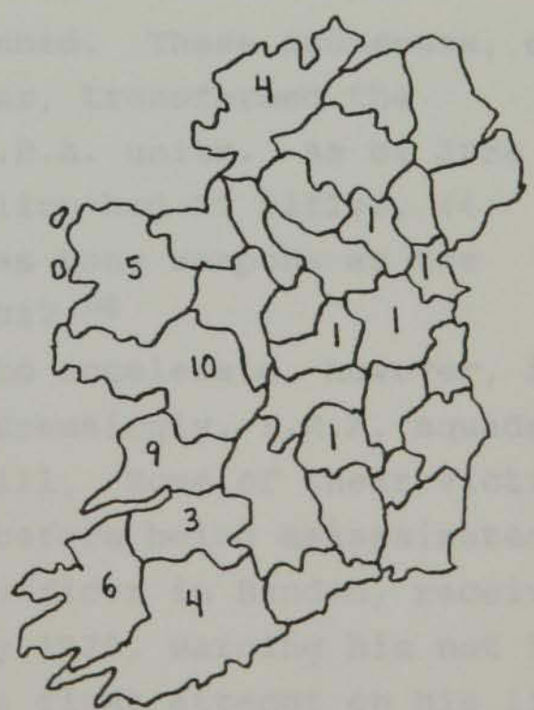
5: Arms Seizures From Crown Forces 1917-19



7: Total Casualties 1917-19



6: Crown Forces Casualties 1917-19



8: Victims of Agrarian Shootings 1917-19

II

January 1920 marked a turning point for both government and guerrillas. The headquarters staff of the I.R.A. bowed to provincial realities and authorised open attacks on Crown forces (partly in order to suppress even wilder schemes). This decision loosed a wave of attempts to capture R.I.C. barracks all over the country. In the first three months of the year ten barracks were attacked in Cork alone. Only two were captured and disarmed, in Carrigtwohill and Castlemartyr, but one policeman was killed and six others wounded.

The Constabulary, still beset by declining manpower, responded by closing down many of the smaller barracks in both rural and urban areas, leaving many areas unpoliced. The I.R.A. took advantage of the withdrawal to cap their campaign with a county- and nationwide arson spree on the night of April 5, the anniversary of the Easter Rising. In Cork, twenty eight government buildings were destroyed that night.

Anyone in uniform was a potential target. Both police and military patrols were now regularly being ambushed, often with
great daring and little or no bloodshed. These successes, on top of the raids of the previous year, transformed the fighting power of the more active I.R.A. units. As of June 1920, for example, the Bandon Battalion had 29 rifles, 44 revolvers and 146 shotguns, almost as many weapons as the whole of Cork at the beginning of 1917.[148]

As the pace of violence began to accelerate, however, it also began to change direction. Increasingly, I.R.A. squads set out not just to disarm but to kill. Some of their victims were specially targeted and warned before being assassinated. Sergeant Mulhern, a Special Branch officer in Bandon, received several threatening letters in early 1920, warning him not to continue his intelligence work. The first attempt on his life

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[148] Arms Roll, 1st Battalion, 3rd Cork Bde., 4 June 1920, reprinted in 'Sinn Fein and the Irish Volunteers', a British army pamphlet printed in October 1920 (Strickland Papers).

in March failed; the second, in July, succeeded.[149] The same procedure was followed when three army officers were shot in Cork city in May.[150]

In other cases the victims had no discernible mark against them, apart from wearing a uniform. Such was the case when Michael McCarthy, a constable of the unarmed Dublin Metropolitan Police, was killed in April in Clonakilty. He was home on leave. McCarthy was shot six times, 'then they asked him if he had had enough.'[151] Three days later in Innishannon, two policemen on patrol were shot down without warning. Their attackers used shotguns at point-blank range to terrible effect.[152] On June 13 Constable King was ambushed on the road to Glengarriffe. Caught alone and unawares, he was wounded but still managed to escape. King ran to a nearby farmhouse, shouting 'Hide me! hide me! They are after shooting me.' The family hid him but he was found, dragged to the yard, forced to his knees and shot in the back of the head.[153]

The I.R.A.'s aggressiveness raised casualty levels to new heights. As many policemen were shot in the first three months of 1920 as in the preceding three years, and more were dying: three between January and March, ten between April and June.

In the eyes of the police, the events of these months unfolded in a familiar way. The winter offensive against R.I.C. barracks was greeted with the usual complaints and appeals for help:[154]

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[149] Examiner, 13 Mar.; 26 July 1920.

[150] Examiner, 12 May 1920.

[151] Examiner, 23 April 1920.

[152] Examiner, 26 April 1920.

[153] Examiner, 14 June 1920. King was the first 'Black and Tan' to be killed in Cork - a fact which may help account for the mercilessness of the killers.

[154] C.I. Monthly Report, West Cork, Jan. 1920 (CO/904/111).

The police and military forces are too small to cope...Our men are practically tied down to guarding against surprise attacks on their own barracks at night and the small forces of military at Bandon, Bantry and Macroom can afford little assistance.

The crisis in the rural constabulary set the scene for renewed military intervention. This time, with a much smaller force at their disposal, the Irish Command could not place detachments in the troubled areas. Instead, Competent Military Authorities were granted extraordinary legal powers and the permission to use them in a counter-offensive against the rebels. In the first hint of a counter-insurgency strategy, a plan was drawn up to systematically deport and intern 'dangerous persons'. I.R.A. officers and known militants - the 'murder gang' - would be the main targets.[155]

These new rules came into operation on the night of January 30 and were an immediate success. Searches uncovered a large volume of documents (although few arms) and picked up key activists all over the county, men such as Liam O'Dwyer and Sean O'Sullivan in Castletownbere, Tadg Manley in Midleton, Ralph Keyes in Bantry and Con Neenan in Cork city.[156] A steady stream of arrests continued in the weeks that followed. In one sweep of the Bandon district in March, police and soldiers managed to capture most of the officers from the crucial companies of Kilbrittain, Mountpleasant and Newcestown. Liam Deasy, now the West Cork Brigade Adjutant, called it 'the black month'; 'The arrest and imprisonment of so many of the most militant officers and men was a serious blow, and caused major difficulties in our plans.'[157] An t-

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[155] Record of the Rebellion in Ireland in 1920-21, and the Part Played by the Army in Dealing With it, Vol.1 [Operations], pp 5-7; 6th Division History, pp 26-7.

[156] Complete lists of deported prisoners can be found in the Art O'Brien Papers (N.L.I., Mss.8443-4).

[157] Deasy, p.99. For similar comments about the South Tipperary Brigade, see the captured letter from Sean Treacy to Michael Collins, Mar. 1920 as printed in the Irish Times, 19 May 1921 (under the false impression that it was written in 1921 - see Irish Times, 9 June 1921).

Oglach, the I.R.A.'s in-house journal, concurred: 'it is only fair to remember that many districts have been hit hard through capture of their best officers.'[158]

Even before the army's plan was put into effect, however, it was blunted by Dublin Castle's insistence on following cumbersome legal procedures. Deportation warrants, the key to the whole scheme, were often refused for lack of evidence.[159] In the meantime, the slowly accumulating 'dangerous persons' were being held for long periods without charge or trial and those who were deported once again found themselves without political status. These conditions prompted yet another amnesty campaign and another round of hard-fought prison protests ending in a mass hunger strike among prisoners in England and Ireland.

The result was a complete republican victory. The government backed down in April and released not just the untried prisoners in Cork and Dublin but all the hunger strikers, including those convicted and deported - up to a hundred men from Cork alone. Even those opportunists who only joined the strike after the first releases were set free.[160]

The strike had gripped the attention of nationalist Ireland (in Timoleague 'the newsagent's shop was congested from an early hour, and scores of country peasants trudged into the village eager for one word of information concerning the prisoners'[161]) so the releases were an enormous coup for

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[158] An t-Oglach, 1 May 1920.

[159] Record of the Rebellion, i, pp 7-8; William Wylie memoirs, pp 48-49 (P.R.O.L., 30/89/2).

[160] Examiner, 15, 16, 28, 29 April; 5, 8 May 1920. The hunger strikes and amnesty campaign revealed the complete inadequacy of Dublin Castle and the Lord Lieutenant, Lord French. French's own rather surreal explanations are laid out in two letters to Andrew Bonar Law dated April 16 and May 18 1920 (I.W.M., Sir John French Papers, 75/46/12). In the latter he expressed his belief that the parolees would keep their word. William Wylie thought French 'a dear old man...but I often wondered how the first British Expeditionary Force ever got back from Mons' (Wylie memoir, p.49).

[161] Examiner, 19 April 1920.

the republican movement and a disaster for police morale. 'RIC in bad way' noted General Strickland, the commander of the 6th Division, in his diary.[162]

For the Constabulary it was the end of another futile cycle of apparent progress followed once again by an executive reversal undoing all their efforts, just as in 1917 and 1919. After three months of dangerous activity they were even further behind and facing the same opponents they had arrested only a short time before. An enormous amount of careful intelligence work was set at naught. And, to complete the evisceration of the counter-insurgency policy, most of the army's new powers were withdrawn again in early May to promote a new policy of conciliation.

Those police officers responsible for arrests and intelligence gathering had to be transferred for their own safety.[163] Many others applied or threatened to resign.[164] In north Tipperary they were being 'treated as social outcasts'.[165] In west Galway 'their condition of life in barracks with light and air shut out by sand bags, shell boxes and steel shutters is very irksome and disagreeable'[166]; The police 'have to take the necessities of life by force. Their wives are miserable and their children suffer in the schools and nobody cares.'[167] The County Inspector for West Cork reported in July that his men had reached the breaking point.

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[162] Strickland Diary,6 May 1920 (Strickland Papers). See also 6th Division History, p.29 and Record of the Rebellion in Ireland, i, p.11.

[163] 6th Division History, p.29.

[164] See Cpt. John Regan to John Kerr, 18 July 1961 (P.R.O.N.I., D2022/1/35). Regan was a County Inspector in Limerick. For police resignations (many of which were withdrawn) see the R.I.C. Weekly Summaries for 1920-21 (CO/904/148-150) and Fitzpatrick, p.37.

[165] C.I. Monthly Report, North Tipperary, June 1920 (Co/904/112).

[166] C.I. Monthly Report, West Galway, June 1920 (CO/904/112).

[167] C.I. Monthly Reports, West Galway, June, August 1920.

'They may be considered to have ceased to function...the men consider that they are merely pawns in a political game.'[168]

The horror and humiliation of their situation, and the rage it produced, is captured in two reports from small garrisons in Tipperary. On April 9 a three man cycle patrol was ambushed near Newport.[169] The wounded survivor had been refused water at a neighbouring house. When reinforcements arrived, suspect young men were dragged from their homes and the nearby creamery, beaten and 'made to kneel down in the blood of our murdered comrades and kiss the road and say "The Lord have mercy on the souls of the men we murdered this morning."'

Five days before, on April 4, an agitated Sergeant Anthony Foody, stationed in Monroe, discovered upon entering the local chapel that:[170]

> the pew and form which the late Colonel Trant gave to the Sergeant and men at Dovea some six years ago had been removed. We were forced to kneel on the floor to-day; occasionally I could see persons looking in our direction and laughing...My wife and children had gone to Divine Service before us. At the Church gate four men...followed them from the gate and got between them and the Church door; [William] Small said 'Let them clear off to hell they wont get into our Chapel.' [William] Lowry said 'We wont have their breath amongst us.'

While some policemen contemplated resignation, others were thinking of revenge:[171]

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[168] C.I. Monthly Report, West Cork, July 1920 (CO/904/112).

[169] D.I. Report, Newport, 9 April 1920 (CO/904/148):

> we found the late Constable Finn lying on his back on the centre of the road quite dead - both eyes blown away and the lower part of his forehead - brain matter scattered on the road and a large pool of blood. About five yards in advance, on the left hand side of the road, we found the late Constable McCarthy in a sitting posture against the wall of the road and a bullet wound in his neck.

[170] The sergeant's report of 4 April 1920 is in CO/904/148.

[171] C.I. Report, West Cork, June 1920 (CO/904/112).

There is a feeling among the [Cork] police which is becoming prevalent in places where murders of police have been committed that the only way to stop these murders is by way of reprisals or retaliation...It is becoming difficult to restrain men's passions aroused at the sight of their murdered comrades and when they have the means of executing vengeance it is likely that they will use them when driven to desperation.

The assassination of Tomas MacCurtain, the Lord Mayor of Cork and O/C of the 1st Cork Brigade, set the pattern for much of what would follow. This sequence of events began with an ineffectual attack on Professor W.P. Stockley, a Sinn Fein Alderman (itself probably a reprisal) on the night of March 18th. The next night a policeman, Constable Murtagh, was gunned down on Pope's Quay. He was unarmed and on leave; like Sergeant O'Donoghue, he was a veteran non-political officer.[172]

Several hours later armed men with blackened faces burst into MacCurtain's home and shot him in his bedroom. District Inspector Swanzy, who had dogged MacCurtain's footsteps for years and whose district MacCurtain lived in, was blamed.[173] He, like many other marked men at the time, was transferred out of the county. Several months later Swanzy was tracked down to Lisburn, Count Antrim, and shot in the back by Cork gunmen as he came out of church (thereby sparking off sectarian riots in which at least one person was killed and scores burned out of their homes).[174]

It is certain that MacCurtain did not approve of Murtagh's death - he had been trying to curb his wild men for months and he had publically commiserated with Constable

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[172] Examiner, 20 Mar. 1920.

[173] The events of the shooting and the subsequent inquest are described in O'Donoghue, Tomas MacCurtain, pp 166-193 and in the Wylie memoirs, pp 43-6. It is clear that both the jury and evidence were manipulated by the I.R.A.. Florence O'Donoghue's own retrospective doubts about Swanzy's guilt are given in an interview with Ernie O'Malley (O'Malley Papers, P17b/96). But see also his letter to the Sunday Press, 2 Oct. 1955.

[174] Sean Culhane (O'Malley Papers, P17b/108).

Murtagh's family - and it is very unlikely that Murtagh had anything to do with the attack on Stockley.[175] The case against Swanzy was accepted by the Coroner's jury but was, at best, unproven. Murtagh died because he was a policeman and an easy target. MacCurtain and Swanzy died because they were prominent and nominally in control. All of the victims were helpless and unarmed when shot.

This tit-for-tat cycle of violence would be repeated many times over, with many variations but the same basic themes: the overriding motive of revenge; the ability of the anonymous gunmen to do what they liked; the frequently random or mistaken choice of victims and their almost invariable helplessness.

Such murderous exchanges were still relatively rare in the spring of 1920; the next incident of this type in Cork did not occur until June when a Bantry Volunteer was shot in his bed after an ambush.[176] Less rare, however, were reprisals against property. Spontaneous outbreaks of rioting and vandalism by policemen or soldiers gradually gave way to a more deliberate and habitual use of arson. An I.R.A. family's barn and dairy was burnt down in Ballinadee in May and another barn was destroyed outside Fermoy in June, as were several shops in Bantry. July and August saw burnings all over west Cork, while September brought the beginning of a veritable arson campaign in Cork city - which peaked in December with the destruction of Patrick Street.

Reprisals mushroomed as the guerrilla war escalated through the summer of 1920. Crown force casualties rose dramatically from 17 between April and June to 52 between July and September. I.R.A. losses went from 3 to 17 over the same period. The main focus of I.R.A. operations was also shifting from police barracks (now less numerous and better defended)

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[175] On MacCurtain, see O'Donoghue, Tomas MacCurtain, p.171 and chapter 11 below.

[176] Examiner, 26 June 1920. As in the case of Charlie O'Brien, the gunmen were looking for the victim's older brother.

to the roads, where R.I.C. patrols and military lorries became the most frequent targets. This was accompanied by an ongoing arson campaign against courthouses, customs and excise offices, coastguard stations and evacuated barracks.

With escalation came a vast increase in casual violence. The endless round of searches, patrols and arrests went hand in hand with intimidation, beatings and petty theft. Any young Irishman unlucky enough to be suspected of rebel sympathies (as most of them were) could expect rough treatment. A typical case was that of Peter Henchion of Coachford:[177]

> The Sergeant in charge repeatedly struck me and knocked out a front tooth. He also kicked me about the legs, which are marked still. He struck me several times with the butt end of his rifle on the back and shoulders. He also gave me several thrusts with the point of his rifle. He repeatedly struck me with his closed fist on [my] head...I was unable to get any sleep for more than a week as I was not able to lie on my back.

Incidents like this one became an everyday occurrence in the autumn of 1920.

Republican fears and violence followed the same trajectory. Getting caught could easily mean torture or worse. Going on the run meant putting one's family at risk. For many of the I.R.A. veterans I talked to, their worst memories were of their families' suffering. Homes were wrecked, fathers and brothers were beaten up, arrested or shot. One 87 year old man grew enraged all over again as he recounted how his father had been used by Auxiliaries as a hostage.[178] Frank Busteed's mother died after being thrown

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[177] Peter Henchion statement (U.C.D., Desmond Fitzgerald Papers, P80/135). The Fitzgerald Papers contain hundreds of similar internees' statements. See also the testimony from Cork in Evidence on Conditions in Ireland Presented Before the American Commission on Conditions in Ireland (Washington, 1921), pp 740-757.

[178] Interview with E.Y..

down a flight of stairs by a military search party.[179] Events such as these, evoking both anger and fear, bred an urgent desire for revenge.

In this environment information was now a matter of life or death. Informers and collaborators had to be deterred or punished. Opposition or even neutrality could no longer be tolerated. Only people 'in the movement' could be trusted; 'Those who were not for us at the time were against us.'[180]

One large class of instant enemies were those who refused to pay I.R.A. levies. One of a number of similar victims in the Skibbereen area was Con O'Driscoll, punished for resisting the Republic in December 1920:[181]

> A party of eight or nine men said that they wanted the anti-Sinn Feiner...All the raiders were masked, some having bandages over their faces. There were arms in every man's hand and at least one of them had a gun. [O'Driscoll] was sitting by the fireside and the raiders caught him and dragged him out, and said that he was their prisoner. They took him...to a labourer's cottage, where they put a revolver to his face and said that he was keeping all his neighbours from subscribing to the Arms Fund. The men then tied his hands behind his back, blindfolded him, and proceeded to cut off his whiskers with a sort of clipping machine, used by barbers, and then tortured him by using an old razor. While cutting off his beard they put a revolver muzzle into his ear...

Men on both sides turned to armed robbery, on a large (but largely hidden) scale. I.R.A. and Crown forces raiders often used their operations to steal; postmen and post offices, for example, often had money orders or stamps stolen along with the mail.[182] It is impossible to know just how many robberies took place or who was responsible but, if we

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[179] O'Callaghan, Execution, pp 181-2.

[180] Report by Vice O/C 2 Bn., 3rd Cork Bde., n.d.[1922] (M.A., A/0659).

[181] Eagle, 29 Jan. 1921. O'Driscoll also had his windows broken and his horse stolen.

[182] For police robberies, see Crozier, 110, 120. For the court-martial of two Auxiliaries in Dunmanway for a bank robbery, see Irish Times, 8 Feb. 1921.

count those armed robberies of shops, banks and post offices (where money was taken) mentioned in newspapers or police reports, we can get some idea of the shape of the revolutionary crime wave:

Table 6: Armed Robberies of Businesses in Cork, 1917-21

1917	1918	1919	1920	1921
-	2	7	47	41

These figures represent only the tip of the iceberg (raids on private homes and highway robbery were far more frequent) but they do indicate the speed with which a crime which was practically nonexistent in Cork before 1918 became commonplace in the last half of 1920.

The reprisal movement within the R.I.C., and much of the casual violence that went with it, was largely a creation of non-Irish recruits: the Black and Tans. British ex-soldiers began arriving at the Constabulary depot in Gormanstown in January 1920, and this trickle became a flood in the summer. In September they were joined by the ex-officers of the Auxiliary Division. As West Cork's police chief noted, 'the character of the force is changing a good deal on this account.'[183]

The new recruits shared none of the R.I.C.'s traditional sense of discipline, restraint or Irishness. They had little in common with the old force and kept apart by mutual consent: 'We didn't really know them. We just didn't approve of their methods...they were never popular with the regular force'; 'We didn't like them, we would have no place for them, we didn't like them coming along and mixing with us'; 'The Black and Tans were all English and Scotch people see, and they were...very rough, f-ing and blinding and boozing and all'; 'They were on their own, hurt one and you hurt them all.'[184]

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[183] C.I. Monthly Report, West Cork, Sept. 1920 (CO/904/113).

[184] Interviews with R.I.C. veterans quoted in Brewer, The Royal Irish Constabulary, pp 112, 113, 116, 111.

Their training was perfunctory and did nothing to alter their view that they were soldiers in enemy territory rather than policemen in their own country.[185] Their brutality was a direct consequence of their alienation and wartime experience, and their arrival frequently acted as a catalyst for violence ('from the minute that the Black and Tans came on the scene, all the shutters went up on the windows and things like that.'[186]).

Alienation also created a fierce solidarity and protectiveness among these otherwise friendless men:[187]

> There was a comradeship there that you wouldn't get anywhere else...We were all ex-servicemen except three or four old R.I.C. men...It was the same ribaldry and the same give and take as in the trenches...You had no real contact with the community at all...We were all young men, you see, and I suppose in a sense it was quite natural when somebody starts ambushing you, the rest reply.

The Tans' ethnic hostility was shared by the English soldiery, who usually began to lump all Irishmen together as dirty and treacherous soon after their arrival. British anger occasionally expressed itself in sectarian terms - anti-Catholic songs were heard sung during reprisals, threatening notices and letters from the so-called 'Anti-Sinn Fein Societies' often used Orange imagery, priests were sometimes singled out for revenge and rioting soldiers sometimes

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[185] See Douglas V. Duff, Sword For Hire (London, 1934), pp 57-60, 73.

[186] Brewer, p.103. The role of these men in the escalation of violence is underlined by the character of the earlier British counter-offensive in February-April. Although the R.I.C. and the army were raiding constantly, there were comparatively few complaints about looting, reprisals or brutality. These became numerous only after the Black and Tans arrived en masse.

[187] Brewer, pp 107-110.

declared themselves out to get 'the Catholics'.[188]

The same process took place among Irish republicans. The old image of the 'peelers' - distrusted or despised perhaps, but familiar - was replaced by images of an occupying army. The label 'Black and Tans' connoted lawless foreign invaders: 'terrorists' with drunken and criminal habits.

Ethnic polarisation also extended to Cork's large Protestant community, who increasingly came to be seen by the I.R.A. as 'the enemy within' as the war escalated. As 1920 progressed Protestants became prime targets for robbery, extortion, dispossession and murder.[189]

There was a much lower threshold of violence along these growing ethnic divides. One reinforced the other to form a single destructive dynamic. The British, soldiers and ex-soldiers alike, arrived with the standard mental baggage of Irish stereotypes but these were rapidly inflamed by the constant fear and isolation of barracks life. For the Black and Tans and Auxiliaries, their nationality and background separated them as much from the old R.I.C. as from the general population. Like their Irish comrades, however, they felt betrayed by government indecision and indifference and, with only each other to support them, reacted savagely to any attack on themselves or their comrades. And, since almost any Irishman was automatically deemed a 'Shinner' and an enemy (just as native Protestants were by the I.R.A.), casual violence became routine. Alienation generated violence and vice-versa.

Further shifts in British policy came in 1920 but these merely fuelled the accelerating cycle of terror and counter-terror. As in 1918 military detachments were sent to some troubled districts in May but to little effect. They were hamstrung by a lack of both men and legal authority and were

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[188] Crozier, Ireland For Ever, pp 114-5; Irish Times, 1 Dec. 1920; Examiner, 25 Sept. 1921. This does not seem to have been a major factor in Crown Forces violence, however.

[189] see chapters 10 and 11.

easy targets for local I.R.A. units, now armed with captured rifles and carbines.

In Ballyvourney, the Hampshire Regiment's bicycle patrols and lorries were successfully ambushed three times within a month, losing nine men killed and wounded, four vehicles and over a dozen rifles. They could do little in return except mount counter-ambushes using a fake lorry. This managed to kill an I.R.A. officer but took an innocent man's life as well.

By the time of this last incident in September, the problem of legal authority had been addressed by the Restoration of Order in Ireland Act, which placed a large number of crimes under the jurisdiction of military courts. These produced convictions with dispatch, up to sixty a week in Ireland as a whole.[190] These were secured on the evidence of arms and documents found in searches and under this new legal regime Crown forces resumed their policy of aggressive raiding. In the week between 'Bloody Sunday' and the Kilmichael ambush, for example, there were over 450 police and military raids in Cork (and over 50 arrests) in five days.[191] Considering the traumatic effect these had on households, whether republican or not, this massive assault on the privacy and property of Irish communities had an immense and inflammatory impact.

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[190] Record of the Rebellion, i, p.22.

[191] Irish Bulletin, 27 Nov. 1920:
Monday (Nov.22): Over 70 raids on houses in the city.
Tuesday: Over 30 raids in Ballincollig, 25 in Leap, 7 in Youghal, 17 in Cobh, 3 in Bantry and 4 garages in the city.
Wednesday: 40 raids in Cobh, 5 in Clonmult, 3 in Fermoy.
Thursday: Over 70 raids in Mallow, 25 in Mitchelstown, 13 in Courtmacsherry, 11 in Youghal, 7 in Timoleague, 5 in Schull, 3 in Kinsale, 3 in Ardfield, 2 in Clonakilty, 1 in Rosscarbery and raids on the Macroom workhouse and the Urban Council offices and homes of municipal officials in Youghal and Fermoy.
Friday: Over 100 raids in Mitchelstown, Castletownbere, Buttevant and Youghal.

For arrests in the same time period, see the Examiner, 23-30 Nov. 1920.

Without more evidence, however, even courts martial could not convict murder suspects.[192] The effectiveness of these new procedures did force many guerrillas to go on the run but the pressure simply generated more I.R.A. activity as the fugitives perforce became full-time fighters. These men naturally gravitated together and were soon fighting together: inadvertently, the British army had created the flying column. By January 1921 each brigade had at least one operating in its area.[193]

The government's tinkering with the police and legal system was designed in large part to avoid a declaration of martial law. As we have seen, the Kilmichael ambush removed the last of these objections and martial law was introduced in Cork and three adjoining counties on December 11.

Neither the Restoration of Order Act nor martial law succeeded in curbing the I.R.A. or violence in general. More Volunteers were arrested, shot or executed after these measures were implemented (I.R.A. losses peaked at 82 between January and March) but police and military casualties kept on rising: from 52 between July and September 1920 to 136 between April and June 1921. The complete casualty toll of the guerrilla war is shown in Table 7.

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[192] Up to August 1920 there still had not been a single conviction in Cork or anywhere else. Townshend, p.106.

[193] For the development of flying columns, see the pamphlet issued by G.H.Q. Ireland in June 1921, 'The Irish Republican Army' (Strickland Papers); Record of the Rebellion, vol.1, p.4; Charles Townshend, 'The Irish Republican Army and the Development of Guerrilla Warfare, 1916-1921' in English Historical Review, April 1979, p.330 and Fitzpatrick, Politics and Irish Life, pp 217-19. For details of their origins and operations in Cork, see chapters 5 and 12.

Table 7: Victims of the Revolution in Cork, 1920-21[194]

R.I.C.		Army		I.R.A.		Civilians By I.R.A.		Crown Forces		Unknown		Total	
K	W	K	W	K	W	K	W	K	W	K	W	K	W
105	131	85	136	122	50	111	35	53	63	31	69	507	484

As can be seen in Figure 2 the seven months after the introduction of martial law were the worst of all.

The combination of higher casualties, martial law and flying columns suggests an increasingly militarised conflict, a war of movement between patrols and guerrillas. This is indeed how the struggle has generally been portrayed by the participants - as a succession of ambushes and round-ups - but the figures below tell a different story. Table 8 divides casualties in 1920-21 according to whether or not they occurred in combat: i.e. were the victims part of an armed and active group or unit when attacked or were they alone and unable to fight back? The resulting statistics show that in 1921 only one third of 566 casualties - less than half of police and military casualties, and only 35% of I.R.A. shootings - occurred in combat. Crown force shootings followed the same pattern. After June 1920 more than half of all casualties (and 45% of all victims in 1920-21) were civilians. Clearly, in these terms the violence was becoming less rather than more 'military'.

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[194] These figures do not include the three Corkmen who died on hunger strike in this period. They do include the R.I.C. victims of two ambushes carried out by Cork I.R.A. men in 1921 just across the border in Kerry.

Table 8: Percentage of Casualties Due to Combat, 1920-21[195]

	I.R.A. Victims		Crown Forces Victims		
	Crown Forces	All	I.R.A.	All	All
Victims					
1920 Jan.-June	76	54	29	25	48
July-Dec.	74	67	30	15	56
1921 Jan.-July	49	36	49	30	34

These statistics are underlined by another, equally significant. Only 10% of all Crown forces casualties in 1920-21, and 19% of the I.R.A.'s, occurred in engagements where the other side also suffered losses. In this whole period there were only nine such encounters (including Kilmichael). In other words, even when combat took place the attacker almost always had an overwhelming advantage. Guerrilla war favoured the hunters, who more and more preyed on the most vulnerable.

The image of 'hunters' calls to mind the legendary Cork flying columns and their famous ambushes and escapes: Upton, Clonbannin, Rosscarbery, Crossbarry, Coolavokig and, of course, Kilmichael. These battles were certainly closer to conventional skirmishes than the night attacks on barracks and bicyclists of 1919 and early 1920 but were they typical of I.R.A. operations? Table 9 shows I.R.A. operations in a different and unflattering light. The brigade flying columns (or 'active service units') did pack a heavier punch, judging by the increase in casualties per attack after September 1920. However, while successful I.R.A. attacks grew more violent in the autumn and winter of 1920-21, they did not grow more frequent. In any case the increase was a modest one - most operations remained small in scale - and did not last long. As the brigade columns were broken up or fell apart in the spring of 1921 (to be replaced by battalion-level units),

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[195] These figures do not include the 12 I.R.A. men who were officially executed or those who died because of hunger strikes or accident. Where circumstances are doubtful I have considered casualties to have occurred in combat. In cases where an ambush led to a massacre, as at Kilmichael or Clonmult, all victims are included under 'combat'. Consequently, Table 8 represents a conservative estimate of the numbers killed other than in combat.

operational effectiveness declined to its previous level.

Flying columns also made easier targets and exposed the I.R.A. to counter-ambushes. Major T.A. Lowe of the Essex Regiment wrote that 'it was these...which gave back the initiative to the Crown Forces.'[196] British casualties may have risen after September 1920 but I.R.A. losses in combat rose even faster, from seven between October and December to 44 between January and March. Consequently, Volunteers were the only category of victim more likely to be shot in combat in 1921 (see Table 8). Recognition of these risks was one of the principal reasons why the big columns were disbanded that spring.

Table 9: I.R.A. Combat Performance, 1920-21[197]

		Number of Successful Attacks	Crown Forces Casualties Per Attack
1920	Jan.-March	12	0.8
	April-June	9	1.4
	July-Sept.	18	2.2
	Oct.-Dec.	21	4.2
1921	Jan.-March	20	4.4
	April-June	19	2.4

The reality behind the myths of battle was that I.R.A. units spent most of their time avoiding the enemy or waiting, often fruitlessly, for an opportune target. Most planned ambushes never made contact with the enemy and most 'operations' had little to do with combat. Major Lowe again: 'As a rule, they were careful to avoid anything in the shape of a battle...but they continued their vendetta with the police, the coastguards, and with isolated loyalists with unabated violence.'[198]

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[196] Brevet Major T.A. Lowe, 'Some Reflections of a Junior Commander Upon "The Campaign" in Ireland 1920 and 1921' in The Army Quarterly, Oct. 1922, p.53.

[197] By 'successful' I mean attacks which inflicted at least one enemy casualty or led to the seizure of arms.

[198] Lowe, p.56.

The following weekly report from the Castletownroche Battalion provides a good description of life 'on the column' in the winter of 1921:[199]

The Battalion A[ctive] S[ervice] S[ection] moved into g. Company area on 15-1-21 to watch a police patrol from Doneraile. We got into a place on Monday [but] they only went out a short distance from the town that day on a road it would be impossible to attack them in. We were out again on Tuesday morning at dark. The police did not go out at all that day. We were out again on Wednesday at dark and got into position on a road we had good reason to suspect they would patrol, but they went out on a different road that day. The road they patrolled was too far from our position for us to get there and intercept them. On Wednesday night we took up positions to defend the men falling the bridge leading from Ballyvonaire [army] Camp. We were prepared that night to attack any troops or patrols that would be going to Doneraile, but nothing turned up. We watched the police patrol again on Thursday in the same position as the previous days, but they again went out on a different road...They went out again but they were very much on the alert...We had the same bad luck Saturday...we could not stay any longer with the Company as too many people noticed us. We hope to chance it again in the near future. It was our bad luck on the men as they had to stay in a position from Dark to dark. One family refused to take in our men, the door was locked on them when they called one evening very late. We only spent a couple of nights there. They also tried to keep other people from taking our men in. What should be done with these people?

The column's local foes, Captain Pinkey and two platoons of the Buffs Regiment, faced many of the same problems and frustrations.[200] When they first arrived in Castletownroche in September 1920 they could only search suspect homes and set up road blocks in the hope of catching I.R.A. men red-handed. These efforts proved fruitless. Intelligence was nearly non-existent, composed of outdated R.I.C. tips and vague anonymous letters. The I.R.A. had stripped the countryside of guns and hid them well. Incessant raids on prominent I.R.A. families, notably the Shinnicks and O'Sullivans, turned up nothing

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[199] A copy, dated 22 Jan. 1921, can be found in the C.I. Monthly Report, East Cork (Mallow), Jan. 1921 (CO/904/114).

[200] For the strength of the detachment, see Compositions and Dispositions of the 6th Division, 29 Oct. 1921 (M.A., A/0627).

except, rather embarrasingly, their own stolen correspondence.[201]

Pinkey's men made no recorded arrests until the 'Bloody Sunday' shootings in Dublin on November 21. The next day they were ordered to arrest all I.R.A. officers on sight. With surprise on their side for once they were able to capture a third of their suspects. The rest went on the run - and on the column.[202]

After this sudden shift in gears, and especially after the introduction of martial law, the flow of information improved. The detachment's log for 1921 is peppered with notations of rumours and 'information received'. As with their opposite numbers in the Active Service Section, however, most of this came to nothing. Almost invariably the raiding party would arrive at the suspect pub, house or ambush site to discover that the 'boys' (if they were ever there in the first place) were gone. The detachment's one encounter with the enemy came by chance on April 21; two guerrillas were caught wrecking a bridge and two more were wounded in a subsequent raid on an I.R.A. safe house.[203]

Apart from this, Pinkey's men experienced the war as an unceasing series of patrols, searches and ambushes which yielded only scattered arrests. Their elusive enemies made their presence felt through occasional long-distance sniping attacks and by stealing bicycles, attacking loyalists, blocking roads, blowing up bridges and railway tracks and chopping down telegraph poles.[204]

No reinforcement or relief was possible due to the constant demands of empire. The battalion, headquartered in

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[201] See Castletownroche Detachment Log, 9 Sept.- 17 Nov. 1920 (Buffs Regimental Museum, Canterbury).

[202] Castletownroche Detach. Log, 22-23 Nov. 1920.

[203] Castletownroche Detach. Log, 21 April 1921; Examiner, 22, 23 April 1921.

[204] See Castletownroche Detach. Log, 25 Dec. 1920; 10 Feb.; 1, 15 Mar.; 9, 10, 22, 30 April; 12, 13, 27 May; 22 June 1921.

Fermoy, lost 154 men to Mesopotamia in January and 52 more in February, receiving only 63 new recruits in return. 185 more men were discharged on March 31 as their two years service was up. The result was that battalion manpower fell from 947 in June 1920 to 816 in February and 681 in March. 'The depreciation in numbers was greatly felt.'[205] Just as important, they lost half of their experienced officers and men and had constantly to retrain men in Irish conditions. Even Captain Pinkey had to be transferred to other duties between December and April, leaving the detachment in the hands of a single Lieutenant.[206] In a war which depended on the leadership of junior officers, this was a serious loss.

When an English reporter visited nearby Buttevant he found a garrison that was physically and mentally in a state of siege.[207]

We careened at 35 miles an hour through the country, wide stretches of gorse and heather falling rapidly behind, and a white ribbon of road diminishing in front. Every two or three miles the officer pointed to patches of loose road-material where a trench had been filled in or where no long while before an ambush had taken place. When we came to corners he grasped his revolver more tightly and every now and then looked back to see whether the lorry and its armed load were keeping its distance. Once or twice we met parties of civilians, and when this happened the rifles were raised to the 'ready'.

Later he spoke to a staff officer:

People in England...don't seem to realize what things are like out here - or else they don't care...You've seen yourself the conditions we get about under. We can't go outside barracks without the risk of being shot in the back...Only the other day an officer went over to a place five miles away on a motor-bike, and has never been heard of since.

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[205] 1st Bn., the Buffs, Historical Records from Discontinuance of the War Diaries to 31 March 1922 (Buffs Museum). See also Townshend, p.217.

[206] Castletownroche Detach. Log, 7 Dec. 1920; 28 April 1921.

[207] 'Life in Mallow: An English Officer's Impressions', Times, 19 May 1921.

We can see the same themes emerging on each side: the elusive enemy, poor information, and incessant, fruitless activity. Also a sense of isolation, shared by Irish guerrillas and English infantrymen alike. The 'boys' were resented as squatters and did not trust the locals not to betray them. Life on the column was one of constant movement and nagging discomfort. Their official reports were filled with requests for fresh clothing ('be sure you make no mistake about the socks') as well as rifles.[208] To the men of the Buffs the Irish landscape was suffused with danger, with every turn in the road a potential ambush site and every countryman a suspected rebel.

These conditions bred fear, hatred and a compelling need to strike back.[209] Guerrilla war in Cork in 1921 was not primarily an affair of ambushes and round-ups. It was terror and counter-terror, murder after murder, death squad against death squad, fed by both sides' desire for revenge. Each new atrocity demanded a reply and so set off another round of reprisals. 'We suggest that for each prisoner shot in future we shoot one local loyalist'[210]; 'if you didn't kill someone, someone was going to kill you'[211]; 'I ordered them shot as a preventative against their shooting any more unarmed prisoners'[212]; 'it was a case of who got the first shot in.'[213]

This pattern was repeated all over the county. In 1920

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[208] Adj., 3 Bn. A.S.S., 2nd Cork Bde., 22 Jan. 1921 in C.I. Monthly Report, East Cork, Jan. 1921.

[209] As illustrated by the quotations at the beginning of the chapter.

[210] O/C 1st Southern Div. to C/S, 4 May 1921 (Mulcahy Papers, P7/A/19).

[211] Brewer, p.103.

[212] Column Report No.4, 3rd Cork Bde., 22 Feb. 1921 (Mulcahy Papers, P7/A/38).

[213] Brewer, p.105.

the Macroom and Ballyvourney battalions, as discussed above and in the previous chapter, mounted a series of successful ambushes against military and police patrols while losing only one man in combat and another to an army trap. They also assassinated one policeman, wounded another and shot an army recruit.

The arrival of Auxiliary Company 'C' in Macroom changed the course of the war there. Only once did the west Muskerry Volunteers take on the Auxiliaries in battle (as part of the 1st Cork Brigade Flying Column), at Coolavokig on February 3. Three Cadets died and five were wounded. In other operations between September 1920 and July 1921, three Cadets were wounded by a bomb while playing billiards and two ambulance drivers were shot and their vehicle (containing patients) burned. Seven soldiers and policemen, and two suspected informers, were executed in the same period, seven of whom 'disappeared' into unknown bogs. The Crown forces in Macroom responded by shooting four Volunteers and three civilians who either 'failed to halt' or 'attempted to escape'. One other killing took place whose perpetrators and motives remain unknown.

Midleton, at the other end of the county, experienced one of the most punishing exchanges of reprisals in Cork in 1921. 1920 was a year of triumph for the 4th Battalion of the 1st Cork Brigade (covering Midleton, Cobh and Youghal) due to the bold leadership of Diarmuid Hurley. A string of victories - including three captured R.I.C. barracks - peaked in December with the local column's daring breakout from a surrounded house in Cloyne, followed by a successful ambush in the town of Midleton itself.[214]

The spree came to an end on February 20, 1921, when Intelligence Officers of the Hampshire Regiment tracked the column to an abandoned farmhouse near the village of Clonmult. Like the Macroom Auxiliaries, the men of the 4th Battalion had

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[214] See Seamus Fitzgerald, 'East Cork Activities - 1920' in Capuchin Annual 1970 and Padraig O Ciosain, 'Operations in East Cork' in Rebel Cork's Fighting Story.

become over-confident and had fallen into a traceable routine.

What ensued can be described as Kilmichael in reverse. The column was attacked and besieged by a combined force of soldiers and police, and both sides suffered losses in the ensuing firefight. According to the official British communique, several guerrillas came running out with their hands up but others continued to fire. A number of Black and Tans were shot as they went to accept this 'false surrender'.[215] Twelve Volunteers were dead and four wounded (out of twenty) before army officers got the enraged policemen under control. The Irish survivors testified that there was no treachery. They surrendered in good faith and were gunned down as they emerged or else stood against a wall and executed.[216]

After Clonmult every suspected informer and every man in uniform (including coastguards and Marines) became a legitimate target to be 'shot on sight' in the I.R.A.'s quest for vengeance.[217] 'Things went to hell then in the battalion...they had terrorised the people.'[218] Where no one had previously been shot as a spy, six were killed in rapid succession in Midleton and neighbouring villages. Several of these were accused of leading the enemy to Clonmult. Worst hit was the village of Carrigtwohill, described by Mick Leahy, the Vice O/C of the Brigade, as 'a bloody pile of spies.' Leahy described one such 'job':

I sent Dathai O'Brien to pick up [Michael] O'Keefe there for we had the goods on him. I told him to go down and get this man. O'Brien arrived back in an old Ford car...'He's in Patsy

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[215] Irish Times, 17 May 1921.

[216] For different accounts of the battle, see the I.R.A. report in the Mulcahy Papers (P7/A13); O Ciosain, pp 190-5; the Report of the Military Court of Inquiry (WO/35/155A); '2nd Battalion Notes' in The Hampshire Regimental Journal, Mar. 1921, p.37 and 'The War in Ireland' in the same journal, May 1921, pp 80-82.

[217] C.I. Monthly Report, East Cork, May 1921 (CO/904/115); O Ciosain, p.197.

[218] Mick Leahy (O'Malley Papers, P17b/108).

Connors' he said. 'But I told you to bring him back here.' 'I know that' O'Brien said, 'He's on the sidewalk outside and we couldn't bring him back because he's dead. We went down to his house and when we were passing up the street at Patsy Connors I turned round and let him have it for he jumped out of the car.' 'You had no authority', I said, 'to shoot him.' It was casual enough this shooting of O'Keefe but they didn't worry about it.

After three retaliatory massacres of unarmed policemen and Marines in early May it was once again the army's turn for revenge. Once again Carrigtwohill was the scene for kidnappings and drive-by shootings, this time carried out by British soldiers, who used the same excuse as Dathai O'Brien, that their victims had tried to escape. Similar reprisals took place in Ballycotton in July after a lorry ran over a mine.

Nowhere did these underground vendettas follow a more tangled course then in Cork city - 'the city of spies'[219] - where 'active squads' hunted their victims through a labyrinth of suspicion and betrayal. In some cases the motives for a shooting are so indecipherable that it is impossible to say who was responsible. Here the war proceeded murder by murder, disappearance by disappearance, with almost every night producing another body. In the months following the shootings of Sgt. O'Donoghue and Charlie O'Brien, the city I.R.A. carried out 8 'successful attacks' on patrols or barracks and 131 shootings of helpless victims. Both sides had their black lists: 'Mick [Murphy] would blow smoke out of his mouth and say "Just you shoot them... and you shoot them also", and as the names went on he'd let out a puff of smoke .'[220]

Any departure from this steady pace was usually reciprocal. After an Auxiliary section was ambushed at Dillon's Cross on December 11, their comrades burned Patrick Street and City Hall, murdered two I.R.A. men in their beds and shot five other people. On February 28, the day that six

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[219] 'Life in Cork: An English Officer's Impressions' in Times, 18 May 1921.

[220] Con Neenan (O'Malley Papers, P17b/112).

Volunteers were executed in the city barracks, twelve unarmed soldiers were shot in the streets by I.R.A. squads. British intelligence blamed most of the shootings on what they called 'the Blarney Street murder gang'.[221] When six of these men were tracked to a barn in Clogheen they were wiped out in a hail of bullets, reportedly trying to escape.[222] Tit for tat.

The city's atmosphere of fear and menacing uncertainty was caught by a visitor in April 1921:[223]

> To be a stray Englishman...was to be almost invariably mistaken for a Government agent...plain clothes visitors to the barracks are objects of peculiar interest to the various groups of young men who lounge at street-corners in that vicinity...
>
> There was a calm spring evening when I made my way out to Blackrock...Near to the city, at an open ground where children play, high commotion prevailed. Mothers, fathers, children and strangers were all jabbering together in a crowd, pointing in the direction of the town. Somebody's child, it appeared, had been kidnapped by a mysterious individual in a motor-car.

Which side was the mysterious individual on, if any? What was his motive? The area was a favourite hunting ground for the I.R.A., who abducted and executed several young teenagers about this time, but we shall never know for sure what happened.

These incidents were linked by more than the chain of reprisals and counter-reprisals. Guerrilla war was a game with few players and most of the killings were carried out by the same cliques of 'hard men', the O'Briens, Busteeds, Barrys and their anonymous British counterparts. Frank Busteed's career is a good example of this. Besides the shooting of Din-Din O'Riordan, he was involved in that of Mrs. Lindsey and her chauffeur in Coachford, the twelve off-duty soldiers

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[221] See 'Some Types of the Sinn Fein' compiled by the Intelligence Branch, 6th Division (Strickland Papers).

[222] Adj., 1st Cork Bde. to A/G, 4 April 1921 (Mulcahy Papers, P7/A/38).

[223] 'Life in Cork'.

mentioned above, three British officers in Macroom and a massacre of Protestants in the early months of 1922. He also led his battalion column in 1920 and 1921 and participated in an unknown number of other attacks up to (and perhaps beyond) the end of the Civil War.[224]

We have less evidence from inside the R.I.C. and the regiments in Ireland but there were clearly informal British death squads as well, often masquerading under titles such as 'the Anti-Sinn Fein Society'. One constable stationed in Bandon (an area which saw a large number of I.R.A. deaths) said of the Black and Tans:[225]

> if they were ambushed and had a lot of them shot, well then they retaliated. One man, a Head Constable, he took charge of a squad, he was always in plainclothes, never wore a uniform, and they had a big price on his head...But they never got him...Well he was on a special squad; he had his men with him, four or five of them all dressed like old farmers, they gathered the information. Oh there was quite a lot of undercover work.

Another policeman in Cork was said to have had 37 'kills' to his credit before being transferred.[226]

These executioners were frequently self-appointed. The O'Briens on White Street, Tom Barry at Kilmichael and Dathai O'Brien at Carrigtwohill all carried out unauthorised operations and got away with it just as did the assassins of Tomas MacCurtain and of the victims at Clogheen and Clonmult.

As time went by these political serial killers and their methods became virtually indistinguishable, their 'stunts', 'jobs' and 'operations' a blur of masked men in trenchcoats,

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[224] See Frank Busteed (O'Malley Papers, P17b/112); O'Callaghan, Execution; D/I Report on Busteed, 30 May 1924 (M.A., A/0825).

[225] Brewer, p.115.

[226] Commander J.E.P. Brass, 'Diary of a War Cadet 1914-1921', p.234 (I.W.M., 76/116/1). See also Richard Bennett, 'Portrait of a Killer' in New Statesman, 24 Mar. 1961, pp 471-2; Hervey de Montmorency, Sword and Stirrup (London, 1936), pp 354-5; Crozier, pp 147, 159; Townshend, pp 97, 100-1, 116.

'attempted escapes' and disfigured bodies. 'A shot was fired, and he fell to the ground. The civilians then fired at his head four or five times as he lay on the ground and then ran'; 'the assailants took him, stood him in the gutter and shot him. They all fired at him as he was lying on the ground and then ran away'; 'between three and four o'clock this morning armed and disguised men suddenly appeared'; 'one of the intruders said "Are you Patrick Sheehan?" He replied "yes" and the next instant he was shot dead, bullets passing through his heart and neck.'[227]

Another weapon of retaliation and terror used by both sides was arson. British reprisals against property began in the summer of 1920 and quickly became routine, though not officially sanctioned until January 1921. Sometimes the houses and shops destroyed belonged to republican families; more often they did not. The I.R.A. began to burn loyalist houses in reply that winter. By the spring of 1921 the combatants had become locked into an arson competition which became part of the cycle of reprisals. A killing would be answered by another killing, but also provoked beatings and attacks on suspect homes. As in the shooting war, it was the non-combatants who were caught in the middle. The resulting spiral of destruction is shown in Table 10:

Table 10: The Destruction of Buildings in Cork, 1920-21[228]

		By I.R.A.	By Crown Forces	Unknown	Total
1920	Jan.-June	74	3	8	85
	July-Dec.	42	146	2	190
1921	Jan.-July	93	67	5	165
Total		209	216	15	440

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[227] Examiner, 17 April, 30 Mar. 1921; Irish Times, 16 May, 24 Mar. 1921. The first two quotations describe I.R.A. killings, the last two British reprisals.

[228] The prominence of the July-Dec. 1920 period for Crown force arson is due to the 'burning of Cork' on December 11, 1920. In the first half of 1920 most buildings destroyed by the I.R.A. were R.I.C. barracks. Thereafter they concentrated on private houses.

Arsonists shared the revenge mentality of the gunmen. Then-Major Bernard Montgomery admitted that 'it never bothered me a bit how many houses were burnt.'[229] Liam Lynch, the head of the 1st Southern Division, echoed this sentiment: 'The Enemy seems inclined to burn out every house and we may as well have our share.'[230] Arsonists, like assassins, acted much the same no matter which side they were on, as the following account demonstrates:[231]

A great burning took place in this district in the month of June in the year one thousand, nine hundred and twenty one. Two dwelling houses the property of Samuel Daly at Lisheencreagh, Ballydehob were burned to ruins.

One of the houses was an outside farm, which Daly had bought about a year before that, and this was burned to ruins on the twenty second of June. The burning was performed by a party called the Flying Column, as they suspected the Daly family of being informers to the British forces.

On the eve of the twenty ninth of June the party again visited Daly's house. They accused his sister of being an informer, and they cut the hair from her head. Later that night they again came. The Dalys were in bed and they were ordered to leave, as the house was to be destroyed. Daly's mother, who was an aged woman, was reluctant to leave the house, and she was treated roughly, and taken out by force.

The soldiers then put the house on fire. Into the flames they cast harness and all other things they could lay hands on. All next day the fire continued and in the evening nothing remained but the black walls.

The farm animals, which numbered about fifteen cows, some heifers, calves and horses were carried off by the destroyers. One calf, which remained behind, had to be killed through scarcity of milk. The Dalys then lived in a stable.

This story concerns an I.R.A. 'operation' but with a few changes of names it could easily have been about a British reprisal.[232] It is told very much in a traditional mode,

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[229] Major B.L. Montgomery to Major Percival, 14 Oct. 1923 (I.W.M., A.E. Percival Papers).

[230] O/C 1st Southern Div. to C/S, 20 May 1921 (Mulcahy Papers, P7/A/21).

[231] Dept. of Irish Folklore, Sms.288, pp 361-2.

[232] Samuel Daly statement (P.R.O.L., Irish Grants Committee Papers, CO/904/192). These attacks originated in Samuel Daly's refusal to give money to the I.R.A. arms fund.

even beginning with the formulaic 'a great burning took place' but in this case the language was inverted and turned against the conventional folk heroes. Instead of the 'soldiers' and 'destroyers' - the brutal outsiders - being Black and Tans, they are 'a party called the flying column'. The storyteller probably saw little difference between the two.[233]

The spread of violence shattered normalcy and disrupted the lives and commerce of every community in Cork. Britain's coercion policies from 1918 onward depended on punishing the general population for I.R.A. actions. To suppress the rebellion the army made itself a suffocating presence, blanketing daily life with curfews, restrictions on trade and movement, arbitrary detentions and other forms of harassment.[234] Mass raids and searches were used to trawl whole neighbourhoods and parishes for suspects and arms. Reprisals were frequently directed against communal targets such as creameries and town halls. The mere prospect of one was enough to cause families and whole districts to leave their homes at night and go on the run en masse.

The people of Cork also had to negotiate the new rules laid down by 'the Republic.' The Belfast boycott, which often effectively included British goods and Protestant firms, was

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His family was both Protestant and loyalist - two of his brothers were policemen and another was a soldier. They were boycotted from late 1920 on so that no labourer or neighbour would work on his farm, no one would help put out the fire and no doctor would come to treat his mother, who was paralysed from shock. After the police and army withdrew in the spring of 1922, the I.R.A. renewed their demands. This time Daly paid. His marriage plans were also destroyed, according to Catherine Kingston's statement (CO/904/184). Neither Samuel nor his sister were listed as suspected spies by local I.R.A. intelligence officers in late 1921 (M.A., A/0897).

[233] As with all the schools manuscripts, this story was collected by a student from an elder (in this case unknown).

[234] The Martial Law authorities did attempt to forcibly enrol civilians as civil guards but this failed due to non-cooperation. For the Drimoleague civil guards, see Irish Times, 15 Feb. 1921; for Liscarroll and Ballincollig, Examiner, 25 Feb. 1921.

enforced with threats, guns and kerosene. The I.R.A. also threw its weight behind the railways strike of 1920. Both sides tried to suppress hostile newspapers. The Southern Star was finally closed down by the police in 1919; the other three local newspapers, the Examiner, the Cork Constitution and the Skibbereen Eagle all had their employees and premises attacked and their papers seized and burned by the rebels.

Worst of all was the I.R.A.'s assault on roads, bridges, railway, telegraph and telephone lines and the mails. These attacks were carried out in every parish of the county from the winter of 1920 onward, paralysing travel and communications. Roads were trenched or blocked with trees (usually by conscripted civilians), railway tracks were broken or blown up, telephone wires were cut and poles were chopped down (and repairmen were threatened or held up) so often and so repetitively that the incidents defy enumeration. Paddy O'Brien, a guerrilla leader in north Cork, recalled that 'there was scarcely a day that they [the British] would not be out trying to put the roads in order and we would block them again at night.'[235] Reliable data can be assembled for raids on mails and destroyed bridges:

Table 11: Attacks on Communications in Cork, 1920-21

		Bridges Destroyed	Raids on Mails
1920	Jan.-June	-	15
	July-Dec.	-	65
1921	Jan.-July	110	147

These acts of sabotage began as part of individual Volunteer attacks, to prevent or delay reinforcements. In 1921, partly as a result of central direction and partly by force of imitation, this destruction became an end in itself. As a campaign to immobilise their opponents it was a clear success. Major A.E. Percival, the Intelligence Officer of the Essex Regiment in Bandon concluded that 'it is really impossible...to keep the road communications open if the enemy

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[235] Paddy O'Brien (O'Malley Papers, P17b/108).

are determined'.[236] When Colonel Hugh Elles toured Ireland in June he found that travel was 'laborious and difficult'; 'To go from Dublin to Cork one may fly, one may go by T.B.D[estroyer] and be met by escort at the docks, or one may go - very slowly - by armed train.'[237] Captain Pinkey and his men in Castletownroche were so isolated they heard about the Truce by aeroplane and pigeon.[238]

Road wrecking and mail interception were also weapons of intimidation, to be used against antagonistic households or communities. A trenched road could not only block exit from a farm but also divert traffic across private land and attract the attention of the police. Catherine Murphy's family (whose head was an ex-policeman) experienced this near Banteer:[239]

> On the eve of the 16 of June, my Father Brother and two Aunts, including myself were in the house having some tea...when all of a sudden a Captain of the IRA not living far from here rushed in the door and made a roar at my brother to get out: put him at once to cut down a tree right opposite the door, never said there was an ambush to take place...While my brother and another boy was felling the tree, The Captain drew what carts were in the yard and threw them on the road...then the Captain and 5 other boys whom we know well took their departure, never telling us what to say when the military would arrive.

The army blamed the Murphys, as 'the boys' knew they would and Catherine's brother was beaten up and arrested the next day.

The only type of violence to decrease in 1920 and 1921 was that of crowds. The number of riots subsided from 23 in 1919 to 13 in 1920 and to zero in 1921 (up to the truce). True to their rich factional heritage, it was the street fighters of Cork city's north side who persisted the longest.

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[236] Major A.E. Percival, 'Guerilla Warfare - Ireland 1920-21', Lecture 1 (Percival Papers).

[237] Col. Hugh Elles, 'The Military Situation in Ireland', 24 June 1921 (P.R.O.L., CAB 24/125, C.P.3075).

[238] Castletownroche Detach. Log, 9 July 1921.

[239] Catherine Murphy to Min. of Defence, 30 Nov. 1921 (M.A., A/0668).

This decline indicates the increased danger of such activity but it also reflects the end of republicanism as a mass movement and the dampening of popular enthusiasm for 'the cause'. By the beginning of 1921 the revolution had hardened into a contest between gunmen.

The dynamic of escalation acted not only to raise the casualty rate but also to enormously broaden the arena of violence so that it touched almost every life in the county. Guerrilla war in Cork was a kind of total war in miniature, with fewer and fewer barriers to violence and the burden of suffering falling increasingly on civilians.

In retrospect, both sides declared themselves to have been gaining the upper hand in the months before the truce.[240] Neither claim can be endorsed. Violence, driven by the reciprocal siege mentality and desire for revenge, had become self-sustaining and could well have continued for a long time to come as both sides turned increasingly to murder and execution. The British forces had succeeded in breaking up the larger flying columns and interning hundreds of Cork Volunteers but, without a large-scale infusion of new troops, they could not hope to reestablish law and order or even protect vulnerable loyalists. The I.R.A. had kept their grip on the political life of the county and commanded considerable stretches of countryside but their war of attrition was doing nothing to affect the military balance of power. Victory for either side was a distant prospect.

The overall distribution of casualties in the county can be seen in Maps 9-12. Despite the local fluctuations charted over the course of the guerrilla war, this pattern essentially repeats that of 1917-19. The shooting war was concentrated in Bandon, Macroom and Cork districts, which together accounted for 28% of the rural population and 42% of the rural violence

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[240] For the I.R.A., see Liam Deasy, Brother Against Brother (Cork, 1982), pp 22-3 and Barry, Guerrilla Days in Ireland, pp 224-7; for British forces, see Lowe, pp 56-8; 6th Division History, pp 127-9.

(if the city is included, these figures rise to 44% of the total population and 59% of the casualties).[241] The major change was that Beara and Fermoy districts fell from the front lines of the revolution to relative insignificance. Violence in these areas also went in cycles but it started and peaked early, burning out just as other areas had got going.

Maps 33-40 (Appendix 2) outline the geography of escalation. A strict district-by-district analysis would be misleading as both I.R.A. units and British operations crossed these arbitrary boundaries. The Kilmichael ambush, for example, was fought in the Dunmanway district between Auxiliaries from Macroom and a column largely derived from Bandon.[242] Nevertheless, local cycles of action and reaction can be discerned. Only one seizure of arms and one police casualty occurred in Bandon before 1919. I.R.A. operations slowly picked up steam in 1920 and took off after September. Violence subsided somewhat after March 1921 but by this time other cycles were building in areas such as Millstreet, Mitchelstown and Youghal as ambushes triggered reprisals and counter-reprisals. Different areas moved at different paces.

This strong distinction between core and peripheral areas becomes blurred if casualties are weighted for population, as in Map 12. Bandon and Macroom districts and Cork city still show up as being comparatively rebellious but Bandon emerges as by far the most violent district per capita while Cork rural district (which included suburban areas) falls far behind. Violence in general appears more diffuse (although it should be noted that the figures for Youghal, Millstreet and Dunmanway depend on one ambush in each case). The regions of least resistance remained constant either way: East and West Carbery (Beara, Schull, Skibbereen, Bantry and Dunmanway), Kinsale, Kanturk and Fermoy.

The guerrilla strongholds were located in mid-Cork, along

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[241] If Midleton and Youghal are included, these five districts generated 68% of the casualties with 52% of the population.

[242] See chapter 5.

the Bandon and Lee rivers. This was not a homogenous zone, socially or geographically, but I.R.A. activity did seem to thrive in more urbanised areas with better land and to be hampered by poverty and physical isolation. Proximity to the city may also have been a factor.[243]

I.R.A. arson and sabotage occurred much more widely (see Maps 13-16). Areas which saw little fighting, especially the Carberies and Duhallow (the south- and north-west), still experienced a good deal of destruction. Bandon and Macroom, on the other hand, saw comparatively little mail raiding and bridge wrecking. It may be that in some heavily contested districts the Volunteers' energies were fully absorbed with fighting or evading their enemies and did not need to justify themselves with smaller operations.

Can the geography of violence be explained by organisational differences between the three Cork brigades? Table 12 measures the performance of these units in terms of their own losses and the Crown force casualties they inflicted:

Table 12: I.R.A. Brigade Performance in Cork, 1917-21[244]

	Crown Forces Casualties		I.R.A. Casualties	
	Total	Per 10,000 People	Total	Per 10,000 People
Cork 1	236	12	68	3.4
Cork 1 (rural)	149	13	49	4.3
Cork 2	99	11	40	5.0
Cork 3	142	14	52	4.5

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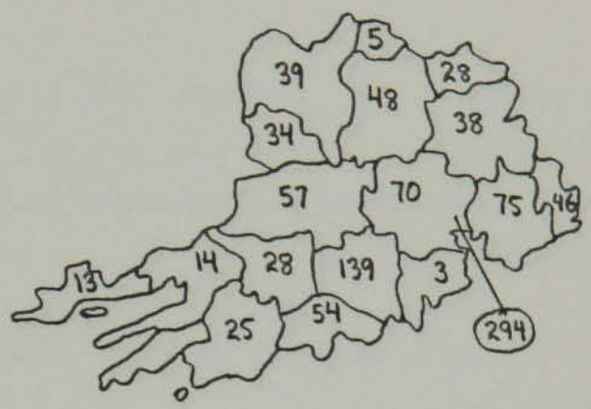
[243] These social factors will be discussed further in Chapter 4.

[244] I.R.A. casualties do not include accidents, executions or hunger strikes.

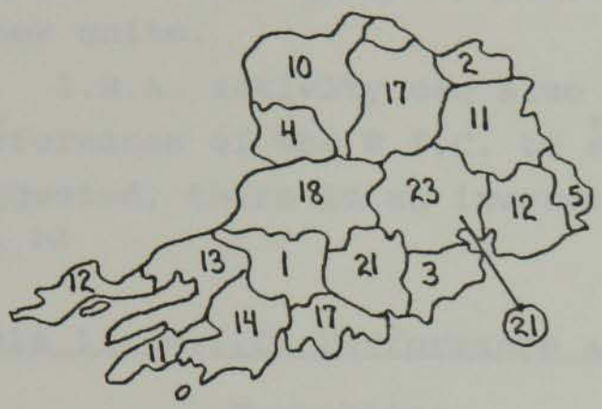
9: Crown Forces Casualties
Jan. 1920-July 11 1921



11: Total Casualties
Jan. 1920-July 11 1921

10: I.R.A. Casualties
Jan. 1920-July 11 1921

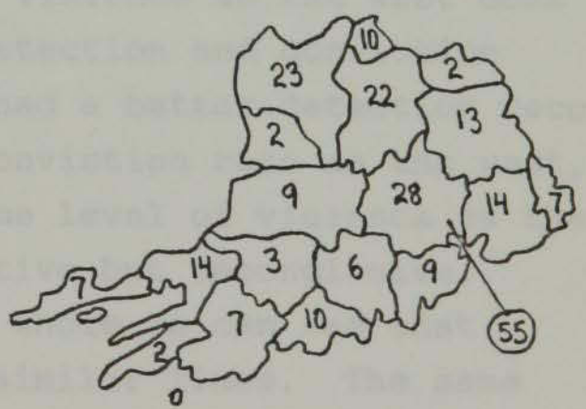
12: Total Casualties per
10,000 People
Jan. 1920-July 11 1921



13: Buildings Destroyed by I.R.A. 1920-21

15: Bridges Destroyed by I.R.A. 1920-21

14: Buildings Destroyed by Crown Forces 1920-21



16: Raids on Mails 1920-21

Despite numerous local claims about which unit or region won the war, we can see from these figures that there was little to choose between them in terms of initiative or endurance. The 2nd (north) Cork Brigade suffered the highest losses and did the least damage for its population, but its record was only slightly less successful than that of the other units.

I.R.A. activity can also be mapped against the earlier performance of the R.I.C. to see if, as David Fitzpatrick has suggested, there is an inverse relationship between the two.[245]

Table 13: R.I.C. Performance and I.R.A. Violence in Cork[246]

	Casualties Inflicted by I.R.A. Per 10,000 Population 1920-21	Proceedings/ Offences 1919	Convictions/ Proceedings 1919
East Riding	14	43%	70%
West Riding	18	36	57
City	17	57	58

If we compare the east and west ridings of the county alone, the higher level of I.R.A. violence in the west does roughly coincide with its lower detection and conviction rates. However, the city police had a better detection record than either riding and the same conviction rate as the west, while having approximately the same level of violence as the latter. These results are suggestive but inconclusive.

When we turn to Ireland as a whole we can see that violence developed along broadly similar lines. The same patchwork of core and periphery is in evidence in Maps 17-20. Munster (apart from Waterford) and Dublin were the main centres of rebellion, as in 1917-19. A second centre also emerged in Roscommon and Longford. These areas come close to forming a band of violent counties running from Munster to the

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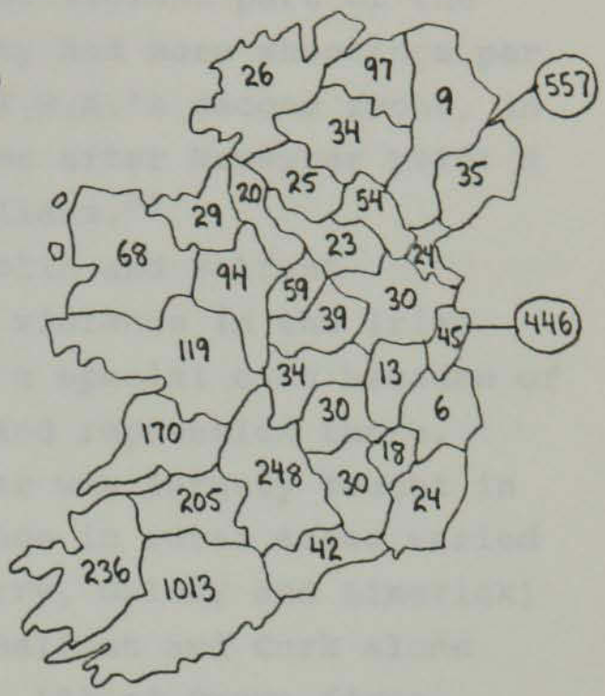
[245] Fitzpatrick, 'The Geography of Irish Nationalism', pp 121-2.

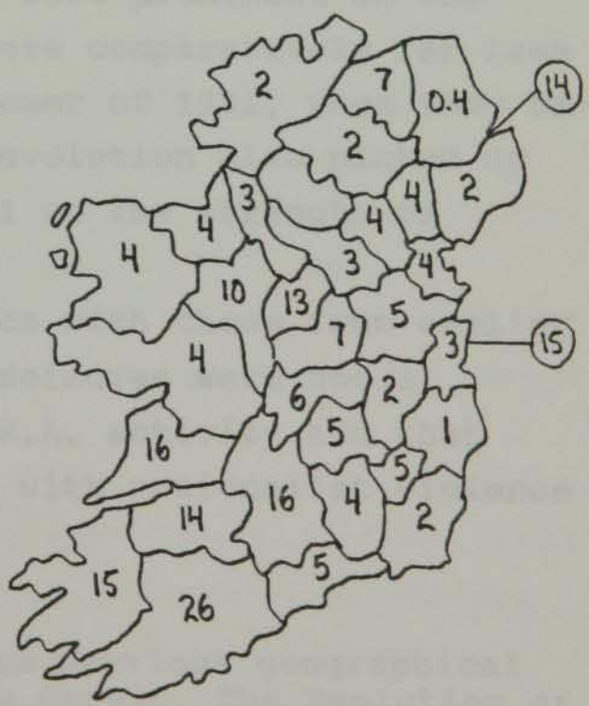
[246] These figures are derived from Judicial Statistics, Ireland 1921 (Cd.1431).

17: Crown Forces Casualties Jan. 1920-July 11 1921



19: Total Casualties Jan. 1920-July 11 1921

18: I.R.A. Casualties Jan. 1920-July 11 1921



20: Total Casualties per 10,000 people Jan.1920-July 11 1921

midlands, a central war zone perhaps akin to that in Cork.[247] Cork itself was far and away the most violent part of the country; most districts in the county had more shootings per capita than most counties. On the I.R.A.'s second front, in Britain, shootings claimed 23 victims after November 1920: 8 policemen, 4 Volunteers and 11 civilians.[248]

The number of casualties in Dublin and Belfast underscores the importance of urban violence in the Irish revolution. Belfast, of course, is a special case because of the sectarian nature of revolution and repression there. Nevertheless, while the guerrilla war was largely fought in the countryside, the level of violence in rural areas varied enormously; in cities (including Derry, Galway and Limerick) it was consistently high. Dublin, Belfast and Cork alone accounted for 18% of the population, 18% of Crown force casualties and 38% of total casualties in 1920-21.

We can also see that, within the nation-wide escalation of the war, different counties, like the districts of Cork, followed different rhythms (see Maps 41-48, Appendix 2). The western counties of Galway and Mayo were prominent in the early years of the revolution but were comparatively far less violent in the Tan War up to the summer of 1921, when they re-emerged as front-line areas. The revolution also picked up steam in Monaghan and Armagh in 1921 on the strength of growing sectarian rivalries.

A comparison of these statistics with those from earlier years shows that, as in Cork, arms seizures were not a necessary precondition for later I.R.A. activity and that agrarian shootings do not correlate with nationalist violence

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[247] These results broadly confirm previous geographical analyses of the guerrilla war in Tom Garvin, The Evolution of Irish Nationalist Politics (Dublin, 1981), pp 122-24 [although how he measures 'I.R.A. activity' is unclear] and E. Rumpf and A.C. Hepburn, Nationalism and Socialism in Twentieth-Century Ireland (Liverpool, 1977), pp 38-41. See also Fitzpatrick, 'The Geography of Irish Nationalism', pp 114-122.

[248] These statistics are based on a survey of the London Times in 1920-21.

one way or another.[249]

A shift in the nature of violence in 1921, paralleling that in Cork, can also be detected from Maps 45-48. Civilian casualties rose all over Ireland as escalation provoked reprisals in the usual tit-for-tat cycles. Nowhere was the principle of retaliation invoked more than in Ulster, as illustrated by the feud between the villages of Lisnaskea and Rosslea on opposite sides of the Monaghan-Fermanagh border. The I.R.A.'s strategy in this contest was laid down in March 1921: 'we decided to teach them such a lesson as they would hardly forget for a while.'[250] This thinking and the sectarian polarisation that lay behind it was not limited to Ulster - or to Cork. Protestants were singled out for attack in Tipperary, Roscommon and Wexford and other counties as well. The ethnic divisions found in Cork ran through the whole country, from north to south.

III

On the morning of July 11, the I.R.A. killed three men in Skibbereen and in the city, and burned a coastguard station near Midleton and a house near Mallow. At noon the fighting stopped. For the next five months Cork remained an armed camp. The I.R.A., police and army were each ready - and expected - to resume hostilities on an even larger scale than before. Nevertheless, despite considerable and growing friction, aggressive posturing and a host of minor confrontations, the truce held until the signing of the Anglo-Irish treaty on December 7.

The truce put an end to the war but local vendettas lived on. I.R.A. gunmen secretly executed and disposed of at least two suspected spies in July and August (and wounded another in September) and continued to harass loyalists. Some were

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[249] See Gloria Maguire, The Political and Military Causes of the Division in the Irish Nationalist Movement, January 1921 to August 1923, D.Phil. Thesis (Oxford, 1985), pp 233-35, who suggests that agrarian unrest debilitated the I.R.A..

[250] Monaghan Bde. Monthly Report, Mar. 1921 (Mulcahy Papers, P7/A/39).

kidnapped like James Fehilly and Denis Donovan of Dunmanway, some were beaten and humiliated like George Mannix of Kanturk, and others were fined, vandalised or boycotted.[251] Behind the walls of the prisons in Cork city and Spike Island interned Volunteers mutinied and fought ferocious battles against their captors.[252]

The Volunteers and their opponents waged a constant battle for authority, arresting and kidnapping one another, seizing cars, bicycles, horses and guns and exchanging threats, blows and gunfire.[253] The atmosphere of this behind-the-scenes war of nerves is evoked by an encounter which took place in Macroom when the O'Sullivan brothers of Ballyvourney met an Auxiliary patrol led by an officer nicknamed 'Hollywood' - 'a great gunman and guns strapped on to his legs':[254]

I was in the car with a trench coat on me. I had two guns in the slit pockets and I was standing by when 'Hollywood' came along. He walked round and round the car - a big tall pompous man. 'That's our car', he said. 'Is that so?' said I. 'It was', I said, 'but it isn't yours now.' 'Well quite possibly we might own it again.' 'Well we want it at the moment.' 'We'll see about that' he said. 'Well', I said, 'you mean you

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[251] See D.I. Timoleague Report, 14 Aug. 1921 and Liasion Officer, I.R.A. to C.I., Mallow, 30 Nov. 1921 (P.R.O.L., Breach of Truce Reports, CO/904/152).

[252] In a period of epic prison riots, these were the worst. The commander of the Spike Island camp told his superiors in Dublin that 'I think they will get the best of us'; 'I am not dealing at all with human beings. I am dealing with madmen.' Intercepted telegrams, 18 Oct. 1921 (N.L.I., Florence O'Donoghue Papers, Ms.31, 230[1]). See also P.J. O'Neill [of the 1st Kerry Bde.] to Tadg Brosnan, n.d.: 'we outnumbered the Cork prisoners. Still whatever the Cork division said was law for us.' O'Neill accused 'the Cork crowd' of manipulating events 'by underhand means.' (Mulcahy Papers, P7/A/30). For similar riots in Galway, see Duff, pp 86-7.

[253] Most of this went unreported by local newspapers but was recorded in detail in the C.I. Monthly Reports for Cork, July-Sept. 1921 (CO/904/115-6) and R.I.C. Breach of Truce Reports (CO/904/152). See also the correspondence in the Liaison Papers (M.A., LE/3/2, LE/4/7A).

[254] Mick O'Sullivan (O'Malley Papers, P17b/108).

want it back; you're welcome to it if you can take it back.' I put my hands in my two pockets and if he moved I'd have let him have it.

The stand off continued in the same vein until the Auxiliaries backed down. The story shows how much the two armies had come to resemble one another and presents a vivid picture of the gangsterish culture of violence inhabited by the gunmen on both sides: the eager toughs in their matching trenchcoats, revolvers and Ford cars: a law unto themselves with little to choose between them.

The treaty settlement ended this jockeying for position and left the I.R.A. in sole possession of the field. Most army and police detachments were withdrawn by the end of January 1922. Captain Pinkey and his two platoons were gone from Castletownroche in mid-December; the Macroom Auxiliaries left a month later.

Although most Cork guerrillas opposed the settlement they were its immediate beneficiaries. For the first seven months of 1922 they constituted the sole real authority in the county and were, by default, the effective rulers of what came to be known (half-jokingly) as the 'Cork Republic'.

Once in power the guerrillas' resemblance to their erstwhile foes became complete. The Black and Tans had impressed Cork people as 'black-berried bullies [in] loud lorries racing along country roads': 'They commandeered without payment food and drink'; their lorries raced through the streets with complete disregard for life or limb.'[255] The I.R.A. were condemned in nearly identical terms in the summer of 1922. 'The most striking and ridiculous aspect of their movements...was the way in which squads of the fellows went tearing from one point to another without absolutely any discipline'; 'During the occupation of the town every available motor vehicle was seized...while large quantities of

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[255] Crowley, In West Cork Long Ago, p.24; Barry, Guerrilla Days in Ireland, p.37; Olga Pyne Clark, She Came of Decent People (London, 1985), p.46.

foodstuffs were commandeered'.[256]

For many guerrillas power meant one thing: settling old scores and ridding the country of their enemies. In the sudden absence of government or opposition a profusion of grievances and feuds sprang back to life. Once again, anonymous shootings, disappearances and nocturnal raids became commonplace.

The dominant theme of the violence, as in 1921, was revenge. When three off-duty British officers were abducted in Macroom in April, a long list of accusations were ready at hand to justify their deaths. Their driver was also shot to keep the secret.[257] Another officer, a Lt. Genochio, was shot in February 'attempting to escape' from his kidnappers at the city asylum.[258] Other opportunistic shootings of British soldiers took place in the city, Carrigtwohill, Ballincollig, Castletownbere and Bantry, and continued into the Civil War. Eight serving or discharged policemen were shot, most in their homes. Many others were threatened, boycotted and attacked, and forced to join the growing number of refugees in Britain. In one case, also in Macroom, two constables against whom a year-old grudge was held were kidnapped and flogged with strands of wire until near death.[259] Ex-servicemen encountered the same hostility. One case among many was that of ex-Sergeant Denis Joseph Roche, who returned to Conna to

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[256] Freeman's Journal, 1, 21 Aug. 1922. See also Irish Independent, 12 Aug. 1922.

[257] See O'Callaghan, Execution, pp 189-192; Florence O'Donoghue, Charlie Browne (O'Malley Papers, P17b/96, 112); Nigel Hamilton, Monty: The Making of a General 1887-1942 (London, 1981), pp 153-4; Eoin Neeson, The Civil War 1922-23 (Swords, 1989), pp 101-2.

[258] Examiner, 19 Feb. 1922; Cork Liaison Office Report, 15 Feb. 1922 (M.A., LE/4/7A).

[259] Examiner, 11 Feb. 1922; Bandon Liaison Office Report, 10 Feb. 1922 (M.A., LE/4/7A); Intercepted British army telegram, 17 Feb. 1922 (N.L.I., Florence O'Donoghue Papers, Ms.31,230[6]).

live with his boycotted father in March 1922:[260]

We had just retired to bed, when the front door was battered in and a band of disguised ruffians rushed in and shouted for the 'dog that did England's dirty work.' My father was right behind me and interfered, only to be struck with a rifle and pushed into the parlour. I was surrounded, pushed half naked into the street and put up against the wall with four or five rifles up to my head. Others of the party proceeded upstairs and I next saw them hand bundles of clothing to each other. Then the leader asked me to hand over my revolver as I would need it no more after that night. One fellow said 'We will shoot him here'...I was now put on my knees to be shot and was saying my prayers when one suggested that it was too near the priest's house to fire the shots...

When I got back, my father was trying to extinguish the fire which they had lit upstairs. All the windows, five in number, the front door and panels were smashed in. I...hid next day and slept in various places till I managed to get some clothes. I left the place then and never returned till the death of my poor father who never recovered from his experiences on that night.

In Cork city organised groups of ex-soldiers and the I.R.A. clashed repeatedly, just as they had before the truce. Two Volunteers and three veterans were shot in brawls between December and March.

The Protestant community came under renewed attack; if anything, sectarian violence worsened after the British left Cork. The worst wave of killings came in April in west Cork after the death of an I.R.A. officer near Bandon. Fifteen Protestant men were shot in revenge and dozens of others were threatened, sparking a mass exodus. In this massacre, as in other incidents, the gunmen were probably acting on their own just as they had done in the Tan War.[261] Most of these killings were disavowed and condemned by their superiors - just as police reprisals had been.[262]

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[260] Denis Joseph Roche statement (P.R.O.L., Irish Grants Committee Papers, CO/762/192).

[261] See chapter 11 for a full reconstruction of this massacre.

[262] When investigating the killing of three officers in Macroom in April 1922, British authorities were told by the 1st Cork Brigade headquarters that 'it was done by some of the

Similar attacks on Protestant farmers and ex-policemen were carried out all over Ireland in the early months of 1922. In March, for example, two invalided R.I.C. veterans in Galway were killed and another wounded.[263] On April 6, six were shot in one day in Clare and Kerry.[264] For these men, as for the guerrillas, the revolution was far from over.

Very little of this violence was directed at rival I.R.A. factions or other supporters of the Treaty (soon labelled 'Free Staters'). Some pro-treaty candidates and election agents were attacked and imprisoned but even during the June general election there was far less trouble than Cork had been accustomed to before the Great War. Where pro-treaty Volunteers could muster enough strength and animus - in Skibbereen and Midleton - there were some brief but harmless skirmishes. One man was shot in Mallow on his way to join the new National Army. Apart from these incidents, the guerrillas remained preoccupied with old enemies.

Table 14: Victims of Revolution, July 11, 1921-July 1, 1922

R.I.C.		Army		I.R.A.		Civilians By I.R.A.		Unknown		Total	
K	W	K	W	K	W	K	W	K	W	K	W
1	3	6	3	1	4	21	8	3	7	32	25

The contours of violence in early 1922 generally followed those of 1920-21 (see Maps 21-24); not surprisingly, since the former was a direct extension of the latter. The death toll in Bandon and Cork city had created the feuds which played themselves out after the British departure (in 1920-21 Bandon and Cork city together accounted for 43% of all casualties; in 1921-22, they accounted for 66%). Another echo of 1921 lay in the nature of the victims: as before, the death squads preyed

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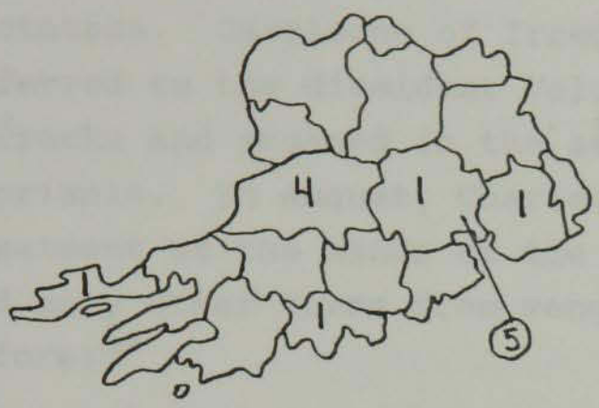
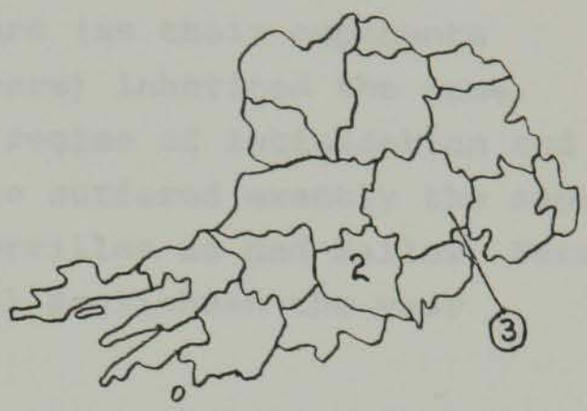
I.R.A. at Macroom who had temporarily seceded from control.' Hamilton, p.154.

[263] Irish Times, 17 Mar. 1922; Duff, p.90.

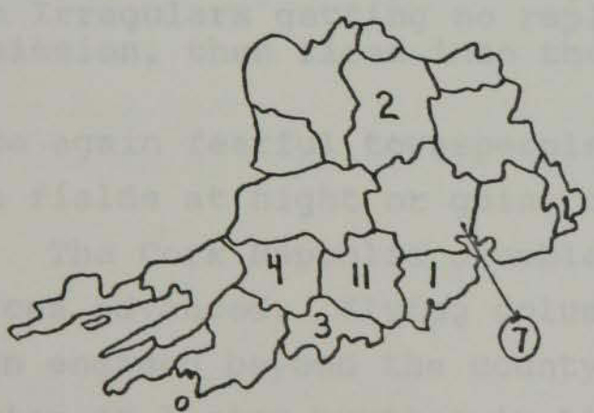
[264] Irish Times, 7 April 1922.



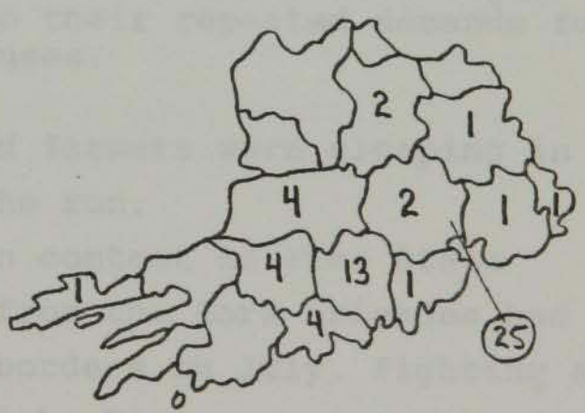
21: Crown Forces Casualties
July 11 1921-July 1 1922



23: I.R.A. Casualties
July 11 1921-July 1922



22: Civilian Casualties
Shot by the I.R.A.
July 11 1921-July 1 1922



24: Total Casualties
July 11 1921-July 1922

on the powerless. None of these casualties occurred in combat.

IV

As civil war approached the Cork I.R.A. assumed the role of an occupying army, following closely in their predecessors' footsteps. Garrisons of Irregulars (as their opponents referred to the dissident Volunteers) inherited the same barracks and engaged in the same regime of intimidation and reprisals. In August, Charleville suffered exactly the same treatment at the hands of the guerrillas as had Mallow, Fermoy and many other towns from vengeful Englishmen the year before:[265]

> On Thursday night week [August 11] some Irregulars returned to the town in motors and after partaking of liquor in a local public house, proceeded to complete the work of destruction in the Commercial Club and Courthouse.
>
> About 11.30 pm the townspeople were terrified by the firing of rifle shots through the streets, which increased as time wore on. Knocks were heard at the doors of houses, and several parties called out by name. Some of the local young men who were sought by the Irregulars escaped by the rear of their houses and sought refuge in the fields for the night. The Irregulars getting no reply to their repeated demands for admission, then fired into the houses.

Once again fearful townspeople and farmers were sleeping in the fields at night or going on the run.

The Cork Republic crumbled on contact as Free State forces advanced. Flying columns from the Cork brigades had been engaged beyond the county's borders in July, fighting a series of losing battles in Limerick, Tipperary and Waterford. At least three of their men died. As they fell back on their home county National Army troops landed unopposed at Passage West on August 9. A thin I.R.A. firing line was assembled to block their route into Cork. The two forces met in the hills around Rochestown and Douglas, and some sharp fighting ensued. Both sides appear to have shot prisoners in the heat of

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[265] Freeman's Journal, 21 Aug. 1922.

battle.[266] The rebels managed to capture quite a number of unwary soldiers but they were outnumbered, outgunned and exhausted. Olga Pyne Clark watched as they went into battle ('ragged, dispirited...but really tough and brave in their own way') and later, as they began their long retreat:[267]

> They were very tired, marching raggedly, no military precision about them. They probably had not been properly fed and had slept rough. Their trench coats were dirty and muddy, their faces hollow-eyed had a starved savage look in them...At six pm they came from all directions...they were a rabble and they knew it.

The Free State column entered the city on August 11, on the heels of the departing guerrillas. Other National Army units had landed in Union Hall, near Skibbereen, and in Youghal and were simultaneously advancing against token opposition. '"We got there without firing a shot" is the remark that one hears every day now with mechanical monotony along all the Cork fronts' reported the Freeman's Journal on August 21. The only gesture of resistance in most cases was sabotage. As the I.R.A. retreated they left behind dozens of burnt buildings, blown railway lines and wrecked bridges. Within two weeks of the landings almost all of the county's towns had been occupied and the Cork Republic had shrunk to a few mountainy redoubts in Duhallow, along the Kerry border.

The war was not over however. The Free State commander reported on August 22 that 'The Irregulars in Cork and Kerry are still more or less intact. Our forces have captured towns, but they have not captured Irregulars and arms on anything like a large scale.'[268] This point was driven home

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[266] Emmet Dalton to Michael Collins, 12 Aug. 1922; 'Liam' [Tobin?] to Collins, 10 Aug. 1922 (Mulcahy Papers, P7/B/20); Dalton to Min. of Defence, 11 Aug. 1922 (Mulcahy Papers, P7a/50); Clark, p.57.

[267] Clark, p.55.

[268] Quoted in Michael Hopkinson, Green Against Green: A History of the Irish Civil War (Dublin, 1988), pp 164-5.

the same day by the death of Michael Collins in west Cork. A hard core of Tan War veterans remained, tired and demoralised but still committed to their revolution. They simply returned to their cellars, barns and safe houses and to their old routine of roadside ambushes, drive-by shootings, nocturnal raids and sabotage. The first attacks on Free State troops began within a week of the capture of Cork city.

From the outset the Civil War followed a different trajectory. The revived columns were less numerous but far better armed (the Bandon battalion, which had 29 rifles in June 1920, had 55 rifles and a Lewis gun in September 1922[269]) but this extra firepower had little influence on tactics or the number of casualties. Apart from a few frontal assaults, such as on Bantry on August 30 or Ballymakeera on December 4, the rebels tended to be more cautious than in the last war. There were no do-or-die ambushes as at Kilmichael. Ambushing parties kept a safe distance; there were fewer firefights and more sniping attacks. The I.R.A. also relied much more heavily on mines (as they had been in the last months of the Tan War), the least risky form of operation. As a result there were more, but less effective, attacks in 1922 than in 1920-21:

Table 15: I.R.A. Combat Performance, 1922-23

		Number of Successful Attacks	National Army Casualties Per Attack
1922	July-Sept.	37	2.5
	Oct.-Dec.	29	2.3
1923	Jan.-March	13	1.5
	April-June	2	1.5

As the number and intensity of attacks declined so did violence as a whole (see Figure 2 and Maps 49-52, Appendix 2). Unlike the earlier conflict there was no massive turn to terrorism and 'soft' targets. Far fewer civilians were killed

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[269] Inspector of Org. to O/C Org. 1st Southern Div., 7 Sept. 1922 (M.A., A/0991/2); O/C 1st Southern Div. Report, 5 Sept. 1922 (M.A., IRA/2).

(15% of I.R.A. victims in 1922-23 were civilians as opposed to 24% in 1920-21) and a considerably higher proportion of casualties came in combat. Indeed, in the most intense period of the war, from August to December, nearly 95% of National Army casualties derived from armed engagements (see Table 16). Over the whole of the Civil War, only 9% of Free State casualties (as opposed to 40% of Crown force losses in the Tan War), and 20% of all I.R.A. shootings (that is, including civilians), occurred other than in combat. Despite many opportunities to do so, the I.R.A. rarely attacked off-duty or unarmed soldiers.

The National Army's record was altogether less gentlemanly than the I.R.A.'s, but more so than their British predecessors'. 52% of I.R.A. casualties were due to combat in the Civil War, compared to 43% in the Tan War. While British forces shot 116 civilians in 1920-21, the National Army shot only 10; thus, 25% of British victims and 45% of National Army victims came in combat.

Table 16 does show a relative increase in non-combat shootings by both sides after October 1922, and particularly in 1923, but this must be understood in the context of the swift overall decline in violence. Whereas National Army casualties fell from 204 in 1922 to 33 in 1923, civilian casualties inflicted by the I.R.A. only fell from 23 to 11. Similarly, I.R.A. losses in 1923 were less than half the number incurred in 1922. The shift to non-combat shootings was due more to the collapse of the republican military campaign than to any turn towards terrorism. In other words, the dynamics of violence in Cork had been reversed. Rather than exploding, as in 1920, the revolution was imploding.

Table 16: Percentage of Casualties Due to Combat, 1922-23

		I.R.A. Victims		National Army Victims		
		National Army	All	I.R.A.	All	All
Victims						
1922	July-Sept.	94	81	72	72	68
	Oct.-Dec.	94	79	44	29	53
1923	Jan.-March	72	60	11	11	38
	April-June	75	50	71	56	44

Another way to look at the changing character of violence and I.R.A. performance is by comparing the numbers of killed with the numbers wounded. In 1920-21, 51% of all casualties, and 42% of those in the Crown forces, were fatal. In 1922-23 the numbers fell to 37% and 28% for National Army casualties. The I.R.A. also suffered proportionately far fewer deaths. In fact, the Civil War accounted for only 24% of all revolutionary deaths in Cork.

Table 17: Victims of the Revolution in Cork, 1922-23

British Army		National Army		Civilians By I.R.A.		By National Army		Unknown		Total	
K	W	K	W	K	W	K	W	K	W	K	W
1	10	67	171	21	11	7	3	30	51	169	287

The key factor in this rapid de-escalation of violence was the absence of reprisals. The Civil War in Cork did not develop a revenge dynamic and thus never descended into cycles of terror and counter-terror. Revenge killings were not unknown, but they were relatively uncommon. Even when the I.R.A. did carry out reprisals they usually targeted ex-loyalists, the remnants of their Tan War black lists. These kidnappings, shootings and burnings were less a response to the new round of violence than a continuation of old vendettas.

Nor did the National Army rely on communal punishments to deter or subdue the rebels. Ambushes were not routinely followed by reprisals - although these did sometimes occur - and civilians were not made to suffer for I.R.A. operations. Despite frequent complaints about indiscipline there was much

less reported intimidation and brutality. In the whole of the war the Army destroyed not one house and rarely damaged private property. Only four Corkmen were executed by court-martial, as compared to twelve in 1921.

This official restraint was due to the fact that Cork natives made up the majority of the Free State forces in the county.[270] These men frequently served in their home districts and actively resisted any extreme measures or death squad tactics on their own turf. When these were used it was usually the widely hated Dublin 'Guard' and 'Squad' or other outsiders who were responsible. A key confrontation along these lines took place in September 1922. An I.R.A. prisoner was murdered after a bloody ambush near Macroom. One of the local commanders reported that:[271]

> The shooting...has caused considerable contempt among the Garrison here. They have paraded before me and gave me to understand they would not go out on the hills anymore. Therefore you will want to tell these officers from Dublin that they will want to stop that kind of work or they will corrupt the Army...the situation here is at present very critical, I may tell you, among the men.

His superior, General Emmet Dalton, then wrote to Dublin:[272]

> The shooting was the work of the Squad. Now I personally approve of the action but the men I have in my Command are of such a temperament that they can look at seven of their companions being blown to atoms by a murderous trick without feeling annoyed - but when an enemy is found with a rifle and ammunition they will mutiny if he is shot. On this account I think it would be better if you kept the 'Squad' out of my area.

It is interesting to note how quickly Dalton and other

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[270] A survey of 1093 men of the Cork Command in October 1922 revealed that 55% were natives (usually serving in or near their home districts), although the proportion of officers and N.C.O.s was lower. (M.A., Army Census, L/S/1).

[271] O/C No.2 Column, Southern Area, Macroom Report, 18 Sept. 1922 (Mulcahy Papers, P7/B/82).

[272] Dalton to C-in-C, 19 Sept. 1922 (P7/B/82).

Free State officers absorbed the mentality and language of their British predecessors. Where these triumphed and the 'Squad' stayed, as in Dublin and Kerry, the war was far more savage.

This restraint worked both ways. The local I.R.A. were far less willing to attack not just fellow Irishmen but people from the same neighbourhoods. A strong strain of sectarian violence persisted but the pervasive ethnic friction which so exacerbated the war against the British was largely absent from the Civil War.

This time around it was the I.R.A. who set out to punish the general population for turning against them. According to Paddy O'Brien, O/C of the 4th Cork Brigade, 'in the Civil War we were in the same position that the Brits had been in the first period. They fought the people and then we fought the people.'[273] Their main target was the railway system, its personnel, rolling stock, tracks, stations and telegraph lines (most of this sabotage does not show up in the figures in Table 17). These attacks began in mid-August and worked immediately to bring most rail traffic to a halt, a situation that continued well into the new year. In September 1922 only a few branch lines of the Cork and Muskerry and Great Southwestern railways were still in operation. All other lines were closed and 1200 men were out of work in Cork alone.[274] The full tally of I.R.A. sabotage is given below.

Table 18: Attacks on Property and Communications, 1922-23

Buildings Destroyed By I.R.A.	Unknown	Bridges	Raids on Mails
81	4	99	111

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[273] Paddy O'Brien (O'Malley Papers, P17b/124).

[274] Cork City and County Railway Situation on the 11th September 1922; C-in-C to Emmet Dalton, 20 Sept. 1922 (Mulcahy Papers, P7/B/66). For a fascinating memoir of the period, see Dr. George Hadden, 'The War on the Railways in Wexford 1922-23' in Journal of the Irish Railway Record Society, Autumn 1953, pp 117-149.

Armed robberies of businesses, which had apparently decreased somewhat between the wars (31 in 1921-22, although this drop may be attributable to poor reporting) shot up again after guerrilla war was renewed, rising to 141 in the Civil War.

In late 1922 the guerrillas began a campaign against grocery and bread vans. At least 43 were held up and burned between December and April. The aim of this policy is unclear but may have been summed up by one reported remark by a Volunteer that 'they were going to starve the country and not fight the Free State troops again.'[275]

I.R.A. operations reports from the winter of 1922-23 reveal the outcome of this attitude: week after week of minor sabotage and nuisance attacks. In a three week period in December, for example, the Mallow Battalion was active on 11 out of 21 days. On one occasion a bridge was wrecked, on another a mine was laid (which never went off). On the other ten days National Army posts and patrols were sniped at, with no result.[276] The weekly reports for the same unit from February to the end of April show the battalion settling into a regular routine. Every week the road from Mallow to Dromahane was blocked, cleared and blocked again; every week the telephone and telegraph wires going west were cut, repaired and cut again; every week one or two enemy posts were fired at with no perceptible results.[277]

The same minimalist pattern was adopted throughout the county. From the formerly vigorous Bandon Battalion comes this weekly report of January 13, 1923:[278]

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[275] Cork Command Intelligence Report, 28 Dec. 1922 (M.A., CW/OPS/14/F).

[276] Mallow Bn. Summary of Operations, 29 Dec. 1922 (C.A.I., Siobhan Lankford Papers, U169b/33).

[277] Mallow Bn. Weekly Summaries of Ops. (Lankford Papers, U169b/32).

[278] M.A., A/1164.

Saturday night: Upton railway station burned including signal cabin goods store etc. No rails were removed owing to men not being able to get the necessary tools.
Gaggin railway station burned, including goods stores, signal cabin, etc. Telephone wires and two poles cut. No rails were removed as tools for same could not be got.
Sunday night: Sherlock, Solicitor, Bandon, kidnapped and his house burned by men from E. Company.

Serious violence was now confined to weekends and to non-military targets: two railway stations and a Protestant lawyer.

Free State success had nothing to do with tactical innovation. In fact, the National Army adopted British methods wholesale - minus reprisals - so that military operations were a familiar mix of sweeps, patrols, raids and counter-ambushes. They even seem to have followed the same learning curve, particularly in the matter of replacing lorries with foot patrols.

The Irish soldiers had enormous advantages over their British counterparts. Their commanders had clear goals, unity of command and little political interference or indecision to deal with. If anything, senior officers and Provisional Government politicians took a more extreme view of the conflict than the front-line soldiers. The army also had the absolute authority of martial law from the beginning and never had to worry about evidence, juries, magistrates or amnesties (two Corkmen died on hunger strike in November 1923). Nor did they have to engage in crowd control: not one anti-Free State riot took place, a telling statistic for 'rebel' Cork.

The Free State's most important asset, however, was superb intelligence. The former Volunteers and other locals who joined the National Army all over Cork knew exactly who their opponents were and, often, where they could be found. 'Informers' were also easy to find.

I.R.A. ranks, already diminished because of the Treaty split, were gutted by arrests in the first months of the war. After three weeks of Free State occupation the city battalions had been driven deep underground: 'unless a man asks for

immediate arrest he dare not go out on the streets.'[279] Practically every active member of the 2nd (south side) Battalion had been captured, including nearly all the officers, along with many key people from the 1st Battalion. The Brigade O/C was, perhaps wisely,'still confined to bed and will be unable to resume for some time yet.'[280] Organisers investigating the state of the I.R.A. found the same story in every brigade.

By the end of February the Cork guerrillas knew they had lost. At a divisional conference held on February 26 the brigade commanders were unanimous: 'We are absolutely on the rocks.'[281] The O/C of the 1st Cork Brigade declared that 'active men were very few also the people were very hostile. The only work his brigade could do was very small jobs.' The O/C of the 3rd Brigade said he would soon have no men left. 'It was only a matter of time as to how long we are going to last.' Tom Crofts, the commander of the 1st Southern Division, concluded that 'We are flattened out...if five men were arrested in each area, we are finished. The men are suffering great privations and their morale is going. These men have been continually going for years back.'

Most of those guerrillas still at large turned into survivalists, living literally underground in dug-outs or in remote mountain hideouts. According to George Power of Fermoy, 'it was a question of evading arrest and keeping the organisation going...We could only carry out annoyances, which were very minor.'[282] Another veteran recalled that 'we lived almost back with the foxes in the end and you got as wise as

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[279] O/C City to Adj., 1st Southern Div., 6 Sept. 1922 (O'Malley Papers, P17a/97).

[280] Adj., 1st Cork Bde. to Adj., 1st Southern Div., 5 Sept. 1922 (O'Malley Papers, P17a/88).

[281] O/C 1st Southern Div. to Deputy C/S, 2 Mar. 1923 (O'Malley Papers, P17a/90).

[282] George Power (O'Malley Papers, P17b/100).

foxes too.'[283] Violence slowly petered out but never quite ended, even after the I.R.A.'s unilateral ceasefire of April 30. The army continued to hunt down fugitives and shot several in the process. A few stubborn groups of rebels remained active, holding up mailmen, robbing post offices and harassing their enemies, but these men were a tiny fringe element.

The end of the Civil War was symbolised by the 'fall' of the last I.R.A. strongholds in west Cork around Ballymakeera and Ballyvourney. Since August 1922 these districts had been 'like a border line of an independent state with our troops sallying occasionally into the enemy area but never able to reach the most important centres.'[284] The Free State finally came to stay in a week-long operation in the first week in May. The revolution was over.

The geography of the Civil War reflected the I.R.A.'s long retreat from east to west (see Maps 49-56, Appendix 2). The initial burst of fighting in Cork city and district and in Skibbereen and Clonakilty occurred during the Free State landings and republican counter-attacks. After September, which saw Free State intelligence score its first big successes, the tide of armed resistance receded westward with the fleeing guerrillas. In 1923, as a result, violence was concentrated along the Kerry border, and especially around Macroom and Millstreet. Bandon and Cork city retained some of their old energy but heavy losses in the former area snuffed out rebellion there over the winter.

Nevertheless, if we look at aggregate violence (Maps 25-28) the picture does not look all that different from previous years. Although the focus of I.R.A. operations shifted, and the districts east of the city were no longer important after August, the heartland of Bandon, Macroom and the city still

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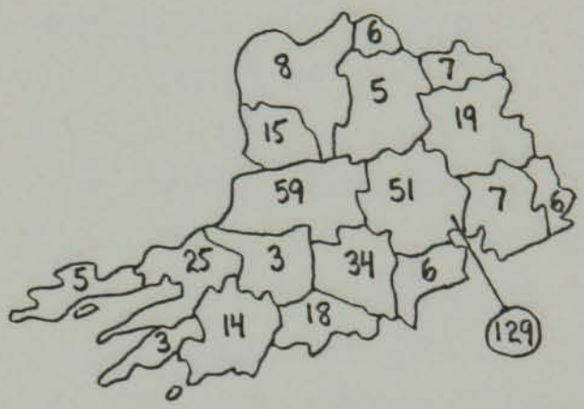
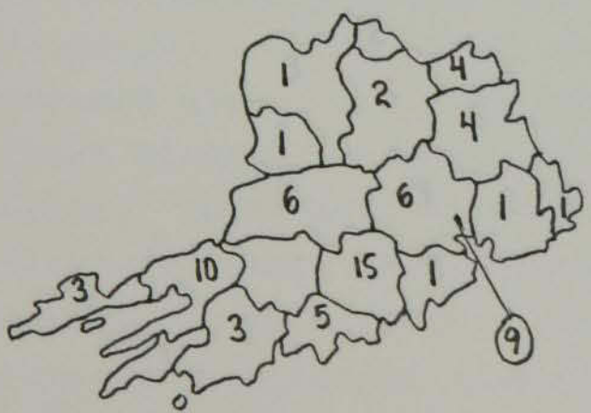
[283] Paddy Donagh Owen O'Sullivan (O'Malley Papers, P17b/57).

[284] C/S General Situation Report, 26 Sept. 1923 (M.A., A/0875).

25: National Army Casualties
July 1922-June 1923

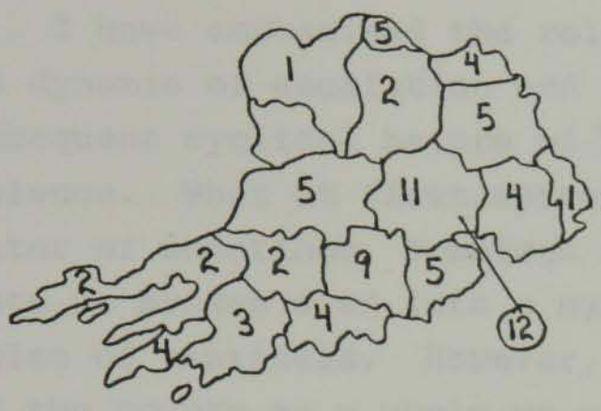


27: Total Casualties
July 1922-June 1923

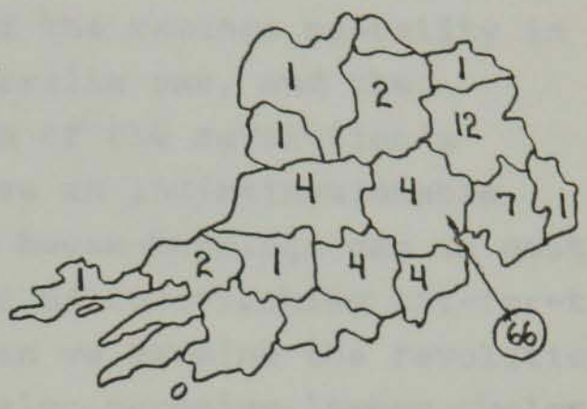


26: I.R.A. Casualties
July 1922-June 1923

28: Total Casualties
per 10,000 People
July 1922-June 1923

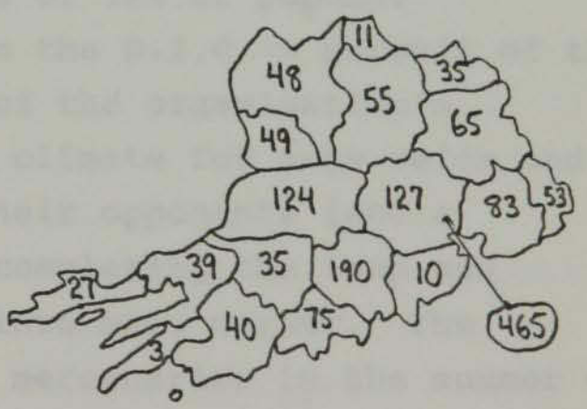


29: Buildings Destroyed
by I.R.A.
July 1922-June 1923



31: Raids on Mails
July 1922-June 1923

30: Bridges Destroyed
by I.R.A.
July 1922-June 1923



32: Total Casualties
1917-1923

formed the main arena of violence in the Civil War. Another point of continuity was the fact that the distribution of sabotage and arson was still quite different from that of shootings (Maps 29-32), showing again that one type of violence was not necessarily related to the other.

I have emphasised the role of the revenge mentality in the dynamic of escalation and guerrilla war, and the consequent cyclical nature of much of the revolution's violence. What at first appears as an indistinguishable welter of shootings, bombings and house-burnings can in most cases be broken down into a myriad of interlocking tit-for-tat cycles of reprisals. However, when we examine the revolution and the county as a whole we can also perceive longer cycles extending beyond these local vendettas, covering years rather than months.

Violence engendered violence, often in unintended or unexpected ways. Dublin Castle's oscillation between coercion and conciliation alienated republicans, home rulers and policemen alike, polarising electoral and communal politics without sustaining either the rule of law or popular legitimacy. In this policy vacuum the R.I.C.'s pursuit of the Volunteers played into the hands of the organisation's militant minority and created the climate for arms raids and ambushes. These in turn goaded their opponents into a backlash from late 1919 on, thus completing the loop and beginning the retaliatory spiral into mass murder. The government's injection of British mercenaries in the summer of 1920 again produced the opposite of intended results. Rather than suppressing the I.R.A., the Black and Tans' rapid descent into illegal mayhem only intensified the contest and fuelled the cycle of reprisals. Indeed the rebels acted just as the police had when they came under attack. Overhauling the legal system via the Restoration of Order in Ireland Act and martial law had the same outcome.

Neither side anticipated guerrilla war. Cork's I.R.A. leadership clung for years to the ideal of a 'spectacular' rising and tried hard to suppress their own disorderly

militants. Nevertheless it was this self-appointed vanguard who prevailed, pushing and pulling their organisation into revolution. Their seizure of the political agenda was symbolised by the general election of 1921, in which nearly all the new M.P.s were members of the I.R.A. or I.R.B.. Between the summers of 1920 and 1921 Irish politics was in the hands of the gunmen, Irish and British alike.

Like guerrilla war, revenge took on a life of its own, heedless of tactics, truces and treaties. Most of the civilians killed or dispossessed by the I.R.A. in 1922 and 1923 were left over enemies from 1920 and 1921, their supposed crimes unforgotten. Cork hitmen even tracked informers to England and New York in 1922.

The politics of revenge also took an unexpected direction as nationalism veered towards sectarianism in late 1920 and guerrilla war became, in some places, a kind of tribal war. Communal violence developed its own momentum and smouldered on long after the British regime had departed.

Weaving in and out of these larger patterns of force, other threads of violence followed similarly uncharted courses. The unforeseen epidemics of 'land hunger' and robbery which recurred throughout this period can be attributed in part to policemen and rebels but both types of violence continued after the R.I.C. was disbanded and while the I.R.A. was in power. Just as some serial killers continued to stalk the same prey - Protestants and policemen, mostly - after their loyalties had been made irrelevant, so more ordinary criminals were also creatures of habit. Both practioners and victims found it difficult to escape from violence and suffering.

Violence, as it was experienced by different groups, had many different faces and varying life cycles; we must therefore be wary of dividing the revolution into labels and periods. For many guerrillas their struggle followed an unbroken line from 1917 to 1923. Members of the R.I.C. and their families were equally at risk from 1917 to 1922. For loyalists, on the other hand, persecution became general in 1920 and continued almost unabated up to 1923. From this

perspetive, there was no division or hiatus between the wars against the British regime and the Free State; it was all a civil war.

The perception and chronology of violence depended on one's point of view. To understand the dynamics of violence, therefore, the revolution must be considered as a whole, both chronologically and sociologically. While violence was a force in itself and did develop its own logic, its continuities were shaped and embodied by individual and group decisions, fears and loyalties. This chapter has examined violence primarily as a set of experiences and outcomes, as a function of death and destruction. Violence also resided in language and social relationships. How did the revolution transform some neighbours and strangers into comrades, to kill and die for, and others into enemies to be shot and expelled? Before we can begin to understand how the Cork of 1914 became the Cork of 1921 we must first explore the lives of its revolutionaries.

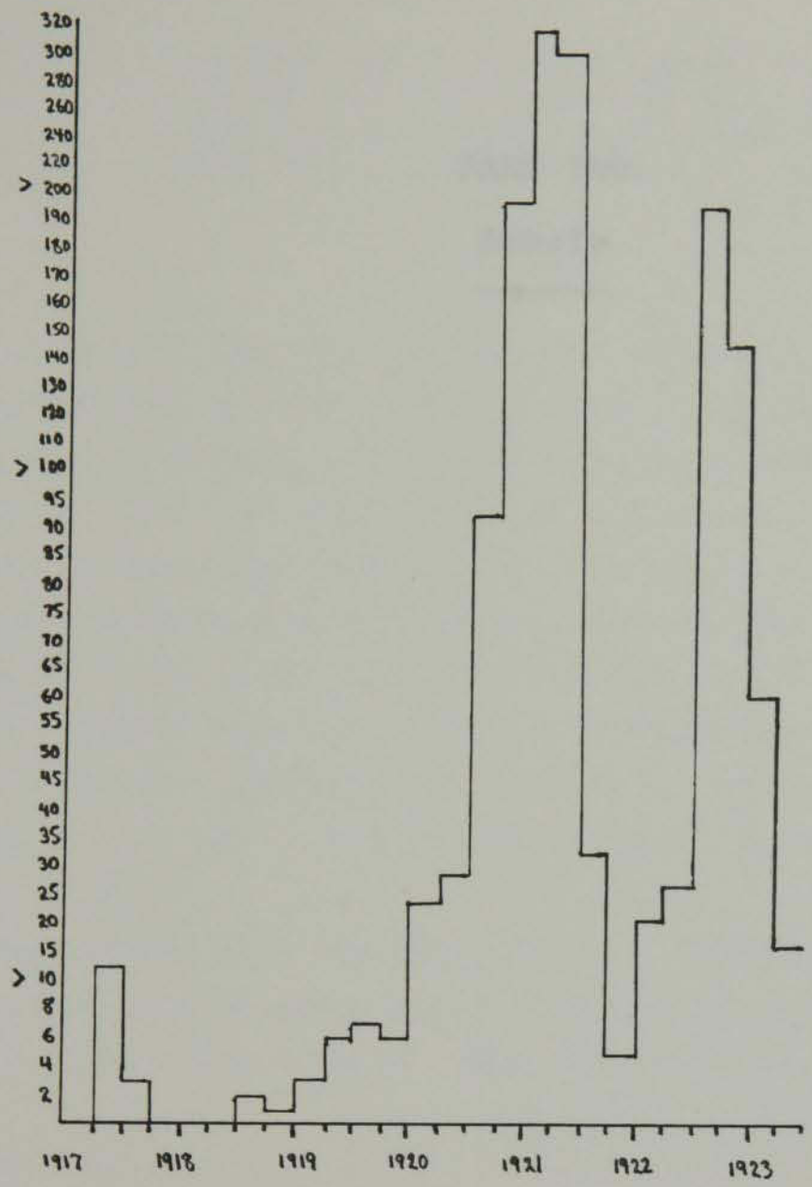


Figure 2: Total Victims of the Revolution, 1917-1923[285]

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[285] Each number shown in Figure 2 represents the total number of killed and wounded (as defined in Table 1) for a three- month period, beginning in January 1917 and ending in June 1923. Please note that (as indicated by arrows) the scale of the vertical axis, measuring casualties, changes several times as the numbers increase. Thus, each unit measures 2 casualties up to 10 per quarter, 5 casualties between 10 and 100 per quarter, 10 casualties between 100 and 200 per quarter, and 20 casualties above 200 per quarter. As a result, the apparent difference between the level of violence in 1919 and 1921 looks deceptively small: the accurate comparison is between numbers, not positions on the graph.

PART TWO

Rebels

The Boys of Kilmichael

> Forget not the boys of Kilmichael,
> Those gallant lads stalwart and true,
> Who fought 'neath the green flag of Erin
> And who conquered the Red, White and Blue.
> 'The Boys of Kilmichael'

Kilmichael immediately became a symbol of rebellion and transformed the victors into heroes.[1] In local eyes, 'our own boys, our neighbours' sons and grandsons' had become warriors.[2] Who were the boys of Kilmichael? What sort of Ireland did they represent? What kind of men were these ruthless and suddenly victorious guerrillas?

Their opponents, the Auxiliaries, were in little doubt. They considered the men of the flying column (whom they were quickly able to identify) as 'dirty', 'brutish' and 'a thoroughly bad lot', and despised them for what they had done at Kilmichael.[3]

'The boys' were equally sure of themselves. To them it was the Auxies who were the 'terrorists', 'killers without mercy' and 'prison scum'.[4] The Column were, in Tom Barry's

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[1] In Dunmanway in 1922, for example, the new year was ushered in by 'a torchlight procession of juveniles, who sang lustily of Kilmichael, Crossbarry and Rosscarbery.' Star, 7 Jan. 1922.

[2] Crowley, In West Cork Long Ago, p.19.

[3] 'Raymond' (Flor Crowley), 'Black and Tan Diary', Southern Star, 23 Oct.-27 Nov. 1971 (hereafter referred to as the Star). This invaluable series of articles reproduces the complete text (minus the names of informers) of the Dunmanway Auxiliary Company's Intelligence Diary from December 1920 to March 1921. It includes an accurate list of local I.R.A. men, along with the sort of descriptions quoted above. See also Gleeson, Bloody Sunday, pp.73-75 and Everett, Bricks and Flowers, p.154.

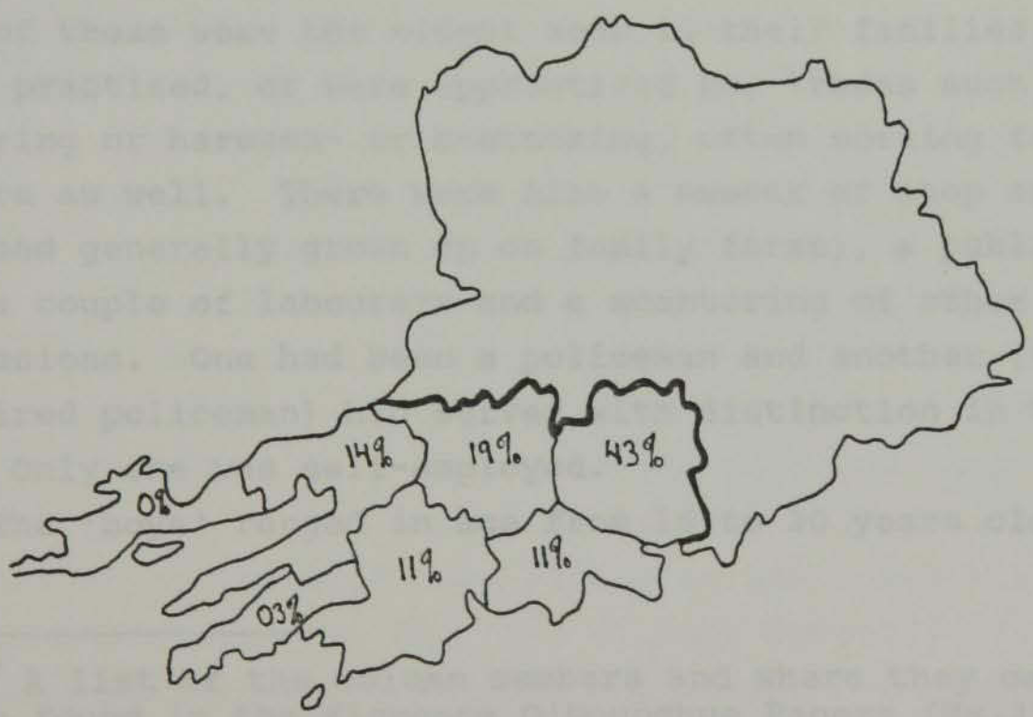
[4] The first two terms are from Barry, Guerilla Days in Ireland, p.41; the last is from another song of the period, 'Barry's Flying Column'.

words, 'a fine body of the best type of Volunteers'; 'a tough bunch of men, and above all, decent men.'[5]

One Kilmichael veteran told me his comrades were 'a lot of hard men...a fine bunch of fellas. They wouldn't let you down.' Others spoke of them as 'West Cork men all, loyal and staunch comrades' and 'a fine lot of good, decent Irish men.'[6] With varying degrees of modesty, they accepted their local fame as 'gallant lads stalwart and true.'

The guerrillas were indeed 'West Cork men all'. Their names - O'Sullivan, McCarthy, Hegarty, Crowley, O'Driscoll and others - evoke an almost tribal identity and echo those of generations of local ancestors and innumerable relatives and neighbours.

Figure 3: Geographical Origins of the West Cork Flying Column



[5] Barry, Guerilla Days in Ireland, p.38; Interview with Barry broadcast on R.T.E. Radio on the occasion of his death in 1980 (tape in the possession of Donal O'Donovan, Cork city).

[6] Interview with E.Y., 25 June 1988; Interview with Mr. Buckley (R.T.E. Archives, A2792); Tim O'Donoghue, 'Destruction of Rosscarbery R.I.C. Barrack' in Rebel Cork's Fighting Story (Tralee, n.d.), p.163.

The column was drawn from towns, villages and farms throughout the West Cork Brigade area. As can be seen from Figure 3, by far the largest contingent - nearly half - came from the Bandon Battalion, while another 20% came from Dunmanway, where the ambush took place.[7] This was the heartland of south Cork and of its rebellion. The other members were scattered around the fringes of this core area; the Schull battalion could only muster one volunteer for the training camp and ambush, and the nine men sent from the Beara Battalion arrived too late for either.[8]

Of the Kilmichael participants whose social backgrounds can be traced, one-quarter worked on their fathers' farms, which ranged in size from a substantial 174 acres to a comparatively meagre 19 acres (and in value from £11 to £46).[9] Most of these were the eldest sons in their families. Over a third practised, or were apprenticed to, trades such as coopering or harness- or bootmaking, often working for their fathers as well. There were also a number of shop assistants (who had generally grown up on family farms), a publican's son, a couple of labourers and a scattering of other professions. One had been a policeman and another (the son of a retired policeman) had served with distinction in the Great War. Only one was self-employed.

The 'boys' ranged in age from 16 to 30 years old, the

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[7] A list of the column members and where they came from can be found in the Florence O'Donoghue Papers (Ms.31,301).

[8] See Liam O'Dwyer, Beara in Irish History (New York, 1977), pp 120-121. For more on the geography of the column, see Chapter 7, which includes a comparative map of the members' origins as of the battle of Crossbarry in March 1921 (Figure .

[9] This description of the Column at Kilmichael is based on an occupational sample of 23, and an age sample of 18, out of the 37 members present. The information came from a variety of sources (see Appendix 4), but primarily from manuscript Census returns in the P.R.O.(Dublin) and land records in the Land Valuation Office.

average being 23. All were literate, unmarried and practising Catholics. Most had lived with their families until they went on the run, to prison and to war.

All of these men were officers in their respective companies and battalions of the West Cork Brigade: experienced local leaders and activists ('hard men') with years of organising and conflict behind them, and many battles ahead of them. They were wanted men, forced out of their homes and jobs since the previous winter. Nine had taken part in the great prison hunger strike of that spring. Five were still with the column at the battle of Crossbarry in March 1921.

Most had joined the movement in 1917 (some even earlier), when many were still teenagers. In most cases, brothers and cousins had also joined (Tom Barry was the exception). A good number of these relatives were also arrested and a few were killed. Their farms, villages and towns remained strongholds of the revolution right through the Civil War. 'Barry's Flying Column' went anti-treaty to a man[10] and several were present at the fatal ambush of Michael Collins at Beal na mblath in 1922.[11] At least one may have been involved in the massacre of Protestants along the Bandon valley in April 1922.[12] By 1923 nearly every man present at Kilmichael had been killed, wounded or imprisoned.[13]

These are the sociological facts of the Kilmichael ambush, but how do they relate to the opposing 'dirty' and 'decent' images of the ambushers held by either side? How did the men of the West Cork Flying Column compare with the rest of the I.R.A., or the rest of Cork society? The following chapters will examine the social structure and perceptions of the Republican Army.

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[10] Interview with E.Y..

[11] See Meda Ryan, The Day Michael Collins Was Shot (Swords, 1989).

[12] See Chapter 9.

[13] Three more members of the column died in the remainder of the Tan War or the Civil War.

Volunteers

> This was a war between the British Army and the Irish people.
>
> Tom Barry, Guerilla Days in Ireland[1]

> Surely, what we chiefly do when we speak of the People is to make an historic reference to certain more or less defined loyalties, and to those who fougt for them whether under Collins, Redmond, Davitt, O'Connell, or Wolfe Tone. It is a term, that is, which frankly excludes and frankly sets a boundary.
>
> Sean O'Faolain, 'The Plain People of Ireland'[2]

An enormous amount has been written about the I.R.A., and the name conjures up powerful images and symbols, but we still know very little about what sort of people joined and why. The question goes to the heart of political myths both new and old. Were the Volunteers a nation in arms or a 'murder gang' composed of thugs and corner boys?

Most official British commentators echoed the Dunmanway Auxiliaries' caustic appraisal of the I.R.A. as being 'a thoroughly bad lot' recruited from the lowest classes. Within the Royal Irish Constabulary, initial reactions to the emergent movement ranged from the Inspector General's lofty declaration that the Volunteers were 'half educated shop assistants and excitable young rustics'[3] to the local sergeants' easygoing identification of them as 'insignificant' men of 'good character.'[4] Indeed, a few policemen in places such as Mallow, Firmount and Cork city were even willing to testify in court that their local Volunteers were 'respectable

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[1] Guerilla Days in Ireland, p.207.

[2] 'The Plain People of Ireland', The Bell, October 1943, p.1.

[3] Monthly Report of the Inspector General, Jan. 1918 (P.R.O. London, CO/904/105).

[4] Reports on illegal drilling in Charleville, 18 Nov. 1917 and Rockchapel, 24 Nov. 1917 (CO/904/122).

young men'; 'well conducted boys' or 'of respectable family'.5

The advent of guerrilla warfare and widespread killing changed this attitude of half-amused condescension into one of bitter loathing, shared by both policemen and soldiers stationed in Cork. However, it did little to alter the basic official contempt for the revolutionaries. 'They looked rather a pallid, unwashed crowd who endeavoured to look important';'young bolshevists who had no stake in the country and who delight in seeing the 'stay-at-homes' ruined.'6 The notorious Major A.C. Percival, stationed in Bandon with the Essex Regiment, dismissed his local foes as:7

> Farmers' sons and corner boys who had no stake in the country and preferred earning a living by plunder and murder than by doing an honest day's work...they nearly all had an exaggerated idea of their own importance. The officers were generally selected from the more desperate men of the neighbourhood, the rank and file consisting chiefly of labourers and young recruits.

Once Free State troops began to wage their own war against the Cork I.R.A. in late 1922, they began to think in remarkably similar terms.8 Republicans and their supporters came from the 'poorer classes' and 'backward areas', lacked

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[5] See Cork Examiner, 26 May 1917; 22 Nov. 1917; 14 Nov. 1918; 14 Aug. 1919.

[6] Brigadier Frederick Clarke, "The Memoirs of a Professional Soldier in Peace and War", unpublished, 1968 (Liddel Hart Centre for Military Archives, Clarke Papers), p.11; Extract from a report by the Col-Comdt. of the Kerry Brigade (whose area covered part of north Cork) included in a letter from Gen. MacCready to Frances Stevenson, 20 June 1921 (House of Lords Record Office, Lloyd George Papers, F/36/2/19).

[7] Major A.C. Percival, "Guerrilla Warfare - Ireland 1920-21" [Lecture No.1] (Imperial War Museum[I.W.M.], Percival Papers).

[8] Michael Collins was quoted as saying: 'These men...are not the men with whom I fought; they are the rebble and rough-necks from all quarters.' Plain People, 23 April 1922.

education and were little more than thieves.9 National Army officers from outside the county who found themselves fighting in the wilder and more isolated parts of northern and western Cork were especially prone to these attitudes.

This contemptuous tone was widely adopted outside the republican movement. One R.I.C. sergeant reported in 1917 that 'the well-to-do inhabitants of Charleville' considered the Volunteers to be 'an insignificant crowd who have no real stake in the country...a large majority of the people in Charleville treat these Sinn Feiners with contempt.'10 The Skibbereen Eagle referred to participants in one Volunteer parade in 1918 as 'young rustics, bored by the vacuity of country life, and Skibbereen 'sparks' wishful of a change from billiards.'11 In Bantry the I.R.A. were referred to, rather politely, as 'young men of no means.'12 In Youghal they were called 'the loafers of the town', in Timoleague, 'ignorant country boys', in Macroom, 'idle, no account fellows', in Castletownbere, 'raw country bogcutters' and in Lissard, 'scum, who didn't own a wheel-barrow of their own.'13 Above all, they were 'corner boys'.14

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9 General Weekly Return (Irregular), 9 June 1923 (M.A., CW/OPS/14); General report on Cork, 1 April 1924 (M.A., A/0825); see also Weekly [Cork] Command Situation Report, 15 March 1923 (CW/OPS/13), Report on Land Seizures to Min. of Agriculture, 19 April 1923 (M.A., DOD A/0875) and General Situation Report to Min. of Defence, 20 Sept. 1923 (A/0875).

10 Report on illegal drilling in Charleville, 18 Nov. 1917.

11 County Cork Eagle, 20 July 1918. This newspaper was universally known as the 'Skibbereen Eagle' and will hereafter be referred to as the Eagle.

12 Irish Times, 14 April, 1920.

13 Michael Gleeson statement (P.R.O.L., Irish Grants Committee Papers, CO/762/26); Letter from Elizabeth O'Donovan, 28 Oct. 1921 (U.C.D., Richard Mulcahy Papers, P7/A/30); Freeman's Journal, 21 Aug. 1922; Intercepted letter in Officer Commanding[O/C] 1st Southern Division to O/C 5th Cork Brigade, 13 Sept. 1922 (M.A., A/0991/4); a neighbour's comment noted in Edith Somerville's diary, 12 May 1922 (Queen's University Special Collections, Somerville and Ross Papers).

These opinions came from shopkeepers, farmers, a businessman, a newspaper editor and reporters, a Poor Law Guardian, and a retired military officer - people with some property and authority who saw the I.R.A. as social upstarts.

Dirt was a constant theme of these descriptions (and of those by British soldiers as well).15 The Volunteers were 'dirty', 'ragged' and even 'verminous': 'a scrubby-looking lot of corner boys'16 Protestant families who had guerrillas take over their houses in 1921 and 1922 often complained of their roughness and dirt.17 What did Katherine Everett remember of her encounter with an I.R.A. officer in Macroom? 'A seedy-looking young man in a stained yellow mackintosh.'18

We can trace the evolution of one Cork observer's attitudes towards the Volunteers in the diaries, letters and writings of Edith Somerville, an acute but nevertheless caste-bound observer. Somerville, a lifelong resident of Castletownshend, felt herself to be a countrywoman first and foremost and regarded Irish towns with scorn. Here resided the trouble-making 'Irish intelligentsia [and] their

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[14] The I.R.A. were typically, and endlessly, referred to as 'those ---- corner boys'. The anonymous author of 'Through an Ulsterman's Eyes: the Birth of the Irish Free State' (Atlantic Monthly, Oct. 1922, p.545) called those he met in Cork city 'furtive corner boys'. See also 'Sassenach', Arms and the Irishman (London, 1932), p.77.

[15] See Clarke, 'Memoirs of a Professional Soldier', pp 3-4; 79th News (the journal of the Cameron Highlanders), Oct. 1920, p.146.

[16] C.H. Bretherton, describing Tom Barry and his men: 'Irish Backgrounds' in Atlantic Monthly, Dec. 1922, p.698.

[17] The files of the Irish Grants Committee are full of such accounts, from all over the county. See, for example, the statements of Bartholemew Purdon (CO/762/106), Harry Kingston (/150), John Beamish (/177), George Daunt (/180), Samuel Jennings (/183), William Hingston (/192), Samuel Kingston (/193) and Sarah Trinder (/194).

[18] Everett, p.155.

disgusting class - the lower middle drawer!'19, along with assorted 'counter-jumpers', 'flappers' and 'town blackguards' (a favorite phrase). To her, Skibbereen was the root of all evil.

Against these pernicious townspeople she set the men and women whom she thought formed the moral and social backbone of Ireland: the 'sane and solid' farmers and their wives.20

In the early years of the war, and even after the 1916 Rising, Somerville saw Sinn Fein and the Irish Volunteers as being more or less a continuation of the old Home Rule agitation - the same 'town blackguards' under another name, harbouring the same fantasies about the coming Irish millennium.21 In 1914 she gathered that Home Rule meant 'Yees will be we'es, and We'es will be Yees!' while in 1917 the Republic was defined to her as 'No polis and no taxes.'22

At this stage she still thought of the Volunteers as part of that quaint lower-class Catholic world she imagined, whose foibles and antics she loved to catalogue. In 1918 some tolerance could still be extended (along with considerable mockery) to 'Ourselves Alone' - the 'green-capped boys and fury flappers' otherwise referred to as 'idle, contentious youths' and 'sentimentally seditious shopgirls.'23 The local company of Volunteers were 'two dozen tom-fools' and the young republican leader she met was misled but meant well.24 'There is pathos in his eager intelligence, his genuine

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[19] Somerville to Ethel Smyth, 27 Oct. 1921 (Somerville and Ross Papers, Lot 878).

[20] Edith Somerville, 'Ourselves Alone', Ms. article, n.d.[1918] (Somerville and Ross Papers, Lot 899).

[21] For references to 'town blackguards' and politics, see E. Somerville to Col. John Somerville, 2 Dec. 1913; 2 April, 21 May 1914 (Somerville and Ross Papers, Lot 877), and Edith Somerville Diary, 5 Feb. 1919.

[22] E. Somerville to John Somerville, 21 May 1914; note in 1917 volume of her Diary (Somerville and Ross Papers).

[23] Somerville, 'Ourselves Alone'.

[24] E. Somerville to Col. J. Somerville, 24 Nov. 1917.

enthusiasm.'25 She still hoped that the traditional figures of authority, the priests and established farmers, would exert their influence to curb such enthusiasts.

This benevolent tone quickly evaporated in the face of open rebellion with its attendant killings and vandalism. The eager enthusiasts and tom-fools became 'half-educated cads and upstarts' and 'a Thieves' gang.'26 When she meets an I.R.A. leader he is now described as 'a dirty youth.'27 By May 1922, 'the scum and the dregs of this wretched country are now in power, and we - the unfortunate middle strata - gentry, farmers, shop people - are helpless.'28

Even in 1921 and 1922, however, Somerville clung to the idea that the country boys, the sons of the farmers she respected and hunted with, were innocents, coerced or misled by those eternal culprits, the outside agitators: 'paid outside [and doubtless town-bred] Bolshevists.'29

Somerville's faith that the peasantry were fundamentally sound, albeit easily cowed, was not necessarily widely shared. Her local ally, P.J. Sheehy, the staunchly anti-republican editor of the Skibbereen Eagle, usually blamed any trouble on 'the lusty young men of the country'. The town's Sinn Feiners were few in number and 'only of Skibbereen in the sense that they reside there at the moment.' 'Why', he lamented, 'don't the young men coming into Skibbereen take as a pattern their compatriots of the town?', the latter being both orderly and loyal.30

Sheehy and many others did, however, share Somerville's belief in a silent majority opposed to the revolution. Again and again, hostile observers commented on the division between

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25 Somerville, 'Ourselves Alone'.

26 E. Somerville to E. Smyth, 22 April 1922.

27 Somerville Diary, 17 May 1922.

28 E. Somerville to E. Smyth, 2 May 1922.

29 E. Somerville to E. Smyth, 10 March 1921.

30 Eagle, 13 Jan. 1917, 9 Mar. 1918.

the revolutionaries and the farmers and shopkeepers - the 'stake-in-the-country men' - and frequently lamented the latters' silence or 'moral cowardice'.31 In the opinion of one judge at the Munster Assizes, 'They have allowed themselves to be cowed, intimidated and down-trodden by a comparatively small number of wicked men.'32 In 1921, one British commander in Cork concluded that 'the farmer class as a whole are governed by the gunmen.'33 In 1923 the National Army's Cork Command was still decrying 'the general rottenness of the moral fibre of the people.'34

This depiction of the I.R.A. as 'idle and reckless men' of the lower classes was endorsed by commentators, official and otherwise, throughout Ireland.35 As in Cork, the most common initial reaction to the Volunteer movement was one of mild disdain. In Drogheda in 1917 they were deemed by the police to be 'persons of no consequence.'36 In Tyrone they were 'primarily confined to the lower classes.' In Kerry the movement 'embraces the rowdy part of the community.' In

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[31] See C.I. Monthly Report, West Cork, June 1919 (CO/904/109). Sir Henry Robinson, the President of the Local Government Board, wrote from Cork in May 1919 about local reactions to a riot he had witnessed:

I spoke with a number of persons of the small shopkeeper class about the matter and they all said, in effect, very much the same thing - that they hoped the police would '<u>give it to them</u>' and that 'these men who had nothing to lose would have the place under martial law before they were done.' But I noticed that they were more guarded in expressing opinions when speaking to one another.

Robinson to Vice President, Local Government Board, 13 May 1919 (I.W.M., Sir John French Papers, 75/46/12).

[32] <u>Examiner</u>, 3 Dec. 1919.

[33] Extract from report of Area Commander in MacCready to Stevenson, 20 June 1921.

[34] Cork Command General Weekly Survey, 12 April 1923 (CW\OPS\14).

[35] C.I. Report, Galway West, Feb. 1918 (CO/904/105).

[36] Report on illegal drilling in Drogheda, 30 Dec. 1917 (CO/904/122/3).

Galway, it consisted of 'young rough men and young priests and for the most part bullies', in Kilkenny, 'rowdies and persons of no standing in the locality' and in King's County, the 'hooligan class' predominated.37 The Local Government Board Inspector for Donegal, Derry and Fermanagh reported in May 1918 that 'they are really just the mischievous characters of the various localities and if there was no Sinn Fein they would probably find some other excuse to behave as they do.'38 Still writing in the same vein in 1919, Lord French, the Lord Lieutenant, dismissed the Volunteers as mere 'village ruffians.'39

Volunteer leaders were not much better and, in fact, were 'barely men in the ordinary sense at all' according to a typical police report from Fermanagh in 1918.40 In Clare and Mayo local officers were 'of no importance' and had 'practically no influence.'41 One policeman summed up the prevailing attitude in his characterization of one Tipperary Captain: 'He is a man of good character but is not looked upon as being of much importance in the locality.'42

Later descriptions dripped with venom. The guerrillas of 1920 and 1921 were 'a horde of proletarians, grocers' curates, farm labourers, porters, stable boys, car-conductors and what

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37 C.I. Monthly Reports, Tyrone, Sept. 1917; Kerry, Nov. 1917; Galway (West Riding), June 1918; Kilkenny, July 1918; King's, July 1918 (CO 904/102-107).

38 Report to Sir Henry Robinson, 29 May 1918 (French Papers, 75/46/12).

39 Report on the State of Ireland, 15 May 1919 (French Papers, 75/46/12).

40 C.I. Monthly Report, Fermanagh, March 1918 (CO/904/105).

41 Reports on illegal drilling in Bohola, Co. Mayo, 16 Dec. 1917 and Kilrush, Co. Clare, 10 Dec. 1917 (CO/904/122).

42 Report on illegal drilling in Donaskeigh, 9 Dec. 1917 (Co/904/122). The British Army's 1920 guide to 'Sinn Fein and the Irish Volunteers' (Strickland Papers) went so far as to ascribe the I.R.A.'s lack of proper discipline to the fact that the social background of the officers was 'exactly the same as the rank and file.'

not', 'scum' or 'corner boys.'[43] Their 'officers' 'are to be found among the farm hands all over the country, and the shop assistants in the villages and towns.'[44] One Killorglin (Co. Kerry) businessman felt that 'those who have to leave the town [to go on the run] are all corner boys and are a good riddance.'[45] And finally, the R.I.C. Commissioner for Munster No.1 Division, the formidable General Cyril Prescott-Decie: 'all the corner boys, the criminals and the murderers. This population is one of the worst in the world - cruel, cowardly, idle, and inefficient, corrupt, and born intriguers.'[46]

According to most of these descriptions, in Cork and elsewhere, Volunteers (or 'Sinn Feiners', a blanket term) fell into two main occupational categories: 'shop assistants and town labourers.'[47] In Sir James O'Connor's unfriendly view, 'the 'war' was the work of two thousand men and boys, nearly all of them of a low grade of society - farm hands, shop hands and the like.'[48] In Down, the republicans were 'young shop boys, clerks etc.'; in Tullamore, 'shop assistants and labourers for the most part'; in Longford, 'mostly shopboys'; in Kilkenny, 'shop assistants and persons of that

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[43] C.H. Bretherton [the Irish correspondent for the Morning Post], The Real Ireland (London, 1925), p.80. This book was withdrawn soon after publication because of threatened lawsuits, but see also Bretherton, 'Irish Backgrounds', pp 692-3, wich contains a more detailed and interesting social analysis of the I.R.A..

[44] Memo. by Maj. Charles Foulkes, 16 May 1921 (Liddel Hart Centre, Foulkes Papers, File 1).

[45] Intercepted letter, Nov. 1921 (Mulcahy Papers, P7/A/31).

[46] Memo. by Gen. Prescott-Decie, n.d. (P.R.O.N.I., D989/A/8/23).

[47] W. Alison Phillips, The Revolution in Ireland (London, 1923), pp.176-177. Phillips was involved in the British Intelligence effort in Ireland, and had access to the R.I.C.'s files in 1921.

[48] Sir James O'Connor, A History of Ireland 1798-1924, vol.2 (London, 1925), p.296.

class.'49

Everywhere it was agreed that this 'couple of thousand Irish peasants and shopboys' were opposed by the 'farmer-policeman-priest class' but that the latter were intimidated into silence.50 Or, as General Prescott-Decie put it, they were 'wanting in moral and physical courage and easily coerced.'51

These opinions were, in many cases, an outgrowth of deep-rooted prejudices: those of the English against the Irish, Protestants against Catholics, the propertied against those without, townspeople against countrymen and vice-versa, and so on down through the many layers of Irish society. If, for example, Protestant farmers in Cork found I.R.A. squatters dirty and untrustworthy, and English soldiers thought the same of those they searched and arrested, they were simply applying the usual stereotypes of the Catholic Irish as a whole.

And indeed, many British soldiers and policemen (and some native Unionists) barely distinguished between the insurgents and the general population. Major Bernard Montgomery, a staff officer in Cork city, admitted he 'regarded all civilians as 'Shinners'.'52 One battalion commander operating in east Cork in 1921 reported that 'the troops gradually learned to hate the Irish and have been inclined to brand them as a nation of murderers.'53

Here as well, the Irish army followed in their predecessors' footsteps. In January 1923 the Cork Command's

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[49] C.I. Monthly Reports, Down, Jan. 1917; King's, March 1917; Longford, Nov.1917; Kilkenny, May 1918 (CO 904/102-105).

[50] O'Connor, History of Ireland, p.315; Bretherton, p.80. See also the C.I. Monthly Reports, King's, March 1918 (CO/904/105) and Co. Dublin, May 1918 (CO\904\106); Report on the Clare and Tralee Special Military Areas, 1918 (I.W.M., Lord Loch Papers, 71/12/9) and the 18th [Limerick] Bde. Weekly Intelligence Summary, 20 Aug. 1921 (U.C.D., Ernie O'Malley Papers, P17a/9).

[51] Memo. by Gen. Prescott-Decie.

[52] Montgomery to Percival, 14 Oct. 1923 (Percival Papers).

[53] Anon., 'Appreciation of the Situation in Ireland', May 1921 (N.L.I., G.A. Cockerill Papers, Ms.10,606).

Weekly Survey complained that 'some members of the Army consider all inhabitants of Cork County as irregular.'[54]

A few British commanders and intelligence officers did cut through the folklore and stereotypes to achieve a more balanced, even respectful, view of their enemies. Notable among them was General Nevil Macready, the Commander-in-Chief in Ireland. He began his tenure in 1919 sharing the official view of the I.R.A. as a contemptible murder gang, but by February 1921, he was telling Sir Henry Wilson, the Chief of the Imperial General Staff that they were:[55]

> faced with a considerable proportion of the manhood in Ireland under the age of 25 to 30...In country districts these men may be partially educated countrymen and labouring class, but in the towns and cities they are well educated young men, and all are imbued with what, for want of a better term, I would call 'fanatical patriotism'.

The Irish Command's own history of the revolution spoke authoritatively of 'moral degenerates' and the 'underlying cruelty in the nature of many Irishmen' but went on to describe most revolutionaries as 'honest and earnest visionaries', sober and incorruptible.[56] And the 6th Division's final Intelligence summary concluded: 'it must be remembered that members of the I.R.A. are drawn from the civil population of every station in life.'[57]

The Irish Command historian's (and Macready's) belief in a group of 'earnest visionaries' within the republican movement was shared by some Irish Unionists. They differentiated the decent idealists in Sinn Fein and the Volunteers from both their corrupt rivals in the Irish Party

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[54] Cork Command Weekly Survey, 24 Jan. 1923 (CW/OPS/14).

[55] Macready to Chief of the Imperial General Staff, 18 Feb. 1921 (French Papers, 75/46/12).

[56] Record of the Rebellion in Ireland in 1920-21, Vol.2 [Intelligence], p.32 (I.W.M., Hugh Jeudwine Papers).

[57] 'Notes on the Organisation and Methods of Sinn Fein in the Sixth Divisional Area', 7 July 1921 (I.W.M., Sir Peter Strickland Papers).

and also from the thugs within their own ranks. One Unionist wrote from Cork in March 1917 that 'the active Sinn Feiners are all young and intelligent men, generally teetotallers: unlike the ordinary political fellows they do not patronise public-houses.' J.M. Wilson, an Ulster Unionist organiser, also reported that 'the Sinn Fein movement...in Cork elicts sympathy from the better educated class and is not at all confined to the corner-boy element.[58]

By 1919, with the eclipse of the Redmondites and the rise of the I.R.A., this distinction between 'good' Sinn Feiners and the Party machine was replaced by one between 'good' Sinn Feiners and the 'murder gang':[59]

> These methods to which Sinn Feinism has of late shown a tendency to degenerate are entirely contrary to the policy and interests of he Sinn Fein leaders. In their absence Sinn Feinism is getting out of hand and is being locally controlled by the irresponsible hooligan minority, who are in the movement for what they can get out of it and as an outlet for their criminal instincts...the town hooligans and the sons of labourers and those who care nothing of Sinn Fein ideals.

At the same time, the London Daily News was wondering: 'Will the eminently respectable group of idealists at the top be submerged by an eruption of the men and women a the bottom?'[60] In both cases, political differences entailed class differences.

The I.R.A. did manage to impress some southern Unionists, and others, in their role as policemen in the summer of 1920:

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[58] Letter from Cork, 5 March 1917 (P.R.O.N.I., D989/A/8/7). In September Wilson interviewed a Unionist City Councillor who was 'full of detestation of the Redmondites and would prefer to deal with a Sinn Feiner 'any day'...One thing he admired about the Sinn Feiners is their determination to wipe out that pestilent body, the A.O.H., and Molly Maguires.' This was a typical attitude among Cork Unionists. J.M. Wilson, notes of tour, March 27-8, Sept. 1917 (D989/A/9/7).

[59] Sir Henry Robinson to Sec., Lord Lt., 6 January 1919 (French Papers, 75/46/12).

[60] Quoted in the Examiner, 15 Feb. 1919.

'These boys had seemed to me to take very real pride and pleasure in doing the decent thing which appealed to their sense of chivalry.'61 The polite young men in their Sunday best who kept order at fairs and races, protected property and kept tinkers and beggers away, looked especially good compared with the Black and Tans who drove them back underground.

Nevertheless, such views seem to have been exceptional, and grew even more so as violence escalated. The general consensus among soldiers, policemen, Unionists, and the I.R.A.'s other enemies was that most rebels were unruly and unskilled youths with little social status and too much time on their hands.

So pervasive was this image that 'the usual I.R.A. type' became a common description of suspects in military and police reports, even those of the National Army.62 Major Percival asserted that 'after a little practice one becomes able to select a few likely 'types''.63 The 6th Division circulated a photograph album entitled 'Some Types of the Sinn Fein'.64 General Prescott-Decie was able to reduce 'I.R.A. types' to two: 'the one the burly ruffian type; the other a moral and physical degenerate...these were the men with whom the Black and Tans had to deal.'65

Prescott-Decie's opinions were extreme even by the standards of the Black and Tans, but his belief that he could tell I.R.A. men at a glance was commonplace. To much of the

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61 E.H. Ussher, 'The True Story of a Revolution', p.40 (T.C.D., Ms.9269). This is a fascinating account of the revolution in west Waterford.

62 An example of the use of the term 'the usual I.R.A. type' can be found in the [British] 6th Division Circular, 28 Oct. 1920 (M.A., A/0413); See also, Operational Report, West Cork and South Kerry, 8 May 1923 (M.A., CW/OPS/13).

63 Percival, 'Guerrilla Warfare' [Lecture No.2] (Percival Papers).

64 'Some Types of the Sinn Fein' (Strickland Papers).

65 'How well I know both types! The police photograph books of Irish revolutionaries are full of similar faces.' Prescott-Decie, quoted in the Times, 18 July 1922.

Crown Forces, 'Irish' and 'rebel' were synonymous. Attitudes such as these were the despair of British intelligence officers, who tried to point out to their colleagues that 'it is a mistake to imagine that rebels can be recognised through their uncouth state, or by peculiarities of their dress.'66

Not surprisingly, Cork Volunteers vehemently rejected the charges of being shiftless hoodlums. In their view, the 'terrorists', 'scum' and 'dregs' were in the ranks of the Black and Tans and the British and Free State armies, not the I.R.A..

Labels aside, however, they usually placed themselves within much the same modest social categories. They were indeed 'plain people' but they represented the hard-working and respectable heart of the nation.67 Republican contempt was reserved for the gentry, 'shoneens' and gombeen men above them, and the 'tinkers', corner boys and 'gutties' below.

Theirs was a revolution of 'plain men' and 'ordinary fellas'.68 Not the sort of committee men, politicians and hangers-on who infested 'the Party' (and all parties), but rather, in one veteran's words, men 'brought up like myself out of a little farm, [who] had grown up with a highly patriotic sort of background. Those sort of men meant business.'69

Wealth, property and pretension were felt to be inimical to true patriotism. 'Well-to-do people in towns and big farmers didn't want nothing to do with it' recalls one Kanturk Volunteer, while in Dunmanway, 'business people and bigger

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66 Notes on the Organisation and Methods of Sinn Fein in the Sixth Divisional Area, 7 July 1921 (Strickland Papers).

67 Interview with J.S., 2 April 1988. Padraig O Ciosain, for example, declared that the guerrillas of East Cork were drawn from 'the plain people of Ireland'. 'The Heroic Fight at Clonmult' in Rebel Cork's Fighting Story, p.190.

68 Rory O'Connor quoted in the Examiner, 15 April 19; interview with E.B., 9 May 1989.

69 'Liam Hegarty' (a west Cork veteran) in Peter Somerville-Large, Cappaghglass, p.88.

people - they were never part of it.'70 'Friends among the business community of Bandon...were very few', according to Liam Deasy71, and in Kanturk J.J. Walsh scolded those yong men not in the movement for being 'too classy to take their place with the people'.72

One I.R.A. observer, writing after the 1921 truce, characterised their main opponents as:73

> wealthy, shoneen people with less than average intelligence or education - who form a certain deadweight of interest in the enemy's favour. These people, who merely seek to curry favour, are in the main devoid of much moral or physical courage.

Florence O'Donoghue wrote of one such antagonistic shopkeeper that 'it is a high time to realise what a nuisance this type of polished Irishman is.'74

Equally 'polished' (a favorite republican term of abuse) and anti-National were the middle class salariat, derided by Daniel Corkery as 'all the bank clerks, Government officials and tennis players in the land whose spiritual home is the Strand.'75 Bank clerks, socially influential but widely resented, were singled out as especially suspect, and George Power's comment that Fermoy's 'commercial element...lacked any sort of National outlook' was echoed by Volunteers throughout

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70 Interviews with M.J., 27 April 1989, and C.D., 18 Nov. 1989.

71 Liam Deasy, Towards Ireland Free (Cork, 1973), p.11.

72 I.G. Report on De Valera's Tour of Cork, 18 Dec. 1917 (CO/904/122). Sean Moylan remembered being looked down upon as 'an ill-advised and sans-culottes party'. Eileen Magner, Sean Moylan: Some Aspects of his Parliamentary Career 1937-1948 (U.C.C., M.A. Thesis, 1982), p.4.

73 Anon. memo, n.d.[1921] (Mulcahy Papers, P7/A/32).

74 Adj., 1st Southern Div. to A/G, 1 Nov. 1921 (Mulcahy Papers, P7/A/31).

75 Daniel Corkery, "Of Visions National and International", Irish Statesman, 2 March 1924.

the county.[76]

In the countryside, it was farmers - and large farmers in particular - who held aloof from the struggle or, at best, were only fair-weather republicans: 'The big farmers didn't want us at all.'[77] I.R.A. hostility was strongest in north and east Cork - 'cow country' - where agricultural prosperity was most pronounced. These cattle farmers were the nouveaux riches of rural Cork, who had profited immensely from wartime livestock prices.

Ned Murphy, for example, thought that farmers around Mallow only joined the movement to avoid conscription and 'save their skins' and that 'the farmers' sons there never joined up the Volunteers, but the labourers were Volunteers in this area.'[78] In Whitechurch, 'the Volunteer movement was ridiculed by farmers' sons in this area. The movement was good enough for the labouring class but beneath them.'[79] One I.R.A. Captain in Ballineen was even more blunt: 'God blast yeer souls ye pack of farmers whatever we are you are not much anyway.'[80]

The Farmers' Union, widely seen as a vehicle for strong farmers, aroused much republican ire, mostly within the 1st

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[76] George Power to Florence O'Donoghue, 1 Dec. 1953 (O'Donoghue Papers, Ms.31,421). For the position of bank clerks in Mallow society, see Siobhan Lankford, The Hope and the Sadness (Cork, 1980), pp.76-77 and, more generally, George Birmingham, Irishmen All (London, 1913), p.216, and An Irishman Looks at His World (London, 1919), pp.293-294.

[77] Interview with Dan Browne (O'Malley Papers, P17b/112). Hereafter, this series of interviews with I.R.A. veterans recorded by Ernie O'Malley will be referred to with the name of the interviewee, followed by its location in the O'Malley Papers.

[78] Ned Murphy (O'Malley Papers, P17b/123).

[79] O\C 5th Battalion [Bn.] to O\C 1st Cork Bde., 29 Oct. 1921 (Mulcahy Papers, P7\A\37).

[80] Statement by John O'Mahoney, n.d.[1922] (P.R.O. Dublin, Records of the Dail Eireann Courts (Winding Up) Commission, DE 11/220). For other comments on farmers, see Dan Browne (O'Malley Papers, P17b/112), and Vice O/C 1st Cork Bde. to O/C, 18 Nov.1921 (Mulcahy Papers, P7/A/27).

Cork Brigade. Sean O'Hegarty, the Brigade O/C, called the leaders of the Union 'the reactionary pro-English type, opposed to the republic and an utterly useless class.'[81] At about the same time (late 1921) one of his staff reported that:[82]

Practically every member of the Farmers' Union, with one or two honourable exceptions, are NOT even members of the political side of our movement and unless we act very carefully they will attempt to drive wedges into our Organisation in this district.

Volunteers and Union members' sons even brawled occasionally at meetings and dances, each side accusing the other of being un-Irish. The most famous of these fights occurred in January 1920 at the Grenagh 'Farmers' Union Ball':[83]

> What foolish glowing shadows now
> pierced the swelling brain
> of them that donned false colours in
> the nightmare of Sinn Fein.
> They wanted sport and money but
> no other should have fun
> Now to stop our merrymaking
> they robbed the postman's gun.
> They didn't face the Saxon; they
> might get wounded sore,
> They'd rather buff their neighbours
> who were living quiet next door.
> With masks and blackened faces
> dressed in a cowhouse stall
> They made straight for the schoolhouse
> for the Farmers' Union Ball.

This song mocks the Volunteers but it also asserts the farmers' National credentials: they wore Irish clothing ('for we had no jazzers then'), danced to music 'in the good old

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[81] O/C 1st Cork Bde. to O/C 1st Southern Div., 31 Dec. 1921 (Mulcahy Papers, P7/A/32).

[82] Vice O/C to O/C 1st Cork Bde., 18 Nov. 1921 (Mulcahy Papers, P7/A/27).

[83] John Murphy, 'The Farmers' Union Ball' (U.C.D., Dept. of Irish Folklore, Sms.388, pp.187-193). For a newspaper account, see the Examiner, 6 Jan. 1920.

Irish style' and drank Ireland's health. It was the Sinn Feiners who wore the 'false colours' of patriotism; the Farmers' Union was the genuine article.

Sinn Fein's ban on hunting illustrates this antagonism well. The all-Ireland ban originated in early 1919 as a protest against the continued imprisonment of republican leaders, and was ostensibly aimed at the 'Ascendancy' who controlled most local Hunts. However, it soon pitted Sinn Fein and the Volunteers - who had to enforce the measure - against the traders and farmers who, in reality, made up the bulk of the huntsmen.

Cork's Hunt Clubs - the Muskerry, United, Carbery, Duhallow, Galtees and others - were all of a distinct political hue, uniquely combining the rising world of cattle and 'trade' with that of garrison and gentry. Here, nationalism and unionism reached a relatively east accommodation, and many members' sons had gone briskly to war in 1914.[84]

The Hunt Committees and their members, Protestants and Catholics alike, objected vigorously to the ban. Keen sportsmen, they carried on regardless, provoking confrontations reminiscent of the Land War. Both hounds and huntsmen were sporadically ambushed right up until the end of 1922 (although the only fatalalities were suffered by the hounds).[85]

Hunt members saw the campaign against them as an attack from below aimed at farmers and gentry alone. Why else was hunting singled out, and coursing not included in the ban? 'Why should the sport of one class and not another be

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[84] See Examiner, 5, 8 Feb. 1919 and Edith Somerville to Col. John Somerville, 14 Jan., 24 Feb. 1914, 22 Nov. 1916 (Somerville and Ross Papers, Lot 877). It should be noted that Hunts were no longer segregated, but they were still stratified. Most farmers rode at the back of the field, behind the officers and gentry.

[85] On November 5th, 1922, the United Hunt Club was held up and its horses stolen. Examiner, 6 Nov. 1922. See also Cpt. Eamon O'Mahony to Chief Liason Officer, 10 Jan. 1922 (M.A., Liason Papers, LE/4/7A).

stopped?'[86] Edith Somerville, Master of the Carbery Hunt, reported 'fierce indignation with "the counter-jumpers of Skibbereen"' among local farmers when the ban was announced.[87]

To most republicans, the Hunts were 'enemy institutions': nests of veterans, loyalists and Redmondites, symbols of anglicisation and privilege. Farmers' protests that they were good patriots and certainly not members of the 'Ascendency' got short shrift. Hunts acted as recruiting agents and refused to employ Sinn Feiners. Hunt members had taken no part in the nationalist movement. They were products of the 'Castle garrison' and 'it is about time they were stopped'.[88] The visceral hostility felt towards the huntsmen was revealed by the fact that Volunteers were still disrupting meets long after the 'German Plot' prisoners had been released in the spring of 1919. Riding horses were also frequently seized in 1921 and 1922. This general harassment followed much the same pattern as that of the Farmers' Union.

The contrast with coursing, frequently made by farmers, is a significant one. Coursing was seen as a properly Irish sport, carried on by workingmen who objected to 'polished boots' sports and gave their dogs names such as 'Irish Volunteer' and 'Sinn Fein Boy'.[89] Volunteers often belonged to coursing clubs. Few, if any, rode to hounds.

The campaign against fox hunting underlined the erosion of deference and of the authority of traditional elites that accompanied the I.R.A. uprising. The defeat of the Irish Party in national and local elections in 1918 and 1920 also signalled the eclipse of the old power brokers, the 'big men' so despised by the 'plain men' of the I.R.A..

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[86] A comment made at a farmers' meeting in Midleton. See Examiner, 3 Feb. 1919.

[87] Somerville Diary, 5 Feb. 1919.

[88] A comment made at a farmers' meeting in the Muskerry Hunt district. Examiner, 13 Feb. 1919.

[89] Letter from W. O'Sullivan, Examiner, 10 Feb. 1919, and Southern Star, 10 Nov. 1917.

The decline of the old order proved fleeting, however. The Treaty with England, as the Volunteers saw it, triggered the re-emergence of the old bosses and committee men in the guise of Free Staters. Many of these men joined the new Farmers and Commercial parties in 1922.

The guerrillas blamed these men of property, intent on 'preserving the old ranks and grades in society' for the 'betrayal' of the Republic and subsequent Civil War.[90] One Intelligence Officer from north Cork summed up the local Free Staters as 'the Farmers' Union and the Businessmen, Middlemen, Landlord and Capitalist class.' In west Cork they were 'what are termed 'respectable law-abiding citizens'.'[91] Seamus Fitzgerald, the Cobh Volunteer officer and T.D. stated that 'the only supporters of the Treaty he found in his constituency were the people who had been consistently anti-republican, the well-to-do.' Such people were acting out of 'purely material and sordid interests.'[92] Sean Moylan spoke for many I.R.A. men in the spring of 1922 when he said that 'It was the plain fighting men that won the war and they would win again'.[93]

The natural corollary of such views was that, as Ted O'Sullivan, a staff officer of the West Cork Brigade, put it, 'all the mountain and the poor areas were good', and that small farmers and 'ordinary working people' were the backbone of the rebellion.[94]

Many in the I.R.A shared this belief. In the Macroom

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[90] Letter from W.N., 13 May 1922 (Lankford Papers, U169b)

[91] 4th Cork Bde. Intelligence memo, n.d.[1923] (Cork Archives Institute, Siobhan Lankford Papers, U169b); I/O 3rd Cork Bde. to 1st Southern Div., 13 Feb. 1923 (O'Malley Papers, P17a/92).

[92] Peader O'Donnell, Not Yet Emmet (Dublin, n.d.), p.13; Official Report: Debate on the Treaty Between Great Britain and Ireland (Dublin, n.d.), p.238.

[93] Examiner, 3 April 1922.

[94] Ted O'Sullivan (O'Malley Papers, P17b/108); Interview with E.B., 9 May 1989.

battalion, 'perhaps the most important factor was the sympathy and co-operation of the civilian population, particularly in the poorer and more mountainous districts, where small farmers fed and housed the Columns.' Tom Barry agreed: 'poor people were practically 100% backing the fight for freedom.'95

Peader O'Donnell called the republican movement 'a rich mixture of wage earners, small farmers and the almost landless men of the West.' Ernie O'Malley wrote that 'at the beginning it was the poor who stood by us in the country...the small farmers and labourers were our main support.'96

This sense of plebeian identity produced very little in the way of organisational class-consciousness. Many Volunteers were also officers or members of trade unions (for example, Mick Fitzgerald, the Commandant of the Fermoy Battalion in 1920, was also Secretary of the local I.T.G.W.U. branch), and many participated in land disputes and strikes as individuals, but the two loyalties were kept strictly separate. If the I.R.A. officially intervened in a strike, it was almost always to protect property or urban food supplies: 'If it were not for the action of the Volunteers you would not have a crop of any kind saved in East Cork.'97

The young activists of the Irish Transport and General Workers Union were assumed to be allies, but only insofar as they directed their efforts toward the struggle for independence. Militant union organisers were considered a nuisance by leaders such as Sean Moylan and Liam Lynch. Lynch, while commander of the First Southern Division, declared that 'my experience is that certain organisers try to put Labour above Freedom, this may go on for some time, but

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95 Record of Activities: 7th Battalion, Cork No.1 Brigade (Macroom, n.d.), p.8; O'Mahoney interview.

96 O'Donnell, p.1; Ernie O'Malley, On Another Man's Wound (Dublin, 1936), pp.123, 144.

97 V/C to O/C 1st Cork Bde., 10 Nov. 1921 (Mulcahy Papers, P7/A/30).

not even their own individual members may stick this.'98 This disregard for unions within the movement was apparently common enough to spark a lament by the Voice of Labour that 'many young men in Ireland who are in the Volunteers think there is no need for a Labour Union.'99

These tensions came to a head in late 1921 and 1922 when strikes in Whitechurch, Doneraile, Midleton and other parts of north and east Cork triggered I.R.A. responses which were immediately attacked as anti-union. In Bartlemy (near Fermoy), 'the entire working class membership of the I.R.A., with the exception of a couple of scabs, refused to obey this order and broke away from the I.R.A. temporarily.'100

Embittered labourers were vociferous in their complaints: 'Many of the farmers' sons are in certain organisations for their own benefit, and to use such against the workers'; 'Most of those who are republicans are such for a sinister motive'; 'terrorist methods [are] now being adopted by the employing element in the local Volunteers.'101

Despite these grievances, however, union members never mutinied or seriously tried to manipulate the army themselves. Some, like the besieged labourers of Bartlemy, refused to join either side in the Civil War, but this was more an act of exhaustion than an assertion of independence.

A similar pattern and degree of class conflict existed in Volunteer units elsewhere in Munster and Ireland. In Wexford and Waterford, for example, strikes by farm labourers strained I.R.A. unity and depleted its ranks, at least temporarily. As

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98 O/C 1st Southern Div. to the Chief of Staff[C/S], 13 Oct. 1921 (Mulcahy Papers, P7/A/34).

99 Voice of Labour, 10 Dec. 1921.

100 Maurice O'Regan, 'When the I.R.A. Split on Class Issues', Labour News, 21 Aug. 1937.

101 Voice of Labour, 10, 24 Dec, 1921. See also Adjutant 2nd Cork Bde. to Adj. 1st Southern Div., 30 Sept. 1921 (Mulcahy Papers, P7/A/34); O/C 5th Bn. to O/C 1st Cork Bde., 29 Oct. 1921 (P7/A/37); Irish Farmer, 10 Dec. 1921, and Dan Bradley, Farm Labourers: Irish Struggle 1900-1976 (Belfast, 1988), pp.60-63.

in Cork, commanders reacted cautiously, but usually intervened to protect farmers.102 And elsewhere as well, I.T.G.W.U. organisers were viewed with suspicion as being insufficiently patriotic.103

The revolution did sometimes breed a certain primitive jacobinism among the guerrillas, as when land and cattle belonging to 'enemies of the Republic' was seized and redistributed in west Cork in 1921 and 1922: 'We had in effect been the first practical socialists in the country.'104 In many cases, though, these seizures were little more than the usual family and factional gambits to gain more land.105

Whatever the levelling inclinations of some, Cork republicans as a group were no Sans-Culottes. If the social boundaries of 'the Republic' skirted around big farms and affluent suburbs, they also generally stopped short of the back lanes, cabins and workhouses inhabited by the unemployed, idle or itinerant. Poverty was only a political virtue when it was respectable (and rural).

Cork Volunteers thought of themselves not just as 'plain men' but also as respectable and 'above all, decent men'. Their comrades were 'the best kind of fellas', 'a fine lot of good, decent Irish men', 'all very respectable', 'all a fine bunch of fellas. You feel good when you think of the fellas you knew.'106 The most frequently used images were those of cleanliness: they were 'strong, healthy, clean-living

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102 Tom Foran to Min. of Labour, 15 Sept. 1921 (Mulcahy Papers, P7/A/27); South Wexford Brigade Monthly Report, December 1921 (P7/A/32); [British] Dublin District Weekly Intelligence Summaries, 4 and 11 Dec. 1921 (P.R.O.L., WO/35/93); Ussher, pp.97-101.

103 Mid-Limerick Bde. Monthly Intelligence Report, Sept. 1921 (Mulcahy Papers, P7a/8).

104 O'Mahony interview with Tom Barry.

105 See the letters and reports on land seizures contained in M.A., DOD A/613, A/8506 and Special Infantry Corps Papers, SIC/2.

106 Interview with E.B.; Interview with Mr. Buckley (R.T.E. Archives, A2792); Interview with E.Y.; Interview with M.J..

boys', 'honest, noble, clean', 'brave and clean men', 'sober, clean-living, self-respecting.'[107] These key themes and phrases were enshrined in I.R.A. obituaries, which described men who were uniformly 'respectable', 'respected', 'held in high esteem', 'gentle', 'clean-living', and who 'bore the highest character.'[108]

Respectability was crucial to the guerrillas' sense of themselves: hard-edged, often puritanical, excluding those who were not 'our type', 'our class' or 'one of us'. 'We had only the best kind of men', 'there were no roughs in it', 'you get a bad kind of man if you have to go into pubs to recruit him.'[109] The 'rough crowd' and 'bad characters' were as much outsiders to the movement as the 'big men' at the other end of the social scale.

'The corner boy, the tramp, the tinker, the drunken militiaman' lived a social world away from the respectable shops, offices and farms which produced most of the Volunteers, 'outside the pale of decency and respectability'.[110] 'It was impossible not to be struck by the unbridgeable, inscrutable gulf which the mere turn of a corner could evidently create.'[111] The Volunteers defined themselves in large measure against this culture of poverty, with its squalor, drunkenness, prostitution and idleness (both real and reputed). Good I.R.A. men were hard-working, self-

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[107] P. O'C., 'Heroic Fight at Clonmult', Kerryman, 11 March 1939; Liam de Roiste Diary, 5 Mar. 1922 (C.A.I., de Roiste Papers, U271); B. Whelan to John Ahearn, 28 Feb. 1923 (N.L.I., Ms.15993); Erskine Childers, 'The Irish Revolution', p.8 (T.C.D., Childers Papers, Ms.7808/29).

[108] Examiner, 17 May 1917; 17 Aug., 9 Nov. 1920; 8 Jan., 25 Feb., 23, 30 Mar. 1921.

[109] Interview with E.B.; Interview with J.M.; O'Mahony interview with Tom Barry. Some of Frank O'Connor's short stories illustrate these attitudes very well. See especially 'Jumbo's Wife', 'Jo' and 'Alec' in Guests of the Nation (London, 1931).

[110] T.C. Murray, Spring Horizon (London, 1937), p.81.

[111] George O'Brien, Village of Longing (London, 1990), p.130. See also Conrad Arensberg and Solon Kimball, Family and Community in Ireland (Cambridge[Mass.], 1940, 1968), pp 324-7.

improving, clean-living and sober.112

This was as much a political as a social distinction, as the loyalties of 'the lanes' were felt to be rabidly anti-republican. It was assumed that recruits for the British and Free State armies were almost entirely drawn from the ranks of the undeserving poor ('all the scruff and corner boys'113), and ex-soldiers returning from the Great War were tarred with the same brush.114 These men, along with their wives and mothers - 'shawlies' and 'separation women' - were classed as drunken rabble, and subjected to withering republican scorn: 'they are very ignorant, they understand only violence and force, they have few ideas, and they are easily set on to rows.'115 This contempt and suspicion hardened into fear and violence as the armed struggle escalated in 1920.

Free State soldiers were believed to belong to the same underclass and to share all these vices. One north Cork Volunteer remembered them as 'fellas not working around and hangers-on who'd been through the 14-18 war.'116 In west Cork:117

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112 Those who were not - especially those who were caught drunk - were liable to be court-martialled. See, for example, the Reports of the 3rd Battalion Council, 1st Cork Bde., 5, 8 Aug. 1919 (M.A., A/0341). Many Volunteers took the pledge of total abstinence (see, for example, the Examiner, 14 Sept. 1920) and were aggressive teetotallars, although this often did not last through the misery of the Civil War.

113 These were the words of a Kilrush (Co. Clare) farmer who assaulted a soldier. Staunton, Royal Munster Fusiliers, p.10.

114 Portraits of this enduring class and steretype can be found in Lankford, pp.74-75, 84 and, briefly but evocatively, in John McGahern, The Barracks (London, 1963), p.78.

115 De Roiste Diary, 17 Jan. 1919.

116 Interview with M.J.. Paddy Con MacMahon of the Mid-Clare Bde. believed that 'the Free Staters got a low crowd from the towns to join up with them...the residue of the ex-soldiers and the tough town crowd which joined the British Army, and then became a burden on the town' (O'Malley Papers, P17b/130).

117 Intelligence Report, n.d.[1922] (O'Malley Papers, P17a/34).

The majority of these ex-soldiers, who were the corner boys and loafers of the towns a few months ago, have brought their corner-boy propensities with them into the Free State Army and drunkenness and indiscipline are the order of the day.

In Mallow, 'they have now got the worst type of ex-soldier in the Free State Army', while on the Kerry border, the I.R.A.'s foes were: 'the Drunkard, the Traitor, the wife deserter, the wife beater, the Tramp, the tinker and the brute. This I positively declare is the make up of the national Army, so-called.'118

What happened when these social worlds collided was demonstrated when Dan Shields, an ex-soldier, was brought into a north Cork flying column - over the passionate objections of his local company. 'He had bad antecedents'119; 'We never trusted or liked him and he was aware of it'120; he came from a very low family...the Shields were cheap and low-living...he was low and we'll leave it at that.' Simply put, 'he had no right' to be in the column and did not last more than one ambush.121

The I.R.A.'s stringent concern for respectability and its contempt for those who did not fit in or measure up were amply demonstrated in the summer of 1920, when the Volunteers assumed a new role as policemen. Backed by newly elected Sinn Fein majorities on local councils, and in the absence of the R.I.C. from much of the countryside, I.R.A. units in Cork set out to clean up their towns and parishes. Suspected thieves

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118 I/O 4th Cork Bde. to I/O 1st Southern Div., 8 Sept. 1922 (M.A., A/0991/4); Whelan to Ahearn, 28 Feb. 1923 (N.L.I., Ms.15993). This widely held view of the National Army was contradicted by M.J. Costello in a letter to Florence O'Donoghue, 13 Sept. 1953 (O'Donoghue Papers, Ms.31,423/4), with the significant exception of Cork City.

119 Ned Murphy (O'Malley Papers, P17b/123),

120 Interview with M.J..

121 Dan Browne (O'Malley Papers, P17b/112). When Shields turned informer it confirmed everyone's suspicions, but it is likely that his treatment by his erstwhile comrades was one of the principle causes (as admitted in my interview with M.J.).

and wife beaters, prostitutes and other undesirables were warned, arrested, tried and sometimes expelled, with considerable support from the 'respectable' community. Pub closing hours were keenly enforced, as was the ban on gambling at G.A.A. meets.

The first and most obvious targets, however, were 'tramps' and 'tinkers'. Although familiar tramps were often welcome in farms and villages, itinerant strangers were usually viewed with alarm and suspicion, especially those who travelled or congregated in groups. Bands, or 'tribes' of tinkers were considered particularly unruly or dangerous, and their presence in Munster towns was almost always resented.122 This problem was exacerbated after the end of the war, when demobilised and unemployed soldiers flooded the country. Many of these became tramps and beggars in their search for work. As these poor and dirty unknowns began to collect in their streets and workhouses, town and district councils turned to the R.I.C. for help with the 'tramp nuisance' and the 'tinker pest'.123 But, without draconian legal powers and with a revolution to attend to, Cork's Head Constables and District Inspectors could do little.

The battalion and brigade officers of the I.R.A. zealously took up the slack. Unencumbered by legal niceties (and acting on local initiative), Volunteers began driving 'tramps' out of one town after another. On July 13, 1920, for example, the Cork Examiner reported that 'Midleton has become practically free already from what used to be known as "the tramp nuisance"': 'Undesirable visitors to Midleton this while past who were showing any offensive conduct on the streets were duly rounded up and quickly banished from the town and

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122 Conrad Arensberg and Solon Kimball referred to them as 'an outcast lowest class' (Family and Community in Ireland [Cambridge, 1968), p.272. The most comprehensive guide to these attitudes (as recorded in the 1930s) can be found in the Schools Manuscripts in the U.C.D. Dept. of Folklore Archives. See Smss.281, p.45; 283, p.384; 285, pp 92-3, 233; 289, p.257; 294, p.67; 346, pp 58-9; 347, pp 441-3; 352, p.104; 353, p.355; 383, p.119; 395, p.275.

123 Examiner, 9 July, 26 Nov. 1918; 13 July 1920.

district.'124 Further north, 'the Volunteers have done some good work in Fermoy in the way of not allowing members of the tramp class to congregate in town.'125 The Mallow I.R.A. and others followed suit, as did units in Kerry, Clare, Tipperary and Kilkenny.126 Those tramps who remained in the Munster war zone were liable to be shot as spies or informers.127

When the guerrillas thought of these various enemies and 'undesirables', high and low, they thought of towns. Here were concentrated police and military barracks, loyalists and politicians, bank clerks and corner boys, and all their assorted 'hangers-on': 'We talk of how the village gave the British army its recruits; gave the police their touts; gave the Imperialists their audiences.'128

In the midst of the 1918 general election, Liam de Roiste (subsequently elected as a Sinn Fein M.P.) produced the following catalogue of opponents:129

Some ex-servicemen, their followers and 'women' (our canvassers being hunted out of a brothel quarter in the city); policemen; ex-policemen and their wives; the ignorant 'old ladies' of unionist persuasion; anti-democratic shopkeepers and middle-class people; timid people who fear 'revolutions'.

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124 'the Midleton guardians...expressed themselves well pleased at the very reduced number of casuals of late seeking refuge for the night in the workhouse.'

125 Examiner, 15 Aug. 1920.

126 Lankford, p.183; Examiner, 18 June 1920; O/C 2nd Southern Div. to C/S, 7 April 1921 (Mulcahy Papers, P7/A/21) and Dir. of Intelligence to C/S, 26 July 1921 and the comments of the Assistant C/S thereon (P7/A/22); James J. Comerford, My Kilkenny I.R.A. Days 1916-22 (Kilkenny, 1978), p.150 [Numbering 1,104 pages, Comerford's book is certainly the most extraordinary memoir of the revolution]. See also O/C 2nd Cork Bde to A/G, 24 June 1920 and the A/G's reply of 25 June (M.A., A/0799).

127 See Chapter 10.

128 "Are Villages Less National Than Country Districts?", An Phoblacht, 31 Dec. 1926. See also "Bad Influence in our Townland", 7 Jan. 1927.

129 De Roiste Diary, 8 Dec. 1918

Rural rebels generally viewed towns and villages as 'the organising centres of evil' and would have heartily endorsed one G.H.Q. Inspector's opinion that 'the population of all towns is bad. A little terrorism might have a good effect.'130

Almost every town in Cork was felt by local militants to be lacking in national fibre. Skibbereen's inhabitants 'were a race apart from the sturdy people of West Cork. They were different and with a few exceptions were spineless', Midleton was 'a shoneen town', Fermoy 'essentially a loyalist town', and so on.131

These complaints continued through the Civil War. In Mallow the I.R.A. was faced with 'the awful shoneenism that permeates its walls', in Dunmanway 'people were very strongly against us in the town', and, as we have seen, the National Army was perceived as the dregs of urban society.132 The 4th (north) Cork Brigade even issued an order that 'all men should get strict instructions to avoid hanging around villages.'133 Similar sentiments were expressed throughout the I.R.A.. Ernie O'Malley, as O/C of the 2nd Southern Division, admitted in August 191 that 'the army has been steadily losing its grip of the towns and villages' and that 'the men in the towns may not be up to the requisite standard.' 'Towns we could not count on', he later admitted.134 In Clare, it was said that 'the people in the

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130 "Are Villages Less National"; G.H.Q. Inspector's Report [on Roscommon and Leitrim], 17 Oct. 1921 (M.A., A/0747).

131 Barry, Guerrilla Days in Ireland, p.89; Edmund Donegan (O'Malley Papers, P17b\112) and George Power (P17b\132).

132 Andy O'Sullivan to Brother Miceal, 7 Nov. 1923; Jack Buttimer (O'Malley Papers, P17b/111).

133 O/C 4th Cork Bde. to Bn. O/Cs, 14 Sept. 1922 (C.A.I., Lankford Papers, U169c/8).

134 O/C 2nd Southern Div. to Bde. O/Cs, 5, 26 August 1921 (N.L.I., Ms.17880); O'Malley, p.144. It is worth comparing the former with comments made by the local R.I.C. Divisional Commissioner about the same time; his diary is in the O'Malley Papers (P17a/9).

towns did absolutely nil in the war and it is only right that they be asked to do their bit.'135

Urban spinelessness and shoneenism was usually contrasted with the natural purity and patriotism of the common people of the countryside. 'The country always was ahead of the towns'; 'You hadn't the same feeling amongst the population of the towns as you had in the country, for there you had the whole population.'136 In the early days of the Civil War it was reported that 'whole districts' in west Cork 'are solidly republican and the Free Staters have to depend on their hangers-on in the towns.' It was 'the country fellows who believed in freedom for its own sake' who stayed the course, according to Mossy Donegan, a veteran Bantry guerrilla. 'It was well these men could not discuss documents but they knew what freedom was.'137

Town life was anglicised and degraded; its nationalism was 'shallow and rootless.' The Volunteers were predominantly a product of the country, having deeper roots in old traditions.'138 The further away from towns, and from the rich cattle farms of the valleys and plains, the better. Ted O'Sullivan, for example, equated 'good land' with 'bad people' and 'bad land' with 'good people.'139 Best of all were the small farmers of the mountains - the 'mountainy men' - who were 'as sound as spring water.'140

The republican faith in the instinctive nationalism of the countryside drew on the romanticisation of rural life within the Irish-Ireland movement, and within Irish

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135 O/C Mid-Clare to Sec., Dail Eireann, 17 Sept. 1921 (Mulcahy Papers, P7/A/24).

136 Con Leddy (O'Malley Papers, P17b/123); Con Meaney (P17b/112).

137 Report to I/O 1st Southern Div., n.d. [1922] (O'Malley Papers, P17a/34); Mossy Donegan (P17b/108).

138 Florence O'Donoghue, Tomas MacCurtain (Tralee, 1955), p.59.

139 Ted O'Sullivan (O'Malley Papers, P17b/108).

140 Ernie O'Malley, "Sean Connolly" (O'Malley Papers, P17b/153), p.71.

nationalism in general. Irish writers from Charles Kickham to Daniel Corkery had extolled the virtues of 'the people on the land, the people themselves', and their influence can be seen in statements such as Mossy Donegan's.141

However, more concretely, and probably more importantly, distrust of towns also reflected the enduring everyday divide between town and country - which we have already encountered in comparing the views of Edith Somerville and P.J. Sheehy.142 This cut both ways, as it was just as common for townspeople to sneer at the 'country crowd' as vice-versa.143 Farmers were 'regarded with a sort of contempt. A farmer was a fellow who was hunted off the street on fair days because his cows had fouled the curbstone.' 'The farming people were tolerated in the towns, but there was a bit of class distinction, all right.'144

Moreover, farmers and townsmen regularly accused each other of being anti-National and un-Irish over all sorts of issues. Throughout the Great War, for example, there was a running battle in Cork over which class were the worse profiteers, shopkeepers or farmers. And, sooner or later, the debate always came around to the question of who won the Land War. It was an article of faith among the county's townspeople that they had 'rid the country of the landlords'

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141 Daniel Corkery's foreword to Tomas MacCurtain, p.11. See also Tom Garvin, Nationalist Revolutionaries in Ireland, 1858-1928 (Oxford, 1987).

142 See Conrad Arensberg, The Irish Countryman (Garden City, 1968), p.136: 'In many ways the town is an alien world, even a hostile one, to the countryman. He feels its scorn of his rusticity and distrusts its urbane ways.' See also Flor Crowley, In West Cork Long Ago, pp 47-50.

143 John Jackson, Report on Skibbereen Social Survey (1967), p.29.

144 Somerville-Large, pp.71, 101. In George O'Brien's Lismore 'we despised the country and all belonging to it, and felt ourselves immeasurably superior to everything it stood for...They, in turn, thought us weaklings, cissies, Mammies' boys, half-men.' Village of Longing, p.130. See also P.D. Mehigan, 'When I was Young', Carbery's Annual, pp.125-127.

while the farmers had reaped all the rewards. 'Was there ever a farmer's band seen at a national meeting?' asked one speaker in Skibbereen to scornful laughter.145

Such attitudes could be found within the I.R.A. as well. Volunteer officers from Cork or other cities often looked down on the yokels in rural units. For instance, one emissary from Dublin pronounced that the north Tipperary organisation was inadequate because of 'the low cultural standard of the area.'146 The countrymen responded by mocking them, playing tricks on them or simply ignoring them. When Ernie O'Malley arrived in the North Cork Brigade in mid-1920, he was made fun of for his city ways and disliked for his arrogance. 'He didn't like our fellows at all, like he was a step above us.'147 The countrymen of the 1st Cork Brigade, who had previously shunned O'Malley, were equally cool to the attentions of Cork City officers, complaining that 'city men think they know too much.'148

The political idealisation of 'mountainy men' may be similarly related to the generally perceived differences between the egalitarian culture of poor areas and the snobbishness of strong farmers. In the uplands of Cork, small farmers and labourers worked side by side and ate at the same table without distinction. When these men went to work 'down the country' - in the 'lower country' to the north and east - they often entered a different world, in which they lived and worked apart from their employers.149 The I.R.A. probably inherited some of their pride and resentment.

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145 Eagle, 4 May, 23 Feb. 1918; See also Examiner, 15, 20 Feb., 14 Mar. 1917; 15 April 1919.

146 G.H.Q. Organiser's Report to O\C 3rd Southern Div., 6 Sept. 1921 (M.A., A/0670). See also J.J. O'Connell to Michael Collins, 5 Sept. 1919 (A/0354) and Training Report for South Connemara, 5 Jan., 1922 (A/0680).

147 Interview with M.J..

148 Mick O'Sullivan (O'Malley Papers, P17b/111).

149 Dept. of Irish Folklore, Mss. 1828, 1523. See also 'Working for Farmers', Sliabh Luacra, June 1987, pp.49-52.

Such prejudices ran deep within the I.R.A., as in their communities, but they were almost always expressed against outsiders. Volunteers thought of their own organisation in terms of brotherhood and camaraderie, never class. All of the I.R.A. veterans I interviewed insisted on this point and on the absence of class tension in their ranks. 'No one took any notice of that kind of thing'; 'We were all about the same class'; 'We had all types'; 'we were all just ordinary fellas.'150

The only exception to this was an occasional grumble about 'big fellas pushing their weight about' who had joined the Volunteers when it seemed convenient, but who were not committed to the fight.151 Militants within the movement sometimes lamented that local officers had been chosen because of their social standing rather than their efficiency. When it came to fighting, however, the gunmen grew impatient with traditional social hierarchies:152

> The chap generally elected Company Commander or Brigade Commandant was the man who was the biggest farmer or biggest shopkeeper's son in the district. Great men to parade with a flag who lent their prestige and their money to the fight, but they didn't fight, and those who didn't vamoose had to be shifted out of the way when the fighting started.

Tipperary activists had the same experience:153

> Many of the elected officers were elected during the great surge of feeling in 1918 on the conscription issue. At this stage the Volunteers were highly respectable; Parish Priests

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150 Interviews with M.J.; D.D., 6 Nov. 1988; J.S.; E.Y., 3 April 1988.

151 Interview with E.Y., 25 June 1988.

152 Tom Barry interviewed by George O'Mahony, 1968 (tape in the possession of Mr. O'Mahony, Cork City). See also the comments of M.J. Costello in a letter to Florence O'Donoghue, 11 Dec. 1951 (N.L.I., Florence O'Donoghue Papers, Ms.31,423).

153 M.J. Costello to Florence O'Donoghue, 11 Dec. 1951 (N.L.I., O'Donoghue Papers, Ms.31,423). See also O'Malley, <u>On Another Man's Wound</u>, p.129.

presided at meetings and a lot of people were elected to posts who were better adapted to peacetime politics than to a fighting organisation...it was not until these were got rid of and replaced by more determined and active and more truly patriotic men that anything was done.

Hardened guerrillas saw their flying columns as classless societies, united by patriotism. Florence O'Donoghue wrote from the headquarters of the 1st Southern Division that 'it is a wonderful comradeship this, of men drawn from every walk of life, from the Professor to the simple labourer, all united and contented in a noble service.' Tim O'Donoghue remembered the West Cork column as including 'men from all grades - farmers, students, tradesmen, labourers.'154

This self-image applied to the officers as well as the rank and file. As Ernie O'Malley wryly observed in 1919: 'Often a man - a non-Volunteer - will point with pride and awe to the local President of the Sinn Fein Club; he would not dream of doing so where the local Volunteer Captain is concerned.'155

These opposing images of the I.R.A. - its own and that of its enemies - parallel one another in some interesting respects. Policemen, soldiers and guerrillas all agreed that the Volunteers were mostly men with little or no stake in the country because they were too young or too poor, and that the older, propertied population lacked the 'moral courage' to either join or oppose them. Each side looked on the other as a mob of armed hoodlums, and themselves as the upholders of decency. Both saw the 'rabble' and corner boys as being on the other side. Everyone appealed to more or less the same labels and categories to place the I.R.A. and mark its social boundaries.

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154 O'Donoghue to 'Dhilis', n.d.[1921] (O'Donoghue Papers, Ms.31,176); Tim O'Donoghue, 'Destruction of Rosscarbery R.I.C. Barrack', Rebel Cork's Fighting Story, p.163.

155 Ernie O'Malley to George Plunkett, December 5, 1919 (M.A., A/0747).

The following tables offer a statistical comparison with the perceptions examined above:

Table 19: Occupations of Volunteers in Cork County

	Officers			Rank and File			Census	
	1917-19	20-21	22-23	1917-19	20-21	22-23	1911	26
Sample	139	186	99	255	680	329		
% Farmer/son	28	27	29	29	31	19	45	41
Farm Labourer	04	06	08	12	10	20	25	18
Un/semiskilled	06	09	07	15	18	27		32
Skilled	23	24	24	21	18	21		08
Clerk	20	13	18	09	11	05		06
Merchant/son	12	13	05	07	06	03		05
Professional	05	04	04	01	03	02		02
Student	01	01	-	02	01	01		.4
Other	02	04	04	02	02	02		05

Table 20: Occupations of Volunteers' Fathers in Cork County

	Officers			Men			Census	
	1917-19	20-21	22-23	1917-19	20-21	22-23	1911	26
Sample	112	155	62	292	661	174		
% Farmer	54	56	52	64	61	40	45	41
Farm Labourer	07	05	05	08	10	10	25	18
Un/semiskilled	03	04	03	04	06	09		32
Skilled	18	17	23	14	14	26		08
Clerk	-	01	02	01	.3	01		06
Merchant	15	14	10	07	07	11		05
Professional	-	01	02	01	.2	01		02
Other	03	02	05	01	02	03		05

Table 21: Occupations of Volunteers in Cork City

	Officers			Rank and File			Census
	1917-19	20-21	22-23	1917-19	20-21	22-23	1926
Sample	34	45	35	43	138	203	
Un/semiskilled	-	03	14	21	30	43	39
Skilled	23	42	41	45	39	33	25
Clerk	32	35	28	20	21	14	13
Professional	20	16	14	-	01	01	03
Merchant	02	03	-	03	03	03	06
Student	-	-	-	12	05	01	02
Other	11	06	03	-	02	04	11

Table 22: Occupations of Volunteers' Fathers in Cork City

	Officers			Men			Census
	1917-19	20-21	22-23	1917-19	20-21	22-23	1926
Sample	7	8	15	18	54	74	
Un/semiskilled	-	13	20	11	28	28	39
Skilled	14	13	47	61	26	45	25
Clerk	14	-	13	11	13	04	13
Professional	43	25	07	-	-	03	03
Merchant	14	25	07	11	24	15	06
Other	14	25	07	06	09	05	11

The rebels came from a broad range of backgrounds, and from most sectors of the local economy. The organisation had particular success among the building trades, motor drivers and drapers' assistants. Shoe and boot makers, living up to their international reputation for radicalism, were also prominent. Other occupations, such as fishing, were almost completely unrepresented.156

Artisans and tradesmen provided a solid core of support for the movement throughout the revolution, just as they had for the Fenians fifty years before.157 In the city, the Volunteers recruited at least a third of their members from among the skilled trades, men like Charlie and William O'Brien of Broad Lane, apprentice mechanic and hairdresser respectively, or Dan 'Sandow' Donovan and Mick Murphy, both carpenters and leading city officers. The influence of this radical tradition may also be indicated by the fact that nearly half of the city I.R.A. that remained in the Civil War had tradesmen for fathers.

Outside the city, tradesmen were even more over-represented, consistently making up one-fifth of country units despite being less than 10% of the male workforce. The builders, blacksmiths, bootmakers and tailors who gathered in

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156 See the National Land Bank Report on the West Carbery Co-op Fishing Society, 9 Oct. 1920 (State Paper Office, DE 2/52).

157 See Maura J.B. Murphy, The Role of Organised Labour in the Political and Economic Life of Cork City 1820-1899 (Ph.D. Thesis, University of Leicester, 1979), pp 213-243.

every town proved to be fertile ground for militant republicanism.

Another key group of Volunteers came from the white-collar world of shops and offices that dominated urban life. Here, the artisan's cloth cap and apron began to be replaced with the collar and tie of the shop boy, the drapers' assistant and the junior clerk (all of which have been amalgamated under 'clerk' in the tables above). This was a growing new class of workers, especially in country towns - very few fathers of Volunteers had held such jobs. They were educated, ambitious and highly status conscious - habitual joiners of clubs and, latterly, trade unions. Their employers, the shopkeepers and merchants who ruled Irish towns, rarely joined the movement, but their sons (who often worked for their fathers) frequently did, in both the city and county.

Farming families provided more than their share of sons to the Volunteers, at least until the Civil War. Only half of these actually worked as 'farmers' sons' on their parents' land, however; the other half had migrated to towns to take jobs as shop assistants or clerks. As an occupation, farming was significantly and consistently under-represented in the I.R.A. This class of young men had also proven to be unfertile recruiting ground in the Great War, but without any strong distinction between those who remained on the land and those who went to town. Shop assistants, clerks and farmers' sons alike had consistently 'held back' from joining the British Army.158

This lack of enthusiasm seems to have prevailed throughout rural Cork, as farm labourers and their sons were notably reluctant revolutionaries. Of course, considering the wave of unionisation and agricultural strikes which coincided with the guerrilla war, many of them might have had another sort of revolution in mind.

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158 Police reports all agree on this subject: see C.I. Monthly Reports, East Cork, Mar. 1915 (CO/904/96); West Cork, April 1915, Jan. 1916 (CO/904/99); I.G. Monthly Report, April 1915.

Tables 23 and 24 show where Volunteers were situated within the farming community.[159] Data on both the size and value of I.R.A. members' family farms have been calculated because, while the acreage of a farm did contribute to its owner's social standing, his or her income depended more on the quality of the land.

The value of I.R.A. family holdings tended toward the mean but were far higher than the median. This, combined with their larger than average size, put them perceptibly ahead of most of their neighbours.[160] Volunteer families tended to be neither poor nor well-off - although there were some of both - but rather were somewhere in between, with a decent house, some cattle, and the ability to educate their children.

Table 23: Values of Volunteers' Family Farms in County Cork

Officers

	Sample		Up to £10	11-20	21-30	31-40	41-50	51-100	100+
1917-19	44	%-	16	11	23	16	18	11	05
1920-21	78		15	26	24	15	10	05	04
1922-23	17		18	24	35	06	18	-	-
Men									
1917-19	210	%-	21	25	21	17	10	04	01
1920-21	356		26	23	18	13	09	09	01
1922-23	72		19	21	21	13	13	13	01
Census			43	20	11	07	05	09	05

Mean/Median Value

Officers			Men			Census
1917-19	20-21	22-23	1917-19	20-21	22-23	1911
34/31	28/24	25/23	26/22	28/20	26/25	27/14

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[159] Land holding data was determined from manuscript Census returns for 1911 and from the records of the Irish Valuation Office. The 'Census' figures for Cork in Table 23 were derived from the Report of the Royal Commission on Congestion in Ireland, Appendix 2 [Cd.3786], H.C. 1907. Those in Table 24 were derived from the General Report of the 1911 Census, pp 358-367.

[160] Some of this difference might be attributable to the difference in the dates of the 'Census' figures in Tables 23 and 24.

Table 24: Size of Volunteers' Family Farms in County Cork

Officers

	Sample		Up to 10 Acres	11-20	21-30	31-50	51-100	100+
1917-19	49	%-	06	08	10	20	35	20
1920-21	77		01	09	14	19	34	22
1922-23	23		09	04	09	22	35	22
Men								
1917-19	200	%-	07	04	12	27	39	11
1920-21	345		04	09	13	19	36	19
1922-23	56		07	09	16	18	38	13
Census			31	11	10	16	21	12

Mean/Median Size

Officers			Men			Census
1917-19	20-21	22-23	1917-19	20-21	22-23	1911
67/57	70/59	59/48	77/50	66/57	57/49	47/34

These Volunteers' social position depended as much on their position in their household as on the size or income of the family farm. Land usually passed undivided to the eldest son, so prospective heirs had a special status. Table 25 shows that a little over one third of the rank and file, and roughly half of the officers, were the eldest resident sons in their families.[161] The great majority of the households surveyed contained more than one male child in 1911, and most had more than two, large families being the norm in rural Ireland.[162] Therefore we can reasonably conclude that ordinary Volunteers had a roughly average chance of inheriting land, while officers' chances were distinctly better than average.

Table 25: Position of Volunteers in Farming Families, Co. Cork

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[161] The information for this table was collected from manuscript Census returns.

[162] Of course the passage of time between 1911 and the years of the revolution would reduce the number of brothers living at home (although both military recruitment and the wartime stoppage of emigration would have affected many families in different ways).

	Officers			Men		
	1917-19	20-21	22-23	1917-19	20-21	22-23
Sample	66	82	21	167	369	46
% Eldest son	56	51	48	35	41	39

Upper middle or upper class people almost never joined the I.R.A. Most of the 'professionals' in the I.R.A. were teachers, and assistant or part time teachers at that, and so were at the lower end of the middle class. There were a few ardent republicans among the Cork bourgeoisie, such as the Gallagher and Kennedy families and their circle, but there were not many others who held memberships in both the I.R.A. and tennis clubs.163

Similarly, nearly all skilled workers in the movement were apprentices or journeymen: only a very few, such as Sean Moylan, were masters with their own shops. Those with merchant backgrounds were generally small shopkeepers and publicans or their sons.

These upper social limits were matched by lower ones. Few I.R.A. men appear to have been unemployed or indigent (some did lose their jobs in the depression of 1921 and after). Nor were many casual labourers to be found in their ranks. Most of those described in Tables 19 and 21 as un- or semi-skilled had regular jobs: drivers, hotel, railway or shop porters, or factory or mill workers. The new Ford's factory in Cork city was a hotbed of militant republicanism, for example164, but there were very few dock workers in the Volunteers. The same was true in Cobh. While the shipyard apprentice boys, led by Mick Leahy and Seamus Fitzgerald, were notable for their radical politics, they had few comrades-in-arms among their unskilled co-workers.165

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163 See Celia Saunders' Diary for 1920 (Trinity College Records Office, Frank Gallagher Papers, Ms.10055).

164 See the occupational entries in Prisoners: Records of Charges [for Cork Prison], 1922-23 (M.A.).

165 See 'Sinn Feiners Employed at Haulbowline' [1918] (CO/904/23).

The chronically underemployed general labourers visible in the streets of every Cork town - the corner boys - may have voiced support for the I.R.A. and joined in on riots, but they remained outsiders to the movement.

The most striking result shown by these statistics is the extent to which Volunteers had non-agricultural occupations, and lived and worked in urban rather than rural settings. Most people in Cork (60-70%) outside the city lived or worked on farms, but significantly less than half (around 40% of the rank and file) the Volunteers did.

It might be argued that these figures, which are biased toward those rebels who came to official attention, may reflect the better policing of towns, in both the Tan and Civil Wars. On the other hand, if this were the case, the number of countrymen in the sample should have gone down after 1919, when the R.I.C. were withdrawn from most of their rural barracks and posts.

It would be wrong to draw too sharp a line between the town and the countryside, as kinship and commerce linked them closely together, and many shop assistants and general labourers were farmers' sons. Also, one did not have to be a farmer to live away from towns: teachers, doctors, blacksmiths, carpenters and tailors all could be found in rural areas. It is also worth noting that the sample is biased toward activists and those who came to official attention, and so may not be a completely accurate reflection of the full membership. Even with these qualifications, however, it is clear that the Cork I.R.A.'s membership outside the city was predominantly drawn from the non-agricultural population, and that this was a consistent feature throughout the revolutionary period. And, if the very active city battalions are included, the organisation's urban orientation becomes even more pronounced.

The basic occupational characteristics of the I.R.A. were shared by both officers and men, but there were also important differences. By and large, officers and their families tended to be of higher social status, somewhat more urban and better educated: white collar workers or professionals rather than

manual labourers, farmers' sons rather than farm servants or boys, heirs to property rather than junior siblings. In terms of the land to be inherited, however, significant differences in value can only be detected in the early years of the revolution (1917-19), when officers were well ahead of their men on average. This gap closed rapidly in the subsequent years of guerrilla warfare.

The most significant distinction was that between farmers and their sons on one hand, and their employees on the other. Agricultural workers rarely became officers (although the chances increased slightly as time went on), especially in east Cork, which was the main arena of rural class conflict.166 The farmers had a decisive edge in this respect, but did not dominate the I.R.A. as a whole. This helps account for its general neutrality during agricultural strikes, and for the fact that it usually moved against strikers only when food supplies to urban markets were threatened.

The data do not reveal any dramatic changes in the social structure of the I.R.A between 1917 and 1921. The onset of guerrilla warfare after 1919 did winnow out some officers from larger farms, and also some who were eldest sons (possibly the same people), but this did not represent a major shift in the character of the movement.

During 1922 and 1923, as membership - and the prospect of victory - rapidly receded, farmers and white collar workers among the rank and file dropped out or went Free State in large numbers, as did many city officers who worked in shops or offices. Manual labourers also left the movement, but more stayed: as a result, the army became more proletarian. The size (and, for officers, the value) of I.R.A. family farms also declined.167

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166 See Tables 43-44, Appendix 5.

167 The only exception to this downward trend was with the value of rank and file holdings, which appear to have gone up in the Civil War. This result may be due in part to distortions caused by the smaller sample size.

Cork's physical and social geography were highly varied, ranging from inner city slums to mountainside sheep farms, and from the affluent farmers of its northern cattle country to the poverty-stricken fishermen of the Beara peninsula. Consequently, the Cork Brigades formed a patchwork of different occupations and communities, with each company and battalion following the social contours of its area. Urban companies were made up of by artisans, shop assistants and the like, while purely rural ones had mostly farmers' sons and labourers as members. A few units were dominated by a particular occupation or workplace but none were consciously divided along class lines. Large and small farmers' sons, labourers and others all co-existed in the same companies, as did porters, drivers, clerks, tradesmen of all kinds and shopkeepers' sons.

A study of Behagh Company, just west of Dunmanway, illustrates this point. Located in an area of average wealth for west Cork, this was an entirely rural unit, three quarters of whose members were farmers' sons, along with a few labourers and artisans. Table 26 shows the value of their families' land.[168] The Behagh Volunteers followed the general Cork pattern by being, on average, solidly better-off than their neighbours and by largely excluding the worst off among them.[169] The officers (none of whom were labourers), whose farms had an average value of £40, were a notch above their men.

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[168] This table is based on a sample of 44 Company members, from a unit roll in Thomas O'Donovan, 'Behagh Company I.R.A.' (O'Donoghue Papers, Ms.31,332). Their land holdings were determined from manuscript Census returns for 1911 (P.R.O.D.) and the records of the Irish Valuation Office. For a detailed study of Behagh Company, see Chapter 7.

[169] The median values were as follows:

1917-19:	£24
1920-21:	25
1922-23:	27
Manch D.E.D.:	17

Table 26: Value of Family Farms: the Men of Behagh Company

	Up to£10	11-20	21-30	31-40	41-50	51-100	100+
1917-19	%- 06	32	29	10	03	03	03
1920-21	07	27	33	13	07	03	03
1922-23	-	13	50	25	-	13	-
Manch D.E.D.	30	30	21	10	03	03	03

Regional differences within the organisation were not as sharp as might be expected, and not nearly as great as in the general population. According to Tables 41 and 42 (Appendix 5), the I.R.A. in the West Riding was only marginally more rural than in the East Riding (although the gap widened in the Civil War), and had roughly the same proportion of clerks, shop assistants and teachers - and sometimes more. This solid core of support among tradesmen and white collar workers in west Cork despite their relatively minor presence in the economy underlines the importance of these classes in the I.R.A. as a whole.

On the other hand, western units appear to have been somewhat more egalitarian, particularly in rural areas - possibly a reflection of the much lower level of class conflict and stratification there.

How did the Cork Volunteers compare with those of neighbouring counties, and of Ireland (and the rest of Britain) as a whole? The Cork I.R.A. fits the Munster pattern - as revealed in Table 27 - in being disproportionately urban and non-agricultural. Munster likewise confirms the importance of skilled workers and clerks for the organisation, and also the tendency for officers to be more urbanised and of higher status than their men. The wide gap between farmers' sons and their workers is also present in the rest of the province, much of which shared the rural labour battles of 1921-23.

Table 27: Occupations of Volunteers in Munster

	Officers		Men		Census	
	1917-19	1920-21	1917-19	1920-21	1911	1926
Sample	473	332	974	1264		
% Farmer/son	29	22	39	27	36	40
Farm Labourer	05	04	11	10	26	17
Un/Semi-skilled	04	05	10	16		13
Skilled	21	26	16	21		10
Clerk	20	22	10	13		09
Professional	07	07	01	04		04
Merchant/son	10	12	06	05		04
Student	.4	.3	01	01		01
Other	03	04	02	02		02

Table 28: Occupations of Volunteers in Provincial Ireland[170]

	Officers		Men		Census	
	1917-19	1920-21	1917-19	1920-21	1911	1926
Sample	625	434	1330	1714		
% Farmer/son	27	22	41	29	36	41
Farm Labourer	05	04	11	11	22	15
Un/Semi-skilled	04	05	09	15		13
Skilled	23	26	16	19		14
Clerk	19	22	12	14		07
Professional	09	07	01	04		02
Merchant/son	10	12	07	05		04
Student	01	.3	01	01		01
Other	03	04	02	02		02

The only other intensive analysis of the social composition of the Volunteers comes from David Fitzpatrick's study of Clare. His findings show a parallel, albeit slight, gap between officers and men in occupation and status, but reveal an overwhelmingly rural and farm-based rank and file (unsurprising in such an intensely rural county). He also detects the emergence of a more proletarian, less affluent group of fighters, with fewer eldest sons from smaller farms,

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[170] Not including Dublin District.

during the guerrilla campaign of 1920-21.[171] Such a shift cannot be detected in Cork until 1922.

Data from the rest of Ireland and Britain (see Table 10 above and Tables 51-55, Appendix 6) confirm the I.R.A.'s urban bias. Skilled and white collar workers formed a large part of the membership everywhere, while unskilled labourers (especially farm labourers) were generally under-represented. The only exception to this was Dublin, where there was a strong labouring component, even among the officers. Interestingly, Connaught resembles west Cork in its dependence on teachers and townsmen for leadership.

How did the volunteers of the I.R.A. compare with those of the National Army? Tables 29 and 30 show the social backgrounds of Free State soldiers from Cork:[172]

Table 29: Occupations of National Army Recruits in County Cork

	All Ranks	Census
	1922-23	1926
Sample	1361	
% Farmer/son	04	41
Farm labourer	37	18
Un/semi-skilled	33	32
Skilled	16	08
Clerk	05	06
Merchant/son	01	05
Professional	.3	02
Student	01	.4
Other	03	05

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[171] David Fitzpatrick, Politics and Irish Life (Dublin, 1977), pp.202-204, 222-224.

[172] These samples include every person from Cork with a specified occupation who enlisted in the army before May 1923 (M.A, Enlistment and Discharge Register, vols. 1-31). They do not include those pro-treaty I.R.A. members who joined informally.

Table 30: Occupations of National Army Recruits in Cork City

	All Ranks	Census
	1922-23	1926
Sample	910	
Un/semi-skilled	57	39
Skilled	28	25
Clerk	11	13
Merchant/son	01	06
Professional	.2	03
Student	.5	02
Other	03	11

The men of the National Army in Cork (a great many of whom served in their native county[173]) were mostly urban and unskilled. The majority of them came from Cork City and the county's East Riding (see Tables 49-50, Appendix 5). Almost none described themselves as farmers' sons - the farming community shunned the Civil War as much as it had the Great War. In comparison with the British and Irish armies, the I.R.A. held an extraordinary attraction for the young men of the farms.

These statistics show the Volunteers to have been more or less correct in their self-assessment. They were neither very poor nor very well off, but came from the central strata of 'plain people' in between. The egalitarian image was only partly true, as few unskilled workers became officers and the smallest of small farmers were usually left out, but the organisation as a whole was predominantly lower class.

Countrymen may well have been correct in viewing the towns as the centres of apathy and resistance, but they were wrong in thinking that urban areas did not also contribute to the guerrilla war. Towns produced strong factions of rebels, fence-sitters and loyalists, as the early clashes between Sinn Feiners and Redmondites (and later between Volunteers and ex-soldiers) showed. The consequent polarisation may have

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[173] According to a sample of 1093 men of Cork Command in October 1922, 53% were born in Cork (M.A., Army Census, L/S/1).

actually helped mobilise and radicalise the Volunteers, while the presence of hostile civilians, as well as police and military garrisons may have forced them to go on the run earlier and in greater numbers than their rural comrades.

We can test this notion in the case of the North Cork Brigade in the Tan War. Company returns from 4 battalions in the spring of 1921 give the following figures for urban and rural units:174

Table 31: Urban and Rural Companies in the North Cork Brigade

	Reliable	In Jail	On the Run	Active
Urban	52%	30	12	16
Rural	63	11	05	10

Urban Volunteers were indeed less reliable, just as countrymen suspected, but they also faced greater risks, and were (consequently?) more active than their rural comrades.

I.R.A. fighters were partly right in seeing the farming class as reluctant republicans, but the mantle of rebellion did not thereby fall upon their workers: agricultural labourers were even less prominent until the Civil War. Opposing stereotypes, on the other hand, barely survive statistical comparisons. Policemen and other observers did see the major role played by shop assistants in the movement but the constant references to 'town labourers' were greatly overblown. The I.R.A. did not accept corner boys. The Volunteers were not nearly as 'proletarian' as was often imagined, nor were they generally 'idle'. We must, by and large (and leaving aside rural prejudices), take them at their own estimation: as plain, respectable, ordinary men.

There is, however, an element of truth in others' estimation of the Volunteers' social worth. The widespread belief that these were 'persons of no consequence' was based not just on class, but on age as well: these were not just 'upstarts' but 'young upstarts'. Nor did I.R.A. members think

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174 2nd Cork Bde. Coy. Returns, Feb.-June 1921 (O'Donoghue Papers, Ms.31,223) - see also Table 35 in Chapter 8.

of themselves only (or even mainly) in terms of their occupation. They joined the organisation as shop assistants, carpenters and farmers' sons - but also as young men, sons, friends and schoolmates. It is to these questions of youth, family and rebellion that we next turn.

Youth Culture and Rebellion

> At six, when the deserted city was handed over, the masquerade began. Hundreds of boys and girls, escaping from dreary homes, put on their best clothes, their best manner. For a few hours at least they were subject to no authority, audacious, successful, invincible...It was their compensation for a dull day in shop or office, the dreary homes, the brutal parents, and the more hopeless these, the fiercer was their appetite for sensation, for masquerade.
>
> Frank O'Connor, Dutch Interior[1]

> My fight for Irish freedom was of the same order as my fight for other sorts of freedom...If it was nothing else, it was a brief escape from tedium and frustration to go out the country roads on summer evenings, slouching along in knee breeches and gaiters, hands in the pockets of one's trench-coat and hat pulled over one's right eye.
>
> An Only Child[2]

'Youth is asserting itself in this Ireland of ours as it never did within living memory of the oldest inhabitant' observed Mrs. William O'Brien from her vantage point in Mallow. 'The young have it all their own way in Ireland.'[3] To her, the most novel feature of the rise of republicanism was the emergence of a new generation and a new man: 'the type of youth we have got to know of late, determined, steady, with a drilled uprightness of bearing...a Crusader of modern days.'[4]

This praise echoed the Sinn Fein rhetoric of regeneration and the promise of a new politics sweeping away the old corruption. According to the Southern Star (of Skibbereen), 'the moral and intellectual tone of the generation just growing into manhood is noticeably superior to that of the

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[1] London, 1940, p.88.

[2] An Only Child, pp 201-2.

[3] Mrs. William [Sophie] O'Brien, In Mallow (London, 1920), p.5.

[4] O'Brien, pp 65, 68.

preceding generation.'[5] Erskine Childers called the Irish Volunteers 'the soul of a new Ireland, taken as a whole the finest young men in the country, possessed with an almost religious enthusiasm for their cause, sober, clean-living, self-respecting.'[6]

The enemies of the I.R.A. were also struck by the extreme youth of its volunteers. These observers, however, saw not the Baden-Powellesque vision of sober and clean-limbed youth so dear to republican hearts, but rather an irresponsible and immoral subversion of proper order and authority. Many - policemen and others - thought that this rebellion of 'mere boys' was directed as much against parents and elders as against British rule.[7]

This idea first became a common theme of police and press reports during the by-election campaigns of 1917, beginning with North Roscommon in February.[8] Dubbed a 'women and childrens' election', Count Plunkett's victory was widely attributed to the activities of those too young to vote.[9] Here as well the nefarious influence of the radical 'young curates' was detected pitted against that of their parish priests, just as it had been seen behind the 1916 rebels.[10] Roscommon also produced the first stories that 'young members of the farmers' families used stringent intimidation on their

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[5] Star, 26 April 1919.

[6] Childers, 'The Irish Revolution', p.8 (Childers Papers, Ms.7808/29).

[7] I.G. Monthly Report, March 1918 (P.R.O.L., CO/904/105).

[8] The November 1916 election in West Cork, although it involved some Republicans, was not apparently notable for its youth involvement.

[9] Miceal O'Callaghan, For Ireland and Freedom: Roscommon's Contribution to the Fight for Independence (Boyle, n.d.), p.11.

[10] O'Callaghan, p.8; Report of the Royal Commission on the Rebellion in Ireland [Cd.8311], H.C.1916, p.30. See also I.G. Monthly Report, May 1917 (Co/904/103).

elders.'[11]

The generational divide had apparently widened even further by May, when the next contest was held in South Longford. One local newspaper warned Irish Party voters beforehand that 'some of the young members of your household may put obstacles in your way'[12] while the Irish Times reported that:[13]

> the enthusiasm of the young element has reached such a point as to cause family friction in many households. Some refuse to help their fathers on the land unless they exact a promise to support Mr. McGuinness [the Sinn Fein candidate], while daughters decline to pursue their domestic duties without laying similar toll.

These reports of the intimidation of fathers by their children continued unabated through to the general election of December 1918. As for the latter event (when, for the first time, 'boys' could vote alongside their parents), one breathless account had it that: 'the young people (egged on by the curates!) ran it and actually, in many cases locked the old people into their homes so that they might not be able to attend the booths.'[14]

However exaggerated, such claims reflected a widely shared perception of 'Sinn Fein', and especially the Volunteers, as a youth movement - and an almost equally widely shared aprehension of what this meant. As early as June 1917 the Inspector General of the R.I.C. felt able to conclude that 'the movement appears to have captured all the young Nationalists.' A chorus of County Inspectors agreed with him. republicanism was 'on the rise among the younger population'

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[11] J.M. Wilson, notes of tour, 27-8 March 1917 (D989/A/9/7).

[12] Quoted in Irish Times, 7 May 1917.

[13] 8 May, 1917. See also C.I. Monthly Report, Longford, May 1917 (CO/904/103) and J.M. Wilson report, n.d. (D989/A/9/7).

[14] Ussher, p.25. See also Irish Times, 19 Dec. 1918 and C.I. Monthly Report, Mayo, Nov. 1918 (CO/904/107).

in Fermanagh and 'advancing among the mass of young people' in King's as well as among 'the younger sections of the people' in Kilkenny. Elsewhere, Volunteers were seen as the 'younger and more irresponsible classes' or 'the young bloods in the country.' South Tipperary was 'pervaded with young men who show hostility to any form of control.'[15]

The fear of losing control was uppermost in the minds of many in Cork and the keynote of quite a number of warnings issued at this time. Few remained as sanguine as Mr. O'Brien of the Youghal Rural District Council, who breezily advised: 'Let the young hot-heads run their course, which he didn't believe would be a very long one.'[16]

In September 1917, for example, the Chairman of the Fermoy United Irish League 'appealed to the delegates, lest their sons and daughters may be engulfed in the whirlpool of Sinn Feinism.' 'A Troubled Parent' wrote a letter to the Cork Examiner in January 1918 to say that 'our younger folk...are growing uncontrollable.'[17] Later that year Edith Somerville wrote about the decline of youthful deference (no more doffing or touching of caps) and sounded an ominous note:[18]

> In this far western parish 'ourselves' [the Volunteers] have begun to feel important...Not only have the Government and the Police been derided and defied by meetings and

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[15] C.I. Monthly Reports, Fermanagh, May 1917; King's, May 1917; Kilkenny, May 1917; Donegal, June 1918; Kerry, Aug. 1918; Tipperary (South Riding), Jan. 1919 (CO/904/103-107).

[16] Examiner, 9 June 1917.

[17] Examiner, 20 Sept. 1917; 24 Jan. 1918.

[18] Edith Somerville, 'Ourselves Alone'. Elsewhere in Munster, in the garrison town of 'Karrigeen':

> For the old it began to be a queer time...Houses began to be divided against themselves. The Sinn Fein club came into being. In time there was drilling. There was enough to make fathers uneasy: they complained to one another. The elders of Karrigeen were troubled because their day was ending.

Neil Kevin, I Remember Karrigeen (London, 1944), pp 42-3. Both the author's and the town's names are pseudonyms - for Don Boyne and Templemore, respectively.

drillings but the parish priest has been set at naught: and this, in a primitive part of Ireland, is a matter neither to be lightly dismissed or desired. It is easy to smile at the green caps and the flappers, but the future is in their hands.

By 1920 the situation had been transformed into one of complete domination by the young militants, 'the youth of the country', who held 'in contempt the constituted law' and were 'largely imbued with revolutionary ideas'; 'the old people do not count.'[19] Some priests tried to tell the fathers of their parishes to curb their sons, but to little effect.[20] Surveying his district in 1921, a Skibbereen judge concluded that:[21]

The farmers themselves are anxious to settle down and want peace, but their sons won't let them, and the sooner they get rid of their sons the better for themselves, because the country is going to ruin by the actions of irresponsible boys.

Similar things were being said all over Ireland. Everywere, it seemed, 'the younger generation have taken everything into their own hands.'[22]

British soldiers and policemen brought in to put down the rebellion were of much the same opinion, and were surprised to find themselves fighting 'just youths'.[23] They thought of their opponents as 'young green and inexperienced', 'callow

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[19] These divinations of the 'youth of the country' can be found in C.I. Monthly Reports, East Cork, Oct. 1920 and West Cork, Jan. 1920 (CO/904/113, 111). An English visitor to Cork in 1921 was 'repeatedly assured...that militant Sinn Fein was a young man's movement exclusively - that the parents disapproved, indeed begged their sons not to participate in political activity.' 'Life in Cork - An English Officer's Impressions', in the Times, 18 May 1921.

[20] See Eagle, 26 March 1921; Edith Somerville to Ethel Smyth, 3 Oct. 1922 (Somerville and Ross Papers, Lot 878).

[21] Eagle, 5 Feb. 1921.

[22] C.I. Monthly Report, Cavan, Sept. 1921 (CO/904/116).

[23] Private J. Swindlehurst Diary, 28 Feb. 1921 (I.W.M., P36).

youths who do not really realise what they are doing' and 'f---ing schoolboys'.[24] A battalion commander in east Cork sounded the familiar refrain: 'the youth of Ireland is out of hand and the priests have lost much of their power.'[25]

Farmers and other employers found that their labourers, assistants and apprentices took time off to parade, train or fight and still demanded their pay. Sons deserted their fathers' fields and shops. Merchants had to keep them supplied. Householders had to give them food and lodging. Ned Buckley, the poet of Knocknagree, summed up the feelings of many of his generation when he wrote of the social impact of the revolution:[26]

> Then parent and priest may as well be dumb,
> Their precepts were all ignored;
> And who can tell when the time will come
> That their prestige will be restored;
> Then scant was the work of the plough or spade,
> And employers kept silent beaks,
> For the boy was boss and the Mistress maid
> In the time of the ten-foot pikes.

This perceived sense of restlessness among the young was frequently attributed to the stoppage of emigration after 1914, and to the frustration felt by would-be migrants. 'The young men who in the ordinary course would have emigrated... have had to remain home and are the source of all the trouble. With emigration re-opened and facilitated, a good deal of the trouble would disappear': so believed the County Inspector for

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[24] Douglas V. Duff, Sword For Hire (London, 1934), p.85; F. [a staff officer in Cork City], 'Notes on Ireland 1920' (Cockerill Papers, Ms.10,606); Auxiliary Cadet quoted by Mick O'Sullivan (O'Malley Papers, P17b/108).

[25] Anon., 'Appreciation of the Situation in Ireland' (Cockerill Papers, Ms.10,606).

[26] Ned Buckley, 'The Time of the Ten Foot Pikes', n.d., in Ned Buckley's Poems, ed. Brendan Clifford and Jack Lane (Aubane Historical Society, 1987), pp 45-6.

West Cork.[27]

There were a few isolated cases where thwarted emigrants turned to the Volunteers in anger[28] but there is no evidence to support this idea in general - at least, not in Cork. While larger numbers of young men did undoubtedly facilitate I.R.A. recruitment (and added to intrafamily resentment), when restrictions were removed and normal traffic was resumed in 1920-21, violence continued unabated.[29] Committed revolutionaries in Cork remained committed through the Tan and Civil Wars. There is no record of any active guerrillas leaving the county until after the 1923 Ceasefire.[30]

I.R.A. members were highly conscious of their youth. Being part of 'the younger generation as they called themselves' was central to their sense of identity and with youth came nobility and purity: 'all that was brave and virile, all that was chivalrous, unselfish and highspirited in the best of the young manhood of the nation.'[31]

It was young people who embraced 'the Cause' and 'the

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[27] C.I. Monthly Report, West Cork, Dec. 1918 (CO/904/107).

[28] See C.I. Monthly Report, West Cork, March 1916 (CO/904/99); Report of the Royal Commission on the Rebellion, p.77 (in reference to a case in Galway).

[29] There is some evidence in any case that the sort of men who usually emigrated were not the sort of people who usually joined the Volunteers. In 1914, for example, 68% of male emigrants were labourers, as opposed to 7% who were farmers and 4% clerks and accountants. Emigration Statistics (Ireland) 1914 (Cd.7883), pp 12-13.

[30] For other counties, see Letter form Dan Breen (in Chicago), 3 Feb. 1922 (DE 2/416); Michael Collins to Eamon de Valera, 29 June 1921 (DE 2/446); U.s. Military Attache to A/G, 28 Nov. 1924 and Mil. Att. to A/G, 16 Feb. 1925, with a report that the entire East Waterford flying column had emigrated together (O'Malley Papers, P17a/53).

[31] Irish Times, 9 March 1918; obituary of Liam Hoare, Captain of Gurtroe Company [Cork 1] (O'Donoghue Papers, Ms.31,444).

older crowd' who opposed them.[32] As one Bandon veteran told me, it was 'the old fellas - the farmers' who were the main obstacle to the movement in his area. A Bantry I.R.A. man recalled that 'our fathers and mothers were more or less against us at the time, but we all joined up, all the neighbours, all the young fellas.' In the Clonakilty area, 'people at home told us we were foolish when we joined the I.R.A.. That feeling pervaded among the older generation.'[33] Such was the dominance of the movement by the young that at least one organiser in Charleville felt it necessary to appeal to the middle-aged to join Sinn Fein clubs.[34]

Volunteers in neighbouring counties had the same experience. In the East Limerick Brigade, for example, 'all the older people and the Fenians even remained loyal to the Irish Party; and all their children went into the Irish Volunteers.'[35] Ernie O'Malley found this to be a recurring problem in his organising work. 'The elder people thought I was mad, as they had very little sympathy with us...At times the elders of the family, through the sons, insisted on my removal.[36] As late as November 1921, the Adjutant of the 2nd Southern Division found it necessary to appeal to Sinn Fein 'to strengthen the moral right of the I.R.A., by counteracting the general opinion that we are schoolboys out for a

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[32] Interview with M.J..

[33] Interview with C.D., 19 Nov. 1989; Interviews with Mr. O'Driscoll and John L. O'Sullivan (R.T.E. Archives, A2790). In Kilmeen and Castleventry 'Many of the parents in the parish were reluctan to let their sons join in the Volunteer movement even though it was considered quite respectable to have them join the British army.' Daniel O'Leary, Kilmeen and Castleventry Parish Co. Cork (Jerry Beechinor, 1975), p.86.

[34] Examiner, 13 May 1919.

[35] Bill Carty (O'Malley Papers, P17b/129).

[36] Cormac K.H. O'Malley (ed.), 'Ernie O'Malley Autobiographical Letter' in Cathair na Mart, ix, no.1 (1989), p.7. I am grateful to Joost Augusteijn for this reference.

holiday.'[37]

The Treaty split brought out the same attitudes and language on all sides (although in a more muted form). Ted O'Sullivan described Treaty supporters in west Cork as 'a number of older Volunteers and members of Sinn fein who were not fighting men.'[38] Michael Collins dismissed his erstwhile comrades as 'these young irresponsibles' while in his home constituency, according to one supporter, 'highly placed officers of the [anti-Treaty] I.R.A. have informed me that they will not permit their fathers etc. to vote in the coming election.'[39] In Castletownshend, Edith Somerville and her friends continued to blame the troubles on youthful anarchy: 'The present generation, boys and girls alike, are poisoned and poisonous. Even the priests have to acknowledge themselves helpless and beaten by these brutalised, depraved boys of the so-called "Army."' It was still 'the older people' against 'the young ones'.[40]

The Volunteers' response to their elders' opposition was summed up by one Cobh veteran who said simply (and with great good humour): 'we didn't consult them.'[41] This man's cheerful disregard for his parents' opinion was typical of the ex-I.R.A. men I talked to. Nearly all took undisguised pleasure in remembering their defiance of their fathers (and clerical and political father-figures).[42] The Volunteers clearly revelled in their newfound power and freedom; 'eventually one's people had not the slightest say in matters

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[37] Adj., 2nd Southern Div. to A/G, 17 Nov. 1921 (O'Malley Papers, P17a/101).

[38] Ted O'Sullivan (O'Malley Papers, P17b/108).

[39] Examiner, 14 Mar. 1922; J.J. Crowley to Collins, 27 Jan. 1922 (S.P.O., DE2/486).

[40] Somerville to Ethel Smyth, 2 May, 20 April 1922 (Somerville and Ross Papers, Lot 878).

[41] Interview with E.B..

[42] In one well-known tale from north Cork (related to me twice), a Volunteer turned in his father to make him prove his patriotism.

nor did they attempt it.'[43] At the Slippery Rock ambush near Ballyvourney, for instance, 'An ould lad came out to scold his son for not helping in saving hay' but was quickly sent packing by 'the boys' when the shooting started.[44]

This story illustrates how the revolution had turned these mens' social world upside down. For once 'the boys' were in charge. To many at the time this radicalisation and rise to power of previously unknown young men represented the real revolution, with the battle lines being drawn between generations rather than classes, communities or parties. 'It was the battle of youth and the New Ireland versus the old men and the old servitude...it was a fine thing to be young during the years that followed.'[45]

The table below confirms the youthfulness of the I.R.A.'s membership:[46]

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[43] 'Ernie O'Malley Autobiographical Letter', p.7.

[44] Jamie Minihan (O'Malley Papers, P17b/111). Another version of this story is told in O'Suilleabhain, p.84. Tom Kelleher's satisfaction in refuting the typical policeman's contempt is revealed in his story of shooting a constable in Innishannon (Uinseann MacEoin, Survivors [Dublin, 1980], p.217):

So one night they were in the pub after, the R.I.C. I mean, and they were discussing this. One of them said, 'oh sure they are only a lot of young fellows those I.R.A.. And the wounded man was there. And he said, what are you talking about? Sure my heart was grazed...They must be very well trained.

[45] Patrick Kavanagh, The Green Fool (Harmondsworth, 1971, 1975), pp 105, 108.

[46] These figures include both the city and the county. For the sources of this data, see Appendix 3.

Table 32: Ages of I.R.A. Members in Cork

	Officers			Men		
	1917-19	20-21	22-23	1917-19	20-21	22-23
Sample	225	306	147	571	1298	435
%-Under 20	20	10	03	29	25	20
20-29	59	60	69	55	58	64
30-39	16	25	22	13	14	13
40-49	02	04	04	02	02	02
50-59	03	01	01	01	-	-
Mean/Median Age						
	25/25	28/26	29/26	23/23	25/24	26/24

By comparison, the mean age of pre-1917 Cork Volunteers (from a sample of 147 members) was 27.

The vast majority of Volunteers in the 1917-23 period were bachelors. A few older officers, such as Terence MacSwiney, Tomas MacCurtain, Dan Corkery (of Macroom) and Sean Moylan, did have their own families and the percentage of married men was probably larger in the Civil War as I.R.A. weddings were not uncommon after the Truce, Tom Barry's being the most prominent. Even so, in one I.R.A. roll book from 1923, barely 4% of the officers and men listed were married.[47]

These figures reveal a gradually aging membership concentrated in the early and mid- 20s. A Volunteer aged 30 or more was generally considered an 'old man'.[48] The leadership matured over the years and lost its adolescent fringe. Almost all new officers came from among the already active rank and file rather than from new blood.

Their followers also aged, although not quite so rapidly. The rank and file retained a significant proportion of teenagers, suggesting a fairly constant intake of new recruits. Members in their 50s also declined. These were likely old I.R.B. men who had joined the Volunteers before the

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[47] The exact numbers are 7 married out of 197 (M.A., A/1135).

[48] Interviews with M.J., C.D., E.Y. and B.M..

war and who hung on after the 1916 rising before retiring or being shunted aside into Sinn Fein.

Statistics for the Munster I.R.A. confirm the Cork pattern:

Table 33: Ages of I.R.A. Members in Munster

	Officers			Men		
	1917-19	20-21	22-23	1917-19	20-21	22-23
Sample	565	488	203	1376	1765	652
%-Under 20	14	11	03	23	21	18
20-29	65	68	71	59	65	74
30-39	20	19	21	14	11	07
40-49	02	02	03	03	02	.5
50-59	01	01	-	01	.1	-
Mean/Median Age						
	26/25	26/25	28/26	24/24	26/24	26/24

The guerrillas of the 1920s were, for the most part, the children of the 1890s: beneficiaries of many years of peaceful prosperity before the Great War changed the political and social landscape, preventing emigration and threatening conscription. Theirs was a martial generation all over Europe. Millions of their contemporaries - tens of thousands of their friends and neighbours - died fighting for their countries.

Free State army recruits from Cork were more or less contemporary with their foes, although they did attract a greater percentage of the very youthful:[49]

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[49] For the construction of this sample, see Table 11 in the previous chapter.

Table 34: Ages of National Army Recruits in Cork

	All Ranks 1922-23
Sample	2107
%-Under 20	25
20-29	56
30-39	13
40-49	05
50-59	.1
Mean/Median Age	25/24

The generational conflict embedded within the revolution was a major force in shaping the social perceptions of the I.R.A.. It is notable how often the standard labels applied to the Volunteers - 'rustic', 'half-educated', 'rough' - had 'young' attached to them, just as the republicans' self-image of cleanliness and decency was bound up with their own sense of youthfulness. The corrupt or spineless opponents of rebellion were not just farmers, shopkeepers or politicians, they were also 'the old fellas'. And if the I.R.A. was seen by their enemies as 'insignificant' upstarts with no stake in the country, this was as much a product of their age as of their class (the leading rebel in the Castlehaven parish, for example, was known interchangeably as 'the I.R.A. Pup' and 'Captain Boots'[50]). One's social status depended as much on one as the other.

The place of young men in early twentieth century Cork society was one of strict subordination to fathers, employers and priests. The sons of farmers, shopkeepers and tradesmen usually worked without pay and owned no property. They had little or no control over their labour or any say in work or family affairs. 'It goes without saying that the father

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[50] Note in 1922 volume of Edith Somerville Diary (Somerville and Ross Papers).

exercises his control over the whole activity of 'the boy.'[51]

Farms or businesses only passed from father to son when the parents died or decided to retire, and by that time the son would often be well advanced in years. The other main badge of adulthood, marriage, generally followed this inheritance so that 'boy'hood was as much a matter of estate as of age: 'you can be a boy here forever as long as the old fellow is still alive.'[52] Unmarried, unpropertied Volunteers might be deemed 'boys' well into their twenties or even their thirties.

Ernie O'Malley retained a vivid impression of the rural families he encountered:[53]

> Home life was terribly strict. The men worked like mules and the women like slaves. The boys got an odd sixpence or shilling the day they went to market...At the beginning great courage was needed to enable a man to leave home for some hours in the busy season, to leave it for a day was wonderful and, at any time one chose, nothing short of marvellous. I think great credit should be given to the young lads who risked parental displeasure and loss of inheritance by leaving home despite their parents.

For shop assistants, 'the authority of the shopkeeper is not unlike that which he experienced under the supervision of his father'; 'the older people didn't trust the young to do anything right...we were only the young fellows, and I'd say

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[51] Conrad M. Arensberg and Solon T. Kimball, Family and Community in Ireland (Cambridge [Mass.], 1968), p.55; One apprentice described his life as follows (Somerville-Large, p.50):

> I served my time four years learning the trade of shop assistant to my father, and I don't think I ever qualified in his eyes, for he was that discerning. The slightest fault would mean a good thumping, and you were expected to be twenty-four hours on your feet and always smiling. I learnt a bit about everything and was master of nothing.

[52] Conrad M. Arensberg, The Irish Countryman (Garden City, 1968), p.66.

[53] 'Ernie O'Malley Autobiographical Letter', p.9.

that was the general rule.'[54] Many of Siobhan Lankford's schoolmates 'settled into business in Cork and Mallow in drapery and grocery houses. The apprenticeship to business in these firms was hard, and many years elapsed before the workers got the conditions and wages their work entitled them to.'[55] Few shop apprentices received a salary. Even when they became accredited or qualified, and perhaps moved into their own 'digs', their pay remained low or non-existent and they were kept under strict discipline.[56]

Other apprentices led similar lives. When Donncadh MacCurtain was apprenticed at 19 to a Duhallow carpenter, for three and a half years he shared a bed with two other boys in the master's house. They got no pay apart from a half crown at Christmas: 'We had no money for pubs, pictures or dances.' Farm labourers' employers sometimes 'treated you like a dog more or less.'[57]

Nor were these young men of no property allowed to vote until the expansion of the franchise in 1918. Hence 'the boys', particularly those in their teens and early twenties, formed a sort of underclass without power or authority. As one Dunmanway veteran put it, remembering his early years, 'the young crowd didn't count for anything.'[58]

Fathers generally exercised their near total authority from a great emotional and social distance. Close bonds between fathers and sons were rare, even when they worked together. The two generations inhabited quite separate social

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[54] Arensberg and Kimball, p.349; Somerville-Large, p.50.

[55] Lankford, p.69.

[56] Arensberg and Kimball, pp 355-6. See also Examiner, 31 July 1917, 22 Oct. 1918, 29 May 1919 for details of shop assistants' lives.

[57] Seanchas Duthalla, 1986, p.98; Somerville-Large, p.245. See also Arensberg and Kimball, pp 246-8; Michael O'Connell, 'The Craft of the Cooper in Clonakilty' in Seanchas Chairbre; 'Working for Farmers' in Sliabh Luacra, June 1987 and Seamus Murphy, Stone Mad (London, 1966) for the life of a young stone-carver.

[58] Interview with C.D..

worlds. Sean O'Faolain said of his father: 'I never knew him as a person, only as a type.'[59] Children were reared almost solely by their mothers, in a domestic culture in which the fathers rarely participated.[60] Insofar as children learned their nationalism at home, it was most likely their mothers who taught it to them.

It is likely for this reason that so many I.R.A. men have specified their mothers, or their mothers' families, as their primary domestic influence. When asked where he got his patriotism, Tom Kelleher of the West Cork Brigade replied: 'I definitely got it from my mother.'[61] Some 'hard men' had even harder mothers. When Billy Pilkington went to trial in Sligo in April 1919, 'the defendent's mother entered the court, and addressing the figure in the dock, asked "Did you give bail?" The defendent replied "no." "Good" said the mother, "If you did I would not let you into the house again.'[62]

Mothers provided more than just inspiration, however. Many became active revolutionaries in support of their sons, running messages, guns and safe houses. Hannah O'Brien of Broad Lane was one: 'she wore a long fur coat underneath which she wore the bandoliers with bullets etc. from the boat to the dumping place.' Con Neenan's mother, from the south side of

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[59] Interview with Sean O'Faolain (RTE Archives, B1179).

[60] Arensberg and Kimball, pp 53-63, 229-30; Patrick McNabb, 'Social Structure' in Jeremiah Newman (ed.), The Limerick Rural Survey 1958-1964 (Tipperary, 1964), iv, pp 229-230; Thomas M. Wilson, 'Cultre and Class Among the "Large" Farmers of Eastern Ireland' in American Ethnologist, Nov. 1988, p.683. Both Frank O'Connor and Sean O'Faolain give a very similar picture of growing up in Cork City: see O'Connor, An Only Child (London, 1961) and O'Faolain, Vive Moi (London, 1965). The I.R.A. veterans whom I asked about their parents almost all described their relationships in much the same way.

[61] Quoted in Uinseann MacEoin, Survivors (Dublin, 1980), p.216. Again, most of my interviewees gave the same answer.

[62] Irish Times, 8 April 1919.

the city, was another:[63]

> My mother was wonderful. She was outstanding. My mother was so good that in the Tan War - we had an aunt living in Blackpool on the other side of Cork City; her husband had died, so it was a safe place for putting things. My mother would take a rifle under her shawl and cross the whole city, which was quite a job...She was outstanding; a fighting type.

Fathers, on the other hand, were political as well as emotional outsiders. Apart from a very few Sinn Fein leaders, such as George Power senior in Fermoy, they were almost never involved. It is noticeable, for instance, that Con Neenan's aunt's house was safe <u>because</u> his uncle was no longer there. Similarly, when Liam Deasy was on the run and penniless, it was his mother rather than his father who slipped him half a crown. In Frank O'Connor's family, his joining the I.R.A. was:[64]

> all too much for poor Father...Mother's sympathies were entirely with the revolution, and he would have been more furious still if he had known that not long after she was doing odd errands herself, carrying revolvers and despatches.

And when Mitchelstown's unfortunate stationmaster was arrested in December 1920 because of his family's activities, he vainly protested that 'he could not be responsible for his wife and daugters.'[65]

Interestingly enough, a study of 524 Cork Volunteers reveals that, according to their 1911 Census returns, 23% had mothers at the head of their households (as compared to 19% in Cork as a whole).[66] This heavy incidence of absent fathers

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[63] Marie O'Donoghue Diary (for more on Hannah O'Brien, see the Introduction); MacEoin, p.236.

[64] O'Connor, <u>An Only Child</u>, pp 202-3.

[65] Mitchelstown Detachment War Diary, 31 Jan. 1921 (Buffs Regimental Museum, Canterbury).

[66] The Cork data are based on a survey of the Census returns of 1233 families in 8 District Electoral Divisions and 1 urban district with at least 1 parent and 1 resident child.

in I.R.A. members' backgrounds (presumably even higher by 1917) also points to the role of parental auhority in shaping political involvement.

As adolescents emerged from the domestic sphere of influence and became workers and young adults, they did not immediately enter the older men's social and political circles. 'The subordination of the sons does not gradually come to an end. It is a constant.'[67] The informal village or town 'parliaments' which led public opinion and dominated the political arena were the exclusive province of the established males:[68]

> When groups form in pubs, in one another's houses on evening visits, before and after mass in the churchyard, the enthralling game of presenting argument, choosing sides, directing the flow of talk, belongs to the older men...At such times the important news of the countryside disseminates itself. Political judgements are formed, and the ephemeral decisions of daily life are made. In all this the boys are silent listeners. It is a bold young man who enters an opinion of his own.

Kept outside the adult world, young men formed their own, somewhat marginal, subculture with its own 'complex norms, valuations and conducts.'[69]

> The young people recognise themselves as forming a distinct group with interests and sentiments of its own, opposed in the scheme of rural life to the elders. They use the word 'we' and oppose it to 'them' for the old. They recognise places,

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An approximately comparable figure for 'Britain' (which does not include Ireland) is 14%. Michael Anderson, 'The Social Implications of Demographic Change' in F.M.L. Thompson (ed.), The Cambridge Social History of Britain 1750-1950 (Cambridge, 1990), ii, p.49. This measures 'typical' children born in 1891 at age 15.

[67] Arensberg and Kimball, p.55.

[68] Arensberg and Kimball, p.171. See also Arensberg, pp 125-42. John L. O'Sullivan discussed the phenomena of rural 'parliaments' in west Cork in an interview on R.T.E. Radio, 15 Feb. 1989.

[69] Arensberg and Kimball, p.190.

pursuits and forms of activity as their own...[and] greet the suggestion that they should take their place in the gathering of old men in something of the tone of derision which they reserve for women.[70]

This youth subculture was a collective one, formed around long-lived groupings of brothers, cousins, neighbours, schoolmates and the like who played, and often worked, together. The character of these gangs or 'crowds' varied with the area and individuals involved, but most seem to have had a loose natural leadership made up of the oldest boys, the quickest wits or the best sportsmen or organisers.[71]

Such groups were exclusively male, close-knit and assembled frequently, often every day or night. In many communities there was, in any case, an absence of alternative groups or activities. 'The boys' would gather at a house or cross-roads to play cards or talk. They went to dances together, followed the local band, played on the same football or hurling teams:[72]

Football was very important to the young lads...They also formed a social group, as those same team members would go to the fairs together...they were a strong faction agent. It was the most important group to those lads, closer than the

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[70] Arensberg and Kimball, p.168.

[71] In towns especially, these might also follow class lines. In Barrackton, on the north side of Cork City (O'Connor, An Only Child, p.116):

The shop-fronts and gas-lamps were quite as exclusive as city clubs...The boys from our neighbourhood usually gathered outside Miss Murphy's shop at the foot of the [Harrington's] Square while the respectable boys of the Ballyhooly Road - the children of policemen, minor officials, and small shopkeepers - gathered outside Miss Long's by the Quarry.

[72] Interview with a Munster farmer quoted in Mark Shutes, 'Production and Social Change in a Rural Irish Parish' in Social Studies, 1987, p.22. This man was also discussing the meitheal (neighbourhood cooperative labour) group, another bond between these young men. See also Damian Hannan, 'Kinship, Neighbourhood and Social Change in Irish Rural Communities' in Economic and Social Review, Jan. 1972, p.172.

relatives. They would all be at church on Sunday, outside and in. They grew up together.

These informal but stable cliques generated both rivalries between groups - often on a territorial basis, between neighbourhoods, parishes or townlands - and conformity within them: 'They all sort of kept an eye on each other. It ended up so that rarely could a fellow go wrong because even if he was given to bad habits, he would end up getting a hammering from his own gang. So everybody was kept under control.' One study, conducted in an area bordering Cork, concluded that 'the very essence of expression in this community [was] the inability to step outside accustomed behaviour without the support of the group.'[73]

The friendship group functioned both to include and exclude, and the pressure to belong in a small community could be very great. 'A young man's status in the community depends to a great extent on being accepted by this group and by his full participation in its activities.'[74] Such cliques, and their territory, bands and teams, were a very powerful focus for individual and collective identities and loyalties.

Although essentially marginal and deferential, this youth culture did contain the seeds of rebellion. At one level this mostly consisted of what might be termed passive resistance, i.e. concealing one's activities from one's father or talking behind his back rather than openly challenging him. 'Members of a family are often involved in a conspiracy to keep the father ignorant of their affairs (like Frank O'Connor and his mother).'[75] As Neil Kevin recalled:[76]

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[73] Shutes, p.22; McNabb, p.233. See also Eileen Kane, 'Man and Kin in Donegal' in Ethnology, 1968, pp 252-3.

[74] McNabb, p.219.

[75] McNabb, p.229.

[76] Kevin, pp 30-1.

We, who have grown up in the streets of small towns, have short memories if we do not realise the sense of power over the peace and standing orders of a place which is the quite ordinary feeling of these lads, when they roam the town free from the restraints of home and school. How easily a plot was made to raid an orchard; how you locked it up in yourself at home, while you were being youthful and docile about brushing your hair or running a message; how you gave external assent and saved appearance with your father, while you were, in real life, under the jurisdiction of your street leader who was known to have stolen a goose and who would think nothing of burning down a school.

Catholic folk culture also contained an accepted element of ritualised rebellion which allowed for a temporary and largely symbolic reversal of roles.[77] On festival days such as St. Stephen's Day, St. Bridget's day (or Eve), Shrove tuesday or wedding days, young men had a customary right to wear masks or otherwise disguise and decorate themselves, march about in military fashion and demand food, money or entrance to houses. On Skellig Night (Shrove Tuesday), gangs also commonly kidnapped and ridiculed unmarried older men and women. If householders refused their demands the gang would frequently exact a violent revenge ('if they would not get money or drink they would be very cross and if anyone would go out, they would hunt them').[78]

These events were often the occasion for rowdiness, anonymous intimidation, the settling of old scores and confrontations with rivals or the police. To symbolise this overturning of the normal code of deference, clothes were

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[77] My discussion is largely based on the 126 volumes of Schools Mss for county Cork, containing systematic information on these practices, in U.C.D., Dept. of Irish Folklore. See especially, Smss.283, p.422; 288, p.422; 291, p.375; 347, pp 428-30; 350, p.96; 351, pp 174, 19; 35, p.126; 362, pp 196-7; 373, p.206; 374, pp 61-2; 380, pp 72-3. For Cork City, see P.S. O'Hegarty, 'The Wren Boys' in Bealoideas, 1943-44, pp 275-6; Journal of the Cork Historical and Archaeological Society, 1894, pp 22-3 and O'Connor, An Only Child, pp 135-6. An extended and sensitive account of a 'strawing' appears in John O'Donoghue, In Kerry Long Ago (London, 1960), pp 42-64. See also Alan Gailey, Irish Folk Drama (Cork, 1969) and Henry Glassie, All Silver and No Brass (Dublin, 1975).

[78] Sms.394, p.270 (Cloyne).

often worn inside out or else women's clothes were put on. Disguises were invariably worn - faces were masked, veiled, blackened or rouged ('these men nearly always had their legs bound with hay or straw, their faces blackened or masked and their coats turned inside out'[79]). Anonymity was vital and fiercely protected. Sticks and hurleys were usually carried. These gangs, or 'batches', made up of a dozen or so young bachelors and led by a 'Captain' - the normal friendship group in a different guise - were known as Wren Boys, Biddy Boys, Straw Boys or just 'the boys' (I shall use the term 'Straw Boys' to refer to these groups).

The following is a description of 'Biddy Boys' or 'Brideogs' from Watergrasshill:[80]

A number of young men disguised themselves and dressed up a figure which they called 'Breeda'. It was the custom to call to every house in the neighbourhood. On entering a house they demanded money for 'Breeda', and generally danced for a few minutes with the girls of the house. In a house in which the owner took the whole thing as a joke they departed quietly, but when they were taken roughly they generally took all the bread they could find in the house away with them. On entering a Public House they took whatever drinks were on the counter. This often caused a row with the people who had paid for the drinks, but as the 'Brideogs' were always in considerable numbers they generally came out best. When two bunches of 'Brideogs' met there was some excitement as the strongest party always relieved the other of whatever money they had collected.

The role of these groups within the community was an ambiguous one. They offered an opportunity for young men to swagger and force people to notice them and meet their demands. They also offered an opportunity for intense bonding: 'They seemed to be all one together, understanding each other, sharing something intimate and happy.'[81] Women

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[79] Sms.383, p.89.

[80] Sms.382, pp 79-80.

[81] O'Donoghue, In Kerry Long Ago, p.64.

had no part in these visitations.[82]

Strawboys were disorderly, disrespectful and mocked the established order, to the displeasure of the older and more respectable sections of society, yet they presented no real threat. On the contrary, part of the function of these groups seems to have been to enforce conformity within the community in much the same way as the youth groups controlled themselves. Maura Laverty wrote of the local 'go-boys' that 'they preyed particularly on those who were thoughtless enough to act in any way unbecoming to their age or station in life...the fear of attracting their attention kept many of us from committing foolishness.'[83] Skellig Night's attack on bachelors and old maids was a good example of this: 'they used to duck them in the water and frighten them so much that they used be married the next time.'[84] Other victims of charivari included adulterers, troublesome drunks, wife beaters and widows who remarried too soon.

These rituals belonged to a political subculture quite apart from the formal political arena which concerned itself with elections, parties and patronage. The Straw Boys shared their symbols and methods with factions in land, labour or other disputes, and with agrarian rebels from the Rightboys to the Land League. In such cases the landlord or the land-grabber replaced the adulterer or old maid as the object of attack. In fact, festive occasions sometimes became part of these struggles, as in Mayo in March 1922, when one party in a land feud between families 'strawed' another and two people died in the ensuing fight.[85]

The threads of violence (real or implicit), anonymity and

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[82] In a few parishes, girls were known to go from door to door collecting money on St. Brigid's Day or Eve, but this seems to have been a pale and highly localised imitation of the male version. See Smss.383, p.91; 393, p.37; 394, p.176.

[83] Maura Laverty, Never No More (London, 1942), pp 232-3. Laverty was writing about her village near the Bog of Allen.

[84] Dept. of Irish Folklore, Sms.383, p.91 (Glounthane).

[85] Irish Times, 4 April 1922.

coerced conformity to group demands or norms ran through all these different scenarios. The threatening letter or notice and the Skellig list existed on the same symbolic continuum, as did the 'Captains' of the Wren or Straw Boys and the innumerable 'Captain Moonlights' and 'Captain Rocks' who appeared during agrarian disputes.

What they all had in common was the appeal to an ideal of popular unity, or at least uniformity: the demand for support, acquiescence or silence. The use of masks, the role-playing of the 'Captains' and 'Boys' and the symbols of higher authority - the wren or the 'Breeda' - served to legitimise these demands and to assert the claim to be acting as the voice of the people rather than as individuals. The masks of 'the boys' became, symbolically, the mask of community.

When this mask was assumed by the Straw Boys and their ilk, it was, in most senses, playful and the symbols were rendered routine and drained of meaning. As they moved along the continuum however, these symbols and rituals acquired overt political content and became radicalised by confrontation. They became meaningful. In these new contexts they had the power to either mobilise or marginalise the people against whom they were directed.

I.R.A. units were a natural extension of this youth subculture and its body of unspoken assumptions and bonds. Usually benign events and practices became vehicles for political mobilisation and customs such as 'strawing' became part of the political struggle.

The family resemblance between the majority of I.R.A. 'operations' and the actions of the Straw Boys is close and clear: the same use of masks or blackened and painted faces, often the same 'queer clothes', the same-sized gangs of young bachelors acting anonymously under a 'Captain', the same pseudo-military posturing and the same nocturnal raiding and petty intimidation.

The Volunteers displayed the same kind of bonding and bravado as did the Straw Boys. Most 'military' activities, such as drilling, robbing postmen or raiding for arms,

involved little risk or serious violence and contained an element of playfulness not far removed from the Straw Boy model. This was especially true of the 1917-19 period, before the organisation was committed to insurrection, but even after this, I.R.A. activities were generally small in scale and reminiscent of 'strawing'. The following account of a raid on a loyalist household in Tipperary, for example, could as easily be concerned with St. Stephen's day or Skellig Night:[86]

I was up at the old school house at Carrig, where an Irish class was held. I met the defendent, William Herbert, who gave me a message to do something the next day. Other boys in the class got the same message. Herbert told us all to be down at Anna Minnitt's gate...At Minnitt's gate we were all in a crowd together, and turned our coats inside out, put handkerchiefs on our faces and went up towards the house in a body and in the door.

Examples abound of Volunteers borrowing wholesale from Straw Boy rituals. In February 1918 a gang of masked young men dressed in straw costumes mounted a series of raids for arms on Protestant houses in Glanmire. Some people resisted and fighting ensued. On April 8, 1920, in Ballinahalisk, a loyalist ex-officer was shot by men wearing veils. In January of the following year, William Sweetnam of Caheragh was beaten and kidnapped by local Volunteers disguised with rouged faces. In April, in Ballinphellic, republican police with blackened faces, reddened lips and shotguns gave local drunks and

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[86] Examiner, 17 Nov. 1919. Another such example comes from the Ballagh, in Wexford (Examiner, 16 Feb. 1920):

[We] remained at Stamp's gate for Pat Breen...When Breen arrived we started across the fields...The three of us proceeded as far as Ballymacanogue lane. When about twenty yards up the lane we went into a field...and dressed or masked ourselves. There were nine more persons in the field when we arrived...Bill Murray seemed to be the leader. He said- 'Lads, come on.'

When this group burst into the home of the Morris family, they looked enough like Wren Boys that Mrs. Morris, 'believing that they were local men playing a joke, said - "Don't be going on with your nonsense!"' She was shot immediately thereafter.

'troublemakers' sixteen hours to leave the parish.[87] Often the resemblance was so close that one sort of event was confused for the other, and more than one I.R.A. raiding party was met with the question 'Is it Wren Boys?'[88]

Similar incidents occurred all over Ireland. In Dublin a man was shot dead during a raid on his home by 'boys' dressed in scout [presumably Fianna] uniforms, masks and 'loose clothing like skirts.' In Leitrim three young men dressed in womens' clothes and with window blinds over their faces, gagged and tarred a girl. In King's County a man was attacked by twenty men with blackened faces, some of whom wore womens' clothes. In Limerick, a group of arms raiders wore womens' hats and men's hats turned inside out. In Kerry, police captured one suspect wearing female attire while in Clare another was arrested carrying a Volunteer haversack and a woman's hat decorated with ribbons for 'strawing'. Another was arrested in Tipperary wearing a woman's pink hat with the hat-band pulled down over his face.[89] On one occassion in Clare, an I.R.A. officer entered a captured barracks singing 'The wren, the wren, the king of all birds.'[90]

It is impossible to know how many Volunteers participated

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[87] Examiner, 27 Feb. 1918; 9 April 1920; Eagle, 29 Jan. 1921; Examiner, 23 April 1921.

[88] See 'Sassenach', Arms and the Irishman, p.98. In Cork City, the withdrawal of Crown forces in early 1922 brought an epidemic of Straw Boy-like behaviour into the streets. According to one 'worried woman', her neighbourhood was dominated in the daytime by boys with hurleys while after dark (Letter to the Examiner, 31 Mar. 1922):

bands of boys, ranging from 12 to 17 or 18 years, go round at night with masks on their faces and bang at the shop and other doors, while a new pest is added, several batches going round nightly with cigarettes and cigar boxes collecting for bogus hurling clubs, threatening respectable inhabitants who can't give them money.

[89] Irish Times, 14 Mar. 1919; 6 Sept. 1919; 5 April 1920; 20 April 1920; 21 June 1920; 15 Feb. 1921; 9 March 1921.

[90] Paddy MacDonnell (O'Malley Papers, P17b/130).

in the festival customs but it is certain that a great many did, and that all would at least have been familiar with them: nearly every townland had its 'boys'. On occasion, Volunteer activities were combined with such customs, as in Ballinspittal and Kilbrittain (strongly republican areas) on St. Stephen's day in 1916, when the local 'boys' were arrested for drilling, singing seditious songs and assaulting the police during the celebrations.[91] On the same night in 1920, Wren Boys who came into Rosscarbery from the country attacked the house of a prominent loyalist.[92] Another St. Stephen's day episode occurred in Dunmanway when a 'batch' of Volunteers stole uniforms and ceremonial weapons from a retired British officer and subsequently wore them as part of their Wren Boy costumes.[93]

Local groups of Volunteers adopted names like 'the Galty Boys' and 'the Hardy Boys' (just as agrarian agitators had called themselves 'the Committee Boys' and the like in the 1880s[94]), while some Wren Boy 'crowds' assumed titles like 'the Green Volunteers' and took to carrying a green flag rather than a wren or other effigy.[95] Perhaps the most significant - and ordinary - convergence of names lay in the fact that local I.R.A. members were also usually referred to as 'the boys'.

The most important symbolic links were those used to give legitimacy to the I.R.A.'s actions. Where the Wren Boys acted in the name of 'the Wran' (the king) and the Biddy Boys in the name of St. Bridget, and agrarian factions acted in the name

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[91] Star, 13 Jan. 1917.

[92] Police Report on Malicious Injury Claim (C.A.I., CS/LA/C/MI/69). The house was later seized by the I.R.A..

[93] Interview with C.D.. For another example of Wren Boys turned 'rebels', see Kavanagh, The Green Fool, pp 143-147.

[94] Dept. of Irish Folklore, Sms.350, p.191.

[95] See the Mitchelstown detachment war Diary, 31 Jan. 1921 (Buffs Regimental Museum); M. Jesse Hoare, The Road to Glenanore (London, 1975), p.54; Dept. of Irish Folklore, Ms.434, pp 135-6.

of 'evicted tenants' or 'the committee', the Volunteers acted in the name of 'the Republic' or referred to mysterious 'orders'. These various claims carried very different weight - no one was ever killed in the name of 'the Wran' - but had the same function. Here again we see the appeal to unity and the demand for conformity and silence, the common use of the mask of community.

The Volunteers evoked the same range of responses as the Straw Boys. Some people welcomed them, others only grudgingly complied with their demands, and a few refused them. They were looked down on and feared as disorderly, disrespectful and of lower class ('the boys' could be a term of condescension as well as camaraderie)[96]. Townspeople who saw 'strawing' and 'following the wran' as invasions by 'lusty young men of the country' saw Volunteer events in the same way.[97] As with Straw Boys, lack of cooperation was usually not tolerated: it undermined the necessary fiction of communal unity and was met by acts of intimidation and revenge.

The revolution turned the reversal of roles implicit in the festival rituals into a political reality. In part the Volunteer movement did express youthful resentment, generational friction and a desire for status and authority. For once'the boys' were in charge.

However, while this strongly rebellious aspect of the I.R.A. should be recognised, it must also be remembered that the subculture inhabited by these young men was an integral part of the larger community, and that its themes of rebellion and role-reversal existed in a largely deferential and conformist context. The Volunteers may have broken many of the conventional rules, but in other respects they were zealous in defence of their perception of the proper moral order. Adulterers, wife-beaters, drunkards, tinkers, tramps, prostitutes and other troublemakers generally got short shrift

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[96] Dept. of Irish Folklore, Sms.347, pp 428-30; Journal of the Cork Historical and Archaeological Society, 1894, p.22; George O'Brien, The Village of Longing, pp 45-6.

[97] Eagle, 13 Jan. 1917.

with the I.R.A. just as they did with 'the boys'. I.R.A. men valued their respectability. Like the Straw Boys, they ended up reinforcing communal standards as much as they challenged them.

Indeed, if anything, the Volunteers acted out of a heightened sense of community and saw themselves as embodying 'the people' or 'the nation'. They believed in their imagined united community, and directed their violence towards outsiders or deviants, variously defined. If they had truly sought to attack social norms, instead of just departing from them - for instance, if they had sought to run their households - then their use of communal symbols would have been fruitless and meaningless.

If we return to the 'boys of Kilmichael' we can see that these young tradesmen, shop assistants and farmers' sons were quite typical of their guerrilla comrades. They were the heirs of respectable, successful households from main streets, plains and valleys rather than back lanes, bogs and hillsides. This, in the main, was the I.R.A.: broadly democratic within their self-imposed boundaries of respectability. They were, however, still 'the boys', youths of no property and little consequence until war made them heroes.

Nevertheless, respectability and social position cannot explain why these particular men - these particular O'Sullivans, McCarthys and Crowleys - ended up at Kilmichael. To go further we must examine the ideals, ambitions, fears and loyalties which put them on the path to revolution. These are the subjects of the following three chapters.

PART THREE

The Path to Revolution

The Rise and Fall of a Revolutionary Family

And the Shins in the land
Rent the air with their wails
When they heard of the death
Of their friend John Hales.
'Who killed John Hales?'[1]

On August 22, 1922 Michael Collins set out on a tour of his native west Cork, newly occupied by Free State forces. His last stop was Bandon; there he met with Sean Hales, the officer responsible for driving the I.R.A. out of the towns he had just visited. An hour later Collins was dead, killed in an I.R.A. ambush on the road home. The commander of the ambush was Tom Hales.[2]

The two brothers' involvement in this critical episode was no coincidence. The Hales family had been at the eye of the revolutionary storm in west Cork since the 1916 rising, and their personal histories were closely intertwined with that of the Volunteer movement. A study of one illuminates the other and raises fascinating questions about the choices and forces that transformed these west Cork 'boys' into guerrillas, killers and martyrs. We therefore begin our exploration of these issues by tracing one family's path through the Irish revolution.

All his life Robert Hales was a pioneer. Born in the shadow of the great famine in 1849, by the turn of the century he stood out as a successful entrepreneur, even among the

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[1] This is the chorus of a song written in 1920 by soldiers of the Essex Regiment in Bandon (the title was wishful thinking as they never managed to catch Sean Hales). Percival Papers (I.W.M.). I will use the gaelicised version of his name - 'Sean' - as he and his comrades did.

[2] See Meda Ryan, The Day Michael Collins Was Shot (Swords, 1989), Tim Pat Coogan, Michael Collins (London, 1990), pp 402-412 and Edward O'Mahony, 'The Death of Michael Collins' in Magill, May 1989.

prosperous farmers of his home district of Ballinadee (several miles south of Bandon). His reputation was that of an 'enlightened and progressive' farmer, one of the first to buy a threshing machine, the symbol of progress in rural Ireland.[3] By 1911 he owned five machines and a steam tractor which his sons worked as contractors; 'this alone would have made them an unusual family.'[4] He was a leading horse and cattle breeder - he owned one of the few County Premium bulls - and a major local employer.[5]

Robert Hales was also a political entrepreneur. Active in the Land War and the Plan of Campaign (and a reputed Fenian), he was a life-long radical and follower of William O'Brien.[6] When O'Brien formed the All For Ireland League in 1910 to oppose the Irish Party, Hales was among the first to join and was elected as an O'Brienite to the Bandon Rural District Council.[7]

Hales' children inherited much of his energy as well as his anti-landlord and anti-British politics. His eldest sons, Sean, Bob and Tom, were G.A.A. pioneers and champion

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[3] Interview with Tom Kelleher by George O'Mahony, 1968 (tape in the possession of Mr. O'Mahony). The Hales' ages and other family details are given in their manuscript returns for the 1901 and 1911 Census (P.R.O.D.). See also Kathleen Keyes McDonnell, There is a Bridge at Bandon (Cork, 1972), p.21 and Mary MacSwiney's testimony in Evidence on Conditions in Ireland Presented Before the American Commission on Conditions in Ireland (Washington, 1921), p.784.

[4] Kelleher interview; Ernest Blythe, 'Kerry Better Than Cork in 1915', An tOglach, Christmas 1962. The latter is an exceptionally valuable memoir by a key Volunteer and I.R.B. organiser.

[5] The Hales' stallion 'Royal Irish Jupiter' is described in a newspaper advertisement kept in the Percival Papers; the list of premium bulls is found in the Report of the Royal Commission on Congestion in Ireland [Cd.3839], H.C. 1908, p.374.

[6] See Pat Canniffe, 'The Eviction at Knocknacurra', Bandon Historical Journal 1989, pp 25-27.

[7] See Cork Free Press, June 18, 20 1910.

athletes.[8] Staunch O'Brienites, they also learned Irish (as did all the Haleses) and joined Sinn Fein and the clandestine Irish Republican Brotherhood.[9] Like many other A.F.I.L. members, however, they initially held aloof from the Volunteer movement in 1914, considering it a Redmondite front. In this, as in business and sports, the other young men of Ballinadee followed their lead.[10]

After the Volunteers split and the dissident minority reorganised itself in early 1915, however, the Hales became enthusiastic converts. Sean wrote to Terence MacSwiney in April promising that he could raise a hundred men for a Volunteer company, nearly all over six feet tall.[11] MacSwiney was amused, then impressed, as the Ballinadee company rapidly grew to be the largest and most active in west Cork.

The Haleses delivered the young men of Ballinadee en bloc by recruiting friends, neighbours, cousins, work- and teammates. At the centre of this network were the four Hales brothers, Sean, Robert, Tom and Bill and their neighbours in the townland of Knocknacurra, the five O'Donoghue brothers (who were also extensive farmers). Together these two families made up almost a third of the founding members.[12] The company grew from about 30 men in May to 60 in June, and 68 in July.[13] By April 1916 they numbered 110, despite the

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[8] Evidence on Conditions in Ireland, p.780; Coogan, p.51; McDonnell, p.35.

[9] Kelleher interview.

[10] McDonnell, p.21: 'in matters of common concern it [Ballinadee] had but one voice.'

[11] McDonnell, p.35.

[12] The Ballinadee company membership roll for 1916 can be found in the West Cork Regional Museum, Clonakilty. See also Kelleher interview and Cornelius Flynn, 'My Part in Irish Independence', Bandon Historical Journal 1988.

[13] See the C.I. Monthly Reports, West Cork, May-July 1915 (CO/904/97) and Florence O'Donoghue's ms. history of the Irish Volunteers in Cork (O'Donoghue Papers, Ms.31,437), pp 72-3 [hereafter referred to as 'History of the Irish Volunteers'.].

fact that some members in neighbouring districts - notably Kilbrittain - had left to form their own units.[14] The County Inspector for West Cork singled out Ballinadee for special attention and reported that 'they are almost entirely composed of farmers' sons of military age, who, before the war, were followers of Mr. O'Brien, M.P., but who are now in opposition to his [pro-]war policy.'[15]

Although Sean, aged 35, did much of the organising work, it was Tom, 25, who became the Captain while Bill, the youngest, was made Secretary. When the Ballinadee company and its satellites were grouped into a battalion in 1916, Tom was appointed its commander and Sean replaced him as Captain. Under their leadership the company drilled three or four times a week and conducted a route march every Sunday in order to disrupt recruiting meetings and attract their own recruits.[16] Sean was also able to acquire 12 much-prized Mauser rifles, thereby making Ballinadee the best armed unit in Cork outside the city.[17]

The Easter Rising found the Haleses (who, as I.R.B. members in close contact with the leading conspirators in the city, were among the few Volunteers in the county to know about the plan in advance[18]) and their men ready and eager to take part, and they were correspondingly disappointed when the original marching orders were countermanded on Easter Sunday. Tom argued strenuously that they should seize the moment and attack regardless, but he was overruled by the Brigade

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[14] Company return, April 1916 (Cork County Museum, Terence MacSwiney Papers, L233).

[15] C.I. Monthly Report, West Cork, Sept. 1915 (CO/904/98).

[16] C.I. Monthly Report, West Cork, June 1915; 'History of the Irish Volunteers', p.73; Anon. history of the republican movement in the Bandon area (Price Papers, Ms.15,344) [hereafter referred to as 'Bandon History'].

[17] Flynn, p.55.

[18] O'Donoghue, Tomas MacCurtain, p.89; 'Comments on Florence O'Donoghue's Life of Tomas MacCurtain by the Cork 1916 Men's Association' (Boston Public Library), p.8.

commanders, MacSwiney and Tomas MacCurtain.[19] The week that followed was a troubled one. As rumours and reports of the fighting in Dublin were received, Tom grew increasingly eager to enter the fray. He planned an attack on the R.I.C. barracks in Macroom, and was only dissuaded by his I.R.B. superior, Sean O'Hegarty.[20] The Hales' home seethed with schemes and activity. 'I did not quite understand the attitude of the people of the house' confessed Liam de Roiste, who spent a crowded night there while acting as a courier. 'Though drawing on to 12 0'clock, some of the men began manufacturing "bombs" in the kitchen.'[21] The frustrated Ballinadee Volunteers harassed the local police and tried to smuggle more rifles out of the city but they were forestalled when the Brigade reached an agreement with the British authorities to hand over its arms in return for an amnesty.[22] MacSwiney went to Ballinadee on May 3rd to relay these conditions and was met by Bob Hales:[23]

> good and free and easy simple careless Bob. His way of acting guide was to go off in his own swinging way - letting us to tumble after him as best we could...to our shouts he only returned an occasional surprised response, and inviting us to come on. Picture all that journey in the dark of a pretty dark night, over fields, ditches, then the road for a spell, down the valley, across the slob, over the river, again the road and fields to Hales' house.

As MacSwiney's account suggests, Knocknacurra was a rather isolated out of the way place. When he finally arrived in the early hours of the morning, he discovered that this rural fastness had been turned into an armed and angry camp centred around the Hales and O'Donoghue houses. The boys of

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[19] Florence O'Donoghue, Tomas MacCurtain, p.101.

[20] McDonnell, p.57; O'Donoghue, Tomas MacCurtain, p.112.

[21] Liam de Roiste Diary, 25 April 1916 (C.A.I., U271).

[22] 'Bandon History'; C.I. Monthly Report, West Cork, April 1916 (CO/904/99); O'Donoghue, Tomas MacCurtain, p.113.

[23] MacSwiney Diary, May 25-26 (MacSwiney Papers, L233).

Ballinadee were determined at first to put up a fight. 'I was able to calm the boys and advise them and keep them quiet. If I were not there there might have been trouble.'[24]

Tom refused to give up his arms or cooperate with the authorities, ordered his men to follow his example and promptly went on the run. Several hours later Knocknacurra was invaded by soldiers and police. Bob and Bill Hales, Con and Pat O'Donoghue and MacSwiney were all arrested. Sean was captured a few days later and joined them in the Frongoch internment camp in Wales.[25] Tom continued to evade arrest until his brothers were released in December, prompting repeated raids and searches of the family farm and neighbourhood by armed patrols.[26] To make matters worse, 'in the absence of the officers... Ballinadee company became disorganised' and some of the men voluntarily gave up their arms, including eight of the precious Mausers.[27]

The experiences of 1916 - the long build up to the rising followed by the frustration of inactivity, the arrests, raids and police harassment, the loss of arms and the fellowship and hardships of life in prison or on the run - radicalised the Hales and the other Ballinadee activists and welded them into a nation-wide movement. In Frongoch they met rebels from all over Ireland and England and Sean became friends with Michael Collins and his I.R.B. clique, many of whom were also natives of west Cork.[28]

They returned as heroes and militants, determined to struggle and organise on every possible front. There was a new spirit of resistance in the air and battle was joined

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[24] MacSwiney Diary; see also Flynn, pp 56-7.

[25] Flynn, pp 56-57; O'Donoghue, Tomas MacCurtain, p.121 and 'History of the Irish Volunteers', Appendix 5.

[26] C.I. Monthly Reports, West Cork, July, Aug. 1916 (CO/904/100); 'Bandon History'.

[27] Flynn, p.57; Return of arms in possession of the Irish Volunteers, 28 Feb. 1917 (CO/904/29/2).

[28] Griffith and O'Grady, Curious Journey, p.95.

almost immediately. Only days after the rebel prisoners had come home, the local Sergeant received a threatening letter and a police patrol was attacked in Ballinadee.[29]

The Hales threw their energies into a myriad of organisations and activities, always trying to push 'the movement' forward. When Count Plunkett formed his short-lived Liberty League he was immediately barraged with letters from Knocknacurra. Robert wrote, with typical Hales exuberance (and local pride), that 'the men of Ballinadee are heart and soul with the movement' but generously added that 'as for the adjoining localities [they] possess plenty good material.'[30] Sean declared that 'we will leave no stone unturned to bring the rest of the surrounding districts within the movement' in order to 'fight against corruption and the venality of those who want to make Ireland a Crown Colony.'[31]

A Liberty club was formed. Sean Hales and Pat O'Donoghue were on the executive and Robert was their delegate to Count Plunkett's Convention, one of the few from west Cork.[32] And when the League merged with Sinn Fein, the club simply changed its name. Bill became Secretary and Tom was made a member of the constituency executive.[33] As the party did not have to face a contested election in west Cork until 1922, Sean went

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[29] C.I. Monthly Report, West Cork, Dec. 1916 (CO/904/101). One Frongoch veteran observed (Letter from a released prisoner in Bandon, 19 Feb. 1917 [CO/904/164]):

The bold Tom and Donny [Hales] gave them a good run for it...and I think that they wouldn't hardly meddle with them now. The country changed a whole lot since the rebellion, as they are all Sinn Feiners now with a few West Britons among them.

[30] Robert Hales to Count Plunkett, 4 May 1917 (N.L.I., Count Plunkett Collection, Ms.11,383).

[31] Sean Hales to Plunkett, 9 May 1917 (Ms.11,383).

[32] See William Hales to Plunkett, 31 May 1917; List of Convention Delegates (Ms.11,383).

[33] A complete list of Sinn Fein officers for 1921 can be found in the Military Archives (A/1147). The South East Cork executive is named in the Star, 9 Feb. 1918.

to work in other campaigns in Waterford, South Armagh and Donegal, taking contingents of Ballinadee Volunteers with him.[34]

The brothers also continued their father's fight on behalf of evicted tenants by leading their men to intervene in several local land disputes. Other organisations in which they were involved included the Bandon Peoples' Food Committee and the Unpurchased Tenants' Association, the former anti-British (and somewhat anti-shopkeeper) and the latter anti-landlord.[35] Sean helped in the Sinn Fein takeover of the Southern Star newspaper and was a member of the new Board of Directors.[36] In all the welter of political activity that marked 1917 and 1918, the Haleses and their Ballinadee cohorts were ubiquitous - and unfailingly prominent. When J.J. Walsh returned to Bandon from prison in June 1917 Tom was in charge of the platform committee while Sean led the parade in uniform and mounted on a white horse[37] The brothers were again at the head of the De Valera reception in December.[38]

Above all, however, Tom and Sean wanted to ensure that this time 'the movement' would be committed to revolution. The achievement of this goal - and the family's fate - would rest, not on their indefatigable public organising, but on their underground activities with the I.R.B. and the revived Volunteers, which they were already calling the I.R.A..

The former was the key to the latter. The previously tiny I.R.B. (or 'the organisation', as it was anonymously known to its members) expanded rapidly in 1917 as Tom began to

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[34] Jack Fitzgerald, Sean Breen (O'Malley Papers, P17b/112, 124); Flynn, pp 58-59.

[35] Eagle, 16 March 1918; Star, 8 April 1922.

[36] Southern Star Centenary Supplement 1889-1989, (Skibbereen, 1989), p.62.

[37] Eagle, 30 June 1917; J.J. Walsh, Recollections of a Rebel (Tralee, 1949), p.26.

[38] R.I.C. Report on Bandon meeting, 12 Dec. 1917 (CO/904/122).

swear in those Volunteers he trusted.[39] In Ballinadee it was a brotherhood in fact as well as in name as the Hales and O'Donoghue clans made up more than half the circle.[40] At the same time he moved to purge the battalion of those who had given up their arms or had proven unreliable in 1916, and appointed I.R.B. men in their place. Both Sean and Tom also openly criticised the city leadership, particularly MacCurtain and MacSwiney, for the same reason.[41] These manoeuvres were widely resented and perceived in west Cork as a personal and factional coup; the 'big fellas' throwing their weight around. The battalion split into rival camps and many members who opposed the Haleses and the I.R.B. left altogether. Their anger was such that 'not even during the Black and Tan regime did all these men return to the ranks.'[42]

Nevertheless, after a bitter struggle for power, Tom Hales was confirmed in early 1918 as the battalion O/C, Sean was once again Captain of the Ballinadee company and most of their fellow officers were 'organisation' men, sworn to fight for a republic.

There would be no more surrenders. When a party of police arrived in Knocknacurra in May 1918 with warrants for several of the brothers, they met with such fierce resistance from the assembled 'boys' that Sean managed to escape and two constables resigned on the spot. The incident soon became famous and raised I.R.A. morale throughout west Cork.[43]

Both raids and resistance continued that year and the next, with the Haleses maintaining the upper hand. Their confidence and determination in those days is captured in a

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[39] See, for example, Deasy, Towards Ireland Free, p.15; Flynn, p.60.

[40] Flynn, p.60.

[41] Roibeard Langford statement (C.A.I., Langford Papers, U156).

[42] See 'Bandon History' for a detailed discussion of these events.

[43] Examiner, 20 May 1918; 'Bandon History'.

letter from sisters Madge and Hannah (as fervent republicans as their brothers) to Donal, now living in Genoa:[44]

You can see the fun has begun. We had a complete victory here this morning. At about five o'clock we were awakened by police asking for permission to come in to look for arms (these toys do not be left inside now for play things). Well, we left them wait outside until it was our getting up time. Mother was the first to get up and in they came, but when in it was not arms they asked for but for John [Sean] (who was unfortunately the only member of the family inside, except Bob, who is not very prominent).

The police went to Sean's bedroom but he refused to be taken: 'He is a giant you know.' They were reluctant to use force as the memory of the last encounter lingered and the barracks had since received several anonymous letters promising dire reprisals. 'You know a life taken means several more to be paid for it.' 'After some time we got sick of them and went for our gallant soldiers.' Madge lured the police into a room and the Volunteers held the door shut while Sean once again made his escape. 'The poor police were dumbfounded and did not know what to do.'

This humiliating episode gained additional notoriety when the Southern Star was closed down for reporting it. Attention again centred on the Haleses in July when Tom and Bill barely escaped a hail of bullets during a military raid in Innishannon.[45]

All the brothers were now on the run. Their position at the vanguard of the struggle was confirmed in January 1919 when Michael Collins placed Tom in command of the newly formed (3rd) West Cork Brigade. At about the same time he was also appointed as the I.R.B. Centre for the whole county, and later for South Munster, again with Collins' approval. Sean took Tom's place as Bandon battalion commander (Con O'Donoghue replacing him as company captain) while Bill became head of

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[44] Madge and Hannah Hales to Donal Hales, 18 June 1918 (C.A.I., Donal Hales Papers, U53).

[45] Examiner, 7 July 1918; Deasy, p.22.

the Ballinadee I.R.B..[46]

The family was also at the forefront of the burgeoning guerrilla campaign, often exceeding or ignoring G.H.Q. instructions in their zeal. The Bandon Volunteers launched a series of raids and attacks in 1918 and 1919, culminating in February 1920 with simultaneous assaults on R.I.C. barracks in Timoleague and Mount Pleasant, led respectively by Sean and Tom. Sean led the Brigade flying column in the Brinny and Newcestown ambushes in the fall and Bill was also active in several operations that winter. Sean, Bill and Bob were all present at the battle for Crossbarry in March 1921, Bob participated in the subsequent capture of the Rosscarbery barracks and Sean organised kidnappings and reprisals against loyalists in June.[47]

These activities followed a very clear geographical pattern. Timoleague, Mount Pleasant, Brinny, Newcestown, Crossbarry and nearly every other encounter in which the Hales brothers took part (with the exception of Bob at Rosscarbery) were in the Bandon battalion area. When fights took place beyond these borders, such as at Kilmichael, they were usually absent.

The rest of the family was equally dedicated to 'the cause' without being so tied to their home territory. Donal was made the republican consul in Genoa and became part of Michael Collins' I.R.B.-based arms smuggling network. He even managed to negotiate a deal with several Italian nationalist groups to ship arms to west Cork but this fell apart in

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[46] See Sean O'Muirthle to Florence O'Donoghue, 14 March 1921 and Roll of I.R.B. Officers, Nov. 1921 (O'Donoghue Papers, Ms.31,237); Statements re: [I.R.B.] Enquiry relative to Allegations of Negligence against Former County Sub-Centre for Cork (N.L.I., Maire Nic Shiubhlaigh Papers, Ms.22,567).

[47] For descriptions of most of these actions, see Deasy, pp 92-315. For Bob's actions at Rosscarbery, see the interview with Tom Kelleher in Uinseann MacEoin, ed., Survivors, p.229; for Sean's kidnapping of Lord Bandon, see Coogan, p.178.

1921.[48] Madge acted as Collins' courier in this and other matters and became part of his personal clandestine network.[49]

The family's reputation as patriots and leaders, already established before the Great War, rose with each exploit. However, while some Volunteers became loyal followers (To John L. O'Sullivan, Sean Hales was 'a truly great man...Next to Collins...the best organiser I ever met'[50]) others thought their reputation far outstripped their abilities. 'They had made a name for themselves and that name stuck to them' remarked one Bandon veteran. Ernie O'Malley echoed the views of many younger guerrillas outside the Hales' circle when he wrote:[51]

> [Sean] Hales would swear and flounder but he was only a lot of noise. Neither of the brothers were fit to take charge of a Brigade or even of a Battalion. They were the kind of men the movement threw up earlier and whom it was later found had to be put out of their jobs. They were hurlers or something in the G.A.A. and...they were fond of themselves and of publicity and decent men at the bottom.

The one place their 'name' was secure was in the ranks of the British army. The officers and men of the Essex Regiment stationed in Bandon considered Tom and Sean Hales their arch-foes. When an R.I.C. patrol was ambushed in May 1920 at Butlerstown, near Timoleague, it was the Haleses who suffered the consequences, losing both their barn and dairy to police

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[48] Various accounts of this plan exist. See especially the statement by Michael Leahy in the O'Donoghue Papers (Ms.31, 421[8]). For Donal's voluminous correspondence with Collins and with Art O'Brien, another key I.R.B. figure in London, see the Hales Papers (C.A.I., U53) and the Art O'Brien Papers (N.L.I., Mss.8426-30).

[49] See Ryan, The Day Michael Collins Was Shot, pp 10, 171.

[50] Quoted in Griffith and O'Grady, Curious Journey, p.289.

[51] The former statement is by Flor Begley, the latter by Ernie O'Malley; both can be found in Flor Begley (O'Malley Papers, P17b/111). I encountered similar opinions among most of my west Cork interviewees: Interviews with E.Y.; M.C..

arsonists.[52] They even had songs composed about them, like the one quoted at the beginning of this chapter (written in the belief that Sean Hales was 'the rebel leader over most of county Cork'[53]). Another had as its chorus:[54]

> When Irish eyes are smiling
> At the boys they love the best
> And the Irish Shins are sighing
> For their pals who've all gone West
> When the ghosts of Hales and Hurley
> Are wailing through the night
> Then the lilt of Essex laughter
> Will reecho with delight.

On July 27 the song-writers finally got one of their men, just when revenge was uppermost on their minds. On the night of July 25 Sergeant Mulhern of the R.I.C. was killed in a Bandon church and the next day an Essex private was shot dead while hunting his killers. On the following night Tom Hales and Pat Harte, the West Cork Brigade Quartermaster, were flushed from their hiding place near town.[55]

The two men were stripped, tied up and savagely beaten and pistol-whipped. Tom later described the ordeal in a statement published around the world:[56]

I was nearly blind, as blood was running down my face from the

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[52] Examiner, 11, 12 May 1920.

[53] Clarke, 'The Memoirs of a Professional Soldier', pp 10-11 (Clarke Papers), describes this young Essex officer's encounter with Sean Hales.

[54] Percival Papers. Major Percival himself was clearly obsessed with the Haleses judging by the number of references to them which occur in his lectures on guerrilla war and by the songs, photographs and other mementoes which are in his papers.

[55] Percival's own account can be found in 'Guerrilla Warfare - Ireland' [Lecture No.2] (Percival Papers).

[56] Evidence on Conditions in Ireland, pp 780-3. Other, slightly different versions of Hales' statement were printed elsewhere. The unconvincing British denial of these accusations can be found in 'Thomas Hales, Fiction and Fact', Oct. 1920 (CO/904/168).

injuries I had received. We were taken to Bandon into the Military Barracks yard, and were lined up to be shot. The soldiers were howling for our death and were anxious to shoot us...We were still tied with our hands behind our backs, and the soldiers hit us with their fists...they punched us and pummelled us the whole way across the yard.

That same night Hales was interrogated and tortured by a group of Intelligence officers. Canes and pliers were used but he gave away nothing. Eventually, Hales and Harte were tried and sentenced to two years penal servitude. Defiant to the last, Hales refused to recognise the court or defend himself. Harte proved less resilient. His mental and physical health was wrecked and he died a few years later in an asylum.

Tom spent the next year and a half in Dartmoor prison, suffering badly from his wounds. Madge visited him in January 1921 and reported that 'he is well T[hank] G[od] but oh his mouth is destroyed. All his teeth are out. He cannot speak as his tongue catches in the broken teeth.'[57]

Where once letters from Ballinadee had been triumphant, now they were filled with gloom: 'I have missed many a poor boy whom I knew, more than I thought were missing.'[58] In March came the worst blow yet, the burning of the family home:[59]

Instead of the happy girl I was when I wrote to you last, I am now a homeless and almost a fatherless girl...I had to drag poor father to the workman's house in the cold and rain with terror in my heart fearing when they got no one inside they would again follow us...I never will forget his petitions to those heartless masked men.

The house and all of its contents, laboriously built up by Robert Hales over the preceding decades, were destroyed. In June, one of his workmen (also a member of the I.R.A.), John

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[57] Madge Hales to Donal Hales, Jan. 1921 (Hales Papers).

[58] Madge Hales to Donal Hales, 25 Feb. 1921 (Hales Papers).

[59] Madge Hales to Donal Hales, 25 Feb. 1921 (Hales Papers). See also Examiner, 7 Mar. 1921.

Murphy, was shot and killed in his home by Crown forces.[60] Robert himself died not long after.

After the truce Sean looked back on the war as 'that wonderful struggle, or at least the first part of it, for it is too much to think that it is finished. No matter, on, on. Our dead did not die for anything short of Freedom.'[61] Sean's conception of freedom, it turned out, differed considerably from his brothers'. Although former comrades claim he was against the Treaty when it was first announced, his friendship with Michael Collins - and perhaps the fact that Tom was still in prison -ensured that he voted for it in the Dail.[62] 'I have travelled down this stormy road since 1916 and it is conviction that leads me to vote for this Treaty.'[63] The only member of the family to support him was Madge, also influenced by Collins. Tom, Bob and Bill remained adamantly opposed and Donal remained at his post as Consul of an increasingly illusory republic.

As the only prominent Cork guerrilla leader to side with Collins, Sean became a key - and very public - player in the ensuing political struggle.[64] Many of his former comrades-in-arms (some of whom were already in rival factions dating back to the I.R.B. split of 1917) opposed him, as did his brother Tom, who was released in January 1922. When Sean ventured to speak in Bandon in March his platform was set on

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[60] Examiner, 29 June 1921. See also O/C 3rd Cork Bde. to O/C 1st Southern Div., 8 July 1921 (Mulcahy Papers, P7/A/20). Murphy was arrested on Hales' farm and later found shot and bayonetted to death several miles away.

[61] Sean Hales to Donal Hales, 3 October 1921 (Hales Papers).

[62] Jack Fitzgerald (O'Malley Papers, P17b/112); Coogan, p.339.

[63] Debate on the Treaty Between Great Britain and Ireland, pp 324-5. Hales' speech in private session is quoted in Coogan, p.300.

[64] One observer who took note of Hales was Mark Sturgis, who remarked that his 'fine appearance...in Stephen's Green in uniform, is somewhat marred by the Homburg hat above it.' Sturgis Diary, 21 Dec. 1921 (P.R.O.L., PRO 30/59).

fire and the meeting was broken up by republican Volunteers.[65] He nevertheless placed a comfortable third in the June pact election, his victory ensured by Michael Collins' surplus votes.[66]

Tom and he never openly criticised one another. Tom would only say that 'if my brother stuck to the principles he held always he would be on our side today.'[67] Both worked for army unity and against the extremists in their own camps, but they remained opposed. Faced with a choice between the two brothers, the rank and file of the Ballinadee company resigned en masse and played no further part in the revolution.[68] Only the O'Donoghues soldiered on. Their home continued to be a republican safe house throughout the subsequent fighting.

The opening days of the Civil War found both brothers in west Cork. Tom was in Skibbereen besieging the last Free State garrison in the county and Sean was on the run and agitating for a countervailing 'coup'.[69] When National Army troops landed in Union Hall, it was Sean who took command and pushed the I.R.A. out of Skibbereen, Clonakilty and Bandon.[70] True to their factional instincts, he and others of Collins' clique of west Corkmen (whom Sean had first met in Frongoch in 1916) moved swiftly to rebuild their networks and reward their loyalists in and around Bandon (much as the Hales brothers had done in 1917). These networks survived both Collins and Hales, as one staff officer discovered on a tour of the

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[65] Star, 25 Mar. 1922.

[66] Examiner, 24 June 1922.

[67] Star, 8 April 1922.

[68] See Inspector of Org. to O/C Org. 1st Southern Div., 7 Sept. 1922 (M.A., A/0991/2).

[69] Intelligence Report from M. Connell, 19 July 1922 (Mulcahy Papers, P7a/50).

[70] See Griffith and O'Grady, Curious Journey, pp 288-90; Ryan, pp 27, 90.

district in 1923:[71]

> Everywhere in the area one finds 'Commandants', 'Captains' and 'Brigadiers'...who say they were appoined by the late Commander-in-Chief; by the late General Hales or by the Adjutant General, and they seem to think that, regardless of their suitability to hold their offices, that they have a fixity of tenure in the Army.

Then came the ambush at Bealnablath and the death of Collins, a death mourned equally by both brothers. Tom was once more on the run, and was 'deposed' as Brigade O/C soon afterwards.[72]

The war - and the revolution - ended for the Hales family in December 1922. On the 7th Sean was assassinated in Dublin in retaliation for an emergency powers bill he had not voted for. Tom was captured and interned in the same week. Hannah died a month later and Bob, still hunted by the new authorities (and apparently rejected by the I.R.A.), took increasingly to drink and armed robbery.[73] Only Bill remained at Knocknacurra. He ran as an independent candidate in the 1923 election, coming a distant last in a field of fifteen candidates with only 510 votes.[74] Donal continued acting as republican consul, but the position was purely symbolic. Madge's letters to him were now composed largely of memories of the dead, crippled and imprisoned; 'Oh what bright hopes they had.'[75]

Tom and Sean Hales proved to be successful entrepeneurs

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[71] Report on Cork Command, 18 Jan. 1923 (Mulcahy Papers, P7/B/67).

[72] Liam Deasy (O'Malley Papers, P17b/86).

[73] For Tom, see Weekly Examiner, 2 Dec. 1922; for Bob see Cork Command Intelligence Report, 13 Nov. 1922 (M.A., CW/OPS/14F) and O/C 7 Bn., Cork 1 to O/C 1 Southern Div., 25 Sept. 1922 (M.A., A/0991/5).

[74] See Examiner, 20, 31 Aug. 1923.

[75] Madge Hales to Donal Hales, 6 June 1923 (Hales Papers).

like their father. Between them they helped create the republican movement in west Cork and led - or pushed - it down the untried and uncertain path to revolution. By doing so they made history and they made themselves players in Ireland's new politics.

The Hales family embraced revolution and suffered accordingly. They were engulfed by the politics of violence they espoused and, like the O'Briens of Broad Lane, they became the helpless objects of reprisal. Their farm and then their house was burned at night by masked men. Their workman was killed in his own home. Tom was brutally tortured and Sean was shot down in a Dublin street. As usual, none of these victims had any chance to defend themselves.

Throughout these events the Haleses, particularly Tom and Sean, displayed an extraordinary devotion to their cause and to their country. Nevertheless, the ideas behind these convictions remain vague: a bedrock hatred of landlords, the Irish Party and British rule articulated through prevailing cliches ('we must fight against corruption and... venality' [1917]; 'our dead did not die for anything short of Freedom' [1921]; 'I agree with Mick' [1922][76]). The Haleses acted where others talked, but their basic attitudes were not markedly different from those of a great many other Irish nationalists.

If we are to understand how these ideals became embodied in the Volunteer movement and how they were translated into action and violence, we must also understand their social context. Radicalism ran in the Hales family. It was family pride and loyalty which provided the fundamental basis for political action.[77] The father, sisters, brothers and cousins were all active in the republican movement.

Closely bound up with this kinship network was the Hales' strong sense of neighbourhood. Ballinadee produced a trusted

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[76] Sean Hales, quoted in Coogan, p.339.

[77] For the perceived importance of family tradition, see Meda Ryan, The Tom Barry Story, pp 17-18 and the the national memorial to Sean Hales in Bandon.

cadre of friendly and supportive families and was both a refuge and a power base. The Haleses defined themselves politically in terms of this community: 'the men of Ballinadee are heart and soul with the movement.' It was their prior informal leadership of the 'Ballinadee crowd' - the declared ability to recruit a hundred men over six feet tall - that made them regional leaders in west Cork and it may well be that the company's collapse in 1922 paved the way for Tom Hales to be 'deposed' as Brigadier. Guerrilla war revealed the outer limits of these networks as the brothers very rarely moved beyond their home territory around Bandon.

The power of cliques and territory was also revealed by Sean's decision to vote for the Treaty. While still at home he had apparently been against it, but the debates brought him into the orbit of Collins and his I.R.B./expatriate west Cork cronies. From then on Sean seems to have spent as much time in Dublin as he did in Cork; in a sense, he switched factions. Madge's loyalty to Collins also influenced her support; in both cases, political decisions were channeled by factional or personal loyalties.

Why did people join the Volunteers and how did some Volunteers become guerrillas? Patriotism and idealism were certainly part of the answer for the Haleses and others, but not all patriots and idealists joined the I.R.A. and not all members took part in the Tan or Civil Wars. In Bandon, many Volunteers dropped or were pushed out of the movement. Even in the stronghold of Ballinadee, less than half the company paraded to fight on Easter Sunday 1916 and the entire membership resigned in 1922. To answer these questions, then, we must look beyond the inner drives of nationalism and idealism to examine the social networks through which they were expressed.

Volunteering

> You meet parties everywhere whose outlook, on most aspects of life, is altered by a Parish boundary. In dealing with Parochial matters many of them display striking originality, but their intensity of feeling on these minor subjects, combined with their bitter intolerance of opposition and their multifarious petty jealousies, seems to completely consume their intellectual brilliance...They follow, with unquestioning obedience, on any matter not strictly local, the view of their leader for the time being.
>
> Local Government Inspector in Cork, May 1918[1]

> When 1916 came it had a great impact. It hit us; of course we were sympathetic before that. But to quote the late Seamus Murphy quoting Yeats: 'A Terrible Beauty was born'.
>
> Connie Neenan[2]

> I never joined nothing.
>
> Non-Volunteer (who wishes to remain anonymous)[3]

Who were the Irish Volunteers? We have discussed what sort of people joined the I.R.A. - their ages and occupations - but this does not tell us why particular individuals joined or why only a few of these men went on to become active guerrillas. Most shop assistants, apprentices and farmers' sons did not get involved and many of those who did, did little or nothing. To understand these choices and their consequences we must first explore the experiences, networks and loyalties that shaped them.

The Volunteer organisation which emerged in 1917 had little in common with its namesake of the year before. The new Volunteer companies were far more numerous, larger, more dynamic and part of a wider political movement. They also had

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[1] L.G.B. Inspector in Cork to Sir Henry Robinson, 28 May 1918 (French Papers).

[2] Uinseann MacEoin, Survivors, p.236.

[3] Interview with M.E. (a contemporary of the Irish Volunteers in Kanturk), 26 April, 1989.

an almost entirely different and younger membership. Less than 900 Corkmen had paraded on Easter Sunday 1916 (about 60% of the total force) even before they knew that a rising was planned.[4] In the wake of the rebellion and martial law many of these companies collapsed.[5] Most Volunteers surrendered their arms[6]: many dropped out and did not return. Others were rapidly pushed out by the newcomers.[7] Only a greatly reduced nucleus remained.[8] The Volunteers of 1917 and 1918 were not just joining, they were creating a new movement.

The question of personal motivation is oddly absent from most memoirs of the period. Volunteers seem to have regarded their political commitments as completely natural and their motives as self-evident, requiring little reflection. 'It was the thing to do'; 'sure, everybody was joining'; 'I never thought much about it.'[9]

Individual decision-making - the act of joining - was lost in an emotional haze of romantic patriotism and youthful

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[4] A detailed breakdown of the company rolls and turnout on Easter Sunday can be found in the Florence O'Donoghue Papers (Ms.31,439). See also O'Donoghue, 'The Irish Volunteers in Cork 1913-1916' in Journal of the Cork Historical and Archaeological Society, Jan.-Dec. 1966, p.41.

[5] By January 1917, when new companies were already starting to be formed, only 17 of the original 39 rural companies in the Cork Brigade were functioning and nearly all had lost members: on average, these units were 22% smaller, which probably reflects an even greater loss of old members since some new ones had likely already joined. These figures result from a comparison between the Brigade rolls as of Easter Sunday 1916 (O'Donoghue Papers, Ms.31,439) and an equivalent document seized from Sean Nolan by the R.I.C. on 22 Feb. 1917: Michael Buckley to S. Nolan, 15 Jan. 1917 (CO/904/29/2).

[6] Among the 17 reactivated companies in January 1917 mentioned in note 5, for example, 28 of 50 rifles held in 1916 (or 56%) had been surrendered.

[7] For statistics on the turnover in officers, see note 79 below.

[8] In Dunmanway, for example, one veteran told me that about half of the pre-Rising Volunteers left in 1916. Interview with E.Y..

[9] Interviews with M.J., J.S. and E.Y..

camaraderie, all bathed in the reflected glory of the Easter Rising.[10] Veterans are rarely able to recall exactly when and how they joined but they remember vividly how it felt to belong: 'There was a spirit in the air alright'[11]; 'I did like it at the time. 'Twas very adventurous. Since I was a young fellow I was longing for it.'[12] In the early 1970s Liam Deasy wrote that:[13]

Even now, after a lapse of more than fifty years, I can recall the thrill of those early parades - the feeling of high adventure, the sense of dedicated service to the cause of Irish freedom, the secret rendezvous, and the gay comradeship - all were to me and my companions like signs of the return of the Golden Age of Ireland's ancient chivalry.

With this excitement came a heady sense of transformation. 'What a change you would see to what it was six years ago', one Volunteer wrote in 1918, 'the free and easy lads of Cahalane's Cross are quite the opposite now. They are soldiers.' 'We have grown different men to what we

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[10] Frank Gallagher (a Cork republican) wrote: 'How it was I came to join "K" Company, of the Third Battalion of the Dublin Brigade, I cannot now remember' but 'I think nothing while we live will take from us the thrill of those early days of the Volunteer reorganisation.' David Hogan [pseud.], The Four Glorious Years (Dublin, 1953), pp 228-9.

[11] Interview with C.D..

[12] Chisholm interview (tape in the possession of Dr. John Chisholm).

[13] Deasy, Towards Ireland Free, p.8. Sean O'Faolain echoed these sentiments almost to the letter (Vive Moi!, pp 172-3):

Never will I forget the first day I stood in a field...with a score of other raw recruits, being given my first drill...Before we were dismissed our Captain...spoke to us about what we were, and were there for, about the coming fight, about secrecy and loyalty...this gaiety, this liberation of the spirit, was to stay with us all through the exciting years to come.

Frank O'Connor wrote about the same experience in his story 'The Patriarch' (Guests of the Nation).

used to be' declared another.[14] When Sean O'Faolain joined, 'Straightaway my whole life changed. The university became a conspiracy. I was now both student and revolutionary.'[15] Another new convert remembered equally the pleasure of belonging: 'We were young and there was a lot of the boy scout spirit amongst us. We also had the universally satisfying feeling that comes from belonging to an exclusive club or to any group of conspirators.'[16] The 'boys' had become 'soldiers', friendships became 'conspiracies', fields and crossroads became 'secret rendezvous' and sheds and abandoned houses became 'the barracks' or 'Liberty Hall'(in this case, in Ballyvourney): 'headquarters, clubhouse, meeting place, tea rooms, rest-house, according to the occasion and the point of view, its meagre few cubic feet of air-space vibrated and hummed with sedition.'[17]

O'Faolain is one of many Volunteers who described their commitment to the new movement in almost mystical terms, as a conversion experience.[18] His friend Frank O'Connor wrote that 'a revolution had begun in Ireland but it was nothing to the revolution that had begun in me.'[19] The 1916 Rising and the executions which followed were frequently a catalyst for politicisation, often in an explicitly religious context. Many rebels-to-be were forged during the intense Requiem Masses in honour of the Easter martyrs. These went on all

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[14] Letters from Cork, 17 July 1918 and from Cahirciveen, 9 Jan. 1917 (Censorship Summaries and Precis, CO/904/164).

[15] O'Faolain, Vive Moi!, p.172. Ernie O'Malley: 'The University was changed now for me - new associations, new affiliations...we [O'Malley and a fellow student Volunteer] smiled knowingly at each other, for we kept a secret that nobody else was aware of.' On Another Man's Wound, pp 46-7.

[16] C.S. Andrews, Dublin Made Me (Dublin, 1979), p.98.

[17] Twohig, Green Tears For Hecuba, p.21. Practically every company had its own 'barracks': see, for example, Ned Murphy and 'Congo' Condon (O'Malley papers, P17b/123).

[18] O'Faolain, Vive Moi!, pp 130, 172-3.

[19] O'Connor, An Only Child, p.155.

summer, with emotions kept at fever pitch by the trial and hanging of Sir Roger Casement. Charles Dalton, a member of the Dublin Brigade (and later of Michael Collins' 'Squad') walked for hours amongst the ruins 'with a feeling of sadness, and at the same time of holiness and exultation'.[20] Several weeks later he attended his first patriot Mass, where he met Ernie O'Malley: 'That was a day of great happiness for me. I had a wonderful, proud feeling, walking in the procession... These Masses were held frequently and enabled me to become one of the crowd who attended them.[21]

Such born-again republicans saw their commitment not just as a political act but as a way of life. For some the movement became a calling, the embodiment of virtue. It was these 'new men' who set the puritanical tone for the movement.

Liam Lynch is a case in point. Up to April 1916 he was, with his brothers, an active member of the Ancient Order of Hibernians and the National Volunteers. 'Liam was a terrible Redmond man and he hated the Irish Volunteers.'[22] His more radical godmother, Hanna Clery Condon, remembers his frequent attempts to convert her 'and the tears ran down his face when I couldn't change':[23]

He was a Nationalist until the day the British attacked the Kents of Bawnard and he saw Thomas Kent being brought in bleeding through the town of Fermoy, and his poor mother dragging along after them...He said that when he saw the Kents going through Fermoy it was like a sword going through his heart.

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[20] Charles Dalton, With the Dublin Brigade (1917-1921) (London, 1929), pp 41-2.

[21] Dalton, pp 42-3. Frank O'Connor wrote of the same experience in Cork city in 'The Patriarch': 'It became something of an adventure...the door swinging to behind us and shutting us into the warm, dim, smelly church...where a young priest said Mass for twenty or so other adventurers like ourselves'.

[22] Tom Crawford (O'Malley Papers, P17b/129).

[23] Hanna Clery Condon (O'Malley Papers, P17b/132).

From that point on Lynch was a changed man:[24]

> Lynch's associates in Fermoy were either colleagues in the business where he worked or other members of the commercial element in the town. Most of them lacked any sort of National outlook. Immediately he joined the Volunteers [in July 1917] Lynch broke away from this element completely, and associated only with comrades in the movement. From the very start when he joined the Sinn Fein club and Volunteers in Fermoy he attended every meeting and parade and after business hours he invariably went to the Sinn Fein club.

Lynch was possessed by a sense of mission and by revolutionary ardour and remained so until his death in 1923. Many I.R.A. men described him as being 'like a priest' in his attitudes and manner.[25] He was an exceedingly shy man and 'it must have cost him a big effort at the start appearing in public.'[26] However, Lynch's utter commitment drove him to take the lead in organising the Fermoy area. When he died he was Chief of Staff of the entire I.R.A.. Lynch made himself a leader out of the force of his own convictions.

For all the intensity and impact of these experiences, it was these, and the act of joining itself, which separated the mass of Volunteers from the rest of their generation rather than any prior political, ideological or personal differences. Liam Lynch, the archetypal evangelical republican, was a follower of the Irish Party. Most young men had no 'politics' (in the party sense) at all. There had not been a general election since 1910 and, as we have seen, the young were unable to vote before 1918 and were excluded from the formal political arena by their elders.

William O'Brien's All For Ireland League did have a scattered fringe of youthful radicals (primarily in Bantry, Ballinadee and the city) but most of these departed after

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[24] George Power to F. O'Donoghue, 21 Dec. 1953 (O'Donoghue Papers, Ms.31,421).

[25] Interview with M.J.. See also Florence O'Donoghue, No Other Law, p.10.

[26] Power to O'Donoghue, 21 Dec. 1953.

O'Brien declared his support for the war effort in 1914.[27] O'Brienites were seen as natural allies by Sinn Fein in the common fight against the 'Mollies', and as natural supporters during the Tan War by the I.R.A., but there is no evidence that the Volunteers drew proportionately more members from O'Brienite families or districts.[28] The Haleses were an exception in this respect.

Nor did most Volunteers have any previous contact with the Irish-Ireland movement. Before the Rising the Gaelic League and Sinn Fein existed only in the form of small urban clubs and isolated enthusiasts, most of whom were older than the average Volunteer. This tiny republic of letters with its endless round of meetings, projects and journals, did provide much of the early leadership of Sinn Fein and the I.R.A. in Cork city but it had little influence before 1917.[29] The

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[27] See Hogan, pp 224-8; Florence O'Donoghue, 'History of the Irish Volunteers in Cork', pp 11, 23; Ted O'Sullivan (O'Malley Papers, P17b/108).

[28] Most of the veterans I interviewed did not identify the I.R.A. with either party in any way (one was even offended by the question) but thought that O'Brienites had been friendlier and had played an important role in breaking the Irish Party's hold on local politics. Several had O'Brienite parents but others had either Redmondite families or could not remember. The Ernie O'Malley interviews record essentially the same opinions: see Ted O'Sullivan (P17b/108); Barney O'Driscoll (P17b/95); Paddy Coughlan, Seamus Fitzgerald and Dan Corkery (P17b/111).

A detailed evaluation of the links between the A.F.I.L., Sinn Fein and the I.R.A. is impossible at this point as very little is known about O'Brienite membership or support. However, to say, as Brendan Clifford does, that 'the A.F.I.L. strongholds were the areas where the war of independence was chiefly fought' is clearly untrue (Clifford [ed.], Reprints From the "Cork Free Press": An Account of Ireland's Only Democratic Anti-Partition Movement [Cork, 1984], p.51). In the general elections of 1910 and the subsequent by-elections, the safest O'Brienite seats were in North-East and -West Cork, while the safest Redmondite seat was East Cork. The statistics for I.R.A. activity in the county (see Chapter 2) show that, in general, the guerrillas were more active in the east than the north.

[29] The most detailed guide to this little world is Liam de Roiste's memoirs, serialized in the Evening Echo beginning on 19 Aug. 1954. These were based on De Roiste's voluminous diaries, which can be found in the De Roiste Papers (C.A.I., U 271). See

Gaelic Athletic Association was a different matter (which will be dealt with below) but it too had only a very limited hold on the political imaginations of the 'younger generation'.

The great majority of young men joined Sinn Fein, the Gaelic League and the G.A.A. at about the same time they became Volunteers, in a frenzy of collective joining. All of these organisations expanded suddenly and enormously in this period, in one big rush.[30] Gaelicising one's name, going to Irish classes and buying a hurley were all part of belonging to the movement. 'One can still almost date that generation by its Liams, Seans and Peadars.'[31]

As with the Volunteers it was the joining which was important. Just how deep this enthusiasm ran among the new members was open to question. One Gaelic League veteran refereed in February 1918 to 'the thousands of young men in this City by the Lee who do nothing beyond wearing badges.'[32] Sean Moylan later spoke with disdain of the 'part-time' or 'shoneen' Gaelic League; 'I am afraid there are a good many of that class of Gaelic Leaguer in north Cork.'[33]

For the most part, people became radicalised because they joined the Volunteers; they did not join the Volunteers because they were radical. Apart from its Gaelic gloss, the

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also Liam Ruiseal, Liam Ruiseal Remembers (Cork, 1978), pp 9-20; Moiron Chavasse, Terence MacSwiney, pp 22-34 and Florence O'Donoghue, Tomas MacCurtain, pp 15-25.

[30] See, for example, the annual report of the O'Growney branch of the Gaelic League in Cork city in the Star, 9 Feb. 1918 or the Notes from Kilbrittain in the 16 Feb. issue of the same paper. See also Lankford, The Hope and the Sadness, p.255 and the 'Bandon History' (Price Papers).

[31] Frank O'Connor, An Only Child, p.186.

[32] Michael Ua Cuill in the Star, 23 Feb. 1918. League organisers also frequently complained of poor attendance at Irish classes: see Notes from Ballinhassig and from Timoleague in the Star, 16 Feb. 1918; 5 April 1919. I must also add, however, that one of the veterans I interviewed, E.B., has remained dedicated to the language all his life after first being exposed to it as a Volunteer. There was undoubtedly a small but significant minority like him.

[33] Examiner, 19 Sept. 1921.

political complexion of the early Volunteers was not significantly different from the rest of their peers. Opposition to martial law, recruitment and conscription, as well as dissatisfaction with Redmond's Irish Party, were near universal in Cork after 1916, as was the retrospective acclamation of the heroes of the Easter Rising. The rapid growth of this patriotic cult depended not only on commemorative masses but also on the flood of rebel memorabilia, of postcards, mass cards, song sheets, pamphlets, flags, badges, pictures, photograph albums, calendars and a host of other mass-produced icons.[34] Indeed, souvenirs and prayers often went together. Typically, as Frank O'Connor remembers, 'In the early mornings Mother and I went into town to the Franciscan or Augustinian church where mass was said for the dead rebels, and on the way back we bought picture postcards of them.'[35] After the Rising, Charles Dalton 'began at once to collect souvenirs and papers...Whenever I could get a photograph of one of the dead leaders I treasured it with a kind of sacred interest.'[36] In Liam Ruiseal's Cork city bookstore, the hurriedly reprinted works of the rebel leaders 'sold like hot cakes. Pictures of the leaders, song books, national songs, etc., made a complete change in the people's attitude.'[37] Irish nationalism was as much consumed as practised.

This new iconography was probably more influential than revolutionary ideas or texts. As A.T. Culloty wrote of the

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[34] See, for example, the advertisement for photographs in the Examiner, 13 Oct. 1916 or the collection of memorabilia in R.I.C. files (CO/904/166). The importance and ubiquity of these items is also demonstrated by Dublin District Raid Reports from 1920-21. Most suspect houses contained photographs, calendars, songbooks and the like, all of which was seized and itemized, thus providing a sort of political shopping catalogue (P.R.O.L., WO/35/70-79). Perhaps the most striking aspect of the cult of martyrs was the circulation of political relics: locks of Terence MacSwiney's hair being one example.

[35] O'Connor, An Only Child, p.156.

[36] Dalton, p.41.

[37] Ruiseal, p.22.

Volunteers of Ballydesmond parish, 'Their knowledge of the wider national ideas was vague, and at times, confused', a confusion symbolised by the fact that when De Valera came to speak nearby, no one knew how to pronounce his name.[38] None of the I.R.A. veterans I interviewed read Sinn Fein or any other products of the radical 'mosquito press'. By far the most important book they remember reading was John Mitchel's Jail Journal. The only other nationalist writer who came close was A.M. Sullivan, who wrote The Story of Ireland and helped edit Speeches From the Dock. The young men of 1917 and 1918 read these works with passion and imbued them with revolutionary meaning but they were nevertheless a familiar part of mainstream Irish literature, read equally by large numbers of non-Volunteers. Those men who did not join the I.R.A. believed themselves to be just as good nationalists as the Volunteers, whether they were serving or discharged soldiers ('they were as good Irishman as any Sinn Feiner'[39]), policemen (I'm just as good an Irishman as you'[40]) or anyone else, such as the man quoted at the beginning of this chapter who proudly declared that he 'never joined nothing' and added that 'they were no better than the rest of us.'[41]

The question is not why did certain men become nationalists but rather: why did certain young nationalists

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[38] A.T. Culloty, Ballydesmond: A Rural Parish in its Historical Setting (Dublin, 1986), p.237.

[39] Irish Times, 10 Nov. 1917. This declaration was made at an informal meeting of Munster Fusiliers.

[40] Examiner, 16 Nov. 1916. For the context of this remark, see Chapter 3, n.31.

[41] Interview with M.E.. John Murphy of Grenagh undoubtedly spoke for many when he mocked the self-styled patriotism of the Volunteers ('The Farmers' Union Ball' [Dept. of Irish Folklore, Sms.388, pp187-193]):

> They said we're out for Ireland
> out for freedom ta-ga-bragh,
> But 'twas only ditch-planned orders
> and a branch of mob-made law.

become Volunteers?

These men shared very real convictions and ideals, but it seems clear that, for the majority of Volunteers, the decision to join was a collective rather than a n individual one, rooted more in local communities and networks than in ideology or formal political loyalties. Young men tended to join the organisation together with, or following, members of their families and friendship groups. The 'boys' who 'strawed', played, worked and grew up together became the 'boys' who drilled, marched and raided together.

The most important bonds holding Volunteers together were those of family and neighbourhood. Indeed, I.R.A. companies were very often formed around such networks; 'the raw Volunteers were primarily friends and neighbours.'[42] The Gurteen Company was formed by the Crowley brothers around their neighbours at Tinker's Cross (an old battleground in the Land War). Mallow's first Volunteers all lived on Beecher Street. In Ballinhassig the pioneers were the Hyde family, especially the brothers Paddy and Mick. Mick and Eugene Walsh recruited the Clogagh company from among their neighbours in Gaggin. The Nadd Company was begun by Liam and Aodh O'Brien.[43] Micheal O'Suilleabhain's company in Ballyvourney was led by his uncle and brother. Most of the I.R.A. veterans I interviewed joined with, or following an older brother.

In Dick Barrett's parish near Bandon:[44]

Initially the Irish Volunteer movement did not attract many adherents and the limited numbers who joined were confined to a small area in and around the village of Kilpatrick in the north-west of the parish. Early in the year 1918 units of the Irish Volunteers were organised in Innishannon and Knockavilla as separate companies, the latter being named the Crosspound Company for the probable reason that the leading officers and

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[42] J.J. O'Connell, 'History of the Irish Volunteers', Chp.1, p.3 (N.L.I., Bulmer Hobson Papers, Ms.13,168).

[43] O'Donoghue, 'History of the Irish Volunteers in Cork', pp 28, 29, 30, 74, 83.

[44] Joe Walsh, The Story of Dick Barrett (Cork, 1972).

bulk of the members resided around the road junction three miles north of Upton Station.

Similarly, G Company of the 2nd Battalion in Cork city was known as the 'Phairs Cross' Company because this was 'the heart of the centre from which the company drew its strength.'[45]

The Kilbrittain Company, one of the most active in the county, was built around a clutch of militant neighbours, the O'Neills, Crowleys, Fitzgeralds, O'Briens, Mannings and others. The unit started as an extension of the Ballinadee Company, which was also linked by kinship as the Haleses and the Fitzgeralds were cousins. 'Were it not for families like the O'Neills [five of whose sons were in the I.R.A. and with equally active daughters] and others', declared Liam Deasy, 'our Volunteer army could never have continued the fight.'[46] The cadre of pre-Rising Volunteers who carried on into the new movement was largely made up of such tightly-knit groups.

The same pattern can be observed all over Ireland. Clare had its leading I.R.A. clans, the Brennans and the Barretts, Donegal had the Sweeneys and the O'Donnells and so on. In north Kerry, Mike Quill's company were 'all neighbours from the same parish'[47] and the prominent Carnacross Company in

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[45] The crossroads was at the juncture of Barrack Street and St. Finbarr's Road. The quotation is from a collective obituary for company members, probably written by Florence O'Donoghue (O'Donoghue Papers, Ms.31,444 - the newspaper is unknown).

[46] Liam Deasy, 'Sidelights on Ireland's Fight For Freedom' (Mulcahy Papers, P7/D/45):

Local knowledge, local tradition (in many cases, going back in certain families, through Fenian stock, to '98 and even earlier), local comradeship between men who knew each other intimately from schooldays - all these were potent factors in the development of a determined fighting force.

See also Deasy, 'The Brave Men of Kilbrittain' in the Star, 10 April 1971 and O'Donoghue, 'History of the Irish Volunteers in Cork', p.75.

[47] Shirley Quill, Mike Quill - Himself. A Memoir (Greenwich, 1985), p.19.

Meath 'was almost a family affair with seven Farrelly brothers, five Dunne brothers, another family of four Dunnes, the Lynchs, the Dalys and two Tevlins making up most of the company.'[48]

An analysis of I.R.A. unit rolls bears out this impression of clannisnhess. Of the members of the Macroom Battalion who can be traced in the census, fully 50% were brothers, as were 58% of the Lisgoold Company, 49% of the Mourneabbey Company, 39% of the Grenagh Company and 37% of the Kiskeam Company.[49] And, almost certainly, considerably more of these Volunteers were cousins.

Groups of co-workers often volunteered together, like the apprentices at the Haulbowline shipyards - 'a little nursery of Republicanism' - led by Mick Leahy and Seamus Fitzgerald.[50] Other politically significant workforces included those at the Clondulane mills led by Moss Twomey and Mick Fitzgerald[51], the Blarney woollen mills (including Frank

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[48] Oliver Coogan, Politics and War in Meath 1913-23 (Dublin, 1983), p.191.

[49] These unit rolls can be found in: Charlie Browne, The Story of the 7th; Tomas O'Riordan, Where the Owenacurra Flows: A History of the Parish of Lisgoold (Cork, n.d.); Tom O'Regan, 'Rural Ireland at Easter 1916' (Lankford papers, U169c); John J. Duggan, ed., Grenagh and Courtbrack During the Struggle For Independence; J.J. O'Riordan, Kiskeam Versus the Empire (Tralee, 1985). All of these rolls except that of the Mourneabbey Company refer to nominal memberships as of 1921. The figures given are percentages of those members identified through manuscript Census returns.

[50] The quotation is from an obituary of Mick Leahy, probably written by Florence O'Donoghue (O'Donoghue Papers, Ms.31,444 - the newspaper is unknown). See also Queenstown (Cobh) D.I. Reports of 9 Sept. 1916, 28 Jan. 1917 and 15 Jan. 1920 (Cork Co. Museum, Michael Leahy Papers, L 412) and the file on 'Sinn Feiners Employed at Haulbowline' (CO/904/23) which includes a letter from the Admiralty Sec. to the Under Sec., 6 Aug. 1918 stating that 'the proportion of the workmen employed in the Dockyard who are attached to the Sinn fein movement is so considerable that to make such attachment a disqualification for employment' would shut the yard down.

[51] See Tomas O'Riordan, The Price of Freedom [a biography of Mick Fitzgerald] (Cork, 1971).

Busteed)[52] and the Passage dockyards.[53] The recently opened Ford factory was another hotbed of Volunteer activity throughout the whole revolution.[54]

Even Liam Lynch's highly individual conversion must be put into this social context. Fermoy, where he worked as a clerk, lived up to its reputation as a loyal garrison town. It had no Volunteer company before July 1917 and most of those who joined subsequently were not native to the town but were, like Lynch, young apprentices and assistants from the country.[55] 'There was a big crowd at Barry's'[56], the business where Lynch was employed, and when he became a Volunteer he did so in company with George Power, his best friend and another shop assistant, and Tommy Barry, a fellow clerk at Barry's (Power had previously also joined, and left, the National Volunteers and the Hibernians with Lynch[57]). Liam's brother James also joined the I.R.A. and served until the end of the Civil War.[58] Both Power and Barry went on to become I.R.A. officers and guerrilla leaders. Lynch's personal commitment cannot be doubted but the fact that his brother, friends and workmates, his 'crowd', were fellow-travellers had much to do with shaping his revolutionary career.

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[52] See the statement on the O'Doherty family in the Muiris Meadhach Papers (C.A.I.).

[53] Colman O'Mahony, The Maritime Gateway to Cork (Cork, 1986), p.99.

[54] See the statement of Matt Delaney (CO/762/160) who claimed to have been hounded out of the Fords factory, 'a large number' of whose employees 'were prominently identified with the activities of the Irish Republican Army.' These examples of republican workplaces are also based on the frequency with which their employees turn up in arrest reports or prison records.

[55] Tommy Barry, Lar Condon and George Power (O'Malley Papers, P17b/123).

[56] Lar Condon (P17b/123).

[57] George Power to Florence O'Donoghue, 22 June 1950 (O'Donoghue Papers, Ms.31,421[11]).

[58] See the obituary in An Phoblacht, 11 March 1933.

Football and hurling teams were another important source of recruits. They could be the key focus of young mens' sense of territory and identity and, indeed, provided the main source of recreation and prestige for a lot of young men. It was a small leap from playing together to marching or drilling together. The two activities were often combined, Sunday after Mass being the favourite time for both while the hurleys doubled as mock rifles.

In the strong hurling and football country around Bandon, several teams joined the Volunteers en bloc in 1917 and 1918, their captains and organisers, Dick Barrett and the Deasy and Hales brothers, becoming leading officers. Liam Deasy was responsible for bringing in the Valley Rovers:[59]

> At the time I was well known in this parish [Innishannon] through G.A.A. activities that had led me and a few companions to found the Valley Rovers Hurling and Football Club there six years earlier...Now to see what prospects there were of founding a Company of Volunteers in the parish I sounded some of the more important members of the club, and finding that they considered the prospects favourable...the Company was organised, and I was duly elected its Captain.

Eighty per cent of the Rovers joined the Volunteers; the company drilled on their football fields.

In Cork city, Mick Murphy, the southside battalion commander, was a championship hurler with the Blackrock club. According to Con Neenan, 'our crowd picked up all the hurley groups in the city for Mick [Murphy] was in 1919 a hurling man and was well known.'[60] Mick Leahy, another senior officer in east Cork, had played for the same club. Dan 'Sandow' O'Donovan, the northside commander, was also a medal-winning football player (and another recent convert to the G.A.A.). His brothers were both teammates and fellow gunmen.[61]

The role of formal teams and the G.A.A. should not be

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[59] Deasy, Towards Ireland Free, p.18. For Knockavilla and Dick Barrett, see Walsh, The Story of Dick Barrett.

[60] Con Neenan (O'Malley Papers, P17b/112).

[61] Interview with D.D., 6 Nov. 1988.

overemphasised, however. The organisation seems to have been highly regionalised, hurling teams being concentrated in parts of the Bandon valley, east Cork and the city. In these areas, games and volunteering sometimes went hand in hand but in other areas this was not necessarily the case. Even among I.R.A. men in the Bandon area, many active guerrillas never belonged to any serious club and had no idea of other officers' sporting connections.[62] Dick Barrett was the only officer of the Knockavilla football club - located in the same parish as the Valley Rovers - to become an active guerrilla.[63] Other G.A.A. clubs show similarly tenuous I.R.A. connections. The Captain of the 1918 Rosscarbery team was also Captain of the town's Volunteer company, but only one of his players can be identified as a fellow Volunteer. Among their rivals for the West Cork championship, the Tullig club, no one can be identified as such.[64] In the Midleton and Blackrock (Mick Murphy's club) teams of 1917, only one player of each can be identified as a member of the I.R.A..[65] On the 1911 Bandon hurling team (winners of the West Cork Cup), three players appear to have joined the Volunteers before 1916 but none of them were prominent in later years.[66] Of those surveyed, only the 1917 Lyre (Clonakilty) football team contained a significant number of active guerrillas.[67] In fact, a great many Volunteers only joined or formed hurling or football teams after they had volunteered, as part of the rush

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[62] Three west Cork I.R.A. men interviewed by Dr. John Chisholm, close colleagues of Liam Deasy, knew nothing of his family's G.A.A. affiliations. None of the men I interviewed were active in the G.A.A. before the revolution, although several became so later in the 1920s.

[63] See the list of Knockavilla officials, captains and vice-captains in the Star, 12 May 1917.

[64] The teams are listed in the Eagle, 31 Aug. 1918.

[65] Examiner, 19 March 1917.

[66] The team is named in the Bandon Opinion, Dec. 1980.

[67] Star, 13 Oct. 1917.

to embrace all things Gaelic.[68]

Local teams apart, the G.A.A. as an organisation had very little influence on the development of the I.R.A..[69] A lot of Cork guerrillas were wary of Gaelic officialdom, believing them to be talkers rather than fighters or, even worse, politicians.[70] These fears were personified by J.J. Walsh and Patrick 'Paudeen' O'Keefe, two prominent G.A.A. organisers who made militant speeches but wound up as Sinn Fein, and later Free State, functionaries. This distrust of the Association (which had a particularly chequered past in Cork) and its penchant for bureaucracy predated the formation of the Volunteers. Many local teams never affiliated with the G.A.A. or had broken away in the years before the revolution. Flor Crowley and his friends in Behigullane, Dunmanway, for example, viewed the Association as rule-bound and elitist, and football as a townman's game.[71]

Football and hurling were not important to the Volunteers as an organisation but as a part of local, informal youth culture. The 'hurling crowds' around Bandon were more or less the same clusters of brothers, neighbours and 'pals' who

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[68] See 'Bandon History': 'practically every Company of Volunteers had a hurling or football team or both'. One company in Galway reportedly attracted recruits because it possessed the only football in the neighbourhood [C.I. Report, West Galway, July 1918 (CO/904/106)]. Similarly, a Dublin man stated at his 1921 courtmartial that he had only joined the Volunteers in 1918 to play football (Examiner, 27 Jan. 1921).

[69] J.J. O'Connell stated that 'it was a fact that the Volunteers did not receive from the G.A.A. the help they expected' ('A History of the Irish Volunteers', Chp.1, p.4). J.J. Walsh, the ex-head of the Cork G.A.A., agreed: Recollections, p.34. It should also be noted that many prominent G.A.A. players joined the British army in 1914 and 1915. See, for example, the Star, 27 Oct. 1917; Examiner, 19 Dec. 1918. Also, several G.A.A. clubs - notably Redmond's in the city - remained faithful to the Irish Party. See also David Fitzpatrick, Politics and Irish Life, p.134.

[70] C.S. Andrews and his south Dublin comrades also disapproved of the G.A.A. as insufficiently concerned with the Irish language and overly influenced by priests. See Andrews, pp 113-4.

[71] Flor Crowley, In West Cork Long Ago, pp 25-8.

formed the companies in Ballinadee, Kilbrittain, Kilpatrick and Crosspound already mentioned above, the same 'boys' in a different guise.[72] Local teams were derived from these networks just as Volunteer companies were; at this level, loyalty to your pals and to your corner of the parish was indistinguishable from political and team loyalties.

Companies were usually formed on local initiative by self-nominated organisers: entrepreneurs who could count on their 'crowd' to back them up. In some cases these were men who had joined the movement elsewhere, at work elsewhere or even in prison. These men were important carriers of information and organisation. At the very least they could pronounce 'De Valera'. Men who returned from the British civil service acted as a catalyst for the Volunteers around Newmarket. They 'brought a new dimension to the local scene.'[73] Hugh Thornton, a veteran of the Dublin Rising, performed a similar function in Bandon, as did Seamus Robinson in south Tipperary.[74]

These inner circles recruited from among their relatives, co-workers, schoolmates and neighbours. One rural pioneer in west Cork told me he had joined the Volunteers along with his brother while studying in Cork city in 1917.[75] They returned home in 1918 determined to found a unit in their own neighbourhood near Clonakilty. As was usual, they met and discussed this with 'seven or eight' of their closest friends, and made a collective decision. 'School pals came first. We started with school pals and brought in a fellow here and there, the ones we trusted.' They did not try to mobilise the

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[72] The quotation is from a Bandon I.R.A. veteran interviewed by Dr. John Chisholm.

[73] Culloty, p.237. See also O'Riordan, Kiskeam Versus the Empire, pp 6-7 and James J. Comerford, My Kilkenny I.R.A. Days, pp55, 71.

[74] For Thornton see 'Bandon History'; for Robinson see Dan Breen, My Fight For Irish Freedom, p.21 and his own 'Memoirs', p.22 (N.L.I., Frank Gallagher papers, Ms.21,265).

[75] Interview with J.S..

whole parish. Once they had reached the limits of their like-minded friends and relatives, they stopped recruiting. In effect, their friendship group simply assumed the title of a Volunteer company.

These informal networks and bonds gave the I.R.A. a cohesion that their formal structure and drills could never have produced. On the other hand Volunteer units also inherited the local rivalries, factionalism and territoriality that went with these loyalties. Youth groups created companies in their own image. Their subculture, and the culture of small communities in general, was antithetical to the dictates of mass organisation and military hierarchy. Volunteers may have felt themselves to be soldiers in the service of the Nation but most of them still thought like 'the boys'.

In any case, most companies had little contact with the rest of their organisation before 1920, apart from an occasional visit from a travelling organiser sent from the battalion, brigade or even G.H.Q. in Dublin. These earnest young men arrived armed with drill manuals and orders of battle but they soon discovered that orders or ideas that went against the local grain were usually ignored, that most units barely distinguished between officers and men, and that the main distinctions lay between the 'boys' and strangers like themselves.[76]

Official rank meant little in this milieu. Officers were drawn from the same groups as the Volunteers. Many were self-appointed like the Haleses or the brothers near Clonakilty

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[76] See Ernie O'Malley, On Another Man's Wound, p.128: 'I was on the outside. I felt it in many ways, by a diffidence, by an extra courtesy, by a silence.' Richard Mulcahy, who spent the summer of 1917 organising for both the Gaelic League and the Volunteers (to no discernable effect), despaired of 'the whole loneliness and drudgery of the wide expanse of Cork county...the inspiring company contacts were scant.' ('Personal Chronology', Mulcahy Papers, P7/D/3). Seamus Lankford had similar experiences in north Cork: Lankford, pp 115-6. Micheal O'Suilleabhain provides a picture of an organiser's visit in Where Mountain Men Have Sown, pp 35-9.

described above. Others were the 'natural' leaders of their peers: the football or Wren Boy captains, the teachers, the fast talkers, the representatives of prominent families. In the first years of the revolution, however, companies did little beyond marching and drilling so rank was frequently given to those who would be good at giving commands and leading parades and who would look good in the eyes of the community: 'great men to parade with a flag who lent their prestige and their money to the fight' as Tom Barry cynically put it.[77] 'The men commonly selected someone because he was popular or distinguished in some sphere or other'[78]; 'He was chosen because he was he was from the town, a strong farmer or a neat hurler'[79]; 'Sometimes these were selected if a man were good enough to play .45 or Pitch and Toss'[80]; 'I know of one man who was elected on the sole grounds that he was considered to be the only man able to give an adequate word of command.'[81]

One group practically guaranteed officer status were ex-prisoners, either those who had been interned in 1916 or those who went to jail in 1917. Another group almost guaranteed not to be chosen were former officers who were felt to have been too passive or submissive during or after the Rising. These men either dropped or were pushed out, and rarely resurfaced within the movement.[82]

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[77] Interview with George O'Mahony.

[78] J.J. O'Connell, 'History of the Irish Volunteers', Chp.1, p.3.

[79] O'Malley, On Another Man's Wound, p.129.

[80] Paddy MacDonnell (O'Malley Papers, P17b/130).

[81] M.J. Costello to Florence O'Donoghue, 11 Dec. 1951 (O'Donoghue Papers, Ms.31,423).

[82] In a sample of 26 pre-Rising companies, less than one-third of the original officers remained as company, battalion or brigade officers in the new Cork brigades (23 out of 74 men, or 31%). This figure is based on a comparison of 1916 unit lists located in the Terence MacSwiney (Cork Co. Museum, Brigade Council Returns, L233) and Florence O'Donoghue Papers (Ms. 31,437) with relevant Bureau of Military History records.

In practice, leadership flowed from a man's role in his peer group and followed the norms of youth culture. Just as friendship groups tended to be tightly knit and egalitarian in outlook ('they all sort of kept an eye on each other') so Volunteers tended to make decisions collectively and officers 'had to learn to steer as close to the unit as they could.'[83] It was the communal networks that counted, not the chain of command.

Most of the men I interviewed were I.R.A. officers at one time or another but few could remember when or how they or others were elected or appointed. 'There was no formality'; 'I don't think there were any officers until the truce.'[84] What they did remember clearly were the key local families and 'big fellas' who ran everything. In many units (as in Ballinadee and Bandon), rank circulated among the inner circle of brothers, neighbours and friends. One activist who founded a company near Bandon with his two brothers said he had 'no particular rank. The brother was Captain but of course I was the leader.'[85] These links continued to be important throughout the revolution. In 1922, for example, Tom Barry objected to Ted O'Sullivan becoming the commander of the 5th (southwest) Cork Brigade. O'Sullivan arranged for Gibbs Ross, his cousin and close comrade, to be appointed instead and the same Bantry family remained in effective control.[86]

The irrelevance of rank was demonstrated every time an outsider or superior tried to remove or replace an established local officer. 'The boys' almost invariably stuck together, obeyed whomever they pleased and often seceded from the organisation altogether. Sean and Tom Hales struggled for a whole year to put their own men in charge of Bandon area

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[83] Paddy O'Brien (O'Malley Papers, P17b/124).

[84] Interviews with M.C. and M.R.. In Ballyvourney, Pat O'Sullivan (whose brothers and uncle were also officers) 'fell into place' as the battalion commander: Twohig, Green Tears for Hecuba, p.17.

[85] Chisholm Interview.

[86] Ted O'Sullivan (O'Malley Papers, P17b/108).

units, faced mutinies and mass desertions, and still did not entirely succeed.[87] When T.J. Golden was court-martialled and removed as Commandant of the Donoughmore Battalion, the men of his home company in Courtbrack threatened to withdraw from the brigade. Golden convinced them to stay but continued as an unofficial leader in the area.[88]

In April 1918 Sean Moylan, commander of the Newmarket Battalion, dismissed Jeremiah Scannell as Captain of the Kiskeam Company for disobeying orders, claiming that 'he was never officially appointed anyway.'[89] However, 'many of the rank-and-file members of the Company wanted Scannell, and rather than submit to the new O/C they formed an organisation of their own behind his back.' Moylan wisely backed down after an angry confrontation and Scannell was re-elected. Thereafter he remained careful of local sensibilities. When he sought to discipline wayward Millstreet officers in 1921 he refused to reduce them in rank as 'it might have a bad effect on the Rank and File.'[90] Loyalties to 'the boys' almost always proved stronger than loyalty to the organisation.

Similar confrontations took place in every I.R.A. Brigade. A typical case was that of a company in north Kerry whose members refused to parade in November 1921 after their Captain was replaced by 'an obnoxious man...the head of the village clique. The rank and file will follow any other man outside that clique who number only four or five.'[91] Earlier that year the whole brigade had effectively renounced G.H.Q. control when their commander, Paddy Cahill, was dismissed - or rather, what remained of the brigade. Several units were

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[87] See 'Bandon History' and Chp.7.

[88] Duggan, ed., Grenagh and Courtbrack During the Struggle for Independence, p.16.

[89] O'Riordan, Kiskeam Versus the Empire, p.13.

[90] O/C 2nd Cork Bde. to C/S, 13 Jan. 1921 (Liddell Hart Centre, Charles Howard Foulkes Papers, Epitome of Seized Documents No.53/3649).

[91] Letter from J.K.W., 11 Nov. 1921 (Mulcahy Papers, P7/A/37).

already operating independently of Cahill and Dublin by this time, so real authority had already been lost.[92]

The intensity of these parochial (or sub-parochial) loyalties meant that much of the organisers' time was taken up with factional fire-fighting. One north Cork leader had to 'constantly watch ancient quarrels and local grievances.'[93] Across the border in Kerry, John Joe Rice 'spent all my time tramping from one company area to another fixing disputes and squabbles.'[94] Ernie O'Malley had to fight to overcome 'the clan spirit' and the 'distrust and jealousy' which he encountered everywhere.[95]

The rapid growth of the republican movement in 1917 and 1918 created fierce disputes between competing cliques over leadership, territory and the right to official status as Volunteers. Few units could contain more than one strong personality, family or faction and the usual result was for one group to leave and form their own unit - officially or unofficially - or simply quit the movement altogether.

Many companies split in this way. The first faction fights were between pre-Rising Volunteers and militant newcomers, as in Bandon or in the Berrings Company.[96] Later, the town of Macroom was divided between its rival east and west sides (between Chapel Hill and Masseytown).[97] The men of Clondulane derided and eventually left the Fermoy company.[98] Derrynacaheragh Company broke away from Togher[99],

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[92] See the testimonies of Con Casey, Johnny Connors, Tadg Kennedy (O'Malley Papers, P17b/38), Tom MacEllistrum, Denis Quill and Bertie Scully (P17b/102).

[93] Unpublished memoir (source confidential).

[94] John Joe Rice (O'Malley Papers, P17b/102).

[95] O'Malley, On Another Man's Wound, p.130.

[96] For Berrings, see Duggan, p.14.

[97] Charlie Browne (O'Malley Papers, P17b/112).

[98] See Pat Ahern to Florence O'Donoghue, 22 April, 20 June 1953 (O'Donoghue Papers, Ms.31,423) and Lar Condon (O'Malley papers, P17b/96).

Behagh from Dunmanway (see below) and Kilbrittain from Ballinadee. One parish near Kanturk produced two overlapping companies because, according to one veteran, 'one crowd would always be against the other.'[100] In the north Cork I.R.A. as a whole, he added, 'there were a lot of internal feuds between fellas.'

Not all of these divisions were acrimonious but most represented strong groups - families, neighbours and workmates - asserting local autonomy. These same groups also guarded their turf jealously and deeply resented any intrusions by neighbouring units: 'between them there was a certain rivalry, the same rivalry that spurred the youth of one parish to excel in hurling or other games against the neighbouring parishes.'[101] Thus, raids for arms, collections for company funds or even ambushes were a never-ending source of friction.[102] The famous ambush at Slippery Rock in August 1920 began with a fight between men of the Ballyvourney Company and their neighbours (and rivals), one of whom was Micheal O'Suilleabhain:[103]

> Now we appeared on the scene. I must say we got a very mixed reception...They asserted that they were quite capable of dealing with any situation without any help foreign to the parish. We mildly replied that we were born three miles away on that hill to the south, which not so long ago was part of the parish.

An uneasy truce was eventually arranged between the locals and the 'foreigners' and a temporary peace fell over the ambush site.

The same territorial disputes existed between regions,

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[99] Deasy, Towards Ireland Free, p.128.

[100] Interview with M.J..

[101] O'Suilleabhain, p.82.

[102] See, for example, Adj., 2nd Bn. to O/C 2nd Cork Bde., 19 March 1920 (M.A., A/0499).

[103] O'Suilleabhain, p.83.

battalions, columns and brigades which, in the words of one north Cork officer, prosecuted the war as 'a loose confederacy' while jealously guarding their borders and independence.[104] Such tensions were evident within the North Cork Brigade itself from the moment of its formation on January 6, 1919. The leaders of the three Duhallow battalions, Kanturk, Newmarket and Millstreet, were not even notified of this meeting, which was organised and dominated by Liam Lynch and the Fermoy Battalion (Lynch was elected O/C).[105] This east-west split continued for well over a year, during which the Duhallow I.R.A. was left to its own devices. According to Sean Moylan, the commander of the Newmarket Battalion, he had 'never heard of Liam or of the Cork 2nd Brigade' before February 1920.[106] In fact, Moylan and Lynch, the two regional chiefs did not even meet until May of that year 'and even then [Lynch] only secured his co-operation after a fashion.'[107] A joint column was formed in July but was disbanded into its constituent parts in November. Moylan explained that 'the men did best in their own districts and always wished to be there.'[108]

This split was formalised in July 1921 with the creation of the 4th Cork Brigade, leaving only the eastern rump of the Fermoy, Castletownroche and Glanworth Battalions in the 2nd Brigade. Even within these two areas, Moylan often clashed

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[104] Unpublished memoir (anonymous source).

[105] See O'Donoghue, No Other Law, p.36.

[106] Sean Moylan to Florence O'Donoghue, 20 Aug. 1952 (O'Donoghue Papers, Ms.31,421).

[107] George Power to Florence O'Donoghue, 11 Sept. 1952. See also Moylan to O'Donoghue, 26 Aug. 1952 (O'Donoghue papers, Ms.31,421).

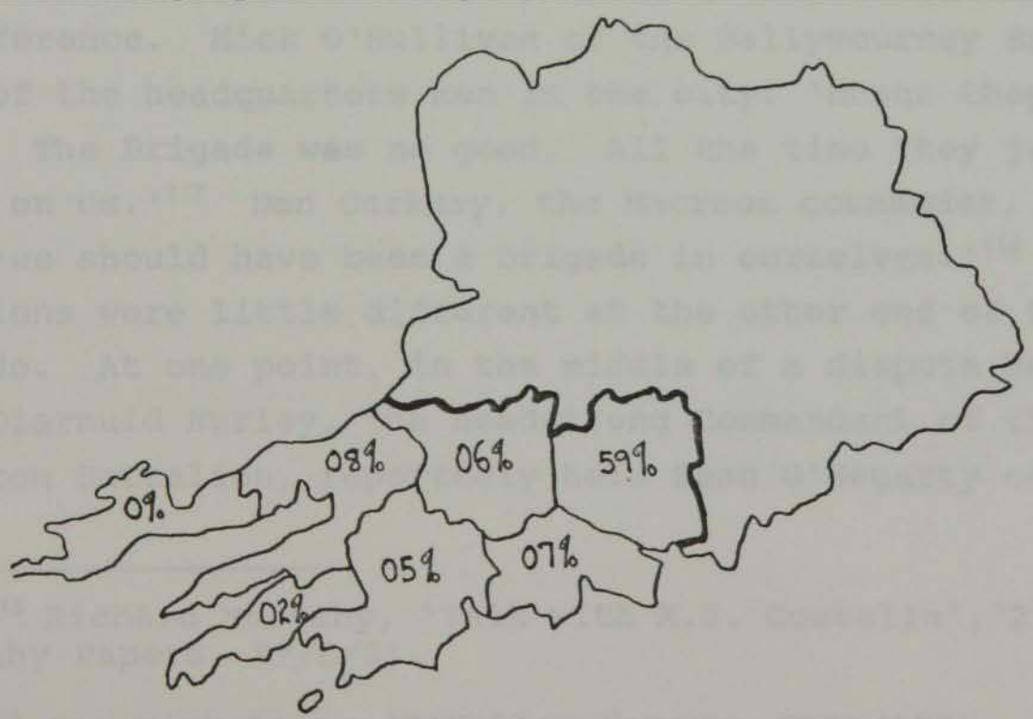
[108] Moylan to O'Donoghue, 20 Aug. 1952. To which George Power replied (Power to O'Donoghue, 11 Sept. 1953):

In those days Moylan himself had only a narrow local outlook and could only think in terms of the Newmarket Battalion. In fact after his appointment as Brigade O/C [in 1921] he made no attempt to act up to his appointment but remained put in the Newmarket area until his arrest.

with other column leaders[109] and the Fermoy Battalion (like the town's company) was divided in two to accomodate local differences.[110]

The West Cork Brigade followed a somewhat similar path. It was dominated by the Bandon Battalion in the same way that Fermoy led North Cork, and the Hales family were as reluctant to leave their area as Moylan or Lynch. Consequently, as the origins of those present at Kilmichael (Figure 3, Chapter 3) and Crossbarry (Figure 4) show, the West Cork Flying Column was drawn heavily from the Bandon valley, to the exclusion of units to the south and west. This localism was greatly resented, especially as the Column also commandeered most of the latters' rifles.[111] Finally, just as in the north of the county, West Cork was split so that a 5th Brigade could be formed around the Bantry, Beara, Schull and Skibbereen Battalions.

Figure 4: Geographical Origins of the West Cork Column 2[112]



[109] Interview with M.J..

[110] George Power to Florence O'Donoghue, 7 Dec. 1953 (O'Donoghue Papers, Ms.31,421).

[111] Liam O'Dwyer, Beara in Irish History, p.122.

[112] This figure shows the origins by district of the 104 guerrillas present at the battle of Crossbarry, March 1921.

The most notoriously territorial of all Cork I.R.A. leaders was Sean O'Hegarty, the O/C of the 1st Cork Brigade after August 1920. The Dublin G.H.Q. wanted to divide Cork 1 along with the other brigades but O'Hegarty put up a fierce - and successful - resistance. Chief of Staff Richard Mulcahy found O'Hegarty 'a snarly gob. If they were taking an inch off his Brigade Area you had reams of correspondence about it.'[113] And when Mulcahy came in person during the Truce he was browbeaten into giving up his scheme (Mulcahy was ever after a figure of fun to the Corkmen)[114]. O'Hegarty also suspected the West Cork I.R.A. of conspiring to lure the Kinsale area away (or, as he put it, of attempting 'to seduce some of his neighbour's officers'[115]); once again, blistering letters and accusations flew over this 'mean intrigue' until the idea was dropped.[116]

Within its sacrosanct borders, however, O'Hegarty's brigade was as divided as the others. Both the western and eastern battalions did as they liked and resented any outside interference. Mick O'Sullivan of the Ballyvourney Battalion said of the headquarters men in the city: 'Musha they were no good. The Brigade was no good. All the time they just put a brake on us.'[117] Dan Corkery, the Macroom commander, felt that 'we should have been a brigade in ourselves.'[118] Relations were little different at the other end of the brigade. At one point, in the middle of a dispute between the two, Diarmuid Hurley, the headstrong Commandant of the Midleton Battalion, reportedly held Sean O'Hegarty captive for

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[113] Richard Mulcahy, 'Talk with M.J. Costello', 23 May 1963 (Mulcahy Papers, P7/D/3).

[114] See Mick Leahy (O'Malley Papers, P17b/108).

[115] O/C 1st Cork Bde. to C/S, n.d. (Mulcahy Papers, P7/A/24).

[116] O/C 1st Cork Bde. to 1st Southern Div., 29 Oct. 1921 (Mulcahy Papers, P7/A/24).

[117] Mick O'Sullivan (O'Malley Papers, P17b/111).

[118] Dan Corkery (O'Malley Papers, P17b/111).

several days. After this, 'Hurley ignored Hegarty...and so the 4th [Midleton] Battalion was out on its own.'[119] Here as well a rivalry developed between 'the Midleton group' of officers and the other companies in east Cork, resulting in the creation of a new battalion separating the two.[120]

The Cork I.R.A. was riddled with such feuds although they never reached the epic proportions of faction fights elsewhere, most notably in Clare and parts of Limerick and Kerry.[121] In East Limerick, for example, the brigade was riven from top to bottom between the followers of Donnacha Hannigan and Liam Shanahan. 'There were units there but they were either Hannigan or Manahan units. Bill and Mick L--- [two brothers] had two rival companies...to show you how far this rot had gone.'[122] And when J.J. O'Connell, the I.R.A.'s Deputy Chief of Staff, toured the 1st Western Division in 1921 his reports spoke repeatedly of mutinies, 'shocking indiscipline', 'private spleens and family hates' and the 'necessity of developing a national rather than a narrow local outlook.'[123]

The same tensions existed within Cumann na mBan, Fianna

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[119] Mick Leahy (O'Malley Papers, P17b/108).

[120] Seamus Fitzgerald (O'Malley Papers, P17b/111).

[121] For examples of such factions, see Gloria Maguire, The Political and Military Causes of the Division in the Irish Nationalist Movement, January 1921 to August 1923 (Oxford D. Phil. thesis, 1985), pp 267-303.

[122] Bill Carty (O'Malley Papers, P17b/129). In west Clare west of Kilkee (Liam Haugh, 'History of the Westy Clare Brigade' [M.A., A/0180]):

A 'Free' Republic on the best Central American lines functioned here from the end of 1920. The inhabitants revelled in an orgy of disputes, principally agrarian, viz. 'Halloran's Bog'...a right of way to a quarry ...Burton's demense...and Willie Studdert's land...One Volunteer named Shea had shot another named Blake dead in February 1920 over a disputed farm. The Lieutenant of Doonaha Company...had taken sides in the Halloran's Bog dispute. He was promptly betrayed to the enemy.

[123] Deputy C/S to A/G, 25 Oct. 1921 (M.A., A/0726).

Eireann and Sinn Fein.[124] Like Volunteer Companies, Sinn Fein clubs came into being wherever some local group decided to call themselves Sinn Feiners. As a result, party headquarters in Dublin was flooded with demands that competing would-be clubs not be recognised and complaints that neighbouring clubs were trespassing or poaching members.[125] And, like the Volunteers, many clubs were divided internally and split along factional lines.

Even republican courts, set up in 1920 to supplant the British judicial system, fell prey to the same 'clan spirit'. As with the rest of the movement, courts were organised on local initiative, parish by parish, and judges were usually elected. In many cases parishes had to be divided between two courts to take local prejudices into account. When it was proposed that these be merged in north Cork in 1921, the protests were explicit. In Dromina and Newtownshandrum, 'the two parts of the parish are entirely opposed to one another and would not work together'[126]; 'the people here [Dromina] are a different kind of people altogether to the other side - and don't get on with them.'[127] The same was true in two or three other parishes according to the District Registrar. On the border with Tipperary, 'there were petty spites etc. and a refusal on the part of the justices of Burncourt to have

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[124] For Cumann na mBan disputes in Cork city, see Sean O'Hegarty to the Cork Bde. Council, 26 Nov. 1918 (O'Donoghue Papers, Ms.31, 198) and Florence O'Donoghue to Moiron Chavasse, 30 Dec. 1954 (U.C.D., Mary MacSwiney Papers, P48C/159). There is no mention of the split in Lil Conlan (an officer of the organisation in Cork city), Cumann na mBan and the Women of Ireland 1913-25 (Kilkenny, 1969).

[125] See the R.I.C. Precis of Seized Documents - Sinn Fein Correspondence, especially for Connaught and Limerick (N.L.I., Ms.10,494[1]-[6]). Unfortunately, the precis of Cork correspondence does not describe the letters' contents.

[126] Min. for Home Affairs to Registrar, North Cork, 30 Nov. 1921 (P.R.O.D., DE 10/7).

[127] Father Carroll to Min. for Home Affairs, 21 Nov. 1921 (DE 10/7).

anything to do with Clogheen.'[128]

This strong sense of place and of local identity could also determine whether or not a Volunteer company was formed at all. As the Local Government Inspector for Cork observed, and as both I.R.A. activists and their enemies found, political attitudes could change abruptly with a parish boundary. One community might produce a strong company but their neighbours over the hill or down the road could be apathetic or actively hostile.[129] To return to the example of the Valley Rovers and Knockavilla G.A.A. clubs, it may be that the officials of the latter did not join the I.R.A. because the former, their long-standing rivals - did.[130] One Kanturk I.R.A. man told me that popular support for the I.R.A. in his area 'changed from place to place. You had to be careful where you went.'[131] Every I.R.A. activist carried a similar mental map of 'good' and 'bad' communities. Micheal O'Suilleabhain's home village of Kilnamartyra was a Volunteer stronghold but a mile south was Ballyvoig, a 'lost valley' where 'all the inhabitants, including my uncle Patsy, were honest, peaceful and law-abiding':[132]

none of the young men of the valley was even a nominal Volunteer...I knew them all. Most of them had gone to school with me. Not a Volunteer among them. All physically fit. A few good athletes among them. No good or harm in them, excepting some who covertly sneered at us.'

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[128] Court Org. to Min. for Home Affairs, 19 Dec. 1921 (DE 11/220).

[129] Ernie O'Malley (On Another Man's Wound, p.129):

Sometimes I came to a townland where there was a company of twenty or thirty men and boys. Tall, well set up or lanky, eager, lithe, willing to learn and anxious to take risks. Six miles away across the barony the people were cowed; the men had no initiative. They were irresolute...Areas of country had a habit of going to sleep.

[130] The rivalry is described in Walsh, The Story of Dick Barrett; the speculation is mine.

[131] Interview with M.J..

[132] O'Suilleabhain, pp 88, 91.

A British army column encountered a parallel situation in the hill country northwest of Fermoy. While 'Araglin valley was a centre of Sinn Fein activity' where 'every house contained letters from the U.S.A. urging on the fight for the Republic', over the hills 'all farmers here [were] very fed-up with events' and were very hospitable to the troops.[133] This array of - often conflicting - local loyalties turned every part of Cork into a political patchwork.

For most I.R.A. men, joining the movement in its early days required little deliberate choice or effort. If you had the right connections or belonged to a certain family or circle of friends you became a Volunteer along with the rest of your crowd. If not, you probably stayed outside or on the fringes.[134] A committed or ambitious man like Tom Barry might still eventually work his way in, but such men were exceptional. The uninvited or unwelcome were easily kept out.

Figure 5 charts the geography of volunteering within one company between 1915 and 1923.[135] The Behagh Company covered eleven townlands within the District Electoral Division of Manch, an area of approximately eight square miles on the north bank of the Bandon river. Three quarters of the members were farmers' sons living on comfortable family farms.[136]

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[133] Patrol Report around Clogheen, 4-7 June 1921 in 6th Division History, pp 118-122 (Strickland Papers).

[134] As the Kanturk man quoted at the beginning of this chapter told me when I asked why he did not join: 'they weren't my crowd'. Interview with M.E..

[135] Information for these maps was drawn from Thomas O'Donovan, 'Behagh Company I.R.A.' (O'Donoghue Papers, Ms.31,332) and from manuscript Census returns for 1911 and the records and Ordnance Survey maps of the Irish Valuation Office. Additional details were gleaned from Florence O'Donoghue, 'History of the Irish Volunteers in Cork', from an article on the Fanlobus and Newcestown ambushes (author and publication unknown, O'Donoghue Papers, Ms.31,301) and from interviews with E.Y., a veteran of the Dunmanway Company.

[136] See Table 26, Chapter 4.

Their average age in 1921 was 27. The Volunteers were first organised locally in the nearby town of Dunmanway, and the men of Manch originally belonged to this unit. They established their own company in 1917, which then became part of the Dunmanway Battalion. Here, as so often elsewhere, the movement spread from town to countryside.

These maps illustrate the importance of family and neighbourhood in determining who joined and who stayed. At every point in the company's history, the number of members with brothers in the unit was never less than half the total. It may be assumed that an even larger percentage belonged to the same extended families.

The size of the company rose and fell with the tide of revolution. The unit's official roll lists 68 members; roughly 40% of the men in the same age group in the district.[137] However, while this many Volunteers did pass through the organisation between 1915 and 1923 they were never all at the same time, and a significant number were purely nominal members.

Eighteen men from Manch, including all four officers, joined the Dunmanway Company before the Rising and several of them were forced to go on the run afterwards. All of these stayed to form their own unit and were joined by 27 others in 1917 and 8 more in 1918 (whether before or after conscription is unclear), bringing the official membership up to 54. The mystique of 1916 proved as powerful a recruiting agent here as elsewhere:[138]

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[137] This official roll number, given in O'Donovan, is confirmed by Bureau of Military History records. The estimate of the size of the age group in Manch is based on an estimate of the number of men between the ages of 15 and 34 in the district. As the ages of the Behagh Volunteers in 1921 ranged from 17 to 48, with the average age being 27, this is approximately correct. The male population of Manch (404) can be found in the 1911 Census (Cork Report, Table XXXIII); the proportion of men between the ages of 15 and 34 in rural west Cork in 1926 is given in the 1926 Census, Vol.5, Part 1, Table 4c.

[138] O'Donovan, 'Behagh Company I.R.A.'.

Among the newly formed members were youths who had only lately left school, drawn by the glamour of the strife to cast their lots side by side with the men whom they had learned to admire and whose previous activities had fired their imaginations and whetted their patriotic instincts.

As the guerrilla war gathered steam in 1920, four men dropped out (two of the original eighteen and two new members).[139] One Volunteer was arrested at the scene of an ambush in September of that year. Six more were caught in a military round-up and interned in June 1921. After the Truce was declared the company quickly gained 14 new members; all of them left again after the Treaty was signed in 1922, along with about half the remaining men, leaving 21 anti-Treaty Volunteers to face the Free State and Civil War.

The company was physically tightly knit. Most of the Volunteers were immediate neighbours, clustered together around several crossroads in the heart of the district. Three of the four officers, Captain Tom O'Donovan, First Lieutenant Tim Crowley and Second Lieutenant Pat Corcoran, lived side by side, forming, with their brothers, a kind of organisational nucleus. In fact, the company was named after the townland where most of the officers and activists were concentrated. As numbers increased, the unit expanded somewhat to more distant townlands, but in 1922-23, its boundaries shrank back to its core area.[140]

Consciously or unconsciously, the self-defined perimeter followed a natural frontier of rivers, marshes and woods, and excluded the three nearby Big Houses. This line very likely marked the horizon of everyday life for the local community: 'our native valley' as Tom O'Donovan proudly called it. The main link with the outside world, the market town of

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[139] In other words, the official membership of the company during the Tan War (50) amounted to approximately 29% of their age group in Manch.

[140] This distribution of members does not simply follow that of the general population. Households were fairly evenly spread over the company area; if anything, Volunteers were concentrated in slightly less populous townlands (with slightly larger farms).

Dunmanway, was also the Behagh Company's link with their superiors and the rest of the organisation. The ties and boundaries that defined the community also determined the shape of the I.R.A..

Those who were the least committed, the four who left in 1920 and the fourteen who joined at the time of the Truce - the so-called 'Trucileers' - tended to be outsiders of one sort or another. Two were the sons of labourers, three had only moved to the area in 1921 and all but one of the other thirteen cannot be located in either the Census returns or the Land Valuation records, meaning that they were probably transient labourers. As can be seen from Map C, most of the 1921 Volunteers also lived more towards the fringes of the company. These men were strangers; without a sense of community or strong ties to local families, they remained on the outer fringes of the revolution.

The maps also reveal less obvious boundaries between the Behagh Volunteers and raise new questions about the geography of activism. There was no police station in Manch (although the adjacent Dunmanway workhouse became an Auxiliary barracks in December 1920) and no battles were fought there. One local man, Mick Hurley, took part in the battle of Crossbarry in March 1921 while three others joined a flying column in 1922. Apart from this, some company members took part in three abortive ambushes in 1920. From this record we can assemble a list of ten 'activists': men who participated in more than one armed operation in the Tan War. Of these ten, nine had a brother or brothers in the I.R.A., seven had been Volunteers since 1915 and six of these (along with a seventh man who joined in 1917) went on to fight in the Civil War. All four officers were 'activists', as were the two Irish Republican Police officers. As can be seen in Map E, these men were heavily concentrated in the centre of the company. Six lived next door to one another, seven lived around the two main crossroads and four lived in the townland of Behagh itself.

It was this small minority of guerrillas (one-fifth of the Volunteers who remained in 1920-21; one-third of those who remained in 1922-23) who did the fighting and suffered the

consequences. All six of the Behagh men arrested in June 1921 were 'activists'. At least three of them were later re-arrested by the National Army. Contrasted with this inner circle was the fluctuating outer fringe of 18 nominal Volunteers who did not take part in the Tan War (27% of the official unit roll) and the 47 who stayed out of the Civil War (70% of the total).

Between these two extremes lay the majority of ordinary members who, with varying degrees of enthusiasm, marched and drilled, canvassed during elections, collected money (an impressive £403 for the Dail Loan and £176 for the Arms Fund), acted as policemen, carried messages, stood guard and gave up their beds when the flying column passed through and performed other occasional tasks, but who never left home, never carried a rifle and never fired a shot. We can estimate their number at about twenty, although they were almost certainly fewer at the height of the rebellion.[141]

Thus, beneath the official membership roll and hierarchy, an informal but enduring substructure can be discerned. One's place in this order depended on one's personal connections and level of activity (whih often amounted to the same thing). At the centre were the activists/guerrillas who called upon a wider, shifting, network of friends and relatives - the 'small fry'[142] - when needed. And beyond these inner and outer circles was the even more transitory fringe of fair-weather comrades and assorted 'hangers-on'.

The history of the Behagh Company (which itself operated rather on the fringes of the Tan War, the Dunmanway battalion being something of a revolutionary backwater) exemplifies the difficulties of defining what it meant to be a Volunteer beyond the mere fact of joining. Those outside the

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[141] According to Liam Deasy's figures, 30 (or 56%) of the 54 Behagh Volunteers in July 1919 were 'active' (by which he meant 'reliable'), the rest inactive; if we subtract the 10 'activists' of the following year, we arrive at the number 20. See Deasy, Towards Ireland Free, p.317.

[142] A favorite phrase within the I.R.A., used to describe the non-fighting men.

organisation probably lumped them together as 'the boys' or 'Shinners'. However, the meaning of volunteering changed over time, from person to person and from group to group. The sense of identity of Behagh's closely bound core of insiders was obviously different from that of the other Volunteers, just as those who joined or departed at different points had quite different experiences. The following chapter will explore the varieties of commitment and participation within the I.R.A..

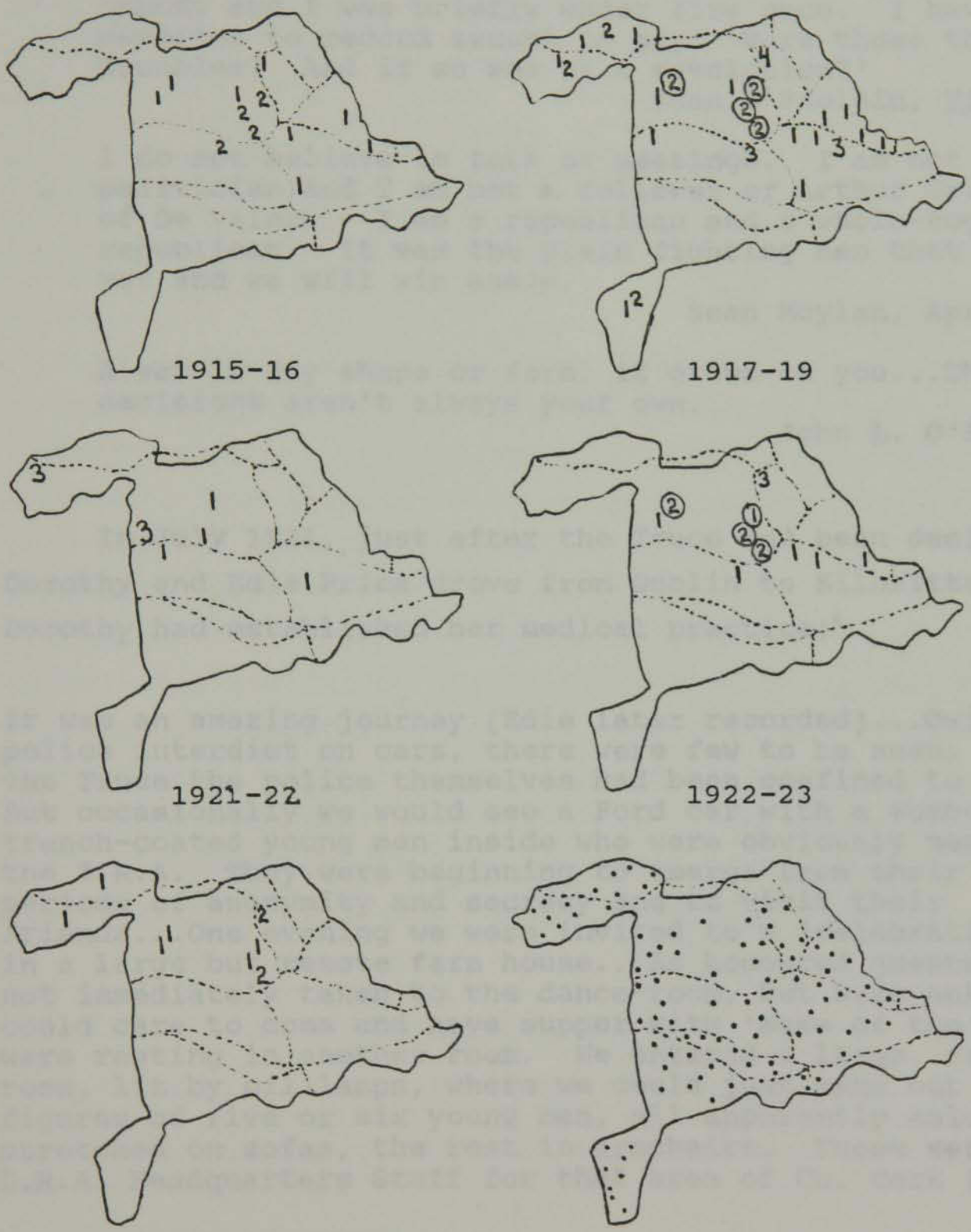

Figure 5: Behagh Company, 1915-23

~ - roads and paths
1 - household with I.R.A. member
(2) - household with 2 I.R.A. members, including an officer

Guerrillas

In my six years as a rank-and-filer of the I.R.A. I shot nobody and I was briefly under fire once. I have no war memories to record except to say: 'Were those the Troubles? And if so was it a revolution?'

Sean O'Faolain, Vive Moi![1]

I do not believe in talk or meetings. I am not a party politician and I am not a follower of Arthur Griffith or of De Valera - I am a republican and a whole-hog republican. It was the plain fighting men that won the war and we will win again.

Sean Moylan, April 1922[2]

A war in any shape or form, it grows on you...The decisions aren't always your own.

John L. O'Sullivan[3]

In July 1921, just after the Truce had been declared, Dorothy and Edie Price drove from Dublin to Kilbrittain where Dorothy had established her medical practice:[4]

It was an amazing journey [Edie later recorded]...Owing to the police interdict on cars, there were few to be seen, and since the Truce the police themselves had been confined to barracks. But occasionally we would see a Ford car with a number of trench-coated young men inside who were obviously members of the I.R.A. They were beginning to emerge from their long periods of anonymity and secrecy and to visit their friends...One evening we were invited to a 'celebration' ceili in a large but remote farm house...As honoured guests, we were not immediately taken to the dance-room, but were asked if we could care to come and have supper with 'some of the lads' who were resting in another room. We entered a large, rather dark room, lit by oil lamps, where we could just make out the figures of five or six young men, all apparently asleep, two stretched on sofas, the rest in armchairs. These were the I.R.A. Headquarters Staff for that area of Co. Cork [the West

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[1] O'Faolain, Vive Moi, p.174.

[2] Weekly Examiner, 8 April 1922.

[3] O'Sullivan, a member of the west Cork I.R.A., was quoted in Griffith and O'Grady, Curious Journey, p.189.

[4] Quoted in Leon O Broin, Protestant Nationalism in Revolutionary Ireland: the Stopford Connection (Dublin, 1985), pp 183-4.

Cork Brigade], anonymous men who had been hunted from pillar to post with prices on their heads and liable to meet death around any corner. Their identity was completely unknown in the countryside, and they were making their first appearance among their neighbours. They were young, sober-minded, responsible and serious, and their Brigadier especially was a fine-looking young man [Liam Deasy] full of earnestness and purpose. They were, I presume still tired from their pre-Truce life of vigil, raids, ambushes and hair-breadth escapes, and so far as I remember they took no part in the subsequent ceili, being still shy of publicity. They did not stay long, but soon after supper slipped off from the farm house in their Ford car, silently and mysteriously. Dorothy and I felt that we had been privileged spectators of a very anonymous bit of history.

The summer of 1921 was a wonderful time to be a young man if you had anything to do with the I.R.A.. 'That perfect summer' Frank O'Connor called it.[5] You were saluted and cheered in the streets, work could be put to one side, dances were held in your honour and your word held apparently undisputed sway in your part of the world. 'All things were possible.'[6] The imagined Republic was practically a reality, established and run by the small band of young comrades who had the will and the ability to impose it and fight for it. A few dedicated men had indeed changed history.[7]

To outside observers like Edie Price, every young man in a trench coat was a rebel (even Patrick Kavanagh, rejected by the I.R.A. for being too young, could play this role, 'and if

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[5] O'Connor, An Only Child, p.209.

[6] J.W.G., review of Simone Tery, En Irlande in The Irish Statesman, 29 Sept. 1923: 'In that brief hour of exaltation even the worst of our pessimists believed that all things were possible'.

[7] For accounts similar to that of Edie Price's or Frank O'Connor's, see Simone Tery, 'French Reporter Visits Volunteers' Training Camp, "Somewhere" in Western Ireland, August 15, 1921' (trans. Marilyn Gaddis Rose) in Irish Renaissance Annual III, ed. Dennis Jackson (Newark, 1982), pp 124-140; Micheal O'Suilleabhain, pp 170-3; Ernie O'Malley, The Singing Flame (Dublin, 1978), pp 15-17. Florence O'Donoghue, at that time the Adjutant of the 1st Southern Division, wrote on July 13 that 'the whole countryside is gone mad, cheering, shouting and so forth.' Letter to 'Dhilis', 13 July, 1921 (O'Donoghue papers, Ms.31,176).

I did I wasn't the only bluffer in town...as every man with a stiff lip was suspected of being an I.R.A. man'[8]). But to I.R.A. insiders like the 'lads' in the back room in Kilbrittain, most of the summer joyriders and dancers had, during the previous two years of struggle, been conspicuous only by their absence.

They had only to look around them. Out of 1075 men who claimed to belong to the Bandon Battalion in July 1921, 478 had been on the rolls in July 1919, of whom 290 (or 61%) were considered 'active'.[9] By the spring of 1921 the number of reliable members had fallen to about 230.[10] In other words, only 21% of those who called themselves Volunteers in Bandon (the heartland of the West Cork Flying Column) after the Truce had been active in the months before it.

The same figures hold true for the whole of the West Cork Brigade, the Behagh Company being a typical example.[11] Even in the militant Kilbrittain Company, 25 out of 70 nominal I.R.A. members had been listed as inactive in July 1919. Of the remainder, 'there were ten men whom [Tom] Barry could always draw on.'[12]

These informal distinctions between nominal, reliable and active Volunteers were recognised in every I.R.A. unit in Cork. In the Macroom Battalion in September 1919, reliable

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[8] Kavanagh, The Green Fool, p.113.

[9] The figure for the battalion's total membership comes from the Bureau of Military History rolls, which are almost identical to those given in Deasy, Towards Ireland Free, p.318. The figures as of July 1919 are given in Deasy, pp 62, 317-8.

[10] This estimate is based on the Organiser's Report, No.1 Bn., 3rd Cork Bde., 7 Sept. 1922 (M.A., A/0991/2).

[11] According to Deasy's figures (pp 62, 317-8), 62% of Brigade members were considered 'active' in July 1919.

[12] Flor Begley (O'Malley Papers, P17b/111). The figures come from the Bureau of Military History rolls and Deasy, p.317.

members made up only half of the total official membership.[13] For one south side company in Cork city the figure (in 1920-21) was 43%, while another company on the north side was described as being 15% 'active'.[14] North Cork Brigade records reveal the same patterns of selective commitment and participation:

Table 35: North Cork Company Strengths, 1921[15]

	Average Company Strengths			
	Truce 1921	Spring 1921		
Battalion	Roll	Roll	Reliable	Active
Fermoy	76	42	27	10
Millstreet	75	63	42	7
Mitchelstown	75	36	23	5
Mallow	68	46	25	4
Average	74	47	29	7

In the typical North Cork Company, therefore, two-thirds of the men calling themselves Volunteers at the time of the Truce had done so in the spring of 1921, 62% of whom had been willing to volunteer their services and 15% of whom actually participated in I.R.A. operations.

Cork was no different than any other county in this respect. David Fitzpatrick has found that, in May 1921, less than half of the Mid-Clare Brigade's Volunteers were considered reliable and an even smaller fraction actually

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[13] This figure results from a comparison of Bureau of Military History Rolls with a notebook captured with Dan Corkery (the O/C of the Macroom Battalion) in September 1919 (C.A.I., U104).

[14] For the former, see J. O'Dwyer Statement (M.A., A/0246) and Sean Daly (O'Malley Papers, P17b/112); for the latter see Sean Collins Powell, 'Details of the Anglo-Irish Conflict, 1916-1921' (M.A., A/0735).

[15] The figures in the first column are derived from the Bureau of Military History rolls; the others from company rolls in the Florence O'Donoghue Papers (Ms.31,223). It should be noted that these rolls do not include the Kanturk, Newmarket and Charleville Battalions.

attended company parades.[16] The records of the 2nd Battalion of the Dublin Brigade for the same period list 59% of its members as reliable; the same figure for the Fingal Brigade in April was 65%.[17] J.E. Nolan found that half his Dublin company existed only on paper.[18] In Sligo as of June 1921, most companies had fewer than 10 reliable members apiece.[19]

Thus, the backroom boys of the West Cork Brigade who gathered that night in Kilbrittain knew themselves to be a minority, their elite status symbolised by their avoidance of the dancers and by their rather self-conscious air of secrecy and purpose. One or more of these men had been present at every major ambush in west Cork (with the exception of Kilmichael); all had been local pioneers in 1917 or earlier and all had spent time with the column. Several had lost their homes, others had lost brothers or cousins, most had been imprisoned at least once, all had been on the run for years. For these men and their fellow activists, revolution had become a vocation; its success had been due almost entirely to their own efforts.

The guerrillas' scorn extended well beyond the inert mass of Volunteers - the 'hangers-on', 'flag-waggers', 'spare parts', 'public house I.R.A.', 'pub republicans' and 'trucileers' - to include much of the wider republican movement as well. During the Truce Liam Lynch bitterly declared that:[20]

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[16] David Fitzpatrick, Politics and Irish Life, p.219.

[17] Fingal Bde. Monthly Report, April 1921 (Mulcahy Papers, P7/A/17). The standard joke in the Dublin Brigade was that 'the Fingal Brigade was mobilised and he turned up.' (N.L.I., Jack Plunkett Statement, Ms.11,981).

[18] 'Figures for Companies Working' in 2nd Battalion, Dublin Brigade Documents (N.L.I., Ms.901); J.E. Nolan Statement (M.A., A/0327).

[19] Sligo Bde. Returns, June 1921 (Mulcahy Papers, P7/A/22).

[20] O/C 1st Southern Div. Memo re: Civil Population in War Time, 24 Nov. 1921 (Mulcahy Papers, P7/A/30).

We must admit that all civil organisations, Co. Councils, District Councils, Corporations, Urban Councils, Sinn Fein Clubs and all other organised bodies were an absolute failure during the last phase of hostilities, if anything they were a burden on the Army.

Sinn Fein suffered a more precipitate decline than the Volunteers in 1920 - and enjoyed an even more spectacular revival in the summer of 1921. Under the pressure of British proscription and harassment most clubs simply ceased to exist in the Tan War: while the number of official branches of Sinn Fein in Ireland stood at a record 1,485 on December 31, 1921, only 89 of these cumann had sent in their affiliation fee before July 11.[21]

As a result of this organisational collapse, many column men had to double as commissars. I.R.A. activists were likely to be policemen, judges, district, town and county councillors and poor law guardians, election and Belfast boycott organisers, collectors for the Dail Loan, and even T.D.s. To return to the example of the West Cork Brigade staff, at least five were also I.R.B. Centres, two were county councillors, at least three were justices on republican courts and two were president of their local Sinn Fein constituency committees.[22] As described in chapter 6, Tom and Sean Hales carried a similar load in the Bandon area. In fact, in the two electoral districts in the brigade area, West and South East Cork, over half (55%) of Sinn Fein's branch officers at the time of the Truce were also I.R.A. officers (most of them company captains).[23] Even a full-time gunman like Frank

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[21] Secretary's Report, Sinn Fein Ard Comhairle, 12 Jan. 1922 (S.P.O., DE/2/486).

[22] For I.R.B. positions as of November 1921, see the Florence O'Donoghue Papers (Ms.31,237); for the County Council, see the Star, 7 Jan. 1922; for the republican judicial system, see the court correspondence in DE/9/8, 10, 12 (P.R.O.L.); for Sinn Fein see the list of Cumann officers (for late 1921) in the Irish Military Archives (M.A., A/1147).

[23] This figure is based on a comparison of Sinn Fein Cumann officers (M.A., A/1147) with officer lists in Bureau of Military History records and Deasy, Towards Ireland Free, pp 326-30.

Busteed also saw service as a parish court judge.[24]

In June 1921 a Mid-Cork Brigade organiser felt it necessary to inform his officious Dublin superiors of the realities of republican organisation in rural Cork:[25]

It must be remembered that in the country districts and the small towns the burden of all national activities frequently falls upon one or two willing individuals who are consequently called upon to discharge multifarious duties and to act in many different capacities.

Another I.R.A. organiser in the North Cork Brigade found that each parish or neighbourhood had its 'local man' who effectively ran the movement in his area, and any question or suggestion of his would be met with the standard phrase: 'ask the local man'. In most cases, this man was the local I.R.A. commander.[26]

The 'reliable' rank and file had a very different experience of revolution. Sean O'Faolain was an enthusiastic but lowly member of the Cork city I.R.A.:[27]

The great majority of us rank-and-filers were given such undemanding if essential jobs as the gathering of more or less useful information, watching over the billets of the fighters, scouting, carrying dispatches, doing police work, helping to trench roads or fell trees...marching in the streets to defy some military order against it, perhaps standing guard at the

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[24] Blarney Parish Court Records (DE/15/27).

[25] Report re: boycott of W.J. O'Sullivan (S.P.O., DE/2/509).

[26] Unpublished memoir (anonymous source).

[27] O'Faolain, Vive Moi!, p.175; Frank O'Connor had much the same experience ('The Patriarch' in Guests of the Nation, pp 154-5):

I was put on Volunteer work...dirty, rather useless work it was too, but for me full of thrills. Lounging around street corners, cap pulled over my eyes, hands in pockets, being smacked or kicked about by sundry spiteful old policemen, reporting at night...and the thrill of pleasure with which one was allowed, so very rarely, to handle a revolver.

This autobiographical story should be compared to his memoirs, An Only Child, p.202.

public lying-in-state of some patriot...Otherwise we hung around, drilled, waited, felt nervy, groused, and were supremely proud and happy whenever even the most modest task made us feel we were doing something positive in the struggle for independence.

These young rebels were very much aware of their place on the periphery of the organisation. O'Faolain reported that 'in my six years as a rank-and-filer of the I.R.A. I shot nobody and I was briefly under fire once' while Frank O'Connor's only contact with the 'declared rebels' in his neighbourhood was to hang about in the churchyard on Sundays 'hoping for a nod or a smile from one of them.'[28] They were called - and called themselves - 'rank-and-filers' or 'small fry'[29]: 'If you were asked to do a thing, you went and did it.'[30] The exploits of such men were the stuff of altogether more modest legends, as can be seen by comparing 'the Boys of Kilmichael' with 'the Boys of Aghinagh':[31]

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[28] O'Faolain, Vive Moi!, p.174; O'Connor, An Only Child, p.186. O'Faolain added that 'our regular fighters or guerrillas, few in number...carried the full strain of the fight, day in and day out.' (p.180).

[29] 'I wasn't in the column then. I was only small fry.' Leo Skinner (O'Malley Papers, P17b/124). Two of my informants also used the expression about themselves: interviews with C.D. and M.J..

[30] Interview with M.C..

[31] (Dept. of Irish Folklore, Schools Ms.343 [Inchalea], p.65). 'The Boys of Aghinagh' were apparently the men of 'B' Company in the 3rd Battalion, 1st Cork Brigade. The only identifiable name in the song is that of Tim Coakley, the company's 2nd Lieutenant Comparable verses of 'The Boys of Kilmichael' are quoted at the beginning of chapters 2 and 4 above.

The sun in the west it was sinking,
Twas the eve of a bright April's day,
When Con Moynihan and Tim Coakley came and told us,
To bring out crowbars right away.

Then here's to the boys of Aghinagh,
Who feared not long journeys to go,
To tear up the roads and the bridges,
To baffle and conquer the foe.

Then over the hills went the echo,
The sound of the crowbar and picks,
And other wild sounds of commotion,
Proclaimed that the boys they were bricks.

Dan Buckley was there with his rifle,
Very important was he,
If the Black and Tans came he would shoot them,
And shout that Aghinagh was free.

To understand this division of labour and attitudes we must ask not why they joined but what they joined. What did it mean to be a Volunteer in 1917 and 1918 and how did this change as the revolution progressed?

What the men of 1917 and 1918 were not joining was the sort of 'Irish Republican Army' embodied by the guerrillas of the West Cork Brigade. The Volunteers were neither armed nor illegal and, however attractive its aura of secrecy and rebellion, there was very little that was revolutionary about the organisation. Publicity rather than anonymity was the aim of their early campaigns against British authority, and their usual target was the regulation of public display and association. Illegal flags were prominently flown, seditious songs were loudly sung and banned meetings were defiantly held. When drilling was outlawed, Volunteer companies paraded en masse and after they were jailed, they protested the prison regulations. Some Cork companies even announced their formation in the Cork Examiner.[32] Volunteer activists sought public recognition and openly courted arrest; Liam Lynch, for one, was keenly disappointed when the police felt he was not

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[32] See, for example, the Examiner, 15 March 1918.

worth arresting.[33] The accompanying violence was equally public, the result of mutual provocation rather than clandestine intrigue.

Typical of such demonstrations was the following, which took place in Kanturk on November 19, 1917:[34]

> They were in fours and went towards Banteer. 16 boy scouts headed the procession followed by 64 girls and 120 men and boys. A Sinn Fein flag was carried in front and about 80 of the men carried pikes, having what appeared to be turf on the top of each pike [while another 22 men formed a drill party]...Most of the houses were illuminated with lighted candles. The streets along the route were lined with a crowd of men, women and children, who raised cheers several times.

The event was held to celebrate both the release of two I.R.A. hunger strikers and a hard-won victory for Sinn Fein on the Kanturk District Council.[35] The question thus arises as to how to identify the participants. The R.I.C. District Inspector labelled the march 'Sinn Fein' and the marchers 'Sinn Feiners'. Who among them were actual Volunteers? Was it all 120 men and boys who marched and formed fours, the 80 who carried pikes or the 2 who made up the drill party? Where did the women marchers fit in?

In fact, it would be impossible to disentangle these peoples' organisational allegiances. In such activities, and in much of its membership, the Volunteers were nearly indistinguishable from Sinn Fein just as Sinn Fein merged into the revitalised Gaelic League. Most republicans joined them all - or rather, it was 'the movement' they joined, an amalgam of different groups defined more by a common sense of energy, youth and direction than by hard-edged party loyalties.

Old Volunteer companies - as in Ballinadee - sprouted Sinn Fein clubs and Irish classes as they re-organised; new companies and clubs were often formed one after the other by

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[33] O'Donoghue, No Other Law, p.18.

[34] D.I. Report, Newmarket, 20 Nov. 1917 (CO/904/122).

[35] Examiner, 19 Nov. 1917.

the same pioneers. In the Bandon Battalion, 'in most districts every Volunteer was a member of the Sinn Fein club and every member of the Sinn Fein club was a Volunteer.'[36] In Dunmanway 'the membership of these clubs consisted mainly of Volunteers and the members of their families.'[37] When George Power and Liam Lynch joined the Fermoy Volunteers, 'it was a small company...consisting of all the members of the Sinn Fein club which had already been in existence a short time.'[38] In Midleton, according to Edmond Desmond, a branch of Sinn Fein was set up in early 1917, 'then the young people were recruited' as both Sinn Feiners and Volunteers, whereupon a parallel company was formed.[39] In Blackpool, in Cork city, the company and club were formed simultaneously, in what was formerly the Brewery Workers' Club: 'these premises literally became a Volunteer Hall under the guise of the Tomas O'Cleirigh (Tom Clarke) Sinn Fein Club, and all its members, except those precluded by reason of age were members of 'E' company.'[40] Similarly, the Mallow Volunteers met and drilled after Sinn Fein meetings in the Town Hall.[41] In the 'Thomas Ashe Sinn Fein Club and Volunteer Corps' in Glenville, and in Inchigeela, Lisgoold and Castlemartyr, the two organisations formed a single unit with a common secretary.[42]

To the Cork R.I.C., there was 'little or no difference' between Sinn Fein and the Irish Volunteers.[43] 'When a Sinn

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[36] 'Bandon History' (Price Papers).

[37] Edward Young statement (in the possession of Edward Young).

[38] George Power statement (O'Donoghue Papers, Ms.31,335).

[39] Edmond Desmond (O'Malley Papers, P17b/112).

[40] Tom Daly Statement (Co. Cork Museum, G1091).

[41] Lankford, p.158.

[42] Examiner, 26 Oct., 2 Jan. 1918, 3 Jan. 1919; Letter from P.J. Gumbleton, 26 March 1918 (Precis of Sinn Fein Correspondence, Ms.10,494[4]).

[43] C.I. Monthly Report, West Cork, Sept. 1917 (CO/904/104).

Fein club has been established in their locality the Irish Volunteers join it in large numbers and the connection between the two is very close'[44]; 'In most cases there is little to distinguish Irish Volunteer from Sinn Fein branches.'[45] Policemen were saying the same thing all over Ireland. In Donegal there was 'no practical difference between this organisation [the Volunteers] and the Sinn Fein clubs'[46]. In Kerry they were 'practically synonymous'.[47] The Inspector General declared in February 1918 that 'many Sinn Fein clubs (or at least a percentage of their members) must be regarded as branches of the Volunteers.'[48]

To the Cork police - as, perhaps, to most of their own members - the insurgent organisations were simply 'Sinn Fein', an undifferentiated movement of 'a very undefined sort', marked by incessant socialising and the constant display of flags, colours and badges.[49] 'Sinn Fein', reported the County Inspector for West Cork in January 1917, 'has so far taken the form of attendance, in more or less large and organised parties, at Sinn Fein functions, concerts, dances, conferences'.[50] The following month's report gives some sense of the new republicans' jumbled enthusiasm:[51]

They lose no opportunity of associating and meeting together at dances, Irish classes, Gaelic League concerts, G.A.A. football matches, etc., e.g. a Sinn Fein dance, attended by fifty couples, was held at Macroom on the 10th. A Gaelic League concert, organised by the Bandon Gaelic League, was

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[44] C.I. Monthly Report, West Cork, July 1917 (CO/904/103).

[45] C.I. Monthly Report, West Cork, March 1918 (CO/904/105).

[46] C.I. Monthly Report, Donegal, March 1918 (CO/904/105).

[47] C.I. Monthly Report, Kerry, Oct. 1918 (CO/904/107).

[48] I.G. Monthly Report, February 1918 (CO/904/105). See also the I.G. Report for April 1918.

[49] C.I. Monthly Report, West Cork, June 1917 (CO/904/103).

[50] C.I. Monthly Report, Jan. 1917 (CO/904/102).

[51] C.I. Monthly Report, Feb. 1917 (CO/904/103).

held on the 11th, all the local Irish Volunteers and Sinn Feiners belong to and attend these Gaelic classes regularly. Two football clubs have been formed during the month in Bandon district...The members include all the local Irish Volunteers with some others.

When the result of the Roscommon election was announced the band at Bantry turned out with a procession of 200-300 sympathizers and paraded the town.

Within this omnibus movement, organisational boundaries and roles were indistinct. Sinn Fein members marched in formation, drilled, fought with police and went to prison while Volunteers collected money, signatures and votes.[52] 'Most of the young Sinn Feiners consider themselves Irish Volunteers though not actually enroled as such.'[53] Organisational labels were largely irrelevant so long as everyone was doing much the same thing and travelling in the same direction, with a broadly shared sense of identity and purpose.

The fact that these activities and this identity were shared by both men and women was one of the movement's most novel features. More than just organisational boundaries had been blurred. Traditional gender roles, usually rigidly observed by Irish politicians of all stripes, were widely ignored by young republicans caught up in the first wave of patriotic excitement. Youthful idealism seized as many girls as it did boys, particularly those who were educated and working outside the home: 'sentimentally seditious shopgirls' Edith Somerville disdainfully called them.[54] As many young

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[52] The Precis of Sinn Fein Correspondence (Ms.10,494) contains numerous letters from all over Ireland concerning clubs drilling and arming. The M.I.5 Censorship Summary and Precis includes similar letters, such as the following from Nenagh, 26 June 1918: 'We have nothing here but Sinn Fein marching and drilling' (CO/904/164). See also Fitzpatrick, Politics and Irish Life, pp 209-210.

[53] C.I. Monthly Report, Co. Dublin, June 1918 (Co/904/106).

[54] Edith Somerville, 'Ourselves Alone' (Somerville and Ross Papers). See also Lankford, pp 103-107; Aideen Sheehan, 'Cumann na mBan: Policies and Activities' in Fitzpatrick (ed.), Revolution? Ireland 1917-1923 (Dublin, 1990), p.89.

women as men attended the formative requiem Masses and demonstrations held in 1916 and 1917.[55]

Cumann na mBan, the women's counterpart to the Irish Volunteers, grew along with the other republican organisations, its members often being drawn from the same pool of families as the Volunteers. The head of Cumann na mBan in Macroom was Mary Corkery, wife of Dan Corkery, the Battalion commander.[56] Bella O'Connell, the leader of the Beara organisation, was the sister of Christy O'Connell, the captain of Eyeries company.[57] Mary MacSwiney and Mrs. Sean O'Hegarty were in charge of one of the city factions. In Kilmeen Company, again, it was the Volunteer officers' sisters who founded the local Cumann na mBan branch.[58] Over half the Courtbrack Cumann na mBan were sisters (all of whom had brothers in the I.R.A), while the Shandon branch in Cork city was formed and run by the Conlon and Crowley sisters.[59] For women as well as men, republicanism seemed to run in families.

As with the all-male Volunteers, Cumann na mBan members circulated freely within the movement, adding tremendously to its social momentum.[60] Most Sinn Fein clubs and nearly all Gaelic League branches had women members: the Courtbrack Sinn Fein cumann, for example, was one-third female, two-thirds of whom belonged to Cumann na mBan.[61] In the suburbs of south

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[55] See Dalton, With the Dublin Brigade, pp 42-3.

[56] Browne, The Story of the 7th, p.12.

[57] O'Dwyer, Beara in Irish History, p.114.

[58] Daniel O'Leary, Kilmeen and Castleventry Parish Co. Cork (1975), p.96.

[59] John J. Duggan, Grenagh and Courtbrack During the Struggle for Independence, pp 64-5; Lil Conlon, Cumann na mBan and the Women of Ireland, p.61. Billy Mullins reported the same family connections in Kerry (The Memoirs of Billy Mullins: Veteran of the War of Independence [Tralee, 1983], p.17).

[60] In the month of June 1918 alone, 6 concerts, 2 picnics and 1 sports were organised by Cumann na mBan for Sinn Fein in the city and suburbs. Conlon, p.63.

[61] Duggan, pp 64-5, 71.

Dublin and Cork the party thereby acquired an occasionally strong feminist fringe.[62]

The British and Irish publics had read with fascinated disapproval of Constance Markievicz's supposed exploits in the Dublin rising. In 1917, a host of tough young Markieviczs - dubbed by Edith Somerville 'the order of Flapper'[63] - appeared at the vanguard of republicanism, to the alarm of policemen and priests alike: 'the Flappers flaunt like banners in the forefront of the battle'.[64] Some clerics issued lurid warnings (as they had done with the Gaelic League) about 'the dangers of sex immorality in Sinn Fein clubs'[65] but female republicans took as much pleasure in defying such opinions and authority figures as their male comrades.

Republican women played a prominent role in the new street politics of urban Cork. As in the Kanturk demonstration described above, nearly every march and protest meeting included large numbers of women, marching in formation (and in uniform) along with the men.[66] One witness to a city procession in 1917 remarked that 'they certainly are drilled as methodically as the scouts.'[67] And when protests turned

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[62] The Bray cumann passed a resolution that 'Sinn Fein stands for equal rights between men and women' (Irish Times, 30 July 1917). The activities of suffragists in another south Dublin club are described in Andrews, Dublin Made Me, p.100. In the 1920 local elections, four republican suffragists from Rathmines were elected (Leah Levenson and Jerry H. Natterstad, Hanna Sheehy-Skeffington: Irish Feminist [Syracuse University Press, 1986], p.133). In Cork, Mary MacSwiney and other republican women had been members of the Munster Women's Franchise League before the Great War (Charlotte Fallon, Soul of Fire: A Biography of Mary MacSwiney [Cork, 1986], pp 21-3.

[63] Somerville, 'Ourselves Alone'.

[64] John Murphy's anti-I.R.A. song, 'the Farmer's Union Ball' also called republican women 'flappers' (Dept. of Irish Folklore, Sms.388, pp 187-193).

[65] Liam De Roiste Diary, 4 Dec. 1917 (O'Donoghue Papers, Ms.31,146).

[66] See Examiner, 10, 16 April, 15, 23 May, 4 July, 13 Aug., 19 Nov. 1917.

[67] Quoted in Conlon, p.52.

violent, women were again at the forefront and were present in force at nearly every riot. Indeed, confrontations between female Sinn Feiners and 'separation women' (who had husbands or sons in the armed forces) often provided the flashpoints for mass violence.[68] One of the first people in Cork to be jailed for refusing to pay a fine was Teresa O'Donovan, of the city Cumann na mBan, who broke her umbrella over a policeman's head.[69]

Essentially, women did just about everything men did. Women fought, drilled, organised, canvassed, collected and were willing to go to jail for it. In Cork city in particular, Cumann na mBan formed a vital - and often overlooked - component of the Sinn Fein electoral machine by registering first-time women voters far in advance of their opponents.[70] Most of the activists themselves still could not vote however, as the franchise was restricted to women over 30.

The issue of equality and the status of women in the independence movement seems rarely to have surfaced. Relations between Cumann na mBan and the Volunteers were occasionally fractious but complaints went both ways.[71] On the other hand, no Cork Sinn Fein clubs had female presidents and only a few had female secretaries. Mary MacSwiney may have wielded as much power in republican back rooms as her brothers but she was the exception. The main power struggle within Cumann na mBan in late 1917 seemed to be over who would get to serve tea to Eamon de Valera.[72]

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[68] See Examiner, 25, 26, 28 June, 12 July 1917.

[69] Conlon, p.45. The incident occurred in April 1917.

[70] See Examiner, 11 June 1918.

[71] See the exchange of letters in the O'Donoghue Papers, Ms.31,198.

[72] De Roiste Diary, 10 Dec. 1917 (O'Donoghue Papers, Ms.31,146). This was not a uniquely female preoccupation, however. Male Sinn Feiners also fought a bitter battle over access to de Valera during his Cork tour (De Roiste Diary, 25 Nov. 1918).

What does not seem to have been typical among women militants was the following sort of sentiment:[73]

> Harra for the Sinn Fein, the Sinn Fein are men,
> and if I were a boy I would go Sinn Fein with them.
> But as I am a girl I must lead a girls life.
> But I'll do all in my power to be a Sinn Fein wife.

In 1917 and 1918 the movement was being made up as it went along, the product of a myriad of local entrepreneurs and initiative. At this grassroots level, both women and men were relatively free to invent their own roles.

Thus, what most people were joining was an open mass movement in which dances, classes, meetings, committees and paramilitary display all flowed together into a broad republican front, usually described in all its manifestations simply as 'Sinn Fein'. However, for the 'declared rebels', the men who met after the meetings and classes were over, Sinn Fein was a 'front' in a different sense: conventions and elections were fixed to push a radical agenda, money was collected to buy guns, petitions were canvassed to know and intimidate their enemies, demonstrations were held to fight the 'peelers' and being Volunteers meant being above politics and 'noise'.

Sinn Fein, however much its officials might protest otherwise, was irredeemably tainted with 'politics' in the eyes of some Volunteers, with all of its connotations of parties, venality and compromise. In August 1917 Liam de Roiste insisted to his diary that 'I, as a Sinn Feiner, was never a politician, and am not now' but he was soon made uncomfortably aware that some of his fellow republicans saw him as exactly that.[74] 'Some of the Oglaigh [Volunteers], he admitted in September, think Sinn Fein is too tame, too

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[73] O'Donoghue Papers, Ms.31,225.

[74] De Roiste Diary, 10 Aug. 1917.

moderate.'[75] At that year's annual convention, Cork delegates (most of whom, ironically, were Volunteers) were told by Michael Collins that 'the Volunteers did not want politicians interfering with their military matters.'[76] In November he reported that 'our relations with Oglaigh are altogether better now' but that same month Sinn Fein was kept off the Manchester Martyrs Parade committee and by January relations had returned to normal: 'there is yet trouble with some of the Oglaigh whose attitude is that Sinn Fein is a mere political and talking machine, fit for old men only, to be despised by the young men.'[77] This absence of fraternalism was felt on both sides. During the conscription crisis the Cork Volunteers did not even consult the Sinn Fein leadership; once this had passed it was the turn of I.R.A. officers to complain of neglect: 'Sinn Fein pay little attention now to those on the run. Maybe they will do something when we and our families are in the workhouse.'[78]

The city's Sinn Fein clubs and committees were the scene for fierce battles over delegate and candidate selection between militant Volunteers and less 'advanced' factions. Liam de Roiste - a veteran of years of similar struggles - was well aware in 1917 that:[79]

> the Volunteer organisation is working quite independently and is capturing, or endeavouring to capture and completely control Sinn Fein as such...Every man who is not a Volunteer or in the good graces of the chiefs of the Volunteers is to be pushed aside.

This committee <u>kampf</u> was revived in the run up to the next convention. Militants organised 'a temporary mass influx of

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[75] De Roiste Diary, 27 Sept. 1917.

[76] De Roiste Diary, 27 Oct. 1917.

[77] De Roiste Diary, 13 Jan. 1918.

[78] Tomas MacCurtain Diary, 31 Dec. 1918 (Co. Cork Museum, L330).

[79] De Roiste Diary, 18 Oct. 1917.

members of the I.R.A., with the result that mainly I.R.A. officers were sent as delegates.'[80] Volunteer leaders also sought a veto over Sinn Fein candidates in the 1918 elections, and again in 1920 and 1921 - although never with complete success, as Liam de Roiste's survival showed.[81]

These Volunteers came increasingly to define themselves against Sinn Fein. Sinn Feiners were 'no good'; 'older men...not involved in the fight for freedom'; 'the older fellas', 'the settled down people, the crowd above'.[82] One of the worst things one Volunteer activist could say about another was that he was really only 'the Sinn Fein type'.[83] With one exception, all the veterans I interviewed had belonged to Sinn Fein clubs and worked in elections - two had even been elected to local councils - but all emphatically (even angrily) denied having anything to do with politics or parties. Yes, they had done all that but they had done it as Volunteers. This adamantly anti-political stance was a core part of the guerrilla's sense of identity. When Sean Moylan declared 'I am not a politician; I am a soldier'[84] he was perfectly sincere, even though he was a sitting T.D., a member of his constituency Sinn Fein executive and a Dail court judge.

This 'spirit of rivalry'[85] and outright contempt for the 'civil side' of the movement could be found in every unit of

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[80] Roibeard Langford, 'Personal Record' (Langford Papers, U155).

[81] See De Roiste Diary, 2 Dec. 1918, 10 May 1921 (C.A.I., De Roiste Papers, U271); O/C 2nd Cork Bde. to A/G, 30 Mar. 1920 and A/G's response, 10 April 1920 (M.A., A/0499); Con Neenan (O'Malley Papers, P17b/111).

[82] Interviews with M.C., J.S. and M.J..

[83] See Sean Breen and Sean Daly (O'Malley Papers, P17b/83, 112).

[84] Examiner, 19 Sept. 1921.

[85] Election Report, South Meath, May 1921 (Mulcahy Papers, P7/A/36).

the I.R.A..[86] C.S. Andrews' company in Dublin 'did not take the debates of the Sinn Fein club seriously but recognised its utility as a means of collecting money...and as a cover for Volunteer activities.'[87] In Ernie O'Malley's unit 'the men had little use for anyone who was not of the physical force belief. Gaelic Leaguers and members of Sinn Fein clubs who did not belong to the Volunteers were sneered at.'[88] When the leader of the Glasgow Volunteers complained to Michael Collins that Sinn Fein were 'no good only for singing and dancing', Collins replied that he was hearing the same thing from all round the country.[89] And when peace returned in the Truce, I.R.A. headquarters was still receiving complaints that its men were 'standing aloof' from political work.[90]

It was not just Sinn Fein the organisation that the guerrillas held in contempt, but 'Sinn Fein' the mass movement with its endless socialising, posturing and patriotic ephemera: the 'noise' and 'blowing', 'the dances and all that carry on.'[91]

This applied equally to those in their own ranks who were merely 'passengers': the 'flag-waggers', 'public house I.R.A.' and 'G.A.A. hangers-on' who were 'only fit for dancing and for

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[86] One Sinn Fein organiser complained of:

> the friction between Volunteers and Sinn Fein...prominent Volunteers seem to encourage amongst their own men a feeling of contempt for the political side of the movement, and put it down as constitutionalism. One Volunteer officer...proves himself to be a good worker for Sinn Fein but spoils it all by sneering at workers who concern themselves with club work alone.

Organiser's Report, Meath, 9 Aug. 1919 (M.A., A/0326).

[87] Andrews, p.101.

[88] O'Malley, On Another Man's Wound, p.57.

[89] Joe Vise to Michael Collins, 6 June 1919 (Mulcahy Papers, P7/A/7).

[90] G.H.Q. Weekly Memo No.17, 21 Oct. 1921 (O'Malley Papers, P17a/2).

[91] Interviews with B.A. and M.J.

style.'[92]

One I.R.A. worker in north Cork became terribly frustrated by the amount of money spent on postcards, belts, banners and the like and declared that 'the desire for music and noise was the chief obstacle to serious organisation.'[93] For many members, however, volunteering and music went hand in hand: several companies were even formed around bands. In the north Cork organiser's territory, 'every club and company wanted its own band. There seemed to be one in every townland.' Despite his best efforts, company funds collected for arms and uniforms would all be spent on instruments. On one occasion he went to drill a unit whom he had already lectured on the subject. All was going well until the mother of the house looked in and asked the boys: 'Wouldn't ye play a tune?' Like magic, their brand new instruments appeared and the real business of the evening got under way.

Worst of all were the 'would-be warriors' and 'conscription heroes' who flooded into Volunteer companies in the spring of 1918 under the threat of conscription.[94] Most doubled in size almost overnight. The Clonakilty company, for example, went from 40 to 150.[95] In Ballydesmond, 'we had 11 members drilling...the Sunday before conscription and we had 100 the following Sunday.'[96] These new recruits gave the cause sudden - albeit temporary - respectability but they were often not welcome. It was felt they would dilute the 'military character and unselfish spirit' of the

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[92] O'Suilleabhain, Where Mountainy men Have Sown, p.55; interview with J.S.; Bill Hammond, Soldier of the Rearguard: The Story of Matt Flood and the Active Service Column (Fermoy, 1977), p.8; Mick Leahy and Dan Browne (O'Malley Papers, P17b/108, 112).

[93] Unpublished memoir (anonymous source).

[94] Tom Daly statement (Co. Cork Museum); Con Neenan in Uinseann MacEoin, Survivors, p.236.

[95] Deasy, Towards Ireland Free, p.55.

[96] Culloty, Ballydesmond, p.237.

Volunteers.[97] 'We knew they would not last.'[98] Many were allowed to march and drill but were never officially enroled. The Blackpool company formed a separate unit for them, which was disbanded after 1918.[99] C.S. Andrews' company told most newcomers to join the Sinn Fein company instead.[100]

These attitudes defined a movement within a movement, a militant tendency composed of Volunteers who saw the protest campaigns of 1917 and 1918 as a kind of phoney war. Marches, dances and committees described who they were not; 'their' I.R.A. was exclusive, secretive and revolutionary. They were a small minority even within the Volunteers but they probably formed a majority of the activists, and they could count on a hard core of like-minded friends and relatives to back them up.

Many militants were also I.R.B. members but not exclusively so. Theirs was more a collective mentality than a conspiracy, united by the desire for guns and for direct action in the tradition of 1916. They took pride in being the men who 'meant business': they were fighting men and they were willing to take matters into their own hands. 'We wanted to get something going'; 'there were a number of men from every company busting to do things'; 'the whole atmosphere was depressing and called for a burst up, and we decided...to start this burst up on our own'; 'there were only a couple of dozen of us in the fight for freedom to begin with but we...had a determination to free our country'.[101]

These 'freedom fighters' first appeared on the streets of Cork city in 1917, using marches and demonstrations as a cover to provoke and attack the police. Most used hurleys and

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[97] O'Donoghue, No Other Law, p.21.

[98] Con Neenan in MacEoin, p.236. See also O'Suilleabhain, p.55.

[99] Tom Daly statement.

[100] Andrews, p.103.

[101] Sean Daly and Frank Busteed (O'Malley Papers, P17b/112); O'Dwyer, Beara in Irish History, p.114; interview with J.S..

stones but, after darkness and police batons had thinned the crowds, they gave way to gunfire.[102] Three policemen were shot while on riot duty in the last six months of the year.

The anonymous gunmen belonged to a shadowy underground inside the Volunteers, loosely organised around a few extremist I.R.B. cells. Among them were Mick Murphy, Joe Murphy, Tadg O'Sullivan, Donnchadha MacNeilus, Roibeard Langford, Dan O'Donovan and Martin O'Donovan; their leader was Sean O'Hegarty, the grey eminence of the Cork I.R.B..[103] These men (several dozen at most), who called themselves the 'irregulars', the 'active squad' or 'Hegarty's crowd', were responsible for the great majority of I.R.A. shootings in the city between 1917 and mid-1920 and continued as key figures in the Tan War. 'The people in authority...didn't want anything done' but they were 'a tough crowd' and acted on their own, in defiance of orders and court-martials to the contrary.[104]

The militants distrusted the Volunteers' official leadership, whom they felt were over-cautious and too political, and whom they blamed for the bloodless surrender of 1916. They were determined for this never to happen again and were not interested in martyrdom or heroic prison sentences; many of their early exploits occurred while resisting arrest or escaping from jail. They also smuggled in or stole their own arms and refused to place them under the brigade's

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[102] See Examiner, 24, 25 June, 27 Sept. 1917; C.I. Monthly Report, East Cork, March 1918 (CO/904/106).

[103] For information on this group, see Seamus O Maoileoin, B'Fhiu An Braon Fola (Dublin, 1958), pp 117-119 [kindly translated for me by Peter Smith]; Seamus Malone, Dan Corkery, Moss Twomey and Sean Daly (O'Malley papers, P17b/103, 107, 111, 112); Roibeard Langford, 'Statement of Service' (Langford papers, U156); O'Donoghue, Tomas MacCurtain, pp 152-4. See also Con Neenan, 'Some Rapid Observations' (C.A.I., U129), which takes issue with some of Seamus Malone's account. Sean O'Hegarty proved his ability at intrigue when he used the I.R.B. to outmanoeuvre the Ancient Order of Hibernians and get himself elected as storekeeper for the City workhouse. See Examiner, 12, 13 Sept. 1917.

[104] Seamus Malone and Moss Twomey (O'Malley Papers, P17b/103, 107).

control.[105] Moreover, they were perfectly prepared to mount their own independent rebellion if necessary - as Tomas MacCurtain, the Brigade commander, only discovered when a secret bomb factory blew up, killing two militants and revealing a huge arsenal of explosives.[106]

This accident exacerbated tensions between the 'underground' and the 'official' I.R.A.. Tomas MacCurtain had already tried to stop the 'irresponsible' and 'disorderly' street violence (with the encouragement of Inspector Swanzy, who told him 'it is not your meetings I mind, it is the youngsters'[107]) but he was a gentleman among players.[108] Sean O'Hegarty was forced out of his position as Vice-Commandant and several 'irregulars' were court-martialled. MacCurtain himself temporarily resigned in exasperation and many of his senior officers (the 'Sinn Fein types'[109]) quit for good.[110] The dissidents kept their guns and kept on using them, impervious to authority. MacCurtain's last official act was to issue an apology for the unauthorised killing of an off-duty constable. 'Whoever did it will play the piper. We can't have men roaming around armed shooting police on their own' he declared.[111] A few hours later he was dead.[112]

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[105] O'Donoghue, Tomas MacCurtain, pp 153-4; Cork 1916 Mens' Association, 'Comments on Florence O'Donoghue's Life of Tomas MacCurtain' (Boston Public Library).

[106] Moss Twomey (O'Malley Papers, P17b/107); Examiner, 29 April, 5 May 1919.

[107] De Roiste Diary, 18 April 1918 (O'Donoghue Papers).

[108] See Examiner, 25, 28 June, 2, 5 Oct. 1917; 19 Jan. 1918.

[109] Sean Breen (O'Malley Papers, P17b/124).

[110] Tomas MacCurtain to A/G, 19 Feb. 1919 (Foulkes Papers, Epitome No.53/2567, p.2772.

[111] Con Kelleher to Florence O'Donoghue, 2 July 1958 (O'Donoghue Papers, Ms.31,430).

[112] Ironically, it was the insubordinate gunmen who assassinated his suspected killer, none other than Inspector Swanzy.

All over the county - in Eyeries, Bantry, Macroom, Ballyvourney, Donoughmore, Kiskeam, Mourneabbey - similarly placed groups were 'forcing the pace' and seizing every opportunity to acquire arms and mount reprisal attacks. Nearly five times as many shootings occurred in 1919 as in 1918, while the number of Volunteer casualties more than doubled. Almost all of these were unauthorised operations. In Kilbrittain, for example, both the pivotal Rathclarin ambush of June 1919 and the shooting of Constable Bolger in December were carried out by the same band of pioneer guerrillas in direct contravention of official orders.[113]

In some cases these activists were, like the Haleses, I.R.B. members. As in the city, this was more a badge of militancy than a well-defined organisation. I.R.B. officials from Dublin or Cork had little contact or influence with the county circles. They were often distrusted or disliked and their orders were ignored as often as those of I.R.A. superiors.[114] As Dan Corkery, the I.R.B. Centre and I.R.A. commandant of Macroom, put it: 'we were on our own.'[115]

The rise in uncontrolled violence, and the common perception that 'hidden forces' were behind it, alienated many Volunteers and pushed tensions between the militants and the wider movement to the breaking point.[116] The men of 1917 and 1918 had joined for all sorts of reasons: for 'glamour' and excitement, to march and drill with their family and friends, to fight the Irish Party and conscription, to help make a new Ireland. What they had not joined to do, most of them, was to

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[113] For Rathclarin, see Deasy, Towards Ireland Free, pp 66-7. For Bolger's killing, see Chapter 2.

[114] See, for example, Mick Leahy's comments about Sean O'Muirthuile (O'Malley Papers, P17b/108) - the I.R.B. organiser for Munster and perhaps the most hated man in the republican movement. See also Mullins, pp 43, 78-93; 'Comments on Florence O'Donoghue's Life of Tomas MacCurtain'.

[115] Dan Corkery (O'Malley Papers, P17b/111).

[116] O/C Sligo Bde. to A/G, 4 April 1920 (M.A., A/0512). See also Adj. Leitrim Bde. to D/O, 25 May 1920 (M.A., A/0510) who complained that 'they seem to have power over us.'

shoot policemen.

Now, in 1919, the organisation was changing around them, a change symbolised by the popular adoption of the title 'Irish Republican Army'. As the year wore on, there were fewer and fewer dances and meetings and the only marching done was at funerals. Men who had vaguely given their allegiance to the movement were suddenly given guns and told to fight. One such was John Gilligan of Ballyquirke, Tipperary, who also provides us with a vivid portrait of a small town I.R.A. militant on the edge of revolution - in this case his nephew, James Carroll:[117]

In March [Carroll] was talking about using the gun, saying he would soon need it, and mentioned about revolutions, and that the men of Ireland would soon need the guns. Shortly after D.I. Hunt was shot in Thurles I asked what was the object of shooting the police as they were the only protection. [Carroll] said 'forget that idea; they are the only enemies Ireland has.' I asked him if they were going to gain anything by shooting the police, and he replied that England would have to give them what they were looking for, and otherwise Ireland would be a scene of blood. He said the Sinn Feiners were well prepared for revolution and would stop at nothing.

On September 1, 1919 Carroll and two comrades, John Joe Madden and Mick Hogan, set up an ambush for a police patrol and brought Gilligan with them:

They ordered me to get inside the wall than. When I was inside the wall [Carroll] opened the parcel which contained four guns. The three men started to load the guns. As soon as they were loaded Carroll passed a gun on to me. I asked them what they were going to do. One of them said 'I do not know which - we are going to hunt.' James Carroll told me not to ask any more questions and I did not.

Carroll, Madden and Hogan shot two policemen but they and Gilligan were soon caught, whereupon the innocent Gilligan told all.

In Ballyclough, near Mallow, Jim Croke found himself

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[117] Irish Times, 3 April 1920.

included in a series of raids on loyalist houses: 'I had to do it or I would be shot...The men made me go...Another raider confided that "he was caught in the same as myself."'[118] Another equally reluctant group were the men of the Carrig Irish class, who were roped into raiding loyalist houses for arms on October 22, 1919:[119]

On the evening before that [Tim Heffernan later testified]...I met the defendant, William Herbert, who gave me a message to do something the next day. Other boys in the class got the same message. Herbert told us all to be down at Anna Minnitt's gate...Before the night of the raid I was speaking to Tim Kelly and Denis Cleary. They said they did not want to go on the raid at all. William Herbert was the man giving directions about everything.

The same scenario was played out in The Ballagh Sinn Fein Club in Wexford in February 1920. The first witness is John Lacey:[120]

I met Thomas Leary of Kilcotty, at Kilcotty. He asked me would I go to a meeting tonight, and I said I didn't know, and what kind of a meeting it was to be. He said a man from town [Enniscorthy] was going to give a lecture...We arrived at John Sinnott's barn at The Ballagh about 7 p.m...When we went in Bill Murray put us into line. Then [William] Dwyer stood in front and said - 'There is a fault in this branch of the Sinn Fein club. The first fault is it is not supporting itself. Secondly, there were raids in every part of this county but here, and they would have to have four raids here on the same night, as every club must support itself...Murray then said, 'Ye will all have to attend at Ballymacanaque lane at 8 p.m. on Saturday.

James Denby, who was also at the meeting, later said 'I knew I was doing wrong, but I was afraid not to go.' In the ensuing raid on a Unionist household, Lacey, who had never before handled a gun, shot a woman dead. Outside, Denby 'heard Laurence Connolly say that Mrs. Morris was shot. Bill Murray,

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[118] Examiner, 8 Mar. 1920.

[119] Examiner, 17 Nov. 1919.

[120] Irish Times, 27 Feb. 1920.

the club leader, then handed his revolver to Dwyer and said 'I am done with your crowd now.'

When the shooting began in earnest, large numbers of Volunteers sided with Murray and left: men like Pat Casey of Kildorrery who 'had volunteered during elections to keep order, but since then...did not belong to the Volunteers or take part in politics'; Steve Morley of Evergreen Street who 'marched with the Sinn Fein Volunteers some time ago' but who 'altogether ceased his connection with Sinn Fein in 1919'; Pat Higgins of Rostellan who 'had been a member of the old Volunteers up to' 1919 but who then resigned upon his mother's advice, or Pat Coakley of Upton who 'always disapproved of ambushing and resigned as a protest over ambushing.'[121]

The mass movement peaked in 1918 with the twin victories over conscription and the Irish Party. These events mobilised huge numbers of young enthusiasts but decay set in almost immediately thereafter. The first to go were the 'conscriptioneers' who 'practically all...dwindled away and were not heard from again.'[122]

The I.R.A. was losing far more than unwanted opportunists, however. Companies all over Cork and Ireland found their memberships melting away. In the Hales family stronghold of Ballinadee, only 35 reliable Volunteers remained in July 1919 out of 60 present at the beginning of 1918 and 100 at the height of the conscription scare.[123] In the West Cork Brigade as a whole, even with the contraction of unit rolls, nearly 40% of the remaining members were inactive. As Liam Deasy diplomatically put it: 'A view of the role of the Volunteer movement at the time which had considerable support even in the ranks was that it would be most effective as a

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[121] Examiner, 3 May 1921, 20 May 1919, 22 June 1921; Eagle, 26 March 1921.

[122] Tom Daly statement. See also Deasy, Towards Ireland Free, pp 24, 66; O'Donoghue, No Other Law, p.21, Duggan, p.34 and O'Suilleabhain, p.47.

[123] The first figure is from Deasy, Towards Ireland Free, p.317; the latter two from Cornelius Flynn, 'My Part in Irish Independence', p.57.

threat, and that any attempt at fighting in its almost unarmed condition could lead only to defeat.'[124]

When Michael Brennan returned home to East Clare in January 1919 he discovered that 'on paper we had large numbers, but it was unusual if more than twenty five per cent of those reported for any parade. In many places no organised unit remained and all I could contact were two or three individuals.'[125] The commander of the South Roscommon Brigade encountered the same apathy: 'In one instance I visited a company - there were 103 members present. I told them that any man that was not prepared to fight for a Republic was not wanted in the Army, whereupon 89 left the meeting.'[126]

The South Tipperary Brigade discovered the depth of this resistance after the (unauthorised) Soloheadbeg ambush in January 1919. It started with the familiar resolve to force the pace. The ambushers were afraid that 'the Volunteers were in great danger of becoming merely a political adjunct to the Sinn Fein organisation' and that 'nothing would be done by a large body of Volunteers until a lead was given by a few.'[127] In Sean Treacy's words: 'It was a high time we did a bit of the pushing.'[128]

These sentiments found little support beyond the narrow circles of Munster militants. Local brigade officers and national Sinn Fein, I.R.A. and I.R.B. leaders all condemned the killings and those responsible found themselves isolated

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[124] Deasy, Towards Ireland Free, p.66.

[125] Michael Brennan, The War in Clare 1911-1921: Personal Memoirs of the War of Independence (Dublin, 1980), p.36.

[126] South Roscommon Bde. Report, Oct. 1921 (M.A., A/0761).

[127] Breen, My Fight For Irish Freedom, p.30; Seamus Robinson memoirs, p.68 (Gallagher Papers, Ms.21,265). The first edition of Breen's memoirs were more blunt. Blaming the general election, Breen wrote: 'There was a danger of disintegration, a danger which had been growing since the threat of conscription disappeared a few months earlier' (1924 edn. as quoted in Townshend, The British Campaign in Ireland, p.16.

[128] Quoted in Breen, p.30.

from their neighbours and the movement as a whole:[129]

> Our former friends shunned us. They preferred the drawing-room as a battlefield, the political resolution rather than the gun as their offensive weapon...Even from the Irish Volunteers we got no support...We had to tramp from parish to parish without a penny in our pockets.

By early 1920, such was the unpopularity of the lead given by the 'amateur tacticians'[130] of Soloheadbeg, three battalions were 'near collapse', one of which was deemed by Sean Treacy to be 'non-existent'. He added that 'the other battalions require a lot of smartening up or they'll begin to rot also.'[131]

The Cork were in similar straits. When Richard Mulcahy, the Chief of Staff, suggested to Tomas MacCurtain in October 1919 that his brigade put their best men under G.H.Q. control, MacCurtain replied with a frank description of organisational decay:[132]

> the selecting out of these men would have a bad effect on the remainder, and the result would more than likely be that the particular unit would fizzle out. It is indeed difficult enough to keep the organisation going at the present time...To keep things going some action must be taken which would give <u>all</u> the men a chance of doing something, otherwise the men will fall away and the Companies die out.
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> Slackness and slowness have crept in everywhere in spite of our best efforts and a general shaking up is required to put the men in anything like order for the work.

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[129] Breen, pp 40-41.

[130] Circular letter from Eamon O'Dwyer, Bde. Quartermaster (Foulkes Papers, Epitome No.53/3649, p.137). For O'Dwyer's court-martial proceedings, see p.150. See also Seamus Robinson Memoirs, p.53.

[131] This letter to Michael Collins was captured and printed in the <u>Irish Times</u>, 19 May 1921 (where it was mis-dated; the correction was printed on 9 June).

[132] O/C 1st Cork Bde. to C/S (O'Donoghue Papers, Ms.31,197). See also O'Donoghue, <u>Tomas MacCurtain</u>, p.157 (which quotes a carefully edited version of the letter).

When the brigade did finally launch the sort of large-scale operation that MacCurtain wished for - the massive destruction of R.I.C. barracks at Easter 1920 - it provoked a storm of protest from within the movement itself.[133]

Some guerrillas later tried to put the best face on the situation. Micheal O'Sullivan argued that 'it needed a little taste of war to separate the chaff from the grain and to reduce further mere numbers to a fighting unit of quality.'[134] Liam Deasy also explained the decline in numbers as a blessing in disguise:[135]

> At such an early date [July 1919], the Volunteers were still in the process of consolidating their movement after the not-unexpected defection of many of those brought into the ranks merely because of the conscription scare. The Volunteers who remained formed a smaller but more steadfast and determined body of young men for whom the accepted duty of fighting for national freedom was a hard reality.

By the spring of 1920, however, Sean Buckley, a fellow West Cork Brigade staff officer, was reporting that:[136]

> the National Organisations - civil and military - have ceased to function in the district [Bandon], and that even our own people -Volunteers, Sinn Feiners, etc. - are now afraid to be seen speaking publicly to those whom the R.I.C. and military consider prominent Sinn Feiners or Volunteers. As far as I can tell, a similar state of things holds good in other districts.

While many Volunteers dropped out after 1918, others were being drawn further in by conviction and circumstance. As the examples of the Ballinadee and Behagh Companies showed, family and neighbourhood remained key determinants of activism. Of the fourteen Kilbrittain men who carried out the critical

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[133] De Roiste Diary, 12 July 1920 (De Roiste Papers).

[134] O'Suilleabhain, p.55.

[135] Deasy, Towards Ireland Free, p.66.

[136] Quoted in a letter to A/G [author and exact date unknown] (M.A., A/0771).

Rathclarin ambush in June 1919, 10 were brothers, and nearly all of these went on to active service in 1920-21.[137] These networks were far from static, however. The revolution forged many new bonds and broke others. The shared experience of struggle and the comradeship among the activists was itself a force in shaping the I.R.A.. Or, to put it another way, revolutionaries were as much creations of revolution as creators. Every person had a different experience, of course, but if we examine a sample of individual careers, we can recognise some common patterns amidst the diversity.

Sean (Jack) Breen, a medical student at U.C.C.[138], first joined the Volunteers in 1916 but did not become active until he met some returned prisoners that Christmas, just home from a British internment camp.[139] With them he went to work for De Valera in the East Clare by-election in July 1917. Breen later accompanied Cork contingents to elections in Waterford, South Armagh and Donegal and also helped organise and drill a company in his home village of Lombardstown. His public activities were matched by his growing involvement with '[Sean] Hegarty's crowd': the city's I.R.B.-led underground movement. He took part in arms raids and smuggling and, after an arrest warrant was issued for him for his overground activities, he went on the run. In Newmarket he was given his first gun.

Breen returned to the city after the 1918 general election, took a job as a chemist and renewed contact with the 'active squad', where his comrades included the O'Brien brothers of Broad Lane and Dick Murphy, one of District

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[137] Deasy, Towards Ireland Free, p.66.

[138] 'It is well known in this City that nearly all medical students here were staunch republicans and at least 90% of them were members of the Irish Republican Army.' Denis Cronin statement (Irish Grants Committee, CO/762/170). According to one list, 20 of the 35 members of the U.C.C. company were medical students (O'Donoghue Papers, Ms.31,455[2]).

[139] Unless otherwise specified, this account is based on Breen's own statements in the O'Malley Papers, P17b/83, 124.

Inspector Swanzy's assassins.[140] Among other operations, they were responsible for the failed attack on General Strickland, the commander of the 6th Division, in September 1920. Breen gave up his job soon after this and he, Murphy and others formed their own death squad, cruising the streets in a stolen car 'to draw blood'. 'We were hanging around doing city jobs for some time.' When things got too hot, Breen and Murphy joined the Cork 1 flying column and participated in the near-disastrous ambush at Coolavokig in February 1921. Breen returned to the city, but at 'a very bitter time' as British intelligence officers and death squads had made the underground a very dangerous place to be. Breen was a target: 'there was no time to organise any jobs or get new orders.' He returned to Lombardstown and spent the rest of the war with Dick Murphy and the local column.

Another member of 'Hegarty's crowd' was Roibeard Langford, an ardent Gaelic Leaguer and founder member of the city Volunteers.[141] A company lieutenant, he was among those junior officers who was in favour of rebellion in 1916. Disappointed by MacCurtain and MacSwiney's actions, and fired from his job as a printer at the Examiner, he went to Dublin. There he attended I.R.B. revival meetings and acquired a rifle. When he returned to Cork city in mid-1917 he naturally fell in with Sean O'Hegarty, Donnchadha MacNeilus (both of whom had belonged to Langford's branch of the Gaelic League) and other disgruntled militants, eager to start anew.

Langford was appointed a company captain and an I.R.B. centre, putting him in a key position to push the radicals' agenda within both Sinn Fein and the I.R.A.. In September 1917 he organised a raid on the Cork Grammar School armoury which netted 47 rifles. This was the dissidents' first

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[140] Charlie O'Brien described Breen as 'very active': interview with O'Brien in Marie O'Donoghue Diary, 13 Feb. 1970 (Marie O'Donoghue Papers). Dick Murphy was also in on the execution of Din-Din O'Riordan, as detailed in chapter 1 (O'Callaghan, Execution, pp 60-62).

[141] This account is primarily based on Langford's personal record and statement (C.A.I., Langford Papers, U155).

unauthorised coup - the participants were a who's who of future guerrilla leaders, including Dan and Martin Donovan, Tom Crofts, Paddy Healy and Donnchadha MacNeilus.[142] Langford was subsequently court-martialled but, as with most attempts to curb the 'irregulars', the charge did not stick.[143] His organising work brought him into the north of the county, where he was arrested for drilling in November. He went on hunger strike and was released in December.

Langford continued to organise on behalf of the Volunteers and I.R.B. and to raid for arms with the 'active squad'. Like Sean Breen and the O'Brien family, he was part of the Brotherhood's early smuggling network, and also operated a clandestine printing press. As his now well-armed comrades moved into open warfare, Langford moved with them. He took part in several ambushes and in two of the most notorious executions of 1920: those of Divisional Commissioner Smyth and of three British court-martial officers at Waterfall. At the end of the year he was able to gain his revenge on the Examiner by leading the destruction of its plant. On the run for well over a year, he was finally captured in May 1921 and interned on Spike Island until after the signing of the Treaty.

Frank Busteed, a Blarney mill worker, joined the Fianna Eireann - the republican boy scouts - in 1910, under the influence of his ultranationalist mother.[144] He moved up to join the Volunteers in 1917, after brawling with policemen who were trying to remove a tricolour from Blarney Castle. Two close friends who joined in this fight also went on to become active guerrillas.

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[142] See Robert Langford to Florence O'Donoghue, 11 Jan. 1953 (O'Donoghue Papers, Ms.31,423); O'Donoghue, Tomas MacCurtain, p.133.

[143] The courtmartial is mentioned in a captured letter quoted in Epitome 53/2567, p.230 (Foulkes Papers).

[144] This account is largely derived from Busteed's interviews with Ernie O'Malley (O'Malley Papers, P17b/112), Sean O'Callaghan, Execution, pp 43-7, and a National Army Intelligence Report, 30 May, 1924 (M.A., A/0825).

Busteed was soon elected as captain of the Blarney company and was also invited to join the I.R.B. but was turned down because of local prejudice over his 'Protestant' name.[145] This did nothing to alter his militancy, however, and he was soon in touch with the city underground to get arms and advice, and came to know the ubiquitous Donnchadha MacNeilus, Dick Murphy and William and Charlie O'Brien among others.

After a brief stint in prison for collecting money without a permit, Busteed was soon 'in the soup' again after a raid on a loyalist house led to a gun battle with police. He and an old friend from the Blarney Fianna went on the run but 'there were few people to depend on so a month later I went home for I was full of lice.'[146] He was immediately re-arrested and spent six months in jail, part of it on hunger strike and in solitary confinement. Acquitted in late 1919 (witnesses having been threatened), Busteed vowed never to go to prison again, quit his job and took up arms full-time in his new capacity as Vice O/C of the Donoughmore Battalion.

From January 1920 on, Busteed took part in nearly every ambush or barracks attack between Cork and Macroom, as well as numerous operations and executions with the city gunmen. When a battalion column was formed in November 1920 he was the obvious choice as commander, and he held the post until the Truce. His mother's death at the hands of British raiders only increased his passion for revenge, which he took out on a considerable number of 'spies' and 'informers', both before and after the Truce.[147] It was he who planned the Dripsey

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[145] Busteed's deceased father had been Protestant although Busteed himself was raised a Catholic and later became an outspoken atheist.

[146] Frank Busteed (O'Malley Papers, P17b/112). National Army Intelligence officers later recalled that 'finding he was not wanted [he] returned home and took up his work in the Mills.' (M.A., A/0825).

[147] See chapter 10.

ambush in January 1921 ('a bit of a debacle'[148]) and the consequent kidnapping and killing of Mrs. Lindsay and her chauffeur.

The career of Mick Fitzgerald, a mill worker in Clondulane, was virtually inseparable from that of Liam Lynch, George Power and Lar Condon, apart from its tragic outcome.[149] Like these men he joined the Volunteers in mid-1917 after being deeply affected by the events of 1916; like them he was quickly elected as an officer and quickly rose through the ranks to become O/C of the Fermoy Battalion in 1919. He was also Secretary of the I.T.G.W.U. branch at the mil, an I.R.A. stronghold.

When conscription was announced, Fitzgerald went on the run with the other Fermoy area leaders and spent months on his bicycle organising the neighbouring units. He and others also travelled to Waterford for its violent 1918 by-election. In April 1919 he led the successful assault on the Araglen R.I.C. barracks. Ammunition was discovered in his home in a subsequent search and he spent two months in prison. Upon release he took a leading role in the ambush of a British church party in Fermoy in September.[150] This and the Araglen attack provided the battalion's main armament for the approaching fight. Unfortunately - or perhaps on principle - he did not take the precaution of going into hiding and he was arrested soon afterwards.

The rest of his life was spent on remand in a series of prisons around Ireland. In August 1920, still untried, he and several others went on hunger strike to demand their release. They were soon joined by Terence MacSwiney but they met an unyielding Irish administration, determined not to repeat the

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[148] Frank Busteed (O'Malley Papers, P17b/112).

[149] For accounts of Fitzgerald's life, see Thomas O'Riordan, The Price of Freedom (1971) and Where Martyred Heroes Rest: The Story of the Republican Plot Kilcrumper, Fermoy (1987); Florence O'Donoghue, 'Michael Fitzgerald of Fermoy' in Rebel Cork's Fighting Story, pp 45-9.

[150] For these episodes, see O'Donoghue, No Other Law, pp 45-56.

mass releases of prisoners that occurred in the spring. For Fitzgerald, as for MacSwiney, self-sacrifice was a vital part of revolution: 'suffering seemed to be a joy to him.'[151] His protest lasted 67 days.

Sean Moylan had established himself as a builder in Newmarket by the time he became active in the republican movement in 1916.[152] Already a language enthusiast, he joined the Volunteers and Sinn Fein, and became the principal organiser for both in Duhallow. Like many other local leaders, he was a delegate to both conventions in 1917. By May 1918 he had left much of his old life behind and had gone on the run as O/C of the Newmarket Battalion. In his capacity as a military leader he led several ambushes of army and police patrols; as a Sinn Fein activist he worked not only in Cork but also in North Donegal.

Exhausted and ill with influenza, Moylan went to Dublin and Waterford to recuperate. When he returned home in April 1919 he was quickly arrested and imprisoned. He was able to engineer his own escape and returned to Newmarket to pull off an equally daring coup by capturing the local R.I.C. barracks without firing a shot.[153] This gave his men the arms necessary to launch their own guerrilla campaign.

Moylan participated in several more attacks in the course of 1920, including the kidnapping of General Lucas in June.[154] He was also responsible for collecting the Dail loan and setting up a Dail court system. After September, however, he spent most of his time in flying columns, first with the brigade and then

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[151] Con Leddy to Florence O'Donoghue, 29 Dec. 1950 (O'Donoghue Papers, Ms.31,421).

[152] Moylan's revolutionary career is described in Liam Skinner, Politicians By Accident (Dublin, 1946), pp 261-278 and Eileen Magner, Sean Moylan: Some Aspects of his Parliamentary Career, pp 2-7. Much information was also provided in interviews with Richard Moylan.

[153] Moylan's prison file can be found in G.P.B. Records, Carton 3.

[154] See O'Donoghue, No Other Law, pp 75-9.

with his battalion. From the Ballydrocane ambush in October 1920 to Toureengarriffe in January 1921 and Clonbannin in March, 'Moylan's Black and Tans' killed or wounded twenty of the enemy and captured dozens of rifles without suffering a single casualty.[155] In April he was appointed Brigade O/C upon Liam Lynch's election to the new 1st Southern Division. Nevertheless, the winter campaign had taken a heavy toll on his still-fragile health. He was captured in May, again suffering from exhaustion. Only his election - unopposed - to the second Dail and his 'chivalrous' record in dealing with prisoners saved him from the firing squad.[156] He spent the remainder of the war on Spike Island.

Denis (Sonny) Murray was a founding member of the Courtbrack Company, one of the best armed and organised units of the pre-Rising Volunteers.[157] With their uniforms and Mauser rifles they were often the star attraction at parades in Cork, Limerick and Killarney. Courtbrack's esprit de corps only intensified their frustration with the events of 1916. In 1917 they re-organised to such good effect that Murray was a wanted man by July 1917. He was arrested after an illegal march in August and carried on the fight from within Mountjoy prison. These cells became the front lines of the revolution when Murray and scores of other Volunteers went on hunger strike that autumn. He was transferred to Dundalk, fought the same battle over again, and was released along with the others in November. Upon returning home he discovered that he was a hero and was unanimously elected captain of the company.

Conscription forced Murray underground again, and he

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[155] Tom Crofts (O'Malley Papers, P17b/53). The best guide to Moylan's campaign is J.J. O'Riordan, Kiskeam Versus the Empire. See also P.D. Mehigan, 'Across Duhallow Border. Reminiscences of the Anglo-Irish War' in Carbery's Annual, Christmas 1940.

[156] His chivalry was attested to at his trial: see Examiner, 31 May, 6 June 1921.

[157] The main source for this account is Murray's own statement, along with those of his comrades, in Duggan, Grenagh and Courtbrack During the Struggle for Independence.

spent most of the year organising resistance and collecting arms. Like Moylan and many others in their position, his health suffered terribly. In the general election he led a Courtbrack contingent to 'keep order' on the north side of Cork city.[158] They were stationed on Blarney Lane and faced a stiff fight at the hands of the battle-hardened 'Mollies'.

In 1919 Murray and his men carried out numerous arms raids and several abortive ambushes, but it was not until July 1920 that they saw action at the seige of Blarney barracks. Murray soldiered on through a variety of other encounters, including the ambushes at Inniscarra in September 1920 and at Dripsey, both led by Frank Busteed. His record was well known to the authorities, with the result that his family home became a frequent target of raids and even arson. In 1921 Murray was made Quartermaster for the Donoughmore Battalion, and thereafter concerned himself with the everyday tasks of destroying roads, raiding mails and similar support work up until July 11.

From their beginnings in scattered companies and early confrontations with policemen and warders, through internment camps, prisons and flight and on to election campaigns, raids and ambushes, then to life on the run and on the column, what these stories (like those of the O'Brien and Hales brothers) had in common was a sense of movement - of moving, radicalizing experiences and of expanding horizons. Street fights, police raids, reprisals, prison sentences, hunger strikes. These were the rites of passage which transformed students, carpenters and printers into revolutionaries.

For many Volunteers, their first encounters with the police and prisons ineradicably defined the British state as violent, repressive and, crucially, beatable. Riots, however started, brought young men and women face to face with R.I.C. batons and bayonets, usually wielded in anger to frighten and punish ('it is very essential that such parties be roughly

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[158] Denis Murray in Duggan, p.25.

handled'[159]). Broken bones and stab wounds were commonplace.[160] While this victimisation surely deterred some would-be rebels, it confirmed others. When the Hardwick Street Sinn Fein club was attacked in November 1917, and many of its members bayonetted and hospitalised, local republicans demanded 'reprisals': 'the affair has created a very determined feeling among those who were assaulted.'[161]

Equally shocking were police raids on private homes. Always invasive, occasionally brutal, these became a constant feature of life as a republican activist but they never lost their power to enrage. One thing that the I.R.A. veterans I interviewed never forgot was how it felt to have their houses searched and their families harassed.

Prison turned these similar experiences into a common experience. From 1916 on, successive waves of arrested Volunteers turned British cells and camps into training and battle grounds. Here Volunteers and Sinn Feiners from all over Ireland were able to meet one another, become friends and comrades and feel part of a truly national movement. Moreover, as the I.R.A. invariably assumed control and were frequently able to run their own affairs as de facto prisoners of war, prison was the closest most Volunteers came to a regular military environment.[162] Where the authorities resisted these demands, the prisoners rallied to Michael Collins' dictum that 'every restriction relaxed and every rule

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[159] Circular from Staff, Midland and Connaught District to C.I.s, n.d.[May 1918] (N.L.I., Ms.10,472). 'Roughly handled' was later changed to 'firmly dealt with' (I.G. Circular, 24 May 1918).

[160] See Examiner, 25, 26 June, 28 Sept. 1917; Lankford, pp 97-98

[161] De Roiste Diary, 22, 25 Nov. 1917 (O'Donoghue Papers); Examiner, 23 Nov. 1917.

[162] See Louis J. Walsh, 'On My Keeping' And in Theirs (Dublin, 1921); Darrell Figgis, Recollections of the Irish War (London, 1927), pp 168-170; Andrews, pp 172-180.

broken is a step nearer deliverance.'[163] These victorious protest campaigns were an unfailing source of fellowship, energy and militancy; each such wave of ex-prisoners returned home to change the movement. All but one of the guerrillas profiled above spent time in prison and all but one of these took part in a hunger strike.

The first of the 'Sinn Fein Universities' were Richmond Barracks and Frongoch Camp, where captured rebels and thousands of their suspected accomplices were gathered after the 1916 Rising.[164] For the first time, isolated provincial republicans who had endured hostility and derision ('Here comes the Kaiser and his country boys'[165]) and whose most rebellious act had been to wear a tricoloured tie to Easter Mass[166], found themselves thrown together with battle-hardened republican fighters. They were dangerous - and important - after all.[167]

The keenest graduates of Frongoch and Richmond came from the Bandon and Macroom Battalions and the Cobh Company: men like the Haleses, Begleys, Mannings and Walshes, Dan Corkery, Charlie Browne and the O'Connors, and Mick Leahy and Seamus Fitzgerald moved immediately to reorganise the I.R.A. (and I.R.B.) and to inject into it their new spirit of defiance.

This localised trickle of prison veterans turned into a county-wide flood in late 1917 with the mass arrest of over 60

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[163] Michael Collins to D/Propaganda, 5 Jan. 1921, quoted in C.H. Foulkes to 'Marsh', 10 Oct. 1921 (Foulkes Papers).

[164] This term was first used by Tim Healy in a speech in the House of Commons.

[165] Clonakilty and District, 1916 (Cork, 1966). See also O'Donoghue, 'History of the Irish Volunteers in Cork', pp 68-9; Browne, pp 3-4.

[166] Lionel Fleming, Head or Harp (London, 1965), p.58.

[167] See Seamus Fitzgerald, 'In English Prisons 1916-1917' in Capuchin Annual, 1967, p.353. Figgis, pp 168-9; John Brennan, 'Frongoch University - and After' in Dublin's Fighting Story 1916-21 (Tralee, 1945), pp 112-124; Sean O'Mahony, Frongoch: University of Revolution (Dublin, 1987).

Cork activists for drilling.[168] The quick release of the 'Mountjoy men' turned them into instant heroes and persons of influence within the movement.[169] Denis Murray was not the only one to be made an officer on the strength of his jail sentence. Among the class of 1917 were Lar Condon of Fermoy, Denis Lyons of Kanturk, Jim Brislane of Charleville, Pa Twomey of Grenagh, Maurice Ahern of Dungourney and Ed Hegarty of Riverstown, all of whom were key organisers of the resistance against conscription the following year.

The next identifiable cohort of guerrillas came out of the British crackdown and subsequent hunger strikes of early 1920. Nearly 100 Cork I.R.A. men took part and were released, including Richard Browne of Macroom, Steve O'Neill of Clonakilty, Mick O'Neill of Kilbrittain, Denis Galvin of Newmarket, John and Ed Stack of Cobh, Ralph Keyes of Bantry and James O'Driscoll of Eyeries. However, while earlier protests had often been exhilarating ('I never spent such a good Hallows Eve as I did this time in jail'[170]), the great hunger strike of 1920 was harrowing for everyone concerned. One of the strikers was John J.O'Mahony of Cloundreen, Kilbrittain:[171]

I was taken by two warders to another very filthy cell and put on a chair. I...got only one very dirt blanket, a dirty pillow without a slip and a criminal's dirty mattress. I expect these clothes hadn't been used for a very long time as the clothes were so dirty I had to tie a handkerchief round my face to keep the dirt off...the one warder said that the dog could die there now. On the following night, someone came outside my door either a soldier or a warder and asked several times in a mocking manner if the old cat was dying. On one

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[168] For accounts of the protests, see Michael Brennan, pp 27-35; Lochlinn MacGlynn, 'Padraic Fleming's Personal Fight for Political Rights' and Fionan Lynch, 'Recollections of Jail Riots and Hunger Strikes' in Sworn to be Free, pp 53-75.

[169] See De Roiste Diary, 25 Nov. 1917 (O'Donoghue Papers).

[170] J.W. Reid to Miss Hawkins, 1 Nov. 1917 (G.P.B. Papers).

[171] Letter from John J. O'Mahony, n.d. [April 1920] (Art O'Brien Papers, Ms.8443). See also Con Neenan in MacEoin, Survivors, pp 237-8.

occasion the cold drinking water was supplied in one of the cell tin vessels which was not even rinsed and was black with dirt. I was left in that cell in solitary confinement [for three days].

The strike lasted twenty three days. Such an ordeal imbued the national struggle with tremendous personal suffering and triumph. Those who went through it returned home determined that their sacrifice would mean something, that the revolution would go forward.[172] Over the next year they would form the backbone of the guerrilla effort in many areas: 9 out of the 37 'Boys of Kilmichael' were veterans of the 1920 strike.

The elections of 1917 and 1918 provided the other great proving ground for activists. Scores of Cork Volunteers (including 4 of the 6 men profiled above, as well as the Haleses) travelled to constituencies all over Ireland to immerse themselves in the work of the movement. Each campaign was a miniature crucible of revolution, galvanising local units and fusing the disparate visiting militants into a single force.[173] These were formative experiences for many future guerrillas, away from homes and jobs - often for the first time - and surrounded by fellow republicans. Sean Moylan was 'deeply influenced' by his work in Donegal; it was a turning point in his life.[174] The East Clare by-election had the same effect on Sean Breen. 'I met everyone who was then active, almost...that was fine at the time to meet the lads from different counties.'[175] The often fierce Redmondite opposition only made them 'pull together' all the more. The same dynamic was present in the Waterford, Armagh

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[172] See Deasy, Towards Ireland Free, pp 107-8; O'Dwyer, pp 113-4.

[173] See Michael Brennan, pp 24-5; Richard Mulcahy, 'The Irish Volunteer Convention 27 October, 1917' in Capuchin Annual, 1967, pp 403-4. The excitement and camaraderie of these campaigns is captured in Frank Gallagher's letters to Celia Saunders (T.C.D., Gallagher papers, Ms.10050).

[174] Quoted in Magner, p.5.

[175] Sean Breen (O'Malley Papers, P17b/124).

and Donegal campaigns:

> The elections had a considerable influence on the lads who travelled from the outside areas. First they met men who had served in Easter Week, then they met senior officers from practically every County in Ireland. They learned songs and they were accustomed to meet men whom they admired and who afterwards became famous. But they also learned an esprit de corps, a handling of men and talk[ed] with many who were trying to solve similar problems as in their own area. Also they began to realize that the Irish Volunteers though deep in politics were not politicians. When they returned home they had often a new judgement on the local officers.

Going on the run had much the same radicalizing impact. As they travelled the circuit of prisons, by-elections, safe houses, 'barracks' and headquarters, the fugitives formed new networks and loyalties around one another and perforce devoted themselves full time to the cause. 'From being on the run we kept together...the fellows were nearly always together.'[176] The intimacy of this small world can be seen in our sample of revolutionary careers. Sean Breen and Roibeard Langford travelled in the same militant circles in the city and both knew and worked with Sean Moylan and Sean Hales in organising drives, arms smuggling and elections. Breen was a friend of William and Charlie O'Brien. Frank Busteed was in close contact with the urban underground, took part in at least one operation with Langford and the O'Briens, and several with Denis Murray. Mick Fitzgerald worked with Breen and Sean Hales in the Waterford by-election of 1918.

Nor were these networks confined to Cork alone. Michael Brennan of East Clare knew the Haleses and Sean Treacy and the men of South Tipperary, who were familiar with Liam Lynch, Mick Fitzgerald and the Fermoy men as well as Liam Manahan and Donnacha Hannigan of East Limerick and Pax Whelan of West Waterford.[177] Everyone knew practically everyone else and

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[176] Mick O'Sullivan (O'Malley Papers, P17b/111).

[177] See Michael Brennan, pp 36, 39-40; O'Donoghue, No Other Law, pp 52-4; Liam Manahan (O'Malley Papers, P17b/106), Con Leddy (P17b/123) and George Power (P17b/132).

this small group of activists were to be found on the front lines of nearly every battle.

Another thing which set the guerrillas apart from the ordinary Volunteers was their possession of arms. Drilling and marching were all very well, but guns were the 'real business', the badge of the revolutionary.[178] 'Everybody wanted a gun', and for most Volunteers, a gun meant a rifle.[179] 'Nobody wanted to carry a shotgun'; 'It was amazing the change rifles made to the men - and how keenly they held on to them.'[180] A rifle gave its owner power, prestige and military legitimacy. It was the most potent of symbols (even if revolvers and shotguns did more actual killing). As one veteran told me: 'Everybody wanted a rifle - to be a man if you like.'[181]

The psychological importance of modern arms was noted as early as 1915 by Ernest Blythe. On his visit to the Mitchelstown Company he attributed their confidence to their arsenal of 40 rifles:[182]

> Here as almost everywhere else possession of arms was vitally important in relation to the National attitude of both the Volunteers and the people round them...they could not have kept the Company as strong and enthusiastic as it was if it had not the rifles, which made even those who were among the

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[178] Comerford, My Kilkenny I.R.A. Days, p.71.

[179] Interview with J.S..

[180] Ned Murphy (O'Malley Papers, P17b/123); North Cork I.R.A. memoir (anonymous source).

[181] Interview with M.J.. This attitude is also demonstrated by the song 'The Boys of Aghinagh':

> Dan Buckley was there with his rifle,
> Very important was he,
> If the Black and Tans came he would shoot them,
> And shout that Aghinagh was free.

[182] Blythe, 'Kerry Better Than Cork in 1915', pp 3-4. J.J. O'Connell found the same thing on his inspection tours: 'The rifle was regarded by many people since the Boer War almost with superstition...it heartened our own men and improved the neighbours opinion of us.' 'History of the Irish Volunteers', Chp.1, pp 4-6.

flabbiest, nationally speaking, of their neighbours regard it as entitled to respect.

By the middle of 1919, each of the men profiled above had stolen, bought or captured arms. On the other hand most ordinary Volunteers, like Sean O'Faolain and Frank O'Connor, did not even know how to use one.

As bands of I.R.A. fugitives acquired arms and permanence over the course of 1920, they became known as flying columns and Active Service Units. Some, organised around battalion and brigade staffs, were created or formalised as official units.[183] Others, such as the 'active squad' in the city or the 'foreign legion' or 'three musketeers' in north Cork remained ad hoc formations, much to the annoyance of superior officers. Stan Barry described another independent squad of gunmen as 'a tough bunch. Jim [Grey] would not allow anyone into his particular group until you stood out on the road and said 'F--- you, God.' That was a sign that you were fit to [be one] of their company.'[184]

What Barry was describing was an extreme example of how guerrillas drew a sharp dividing line between themselves and outsiders. Theirs was not just an intimate world but an exclusive one as well - 'just the fellows'[185] - increasingly removed from local companies as from their homes and families. Insider status was marked by such things as having and knowing nicknames. Many guerrillas were known to their comrades by their nom de guerre: 'Spud' Murphy, 'Flyer' Nyhan, 'Nudge' Callanan, 'Buckshot' Hales, 'Sandow' Donovan, 'Congo' Condon, 'Calder' Corkery and 'Hegga' O'Hegarty being but a few. One woman whose home was the headquarters of the West Cork Brigade

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[183] For the 'official version' of the formation of the West Cork flying column, see Deasy, Towards Ireland Free, pp 158-9. For the Ballyvourney Battalion, see O'Suilleabhain, pp 93-4. See also 6th Division History, pp 54-5; Fitzpatrick, Politics and Irish Life, pp 217-219.

[184] Stan Barry (O'Malley Papers, P17b/111). See also Mick O'Sullivan (P17b/111).

[185] Jim Bromagh (O'Malley Papers, P17b/123).

for months never knew the men's real names until after the Truce.[186]

If you were not a column man, you were 'small fry'. From the column man's point of view, while the rank and file were 'a good help', 'the inactive men stayed at home and the rest of the men were with the columns.'[187] This attitude created many problems between columns and companies. Activists in Bandon, Fermoy and Kanturk were willing to recruit ex-soldiers for their military skills over strenuous local objections.[188] Some units resented having outsiders operate in their territory, demanding food and shelter, commandeering the available arms and pre-empting their own plans. They came to look upon the guerrillas as itinerant troublemakers who stirred things up and left the local men to take the brunt of the reprisals.[189]

The Drishanebeg train ambush in February 1921 revealed a number of these conflicts in microcosm. The Doonen and Coole Cross Companies of the Millstreet Battalion concocted a clever scheme to divert a train carrying British soldiers onto an isolated siding in order to ambush them. When the Battalion column heard of it, however, they took over, refused to let the company men use their rifles and effectively reduced them to auxiliaries in their own plan. The ambush was a great success but the enraged companies saw none of the 14 captured rifles.[190] The Active Service Section commander admitted

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[186] Chisholm Interview (tape in the possession of Dr. John Chisholm).

[187] Paddy O'Brien and Ned Murphy (O'Malley Papers, P17b/124, 123).

[188] For the case of Tom Barry in Bandon, see chapter 2; for Matt Flood in Fermoy, see Hammond, p.8; for the notorious Dan Shields in Kanturk, see Con Meaney and Dan Browne (O'Malley Papers, P17b/112).

[189] See Con Meaney (O'Malley Papers, P17b/112).

[190] For an account of the ambush see Patrick Lynch, 'Drishanebeg Train Ambush Yielded 14 Rifles to Millstreet Column' in With the I.R.A. in the Fight for Freedom 1919 to the Truce (Tralee, pp 160-164.

that 'Owing to all arms being kept with the A.S.S. temporarily, the local Company O/Cs are none too pleased' but then sanctimoniously declared that while 'I only admire them for their spirit to fight...we must make the best use of arms.'[191] By the spring of 1921 most companies had been stripped of their precious rifles and carbines.

Guns, nicknames and swearing-in rituals delineated an exclusively masculine world: the world of the Wren Boy as much as the revolutionary. Whereas Irish classes, protest committees, marches and election campaigns had been open to women - at least at the bottom - the guerrillas drew much of their strength from communal youth culture and its informal network of loyalties among 'the boys'. Underground activity depended on these sorts of tightly-knit groups and this process of male bonding actively excluded women.

As violence rose and the revolution fell into the hands of 'the boys', womens' roles in the struggle also changed. Female activists had been no less militant than men in the heyday of the mass movement and no less suspicious of Sinn Fein 'politics'.[192] Cumann na mBan's 'irregulars' had been equally given to 'unauthorised' and 'irresponsible' violence, and earned the same official censure as their male counterparts.[193] As gunmen eclipsed protesters, however, and the common ground of Sinn Fein and the Gaelic League collapsed, the militants became segregated by gender. Women were less and less involved in direct action and increasingly

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[191] A.S.S. Report, 7 Bn., 21 Feb. 1921 (Mulcahy Papers, P7/A/38). For similar disputes, see O/C Rathmore Coy. to O/C 2nd Kerry Bde., 24 May 1921 (Mulcahy Papers, P7/A/18) - who complains about a north Cork column; Paddy O'Brien and Jack Bolster (O'Malley Papers, P17b/111, 112); Liam O'Dwyer, pp 122-4; O'Malley, On Another Man's Wound, p.196; O/C A.S.S., 3rd Bn., 2nd Cork Bde. to O/C A. Coy. and O/C Intell., 22 Jan. 1921 (C.I. Monthly Report, East Cork, Jan. 1921 (CO/904/114).

[192] See Ward, pp 132-3; Sheehan, p.88.

[193] 'Miss Cummins' Cork branch still gives great trouble. The share-holders meeting in Dublin condemned their work and suspended the rioters, but they take no notice.' Mrs. Wyse-Power to Countess Markievicz, 25 Nov. 1918 (CO/904/164).

relegated to supporting roles within Cumann na mBan.

The conscription crisis marked the turning point in this process. Cumann na mBan branches were placed - theoretically at least - under the command of Volunteer company officers.[194] Route-marches and drill were largely forgotten. Their military work would now be entirely subordinate to that of the I.R.A. and essentially domestic in nature. Some women acted as organisers, couriers or typists, but most were occupied with cooking, sewing, collecting money and helping prisoners and their families. The Blackpool branch made kit-bags for their company.[195] The captain of the Clonakilty branch remembers providing clothing, sending parcels to prisoners and carrying I.R.A. despatches.[196] One girl in west Cork who had stopped doing war work after the Easter Rising found herself doing performing the exact same tasks for the republican cause a few years later.[197]

Cumann na mBan members, it must be stated, did not apparently feel belittled or marginalised. For them, as for the Volunteers, the revolution was a personally liberating experience, fostering an intense spirit of camaraderie in the face of parents and priests and much of 'respectable' society. Many branches were determined to maintain a measure of independence, and they seem to have succeeded for the most part.[198] Some resisted I.R.A. control and refused to affiliate themselves with their local company.[199] Leslie Price, a Cumann na mBan organiser in Cork (who later married

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[194] Conlon, p.60.

[195] Conlon, p.67.

[196] Chisholm interview. See also Duggan, p.65.

[197] Interview with B.A..

[198] See Liam Murphy to Sean O'Hegarty, 25 Nov. 1918 and O'Hegarty to Bde. Council, 26 Nov. 1918 (O'Donoghue Papers, Ms.31,198).

[199] See Florence O'Donoghue to Sec., Cork District Council, Cumann na mBan, 14 Feb. 1919 (O'Donoghue Papers, Ms.31,181); Ward, pp 131-133.

Tom Barry), found that men and women treated each other as equals and 'talked out their views openly.'[200]

How Cumann na mBan members thought of themselves nevertheless did little to alter the general I.R.A. view of them as mere auxiliaries. 'Not that that movement matters a terrible lot' was Seamus Lankford's comment.[201] When Tomas MacCurtain established a Volunteer 'barracks' in the city for the 1918 election, it was the womens' job 'to cater to the men in the building. They will want to start in time (to-morrow) to put the place in order, secure tables etc....They may hire a woman or two to do the rough work but that will be a matter for themselves.'[202] This attitude was also revealed in retrospect in I.R.A. memoirs, which offer only token recognition of Cumann na mBan. Although Liam Deasy declared that 'it would be impossible to extol sufficiently the contribution made by this heroic body of women', this and two other references to the organisation apparently proved sufficient.[203]

However, women's contribution to the revolution also differed fundamentally from men's in that many women were active outside of any organisation. Behind the guerrillas was an essential cadre of mothers, sisters, wives and other domestic revolutionaries, some affiliated to Cumann na mBan but most not, who ran their homes as safe houses. Typical of these was Mrs. Hickey of Badger's Hill, Glenville, whose house

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[200] Leslie Bean de Barra interview on R.T.E. Radio, 1980 (tape in the possession of Donal O'Donovan). See also the interview with her published in Donncha O Dulaing, Voices of Ireland (Dublin, 1984); O'Faolain, Vive Moi!, pp 133-141 and Oonagh Walsh, 'Testimony From Imprisoned Women' in Fitzpatrick (ed.) Revolution? Ireland 1917-1923, pp 84-5.

[201] Seamus Lankford to Florence O'Donoghue, n.d. (O'Donoghue Papers, Ms.31,275).

[202] Tomas MacCurtain to Liam Murphy, n.d. [Nov. 1918] (O'Donoghue Papers, Ms.31, 198).

[203] Deasy, Towards Ireland Free, p.65. Men outnumber women in the book's index by 257 to 6. Comparable figures for similar works: O'Donoghue, No Other Law, 398 to 15; Michael Brennan, The War in Clare, 211 to 8; Desmond Ryan, Sean Treacy, 284 to 42.

was a way station and headquarters for the North Cork Brigade from the conscription crisis onwards. Liam Lynch, George Power, Lar Condon and others spent months living there and the Brigade flying column was formed there.[204] Without Mrs. Hickey and others like her, there would have been no column. Every Brigade had its network of 'Mrs. So-and-sos': vital but invisible.[205] Like the members of Cumann na mBan and Sinn Fein and stay-at-home Volunteers, they were not privy to the guerrilla world.

While the guerrillas went abroad in flying columns, monopolised the best weapons and did most of the organising and fighting, the company men mostly stayed at home, did scout duty, wrecked bridges and robbed postmen. As companies atrophied and reliable Volunteers became scarce, many nominal members were unwilling to do even this much. In December 1920, Seamus Robinson, the O/C of the South Tipperary Brigade, fumed at the rampant 'desertions and neglect of duty and downright cowardice' and declared that 'something in the nature of a crisis is upon us.'[206] The same month, the O/C of West Clare reported that:[207]

I find of late in a great many companies, that the Volunteers themselves are rather inclined to fall in with the views of the old people to remain quiet. For instance, in one particular place where an ambush was planned, the Volunteers in the vicinity refused to take any part whatever in it.

By March 1921 the Skibbereen Battalion's men were not only not

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[204] George Power (O'Malley Papers, P17b/123); O'Donoghue, No Other Law, p.97.

[205] See Hammond, pp 30-31; Liam O'Dwyer, p.128; Frank O'Connor, An Only Child, p.241.

[206] O/C 3rd Tipperary Bde. to C/S, 3 Dec. 1920 (Foulkes Papers, Epitome No.53/3649, p.79).

[207] O/C West Clare Bde. to C/S, 30 Dec. 1920, quoted in 6th Division History, p.72. For similar accounts, see Organiser's Report, Cavan Bde., 22 Feb. 1921 and O/C Donegal West Bde., 7 Mar. 1921 (Mulcahy Papers, P7/A/16, 17).

showing up for parades, many of the trainee column men had deserted as well.[208] In a not untypical case in the Bantry Battalion, the company detailed to act as scouts for the column simply went home, leaving the guerrillas to be surprised by the police.[209] As we move outwards from the hard core of active guerrillas to the reluctant fringes of the I.R.A., the question arises: how voluntary were the Volunteers?

It was not uncommon in 1921 for inactive Volunteers to be called up and forced into action - more or less against their will - as scouts, couriers and road-wreckers. These were not hard men, ready to face battle, jail or worse. When they were captured they talked, and often repudiated the I.R.A.. These incidents became so frequent that Austin Stack complained that 'of late this is being done indiscriminately by almost every man tried in Cork.'[210] Liam Lynch was forced to admit that 'most areas leave scouting to unreliable men - especially men that are not used to fighting.'[211] The case Lynch probably had in mind when he wrote this was that of Pat Casey of Kildorrery:[212]

> he volunteered during the elections to keep order, but since then did not belong to the Volunteers or take any part in politics. His home was searched by police and he went to Dublin and returned three weeks ago. He was looking for work, and at Kilfinane he met some men, they were Volunteers, who took him to a house and gave him tea. He was told to be at a place at the butt of the hill at one o'clock...He did not want to go but the other men said he should.

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[208] 7th Bn., 3rd Cork Bde. Report, 3 Mar. 1921 in 'The Irish Republican Army' [Irish Command, June 1921] (Strickland Papers).

[209] 1st Southern Div. Memo, 11 June 1921 (Mulcahy Papers, P7/A/19).

[210] Austin Stack to M/D, 9 May 1921 (Mulcahy Papers, P7/A/18).

[211] H.Q. 1st Southern Div. Report, 11 June 1921 (MUlcahy Papers, P7/A/19). For similar cases, see O/C 2nd Cork Div. to C/S, 4 Mar. 1921 and O/C 1st Cork Div. to C/S, 25 Feb. 1921 (P7/A/38).

[212] Examiner, 3 May 1921.

Casey was caught up in a disastrous ambush (two I.R.A. men were killed and two wounded), captured, tried at a drumhead court-martial and executed. His dilemma was shared by a good number of other involuntary Volunteers. Dan Callaghan, a scout at the Dripsey ambush, 'was a member of the Volunteers and had to obey orders. He did so to save his life.'[213]

Some units even felt it necessary to forcibly enrol new members. In Kanturk, for example, a 'calling up notice' was posted and 'they pulled in all the able-bodied fellas around. They conscripted them if you like.'[214] Those who refused to join were viewed with great suspicion and became the targets of boycotts and harassment.[215] Jeremiah O'Callaghan of Aghabullogue was approached at Christmas 1920 to join but refused. A few weeks later:[216]

He was ordered to come along with a party of men, one of whom produced a revolver, and said that if he did not go with them he would get the contents of it...He was told to step over the fence and ordered to watch for any soldiers coming along from Coachford to Peake...Later the soldiers were seen advancing and they were told to run away...A bullet struck him in the toe and he threw himself on the ground as he was afraid.

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[213] Examiner, 10 Feb. 1921. For similar cases, see other testimony from that day's paper, as well as 12 Aug. 1920; 9, 10 Mar., 18 June, 1, 2, 7 July 1921. On Dripsey, see O'Callaghan, Execution, pp 83-99 but this must be compared with Frank Busteed's contradictory statements in his interview with O'Malley (O'Malley Papers, P17b/112).

[214] Interview with M.J.. A copy of the poster can be found among the Dublin Castle Press Statements (CO/904/168).

[215] For examples, see O/C 5th Bn. to O/C 1st Cork Bde., 29 Oct. 1921 (Mulcahy Papers, P7/A/37); O/C 1st Bn. to O/C Kerry Bde. [no. unknown]; and the following statements from the Irish Grants Committee files: Julia Neligan (CO/762/32), Joseph Northridge (/37), Patrick Collins (/45), Alexander Stevens (/46), George Sullivan (/68), James Donnelly (/91), Julia Crowley (/108), Maurice O'Connor (/119), Pat Curran (/130), William Leahy (/155), William McCarthy (/157), Sam Kingston (/167), Denis Cronin (/170) and Sam Trinder (/206).

[216] Examiner, 10 Feb. 1921.

The I.R.A. did not just want manpower, however, they also wanted a politically closed shop. Conscription was a way of enforcing silence and acquiescence, the equivalent of the Whiteboys' forcible administration of oaths or the Wren Boys' punishment of the uncooperative.[217] 'In the Millstreet Battalion 90 per cent of the able-bodied men were in the I.R.A. It was a way of keeping peoples' mouths shut.'[218] Indeed, there were cases in Munster of I.R.A. groups administering oaths in exactly the same manner as the rebels of the previous century.[219] 'They had to have you under their thumbs.'[220]

In some cases, conscription became a method of extortion. Sam Kingston was taken from his home near Dunmanway one night in 1921: 'they ordered me to fall in the ranks this I refused to do, then they threatened shooting me to which I replied they could and eventually they let me off on the condition I gave them money.'[221]

In 1921, non-Volunteers were regularly called upon to block or wreck roads and bridges, often at night-time and with no warning. This too could be a form of punishment or intimidation. William Daly of Shannonvale was wounded and arrested at the site of a road-trenching in June 1921:[222]

> He was ordered to the place where he was found. He was commandeered, and he was afraid to refuse. He knew that people had been commandeered to dig trenches...He had been a demobilised soldier, and had been threatened by the Republican Army a couple of times. He got a note to be there or get the full penalty.

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[217] For the Whiteboys, see Beames, Peasants and Power. pp 64-5; George Cornwell Lewis, Local Disturbances in Ireland (Cork, 1977), pp 158-164.

[218] Con Meaney (O'Malley Papers, P17b/112).

[219] See Examiner, 26 Sept., 12 Dec. 1919, 8 Jan. 1920.

[220] Interview with C.D..

[221] Sam Kingston statement (CO/762/167).

[222] Examiner, 14 June 1921. See also Catherine Murphy to M/D, 30 Nov. 1921 (M.A., A/0668).

The same men were often commandeered the next day by Crown forces to repair the work they had done the night before.

The lawyer of one Cork youth facing execution proclaimed that 'there is a reign of terror in the country at the present time. Juveniles are drilled and get orders from H.Q., and their terror is beyond description.'[223] This was courtroom hyperbole designed to appeal to British propaganda; nevertheless there was some truth to it. Most Volunteers were willing participants (only one of my twelve interviewees was conscripted) but it is impossible to distinguish the willing from the unwilling when those called upon so often had very little choice. Violence bred coercion. As one increased, so did the other. By 1921 the demands of guerrilla war and the decline in I.R.A. strength had turned many columns and units into part-time press gangs.

The Truce of 1921 recalled the headiest days of 1918. Inactive members suddenly reappeared and new recruits poured into every republican organisation. Even the Gaelic League was back in fashion.[224] It seemed to the heroes of the guerrilla war as if the whole people were united behind them.

The Treaty changed all that. Just as in the aftermath of the conscription crisis, the new patriots - the 'Trucileers' - drifted away, taking with them a good number of old hands. The speed of this decline can be seen in Table 36, which picks up where Table 35 left off:[225]

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[223] Irish Times, 3 May 1921.

[224] See Lankford, pp 124-5.

[225] Figures for battalions other than Mallow from Report, 29 Feb. 1922 (O'Malley Papers, P17a/87); figures for Mallow from 5th Battalion Weekly Company Reports (Lankford Papers, U169/17).

Table 36: North Cork I.R.A. Company Strengths, 1921-22

Battalion	Truce 1921 Roll	February 1922 Roll	Reliable
Fermoy	76	53	40
Millstreet	75	47	35
Castletownroche	75	69	49
Mallow	68	-	35
Average	74	55	40

In February 1922 the North Cork I.R.A. had returned to its strength of a year before. By late June, the companies of the Mallow Battalion were down to an average of 24 members apiece[226]; in the Millstreet Battalion, the average as of August was 20, less than half the Tan War average[227]. The following table reveals a similar picture in the West Cork Brigades:[228]

Table 37: West Cork I.R.A. Company Strengths, 1921-22

Battalion	Truce 1921 Roll	January 1, 1922 Roll	June 1 Roll
Bandon	83	39	26
Schull	66	34	12
Skibbereen	67	82	17
Drimoleague	62	43	5
Bantry	100	55	17
Castletownbere	48	48	19
Average	71	50	16

By the beginning of the Civil War the west Cork I.R.A. had lost 77% of its paper strength.

The Civil War shattered what was left of this fragile structure. The republican call to arms in July 1922 did briefly stiffen some units, but the immediate and overwhelming

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[226] 5th Bn. Report, 12 July 1922 (Lankford Papers, U169c/42).

[227] O/C Org. to O/C 1st Southern Div., 19 Sept. 1922 (O'Malley Papers, P17a/87).

[228] The figures for Bandon come from Organiser's Report, 1st Bn., 3rd Cork Bde., 7 Aug. 1922 ; those for the other battalions from Report on 5th Cork Bde., Aug. 1922 (M.A., A/0991/2).

success of the Free State invasion in August returned the Cork I.R.A. to its downward course. There would be no return to ranks and no new recruits. By October, the Midleton Battalion had fallen to an average of 7 men per company from a high of 82 the year before.[229] By that date there were 1300 men left on Cork brigade rolls, a loss of almost 90% of their pre-Treaty strength. Of these, 518 were on 'active service'.[230] This figure probably represented the hard core of committed Volunteers: a year and a half later the total membership still stood at 1204 men.[231]

How many of these lapsed Volunteers were actively pro-Treaty? An exact answer would be impossible. National Army records did not register previous service and, in any case, many ex-I.R.A. served the Free State without officially affiliating with the Army. Nevertheless, available evidence strongly suggests that only a small fraction of active Volunteers 'went Free State'. The two main pro-Treaty strongholds were in the south-west, in the Schull, Skibbereen and Drimoleague Battalions (where Michael Collins and Gearoid O'Sullivan had family and personal followers) and in the Midleton Battalion. These were the only places which saw fighting before the invasion of August 1922. Elsewhere, support was confined to isolated companies and officers acting on their own.

The great majority of former Volunteers did nothing and 'kept their mouths shut.'[232] When a divisional organiser toured the west Cork brigades in August he was told in nearly every unit that most of the drop-outs were 'merely

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[229] The Truce figure is from Bureau of Military History rolls; that for Oct. 1922 from Report on 4th Bn., 1st Cork Bde. (M.A., A/1142).

[230] Brigade strengths as of the Truce in the O'Donoghue Papers, Ms.31,216; as of Oct. 1922 in the O'Malley Papers, P17a/89.

[231] Bde. Reports, mid-1924 (M.A., A/1204/2).

[232] Daniel O'Leary, Kilmeen and Castleventry Parish Co. Cork (1975), p.95.

conscientious objectors and are late arrivals in the Volunteers'[233] or 'truce Volunteers who were glad to have a way out.'[234] Only three Bandon I.R.A. men had joined the National Army and 'the men who have fallen away are either Truce Volunteers or men who were never active.'[235] In the Beara Battalion there were less than thirty Free State recruits.[236]

Mallow Battalion records show the same pattern. Of 290 Volunteers who joined in the Truce, 20 stayed for the Civil War. 7 officers resigned but none of them - and only 12 former Volunteers - went Free State. Most National Army recruits were either ex-soldiers or civilians.[237]

True to Cork's tradition of heterodox politics, dissident city Volunteers also helped found the Neutral I.R.A. Association.[238] This was largely the creation of Sean O'Hegarty and Florence O'Donoghue who advocated I.R.A. and I.R.B. unity above all else (although with little success). O'Hegarty gained few adherents but his example did encourage a considerable number of wavering Volunteers to resign as well.[239]

The small minority of the I.R.A. who were positively pro- or anti-Treaty may have been resolute in their convictions but their decisions, and the motives behind them, are as elusive as when they first joined. Eleven of the twelve veterans I

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[233] Organiser's Report, 1st Bn., 5th Cork Bde., 4 Aug. 1922 (M.A., A/0991/2).

[234] Organiser's Report,5th Bn., 5th Cork Bde., 5 Aug. 1922 (A/0991/2).

[235] Organiser's Report, 1st Bn., 3rd Cork Bde., 7 Aug. 1922 (A/0991/2).

[236] Liam O'Dwyer, p.129; Organiser's Report, 5 Bn., 5th Cork Bde., 5 Aug. 1922.

[237] 5th Bn. Report, 1 May 1923 (Lankford Papers, U169/43).

[238] Florence O'Donoghue, No Other Law, p.288; O'Donoghue Diary, 1923 (O'Donoghue Papers, Ms.31,189).

[239] See Eamon Enright and Tom Crofts (O'Malley Papers, P17b/103, 108).

interviewed had fought on the republican side; none could remember making a specific choice to do so. 'I hadn't a clue'; 'It was very confused altogether.'[240] Judging by the recollections of Cork veterans, the Treaty itself and republican ideology were rarely debated within their ranks; 'The politics of it was second place at times.'[241]

Most justified their decisions in collective terms. 'A good 90% of us stayed republican'; 'the whole place [company] were against it [the Treaty].'[242] When asked why he and his brother wound up on opposite sides of the struggle, one man explained that he had been a West Cork column man and that 'all of Barry's men stuck together.'[243] For the lone Free Stater among my interviewees, his choice (made in concert with his brother) was dictated by his personal loyalty to Michael Collins.[244]

These decisions were shaped, as always, by group loyalties and rivalries. Factional dividing lines became political dividing lines. 'It was partly officers, partly jealousies and disputes.'[245] Macroom's rival east and west side companies went their separate ways[246] just as the staff of the new Fermoy Battalion went Free State while the old officers went republican.[247] Family and neighbourhood still played a role, as the example of the Behagh Company shows. Indeed, one National Army survey of west Cork concluded that I.R.A. had survived best 'where the Irregulars had strong

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[240] Interviews with M.J. and M.C..

[241] Interview with M.C..

[242] Interviews with M.J. and C.D..

[243] Interview with E.Y..

[244] Interview with J.S..

[245] Interview with E.B..

[246] Charlie Browne (O'Malley Papers, P17b/111).

[247] George Power to Florence O'Donoghue, 7 Dec. 1953 (O'Donoghue Papers, Ms.31,421).

family connections.'[248] There were some well-known cases of brothers falling out - Sean and Tom Hales or Gearoid and Tadg O'Sullivan - but these appear to have been exceptions (in both these examples, one brother had become a member of Michael Collins' circle in Dublin). More representative perhaps was the Volunteer who went republican because 'my brother half-asked, half-ordered me.'[249]

'You went by your officer.'[250] Officers usually took their personal networks with them, even in cases where they had been court-martialled or replaced. In fact, this sort of grievance often caused the split in the first place. In Donal Barrett's Cork Harbour company, 'it was the question of the appointment of an unpopular Captain which made all his men go Free State.'[251] The one pro-Treaty company in the city - 'C' Company on the north side - did so because of 'bad feeling as the wrong men were officers.'[252] The original officers had been released from prison after the Treaty but had not been given their old ranks. They went Free State in revenge and took their men with them. A similar problem prompted Jack Lynch, the former Vice O/C of the Macroom Battalion, to secede (along with his home company) when he was not given his position back: 'Jim Murphy had been V/C and had seen more fighting, but local sympathy favoured Lynch.'[253] In another company near Schull, the men went Free State because their republican captain had been 'knocking them about.'[254] Finally, in my pro-Treaty informant's company, he and his

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[248] General Situation Report, 20 Sept. 1923 (M.A., A/0875).

[249] Interview with M.J..

[250] Interview with M.C..

[251] Donal Barrett (O'Malley Papers, P17b/111).

[252] Stan Barry (O'Malley Papers, P17b/95). See also Sean Collins Powell, 'Details of the Anglo-Irish Conflict 1916-1921' (M.A., A/0735).

[253] Charlie Browne (O'Malley Papers, P17b/111).

[254] Interview with O.S..

brother retained the support of 'the faithful' despite being isolated within the Battalion.[255]

The most complex of these disputes took place in east Cork. In the 4th Battalion (which encompassed Cobh and Midleton) the leading Midleton guerrillas were cashiered by Mick Leahy, a Cobh officer, for drinking and extortion.[256] One of them, Josie Aherne (whose brothers were also activists), had previously been passed over for command of the battalion and this furor had led to the creation of a separate unit to appease the Ahernes and their friends.[257] By Leahy's own admission these men had been 'bloody good fighters'.[258] Now, to a man, they became his ardent opponents and turned much of the east Cork I.R.A. outside Cobh against the republicans.[259] They were 'the backbone of the Free State in Munster.'[260] Here the political realignment was driven by a combination of local loyalties, territoriality and personal grievances.

Family and faction dictated the course of the I.R.A. split in units all over Ireland, and in highly predictable fashion. Once again, it was the Brennans against the Barretts in Clare, the Hanniganites against the Manahanites in East Limerick and the Sweeneys versus the O'Donnells in Donegal as all the old feuds were re-ignited.[261] In Kerry, Dinny Daly remembered, 'When the officers went one way the men followed

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[255] Interview with J.S..

[256] See Mick Leahy, Mick Burke (O'Malley Papers, P17b/108) and Edmond Desmond (/112).

[257] Seamus Fitzgerald (O'Malley Papers, P17b/111).

[258] Mick Leahy (/108).

[259] 7 of the 9 Midleton companies went Free State: Memo to C/S, 27 May 1922 (Mulcahy Papers, P7/B/191). See also O/C 1st Cork Bde. to M/D, 29, 31 May 1922.

[260] Mick Burke (/108).

[261] See Gloria Maguire, pp 291-3; Rumpf and Hepburn, p.62.

them.'[262]

The importance of officers in determining which side their men took can be tested in the case of the west Cork battalions. Table 38 compares the percentage of company and battalion officers who left the I.R.A. (both pro-Treaty and neutral) to the decline in overall unit strengths:[263]

Table 38: Resignation Rates in West Cork I.R.A. Battalions, 1922

Battalion	Officers Jan.-June	Men Jan.-June
Drimoleague	60%	88
Skibbereen	59	79
Schull	39	65
Beara	25	60
Bantry	20	69
Bandon	15	33

With the exception of the Bantry Battalion, the trend is clear. The more officers who resigned, the more men they took with them and vice-versa. We can examine this pattern in greater detail in two of the most divided battalions, Schull and Skibbereen. Table 39 tracks the movement of officers and men within individual companies. The officers concerned are the Captain and the 1st and 2nd Lieutenants.[264]

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[262] Dinny Daly (O'Malley Papers, P17b/102).

[263] The figures for rank and file strengths are from the Organiser's Report, 1st Bn. 3rd Cork Bde., 7 Aug. 1922 and Report on 5th Cork Bde., August 1922 (M.A., A/0991/2); officer losses were calculated by comparing the lists in these reports with the Bureau of Military History Rolls (anonymous source).

[264] These numbers were derived from the Report on 5th Cork Bde., August 1922 (A/0991/2). According to these documents, all resigned officers were Free Staters.

Table 39: Resignation Rates in West Cork I.R.A. Companies, 1922

Free State Officers Per Company (Out of 3)	Average % Men Resigned Per Company	
	Schull	Skibbereen
0	60%	67
1	66	74
2	-	82
3	89	92

Again the trend is unmistakeable. If a units' officers all stayed in the I.R.A. they were able to hold on to their core constituency - the 'reliable' one-third of the company (as happened in the Behagh Company). If, however, the officers went over to the other side, these friends and comrades went with them and the company collapsed. The two Schull companies which lost all their officers were left with three men between them. In the Drimoleague Battalion, where 60% of the officers 'deserted', the 1st Southern Division's Inspector of Organisation reported in August 1922 that 'there are only about enough men in each area to form a Company staff, and it would be a case of all officers and no soldiers.'[265]

On the other hand, these figures also confirm the limitations of ideology and leadership where the silent majority of Volunteers were concerned. Both tables show that between one and two thirds of I.R.A. members dropped out of their own accord and could not be mobilised by either side. And since these statistics do not include resignations before January 1922 they actually understate the level of apathy within the organisation. If we look at former guerrillas alone, a very different picture emerges. Just as most ordinary Volunteers may not have cared what their leaders - local or national - thought or said, so most activists thought that the departing 'small fry' and 'Truce Volunteers' were irrelevant: 'it was the plain fighting men that won the last war and we will win again.' With few exceptions (and probably

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[265] Inspector of Org. to O/C Org., 1st Southern Div., 3 Aug. 1922 (O'Malley Papers, P17a/87).

fewer additions), the men who fought the British in the Tan War went on to fight the Free State. Tom Barry's column - 'the boys of Kilmichael' - went republican, along with those led by Sean Moylan (who had one man go Free State), Paddy O'Brien and Con Liddy in north Cork, and Frank Busteed in Donoughmore. In the Fermoy area 'the majority of the Old Stock that were on the move...in the Past...are all still in the Republican Army.[266] In Ballyvourney, '45 men of the old column' continued the fight: 'the same men all the time. 80% of the old Brigade Column was in our column.'[267] In the city, Con Neenan, the Murphy, Donovan, Grey and O'Brien brothers, and almost all the gunmen of the 'active squad' stayed republican despite Sean O'Hegarty's resignation. Four of the five surviving guerrillas profiled earlier in this chapter were republicans.

Midleton was the only place where the local column went Free State but this was a special case in that a large number of the original fighters had been killed (most at Clonmult). The south-western battalions had had no active columns and very few of the Free Staters had fought in the Tan War. Even my pro-Treaty informant agreed that 'the best of the fighting men were against us.'[268]

This gap between column and company men can also be seen in the differences between officers and men in west Cork revealed in Table 38, and particularly in the Bandon Battalion where almost all officers had spent time on the column,. While the battalion lost 33% of its men between January and June - and 69% of its full Truce strength - only 15% of its pre-Treaty officers had resigned (the same differences can be detected in the Mallow and Millstreet Battalions). If we put this number together with the other anecdotal estimates of how many column men in Ballyvourney and Newmarket resigned (along with the 4 of our sample of 5 guerrillas who were

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[266] 'Babe' to David Bernard, 8 Nov. 1922 (M.A., A/1142).

[267] Mick O'Sullivan (O'Malley Papers, P17b/108).

[268] Interview with J.S..

republicans), we can guess that, while 80% of the rank and file dropped out, 80% of the active guerrillas stayed the course in the autumn of 1922: perhaps 600 men in Cork as a whole.[269]

The war against the Free State was, in a sense, an assertion of identity for these 'plain fighting men': the 'people who are entitled to speak for the young men, the fighting men, the men who count and who are ready to make sacrifices.'[270] The same attitudes and bonds which sustained them through the Tan War kept them together and active in the Civil War. Their militant elitism and general contempt for 'politics' in any form had already set them apart as a separate caste within the nationalist movement. The veteran guerrillas identified totally with the armed revolution. Their republican convictions were inseparable from their experience of (and belief in) violence and self-sacrifice.

In the Dail Sean Moylan referred to himself as part of 'a third side...the fighting men of the South', ultimately responsible only to themselves.[271] Seamus Fitzgerald, the I.R.A. leader and T.D. from Cobh, gave a speech in a similar vein: 'the men in my area who count will never accept the Treaty...These men have asked me to bring forward this suggestion here, that we should not accept this.'[272] Sean MacSwiney (I.R.A. officer and brother of Terence) said 'I can answer for the Army of Munster, and I have been empowered to answer for them...If I cannot, I will probably be directed in the morning by officers in a position to direct me.'[273] As

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[269] 1st Southern Division figures show 518 men on 'active service' in October 1922 (see note 230 above); Stan Barry of Cork city estimated that there were 500 to 600 'good men' on the republican side (O'Malley Papers, P17b/95).

[270] Cathal Brugha, speaking of I.R.A. leaders in Kerry. Official Report: Debate on the Treaty Between Great Britain and Ireland, p.329.

[271] Debate on the Treaty, p.145.

[272] Debate on the Treaty, p.240.

[273] Debate on the Treaty, pp 48-9.

Moylan and MacSwiney made plain, the Cork guerrillas thought of themselves not only as republicans and fighting men but also as 'men of the South'. Dan Corkery of Macroom (the member for Mid-Cork) was even more explicit:[274]

> I believe the first lorry was attacked in Mid-Cork; the people have been with us all the time up to the Truce and they never flinched though they often heard the angry crack of the rifle and machine gun. The people down there do not want war, but they are not half as much afraid of war as the people from other counties who have not fired a shot yet.

In effect, the guerrillas formed their own political class, one adamantly distinct from fellow republicans as well as from their mutual opponents. Sean Moylan's speech quoted at the beginning of this chapter, insisting that he was no more a follower of De Valera than of Griffith, was typical of the I.R.A. response to the Treaty.[275] Rory O'Connor, the leader of the extremist Four Courts garrison, declared that 'We have nothing whatever to do with politics. We are plain men who stand by the Republic.'[276] Seamus Robinson of the South Tipperary Brigade demanded that the I.R.A. (except for Truce Volunteers) be given a veto: 'we are not a national army in the ordinary sense; we are not a machine pure and simple; we have political views as soldiers.'[277]

The guerrillas thought of themselves as sovereign. They had organised and armed themselves and paid their own way. They had brought the Republic into being and nobody else had a right to give it away. Moreover, they were not just defending

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[274] Debate on the Treaty, p.320. Just as republicans took their stand on their fighting record, so they attempted to discredit their opponents - specifically Michael Collins - on the same basis. See Debate, pp 291, 325.

[275] See, for example, the exchange between Seamus Robinson and Eamon De Valera in Official Report: Debate on the Treaty Between Great Britain and Ireland, pp 289-290.

[276] Examiner, 15 April 1922. See also Seamus Robinson in Debate on the Treaty, p.288.

[277] Debate on the Treaty, p.290.

the national Republic declared in 1916 and reaffirmed in 1919, they were also defending the myriad little parish 'republics' (the 'republic of Ballyvourney'; the 'republic of the Nia' etc.[278]) proclaimed during the Tan War wherever the I.R.A. writ ran unimpeded. From the moment of the Truce onwards, each unit was in effectively undisputed control of its territory and the reality of local power was as difficult to surrender as the ideal of a purified and untrammelled Ireland.

With the exception of a handful of pioneers such as the Haleses or Sean O'Hegarty, there was almost nothing in the pre-revolutionary lives of future guerrillas that distinguished them from their contemporaries. Once immersed in the revolution however (once 'deep in the movement' or 'deep in the know'), they emerged different men. We can trace some of the common threads in these revolutionary careers - the family or factional connections, the early encounters with police, prisons and guns - but 'the spirit of the times' remains, for those who experienced it, inexplicable to outsiders, to following generations or to sociologically-minded historians. 'You couldn't understand it now' is a standard answer given to the standard questions about I.R.A. motives: 'the comradeship of people who never knew each other before couldn't be understood now.'[279]

In that moment life became one with the emotion of Ireland. In that moment I am sure every one of us ceased to be single or individual and became part of one another, in union...It was a supreme experience...when in our generous youth we lived and were ready to die for one of the most wild, beautiful and inexhaustible faiths possible to man - faith in one's fellows.

The guerrilla war would have been unimaginable without this

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[278] Browne, p.45; E.M. Ussher, The True Story of a Revolution, p.143. For other examples, see Liam Haugh, 'History of the West Clare Brigade' and I/O 4th Cork Bde. to O/C Communications, 5 Feb. 1923 (Lankford Papers, U169c/17).

[279] Interview with John L.O'Sullivan (RTE Archives, A2790). I was told the same thing in several interviews. The quotation following is from O'Faolain, Vive Moi!, pp 172-3.

extraordinary alchemy of youthful fellowship and fervent patriotism.

As violence developed its own momentum it created new actors, identities and agendas and gave previously unknown and marginal people the power to make their own history. For those on the periphery of the movement, pulled in whether they wanted or not, the revolution wore a different mask: often intrusive or bullying. For those people whom the 'spirit of the movement' transformed into enemies and victims, the revolution appeared as a terrifying and uncontrollable force, leaving them vulnerable and powerless. The I.R.A. was defined as much by its victims as by its activists, and it is the victims of the revolution that we next turn to.

PART FOUR

Neighbours and Enemies

Taking it Out on the Protestants

We never killed a man or interfered with a man because of his religon...there was never a breath of sectarianism with any of the officers that I ever met anyway, but we had to face up to facts.

- Tom Barry[1]

Remember Belfast and West Cork...

- Anonymous letter, May 2, 1922[2]

At one o'clock in the morning of April 27th, 1922, James and Clarina Buttimer of Dunmanway were awakened by shouting and banging at their front door. When James, a retired draper, opened the door he was confronted by a group of agitated and armed men. 'What do you want, boys?' he asked. 'We want you, we want to talk to you.' 'Sure, you would not take an old man like him' responded Clarina, his wife. 'Go to bed, we don't want you!' And again, to James: 'Come out or we'll make you.' He refused. 'Surely, boys, you would not harm an old man like me?' The boys shot James Buttimer in the face as he stood in his doorway. He died at once, 'his brains and teeth blown out.'[3]

These anonymous men had already killed twice that night elsewhere on Main Street. Alice Gray, a neighbour of the Buttimers, was woken up at about the same time:[4]

There was knocking, thumping and shouting at the door. The door was burst in. Her husband [David, a chemist] went down

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[1] R.T.E. Interview (tape in the possession of Donal O'Donovan).

[2] 'Warner' to Mrs. Williamson, 2 May, 1922: an anonymous letter (Lankford Papers, U169).

[3] Accounts of the murder by Clarina Buttimer can be found in the Belfast News-Letter, 1 May 1922, the Eagle, 6 May 1922 and in her statement to the Irish Grants Committee (CO/762/142).

[4] Belfast News-Letter, 1 May 1922.

and said 'Who is there? What do you want?' She then heard a shot and her husband falling.

More shots were then fired, and she heard voices saying, 'Take that, you Free Stater', several times. She did not come down, as she stayed with the children. When she went down later, her husband was dead. The body was lying on the doorstep, partly out.

Further down the road, Frances Fitzmaurice, an elderly solicitor and land agent, was riddled with bullets on his doorstep as his wife Elizabeth watched.[5] His brother William barely escaped the same fate, as did William Jagoe, another draper, who had his windows shot out. 'We'll get Jagoe yet' said one of the attackers.[6] The home of James McCarthy, yet another Main Street merchant, was also fired upon.[7]

Tom Sullivan, a retired policeman, was one of the many other Dunmanway loyalists to fear for their lives:[8]

I was in bed at the time of the shooting. I heard voices outside and my wife begged me to get up and go out. I got up in my night attire and went out the back way, taking refuge in the local cemetery one hundred yards distant until broad daylight. I could hear the weeping and crying of the relatives of those who had been shot and heard the shooting which continued for a long time.

The killings continued the next night. First to be visited was the neighbourhood of Castletown-Kinneigh, which lay to the east of Dunmanway along the Bandon valley. At 10.30, two men appeared at Robert Howe's door in Ballaghanure and demanded he harness a horse for them. When he refused, they followed him into his room and shot him twice.[9] Next

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[5] Eagle, 6 May 1922, Belfast News-Letter, 1 May 1922; Elizabeth Fitzmaurice statement (CO/762/46). Fitzmaurice was shot twelve times.

[6] William Fitzmaurice and William Jagoe statements (CO/762/12,4).

[7] James McCarthy statement (CO/762/13).

[8] Thomas Sullivan statement (CO/762/175).

[9] The witness was Catherine Howe, Robert's wife. Irish Times, 2 May 1922 and her statement (CO/762/31).

came his neighbour and fellow farmer, John Chinnery, was ordered to harness a horse to a cart in the shed. While he was doing this, he was shot in the back.[10] Both men were killed.

Several hours later Alexander McKinley, a youth of sixteen, was shot dead in the nearby village of Ballineen. His aunt, Frances Peyton, was a witness:[11]

> On Thursday night she heard shots down the street, and shortly after there was a knock at the front door. It was about half past one o'clock. Her nephew had been unwell during the evening. There was a second knock, and she went upstairs to where her nephew was in bed, and told him that there was a knock at the door, and he said to open it. She said that she would not, and she asked him to dress himself. She came downstairs and went out by the back door, and said to him to come on quickly. There was a man outside, who asked her where she was going, and she was not sure whether she answered. He ordered her back and told her to open the front door. She returned and opened the door, and asked a man who was standing outside was he going to shoot her. He said, 'No, I don't shoot women.' She came in and went upstairs. Her nephew had not stirred, and she called him again. She then came down again and went out into the yard, and after some time went away to her sister's house.
>
> Francis Harman stated that he went to Mr. Peyton's residence at six a.m. on Friday. One half of the door was open. He called the deceased lad and got no answer, and he went upstairs with a lamp in his hand. He found him lying on his back in bed, and he was dead. There was no sign of a struggle.

McKinley had been shot three times in the back of the head. Elsewhere in the town William Daunt, a farmer and cattle dealer, had a pony stolen and his house shot up.[12] Further down the Bandon river, the Murragh rectory was also visited and the son of the Rector, Richard Harbord, was killed.

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[10] The witness in this case was Rebecca Chinnery, the victim's mother. See Times, 29 April 1922 and her statement (CO/762/31).

[11] Irish Times, 1 May 1922. McKinley's name was reported in some newspapers as Peyton.

[12] William Daunt statement (CO/762/100).

At two o'clock another farmhouse was attacked in Caher, a townland to the west of Ballineen. Frances Buttimer was the only surviving witness:[13]

I heard some noise and shots and next heard the smashing of windows. My son jumped out and said we're attacked. My husband [John] got out of bed and I got a weakness in the room. I got alright in a short time and came out on the landing. I met my husband and said 'For God's sake get out' and he said 'Sure I can't.' [Jim] Greenfield, was calling on me to stay with him. I went into his room and then came downstairs. I met a man at the bottom. I said 'Where are you going?' and he replied 'Where are the men?' I said 'I do not know. What do you want them for?' He said 'Only for very little.' I asked him to take my house and money and myself and spare the men. I put my two hands to his chest to keep him back and he called my husband in a most blasphemous manner to come down. He then went upstairs and another man threw me into the dining room. I then went into the kitchen. Another man put me out in the yard and I went to a neighbour's field. I came back in a very short time and I met a man, and I said 'You have killed them, but you cannot kill their souls.' When I came into the house I got a light and went through rooms. I found my husband dead in a sitting position in the boy's room, that is Greenfield's, and I found Greenfield dead in bed.

Jim Greenfield, a farm servant described as 'feeble-minded', had been shot once in the back of the head as he hid his face from his attackers. John Buttimer, the owner of the house and farm, was shot twice in the face and stomach. His son escaped and survived.

That same night, Robert Nagle was shot dead at his home on MacCurtain Hill in Clonakilty (about ten miles to the south) in the presence of his mother:[14]

She said that after eleven o'clock on Thursday night there was a knock at the door. She asked out of a window who was there, and a man replied, 'Open for a few minutes.' When she did not do so the hall door was burst in, and two men, one of whom was masked, entered. They said that they came to search for arms and ammunition. They proceeded to search the house, and asked where was the man of the house, meaning her

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[13] Weekly Examiner, 6 May 1922.

[14] Irish Times, 1 May 1922. See also Thomas Nagle's statement (CO/762/3).

husband. She said that he was away. A conversation took place in the room upstairs, where her son was in bed. Prior to this she had told the intruders that she had two children who were going to school. They asked Robert was he going to school and where he was employed. He said that he was going to a night school and was employed at the Post Office. They then told him that they had a warrant for his arrest and to get up and dress and come with them immediately. They put out the light that the witness had in her hand, and one of the men fired a revolver shot at her son as he lay in the bed and left.

Robert had been hit in the chest and killed. His father, Thomas, a greengrocer and summons officer, was searched for but could not be found. The gunmen appeared to Mrs. Nagle to be drunk.

Another potential victim in Clonakilty was Richard Helen, the owner of a cartage, dairy and grocery business. He was taken out of his hotel by two armed men who 'asked me to come with them to the end of the town.' Helen managed to get away from his captors and took refuge in the fields.[15] Outside the town, armed men raided William Perrot's farmhouse but he was already gone.[16]

The Reverend Ralph Harbord was shot the same night in Rosscarbery, but escaped with only a wound.[17]

The following night it was the turn of John Bradfield, a farmer in Killowen, north of Bandon. Two men broke into his house through a window calling for a horse and cart and for John's brother William. The latter had already left home in fear of just such a visit. John would probably have gone with him but he was ill and could not walk without the aid of sticks. He was taken out of bed, told to stand up, and shot in the back of the neck. The men then came into his sister Elizabeth's room. One raised his gun and pointed it at her as she lay in bed. 'Surely you wouldn't shoot me?' she asked. The man's comrade told him to 'put that down' and

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[15] Richard Helen statement (CO/762/33).

[16] William Perrot statement (CO/762/121).

[17] Rev. Ralph Harbord statement (CO/762/58).

they left.[18]

Henry Bradfield, a Killowen neighbour and cousin of John, William and Elizabeth, was sought for but he too had escaped. His would-be executioners had to satisfy themselves with vandalising his house and stealing his watch and clothes. One remarked to his family that 'they would soon have the ---- English out of the country.'[19]

Eleven men had been shot dead, and another wounded. All were Protestant. Several dozen Protestants had been killed as 'spies' or 'informers' in the previous two years, but never so many at once or so (apparently) randomly.[20] The spectre of mass murder had long haunted the Unionist political imagination; when it arrived, the reality struck with the force of a nightmare.[21] Hundreds went into hiding or fled their homes as a wave of panic, fanned by threats and rumours, raced through west Cork. Farms and shops were abandoned and in many households only women and children, or those too sick or old to travel, remained (among them Alexander McKinley and John Bradfield).

Some of these people stopped in Cork city but most continued on to Belfast and England. 'For two weeks there wasn't standing room on any of the boats or mail trains leaving Cork for England. All Loyalist refugees, who were either fleeing in terror or had been ordered out of the

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[18] Elizabeth's account can be found in the Eagle, 6 May 1922. See also Irish Times, 2 May 1922, although here, as in other places, their names were given incorrectly as Shorten.

[19] Henry Bradfield statement (CO/762/185).

[20] The following chapter deals with the subject of 'informers', Protestant and otherwise.

[21] Francis Hackett quoted an American whose hunting friends in Cork declared in 1913 that they would fight with Ulster: 'They say they don't want to be stabbed in their beds.' Ireland: A Study in Nationalism (New York, 1918), p.248. See also Edith Somerville to Col. John Somerville, 21 March, 28 May 1914 (Somerville and Ross Papers, Lot 877) and 'Sassenach', Arms and the Irishman, p.77.

country.'[22] One Cork correspondent who saw the trainloads of refugees go through the city reported that 'so hurried was their flight that some of them had neither a handbag nor an overcoat.'[23] Most of these people returned within a few months but many did so only to settle their affairs, sell their land and leave for good. The Protestant community in west Cork never fully recovered from the events of April 1922.

This unprecedented massacre received extensive coverage in the British press. British officials in Ireland and M.P.s in London expressed great shock and concern[24], unionist organisations in England and Northern Ireland exerted themselves to aid the refugees, and destroyers were dispatched to patrol the coast of west Cork and discreetly provide what assistance they could.[25]

The Provisional Government and the Dail condemned the killings and promised to 'bring the culprits to justice', but did nothing.[26] At the time, with only a small nascent army in Dublin and with the dissident I.R.A. in control of nearly the whole of Cork and Munster, there was little they could do. Irish observers, like the British, were bewildered and shocked by the killings, which seemed to come out of nowhere. Most assumed that they were a sectarian reprisal for recent attacks on Catholics in Belfast, which had been dominating

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[22] Letter from Alice Hodder, Crosshaven, n.d.[May 1922], quoted in Coogan, Michael Collins, p.359.

[23] Irish Times, 1 May 1922.

[24] As did the King, apparently. See the 4 May 1922 memorandum from Lord Stamfordham in Martin Gilbert, Winston S. Churchill Companion Volume IV, Part 3 (Boston, 1978), pp 1900-01.

[25] See Edith Somerville's Diary, 11, 19 Aug.; 12, 28 Sept. 1922 (Somerville and Ross Papers). Orange lodges and churches in Belfast and elsewhere took in some of these refugees: see Irish Times, 2 May 1922 and Church of Ireland Gazette, 16 June 1922.

[26] The quotation is from a joint statement of the Provisional Government and the cabinet of Dail Eireann. Belfast News-Letter, 29 April 1922.

southern newspapers for weeks.[27]

Nationalist outrage over these atrocities did undoubtedly give the massacre some of its emotional impetus. Cork republicans participated enthusiastically in the renewed Belfast boycott of 1922 (largely directed at Protestant businesses)[28], the city I.R.A. was running guns to the north and a west Cork flying column was in action along the border. Moreover, it was widely - and wrongly - believed (and not just by republicans) that the local Protestant community had remained silent on the matter and thus tacitly supported the pogroms.[29] The consequent logic of reprisal was laid out with remarkable clarity in the letter below, sent to a southern loyalist in May 1922:[30]

I am authorised to take over your house and all property contained therein, and you are hereby given notice to hand over to me within one hour from the receipt of this notice the above land and property. The following are reasons for this action:

(1) The campaign of murder in Belfast is financed by the British Government.

(2) As a reprisal for the murder of innocent men, women and children in Belfast.

(3) You, by supporting the union between England and Ireland, are in sympathy with their murder.

(4) In order to support and maintain the Belfast refugees.

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[27] See Belfast News-Letter, 1 May 1922 and Times, 29 April 1922 and Edith Somerville to Ethel Smyth, 2 May 1922: 'In Skibbereen they believe it is in honour of Belfast.' (Somerville and Ross Papers, Lot 878).

[28] One Cork businessman, for example, was told by a former customer that 'they could not deal with Byfords on account of the way Roman Catholics were treated in the North of Ireland' (Samuel Byford statement, CO/762/86).

[29] See Star, 25 March, 29 April 1922. In fact, there were frequent Protestant meetings and letters to the editor condemning the northern pogroms and testifying to southern tolerance in the months before the massacre.

[30] Proceedings of the House of Lords, vol.51, col.889 (May 31, 1922). An almost identical letter can be found in the Lloyd George Papers (F/20/1/21).

To understand the origins of the massacre, however, we must go back to the early hours of April 26th (the night before the first killings in Dunmanway), when another Protestant household was broken into in Ballygroman, about halfway between Bandon and Cork. The owner was Thomas Hornibrook and the intruders were I.R.A. officers from Bandon led by Michael O'Neill, the battalion commander. His brother Stephen later described what happened:[31]

We knocked at the door, a person came to the window, and a man's voice asked 'Who is there?' [Michael], who was in charge of our party said 'Please open the door as I want to see Mr. Hornibrook on business.' The window was shut and we waited to have the door opened for about a quarter of an hour, and as it was not opened Michael knocked again. One of the Hornibrooks opened the window, and we again asked him to open the door as we wanted to see him on business, and we further added that if he would not open the door we would force the door. We heard the party above call out 'Sam'. As the door was not opened, after waiting about another quarter of an hour, Michael lifted up the left hand window of the dwelling house, which seemed to be unfastened. Michael then got in through the window and I and Charles O'Donoghue got in after him.

We found ourselves in a dining room; there was no light but Michael had an electric torch. Michael went into the hall from the dining room and proceeded to go upstairs. We all followed. A shot then rang out. Michael turned and came downstairs making for the dining room again, where he fell on the floor, having exclaimed 'I am shot', immediately after the shot rang out. I and Charlie O'Donoghue took out Michael through the window; he was quite unconscious. Though Michael had a torch I did not see who fired the shot.

Michael O'Neill was dead, shot in the chest.

Revenge was swift and complete. Charlie O'Donoghue drove back to Bandon and returned with reinforcements; this force surrounded and laid siege to the house until eight o'clock the next morning. When Hornibrook, his son Samuel and son-in-law Captain Herbert Woods gave themselves up - on condition their lives would be spared - they were confronted

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[31] Star, 29 April 1922. A brief portrait of the O'Neill family - who came from Kilbrittain - can be found in Liam Deasy, 'Sidelights on Ireland's Fight for Freedom: a Personal Narrative' (Mulcahy papers, P7 D/45). Michael O'Neill had been both wounded and interned during the Tan war.

by O'Donoghue and two of O'Neill's brothers: 'I addressed the three together and asked "Which of you fired the shot last night?" Woods spoke up immediately and said "I fired it."'[32]

Woods was beaten unconscious, taken away by car, and shot that day. The Hornibrooks were executed the following day. All three were secretly buried. The house at Ballygroman was burned to the ground, the fences were broken, the plantation was cut down and the land was seized. No Irish newspaper reported these events. To the outside world, the Hornibrooks and Woods disappeared without a trace.[33]

Why were O'Neill and his comrades breaking into Hornibrook's house at 2.30 in the morning? The raiders were experienced fighters and the raid was a determined one, timed to catch the residents at home and off guard. By O'Donoghue's account, they did not even identify themselves as members of the I.R.A.. No public explanation was ever offered.

One story, that they had run out of petrol, seems disallowed by the fact that Charlie O'Donoghue was able to drive back to Bandon immediately afterwards.[34] Leon O Broin was told that they were there to seize Thomas Hornibrook's motor car (a common enough occurence at that time).[35] Tadg

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[32] Eagle, 6 May 1922.

[33] What seems to be the most reliable account of these executions was published in the Morning Post (the only English paper to follow the story), 1 June 1922. The statement by Matilda Woods (Thomas' daughter and Herbert's wife, who was not present) is also useful, but her description of her family's deaths must be read with caution: 'Herbert Woods it was ascertained afterwards was hung drawn and quartered in the presence of my father and brother. Then my father and brother had to make their own graves and were shot and buried.' (CO/762/133). Free State investigators made a cursory attempt to find out what happened but could do little more than confirm the deaths (M.A., A/0908-9 and DOD A/8274). The fate of Hornibrook's land is described in a Report on Land Seizures, 19 April 1923 (DOD A/8506).

[34] Interview with C.D..

[35] Leon O Broin, Protestant Nationalists in Revolutionary Ireland: the Stopford Connection (Dublin, 1985), p.177.

O'Sullivan, a brigade staff officer, claimed at O'Neill's inquest that the raiders were acting under official orders but these were never disclosed.[36]

The real reason for the break-in, according to several veterans of the Bandon and Dunmanway I.R.A., was that the Hornibrooks were believed to be part of a loyalist conspiracy opposed to the Republic.[37] This belief was nothing new. The men of the Bandon battalion were convinced that local Protestants had formed 'a sort of anti-independence movement' during the guerrilla war, and that this organisation had assassinated a number of Volunteers, most notably the Coffey brothers of Enniskeane.[38]

Such conspiracy theories were flourishing in southern Ireland at this time, fed by political uncertainty, paranoia and the continuing fear of renewed war with Britain. On the same day that O'Neill was shot, for example, another republican was killed in a raid in Wexford after receiving 'information that certain Orangemen possessed firearms'[39] and four British soldiers were kidnapped - and later shot as 'spies' - in Macroom.[40]

The Hornibrooks had long been the object of threats, raids and robbery. Their unrelenting unionism - Thomas refused to resign as a Justice of the Peace even after other

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[36] Eagle, 29 April 1922. Free State investigators were similarly baffled and could only state that the raid occured 'for some obscure reason'. Report by Sec., Exec. Council, 9 Mar. 1923 (DOD A/8274).

[37] Interviews with C.D. and E.Y..

[38] O Broin, p.177. For the murder of the Coffeys, see Examiner, 15 Feb. 1921.

[39] Irish Times, 29 April 1922. A similar incident took place in Blackrock in June - see Examiner, 19 June 1922. For further examples of alarmism, see (3rd) Meath Bde. I/O Report, Sept. 1921 and 4th Northern Div. I/O Report, July 1921 (Mulcahy Papers, P7a/6, 13).

[40] April 30th also saw the release of three British officers kidnapped a week before on their way from Cork to Bantry. See Irish Times, 1 May 1922.

J.P.s had been assassinated - made them 'enemies of the Republic', and their extensive farm and land holdings attracted covetous tenants and neighbours. The family had been raided for arms and money in 1918 and subsequently, their cattle were driven and stolen in 1920 and 1921 and they had been boycotted and sent threatening letters throughout the revolution.[41] In fact, it was these threats which brought Captain Woods to stay at Ballygroman.[42]

Like a great many other Protestants in Cork, the political situation and the hostility of the I.R.A. made the Hornibrooks 'fair game' for robbers, extortionists, vandals and the land-hungry.[43] In early 1922, however, even the limited protection offered by the police and army had gone. Households such as theirs were more or less at the mercy of any group of young men with guns and demands, whether or not they were Volunteers (which was often unclear). Most paid or gave something to avoid trouble. This time, someone decided to resist. Captain Woods ('a bit of a ne'er-do-well and a bit mad but he'd done splendid work in the war'[44]) fired on the anonymous intruders and killed Michael O'Neill, almost certainly unaware of his identity.[45] To the Volunteers, on the other hand, it must have confirmed their worst suspicions: they had indeed uncovered a nest of armed enemies.

It was undoubtedly O'Neill's death that sparked the following three nights of raids and murders. Beyond this,

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[41] C.I. Reports, East Cork, July 1919, June 1921 (CO/904/109, 115).

[42] Hodder letter in Coogan, p.359.

[43] The phrase 'fair game' was frequently used by Protestants to describe their situation. See, for example, W.B. Hosford's statement (CO/762/4) and the leader in the Church of Ireland Gazette, 23 June 1922. For its use in reverse, see Kathleen Keyes McDonnell as quoted below.

[44] Hodder letter in Coogan, p.359.

[45] See H. Kingsmill Moore, Reminiscences and Reflections (London, 1930), pp 312-3, who heard this version of events from 'one who was there that night.'

however, we know very little. No faction or member of the I.R.A. ever claimed responsibility. O'Neill's brothers were present when Woods and the Hornibrooks were 'arrested' and it seems not unlikely that they exacted a personal revenge. Kevin Myers has further identified two key officers of the Dunmanway and Bandon battalions as participants in some of the subsequent attacks.[46] All these men were committed republicans - veterans of the Tan war who went on to fight in the Civil War as well.

The Hornibrooks and Woods were presumably shot by the same members of the Bandon I.R.A. who captured them, possibly aided by men of the 1st Cork brigade, whose territory bordered this area.[47] The killings of Buttimer, Gray and Fitzmaurice were probably also carried out by a single group familiar with the town and following the same pattern in each case (all three men were shot at their front doors). William Jagoe claimed that the killers were 'well-known'.[48]

The next night (April 27-28) another cluster of killings is evident. John Buttimer, Greenfield, McKinley, Howe, Chinnery and Richard Harbord all lived in and around

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[46] Kevin Myers, 'An Irishman's Diary', 19 Dec. 1989, 9 Jan. 1990 and personal information. I have not included the names cited by Myers as his information caused considerable controversy and has been contradicted by local sources (interview with B.A., 6 April, 1990). This is not to say that he is wrong, but that his identification remains unproven.

[47] Frank Busteed, the Blarney I.R.A. leader who killed Din Din O'Riordan (see Chapter 1) and, notoriously, Mrs. Lindsey, was quoted by Ernie O'Malley as saying 'We shot four or five locals, then we could move anywhere' in the Civil War. He also said that 'We shot five to six loyalists, Protestant farmers, as reprisals' in the same period (O'Malley Papers, P17b/112). As these killings certainly did not take place after July 1922, the only events which fit this description are those of April (his memory has already been shown to be fallible in Chapter 1).

Nevertheless, these remain cryptic remarks. Does the 'we' in the second statement refer to <u>his</u> unit, which was part of the 1st Cork Brigade, or to the I.R.A. in general? Does the 'locals' in the first statement mean the Hornibrooks or other of the April victims? Ballygroman lay very close to Busteed's usual territory.

[48] Jagoe statement. He does not name names.

Ballineen and Enniskeane, along the same stretch of the Bandon valley. Howe and Chinnery, close neighbours who were both shot by two men using the pretext of wanting a horse, may possibly have been shot by a separate group. John Bradfield's killers also match this description. Frances Peyton likewise saw only two men but Frances Buttimer saw at least three.

The other two victims, Robert Nagle in Clonakilty and the Reverend Ralph of Rosscarbery, lived south of the Bandon river and were clearly attacked by a different party - or parties - altogether. No one group could have carried out all of the night's attacks in view of the distances involved and the state of the roads at that time. Both Mrs. Nagle and Richard Helen reported seeing only two men but we do not know if they were the same in each case.

It is possible that a single gang was responsible for most of these deaths, travelling down the Bandon river from Dunmanway on the night of the 27th to Killowen on the 29th (see Figure 6 below).[49] Even so, it seems unlikely that these were the same men who wiped out the Hornibrook household northwest of Bandon (although the victims could have been moved by car and killed elsewhere), and it would have been impossible for them to have also been in Clonakilty and Rosscarbery on the same night as the killings around Ballineen.

The most plausible explanation is that there were at least two, and possibly as many as five, separate groups involved, centred around Dunmanway and Bandon, but perhaps including members of the Ballineen, Clonakilty and Blarney Volunteers. The fact that the murders stretched over three nights and encompassed so many different districts argues against the massacre being an organised effort, and for it being a series of copy-cat killings carried out by a dozen or so gunmen, probably motivated by similar fears and desire for revenge.

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[49] Dunmanway, Ballineen, Enniskeane and Murragh were all stops on the Cork, Bandon and South Coast Railway.

Despite Mary MacSwiney's brave attempts to blame the murders on British agents provocateurs[50], the killers were clearly active members of the anti-Treaty I.R.A.. All the evidence points in this direction. Denis Lordan and other republican guerrillas have admitted it was 'our fellows'.[51] The original raiders at Ballygroman were such, as were the men who captured the Hornibrooks and Woods the next morning, as well as the men named by Myers. The shouts of 'Take that, you Free Stater' indicate the allegiance of the Dunmanway killers. Frank Busteed of Blarney, the hardest of die-hards, also seems to have claimed a share of responsibility.[52]

These men probably acted on their own initiative - but with the connivance or acquiescence of local officers and units. This is demonstrated by the non-intervention of the I.R.A. garrisons in Dunmanway and elsewhere, even though they must have known what was happening. In Dunmanway the gunmen 'moved about openly' and there was so much gunfire that townspeople assumed the barracks were under attack.[53] The same was true on a smaller scale in Ballineen. The killers were free to do what they liked and no attempt was made to investigate or punish the culprits after they had finished.

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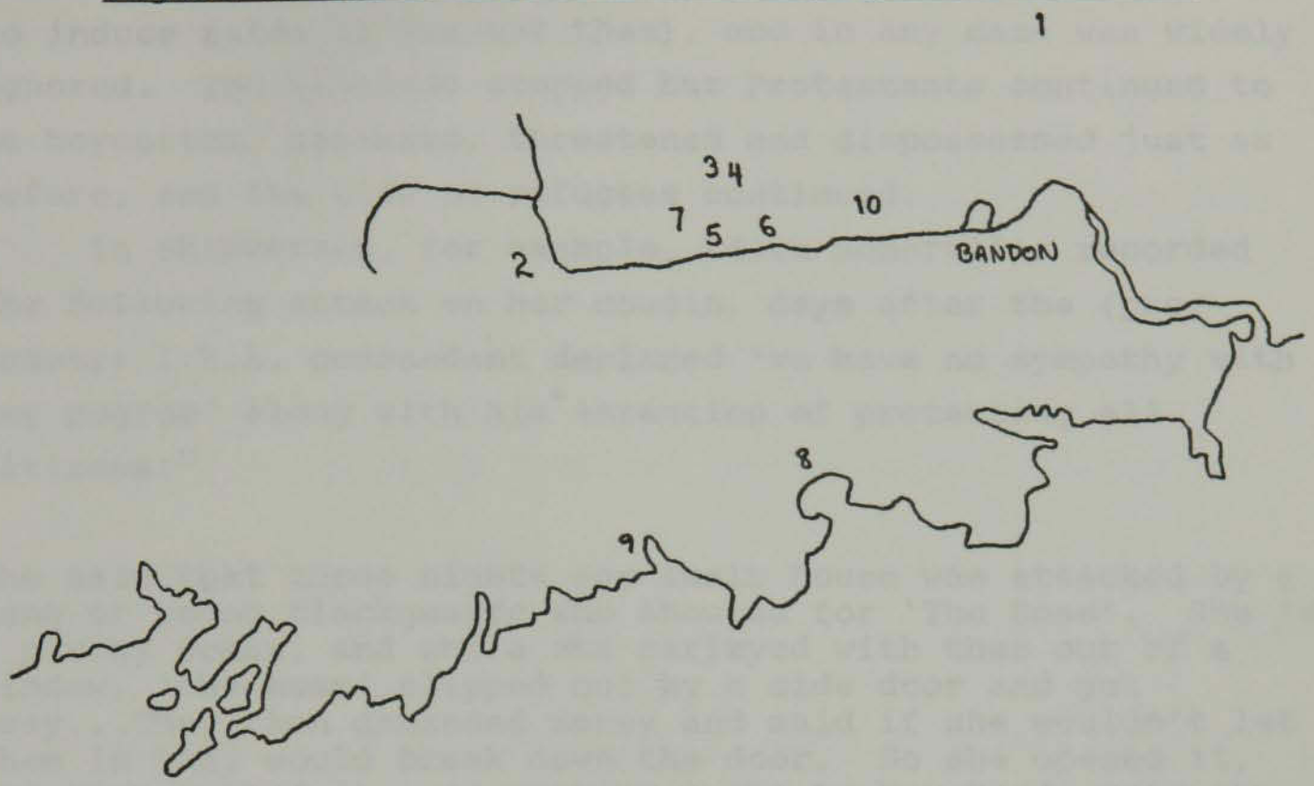
[50] Freeman's Journal, 3 May 1922: 'I know the type of men who compose the army of the south.'

[51] O Broin, p.177; interviews with C.D. and E.Y..

[52] See note 33. Busteed himself had a Protestant father, but was brought up a Catholic. Two of the veterans I interviewed thought that the killers were very likely Volunteers acting on their own.

[53] The quotation is from William Jagoe's statement. See also Irish Times and Times, 28 April 1922 and Thomas Sullivan's statement.

Figure 6: The West Cork Massacre, April 26-29 1922



1.)	Michael O'Neill, Ballygroman	April 26
	Herbert Woods	
	Thomas Hornibrook	
	Samuel Hornibrook	
2.)	Frances Fitzmaurice, Dunmanway	April 27 (morning)
	David Gray	
	James Buttimer	
3.)	Robert Howe, Castletown-Kinneigh	April 27 (evening)
4.)	John Chinnery, Castletown-Kinneigh	April 27
5.)	Alexander McKinley, Ballineen	April 28
6.)	Harbord, Murragh	April 27/28
7.)	John Buttimer, Caher	April 28
	Jim Greenfield	
8.)	Robert Nagle, Clonakilty	April 27/28
9.)	Rev. Ralph Harbord, Rosscarbery	April 28
10.)	John Bradfield, Killowen	April 29

Tom Hales, the commander of the West Cork Brigade, and other leaders condemned the attacks and promised their protection, but these statements were not issued until it was all over and had little practical significance.[54] Hales' call for all arms to be handed in to I.R.A. barracks was

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[54] For the declarations by Hales and Con Connolly, the Skibbereen commander, see Eagle, 6 May 1922.

aimed at loyalists as much as Volunteers (and was as likely to induce raids as prevent them), and in any case was widely ignored. The killings stopped but Protestants continued to be boycotted, harassed, threatened and dispossessed just as before, and the flow of refugees continued.

In Skibbereen, for example, Edith Somerville recorded the following attack on her cousin, days after the (pro-Treaty) I.R.A. commandant declared 'we have no sympathy with any pogrom' along with his intention of protecting all citizens:[55]

> She said that three nights ago their house was attacked by a gang of young blackguards who shouted for 'The Boss'. She is a plucky woman, and while she parleyed with them out of a window, 'the boss' slipped out by a side door and got away...They then demanded money and said if she wouldn't let them in they would break down the door. So she opened it, and they rushed in, and putting a gun to her head, said she must give them 'all the money she had in the house'...They were odious and insolent, but did no harm. The next morning she hunted her husband off to England and she will follow.

The Skibbereen garrison did send guards to watch the house after the owners had decamped - around Bandon, not even this much was done.[56]

To ask why the massacre took place is to move from the

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[55] Edith Somerville to Ethel Smyth, 6 May 1922 (Somerville and Ross Papers). She also reported the following story:

> I heard that a most decent, prosperous, popular farmer (a great hunting friend of mine) was threatened, and had to bolt, his only possible offence being that he is a Protestant. His wife and children stayed to mind the farm, and then they also were ordered to leave. No doubt some blackguard wanted the place for himself.

[56] It could be argued that the (slightly) differing reactions of the pro- and anti-treaty commandants in west Cork suggest still further that the killers were anti-treaty. It might also be suggested that the massacre did not spread to Skibbereen or further west because of Con Connolly's opposition. This, however, is pure conjecture: he certainly did not (or could not) prevent the harassment and expulsion of large numbers of Protestants around Skibbereen and Ballydehob.

relatively straightforward problem of identifying the killers to the more complex question of the identity of the victims as perceived by their attackers. Who did they think they were killing?

Herbert Woods was responsible for O'Neill's death and Thomas and Samuel Hornibrook - although innocent in this respect - were presumably done in as accomplices and co-conspirators, in the same spirit of merciless vengeance. Were the others also believed to be part of the conspiracy or were they just swept up randomly in the general desire for revenge?

If the victims were supposed to be plotters, then it was a most unlikely plot: unarmed (apart from Herbert Woods) and largely composed of old men and teenagers. Alexander McKinley was 16; Robert Nagle, 18; James Buttimer, 82; Francis Fitzmaurice, 70; John Buttimer, 59; Robert Howe, 60; John Bradfield, 69. Nor were the killers very scrupulous about who they shot. In several cases they did ask for people by name - Tom Nagle and William Bradfield - but in both these instances they simply shot someone else when their initial targets could not be found. In other cases they seemed intent on killing all the men in the house: 'Where are the men?' was the first question asked of Frances Buttimer.

There is no evidence whatsoever that any such conspiracy existed.[57] The Protestant community, in Bandon and elsewhere in Cork, had - with very few exceptions - been notably reticent during the Tan war and provided far more frustration than support to the Crown forces.[58] In fact, the murders of the Coffeys and others in 1921 appears to have been the work of an R.I.C. 'special squad' who worked undercover 'all

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[57] If the victims had been active in opposing the I.R.A. they or their relatives would almost certainly have mentioned it in their applications to the Irish Grants Committee, which was charged with compensating those who suffered for their loyalty to the Crown.

[58] For an analysis of this point see the following chapter.

dressed like old farmers'.[59]

The belief in the existence of a loyalist plot was real, but it seems to have acted more as a spur to rage and hysteria than as the blueprint for the massacre. This does not mean that the victims were chosen entirely at random. With the exception of James McCarthy, who was Catholic (and whose life was not threatened), all were heads or members of well-established Church of Ireland families: businessmen, substantial farmers, ministers or their sons. All were men - indeed, emphatically so. The Dunmanway raiders told Clarina Buttimer that 'We don't want you'; 'I don't shoot women' said another to Frances Peyton in Ballineen. In most cases (as with Hannah O'Brien of Broad Lane), women - wives, sisters, aunts and mothers - were the only ones to challenge the attackers and the ones left to hold the fort when the men had fled.

Age did not afford the same protection. The families of Robert Nagle and Alexander McKinley also seem to have believed that these boys' youthfulness would protect them when their father and uncle went into hiding. Their basic assumption may have been right; Nagle's killers did question him closely on his school and job, but apparently he was not young enough. At the other extreme, James Buttimer's protestation of old age was met with a bullet in the head.

Like the Hornibrooks, most of the murdered men had been marked out as enemies long before April 1922. In Dunmanway, the Fitzmaurice brothers and McCarthy had been friendly with the Auxiliaries and were suspected of passing them information.[60] William Jagoe had helped the police and had been told by an I.R.A. officer that 'Truce or no truce, seven persons in Dunmanway were to be shot.' He believed that the shootings were a delayed reprisal for the murder of Canon

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[59] Brewer, The Royal Irish Constabulary, p.115. For further details of this Bandon Constable's testimony, see Chapter 2, note 224.

[60] William Fitzmaurice statement.

Magner by an Auxiliary officer in December 1920.[61] James Buttimer was the only one of these men to have departed from unionist orthodoxy. He had been a dedicated supporter of the Land League and the Irish Party.[62] Like most other long-time Redmondites, however, he had opposed the rise of Sinn Fein. He, Gray and Fitzmaurice had reputedly been 'very foolish' in not giving money to the I.R.A. arms fund.[63]

In Clonakilty, Tom Nagle was on a list of suspected informers, and was the caretaker and secretary of the Masonic Lodge, a damning position in republican eyes.[64] He had, in fact, spent the day of his son's death hiding Masonic valuables before going on the run.[65] Richard Helen had been active in the voluntary recruitment effort during the Great War, had been on good terms with the police and helped them in February 1922 when the R.I.C. barracks was under threat of attack.[66] William Perrot had refused I.R.A. demands for money.[67]

Alex McKinley was another perceived 'friend' of the police. One local republican remembers him as being 'precocious', i.e. outspokenly loyalist.[68] John and Henry Bradfield were members of a blacklisted family: two other Bradfield cousins had been executed in west Cork the previous year. Captain Herbert Woods, himself a native of Bandon, belonged to a family as recalcitrant as the one he married

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[61] Jagoe statement.

[62] Freeman's Journal, 28 April 1922.

[63] Interview with C.D..

[64] This list can be found in M.A., A/0897.

[65] Nagle statement.

[66] Helen statement.

[67] Perrot statement.

[68] Interview with B.A..

into, which had received threats on its own account.[69] His being a retired officer was another strike against him. In fact, most of the victims had relatives in uniform, either army, navy or police, making them automatically suspect in republican eyes.

David Gray, alone among those attacked, was called a 'Free Stater'. It is difficult to say what was meant by this. Opponents of the Treaty applied the term to any and all non-republicans in 1922, from unionists to pro-Treaty Volunteers.[70] It had quickly become, like 'informer', a generic term of abuse; only a month after the Treaty was signed the Skibbereen Town Tenants League were referring to one of their (Protestant) opponents as 'an Orange Free Stater'.[71] No record exists of Gray's opinions or activities, but we can probably assume that, in this sense at least, the label fit him and all the other victims. There is no other evidence that the killers intended the massacre to be an attack on Treaty supporters; if it had been, many more prominent targets existed.

Another connecting thread was land. Many Protestant farmers believed that this was the root cause of the attacks.[72] Both Hornibrook and Howe were extensive farmers and landlords with I.R.A. families - possibly even their murderers - among their neighbours and tenants.[73] Helen also had large land holdings while Perrot was engaged in a dispute

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[69] Edward Woods statement (CO/904/133); Report of Sec., Exec. Council, 9 Mar. 1923 (DOD A/8274).

[70] The Plain People (9 April 1922), for example, defined Free Staters as 'the Unionists, the ex-R.I.C., the retired British Army Colonels and Majors, the seonini, the time-servers, the place-hunters, the whole British officialdom that was behind the war against you.'

[71] Star, 14 Jan. 1922.

[72] See Jack White (himself a Cork-born Congregationalist), Minority Report: the Protestant Community in the Irish Republic (Dublin, 1975), p.85.

[73] These land holdings are on record in the Irish Valuation Office.

with self-proclaimed evicted tenants.[74] Fitzmaurice's land agency was also the source of a great deal of friction (and not a few threats).[75] Most of this land was seized or sold under duress after the massacre.

Behind the killings lay a jumble of individual histories and possible motives. In the end, however, the fact of the victims' religion is inescapable. These men were shot because they were Protestant. No Catholic loyalists, landlords or 'spies' were shot or even shot at. The sectarian antagonism which drove this massacre was interwoven with political hysteria and local vendettas, but it was sectarian nonetheless: 'our fellas took it out on the Protestants'.[76]

The gunmen, it may be inferred, did not seek merely to punish Protestants but to drive them out altogether. This was the message delivered to Henry Bradfield ('they would soon have the ---- English out of the country') and to dozens of other Cork families in the days after the killings. These threatening letters and visitors all echoed the same refrain. Richard Godsil of Bandon was told 'you will be hunted out of the country, and all other Orange dogs with you'; the Ross brothers of Dunmanway were warned 'to run as other Protestant loyalists had run'; Samuel Baker of Timoleague heard that 'all Protestants would be shot and if I ever returned he or someone would do for me'; Arthur Andrews of Ballyhooly left after it was declared that 'we do not want an English dog here.'[77]

Within this rhetoric of ethnic intolerance can be detected the quasi-millenarian idea of a final reckoning of

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[74] A police report of a 3 May 1920 incident involving Perrot can be found in S.P.O., Crime Special Branch Records (Carton 5), Returns of Agrarian Outrages.

[75] Morning Post, 28 April 1922.

[76] Denis Lordan, quoted in O Broin, p.177.

[77] Statements by Richard Godsil (CO/762/34); William, John and Walter Ross (CO/762/180); Samuel Baker (CO/762/109) and Arthur Andrews (CO/904/104).

the ancient conflict between settlers and natives. To some republicans, revolution meant righting old wrongs, no matter how old, and establishing the Republic entailed the reversal of the old order. Many people, like Mrs. Stratford of Schull, were found 'unworthy of a place in the citizenship of the Irish Republic.'[78]

This vision of a world turned upside down was frequently implied and sometimes explicit. Joe Tanner, an assistant to Frances Fitzmaurice, was forced out of his house in Dunmanway by his next-door neighbour, who declared: 'as there is no law in the country now I will have to get back what belonged to my forefathers.'[79] One Protestant businessman in Youghal reported that 'one of my employees actually informed me that his day was coming and that his name would yet be placed over the door of the business in place of my name.'[80] In an ominous speech given several weeks before the massacre, Sean Moylan, the north Cork brigade commander and T.D., declared that 'they would give a call to the fine fat Unionists with fine fat cows. The domestic enemy was most dangerous, and they would have to start fighting him now.'[81] During the Treaty debate he had declared that 'if there is a war of extermination on us...by God, no loyalist in North Cork will see its finish.'[82]

Such sentiments were by no means confined to Cork. The following report from Ballinasloe was written a month after

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[78] O/C 5th Cork Bde. to Mrs. Stratford, 20 Sept. 1921, in Mrs. Stratford's statement (CO/762/97).

[79] Joseph Tanner statement (CO/762/183).

[80] John Brookes statement (CO/762/50).

[81] Weekly Examiner, 8 April 1922.

[82] Dail Eireann Official Report: Debate on the Treaty Between Great Britain and Ireland (Dublin, n.d.), p.146. In fairness, it should be noted that Moylan, despite his rhetoric, had nothing directly to do with the massacre and had the best record of any I.R.A. brigade commander in treating the Protestant minority.

the events of this chapter:[83]

If the campaign against Protestants which has been carried on there since the end of last month is continued in similar intensity for a few weeks more, there will not be a Protestant left in the place. Presbyterians and members of the Church of Ireland, poor and well-to-do, old and young, widows and children, all alike have suffered in intimidation, persecution and expulsion.

The campaign is carried out in the nighttime, by unnamed persons, who give no reason for their action. The system which usually is followed is, first, the despatch of an anonymous letter giving the recipient so many days, or hours, to clear out. If this notice is disregarded, bullets are fired at night through his windows, bombs are thrown at his house, or his house is burned down (as in the case of Mr. Woods). In one case, an old man who had not left when ordered to do so was visited by a gang, who smashed everything in his cottage - every cup and every saucer, and then compelled him to leave the town, with his crippled son, the two of them destitute...The list of those proscribed is added to constantly, and every Protestant is simply waiting for his turn to come.

The rise of religious antagonism had particular resonance in and around the Bandon valley, where the Protestant minority was comparatively large (16% of the Bandon rural district was non-Catholic[84]) and where memories and myths were particularly acute. Castletown, Enniskeane and Bandon itself were plantation settlements whose twentieth-century inhabitants - Catholic and Protestant - still shared a kind of frontier mentality. Pre-revolutionary relations were amicable but beneath this surface ran deep undercurrents of hostility.

Kathleen Keyes McDonnell, a republican activist, wrote of the 'notorious bigots' and 'traditional arrogance of the Bandon settlement' to whom 'a Bandon papist was fair game'.

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[83] Church of Ireland Gazette, 16 June 1922. For a similar and even more detailed account of the destruction of a Protestant farming community in Queen's County, see the Morning Post, 1 May 1922.

[84] By comparison, Clonakilty's non-Catholic population was 10%, Rosscarbery's 8% and Dunmanway's 16%. The Cork average was 8.5%. These figures were taken from the Cork section of the 1911 Census, Table XXXIII.

To McDonnell, a west Cork Protestant represented 'the foreigner.'[85] From the Protestant side, Tom, Nora and Lennox Robinson and Lionel Fleming (who grew up in Ballineen and Timoleague, respectively) have also testified to the unbridgeable gap between the two communities and to the generally anti-Catholic and militantly Low Church tone of west Cork congregations.[86]

The fact that Bandon had also been a war zone between 1919 and 1921 added incalculably to this burden of suspicion and tension. It is perhaps not surprising, therefore, that the reaction of the Catholic majority - and of most I.R.A. members - to the April massacre was (as far as can be ascertained) one of muted indifference. Coroner's juries occasionally expressed their sympathy with the relatives of the deceased, but they did not condemn the murders or mention the I.R.A..[87] No one came to help the victims or their families when they were attacked or afterwards, and almost no one attended the funerals (apart from some local priests). In Dunmanway, only one undertaker was willing to help, and he was boycotted and shot at.[88]

O'Neill's death, on the other hand, was greeted with highly vocal outrage. The jury at his inquest declared that he had been 'brutally murdered' by Woods 'in company with the two Hornibrooks, Thomas and Samuel' - in the circumstances, a

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[85] Kathleen Keyes McDonnell, There is a Bridge at Bandon (Cork, 1972), pp 65, 66, 27, 39. My copy of this book contains an author's dedication which refers to 'Orange Bandon - the Derry of the South'.

[86] Lennox Robinson, Tom Robinson and Nora Dorman, Three Homes (London, 1938) and Lionel Fleming, Head or Harp (London, 1965).

[87] See the inquest reports in the Irish Times, 1, 2 May 1922. Both the Bandon Rural District Council and the Cork Corporation played it safe by condemning all the killings - O'Neill's and the others - at once, without laying blame. See the Weekly Examiner, 6, 13 May 1922.

[88] John Nyhan statement (CO/762/192).

clear incitement to reprisal.[89] One of 'us' had been killed by one of 'them'. Businesses in Bandon were closed in his honour, dances and the like were cancelled and his funeral was largely attended. And, when it was all over, the same veil of silence was drawn over the continuing persecution and dispossession of the Protestants of west Cork.

This atmosphere of mutual hostility and polarisation provided the communal context for the massacre. One could not have taken place without the other. Protestants had become 'fair game' because they were seen as outsiders and enemies, not just by the I.R.A., but by a large segment of the Catholic population as well.

These were revenge killings on many levels. Michael O'Neill's death provided the spark, inflamed by anger over the Belfast pogroms, but the desire for vengeance went further back - years, in the case of the Coffeys, Canon Magner or other unrequited betrayals and murders, a generation or more in the case of evicted or disgruntled tenants or those who suffered from the 'notorious bigotry' of the Bandon settlement. Some or all of these grievances were undoubtedly brought into play on those late April nights.

The shooting at Ballygroman also crystallised republican fears of Orange and British (and possibly Free State) intrigue. The loyalist population of west Cork were seen not only as past enemies and current undesirables but also as a future fifth column in the struggle which many I.R.A. men saw coming. Perhaps they agreed with Sean Moylan that the 'domestic enemy' had to be dealt with first.

Without further information it is not possible to sort all these possible motives into a coherent geneaology of the massacre. And indeed, it may be doubted whether such a clear rationale ever existed. These were angry and frightened young men acting on impulse and, in some cases at least,

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[89] Eagle, 6 May 1922.

alcohol.[90] In their view Protestant Unionists were traitors. Their status was codified in the political language - or mythology - of the day in terms such as: landlord, land-grabber, loyalist, imperialist, Orangeman, Freemason, Free Stater, spy and informer.[91]

These blanket categories made the victims' individual identities - their ages and helplessness - irrelevent. All were enemies. All were guilty. If the suspected informer or conspirator could not be found, his son, brother or workman was killed. Where possible, all the men were killed. We cannot reach a final answer to the question of who the killers thought they were killing, but the answer surely lies in this deadly collection of labels and stereotypes.

In the course of an interview with an I.R.A. veteran in west Cork, I asked him about the events of April 1922, some of which had taken place in his neighbourhood. He astonished me by saying that one of the killings had occurred in that very house, and pointed to the spot where the man had been shot (the person I spoke to had bought the house a few years later, after it had fallen into disrepair).

He assured me that he had nothing to do with the murders

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[90] Robert Nagle's attackers were apparently drunk. One informant, C.D., felt that the indiscipline and wildness (including heavy drinking) of much of the post-truce I.R.A. were partly to blame for the massacre. The fact that the killings took place so late and were accompanied - in Ballineen, Clonakilty and Dunmaway - by gunfire in the streets is also suggestive.

[91] The following speech, reported in Ireland Over All, 7 April 1922 (a Cork journal which lasted one issue), is a good example of this code. The speaker is a republican complaining that the revised electoral register left out many I.R.A. names:

If the election for Cork City and County be fought on such a register, it means that from 15,000 to 20,000 of the best Irish of Cork won't be able to record a vote, whereas every Unionist, Freemason, Orangeman, spy and informer is on the Register and will go to the polls and kill the Republic for which Cork and its people have suffered so much.

He never directly mentions Protestants, but few of his listeners could have mistaken his meaning.

and had no idea of who was responsible. 'Twas a terrible thing' he agreed, 'but those were the times we were living in.' He insisted that the I.R.A. had not persecuted Protestants - 'we had nothing against them' - and that the massacre was the product of anarchy, not republicanism.

I was struck by the symbolic reversal involved in the former guerrilla living in the grand old ancien regime home (taken, at least indirectly, by force), and by his denial of what this suggested: that the nationalist revolution had also been a sectarian one. In fact, he showed uncommon candour. Most of my Cork interviewees refused to admit, or remember, that any killings had taken place.

The April massacre is as unknown as the Kilmichael ambush is celebrated, yet one is as important as the other to an understanding of the Cork I.R.A..[92] Nor can the murders be relegated to the fringes of the revolution or described as an isolated event. They were as much a part of the reality of revolutionary violence as the killings at Kilmichael.

The patterns of perception and victimisation revealed by these events are also of a piece with the whole revolution. These deaths can be seen as the culmination of a long process of social definition which produced both the heroes of Kilmichael and the victims of the April massacre. The identity of the former cannot be fully understood without the latter. How the Volunteers defined their enemies - in the shape of 'informers' - is the subject of the concluding chapter.

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[92] The massacre is the biggest non-event of the revolution. It has been excluded from nearly every narrative of the Civil War or its origins, republican or scholarly. See, for example, Michael Hopkinson, Green Against Green. I did not even know it had taken place until a year into my research.

Spies and Informers

And now my song is ended
I have one word to say
To hell with every traitor
Who gives the show away
May every son of Cromwell
Be banished from our shore
And may God preserve our rebel boys
To make Ireland free once more.
'Where the Dripsey River Flow'[1]

The Irish Civil War, as defined by historical and common usage, began in June 1922 and was fought between the I.R.A. and the Free State. The statistics of violence presented in chapter 2 invite us to question this singular definition.[2] Even excluding policemen and British soldiers, the Cork I.R.A. killed nearly twice as many Irishmen before July 1922 as after and burned three times as many homes. And, although no complete figures are available, the numbers of people whose property was seized or who were made refugees was almost certainly greater beforehand as well. These were the victims of a second, unacknowledged civil war: the war against spies and informers.

In the mythology of the Irish revolution, the heroic figure of 'the rebel' had as its archetypal enemy - and polar opposite - the informer (a symbol of evil since the days of penal laws and priest-hunters). Where the young men of the I.R.A. were 'sober, clean-living, self-respecting'[3], informers were typically assumed to be degraded, drunken, even misshapen. Such was their portrayal in fiction, reminiscence and history. Liam O'Flaherty's Gypo Nolan and

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[1] U.C.D., Dept. of Folklore, Schools Ms.345, p.203. The song commemorates the disastrous I.R.A. ambush at Dripsey in January 1921. The author is unknown.

[2] See Chapter 2, Tables 1, 7, 14 and 17.

[3] Erskine Childers, 'The Irish Revolution', p.8.

Frank O'Connor's Jumbo Geany[4] had their real-life counterpart in 'Monkey Mac' ('a well-known ne'er do-well'; 'small, low sized and a bit hunched.'[5]), a Cork city informer so notorious he became a sort of folk anti-hero.[6]

Nowhere is this opposition of images clearer than in accounts of 'the heroic fight at Clonmult'. The East Cork flying column was the embodiment of the Volunteer ideal: 'strong, healthy, clean-living boys, they revelled in the martial exercises and lectures.'[7] Their 'Judas-like' betrayer, on the other hand, a 'degenerate' and a 'tramp', 'held out a grimy hand for blood money.'[8] The conflict described was not merely one of differing loyalties, but of moral absolutes.

Previous chapters have examined how I.R.A. men viewed themselves and the social attitudes and realities that lay behind these perceptions. Yet this sense of identity was reflected as much in the character of their enemies, real and imagined, as in their comrades. This chapter investigates 'the informer' in the same light. What did it mean to call

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[4] See Liam O'Flaherty, The Informer (London, 1925) and Frank O'Connor, 'Jumbo's Wife' in Guests of the Nation (London, 1931). On the latter, see also Lankford, p.261.

[5] Con Neenan (O'Malley Papers, P17b/112).

[6] Every self-respecting city guerrilla had his own 'Monkey Mac' story: see, for example, Con Neenan's anonymous account in the O'Donoghue Papers (Ms.31,337); Eamon Enright (O'Malley Papers, P17b/103), Sean Culhane (P17b/108) and Sean Hendrick (P17b/111). The Monkey's reputation spread as far afield as Alfred O'Rahilly (O'Rahilly to Barry Egan, 13 Oct. 1921 [C.A.I., Egan Papers, U404]) and Olga Pyne Clarke, who remembered him as having almost supernatural powers (Clarke, p.46):

Who, or what, he was I never knew...but when he fired, left or right, he never missed his mark. None of the city businessmen would ever look at him, because legend had it that if you did he...would have plugged you.

[7] Padraig O Ciosain, 'The Heroic Fight at Clonmult' in Rebel Cork's Fighting Story, p.191.

[8] O Ciosain, p.190; Marjorie M. Aherne, Ms. Account of Clonmult (Co. Cork Museum, G106).

someone an informer? Who was suspected, who actually informed and who paid the price?

I interviewed a dozen I.R.A. men but I only ever met one 'informer', and that by chance. I was in a pub in a north Cork town when one of my companions pointed to a middle-aged man and announced, with considerable if surreptitious venom: 'here comes the informer now'. I was introduced to a pleasant man who agreed that there was 'a lot of history' in the town to be studied but who was far too young to have even been alive in the 1920s. Oh yes, I was told afterwards, it was his father who had been the informer. They did not know what he had done to warrant the charge, but 'the informer' was what he had been called behind his back ever after, and 'the informer' his son remained.[9] If rumour and reputation proved so virulent after seventy years, what must it have been like in the midst of guerrilla war?

To be branded a spy or informer in revolutionary Cork was to be threatened with the loss of one's home, livelihood and life. Accused informers were subject not only to the attentions of the I.R.A. but also to those of their neighbours. Condemned informers could be outcasts within their own communities, even within their own families: 'I am sorry to say or think I had a spy belong to me if I only knew he was one I would have shot him myself'; 'As his mother I would be one of the first to banish him out of the way.'[10]

Henry Glinn of Castlelyons was 'openly and frequently accused...of being a British government spy.' He was boycotted, lost his business and was forced to leave the county.[11] In Toormore (Skibbereen) Sam Baylie was 'hooted

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[9] In another town in west Cork I had a house pointed out to me as 'the informer's house', despite the fact that 'the informer' had left it to his children decades before.

[10] Mrs. Murphy to M/D, 11 April 1922 (M.A., A/0535); Mrs. O'Brien to Michael Collins, 19 June 1922 (A/0649).

[11] Henry Glinn statement (Irish Grants Committee, CO/762/145).

and hunted when met on the road and men gathered round my house night after night and hooted me, and when going to Church myself and my wife were repeatedly hooted.' He lost his dog, his barn, his windows and most of his crops.[12] Daniel Donoghue of Leap abandoned his home and went into hiding in 1921 after having a poster with the word 'Traitor' nailed to his gate.[13] James Noonan of Cork city was booed by neighbours going to and from work and received threatening letters.[14] Rita Curran, also of the city, 'was persistently insulted and taunted by my former friends and...had been stopped in the street by a man who held a revolver to my head and told me to leave the country at once.' She and her family left in 1922.[15] Jeremy Kingston of Clonakilty had signs 'put on my land to the effect that no spy or traitor would live here' and was boycotted and repeatedly robbed.[16] James Hogan of Killeagh had his store picketed by Volunteers who harassed his customers, cut the axles on his carts and forced his daughter (a reputed spy) to leave the country.[17] William Brady of Cobh lost his job and saw his family 'hooted and shouted' in the streets.[18] Sam Beamish of Drimoleague was kidnapped and boycotted, and 'called a spy and an Orangeman and told I should clear out dead or alive and go to the Orangemen or over to England.'[19] Michael Condon of Youghal was taunted and stoned by schoolboys and was also forced to go on the run from the I.R.A..[20] In the same town,

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[12] Samuel Baylie statement (/185).

[13] Daniel Donoghue statement (/30).

[14] James Noonan statement (/158).

[15] Rita Curran statement (/120).

[16] Jeremy Kingston statement (/133).

[17] James Hogan statement (/166).

[18] William Brady statement (/174).

[19] Samuel Beamish statement (/193).

[20] Michael Condon statement (/164).

Pat Lynass 'was boycotted by everybody concerned with the I.R.A., employers were afraid to give me work; I was spat at in the streets and treated worse than a dog.'[21] Once acquired, this reputation usually proved unshakeable. One 'informer' returned to his west Cork home after the Treaty 'but no one would ever speak to him, not even the children of the place.'[22]

For hundreds of 'spies' and 'informers', however, the matter was resolved much sooner - by flight, expulsion or, as in the case of Christy O'Sullivan of Blarney Street, by death:[23]

> Very few of his neighbours would speak to him. The children in the street were often heard shouting 'spy' after him as he passed on his way to work, and he was haunted by the conviction that he would be murdered.

He was found shot to death on May 27th, 1921.

O'Sullivan's death was one among many. Scores of bodies were dumped in fields or in ditches tagged with the messages like 'Spies and informers beware' or 'Convicted spy'. Scores of others simply disappeared; kidnapped, shot and secretly buried in some bog or graveyard.[24] At least 202 civilians were deliberately shot by the I.R.A. in Cork in the course of the revolution, the vast majority of whom were alleged to be spies or informers.[25]

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[21] Pat Lynass statement (/73).

[22] Flor Begley (O'Malley Papers, P17b/111).

[23] Irish Times, 6 June 1921.

[24] Most areas had their own clandestine burial grounds. One such site in Rylane parish was known as 'the death chamber' or 'the cottage'. '"He's for the cottage", we'd say among ourselves, and this meant that he was for execution.' Frank Busteed (O'Malley Papers, P17b/112).

[25] This does not include a 'spy' assassinated by Cork gunmen in New York city in 1922, a (reported) suicide in I.R.A. custody in Cobh, or a man who was stabbed to death in Cork city. For the sources of this figure, see Appendix 6. I have counted about 10 further unconfirmed shootings.

It was a matter of life and death to the guerrillas as well. Their survival and the success of their ambushes depended upon their opponents not knowing who or where they were, and therefore upon the support and silence of their communities. The men who died at Broad Lane, Clogheen and Clonmult, and many more besides, had all been given away by informers. In the midst of this pervasive fear of betrayal any suspicious act could have deadly consequences.

Where did these suspicions lead? Both suspects and victims can be quantified. In January 1922 the brigades of the 1st Southern Division (including the Cork brigades) were ordered to compile lists of 'all persons guilty of offenses against the Nation and the Army during hostilities and to date, and of all persons suspected of having assisted the enemy during the same period.'[26] Although many battalions did not respond[27], this extraordinary document provides the fullest picture of who the I.R.A. saw as their enemies and can be compared to the statistics of those they shot:[28]

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[26] I/O 4th Cork Bde. to O/C 5th Bn., 31 January 1922 (Lankford Papers, U169).

[27] Including those of Cork city, Bandon, Macroom, Ballyvourney, Kanturk and Newmarket.

[28] The list of suspects (157 from Cork, from the 1st Southern Division as a whole) can be found in M.A., A/0897. For the sources of my statistics on I.R.A. victims, see Appendix 4.

Table 40: Spies and Informers in Cork, 1919-23

	Suspects	Victims
	I. Occupations	
Sample	124	122
%-Farmer/son	14	17
Un/semiskilled[29]	13	24
Skilled	06	07
Clerk	08	06
Merchant	20	09
Professional	03	03
Unemployed (Male)	07	23
Other	27	09
	II. Ages	
Sample	114	49
%-Under 20	08	12
20-29	26	31
30-39	17	06
40-49	14	14
50-59	21	16
60-69	09	12
70+	05	08
	III. Other	
Sample	157	202
%-Women	23	03
Protestants[30]	17	36
Ex-servicemen	10	29
Tinkers/tramps[31]	0	08

As parts I and II of Table 40 show, suspicion and punishment were visited upon town and country and upon all ages and all walks of life. The guerrillas shot disproportionately more labourers and unemployed people and

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[29] Includes farm labourers.

[30] This figure represents the number of people whom I have confirmed were Protestant: the actual number may be somewhat higher.

[31] This category includes only those people described as 'tinkers' or 'tramps' in newspaper or police reports or in I.R.A. sources. Therefore, as with Protestants, this number is a minimum.

fewer merchants than appeared in their blacklist, but suspects and victims alike appear to have been fairly widely distributed within Cork society. Part III, however, while explaining some of these differences in the figures[32], points to other and more important divergences between them. Those shot were much less likely to be women or merchants but far more likely to be Protestants, to have seen military service or to be unemployed or itinerant.[33]

Independent confirmation of some of these statistics comes from another list of 'Enemy agents (special) and other suspects' compiled by the West Cork Brigade in July 1921.[34] Women made up 25% of the suspects and 4% of the victims in the brigade area. Protestants made up 25% of the suspects and 64% of the victims; ex-servicemen, 5% and 15%; merchants and their sons, 25% and 9%.

To understand what these numbers mean we turn first to the term 'informer' itself. Calling someone an informer was in fact a standard rhetorical weapon in all manner of disputes - factional[35], agrarian[36], labour[37], domestic[38] or

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[32] Most ex-servicemen were members of the unskilled working class, women account for most of those suspects listed in 'other' occupations and vagrants made up a large proportion of unemployed victims.

[33] A total of 66% of Cork victims were Protestants, ex-soldiers or itinerants. This total includes a number of victims who fell into more than one category, here counted only once: 36% were Protestants, 24% were Catholic ex-servicemen (including several tramps) and 6% were simply tinkers or tramps.

[34] Only one of these 20 names is repeated in the January 1922 list. I/O 3rd Cork Bde. Report, July 1921 (Mulcahy Papers, P7a/7).

[35] See C.I. Monthly Report, East Galway, May 1918 (CO/904/106).

[36] See Irish Times, 3 May 1920; 16 April, 26 May 1921.

[37] See Irish Times, 29 May 1920.

[38] See Examiner, 8 Dec. 1919, 31 May 1921; Irish Times, 14 April 1921.

political[39] - regardless of revolution. It was one among many nationalist terms of abuse and was used interchangeably with similar fighting words like 'grabber', 'shoneen', 'souper', 'tyrant' or 'emergency man'. In 1913 for example, the priest at Farelton (near Macroom) tried to stop night dances in his parish. In response, 'bands of young men and women...began parading at night the public roads, shouting 'informers' and 'soupers' outside any houses of persons supposed to be sympathizers of the Priests.'[40]

The Cork I.R.A. inherited this vocabulary with all its variety of meanings and used it in the same spirit, to cover a multitude of counter-revolutionary sins. When Robert Beamish of Brade took his neighbour to court over a disputed shot gun in 1918, he was denounced as an informer and had his horse stabbed.[41] In Macroom district in 1919 a man who let his threshing machine to the boycotted Bowen-Colthurst family was called 'an English spy in our midst', while another group of farmers who claimed exemption from a compensation judgement were labelled 'self-confessed spies and informers.'[42]

Any contact with the police - and later the army - could be grounds for the darkest suspicions. As early as December 1918 notices were being posted in Ballyvourney warning that 'Anyone talking to the police will be shot dead on the

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[39] See Irish Times, 1 July 1920.

[40] C.I. Monthly Report, West Cork, Jan. 1913 (CO/904/89). Similar examples of this rhetoric of abuse are easy to find. A speaker at a Town Tenants meeting in Skibbereen referred to 'landlords, grabbers, tyranny, Land War etc.' (Eagle, 20 July 1918). In a court case in Union Hall, Hannah Kingston referred to one of her opponents in a dispute over a licensed premises as a 'tyrant' and another as a 'grabber',a 'a Belfast Orange Protestant' and an 'informer'. Kingston to Registrar, 27 Dec. 1921 (Dail Eireann Courts Commission, DE 14/5).

[41] Eagle, 20 July 1918.

[42] Examiner, 29 Sept. 1919.

spot'[43] (in this case signed 'Mike O'Leary, V.C.', a triumph of local pride over ideological purity). Such warnings reappeared frequently thereafter.[44]

This proscription was rapidly extended to include police and army recruits[45] and anyone who served, supplied or worked for the R.I.C. or the army, to anyone who entertained them socially and even, by 1921, to those who wrote letters to friends or relatives in the police or armed forces.[46] As the mails had to run the gauntlet of I.R.A. censors, any political or personal comments could be risky.[47] Those who were caught making derogatory comments about the I.R.A. - a not infrequent occurrence - were severely punished. Sam Beamish wrote such a letter in April 1922 and had its contents 'thrown in my face' when it was intercepted. 'From that onwards I was called a Spy and an Orangeman.'[48] Mrs. Stratford of Schull received the following in June 1921:[49]

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[43] Examiner, 19 Dec. 1918.

[44] See Liam Lynch to O/C 2nd Bn., 2nd Cork Bde., 9 April 1921 (Lankford Papers).

[45] In February 1920, for example, a Mallow R.I.C. recruit and the sexton of his church were sent letters accusing them of being spies. C.I. Monthly Report, East Cork, Feb. 1920 (CO/904/116).

[46] See the statements of Dan Donoghue and John Long (CO/762/30, 187).

[47] With typical literary ingenuity, Edith Somerville and her family wrote in a code of their own devising or else wrote in French. See Edith Somerville to Col. John Somerville, 17 July 1922 (Somerville and Ross Papers, Lot 877). See also Lot 889.

[48] Samuel Beamish statement (CO/762/193).

[49] Included in the Edward Wingfield-Stratford statement (CO/762/97). Mrs. Williamson of Mallow was told that 'it is you and your equals can write about other people but remember Belfast and West Cork it wont be tolerated much longer': 'Warner' to Mrs. Williamson, 2 May 1922 (Lankford Papers, U169). For similar cases, see HQ 1st Southern Div. to O/C 5th Cork Bde., 13 Sept. 1922 and Adj. 5th Cork Bde. to I/O 1st Southern Div., 15 Nov. 1922 (M.A., A/0991/4).

As a result of a statement made by you in a letter written to a friend of yours in England, and captured by us in the mails, some time ago, we deem it necessary for us to order you to leave the country. We find you unworthy of a place in the citizenship of the Irish Republic.

Mrs. Stratford and her husband duly left two days later.

Another large category of 'spies' and 'informers' were those people who refused I.R.A. demands for money or who refused to sign anti-conscription or pro-republican petitions.[50]

Out of the 157 suspects named in January 1922, 56 (or 36%) were directly charged with giving information to the authorities. Of the remainder, 45 (29%) had simply been 'friendly' with the enemy in one way or another, including many girls who were keeping company with policemen or soldiers.[51] The rest were guilty of a wide variety of supposed crimes. Some had refused to give up their guns or subscribe to the Dail Loan or the I.R.A. arms fund, some were related to, or seen in the company of other suspects and some had relatives in the R.I.C.. Others had been given curfew passes by the army, had insulted the I.R.A. or had worked for the police or army. Two had done 'immense damage' to the I.R.A.'s standing in their communities because of their public opposition. One had cheered British troops; another had shouted 'Up the King'. A few had been named by other 'informers' in their confessions. Some suspects were simply described as 'hostile' or 'suspect'.

The real 'offence against the Nation and the Army' in

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[50] See the statements of Walter Hailes (CO/762/7), Dan Donoghue (/30), John Coleman (/77), Jeremy Kingston (/133), Michael Condon (/164) and Samuel Baylie (/185), and the Eagle, 8, 29 Jan. 1921.

[51] Here one notes both moral outrage - such women were 'fast', 'more or less a prostitute' or a 'bad influence on other girls' - and jealousy: a Miss Sullivan of Castletownbere, who declared that the men of the I.R.A. could not compare with those of the Auxiliaries was described as 'Good looking. Dreamy eyes.' (M.A., A/0897). See also O/C 1st Bn. to Adj. 4th Cork Bde., 9 Dec. 1921 on the case of a 'peeler-hunter' (A/0668).

most of these cases, it may be suggested, was noncooperation and nonconformity.[52] Many suspects were guilty only by association. These were people, as one anonymous letter writer to the Cork Examiner put it, 'whose only crime is that they do not see eye to eye with Sinn Fein on everything': 'those who were not for us at the time were against us.'[53]

I.R.A. shootings followed the same pattern. Almost all victims were officially described as spies or informers but in practice this could mean anything.[54] Being friendly or being seen with a policeman got a great many people killed; more than one 'spy' was found dead with a note attached saying 'This is the penalty for all those who associate with the Auxies, Black and Tans, and the R.I.C.'[55] William Vanston of Douglas[56] and William Nolan of the city had applied to join the R.I.C. while Mick Sullivan of High Street[57] and Thomas Walsh of Glashabee had enlisted in the army. John Hawkes of Crowley's Lane[58], Dan McCarthy of Midleton and Robert Eady[59] had been seen entering police or military barracks. John O'Leary of Beacock Lane[60], John Good

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[52] 'It was as much as a man's life was worth to utter a discordant note, let alone give information to the enemy.' Seamus O'Connor, Tomorrow Was Another Day (Dun Laoire, 1970, 1987), p.38.

[53] Examiner, 14 Feb. 1919; V/C 2nd Bn., 3rd Cork Bde. Report [Jan. 1922] (M.A., A/0659).

[54] The Cork Republican Police (in effect an extension of the I.R.A.) were told in 1922 that 'those shot during the war [are] not to be inquired into as they are all Spies.' O/C 1st Cork Bde. I.R.P. memo, n.d. (M.A., A/0649).

[55] Examiner, 18 Mar. 1921.

[56] Military Inquiry (WO/35/160).

[57] Examiner, 23 Feb. 1921.

[58] Examiner and Irish Times, 14 Oct. 1920. Hawkes described his experiences in a fascinating statement (CO/904/168).

[59] Eagle, 16 April 1921.

[60] Examiner, 14 Feb. 1921.

of Barrackton[61], Edward Hawkins of Broad Street and Christy O'Sullivan of Blarney Street were all employed in Victoria Barracks. Leo McMahon of St. Luke's worked in the War Pensions Office.[62] In Youghal, Tom Collins and Pat Lynass were members of the Comrades of the Great War band and played at military dances.[63] Several victims had worked for accused spies and two others were killed because they had spent so long in I.R.A. captivity they 'knew too much'.[64] Cork units also borrowed the two favourite excuses of police and military killers: Leo Corby of Castletownroche was killed because he 'failed to halt' and Michael O'Keefe of Carrigtwohill was shot while trying to escape.[65]

Open loyalty to Britain or opposition to the I.R.A. could bring with it the death penalty. Major J.B. O'Connor and Alfred Reilly, both resident in city suburbs, appear to have been shot because they refused to resign as Justices of the Peace.[66] Three members of the Cork Examiner staff were gunned down after their paper had refused various I.R.A. demands.[67] Joseph Bolster of Banteer died for his refusal to subscribe to the railway strikers' fund.[68] Sam Shannon of Lissaclarig was executed for helping his father resist an arms raid.[69] Other political opponents who suffered the

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[61] Examiner, 11 Mar. 1921.

[62] Examiner, 20 May 1921.

[63] Military Inquiry (WO/35/147A); Pat Lynass statement.

[64] See Mick Leahy (O'Malley Papers, P17b/108); J.J. O'Riordan, Kiskeam Versus the Empire, p.102.

[65] Military Inquiry (WO/35/148); Mick Leahy (O'Malley

'extreme penalty' included Tom Downing, the head of an ex-serviceman's organisation in the city[70], and Francis Sullivan of Rosscarbery, the president of a stubbornly anti-republican branch of the Irish Land and Labour Association.[71] David Fitzgibbon of Liscarroll 'was the only member of his family who refused to have anything to do with the I.R.A. and for that reason alone he was considered "in the way". He was never a spy but just a man who minded his own business.'[72]

The pursuit of informers led to vendettas against whole families like the Goods, Bradfields, Cotters, Sweetnams, Hornibrooks, Beales, Bleminses and Woods. One killing led to another and one suspected informer could condemn the rest of the family. Wives and children were usually ordered out of the country after a husband or father was shot.

Many I.R.A. and other witnesses have reported cases of people being falsely accused of informing out of 'local spite', because of some feud or grievance.[73] As almost all victimised landowners had their property confiscated, agrarian disputes may well have provided another contributing motive. Among those shot were two reputed 'grabbers', three land agents, two bailiffs, and two solicitors and a law clerk involved in land claims. A large number of killings seem to have had an agrarian subtext.[74]

Cork I.R.A. officers insisted that those executed were proven, convicted traitors. 'We were careful that before a

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[70] Examiner, 27 Nov. 1920.

[71] See the Star, 26 April 1918.

[72] Testimony of Lt. F.C. Sherwood, Kerry Bde. Intell. Officer (Military Court of Inquiry, WO/35/150): 'it is a favourite thing for the I.R.A. at present to murder innocent people, so as to advertise their "Intelligence" regarding spies.'

[73] See Ryan, Tom Barry Story, p.53; George Power (O'Malley Papers, P17b/100); Frank Busteed (P17b/112); Jim Bromagh (P17b/123).

[74] See Jack White, Minority Report, p.85.

spy was shot it had to be a definite case of spying.'[75] Some were indeed 'guilty' (if only by I.R.A. standards). Tom Connell and Matthew Sweetnam did identify I.R.A. arms fund collectors in court, Mary Lindsay did help give away the Dripsey ambush and the two Bradfield cousins (both named Tom) were 'guilty of attempting' or 'intending'[76] to help the army (although they were tricked into doing it), but such 'definite cases' were exceptional.[77] In reality, on the run and afraid for their lives, the guerillas usually acted on their own suspicions and 'in a panic' (just as in the west Cork massacre of April 1922).[78] In the early months of Martial Law, for example, a series of British intelligence successes prompted a wave of I.R.A. reprisals against suspected spies. However, according to the Irish Command, 'in every case but one the person murdered had given no information.'[79] British authorities agreed that the guerrillas' war on informers was effective, but because of its 'sheer brutality', not its accuracy: 'There were very many cases where persons were shot simply because they might

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[75] Sean Culhane (O'Malley Papers, P17b/108). See also Deasy, Towards Ireland Free, p.200 and Barry, Guerilla Days, pp 106-7. The I.R.A.'s General Order No.20 (20 April, 1921) stated that 'a convicted spy shall not be executed until his conviction and sentence have been ratified by the Brigade Commandant concerned' and that inconclusive evidence 'shall, before the arrest of the suspected person, be placed before a Court of Inquiry'. I.R.A. General Orders [New Series] (Boston Public Library).

[76] These were the words used by the I.R.A., as quoted in the Belfast News-Letter, 26 Jan., 3 Feb. 1921.

[77] For Sweetnam and Connell, see the Eagle, 8 Jan., 26 Feb., 9 April 1921; Examiner, 3 Jan. 1921. For Mrs. Lindsay, see below.

[78] Con Leddy (O'Malley papers, P17b/123). See also Mick Leahy (/108), Jack Clifford and Sean Carroll (/130).

[79] 'In that one case the murdered man was an agent known to be untrustworthy.' Record of Rebellion, ii (Intelligence), p.12.

have given information.'[80] Not for nothing did the Cork brigades acquire a reputation within the I.R.A. for shooting first and asking questions later.[81]

The summaries of evidence given for some of the suspects on the January 1922 list are telling: 'From personal observation, I consider this person guilty in the first degree'; 'Any Volunteer called on could verify this'; 'I am perfectly confident of this woman's guilt, although I have no direct evidence against her other than suspicion'; 'Although it has been hard to trace any information given by him, I have no hesitation in stating...'. The equation of suspicion with guilt is evident even from the composition of the lists. The West Cork document referred to 'Enemy agents and other suspects' while the 1st Southern Division list combined 'all persons guilty of offenses [and] all persons suspected'.

Two examples serve to illustrate how easily suspicion became 'guilt'. In the case of James Fehilly, an ex-soldier threatened, expelled and nearly shot, the I.R.A. officer responsible explained that:[82]

> My policy was that those who were not for us at the time were against us, and as I had been informed Fehilly was in touch with the enemy, I naturally presumed he was hostile, and even suspected him of giving information to the enemy.

'I had been informed...I naturally presumed...and even suspected': the absence of any real evidence is clear. The Adjutant of the West Cork Brigade added that Fehilly and his wife 'both seem to be of the type that proved a constant

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[80] Record of Rebellion, ii, p.25; i, pp 33, 38. See also 6th Division History, p.97. Among those whom the British authorities declared to be innocent were David Fitzgibbon, Stephen O'Callaghan (C.I. Monthly Report, East Cork, April 1921 [CO/904/115]) and Pat Sheehan and John Sullivan (C.I. Monthly Report, East Cork, June 1921).

[81] I/O 1st Southern Div. to C/S, 1 June 1921 (Mulcahy Papers, P7/A/20).

[82] V/C 2nd Bn., 3rd Cork Bde. Report (M.A., A/0659).

menace to the National movement.' Kate Fehilly responded that 'there is no such thing as a direct charge and trial to give him an opportunity to defend himself.'[83]

A similar line of reasoning was followed in the case of Henry Forde of Bandon, also threatened and expelled:[84]

> It is believed that he was a member of the Anti-Sinn Fein gang which was undoubtedly an off-shoot of the Orange Society of which he is a member...I think he is one of those better out of the Country for the Country's good.

In other words, as a member of the Orange Order, Forde was automatically guilty of conspiring against the Republic. In fact the only evidence the brigade intelligence officer could come up with was that Forde was 'very loyal'. Both Forde and Fehilly were condemned by virtue of being the wrong 'type'.

This idea that their enemies belonged to certain recognisable types was common throughout the I.R.A. (just as it was within the Crown forces). Tom Barry said that 'we knew that men were being sold, and we knew that there were several types of spies and informers'[85]: informers 'were generally big landlords, gombeen men and all these types...quite a number of what was called the Ascendency were informers.' A large number of these were Protestants although, he hastened to add, 'there were, of course, an equal number of Catholics.' Spies, on the other hand, 'were generally paid scoundrels'; 'invariably the most vicious and degraded of the population'[86] (by this he seems to have been referring primarily to ex-soldiers[87]). British ex-officers

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[83] Kate Fehilly to Michael Collins, 20 Jan. 1922 (A/0649).

[84] 3rd Cork Bde. Report, 4 Mar. 1922 (M.A., A/0960).

[85] O'Mahony interview (tape in possession of George O'Mahony).

[86] R.T.E. Interview, 1980 (tape in possession of Donal O'Donovan).

[87] See Barry, Guerrilla Days, pp 107-8.

constituted yet another dangerous 'type'.

The case of Henry Forde further illustrates the unfailing I.R.A. belief in conspiracy theories. Opposition implied intrigue. Wherever the guerrillas looked they saw loyalist subversion and secret societies: in the Bandon valley, Fermoy, Skibbereen, Schull, Youghal and Cork city, in Masonic and Orange lodges, the Post Office, the Y.M.C.A.[88], County Clubs and even some Church of Ireland congregations[89]. By extension, all members of these organisations (like Forde) became suspect. The Freemasons, those perennial objects of Catholic and nationalist paranoia, were especially feared.[90] Identifying and suppressing them became a near-obsession for some I.R.A. leaders.[91]

Nearly every executed 'spy' was believed, either before or after the fact, to be connected to one or another of these purported 'Anti-Sinn Fein Societies'.[92] Although it is impossible to be certain that there was no truth in these allegations, no evidence exists beyond the assertions of Volunteers themselves. Each successive informer's confession revealed more alleged plotters but these were so often forced

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[88] See Martin Corry, Mick Murphy and Con Neenan (O'Malley Papers, P17b/112). See also Louth No.2 Bn. Intell. Report, July 1921 (Mulcahy Papers, P7a/13).

[89] See Flor Begley (O"Malley Papers, P17b/111); Barry, Guerilla Days, p.111; Somerville-Large, Cappaghglass, p.343.

[90] For the Masonic peril, see Florence O'Donoghue (O'Malley Papers, P17b/96); O/C 1st Southern Div. to C/S, 4 May 1921 (Mulcahy Papers, P7/A/20); 1st Southern Div. Intell. Report, 15 Nov. 1921 (O'Donoghue Papers, Ms.31,207); D/I 2nd Cork Bde. to O/C 2nd Bn., 11 April 1921 (Lankford Papers, U169/26). One of many lists of Masons complied by the I.R.A. can be found in the O'Donoghue Papers, Ms.31,200.

[91] Interview with D.D..

[92] See Stan Barry (O'Malley Papers, P17b/95); George Power (/100); Eamon Enright (/103); P. O'Reilly (/107); Mick Murphy, Con Neenan, Jamie Minihan (/112); Jim Bromagh (/124).

or tricked as to make them worthless as proof.[93]

'Anti-Sinn Fein Societies' did exist, but as a cover for Black and Tan reprisal squads, not a counter-revolutionary underground.[94] In fact, the assumption that loyalists were the most likely collaborators and informers, while plausible, was quite wrong. The R.I.C. and the British army found the Unionist population to be utterly unforthcoming. When the Irish Command surveyed Martial Law area commanders in the spring of 1921, opinions in this regard were unanimous. 'Personally I have no very high opinion of the politic value of the loyalist'; 'Few in these counties are reliable'; 'I can see no sign of any effort to actively help the government'; 'I would say that their action is very passive...Whether they know things or not, I cannot say, but I do not think any try to be of any assistance in the way of intelligence.'[95] Those who did proclaim or act on their

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[93] See Adj., 2nd Cork Bde. to O/C 4th Bn., 1st Cork Bde., 21 May 1921 (Strickland Papers); Record of Rebellion, ii, p.25; O'Callaghan, Execution, pp 59-60.

[94] The Bandon valley 'Anti-Sinn Fein Society' (described in Deasy, Towards Ireland Free, p.200 and O Broin, Protestant Nationalists, p.177) can be traced to a Black and Tan death squad (see Brewer, p.115 and the Eagle, 16 April 1921). The Cork city 'Society', believed by the I.R.A. to be headed by a cabal of Protestant and Masonic businessmen, can be traced in part to two extraordinary newspaper interviews given by General Strickland (Irish Times, 23 Jan. 1921; Evening Standard, 25 Jan. 1921) in which he described the improvement in intelligence under Martial Law and openly discussed his attempts to recruit 'leading people' for a 'Citizens Committee' to assist in intelligence work. The usual response by Protestant businessmen to his approaches is described in Olga Pyne Clarke, pp 51-2. See also the Strickland Diary, 5 Feb., 1 Sept. 1920 (Strickland Papers). The R.I.C. Divisional Commissioner for Cork told Mark Sturgis that the 'Anti-Sinn Fein League' did exist and was not simply a police cover but it would appear he was simply defending his men in the wake of the burning of Cork. Sturgis Diary, 14 Dec. 1920 (PRO 30/59).

[95] Extracts from reports quoted in Gen. Macready to Miss Stevenson, 20 June 1921 (Lloyd George Papers, F/36/2/19). Another Cork battalion commander wrote of the local loyalists that 'practically none take any action and nearly all hide their sentiments.' 'Appreciation of the situation in Ireland', May 1921 (Cockerill Papers, Ms.10,606). Major

loyalty did so knowing they were on their own. James McDougall, a Scottish businessman who had to flee Cork, stated bitterly that he 'wasn't like the spineless so-called "loyalists" I knew there.'[96] Tom Bradfield, another fervent patriot (and supposed member of the Bandon valley Anti-Sinn Fein Society) who paid the extreme penalty, declared that he was 'not like the rest of them round here.'[97] Even among Irish Grants Committee claimants, who had to demonstrate their loyalty to the Crown to receive compensation, only 15 out of approximately 700 Cork applicants (or 2%) said that they had provided information to the authorities, none mentioned any sort of clandestine organisation and only one had been an agent for British intelligence.[98]

The same was apparently true everywhere outside Ulster. A 5th Division situation report from December 1921 spoke only of 'loyalists in name' and concluded that 'active loyalists' were 'an inconsiderable class.'[99] One constable stationed in the west remembered that 'we wouldn't be a bit better in with Protestants than Republicans. We'd be less better in with them...because they were afraid to be accused of giving us news...they kept away from us altogether.'[100] The Irish Command's official history states flatly that although 'a

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Percival felt that the 'old landlords' of west Cork 'had English sympathy but avoided active participation' while, of 'the Protestant element' [chiefly farmers and shopkeepers], 'a few, but not many, were brave enough to assist the Crown Forces with information.' 'Guerrilla Warfare - Ireland 1920-21', Lecture No.1 (Percival Papers). See also Sir Ormonde Winter, Winter's Tale (London, 1955), pp 299-300.

[96] James McDougall statement (CO/762/112).

[97] O Broin, Protestant Nationalists, p.177. There are numerous and varied accounts of Tom Bradfield's discovery and confession: see Eagle, 29 Jan. 1921; Flor Begley (O'Malley Papers, P17b/111); Deasy, Towards Ireland Free, p.200; Barry, Guerilla Days in Ireland, pp 109-110 and (for a different version) Ryan, Tom Barry Story, p.53.

[98] See Bride McKay statement (CO/762/181).

[99] 5th Division History, Appendix XIV (Jeudwine Papers).

[100] Brewer, p.82.

considerable number of Unionists were murdered on wholly groundless suspicion...at no time did this class make an united movement towards supporting the forces of law and order.'[101]

The truth was that, as British intelligence officers recognised, 'in the south the Protestants and those who supported the Government rarely gave much information because, except by chance, they had not got it to give.'[102] Unionists, ex-servicemen and vagrants did not have access to the right social and political circles to know anything very damaging to the I.R.A..

The typical informer was not someone with a cause but rather someone with a grudge, a grievance or with people or property to protect.[103] Others saw an opportunity for gain or to settle old scores. 'Monkey Mac', for example, supposedly 'had a flair for going out of his way to hurt innocent men whom he disliked or with whom he had some personal rows.'[104] People were often denounced by informers

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[101] Record of Rebellion, ii, p.31.

[102] Record of Rebellion, ii, p.26. Florence O'Donoghue, the Cork city Brigade Intelligence Officer for most of the Tan War, wrote that 'the creatures employed [by Crown forces] were not of the calibre that could touch more than the outer fringe of the organisation.' 'Military Intelligence in the Black and Tan Days', p.24 (O'Donoghue Papers, Ms.31,443).

[103] A typical grievance was the commandeering by the I.R.A. of cars or bicycles. This was widely resented: see, for example, the Jimmy Hodnett statement, 20 July 1965 (O'Donoghue Papers, Ms.31,307[7]). One example of a protective informer was the anonymous tipster who wrote the Lismore detachment of the Buffs Regiment to say that Joe, not John, Collins was in the I.R.A. Another informed on the men who kidnapped two policemen in Dromahane in order to establish that the cars and homes involved were commandeered - and therefore innocent. This letter is included in I/O 5th Bn. to I/O 4th Cork Bde., 26 Oct. 1921 (Lankford Papers, U169).

[104] Anonymous [Con Neenan] memoir (O'Donoghue Papers, Ms.31,337). Neenan told Ernie O'Malley of another spy who 'was really only a nuisance to people he disliked' (O'Malley Papers, P17b/112). Yet another informer reportedly gave the names of I.R.A. men but also of 'the neighbours he did not like.' Jamie Minihan (P17b/112).

for the same sorts of personal reasons for which people were denounced as informers. Much of what passed for 'intelligence' in Cork was little more than 'fear or malice'.[105] British intelligence officers took their information wherever they could get it and from a wide variety of (usually anonymous, untimely and unreliable) sources. Kenneth Strong, who saw service around Tullamore, found that 'my agents were not of a very high calibre. Sometimes a railway porter who noted suspicious train travellers; sometimes a shopkeeper who might report unusual purchases of food or medical supplies; a bartender who noted the arrival of strangers in the neighbourhood.'[106]

By far the best intelligence, however, came from inside the I.R.A. itself.[107] The killings on Broad Street and Broad Lane, the massacre at Clogheen, the ambushes at Nadd and Mourne Abbey, the round-up at Crossbarry, the capture of Terence MacSwiney and many seizures of arms were caused by Volunteers who fell out with their comrades or were turned or intimidated by British intelligence. By my count there were at least 11 I.R.A. informers in Cork during the Tan War and

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[105] Record of Rebellion, ii, p.24. Catherine Murphy felt her family's persecutors were motivated by 'jealousy and spite'. Murphy to M/D, 30 Nov. 1921 (M>A., A/0668). For another such example, see Edith Somerville to Ethel Smyth, 17 April 1921 (Somerville and Ross Papers, Lot 878) and Somerville Diary, 13, 15 April 1921.

[106] Maj.-Gen. Sir Kenneth Strong, Intelligence at the Top: the Recollections of an Intelligence Officer (London, 1968), pp 1-5. According to the Record of Rebellion, ii, p.25, 'classes which could be tapped were, the clergy, bank managers, shop owners and employees, military contractors, farmers and civilians employed by the military or police' - or in other words, almost anyone. Notably included were merchants; not included were ex-soldiers.

[107] Pat Margetts, a soldier who passed information to the I.R.A. in Cork city, said that a number of Volunteers were informers but that no one would believe him and that '[Sean] Hegarty was blind to it.' Pat Margetts (O'Malley Papers, P17b/111).

at least 4 in the Civil War.[108] Several others were brothers of Volunteers.[109] The only extant British intelligence diary for Cork, that of the Dunmanway Auxiliary Company, records the names of four informants: one loyalist, one man who acted for money and 'petty jealousy', and two members of the I.R.A..[110] 'Strangely enough', wrote one man who has seen the names, 'names of informers officially executed by the I.R.A. are not to be found in the diary.'[111]

The general feeling among most of the I.R.A. men I interviewed was that informers were both numerous and close at hand. In the Bandon valley there were 'a terrible lot' of spies and the British troops seemed 'well informed'.[112] In Clonakilty they were 'all around...in the Army behind my shoulders...They were from respectable families often, after drink, money or else they were jealous.'[113] Around Schull there were 'all kinds.'[114] In Kanturk 'the police would know where we were.' There were a lot of collaborators including 'some big people. 'Twas barefaced. There were a lot of cute

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[108] For I.R.A. informers in Limerick and Kerry, see Tom MacEllistrum (O'Malley Papers, P17b/102); Sean Connell (P17b/114); Jack Clifford and Sean Carroll (P17b/130). One I.R.A. intelligence officer in East Clare reported that intercepted letters to the authorities 'usually contained information of Volunteer activity from a local spy or, sometimes, a disgruntled Volunteer.' P.A. Mulcahy statement (M.A., A/0408). See also Record of Rebellion, ii, p.26.

[109] See, for example, the confession of 'Saunders' [one of the few detailed and semi-reliable accounts by an actual informer] in I/O 1st Southern Div. to C/S, 1 June 1921 (Mulcahy Papers, P7/A/20).

[110] 'Raymond' [Flor Crowley], 'Black and Tan Diary', Star, 27 Nov. 1971. After examining the diary, Crowley wrote that 'it seems to me that there must have been an informer in almost every townland, so detailed and accurate was the knowledge acquired by the 'Tans'. Star, 23 Oct. 1971.

[111] Peadar O'Donovan, 'Why West Cork's Major Role was so Successful' in Southern Star Centenary Supplement, p.47.

[112] Interview with C.D..

[113] Interview with J.S..

[114] Interview with M.C..

fellas.' One man who turned out to be an informer was related to several I.R.A. families. In the case of another, 'I knew him as well as I knew my brother.'[115]

It was not these friends, relatives and respected neighbours who bore the brunt of the I.R.A. terror. Almost anyone could be an informer. Almost anyone could be suspected of informing. Whether one was shot (or burnt out or expelled) as an informer depended on one's position within the community.

The verse quoted at the beginning of this chapter illustrates this point. The song - 'Where the Dripsey River Flow' - refers to the betrayal of the Donoughmore Battalion column on January 28, 1921, which resulted in the death of one Volunteer and the execution of three others. The only 'son of Cromwell' involved was a woman, Mary Lindsay, and the man who originally 'gave the show away' was the parish priest, Father Shinnick. They had arranged that both sides would be warned in order to prevent any bloodshed, but the I.R.A. (led by Frank Busteed) disregarded the warning and so got caught. The priest was questioned and told the enraged guerrillas of Mrs. Lindsay's involvement; she was kidnapped, held in miserable captivity and secretly (and unofficially) shot in revenge for the British executions.[116] With her died James Clarke, her only Protestant servant, who had nothing to do with the ambush. His death was purely a revenge killing. Father Shinnick was unharmed.[117]

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[115] Interview with M.J.. Dr. John Chisholm recorded similar opinions in his research in west Cork (Chisholm interviews).

[116] Her house was also burned down and her land confiscated.

[117] See H.Q. 6th Bn. to O/C 1st Cork Bn., 30 Jan. 1921 in 'The Irish Republican Army' (Strickland Papers); Sean O'Callaghan, Execution; Frank Busteed (O'Malley Papers, P17b/112); Terence de Vere White, 'The Shooting of Mrs. Lindsay' in Irish Times, 17 Oct. 1978. A somewhat similar case was that of Matthew Sweetnam and Tom Connell, two Protestant farmers who were killed for giving evidence while

The disappearance of Mrs. Lindsay was a cause celebre, her fate a subject for newspaper headlines, questions in the House of Commons and even Virginia Woolf's diary.[118] By comparison, the killing of Mick O'Sullivan, a street-singer and cattle drover of uncertain but advanced age, went almost unnoticed.[119] He was shot as a suspected spy and used as bait to ambush an R.I.C. patrol on May 4, 1921.[120] Here is Dan Browne's account of his death:[121]

He was a very raggedy individual, a kind of tinker and hard nail. We were up early in the morning and there were hail stones at 7 o'clock. They brought on the spy, but I heard one shot only. A placard was pinned to him ['Spies and Informers Beware']. A shower came then. We were looking over the bleak black pine bog road. We could see the village [Rathmore] a mile away. Now when the shower was over and I looked out and sure enough the spy was gone. Holy God says I what's wrong with the spy. We searched around for him and we found him over across the ditch and his coat was pulled up as if he was trying to ward off the shower. I jumped out on the road then. Then he was properly finished off. It was 7 o'clock in the morning and there wasn't a soul around and you could see for miles everywhere around you.

This is a remarkably vivid set of images, but this story is just as remarkable for what is left out. O'Sullivan is described as a tinker, a hard nail, a drunk, a tramp, a spy

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four other Catholics who lived in the same area and went to court at about the same time went unharmed. See the Eagle, 5, 26 Feb. 1921.

[118] Anne Olivier Bell, The Diary of Virginia Woolf (New York, 1978), ii, p.127.

[119] O'Sullivan was also an ex-soldier.

[120] For O'Sullivan's trial and death, see J.J. O'Riordan, Kiskeam Versus the Empire, pp 83-6; 'Troubled Times...A First Hand Account of Bog Road Ambush', Sliabh Luachra, June 1982, pp 15-20 (which identifies O'Sullivan as 'Old Tom'); O/C Rathmore Bn. to O/C 2nd Kerry Bde., 24 May 1921 (Mulcahy Papers, P7/A/18). By all accounts, O'Sullivan maintained his innocence to the end. Dan Browne's commander thought this was the case as well, as did the local police (Brewer, pp 77-78).

[121] Dan Browne (O'Malley Papers, P17b/111, 112).

and, finally, as 'the body'. He has no name, no voice, and no presence. With a dead body lying in front of him, Browne's eyes are drawn to the horizon, the sky and the emptiness of the long black road: 'there wasn't a soul around'. We do not even see him killed. In most newspaper and police reports he was referred to as an unnamed 'old man', 'a 70 year-old man' and 'a dead body'. In some accounts of the subsequent ambush he was not mentioned at all.[122]

Mary Lindsay and Mick O'Sullivan occupied opposite ends of the social spectrum, but they were both outsiders and 'strangers' in the eyes of their executioners.[123] Mrs. Lindsay was separated from her Catholic neighbours by class, creed, loyalty and a whole battery of myths and prejudices which combined to form an insurmountable ethnic barrier.[124] Mr. O'Sullivan was a homeless drunk so far on the wrong side of respectability that he had become a non-person. Both of them fell outside the moral boundaries of respectable Catholic society: one of 'them' rather than one of 'us'. They were 'fair game'.

Priests, Protestant clergy and (Catholic) shopkeepers, on the other hand, were generally out of bounds for the gunmen, protected as they were by their position and influence. Friends and relatives of I.R.A. men were also usually safe, as was anyone else with respectability and neighbours on their side. Not always, but usually. Women,

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[122] See the Belfast News-Letter, Irish Times, Examiner, 5 May 1921; C.I. Monthly Report, Kerry, May 1921 (CO/904/115).

[123] For a study of how Protestants and Catholics could be both neighbours and 'strangers', see Rosemary Harris, Prejudice and Tolerance in Ulster (Manchester, 1972).

[124] Some of these feelings were revealed by Frank Busteed in the following outburst (Sean O'Callaghan, Execution, p.133):

Listen you old bitch, you think you are dealing with a bunch of farm labourers, the men who will touch their caps to you and say 'Yes, Madam', and 'No Madam'. Well, we're no bunch of down-trodden tame Catholics'.

of whatever class or denomination, were generally protected by their sex: most guerrillas and most Irish people thought it simply unacceptable to kill women (Mary Lindsay being a rare exception to this rule).[125] Suspected female informers might be ordered out of the country or burnt out but direct violence against them was conventionally limited to cutting off their hair. In all these cases, potential victims were protected by the communal sense of propriety.

Where some were reprieved by this standard, others were damned. It is indeed striking how often condemned 'spies' and 'informers' were described in terms of outraged respectability. They were not just traitors, they were 'low', 'cheap and low living', 'degenerate', 'a bad character', 'a low type', 'the tinker type', 'a bum', a 'desperado', a 'guttie' and so on.[126] Those shot included 5 men described as sexual deviants of one sort or another, 4 drunks and 4 thieves. A large number of female suspects were reputed prostitutes or at least considered 'fast'. Women who were seen with soldiers were almost automatically put in this category. One executed spy in Limerick was officially charged not only with passing information but also with 'living up to the date of his arrest with a woman to whom he was not married.'[127] An ex-soldier who was tarred and feathered near Tralee was labelled 'a fly-boy, a blackguard

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[125] There is no doubt that informers were often women (Record of Rebellion, ii, p.25) but their punishment was always controversial. See Sean Carroll (O'Malley Papers, P17a/130); Liam Deasy to Florence O'Donoghue, 27 July 1965 (O'Donoghue Papers, Ms.31,301[7]); O/C East Clare Bde. to C/S, 12 April 1921 (Mulcahy Papers, P7/A/17). General Order No.13 (1920) declared that 'only consideration of her sex prevents the infliction of the statutory punishment of death' on a female spy.

[126] See Jack Buttimer, Ned Murphy (O'Malley Papers, P17b/111); Con Meaney, Dan Browne, Mick Murphy, Con Neenan, Edmond Desmond (P17b/112).

[127] O/C 2nd Bn. to O/C East Limerick Bde., 22 Mar. 1921 in 'The Irish Republican Army', pp 16-17 (Strickland Papers).

and a spy.'[128] In fin de siecle Macroom (as observed by T.C. Murray), 'outside the pale of decency and respectability [were] the corner boy, the tramp, the tinker, the drunken militiaman.'[129] Guerrilla war transformed them from the unwanted to the enemy within.

Anonymous letters denouncing suspected informers were often catalogues of social and moral transgressions.[130] Typical of these was a letter received by Roibeard Langford's wife in November 1922 from 'National Troop':[131]

> Your house was raided and the works on Saturday night on information sent to the National Troops by a man and his wife who are resident...9 doors from the works. The wife and daughter and that man are friendly with Jews who live opposite the works at No.4 and from that house they are spying...His house No.30 was at one time a disorderly establishment. From 1918 to 1921 he ran it as a Spy HQ for the [British]. His wife is like a demon dragged out of Hell. The daughter and her are doing the spy while he and the sons are up spying about Miss McSweeneys...I don't forget I fought under Mr. R. Langford and I can at any rate make it known to him who is doing the spy behind his back and a few other things.

Another set of victims who can be classed as social misfits of a different sort were those deemed 'half-witted', 'feeble-minded' or 'simple'. Seven men of this description were killed as spies.[132] Again, these were marginal people who had no one to speak for or protect them.

Not all executed 'spies' and 'informers' were 'strangers' or deviants and some of those who were, were in fact guilty of helping the authorities. Nevertheless, these

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[128] Examiner, 3 Aug. 1920.

[129] T.C. Murray, Spring Horizon, p.81.

[130] See the letters to Sam Hunter (CO/762/101) and Henry Wood (/119).

[131] 'National Troop' to Mrs. Langford, 29 Nov. 1922 (M.A., A/1119).

[132] See Lankford, p.143, who quotes Liam Lynch as saying 'these people can cause a lot of trouble with talk.'

were exceptions. In most cases the I.R.A. acted on suspicion alone but, while the great majority of suspects (and, it seems, most informers) were respectable Catholics, the great majority of victims were not. They were killed not for what they did but for who they were: Protestants, ex-soldiers, tramps, and so on down the communal blacklist. Their deaths were not primarily a consequence of heresy but of a persecution that went far beyond the immediate hunt for informers.

The 'tramp class' had been under pressure from the Munster I.R.A. and Sinn Fein local councils for months before they began to 'disappear' in the winter of 1920. I.R.A. units did not just want to silence loose tongues, they wanted to eliminate the 'tramp nuisance' altogether. In early 1921, for example, the North Cork Brigade ordered all vagrants to 'leave the county Cork immediately'[133]: 'Most of them got off the roads, some to the workhouses, others to God knows where. The carefree life of the Irish tramp was over for the time being.'[134]

Demobilized servicemen and their families became targets for nationalist abuse soon after the Easter Rising. Already by July, ex-soldiers and their wives (the so-called 'separation women') were fighting Sinn Feiners in the streets of Cork city and other towns. After one free-for-all in Charleville, an ex-soldier - beaten and derided as 'another rejected soldier who sold his country for a Saxon shilling' - told a reporter: 'it is just because I am a soldier. I am in dread of living in my own town.' Another woman declared that 'a soldier's wife would be murdered in the town by these people.'[135] The first months of 1919 brought the first wave of returning veterans and an accompanying rise in harassment and violence. Typical of the dozens of cases which ended up

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[133] Pat O'Connor, 'The Capture of Lt. Vincent' (O'Donoghue Papers, Ms.31,421[11]).

[134] Lankford, p.183. See also the discussion of 'tinkers' and 'tramps' in Chapter 4.

[135] Irish Times, 5 Aug. 1916. See also 20 July 1916.

in the city's police court was the complaint by the O'Driscoll boys of Evergreen Street. Upon returning home, they were met by the jeering O'Flahertys, one of whom tore the ribbons from their uniforms while 'Mrs. O'Flaherty belaboured both the O'Driscolls with a banjo.'[136]

The long-established stereotype of the old soldier as corner boy and idle drunk, and the reality of mass unemployment[137] and petty crime[138] among the Great War veterans also told against them (many of those victims described as 'dirty' or 'low', or as drunks, thieves and half-wits were veterans). Local councils and Poor Law Boards all over Munster passed resolutions not to employ ex-soldiers, and local post offices and railway companies were pressured to do the same. Many of these men found they had only two roles to play: 'tramp' or 'corner boy'. In the summer of 1920 they became the targets of threats and kidnappings as the I.R.A. police sought to remove criminal and troublemakers from their towns.[139] As the guerrilla war

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[136] Examiner, 21 Jan. 1921. See also 17 June, 28 July 1919; 12 Jan. 1920. Bridget Sliney of Ballycotton, the wife and sister of servicemen, declared that 'I had a dog's life from the Sinn Feiners' (CO/762/21).

[137] 46% of Irish ex-servicemen were drawing the new out-of-work donations in November 1919, as opposed to 10% in Great Britain - and since the rate was almost certainly lower in Ulster, it was likely even higher in Munster (Irish Times, 11 Nov. 1919). In early May 1919, for example, there were 244 ex-soldiers and 50 civilians on the dole in Fermoy; by the end of the month the number of veterans had risen to 274 while the number of civilians had fallen to 35 (Examiner, 3, 24 May 1919). This probably accounted for a large majority of ex-soldiers as the local Demobilised Soldier's and Seaman's Federation only had 260 members in April (Examiner, 14 April 1919). See also the Irish Times, 21 Feb. 1921.

[138] The ex-soldier as drunk, petty thief, wife beater and deserter became a fixture in police and magistrates' courts all over Cork: see the Examiner, 7, 18 June; 11, 13, 16, 21, 23 Aug.; 4, 10, 27 Nov., 30 Dec. 1919; 15, 20 Jan. 1920. See also the discussion of ex-soldiers in Chapter 5.

[139] See Irish Times, 3 July 1920; Examiner, 8, 18 June; 6 July 1920; Comerford, My Kilkenny I.R.A. Days, pp 82, 243, 523-536.

escalated, these assaults turned into death threats and shootings and many were forced to leave altogether.[140] In an event which summed up the plight of many, one man was stabbed to death in the city simply because he gave the wrong answer: when asked who he was he replied 'an ex-soldier'.[141]

Over the same period, Cork Protestants watched with growing apprehension as many of their nationalist neighbours turned away from or against them: 'after the war people turned very black and bigoted...and we were only a daisy in a bull's mouth compared to them.'[142] Lionel Fleming, then growing up in Timoleague, recalled that:[143]

During this time [the Great War] the gap between Us and Them had been steadily widening, until in the end it seemed to be quite unbridgeable. They became not only different from us, they were against us.

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[140] See, for example, Staunton, Royal Munster Fusiliers, p.403. See also Jane Leonard, 'Getting Them at Last: the I.R.A. and Ex-Servicemen' in Fitzpatrick, ed., Revolution?, pp 118-129 and Fitzpatrick, Politics and Irish Life, pp 162-3.

[141] Irish Times, 29 Mar. 1921. See also an evocative letter from an ex-soldier's mother in Cork city, 3 April 1921 (P.R.O.N.I., D989A/8/23).

[142] Somerville-Large, Cappaghglass, pp 343-4.

[143] Fleming, p.52. See also 'Letters from a Cork Farmer', 15 Mar., 5 April, 1921 (P.R.O.N.I., D989A/8/23) and Patrick Buckland, Irish Unionism: One The Anglo-Irish and the New Ireland 1885-1922 (Dublin, 1972), pp 213-6. Something of the character of this sectarian divide is indicated in the following report of the induction of the new Church of Ireland rector at Leap (Irish Times, 30 April 1921):

As the parishoners were assembling a large funeral passed, and in the procession Mrs. Maurice Townshend, Shepperton, recognised a horse and trap which had been forcibly taken from her some time ago by armed and disguised men. With great pluck Mrs. Townshend seized her stolen property, and took it into the churchyard. Terrifying incidents followed. Several men left the funeral procession and entering the church grounds discharged revolver shots, which created consternation among the congregation. Dr. Dowse, Bishop of Cork, who was officiating, received a great shock. The horse and trap were retaken by some men, who then rejoined the funeral procession.

I.R.A. shootings only begin to measure the toll taken of the Protestant community during the revolution. Of 113 private homes burned by the guerrillas, 96 (or 85%) belonged to Protestants. None of the more than two dozen farms seized from 'spies' in 1921 and 1922 were owned by Catholics.[144] Protestants who wished to sell up and leave were presumed to have 'guilty consciences'[145]; their sales were boycotted, fined or stopped altogether.[146] Hundreds were forced to seek refuge in Dublin, Belfast or England. Those who stayed lived under a regime of boycotts, vandalism and theft. Many had their houses or property commandeered by neighbours or Volunteers and nearly all those who lived in rural areas had to put up with I.R.A. squatters. Some indication of the severity of the terror is given by the scores of loyalists who suffered nervous breakdowns, even to the point of insanity and suicide.[147]

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[144] See the Report on Land Seizures to Min. of Agriculture, 19 April 1923 (M.A., A/8506); O/C 3rd Bn. Special Infantry Corps [S.I.C.] to Comdt. J.J. Coughlan, n.d. [May 1923?] (M.A., SIC/2); 'Spy Farms' File (DOD A/613).

[145] O'Mahony interview with Tom Barry.

[146] See the following statements to the Irish Grants Committee: Joseph Hosford (CO/762/7); Thomas Beamish Cooke (/14); John St. Leger Gilliman (/33); Robert McGivern (/33); Henry McGivern (/35); Anne Appelbe (/37); William Hosford Bryan (/45); Robert Warren Farran (/61); William Good Wood (/64); Robert Ginn (/71); George Tyner (/80); John Macbeth (/92); James Lambe (/117); Spencer Travers (/119); John Hosford (/133); John Kingston (/150); William Good (/184); Edmond Murnane (/191); William Conner (/198); William Bateman (/205).

[147] The most sensational suicide by a threatened loyalist was that of George Tilson: see the Examiner, 21, 25 Feb. 1921. For examples of mental or physical breakdowns, see the following statements to the Irish Grants Committee (usually supported by medical testimony): W.B. Hosford (CO/762/5); Thomas Gardner Wallis (/13); Harry Muggleworth (/14); Richard Baker (/19); Robert Meara (/33); Joseph Northridge (/37); Henry Smyth (/69); John Good (/86); James Thomas (/96); Eleanor Penrose (/104); Thomas Wood (/125); Mary Unkles (/140); Richard Kingston (/176); Henry Chamney (/191); John Kehilly (/199).

Moreover, the persecution of Protestants, ex-soldiers and ex-policemen continued long after the Treaty made old loyalties irrelevant (and after British intelligence officers had departed). The I.R.A. pursued the same 'types' in 1922 and 1923 as they had in the Tan War: 44% of civilians shot by the rebels after July 1921 were Protestant and 20% were ex-soldiers.[148] Over three-quarters of the houses burned in the same period were Protestant-owned. Looking over the whole span of the revolution, we can see that the main themes of the West Cork massacre - conspiracies, land and sectarian vengeance - were prefigured in the executions of 'informers' carried out in the previous two years.

Like the events of April 1922, the war on informers must be seen as part of the tit-for-tat dynamics of violence, driven by fear and the desire for revenge. It was not, however, merely (or mainly) a matter of espionage, of spies and spy-hunters: it was a civil war within and between communities, with the battle lines drawn by a whole range of social bonds and boundaries. The dynamics of violence were ultimately centrifugal.

As used by the men of the Cork I.R.A., the term 'informer' meant simply 'enemy' and enemies were defined by their religion, class, respectability, connections - in fact, by the same communal standards by which the Volunteers defined themselves. The myth of 'the Informer' thus went hand in hand with the myth of 'the People' united behind the I.R.A., so crucial to the Volunteers' corporate sense of identity and legitimacy. Traitors, by definition, had to be outsiders and monsters, the obverse of the Volunteers' embodiment of communal virtues. Alienation and solidarity were two sides of the same coin.

Beneath the welter of pretexts and suspicions, and beneath its official rhetoric of court-martials and

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[148] This victimisation continued well after the I.R.A.'s 1923 ceasefire: see Ministry of Home Affairs Confidential Report, Feb. 1924 (U.C.D., Ernest Blythe Papers, P24/323).

convictions, the I.R.A. were tapping a deep vein of communal prejudice and gossip about grabbers, black Protestants and Masonic conspiracies, dirty tinkers and corner boys, fly-boys and fast women, the Jews at No.4 and the disorderly house at No.30. This sort of talk was normally confined to pubs, kitchens and crossroads. At most, 'the boys' might throw stones at the 'Proddy-woddys'[149] or the priest might take a hand to protect the moral integrity of the community.

What the revolution did was to take this talk from behind closed doors and squinting windows into the streets, where 'informers' were exposed to the hostility and distrust of their neighbours: 'I was hooted and hunted when met on the road'; 'I was persistently insulted and taunted by my former friends'; 'I was spat at in the streets and treated worse than a dog'.

Silence and indifference were equally destructive. One elderly Unionist whose home was destroyed by I.R.A. arsonists remembered bitterly that 'when we went down the avenue and into the village, each door was shut and barred. No one would take us in. I knew every one of them, their fathers and mothers, their grandparents, all their children, and I thought they were my friends.'[150] Under the stress of revolution she and her family had become strangers in the eyes of their neighbours. To her, and to countless other victims, neighbours and enemies had become indistinguishable.

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[149] Fleming, p.35. According to Tom Barry, 'taking from a Protestant was not stealing; as a matter of fact, it was the bounden duty of all small Catholic boys to relieve Protestants of their goods, especially their sweets.' Guerilla Days, p.146. For attitudes in a similar 'border' context, see Patrick Kavanagh, Green Fool, pp 34, 60.

[150] Maurice Headlam, Irish Reminiscences (London: Robert Hale, 1947), pp 222-3.

CONCLUSION

Violence and Community

Lindsay, Mrs. Coachford Co. Cork, executed.
-Index, Dorothy Macardle, The Irish Republic[1]

Lindsay, Mrs., murdered.
-Index, W. Alison Phillips, The Irish Revolution[2]

Part One of this thesis dealt with the politics of violence, Parts Two and Three with the politics of identity; Part Four showed the two to have been inseparable. I.R.A. units were an amalgam of fervent nationalism, youthful rebellion and family and neighbourhood networks, but it took the impact of violence - in arms raids, in confrontations with the police and opponents, and in prison - to transform them from Straw Boys into guerrillas. The intense emotions and loyalties generated within these small, tightly-knit groups contributed much in turn to the culture of violence in the Tan War and after. The young `nobodies' emerged from these experiences as `the men of the south', `big fellas', leaders, heroes and republicans: an identity they fought to defend against the Treaty settlement and through the Civil War.

The same complementary processes of escalation and social definition also produced the Volunteers' enemies and victims. A crucial part of the rebels' corporate sense of identity and legitimacy was the belief that the I.R.A. were one with `the People'. Sean O'Faolain declared that he and his comrades `could not, it must always be said, have done anything without the silence, patience, and loyal help of the whole people.'[3] However, as O'Faolain himself pointed out in an earlier and more critical moment, `the whole people',

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[1] Macardle, The Irish Republic (London, 1938).

[2] Phillips, The Irish Revolution (London, 1923). For this comparison of index entries, see Jack White, Minority Report, p.85.

[3] O'Faolain, Vive Moi!, p.181.

used as a political label, did not imply universality, but rather the opposite. `It is a term, that is, which frankly excludes and frankly sets a boundary.'[4]

Violence followed these communal boundaries. Before a person (or a class of people) could become a legitimate target, they first had to be safely categorised as `enemies' and outsiders. The mass killings at Kilmichael or during the west Cork massacre would have been inconceivable without the alienation and exclusion (operating on both sides) which turned policemen into `terrorists' and Protestants into `informers' and `traitors'. The same dehumanising stereotypes were at work in the British killings at Clonmult and Clogheen. As communities and identities became more and more polarized between varieties of `Us' and `Them', the revolution found more and more victims among those who were excluded.

Violence was not the sole province of a few hundred gunmen, however, and the guerrillas were not the only players created by the revolution. Violence mobilised new actors and presented new possibilities to people throughout their communities. Everyone who took part in a boycott, who jeered suspected informers, or who kept quiet and refused to help their neighbours if they were seen as being on the wrong side, also took part in this process of definition and exclusion.

One set of actors politicised in this way were children. The revolution was played out in street games and schoolyards as vigorously as in more adult arenas and `that world which "the lads" inhabit and which the teacher never enters'[5] was as divided between Us and Them. Sons and daughters of policemen, government officials or other loyalists were as liable to be accused of betrayal as their parents, and equally subject to violence and boycott.[6]

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[4] O'Faolain, `The Plain People of Ireland', p.1. A longer quotation from this article can be found at the beginning of Chapter 4.

[5] Kevin, I Remember Karrigeen, p.31.

[6] See the Tom Curran and Francis Cross statements (CO/762/15, 172); Reardon Conner, A Plain Tale From the Bogs (London, 1937), pp 20-22 [`Already I am beginning to feel

This childhood patriotism was not confined to their own society; its impact was felt by adult `enemies of the Nation' as well. When Lt. Col. G.S. reported on the Special Military Areas in Clare and Tralee in the summer of 1918 he particularly noted the `deplorable' behaviour of the children who constantly shouted `Up the rebels' and `Up De Valera', harassed the garrison at every turn and even punctured his car tires. Frustratingly (and significantly) the adults would do nothing to halt this display.[7] Many of the early police riots began with similar youthful abuse[8] and in later years these juvenile vigilantes waged their own fierce campaigns against suspected informers. Children were enthusiastic boycotters and spy-hunters.[9] Mick Condon was stoned by schoolboys and Christy O'Sullivan was followed by neighbourhood children who shouted `spy' after him.[10] In Limerick City, children wrote `Dalton the Informer' on James Dalton's house before he was shot by the I.R.A..[11]

These children were able to inspire remarkable fear among some loyalists and members of the Crown forces. Maud Wynne declared that `in those days the children of Ireland were being taught to be spies.'[12] In Cappagh, according to Emily Ussher, `the very children of our neighbours were being sent out to spy on us and they would turn away their little

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service of the British government. Therefore I am to be shunned by my former playfellows, ostracised.'] and O'Shea, Voices and the Sound of Drums, pp 18, 22, 66.

[7] Report on Clare and Tralee Special Military Areas, n.d. [Aug. 1918] (Loch Papers).

[8] See the De Roiste Diary, 3, 17 Oct. 1917; 23 April 1918 (O'Donoghue Papers, Ms.31,146); 16, 18 Dec. 1918 (De Roiste Papers); and the description of the Mallow riots of 1917 in Chapter 2.

[9] Hunting the spy was a popular game among the children of Templemore: Kevin, p.7.

[10] Mick Condon statement (CO/762/164); Irish Times, 6 June 1921.

[11] Irish Times, 28 May 1920.

[12] Maud Wynne, An Irishman and his Family: Lord Morris and Killanin (London, 1937), p.255. One policeman she met `warned me not to come too close and again pointing out a couple of children who had edged near us he said in a quiet

round faces if we passed or stare at us stonily.'[13] Another (anonymous) Unionist wrote to General Strickland to warn him that `the Sinn Fein Boy and Girl Scouts are everywhere, watching people and listening to them when they happen to converse in the streets.'[14]

These peoples' fear of children, however exaggerated, reflected their isolation and the extent to which the revolution and the community at large had become indistinguishable. One example of this fusion of violence and community was the destruction of the Warrenscourt estate. This, one of the last flourishing estates along the Lee valley, maintained a loyal workforce and was apparently held in high esteem by its neighbours. The Warrens were liked and were in no way politically involved during the revolution. Nevertheless, by virtue of its owners' position and loyalties, Warrenscourt was an obvious symbolic target of the I.R.A. arson campaign of 1921. On June 16th, local Volunteers burned it to the ground along with most of its contents.[15] The pretext remains obscure but reprisals had become so general in this period that it hardly mattered: it was a `stronghold of the Ascendency'.[16]

This was the event that the newspapers and police reported, and which exists as a statistic in this thesis. However, violence was not a discrete event, but a process, and arson only marked the beginning of the destruction of Warrenscourt. What was `fair game' to the I.R.A. immediately became `fair game' to a host of predatory neighbours.[17] Estate lands were being claimed and seized within a month of the burning. The farm was looted `by mobs' and `republican'

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[13] Ussher, p.185.

[14] Undated letter in Strickland Papers. See also Lankford, The Hope and the Sadness, p.94.

[15] This description of the Warrenscourt Estate and the burning of the great house is derived from Mick Galvin's valuable local and oral history, `The Burning of Warrenscourt House' (unpublished).

[16] Twohig, Green Tears for Hecuba, p.20.

[17] The following account of the looting of Warrenscourt is entirely based on the Sir Augustus Digby Warren statement (CO/762/101).

animals were set to graze on its fields, now `more or less a commonage'. The steward discovered that `all the neighbours seemed to think this the correct thing as some of them told me the land would all be taken from Lady Warren and divided with the people of the District.' The salmon fishery was poached, the plantations and gardens were cut down, walls were torn down, cattle and horses were stolen, and in most cases the attackers were neighbours well-known on the estate.

John Hunter, the loyal (and Protestant) steward himself became a target. He was told in 1922 that `I would get what some other Loyalists further South had got' (a reference to the west Cork massacre) and received many threatening letters, including the following, a classic of its kind:

Dear Hunter,
How stiff you are in the miffle of Catholic people a old stranger like you. You should be hunted out long ago like all your tribe and also that bad character of a woman you have in the house with you. that showing a bad example in the Parish. This is a warning to you and her.
signed IRA

Here the anonymous writer has built a whole series of barriers between Hunter and the parish. He is neither Catholic, respectable or local - the complete outsider. This and other letters were signed `I.R.A.' and there were undoubtedly Volunteers involved, but it would be impossible to say where the organisation began and the community - or `the People' - ended.

Warrenscourt was the victim of the same interlocking dynamics of violence and community as Mrs. Lindsay, the `informer' whose death was discussed in the last chapter. The contrasting index entries quoted at the beginning of this chapter do not merely illustrate differing points of view, they delineate a vast social and imaginative distance - the distance between the Cork of 1914 and the Cork of 1921 - which had to be crossed before the event itself could take place. In order to understand the killing of Mary Lindsay, and of the hundreds like her on all sides, this study has explored not only the circumstances of the executioners and their war, but also the whole process by which individuals became `soldiers' on the one hand and `spies' on the other.

The roots of the revolution in Cork lay in the bonds and boundaries that existed between neighbours.

APPENDICES

The Origins and Organisation of the Cork Volunteers

The founding of the Irish Volunteers in Cork proceeded town by town and parish by parish. The first public meeting was held in the city hall on December 14, 1913, three weeks after the movement was inaugurated in Dublin. As in Dublin, Cork's provisional committee was dominated by cultural activists and - behind the scenes - by the Irish Republican Brotherhood.[1] Unlike in Dublin, however, the southern organisation had a contentious birth as the local Ancient Order of Hibernians (Board of Erin) objected to the involvement of the schismatic A.O.H. (American Alliance). When this provocation was compounded by Eoin MacNeill's speech apparently praising Edward Carson, the assembled 'Mollies' rushed the stage and knocked the Chairman unconscious. Despite this inauspicious beginning over 400 men were enroled that night, and the first drill class took place the following week.[2]

Outside the city, and independent of it, small groups of men were simultaneously starting their own branches. Anyone with initiative could form a local committee and assume the title of Volunteers; nevertheless, few local pioneers

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[1] For the birth of the movement in Dublin, see F.X. Martin, 'MacNeill and the Foundation of the Irish Volunteers' in Martin and F.J. Byrne, eds., The Scholar Revolutionary: Eoin MacNeill, 1867-1945, and the Making of a New Ireland (Dublin, 1973), pp 99-181 and Martin, ed., The Irish Volunteers 1913-1915: Recollections and Documents (Dublin, 1963), pp 3-116. For counties other than Cork, see Oliver Coogan, Politics and War in Meath, pp 1-31 and especially David Fitzpatrick, Politics and Irish Life, pp 101-110.

[2] The main sources for this and the following paragraphs on the origins and early development of the Cork Volunteers are: Florence O'Donoghue, 'History of the Irish Volunteers' (O'Donoghue Papers, Ms.31,437), 'The Irish Volunteers in Cork 1913-1916' in Journal of the Cork Historical and Archaeological Society, Jan.-Dec. 1966, pp 41-48 and Tomas MacCurtain, pp 29-40; J.J. Walsh, Recollections of a Rebel, pp 22-28; Roibeard Langford Statement (C.A.I., Langford Papers, U155); Douglas Community School, 'The Rank and File Response: Cork City Corps, Irish Volunteers, 14 Dec. 1913-30 Aug. 1914' (Unpublished essay, 1988).

presented themselves and those that did were dismissed as young 'nobodies'.[3] Both of Cork's rival parties - the All For Ireland League and the Irish Party (backed by the Hibernians) - held aloof so both membership and the number of branches remained small for the first six months. Even the R.I.C. barely noticed their existence amidst the furore of local elections.

All this changed dramatically in May 1914. In west Cork, where the movement previously had the smallest of footholds, 'it sprang into existence with startling suddenness.'[4] In the East Riding during the same month, the County Inspector noted that branches had been formed in every district except Newmarket and Kanturk.[5] This sudden progress finally attracted the predatory interest of the Irish Party, which demanded, and got, control of the Executive Committees in Dublin and Cork, and whose followers rushed to join and form their own branches. Respectability followed closely in their wake: by the end of June the Constabulary Inspector for west Cork reported that 'the Catholic Clergy, Professional men, and public representatives...are now openly patronising the movement.'[6]

Redmondites and respectability transformed the organisation into a mass movement in a matter of weeks. In west Cork, in July, the number of branches rose from 5 to 25 and the number of recruits from 400 to over 2000. In August, 5 more companies and 1000 more members appeared. This growth

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[3] See C.I. Monthly Report, East Cork, Dec. 1913 (CO/904/91).

[4] C.I. Monthly Report, West Cork, May 1914 (CO/904/93).

[5] C.I. Monthly Report, East Cork, May 1914.

[6] C.I. Monthly Report, West Cork, June 1914 (CO/904/93). For the development of one such company, see the Minute Book of the Lord Carbery Branch, Irish National Volunteers, Clonakilty (West Cork Regional Museum).

peaked in September with 33 branches and 2996 members.[7] In the city 700 men joined in one week alone.[8]

The Great War divided the Volunteers and decimated its membership. The original founders parted ways with the Redmondite majority in September over the issue of British army recruitment. The former retained the title of Irish Volunteers but few members; the latter became the Irish National Volunteers.

The new and reorganised Irish Volunteer companies which emerged after the split were both anti-Party and anti-British. As such, they were the main beneficiaries of nationalist disillusionment with their parliamentary leadership and the growing apprehension over conscription. Their fortunes improved as those of the National Volunteers fell. In February 1915 the west Cork National Volunteers were said by the police to exist 'only on paper'.[9] By August they had 'practically ceased to exist' in the east.[10] In the meantime the dissidents had established a small but 'very active' presence in the city and in a dozen parishes all over the county, including such future revolutionary strongholds as Macroom, Ballinadee, Kilbrittain and Mourneabbey.[11] At the end of 1915 there were 46 Volunteer companies in Cork of varying degrees of efficiency and activity.[12]

In theory the Volunteer organisation, as originally laid out, had both civil and military components. Companies were

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[7] For these statistics, see the C.I. Monthly Reports, West Cork for July-September (CO/904/94). See also the National Volunteer company returns in the Maurice Moore Papers (N.L.I., Ms.10,544; 10,547[6]).

[8] Douglas Community School, 'The Rank and File Response', p.6. This surge followed the Howth gun-running and the Bachelors' Walk shootings.

[9] C.I. Monthly Report, West Cork, Feb. 1915 (CO/904/96).

[10] C.I. Monthly Report, Aug. 1915 (CO/904/97).

[11] C.I. Monthly Report, East Cork, July 1915.

[12] O'Donoghue, 'History of the Irish Volunteers in Cork', p.70.

formed and run by committees whose military responsibilities were devolved to a captain and his officers. On paper, each unit contained an elaborate structure of half-companies, sections and non-commissioned officers.[13] In practice, the committees quickly faded into the background and the military and civil hierarchies were merged in the persons of a Captain, Secretary and Treasurer.[14] The county became a brigade and its Executive Committee and Military Council gave way to a military staff, with Tomas MacCurtain as Commandant. He in turn was responsible to General Headquarters in Dublin. Terence MacSwiney was appointed as the county organiser in August 1915.

In the fall of 1915 most companies were grouped into battalions in the city and around Bandon, Macroom, Millstreet and between Mourneabbey and Donoughmore. The main exception to this scheme was the Mitchelstown area which formed part of the independent Galtee Regiment headquartered across the border in Limerick. It was in this guise that the Cork Volunteers entered the Easter Rising.

The reorganised Volunteers of 1917 and 1918 followed the same pattern with minor changes. Most companies retained the office of Secretary but this gradually fell into disuse in favour of the more strictly military arrangement of a Captain, Adjutant and First and Second Lieutenants. As these units began to function as quasi-military formations, Quartermasters and Intelligence Officers were added (although these were often little more than honorary positions).

The Cork Brigade and its staff were re-established in 1917 (again under Tomas MacCurtain), eventually including the Mitchelstown section of the county as well. By mid-1918 there were companies in nearly every parish (140 outside the city) which were grouped into 18 battalions: the 1st and 2nd in the city and the rest formed around towns or key

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[13] See Martin, ed., The Irish Volunteers, pp 127-8.

[14] See the Constitution and Organisation of the Cork Corps, Irish Volunteers and the Cork Company Returns, 17 Mar.-9 April 1916 (MacSwiney Papers, L233).

districts.[15] An extra layer of authority was introduced at this time in the form of Brigade and Battalion Councils - comprised of their staffs plus subordinate units' commanders - but these only met occasionally and became supererogatory with the onset of guerrilla war.

As this structure was soon considered unwieldy, especially with only four full-time brigade staff for the largest county in Ireland, it was decided that Cork would be subdivided into three brigades. Meetings were held to elect new staffs in January 1919. The new units remained substantially the same for the duration of the Tan War.

Both battalions and brigades were run by staffs consisting of a Commandant, Vice-Commandant, Adjutant and Quartermaster, to which were later added - more or less at local discretion - Intelligence Officers, Engineers and Transport, Medical, Training and Police Officers. In April 1921 Cork as a whole, along with the Kerry, Waterford and West Limerick Brigades, were formed into the 1st Southern Division under the command of Liam Lynch (later succeeded by Liam Deasy and Tom Crofts, both Corkmen). This new unit was barely off the ground, however, before the commencement of the Truce.[16]

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[15] A full order of battle, dated 6 Sept. 1918, can be found in the O'Donoghue Papers, Ms.31,180.

[16] Table 41 is primarily based on the Bureau of Military History Rolls, supplemented by O'Donoghue, Tomas MacCurtain and No Other Law, Liam Deasy, Towards Ireland Free and a variety of other sources. The brigade strengths quoted here are found in the O'Donoghue Papers, Ms.31,216.

Table 41: Organisation of the Cork I.R.A., 1919-July 11, 1921

1st (Mid) Cork Brigade — O/C Tomas MacCurtain (k 20 Mar 20), Terence MacSwiney (d 25 Oct 20), Sean O'Hegarty

2486 men (July 11, 1921)

Battalion	Companies (July 1921)
1 Cork City (North Side)	8
2 Cork City (South Side)	8
3 Ballincollig-Ovens	6
4 Midleton-Cobh-Youghal	17
5 Whitechurch-Riverstown	4
6 Blarney-Donoughmore	7
7 Macroom	9
8 Ballyvourney	5
9 Rochestown-Passage	9
10 Youghal (from 4th Bn, 1921)	-
	73

2nd (North) Cork Brigade — O/C Liam Lynch (O/C 1 SD 26 Apr 21), Sean Moylan (arr. May 21), George Power

4706 men

Battalion	Companies
1 Fermoy	8
2 Mallow	8
3 Castletownroche-Mitchelstown	10
4 Charleville	10
5 Kanturk	10
6 Newmarket	10
7 Millstreet	10
	66

3rd (West) Cork Brigade — O/C Tom Hales (arr. 27 July 20), Charlie Hurley (k 19 Mar 21), Liam Deasy

5277 men

Battalion	Companies
1 Bandon	13
2 Clonakilty	9
3 Dunmanway	12
4 Skibbereen	8
5 Bantry	12
6 Castletownbere	11
7 Schull (from 4th Bn, 1920)	9
	74

Immediately after the Truce, the North and West Cork Brigades and some of their constituent battalions were subdivided to allow for greater local control (in effect recognising de facto splits which had already occurred in these units). A similar proposal for the 1st Cork Brigade

could not overcome Sean O'Hegarty's objections.[17] In October 1922 yet another organisational layer was created with the Southern Command which encompassed the 1st, 2nd and 3rd Southern Divisions as well as the 1st Western and 3rd Eastern Divisions. Liam Deasy was placed in charge.[18] The new post-Truce arrangements were as follows:[19]

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[17] See Chapter 7 above.

[18] Deasy, Brother Against Brother, p.84.

[19] Particularly helpful in reconstructing the post-Truce changes was a Cork I.R.A. prison register (M.A., A/1135). Brigade strengths as of Oct. 1922 are found in the Ernie O'Malley Papers, P17a/89.

Table 42: Organisation of the Cork I.R.A., July 1921-1923

1st Cork Brigade — O/C Sean O'Hegarty (resgnd July 22); Sean MacSwiney (QM 1 SD 22); Dan O'Donovan
523 men

2nd (North-East) Cork Brigade — O/C George Power

50 men (October 1922)

Battalion
1 Fermoy
2 Castletownroche
3 Bartlemy (from 1st Bn, 1921)
4 Glanworth (from 2nd Bn, 1921)
5 Lismore (Waterford, attached 1921)

4th (North-West) Cork Brigade — O/C Sean Moylan (abroad Dec 22); Paddy O'Brien
208 men

Battalion
1 Millstreet
2 Newmarket
3 Charleville
4 Kanturk
5 Mallow

3rd (West) Cork Brigade — O/C Sean Lehane (to Hales Jan 22); Tom Hales (relieved Oct 22); Dan Holland
162 men

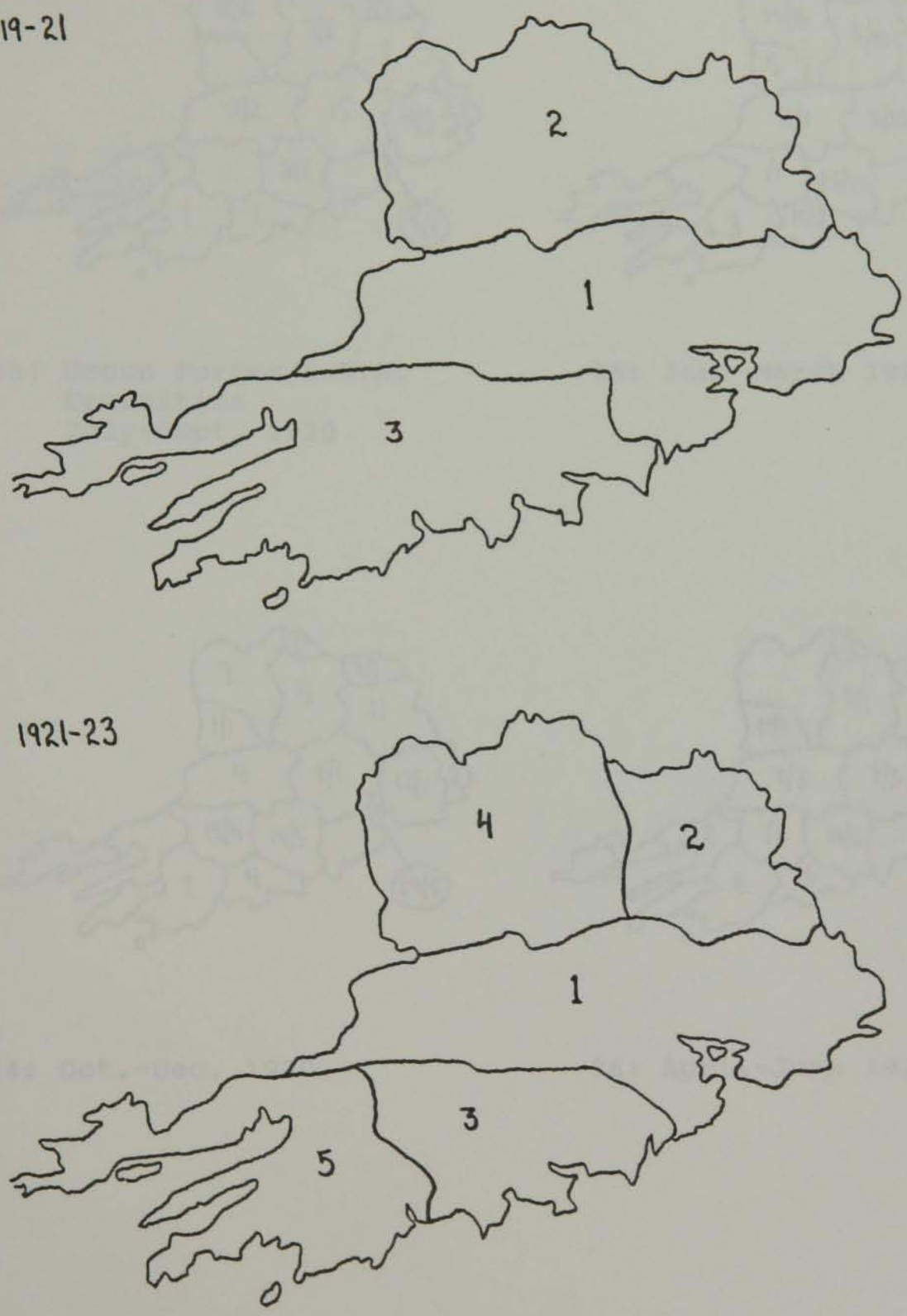
Battalion
1 Bandon
2 Clonakilty
3 Dunmanway
4 Ballineen (from 1 Bn, 1921)
5 Upton-Ballinhassig-Kinsale (from 1st Bde, 1922)

5th (South-West) Cork Brigade — O/C Gibbs Ross (k 30 Aug 22); Ted O'Sullivan
357 men

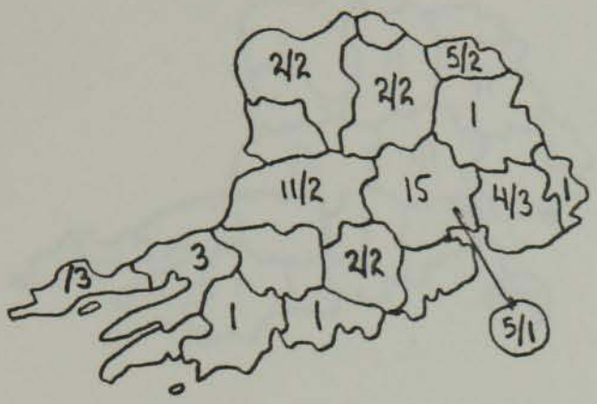
Battalion
1 Schull
2 Skibbereen
3 Drimoleague (from 4 Bn, 1921)
4 Bantry
5 Castletownbere

Figure 7 shows the brigade areas between 1919 and 1923:

Figure 7: Cork Brigade Boundaries, 1919-1923



The Distribution of Violence in Cork and Ireland

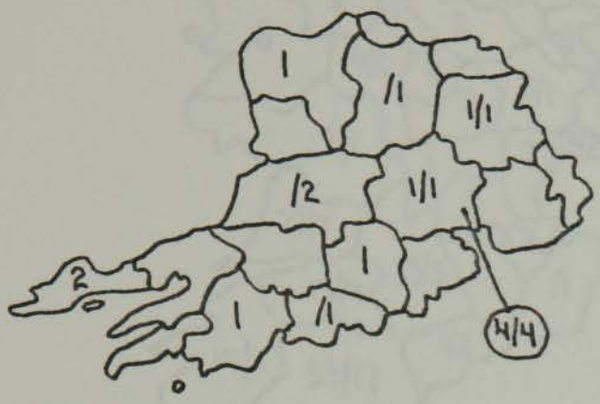


33: Crown Forces/I.R.A. Casualties July-Sept. 1920

35: Jan.-March 1921

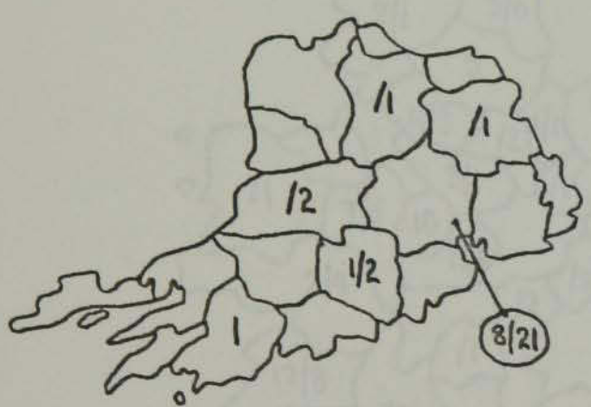
34: Oct.-Dec. 1920

36: April-June 1921

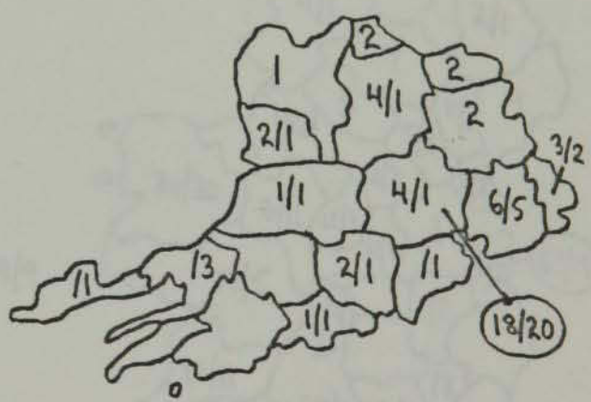


37: Civilians Shot by I.R.A./Crown Forces July-Sept. 1920

39: Jan.-March 1921



38: Oct.-Dec. 1920

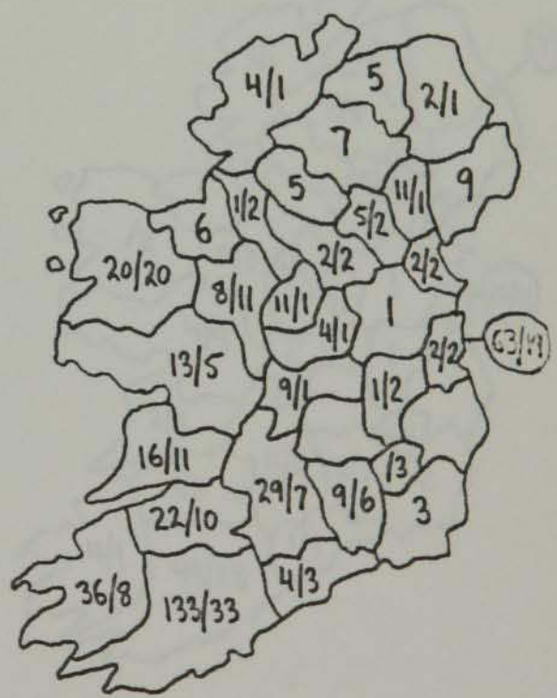


40: April-June 1921

41: Crown Forces/I.R.A. Casualties July-Sept. 1920

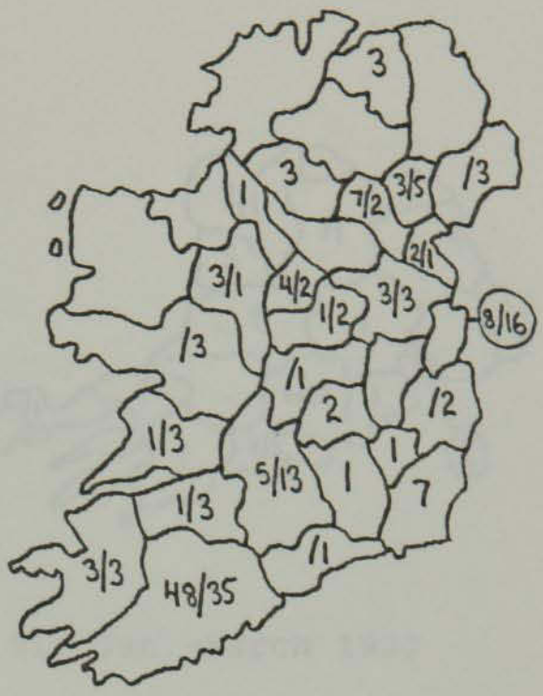
43: Jan.-March 1921

42: Oct.-Dec. 1920



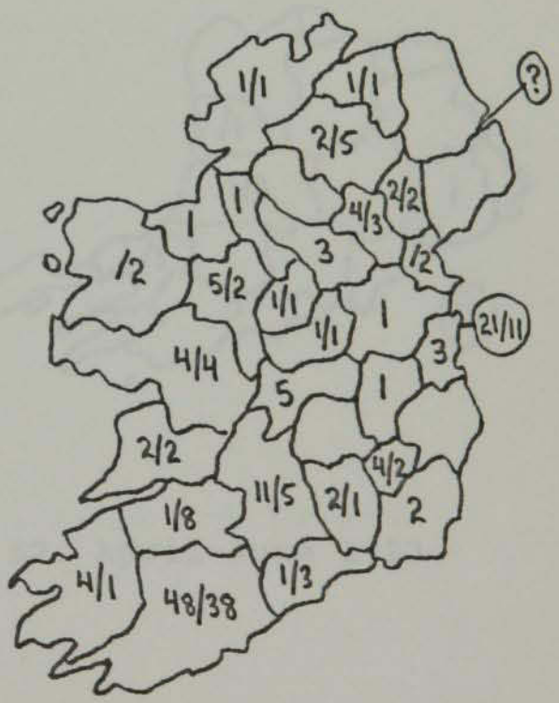
44: April-June 1921

45: Civilians Shot by I.R.A./Crown Forces July-Sept. 1920



47: Jan.-March 1921

46: Oct.-Dec. 1920



48: April-June 1921

49: National Army/I.R.A.
Casualties
July-Sept. 1922

51: Jan.-March 1923

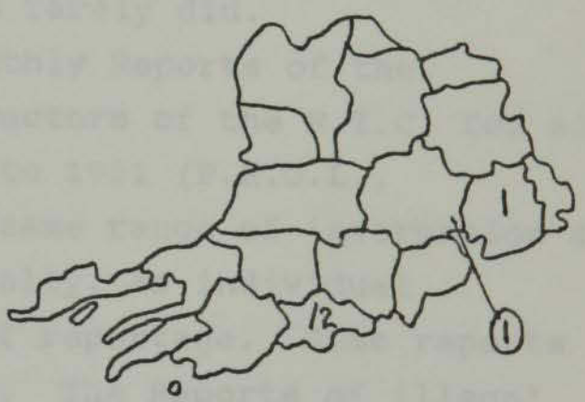
50: Oct.-Dec. 1922

52: April-June 1923

53: Civilians Shot by I.R.A./National Army July-Sept. 1922

55: Jan.-March 1923

54: Oct.-Dec. 1922



56: April-June 1923

I.R.A. Membership Sample: Sources

The data on the social composition of the I.R.A. in Cork and elsewhere presented in this thesis was collected from a wide variety of sources:

1.) Newspapers. A complete survey was done of the Irish Times, the Cork County Eagle, the Southern Star, and the Cork Examiner (which covered Munster as a whole) from May 1916 to May 1923, and also of the London Times from August 1920 to May 1923 (this was primarily for the I.R.A. in Britain). These contain reports of arrests, convictions and killings, often with biographical details. Unfortunately, while civil court reports frequently gave defendants' ages and occupations, courtmartial reports rarely did.

2.) Police Reports. The Monthly Reports of the Inspector General and County Inspectors of the R.I.C. for all counties were surveyed from 1916 to 1921 (P.R.O.L., CO/904/102-116). These give the same range of information as newspapers, although more erratically, as individual Inspectors had different styles of reportage. Some reports are missing, especially from 1920. The Reports of illegal drilling in 1917-18 (CO/904/122) are particularly useful as they give the ages and occupations of a large number of Volunteers, mostly from Munster and Connaught.
Gardai reports from 1922 and 1923 are not available.

3.) Military Reports. Dublin District Raid and Search Reports for 1920-21 (P.R.O.L., WO/35/70-79) give details of several hundred arrestees, almost all from the city and its suburbs. The files of the Military Courts of Inquiry on deaths from late 1920 to early 1922 (WO/35/146A-160) usually give the ages and occupations of those killed, and the circumstances of their deaths. Occasional details of I.R.A. members can also be gleaned from the 5th Division and Dublin District War Diaries (WO/35), and from reports in the Strickland Papers (I.W.M.) and in captured documents in the

Ernie O'Malley Papers (U.C.D., P17a) and the A/ series of the Irish Military Archives (also referred to as the Michael Collins papers. The following National Army records contain information on I.R.A. men captured or killed: Cork Command Operations Reports, Dec. 1922 - May 1923 (CW/OPS/13), General Weekly Surveys, Jan. - May 1923 (CW/OPS/14D), General Weekly Returns [Irregular], Jan. - May 1923 (CW/OPS/14E), Intelligence and Raid Reports, Dec. 1922 - May 1923 (CW/OPS/14F).

4.) Prison Records. The General Prison Board records (S.P.O.) list many - but not all - of those persons committed for offenses under the Defence of the Realm Act between late 1917 and early 1920. These files give prisoners' ages and charges, but unfortunately only rarely mention their occupations. The Art O'Brien Papers (N.L.I., Ms.8443-8445) contain lists with similar information on prisoners in English jails in 1920-21. For the Civil War period, Prisoners' Location Books, Charge Records and Prison Ledgers for Cork Command and elsewhere (M.A., P/1-6 and miscellaneous) provided background information on some I.R.A. prisoners.

5.) I.R.A. Records. A few partial and complete unit roll books giving occupational details have survived from Dublin, Cork and Limerick. Another useful source is lists of men who required aid from the White Cross or the Prisoners' Dependents Fund. These can be found in the Siobhan Lankford Papers (C.A.I., U169), in the Art O'Brien Papers, and in the A/ series documents in the Military Archives.

Finally, the task of locating individuals and their homes, especially when dealing with the townland census returns, was made infinitely easier by the Cork County Council's Directory of Townlands and District Electoral Divisions (Cork, 1985).

Most of these sources also provide the home addresses of those observed, arrested, interned or killed. These men and their families were, wherever possible, traced through the manuscript returns for the 1911 Census (P.R.O.L.) and the

records of the Irish Valuation Office, providing much additional data on ages, occupations, housing conditions and familial property.

The sample includes only those identified in I.R.A. records as members or engaged in activities specific to the Volunteers, such as drilling, or possession of arms or a membership card. This eliminates a lot of Volunteers who were arrested for collecting money, driving cattle or making seditious speeches. As for those men killed in 1920-21, only those definitely identified as Volunteers can be included, as some were shot mistakenly or arbitrarily. I have left out all uncertain cases.

The same person may appear in samples for different periods, but never more than once in the same period. The ages given are for the standard years of 1917, 1920 and 1922.

Distinguishing officers and men sometimes presented a problem. Men who led drilling or marching parties in 1917-19 are assumed to have been officers. The problem of identification is worst in 1920-21, when drillers no longer provided such grist for the judicial mill, and without the detailed Free State records to provide enlightenment. Here we are largely dependent on the record to tell us who was who. I.R.A. memoirs and unit rolls are very helpful in this respect. Again, only those who were clearly identified as officers were classed as such, so that some have inevitably been included in the 'rank and file' sample.

The division of the occupational sample into the various categories generally followed Guy Routh's analysis in his Occupations and Pay in Great Britain 1906-79 (London, 1980). A few of the I.R.A. members had more than one occupation, and were listed under the presumed principal source of income. Descriptions of Volunteer occupations came from many sources, and a few are probably false, but not enough to move significant numbers from one category to another.

'Farmer or son' consists largely of sons working on their family farms, although some of these probably also

worked on other farms as well. Thus, there was often a fine line between farmers' sons and labourers.

'Farm Labourer' includes 70% of those described simply as 'labourer' or 'general labourer', in line with the General Report of the 1911 Census, which advised that "the majority of persons in rural districts returned as 'labourers' may be assumed to be Agricultural labourers" (p.xxvii). I have extended this to include town labourers outside Cork City. In fact, general labourers make up the bulk of this category.

'Un/semi-skilled' covers a wide variety of occupations and social distinctions, from salaried railway employees to casual dock labourers, and 30% of the 'generals'. Many I.R.A. men in this category were drivers, messengers, porters, mill or creamery workers and builders' labourers. Most had steady jobs (although some of these became unemployed during the depression of the early '20s) and a few were self-employed. Only a minority appear to have been casual labourers.

'Skilled' includes all trades and crafts, including mechanics. Many, perhaps most, of the tradesmen in the I.R.A. were apprentices, a large number of whom worked for their fathers. Almost none were masters or builders.

'Clerk' covers all kinds of clerks and shop assistants, including those who worked in pubs and other licensed premises. Many of these were also apprentices or working for their fathers (although, where this was specified, they are included under 'merchant or son'. This category masks a great many differences in status, as bank or solicitor's clerks would have ranked far above shop apprentices in town society. The problem in differentiating these various groups is that shopkeepers' sons were frequently described as shop assistants, and shop assistants were frequently described as clerks. However, it can be safely concluded that the great majority of the men in these samples were rather junior shop assistants, most of whom apparently worked for drapers and grocers (including publicans).

'Professional' Volunteers were almost all teachers or

assistant teachers in elementary or secondary schools. Several university lecturers were also involved. There were a number of assistant surveyors and government Agricultural Inspectors, and a tiny number of solicitors.

'Merchant or son' covers shopkeepers, publicans and traders of all sorts, and their sons who worked for them. I have also included creamery managers under this heading.

'Student' includes all those in post-secondary institutions or simply described as 'student'.

'Other' occupations include policemen (and their sons), fishermen, gamekeepers, commercial travellers and insurance agents. They are almost entirely urban-oriented occupations, and there are no manual labourers (skilled or unskilled) in this category.

The census data is taken from the Irish Census of 1911, and from the Free State and Northern Ireland Censuses of 1926. The tabulation of the 1911 occupational figures was more difficult to translate into my categories, with resulting gaps in the numbers. The base populations from which the percentages were calculated consisted of occupied or productive males.

It must be remembered that the 1911 and 1926 Censuses lie at either end of the revolutionary period, and do not accurately reflect the effects of the Great War, and the economic depression which followed it in the early 1920s. 1911 and 1926 were comparatively stable years compared to most of those in between. Among other things, the war kept tens of thousands of younger men at home in the countryside, and increased the area under tillage, and thus the demand for agricultural labour. It also removed two hundred thousand young men - largely from the towns and cities -to European battlefields, killing many thousands of them in the process. The net result is hard to gauge, but we may tentatively state that there was an excess of young men and agricultural labourers in the country, and a comparative drop in the numbers of men of military age in urban areas.

Some of the samples are small and thus highly sensitive

to small changes. They must be used with caution. On the other hand, most of the figures are at least adequate, and those for Cork, Dublin, Britain and Munster, and most of the other 'rank and file' figures are quite strong. At the least, they indicate clearly the broad social contours of the organisation. The general accuracy of the weak figures is also confirmed by the continuities with the strong samples. This is one of the advantages of comparing national, provincial and local samples.

Because of the nature of the sources, there is an undoubted bias in the samples towards I.R.A. members who attracted attention from the police, army or newspapers. These were the movement's activists and leaders, the men most likely to be arrested, imprisoned or shot. Volunteers who rarely participated in operations or drill exercises, or who were only nominal members, are much less likely to appear in the data. Thus, the samples are probably more representative of the militant hardcore than of the movement as a whole. It is impossible to say what impact this bias has on the statistics, but a few guesses are discussed in Chapter 4.

Statistics on Violence: Sources

> We are closed in, and the key is turned
> On our uncertainty; somewhere
> A man is killed, or a house burned,
> Yet no clear fact can be discerned
> W.B. Yeats, 'Meditations in Time of Civil War'

I have focused my analysis on those categories of violence where one can arrive at a reasonable estimate of what happened, when and where. It must again be stated, however, that these incidents represent only a minority of those activities which may be termed 'violent'.

The statistical categories I used were defined as follows:

Killed and Wounded

By far the most reliable statistics are those of shootings and deaths. Gunshot wounds and killing always attract attention and are almost always mentioned in reports where they are known to have occurred. Even so, some deaths were hidden or went unnoticed by both newspapers and police reports, and only come to the historian's attention through personal letters or reminiscences. No one source gives a full or unbiased account.

I have included in my numbers only those deaths to which there is more than one reference or witness. Because of this, over a dozen uncorroborated killings of 'spies' and 'informers' mentioned in I.R.A. memoirs or interviews were not included. The only exception to this rule was when a death or injury is mentioned in an official report as having happened to a member of that force. This was the case with quite a few self-inflicted I.R.A. deaths.

Where two different numbers are given for the casualties of an ambush or attack, I used the lower unless the other number was clearly more plausible. For example, republican writers have claimed that over 30 British soldiers died at

the battle of Crossbarry on March 19, 1921 whereas the British government reported only 10 troops and police killed and 4 wounded. I chose the latter figure because it was given in internal police and military documents and verified at the inquest. On the other hand, unsubstantiated government (British and Free State) claims that Volunteers were killed or wounded in encounters or in accidents (the usual formulations were 'several men were seen to fall' or 'much blood was found at the scene') were ignored unless verified by I.R.A. reports or Rolls of Honour, or unless bodies were produced. As in all wars, both sides exaggerated their claims.

In general, the largest class of under-reported deaths is that of 'spies' and 'informers' - civilian enemies of the I.R.A.. Many of these simply disappeared and were secretly buried. Unless a relative came forward whose correspondence survives, the British government listed them as missing, or an I.R.A. man remembered the killing in print or in an interview, these deaths remained hidden. As the I.R.A. often killed tinkers, tramps and other loners and outsiders who might never be missed, some of these killings will surely never come to light.

I have only described an incident as an I.R.A. or Government shooting where this is certain or extremely likely (as in the case of Tomas MacCurtain's death in March 1920). Cases in which the identity of the killers is uncertain are placed in the 'Unknown' category along with civilians who were caught in the crossfire during an attack.

It should be noted that non-fatal wounds were less likely to be reported than deaths, especially if they were relatively minor. They did not require inquests or funerals and do not appear in Rolls of Honour. Consequently, the number of people wounded was probably slightly greater than the statistics show.

Only wounds or deaths inflicted by guns or explosives are included. Many people were injured in riots or were badly beaten up but I have left them out because it is too difficult to count them accurately or judge the severity of

their wounds (this means that I have also had to omit the ingenious I.R.A. attack on a National Army troop train near Inchigeela in November 1922 - they rammed it with another engine - which caused a large number of injuries). Limiting my statistics to guns and bombs give the figures a useful uniformity and reliability. The use of guns also indicates that a certain threshold of violence had been passed.

A few final notes about these statistics: Royal Marine casualties are included under the 'Military' heading. Members of Sinn Fein who were shot are counted as 'civilian' rather than as I.R.A. casualties.

Of course, all of these caveats affect different districts and periods more or less equally, so the different numbers are quite comparable.

Arson

The next most important and reliably reported category of violence is arson. I have only included here the burning or blowing up of buildings where significant damage was done. This excludes an enormous amount of more petty attacks on cars, vans, plantations and, especially, hay stacks. Again, such acts are too numerous and too ill-reported to be properly counted. The destruction of houses, shops or public buildings, however, was usually considered important enough to warrant notice in newspapers or official reports. In the few cases where the identity of the arsonists is unclear, I have placed the attack in the 'Unknown' category.

The numbers refer to buildings burned rather than to separate arson attacks. Thus, the burning of St. Patrick Street in Cork city in December 1920 began with only three or four fires but ended by destroying nearly a hundred individual houses or shops. My statistics refer to the latter.

Bridges Destroyed

This category bears the same relation to road trenching

or blocking or rail line destruction as the burning of houses has to lesser forms of arson - it is much easier to count and much more likely to be reported. Individual road or rail bridges can usually be identified and are small enough in number not to be lumped together in a report.

Raids on Mails

Unlike the myriad other forms of armed robbery, these raids were all directed at the same government department and were thus much more likely to be reported. The loss of mail, parcels and pensions from even one office or route was immediately felt. Here we can rely on newspapers to give us reasonably accurate information.

Riots

For my purposes, these events are defined by the violent involvement of at least one unorganised crowd of at least (approximately) a dozen people. This category includes crowds of police or soldiers who ran amuck, food rioters and party brawls (as between O'Brienites and Redmondites), but not cattle drivers (unless they fought with police).

The three basic sources for this study were the Cork Examiner, the monthly R.I.C. County Inspectors' Reports for the East and West Riding (In February 1920 the East Riding was divided into two jurisdictions and a separate Inspector was appointed for north Cork, headquartered in Mallow), and the National Army's Cork Command Operations Reports for December 1922 onwards. However, while these records complement one another they are still incomplete, and a wide variety of other sources must also be used to fill in the gaps.

Newspapers

The Examiner (along with the companion Weekly Examiner)

is the best single record of events in Cork. Although it maintained a steadily Redmondite and anti-republican editorial stance (and was vandalised and had several employees shot as a result), it maintained an admirably high standard of independent reporting and was attacked, censored and suppressed by all sides in both wars. The paper was often at odds with both the British authorities and the I.R.A.. It not infrequently contradicted official accounts and also published government refutations of its stories. These were very rare, however.

In Cork, the Examiner was alone in consistently publishing both sides' atrocities, a policy aided by the pro-Sinn Fein bias of many of its local reporters. Fortunately, it suffered very little censorship until the I.R.A. took over Cork in early 1922. Under this and the succeeding Free State regime the news was tightly controlled and the newspaper's value to the historian is correspondingly reduced.

Other Cork newspapers consulted were the Eagle and Southern Star, the former being staunchly anti-I.R.A. and the latter being Sinn Fein-controlled from 1918 to 1922. Both of these give detailed coverage for western Cork. Neither was published during the Civil War.

The Irish Times was also surveyed for the entire period. This provided the basic newspaper record for the national-level statistics on violence but it also served as a useful addition to the Examiner, particularly when the latter was censored in mid-1922. One key document that appeared in the Irish Times on August 22, 1921 was the British list of missing persons which lists several dozen soldiers, police and civilians who were kidnapped and shot by the I.R.A..

The London Times was used to analyze the I.R.A. campaign in mainland Britain.

Police Reports

The Monthly Reports of the County Inspectors (CO/904/-) are reasonably comprehensive and are crucial in establishing

accurate police casualties for both Cork and the whole of Ireland. They are also the best source for determining raids on mails. Their main blind spot is their failure to report many killings by Crown Forces (acknowledged or otherwise); for this, the newspapers are far more reliable. The police also frequently underestimated military casualties, probably because the army was reluctant to provide the information.

Other series of R.I.C. reports used were the national Weekly Summaries of Outrages for 1920-21 (CO/904/148-150), Returns of Agrarian Outrages for 1920 and 1921 (CO/904/121-121/3) and Breaches of the Truce (CO/904/152). These reports can be used to cross-check the regular monthly reports.

Military Reports

A very useful precis of British army reports for 1920 can be found in the Military Archives (A/0434). This, along with the Weekly Surveys of the State of Ireland submitted to Cabinet in 1920 and 1921 (P.R.O.L., CAB 24/-), list casualties not given in police reports or newspapers. Together these are the most authoritative sources for military engagements and losses. The Weekly Survey also provides a useful official record of events during the Truce and after the Treaty - the only one available after the police were disbanded.

The reports of the Military Courts of Inquiry (WO/35/146A-161A), although not comprehensive, give the names and details of death of the subjects. They must be used with care however, as the real facts of Crown force killings were often covered up, ignored or falsified.

For the period of the Civil War, the Cork Command Operations Reports (CW/OPS/14) are the main reliable source for incidents and casualties. Like the British equivalents, they are not necessarily accurate with regard to National Army activities but they contain many details not reported in newspapers.

I.R.A. Reports

The Mulcahy Papers contain monthly reports from brigades and other units, as well as reports of individual engagements

(P7/A/17-39), which provide I.R.A. casualty statistics not otherwise available. The O'Malley Papers (P17a/-) and captured documents in the Military Archives (see especially A/0991-2) contain scattered similar reports from the Civil War. Lists of I.R.A. casualties can also be found in the Military Archives (A/0436).

Also useful in determining I.R.A. deaths were the official Rolls of Honour of the 1st and 3rd Cork Brigades from 1916 to 1923. These include the date, and sometimes the place of death. These can be supplemented with The Last Post (National Graves Association, 1986) which lists I.R.A. dead throughout Ireland, along with personal details and the time and place of death. Neither the Rolls nor The Last Post are complete; the latter also often fails to distinguish between Volunteers and unaffiliated reprisal victims. None of these list non-fatal casualties.

Killings of suspected spies, informers or other enemies are by far the most difficult to discover or verify and thus form a special statistical case. In many instances, the person simply disappeared and no body was found. As a result, reliable information is scarce and rumours and false or uncertain reports are rife.

Nevertheless, a wide variety of documents beyond those listed above contain solid information about these shootings. Correspondence from relatives of missing persons to I.R.A. leaders, and the subsequent internal investigations, can be found in the Military Archives (A/0535, 0622, 0649, 0659, 0668, 0909). The Examiner of January 14, 1922 reports the findings of a Dublin court in several of these cases. Also important are the statements by victims and their families to the Irish Grants Committee (CO/762/-) and the testimony of I.R.A. members to Ernie O'Malley (O'Malley Papers, P17b/-).

The above represent the main sources for my statistics, but I also made use of a wide variety of others to check my facts. Some incidents could only be confirmed or denied by reference to memoirs, local histories or personal papers.

For this reason, my statistics for counties other than Cork are not quite as reliable. A truly definitive statistical study would have to be based on a series of comprehensive county studies. Unfortunately, the only other such study is that of Clare by David Fitzpatrick, and none at all exist for the post-Truce period.

Once again, I found the Cork County Council's Directory of Townlands and District Electoral Divisions to be an invaluable aid in locating and mapping these incidents within Cork.

Regional I.R.A. and National Army Membership Samples

Table 43: Occupations of I.R.A. Members and Fathers, East Riding

	Officers/Fathers			Men/Fathers			Census
	1917-19	20-21	22-23	1917-19	20-21	22-23	26
Sample	65/56	98/70	48/22	167/160	449/313	231/75	
%-Farmer/son	25/48	29/41	25/41	26/71	31/62	17/27	28
Farm Labourer	05/05	04/07	02/04	12/08	10/10	19/11	21
Un/semiskilled	05/05	09/07	08/10	21/04	20/07	27/12	20
Skilled	26/20	27/24	33/27	22/10	19/12	23/29	11
Clerk	22/-	14/01	20/-	08/-	09/.5	06/01	06
Professional	02/-	02/01	- /05	01/01	04/-	02/-	02
Merchant/son	15/20	13/16	06/14	08/06	06/06	03/17	05
Student	- /-	- /-	- /-	02/-	01/-	.4/-	01
Other	02/02	02/01	04/-	03/01	02/02	02/03	08

Table 44: Occupations of I.R.A. Members and Fathers, West Riding

	Officers/Fathers			Men/Fathers			Census
	1917-19	20-21	22-23	1917-19	20-21	22-23	26
Sample	74/56	88/85	51/40	88/132	231/348	98/99	
%-Farmer/son	30/59	25/68	31/58	41/57	30/59	24/49	54
Farm Labourer	03/08	03/03	18/05	11/08	10/11	20/10	18
Un/semiskilled	07/01	09/01	08/01	03/05	15/04	15/06	08
Skilled	20/16	20/12	14/20	20/03	15/15	15/23	07
Clerk	17/-	13/01	16/03	11/02	13/.5	13/-	03
Professional	11/-	10/-	08/-	01/02	06/.5	06/01	02
Merchant/son	08/11	11/12	04/08	05/07	07/08	07/07	04
Student	01/-	01/-	02/-	02/-	01/-	01/-	.3
Other	03/04	07/02	02/08	05/02	03/02	03/03	03

Table 45: Values of I.R.A. Members' Family Farms, East Riding

Officers

	Sample	Up to 10	11-20	21-30	31-40	41-50	51-100	100+
1917-19	25	04%	08	28	08	28	16	08
1920-21	28	04	18	18	14	21	14	11
1922-23	7	14	14	43	-	29	-	-

Men

1917-19	124	19	25	20	15	14	06	01
1920-21	149	30	18	17	10	13	11	01
1922-23	35	14	17	17	17	14	17	03
Census		37	15	12	08	06	14	08

Mean Value

Officers			Men			Census
1917-19	20-21	22-23	1917-19	20-21	22-23	1911
46	40	28	26	30	28	40

Table 46: Value of I.R.A. Members' Family Farms, West Riding

Officers

	Sample	Up to 10	11-20	21-30	31-40	41-50	51-100	100+
1917-19	19	32%	16	16	26	05	05	-
1920-21	50	22	30	28	16	04	-	-
1922-23	10	20	30	30	10	10	-	-

Men

1917-19	86	24	24	23	19	06	02	01
1920-21	207	23	27	19	15	06	08	01
1922-23	37	24	24	24	08	11	08	-
Census		48	25	11	06	03	05	02

Mean Value

Officers			Men			Census
1917-19	20-21	22-23	1917-19	20-21	22-23	1911
20	22	23	26	27	24	18

Table 47: Size of I.R.A. Members' Family Farms, East Riding

Officers

	Sample		Up to 10 Acres	11-20	21-30	31-50	51-100	100+
1917-19	27	%-	04	04	04	19	48	22
1920-21	28		-	07	04	18	39	32
1922-23	9		-	11	-	22	66	-
Men								
1917-19	120	%-	09	04	13	20	47	08
1920-21	139		04	09	16	19	42	09
1922-23	22		09	-	23	05	50	14
Census			36	08	08	15	20	13

Mean Size

Officers			Men			Census
1917-19	20-21	22-23	1917-19	20-21	22-23	1911
81	94	49	74	58	68	48

Table 48: Size of I.R.A. Members' Family Farms, West Riding

Officers

	Sample		Up to 10 Acres	11-20	21-30	31-50	51-100	100+
1917-19	22	%-	10	14	18	23	18	18
1920-21	49		02	10	20	20	31	16
1922-23	14		14	-	14	21	14	36
Men								
1917-19	80	%-	05	04	10	37	30	14
1920-21	206		03	09	11	20	32	25
1922-23	34		06	15	12	27	29	12
Census			25	13	12	18	21	10

Mean Size

Officers			Men			Census
1917-19	20-21	22-23	1917-19	20-21	22-23	1911
50	58	67	61	71	50	46

Table 49: Position of I.R.A. Members in Farming Families, East Riding

	Officers			Men		
	1917-19	20-21	22-23	1917-19	20-21	22-23
Sample	24	26	6	89	147	19
%-Eldest son	54	58	67	40	44	47

Table 50: Position of I.R.A. Members in Farming Families, West Riding

	Officers			Men		
	1917-19	20-21	22-23	1917-19	20-21	22-23
Sample	42	56	15	78	222	27
%-Eldest son	57	48	40	28	39	33

Table 51: Occupations of National Army Recruits, East Riding

	All Ranks	Census
	1922-23	1926
Sample	1036	
%-Farmer/son	02	28
Farm labourer	37	21
Un/semi-skilled	35	20
Skilled	17	11
Clerk	05	06
Merchant/son	01	05
Professional	.3	02
Student	.4	01
Other	03	08

Table 52: Occupations of National Army Recruits, West Riding

	All Ranks	Census
	1922-23	1926
Sample	325	
%-Farmer/son	10	54
Farm labourer	38	18
Un/semi-skilled	29	08
Skilled	13	07
Clerk	04	03
Merchant/son	01	04
Professional	.3	02
Student	01	.3
Other	02	03

National I.R.A. Membership Samples

Table 53: I.R.A. Members in Connaught

Occupations

	Officers		Men		Census	
	1917-19	1920-21	1917-19	1920-21	1911	1926
Sample	47	31	216	126		
%-Farmer/son	41	42	57	39	67	74
Farm Labourer	03	04	06	12	15	07
Un/Semi-skilled	02	03	04	08		04
Skilled	17	03	11	12		05
Clerk	09	06	18	17		03
Professional	19	29	.5	02		02
Merchant/son	09	13	04	08		02
Student	02	-	.5	05		.4
Other	-	-	.5	01		01

Ages

Sample	41	19	311	69
%-Under 20	22	05	17	20
20-29	44	53	75	62
30-39	32	37	08	13
40-49	02	05	01	03
50-59	-	-	-	01

Table 54: I.R.A. Members in Leinster[20]

Occupations

	Officers		Men		Census	
	1917-19	1920-21	1917-19	1920-21	1911	1926
Sample	68	52	106	210		
%-Farmer/son	16	23	22	32	44	35
Farm Labourer	03	07	16	13	43	23
Un/Semi-skilled	03	05	10	09		12
Skilled	32	23	13	16		13
Clerk	14	19	16	18		05
Professional	13	15	03	03		02
Merchant/son	12	06	19	06		03
Student	01	-	-	-		
Other	04	04	01	02		

Ages

Sample	22	10	112	76
%-Under 20	14	20	10	14
20-29	64	70	69	66
30-39	14	10	16	18
40-49	-	-	02	01
50-59	09	-	02	-

[20] Not including Dublin District.

Table 55: I.R.A. Members in Ulster[21]

Occupations

	Officers		Men		Census	
	1917-19	1920-21	1917-19	1920-21	1911	1926
Sample	37	19	34	114		
%-Farmer/son	05	32	12	28	35	33
Farm Labourer	08	-	09	13	19	08
Un/Semi-skilled	11	05	12	19		21
Skilled	38	16	29	18		20
Clerk	19	16	18	18		07
Professional	14	21	03	-		02
Merchant/son	05	05	18	06		05
Student	-	05	-	-		.2
Other	-	-	-	-		03

Ages

Sample	11	5	54	99
%-Under 20	18	80	15	19
20-29	64	20	57	75
30-39	18	-	15	05
40-49	-	-	07	-
50-59	-	-	06	-

[21] The census data include Protestants, who dominated the professions and skilled trades. As the I.R.A. drew exclusively on the Catholic population, this means that these occupational groups were even more over-represented in the I.R.A. than the above figures suggest.

Table 56: I.R.A. Members in Dublin District[22]

Occupations

	Officers		Men		Census	
	1917-19	1920-21	1917-19	1920-21	1911	1926
Sample	49	86	201	507		
%-Un/Semi-skilled	31	27	43	46	35	36
Skilled	24	23	33	23		30
Clerk	22	32	17	18		15
Professional	12	09	.5	02	02	05
Merchant/son	04	06	01	03	05	05
Student	02	01	03	03	02	02
Other	04	02	01	04	03	03

Ages

Sample	13	39	115	158
%-Under 20	38	26	40	38
20-29	31	62	51	48
30-39	31	10	08	10
40-49	-	03	01	03
50-59	-	-	-	01

[22] This area includes the suburbs of Rathmines, Blackrock, etc., and is roughly co-terminus with the Dublin Metropolitan Police District. The Census figures for 1911 do not include much of the suburbs, and so are not strictly comparable with the 1926 data.

Table 57: I.R.A. Members in Britain

Occupations

	Officers	Men
	1920-22	1920-22
Sample	26	105
%-Un/Semi-skilled	20	27
Skilled	27	32
Clerk	35	19
Professional	08	07
Merchant/son	08	09
Student	04	02
Other	-	04

Ages

Sample	14	126
%-Under 20	21	30
20-29	37	44
30-39	26	18
40-49	07	03
50-59	07	05

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