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The IRA under Moss Twomey 1926-1936

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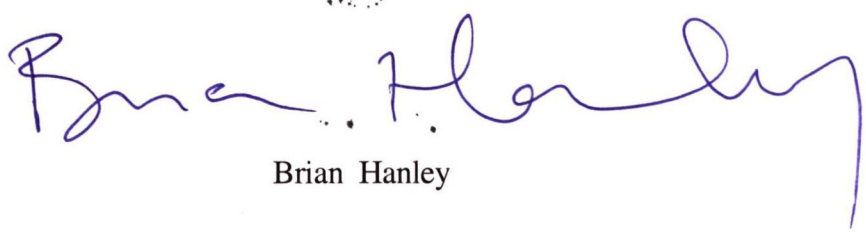
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Summary

This thesis is an examination of the Irish Republican Army in the post revolutionary era. Despite its defeat in the Civil War the IRA could still count its membership in several thousand by the late 1920s. It remained a force that both states in Ireland had to reckon with. However the IRA aimed not to be an effective terrorist organisation but a mass revolutionary army. In reality its membership never reached higher than 12,000 in this entire period. It lacked the necessary equipment to mount a serious challenge to either state and its training methods and internal discipline were often rudimentary. It also faced a challenge to its status within republicanism from 1926 onwards in the shape of the Fianna Fáil party. Nevertheless the existence of a sizeable disaffected minority, coupled with the impact of the Great Depression on Ireland saw the IRA begin to grow in numbers by 1931. It also increasingly adopted the language of social radicalism which raised the spectre of a communist threat within Ireland. Over those years the IRA engaged in conflict with opponents as diverse as the Orange Order and Dublin's 'Animal Gangs.' It intervened in strikes and land disputes. While overwhelmingly an organisation of Catholics it faced severe censure from the Catholic Church. In Northern Ireland it attempted to build support across the sectarian divide during the early 1930s. It played a role in Fianna Fáil's electoral triumph of 1932 and was offered a merger with the party in the aftermath of that election. However the next four years saw a struggle for dominance within republicanism in which the IRA was effectively marginalised.

I have examined the relationship between the organisation and its allies and enemies. I locate its position in broader nationalist culture and argue against previous interpretations of its social radicalism. I argue that the IRA represented a radical force, influenced by both its own members' experiences and contemporary political philosophies.

However the internal confusion produced by some of these policies and external pressures from Irish society, especially after 1932, produced crippling disagreements over policy which severely weakened the organisation. More importantly its base of support contracted as constitutional republicanism satisfied the majority of its supporters' aspirations.

Acknowledgements

In 1997 I was first pointed in the direction of the Twomey Papers by my supervisor Professor David Fitzpatrick. I must thank him for that and for his help and guidance, criticism and encouragement over the subsequent four years. I have benefited greatly from his advice and instruction. Michael MacEvilly has been of tremendous assistance, in both sharing his own knowledge of republicanism and introducing me to his vast range of contacts. Fr. Maurice Twomey deserves thanks for ensuring his father's collection will continue to enthral future researchers. I hope his desire to see his father's political life *critically* evaluated will be satisfied somewhat by this study. I have gained some sense of the atmosphere of my period of study by speaking or corresponding with a number of people, of varying political persuasion, who lived through it. My thanks to Eamon Corcoran, Jim Savage, Charlie Byrne, Maura Ó Nualláin, Mick Dowling, Patsy McGuinness, Packy and Sheila Early and Uinseann MacEoin. I would like to thank the staff of the various libraries and archives in which I have worked, especially Seamus Helferty and the staff at UCD Archives. I must also mention the late Commandant Peter Young at Military Archives and the ever helpful staff at the Gilbert Library. A large number of historians and fellow researchers have assisted me in various ways. I thank Fearghal McGarry, Anthony Coughlan, Eunan O'Halpin, Seán O'Mahony, Seán Cronin, Emmet O'Connor, Brian Murphy, Joost Augusteijn, Aindrias Ó Cathasaigh, Conor Brady, Matt Tracey, Gerry Cronin, Carlo Pellizzi and Tommy Graham. My fellow post-grads at Room 3077 have kept my spirits up when they were in danger of flagging. I thank you all. My greatest gratitude is owed to my father who has borne with me over what must have seemed like never ending years of study, to my brother and my sisters and finally to my mother who I thank for interesting me in history in the first place. I dedicate this thesis to her memory.

Abbreviations

A/G	Adjutant General
Adjt	Adjutant
ACA	Army Comrades Association
AOH	Ancient Order of Hibernians
Batt	Battalion
Bdge	Brigade
Coy	Company
C/S	Chief of Staff
D/I	Director of Intelligence
D/J	Department of Justice
D/T	Department of the Taoiseach
GAA	Gaelic Athletic Association
GAC	General Army Convention
GHQ	General Head Quarters
ICA	Irish Citizen Army
IRA	Irish Republican Army
ITGWU	Irish Transport and General Workers Union
MTUCDA	Moss Twomey Papers University College Dublin Archives
O/C	Officer Commanding
QMG	QuarterMaster General
PP	Private Papers
UCDA	University College Dublin Archives
NAI	National Archives of Ireland
NLI	National Library of Ireland
PRONI	Public Record Office of Northern Ireland
T/O	Training Officer

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THE IRA UNDER MOSS TWOMEY, 1926-1936

Introduction

The history of the Irish Republican Army has been the subject of numerous studies, ranging from general histories of the organisation to critiques of its politics.[1] However relatively little attention has been paid to its membership and their activities in any detail. In the past the main problem identified by historians was the absence of primary source material. Hence J Bowyer Bell concluded his history of the organisation by claiming that "it is no real exaggeration to contend that there are little or no readily available written records, primary or secondary, for a study of the IRA." James P. McHugh concurred in his study of the Republican press of the 1930s, writing that the IRA left "no membership roles, no minutes of meetings, and no records of conventions and debates among leaders where important decisions were made."[2]

However the IRA *did* keep often very detailed records. We know this thanks to the papers of the single most important IRA figure in this period, Maurice (Moss) Twomey, now open to researchers. Twomey, Chief of Staff of the IRA from 1926 to 1936, kept in his possession a vast quantity of correspondence, orders, and minutes from his period as Chief of Staff.[3] We also now have access to the papers of republican activists such as Sighle Humphreys, and of government ministers such as Frank Aiken and Seán

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[1] The two major general studies are J. Bowyer Bell's *The Secret Army - The IRA 1916 - 1979* (Dublin, 1979) and Tim Pat Coogan's *The IRA*, (London, 1995). On the organisation's politics see Richard English, *Radicals and The Republic - Socialist Republicanism in the Irish Free State*, (Oxford, 1994) and Henry Patterson, *The Politics of Illusion - Republicanism and Socialism in Modern Ireland*, (London, 1989).

[2] Bowyer Bell, *Secret Army*, pp. 447. James P. McHugh, *'Voices Of The Rearguard - A Study of An Phoblacht - Irish Republican Thought in the Post - Revolutionary Era, 1923 - 1937'* MA Thesis (UCD, 1983).

[3] Deposited by Maurice Twomey Jr. in University College Dublin Archives (UCDA) in 1985.

MacEntee of Fianna Fáil, and Ernest Blythe and Desmond FitzGerald of Cumann na nGaedheal.[4]

While the 1920s and 1930s have long exercised a fascination for historians, scholarship has tended to concentrate on the IRA's relationship with the far left, leaving its role in Irish society as a whole to general histories. Republicans themselves have largely ignored the period, possibly because of the lack of an armed campaign. None of the IRA members who met violent deaths during that era are listed in *The Last Post* and the same publication refers to the years between 1923 and 1940 as "a valley period" of "inaction and playing with politics."[5]

In reality the period from 1926 onwards was of vital importance for the IRA. Despite its defeat in the Civil War and the subsequent founding of a constitutional rival, Fianna Fáil, the IRA remained a significant factor in political life in Ireland north and south. Its very existence as a substantial armed organisation, dedicated to the overthrow of both states, and claiming to be the rightful inheritor of the revolutionary mantle of 1916-21 gave the IRA considerable importance. Outside its ranks there also existed a sizeable republican constituency which could be mobilised in support of its activities. The Cumann na nGaedheal government faced grave difficulties caused by the IRA and its allies between 1926 and 1932. Fianna Fáil were thankful for its support in the General Elections of 1932 and 1933 and even offered the IRA the chance of a merger with their party on the eve of the 1932 election. While the situation in

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[4] All held at the UCD Archives. Aiken P104, MacEntee P67, Blythe P24, FitzGerald P80. I have made extensive use of the *Departmental Notes on Events*, January 1931 - December 1940, in the Seán MacEntee Papers, UCDA, P67/534. These were among a series of confidential handbooks written by Peter Berry of the Department of Justice for ministers in the Fianna Fáil government from 1932 to 1948. Berry also wrote similar handbooks on IRA activities from 1941 - 1947, on communist activity in the Free State and on the Republican Congress. I am grateful to Seán O'Mahoney for pointing out Berry's authorship of these documents to me. Following the election of the inter - party government in 1948 there was a minor conflict over the refusal of outgoing ministers to return these handbooks. See Department of Justice 1993 (Jus 8) Release Jus 8/966 National Archives of Ireland (NAI).

[5] *The Last Post* is published by the National Graves Association. It lists republican dead since 1916. Quote from 1976 edition (Dublin) pp. 54. Another republican publication lists as 6 the number of men who "gave their lives for Ireland" during the 1930s. All died after 1936. *Tom Harte and His Comrades of the Forties* (Dublin, 1990). PP. 5 & 14-15.

Northern Ireland was very different the IRA also played a significant part in politics there on occasion.

Chapter One

Scale, Leaders and Men.

How many people were actually involved with the IRA over this period? Bowyer Bell's estimate for 1927 is 20,000 to 25,000 IRA members.[6] However the most reliable documents indicate that the figures were much smaller. A report compiled for the IRA Executive in August 1924 gives an estimate of 14,541 members.[7] These figures are incomplete as no estimate is given for the Dublin No.1 Brigade or the 3rd Western Division. All the IRA's figures were also based on strength on paper, rather than active members.

Table No. 1 Local IRA strengths 1924

Division	Area	Strength
1st Southern	Cork, Kerry.	2,904
2nd Southern	Tipperary, Kilkenny, Waterford.	1,983
3rd Southern	Tipperary, Leix, Offaly.	1,594
1st Western	E. Clare, M. Clare, S &W Galway	2,018
2nd Western		347
4th Western	W. Mayo, N. Mayo, W.Connemara, E. Connemara, N.W. Mayo, S. Mayo.	1,723
Eastern Division	S. Wexford, N. Wexford, Carlow, Wicklow.	962
4th Northern		944
Midland		628
Limerick County	Mid, East and West	504
Tyrone		100
Dublin No 2		250
Belfast		240
Britain		344
		14,541.

[6] Bell, *Secret Army*, pp. 57.
[7] General Report for Executive Meeting, 10 August 1924, in Moss Twomey Papers, University College Dublin (MTUCDA) P69/179 (104 - 109).

The report stressed that in order for officers to understand the condition the IRA was in they would have to look at the situation immediately after the Civil War. Then inspections had found several areas in a dis-organised and shambolic state, with little contact between the various Divisions. Since then considerable improvements had taken place and while the organisation was "not yet perfect or near it" every Division was now reporting to Headquarters. Intensifying the training of officers and getting these men to keep the leadership in touch with the Divisions would improve the situation further. In the inspecting officer's view the IRA "must train for war and we must give most of our time and attention to it, otherwise we can never hope to keep anything but the semblance of an Army together."[8]

There was no reopening of hostilities with either government in Ireland over the next two years and while the IRA saw considerable changes in leadership personal and political strategy, the organisation did not grow in numbers; in fact it shrank drastically.[9] By November 1926 the IRA's membership had declined to only 5,042.[10] The strongest single area was now Dublin, with 583 members in the city and county.

Table No. 2 Local IRA strengths 1926

Armagh 142	Claremorris 227	S. Galway 20	Offaly 216
Antrim 23	Connemara 22	Kerry 1 380	Sligo 80
Bantry 23	Cork No.1 200	Kerry 2 100	Tipperary 80
Belfast 242	Cork No. 2 60	Kildare 30	Tirconaill 175
Boyne 146	Caherciveen 80	Kilkenny N. 50	Tyrone 30
Carlow 40	Derry 40	Kilkenny S. 185	Waterford 135
Carrk/Sh 80	Down 40	Leix 150	Wexford 70
Clonakilty 20	Dublin 533	Limerick 60	Wicklow 20
Cavan 30	Dub. Battn 50	Mayo N. 520	Scotland 100
Clare 260	Dundalk 97	Midlands 200	England 89

Total: **5,042**.

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[8] General Report for Executive, MTUCDA, P69/179 (109).

[9] The November 1925 General Army Convention saw the IRA withdraw its allegiance from the Second Dail 'Republican Government' and replace Frank Aiken as Chief of Staff with Andy Cooney. Bell, *Secret Army,* pp. 53.

[10] Notes for Statement by C/S, 1st November 1926 in MTUCDA P69/181 (5). During 1927 the print run of the IRA's journal *An t-Óglách* was just 1,500. The IRA's orders specified that it be seen by every member. See C/S to H.S., 10 March 1927, in MTUCDA, P69/48 (250) and Adjutant General (A/G) to Officer Commanding (O/C) North East Cork Battalion (Batt), 23 May 1929, in Department of the Taoiseach, (D/T) S 5864 A NAI.

In the interim the IRA had been reorganised to take account of its declining strength. Until December 1924 the organisation was still operating on a Divisional basis. However in 1925 the Divisions were replaced by "a large number of independent units, which are now Brigades or Battalions according to their strengths."[11] There were several factors for this decline in the IRA's strength. The new Fianna Fáil party had been formed in May 1926, and included many of the IRA HQ Staff of 1924. However there was still a considerable cross over in membership between the two organisations, and this would continue for some years, especially at rank and file level.[12] Of greater importance was the effect of mass emigration from the Free State and the loss of members who drifted out of the organisation through disillusionment. As the Army Council noted that after the "general release of the prisoners large numbers of volunteers from all along the west coast emigrated, and a considerable number also from other parts of the country. The reason for which most of these men emigrated was because there was no hope of their obtaining a livelihood in Ireland in the near future."[13]

During 1926 Irish Army Intelligence noted the emergence of a younger more militant leadership within the Dublin IRA. This grouping including Michael (Mick) Price and Seán Russell were believed to have planned the "decidedly successful" breakout of 19 IRA prisoners from Mountjoy Jail as well as other aggressive activities.[14] The IRA had attempted to forge a united electoral pact between Fianna Fáil, Sinn Féin and themselves prior to the June 1927 election but this effort failed. When Fianna Fáil did enter Leinster House that autumn the IRA took a relatively pragmatic view. The presence of Fianna Fáil TDs in

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[11] AC Report to GAC, Autumn 1925, in MTUCDA P69/181 (91).
[12] Many of the Fianna Fáil aligned officers would not be forced out of the IRA until after they stood as candidates in the June 1927 General Election. See Chapter Six pp. 191.
[13] AC report, P69/181 (91). The extent of the emigration and the IRA's response to it is examined in Chapter Nine.
[14] A/Commandant Dan Bryan, to Irish Army Chief of Staff, 2 December 1925, in Desmond FitzGerald Papers, UCDA, P80/849 (11).

the Dail, who consistently denounced government attempts to suppress the IRA was of use to the organisation over the next five years.

In this period IRA activities ranged from attempts to disrupt Remembrance Day ceremonies in Dublin, to destruction of "Imperialist" symbols and a growing emphasis on social agitation beginning with a campaign against payment of Land Annuities to Britain.[15] Despite these activities there was to be no rapid increase in IRA strength. Local estimates during 1930 point to IRA membership stagnating rather than growing.

Table No. 3 Local IRA Strengths 1930

Armagh 169	Belfast 177	Derry 12
Tyrone 136	South Dublin 65	Antrim 17
Dublin Brigade 262	Kerry 1st Batt 70	Kerry 2nd Batt 51
South Tipperary 270	Mid Tipperary 28	Sligo 155
Donegal 138	Limerick City 65	East Limerick 25
North Galway 36	Connemara 50	Claremorris 40
South Galway 62	Galway City 30	Drogheda 37
East Clare 124	West Clare 119	Total: **1,833**

IRA active strength was often much less than these figures. South Tipperary counted only 135 out of 270 as its parade strength, and Donegal 60 out of 138.[16] During 1930 Seán Russell found there was no serious attempts being made to train or drill the IRA in south Tipperary while the IRA in west Limerick had not paraded since 1923. Similarly in Sligo and south Galway there were few parades and no training being carried out.[17] One inspecting officer wrote that it was "painful" to see the decline of the IRA in Westmeath.[18] A major problem the IRA leadership located within their ranks was the belief among many of their men that "there was no serious

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[15] The IRA leadership endorsed this campaign in January 1928. A/G to O/C Tirconnaill Batt, 12 January 1928, in MTUCDA, P69/149 (70-71).

[16] All figures from MTUCDA. All from 1930 except Kerry. Northern Ireland, 29 July 1930, in P69/153 (237), Kerry, 18 January 1931 in P69/153 (19-20). Dublin, 17 November, in P69/153 (76-79). Tipperary, 6 November, in P69/153 (99-104). Sligo, July, in P69/153 (228). Donegal, 22 September, in P69/153 (181-183). Limerick, 25 November, in P69/153 (70-72). Galway, Connemara and Claremorris, July, in P69/153 (229). Drogheda, 31 October, in P69/153 (86). Clare, 25 November, in P69/153 (64-67) South Dublin, 11 September, in P69/153 (202).

[17] 'Q' report, (Seán Russell), July 1930, in MTUCDA, P69/153 (231).

intention...to ever resume the fight again."[19] Allied to this there was a marked tendency for "old hands" to dismiss the possibility of recruiting young men who were thought to be "not the right type...too fond of amusement" and therefore could not be trusted.[20]

A further feature of the IRA's political direction during 1930 was a close association with organisations like the Irish Labour Defence League and the Friends of Soviet Russia. Government sources considered that the IRA was entering into an alliance with communism, even suggesting leaders like Seán Russell had been won over to the Comintern.[21] On the eve of the government's clamp down of October 1931, which to a large degree depended on the belief that the IRA was a growing threat, the Special Branch estimated the organisation had a membership of just 4,800.[22] However to put these figures into perspective they were accompanied by Garda reports which stressed that they were losing control of the countryside, and that unless draconian measures were implemented by the government the state would not survive.[23]

There were indications the IRA *was* increasingly recruiting new members during 1931. *An t-Óglách* claimed that "several companies and Battalions have doubled and trebled their strengths in the present year."[24] Twomey told Joseph McGarrity of the IRA's American support organisation, the Clan na Gael, that he could "scarcely credit himself the extraordinary growth of the Volunteer movement."[25] The IRA was benefiting both from the radicalisation brought about by the effects of the Great Depression, and its own moves to exploit this discontent. As Twomey explained "the stoppage of emigration is adding to the

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[18] 'M' report, March 1930, in MTUCDA, P69/151 (193-197).
[19] Staff Captain 'Jones' report on South Tipperary, 6 November 1930, in MTUCDA, P69/153 (101).
[20] 'JJ' report on Kerry, 18 January 1931, in MTUCDA, P69/153 (14-18).
[21] Report on Anti-State Activities, September 1931, in D/T S 5864 B NAI.
[22] The estimate is of 1,300 Officers and 3,500 rank and file. D/T S 5864 A, NAI.
[23] See for example the Garda Chief Superintendent of Kerry, October 1931 "If the Soviet comrades are not dealt with more determinedly at once the state will perish." in D/T S 5864 B NAI.
[24] *An t-Óglách,* July 1931, copy in D/T S 5864 A, NAI.
[25] Twomey to McGarrity, 26 June 1931 in McGarrity Papers, Ms, 17,490 NLI.

feeling of unrest and dissatisfaction: Young people want to know how they are to exist unless something is done to fundamentally alter conditions." [26] He also claimed that the IRA was now having "little difficulty" in recruiting and that the turnout for an IRA funeral and the breaking of a ban on the Wolfe Tone commemoration at Bodenstown had "alarmed" the government who now seemed to be "losing their grip." Now the IRA's policy was to encourage its units to "come out as openly as morale of the men will allow."[27] With what the IRA called "the improvement in feeling" IRA units were encouraged to appoint young officers and if possible to confine appointments to men under the age of 25. Where possible local IRA units were to invite "all the available young lads" in their area to an IRA recruitment meeting.[28]

During 1931 the IRA had also decided to set up a 'Civil Organisation' to organise the "revolutionary feeling" it believed was growing because of the economic crisis.[29] During 1930 the IRA in west Clare had experimented with a civilian support organisation which was judged to have been a success both in giving practical support and helping develop contact with local people.[30] This organisation was Saor Éire which was finally launched in September that year. By the summer of 1931 Twomey was already aware that a government clampdown on the IRA was likely and the organisation made plans to deal with it. Indeed he suggested that if the government attempted to use force in order to stay in power that could benefit the IRA.[31] In October the IRA faced an intense attack on its organisation, politically through a 'red scare' endorsed by the Catholic Church and organisationally through a Public Safety Act allowing

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[26] Twomey to McGarrity, 9 December 1931, in McGarrity Papers, Ms 17,490 NLI.
[27] Twomey to McGarrity, 26 June 1931, in McGarrity Papers, Ms, 17,490 NLI.
[28] C/S to A/G, QMG and D/I, 29 May 1931 in MTUCDA, P69/51 (9).
[29] *An t - Óglách,* March 1931, in MTUCDA, P69/263 (7).
[30] Staff Captain 'McAuley', 26 November 1930, in MTUCDA, P69/153 (63-72). The support organisation numbered about 200 with the local IRA having 119 members.
[31] Twomey to McGarrity, 23 June 1931, in McGarrity Papers, Ms. 17,490 NLI.

for trial by Military Tribunal and use of the Death Penalty.[32] While Twomey claimed that the 'Coercion Act' had helped recruitment in some areas and that his organisation was weathering the storm in reality the IRA did face severe difficulties.[33]

While the IRA did not emerge from this period unscathed, its contribution to Fianna Fáil's victory in March 1932, and the enthusiasm this victory generated, meant the organisation was able to recruit relatively openly throughout that year. Just prior to the election Frank Aiken had approached Twomey with an offer of a merger between Fianna Fáil and the IRA. However the IRA rejected this offer and Fianna Fáil was able to form a minority government with the support of the Labour Party.

The IRA's increasing confidence was expressed in orders such as the following given to its Tralee Unit "We have an opportunity now that we have been looking for years and every advantage should be taken of it in order to improve the training and morale of our organisation."[34] Younger members of Fianna Fáil were reported to be leaving the party for the IRA in some areas.[35] Other units claimed increased recruitment and a "great wave of enthusiasm" towards the IRA.[36] Increasingly public parades and drilling and the further boost of activity in the January 1933 General Election saw IRA membership reach its post Civil War high point. Seán Russell bemoaned how few trained officers he had now that "recruits were pouring in."[37] The IRA's policy for much of 1932 was to avoid confrontation with the new government in the Free State and to mobilise popular support for the Economic War in the hope that military conflict

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[32] David Fitzpatrick, *The Two Irelands 1912-1939*, (1998). pp. 164-165 & 189. English, *Radicals*, pp. 138-146. For government perspectives see John M. Regan, *The Irish Counter Revolution 1921-1936*, (Dublin, 1999) pp. 287-304.
[33] Twomey to McGarrity, 9 December 1931, in McGarrity Papers, Ms. 17,490 NLI. See Chapter Two pp. 51-53.
[34] A/G to Adjt Tralee Battalion, 22nd June 1932, in MTUCDA, P69/155 (113).
[35] O/C South Dublin Batt to A/G, 25 September 1932 in MTUCDA, P69/156 (105-106) and report on North Tipperary Batt, 30 June 1932, in MTUCDA, P69/155 (98).
[36] Adjt Leitrim Batt to A/G, 24 May 1932, in MTUCDA, P69/155 (217) and Adjt, Dingle Batt, to A/G, 26 October 1932 in MTUCDA, P69/156 (50).

with Britain would result. During the year it made overtures to Fianna Fáil about a united campaign of republican and labour forces but these offers were rejected. While it has often been asserted that the IRA embarked on a campaign of intimidation against its enemies after Fianna Fáil came to power it is significant that the IRA themselves thought they were behaving with restraint. Indeed the Department of Justice considered that the IRA had been comparatively "quiet" during 1932 and the first half of 1933.[38] During this period the IRA also involved itself in attempts to force the pace of the economic war by launching a campaign against British goods. The IRA was a very public organisation in those years. Its members paraded openly at dozens of local commemorations, at political meetings and at the nation-wide Easter and Bodenstown events.[39] Often IRA rallies were accompanied by 'Aeridheacht' featuring local bands and football or hurling competitions.[40] The IRA leadership were identified as such by newspapers and a press description of Twomey as Chief of Staff would not have met with denial or a writ for libel.[41]

The actual strength of the organisation at this stage is difficult to gauge. Coogan has given a figure of over 30,000 IRA members in the Free State alone.[42] An examination of the IRA's own unfortunately incomplete estimates do not bear this figure out. There is certainly widespread evidence of increasing confidence and recruitment, but nothing to suggest a figure that high. An element of caution was also sounded by Twomey himself during this period when he claimed that with "open recruiting" the IRA could recruit "thousands"

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[37] Russsell to C/S, 10 January 1932 (sic), in Frank Aiken Papers, UCDA, P104/2835 (1-2). This is a captured IRA document with the signature missing but the handwriting is Russells. Compare for example to document of 27 April 1931 in MTUCDA, P69/151 (33-34).

[38] *Notes on Events*, General Survey, MacEntee Papers, UCDA, P67/534, pp. xvi.

[39] Mike Cronin states incorrectly that only the Blueshirts held open rallies in Ireland during this period. *The Blueshirts and Irish Politics*, (Dublin, 1997) pp. 49.

[40] For example in Ballymahon, Co. Longford during October 1932, AC member George Gilmore spoke after a march featuring the Ballymore and Kellinure Fife and Drum Bands. The meeting which was followed by a football tournament with teams from Ardagh and Tubberclair. *Longford Leader*, 1 & 15 October 1932.

[41] *An Phoblacht* usually referred to Twomey as Chief of Staff. See issue of 13 October 1934. See *Irish Press*, 18 June 1934 for description of Seán MacBride, Seán Russell and Michael Fitzpatrick as members of the "IRA Council."

[42] Coogan, *The IRA*, pp.79. See also Eunan O'Halpin, *Defending Ireland. The Irish State*

but that they wanted to select recruits and avoid a reoccurrence of the period after the truce of July 1921.[43] However there was also a sense of annoyance that with such great possibility of growth the Dublin IRA still had "less than 500" active members by the years end.[44] The IRA also began to grow in Northern Ireland, where membership had been low since the mid 1920s. Increasing activity in the north saw the IRA active in political campaigns, with an appeal to the Orange Order during 1932 and the standing of four IRA members as candidates in the 1933 Stormont elections. IRA members were also involved in paramilitary activities during the 1932 Outdoor Relief dispute and the 1933 rail strike.

Table No. 4 Local IRA Strengths 1932.

Dublin 472	Ulster No.1 564	Leitrim 330	Sligo 286	Tirconaill No. 1 132	Tirconaill No. 2 90
Connemara 57	Waterford 89	North Clare 102	Tipperary Town 121	Clonmel 140	North Cork 73
Caherciveen 189	Dingle 122	Killarney 300	Tralee 138	Roscommon 180	Offaly 260

Total: **3,645** [45]

The Ulster No. 1 area included 513 members in Belfast City itself and the surrounding area. The Dublin figure did not include a large number of new recruits who were on probationary membership or the membership in south Dublin.[46] However the membership levels reflect both increased activity and a new enthusiasm north and south.

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and its Enemies since 1922. (Oxford, 1999) pp.108.

[43] Twomey to Connie Neenan, 15 September 1932, in MTUCDA, P69/185 (196). Neenan was the IRA's representative within the Clan na Gael. See Chapter Nine.

[44] C/S to O/C Dublin Bdge, 17 December 1932, in MTUCDA, P69/54 (21). Twomey was not beyond exaggerating membership levels elsewhere to put pressure on Dublin. He claimed Belfast had twice as many active members as Dublin but that was not true. See Table No. 4 above.

[45] IRA reports, 1932, Dublin (April), Ulster No. 1 (October), Leitrim, Sligo, Tirconaill (June), Connemara (November), Waterford (September), North Clare (June), Tipperary (July), Clonmel (October), North Cork (June), Caherciveen (August), Dingle (October), Killarney (September), Tralee (October), Roscommon (June), in MTUCDA, P69/155 (116 - 121), P69/156 (25 - 38), P69/155 (95), P69/155 (95), P69/156 (3), (95), P69/155 (179), P69/156 (69), P69/155 (154 - 156), P69/156 (75), (78), (54), (56), P69/155 (59).

[46] Adjt Dublin Bdge to A/G, 14 June 1932, in MTUCDA, P69/155 (115).

By 1933 there had been further increases in the strengths of key units.

Table No. 5

Dublin 630	Tirconaill No. 2 132	Laoghis 178	Offaly 285	West Cork 412	Leitrim 465 [47]

What is notable about these figures from 1932 and 1933 is that they include both the key Dublin Brigade area and Belfast as well as the rural strongholds of Kerry and Leitrim, yet only the Dublin and Kerry units numbered over 500. This evidence suggests that 10,000 to 12,000 members would be closer to the real figure for the IRA's strength at its peak from 1932-1934. At two successive General Army Conventions Peadar O'Donnell referred to a figure of 12,000 as the organisation's total membership.[48] The IRA's only public pronouncement on the subject was when *An Phoblacht* claimed 16,000 IRA members had paraded at Bodenstown in 1933.[49]

This would make the IRA significantly smaller than the Blueshirt movement, which at its height could claim almost 48,000 members.[50] Indeed in west Cork, a area of strong Blueshirt support, the IRA found itself under severe pressure during 1933 and 1934.[51] By 1933 violence between republicans and the Blueshirts had become endemic in the Free State. On the one hand this led to IRA recruitment, as "extraordinary life" was put into the organisation by

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[47] Dublin Report, January, West Cork report, 9 July, in Frank Aiken Papers, UCDA, P104/2822 (1-7) & P104/2852 (9). Leitrim, 10 March, Tirconaill, 11 March, Laoghis, February, and Offaly (nd) 1933, in MTUCDA, P69/187 (17-20).

[48] "The 12,000 men is the material on which we have to work." Notes of March 1933 GAC in MTUCDA P69/187 (95) and "We have about 12,000 people in the IRA." Notes of 1934 GAC, in MacEntee Papers UCDA, P67/525. Another Army Council member of that period, George Gilmore, estimated that the IRA had about 10,000 members at its height. Anthony Coughlan to author, 17/1/2000.

[49] *An Phoblacht*, 23 June 1933. Two years later Tom Barry would claim the IRA had 29,000 armed and trained members which was blatantly untrue. *Irish Times*, 27 April 1935.

[50] Figure quoted in Mike Cronin, *Blueshirts and Irish Politics*, pp.115.

[51] See Notes of 1933 GAC, in MTUCDA, P69/187 (114-115) and Notes of 1934 GAC, MacEntee Papers, UCDA, P67/525. See Chapter Four pp. 144-145.

the rise of the ACA.[52] However increasing violence exposed the inability of the organisation to control its membership.

There were several reasons for the beginning of the IRA's decline after 1934. Firstly there was a split at the 1934 General Army Convention which saw the departure of several leading officers and later a number of the rank and file. Since 1932 the IRA had been wracked by internal disagreement about its adoption of radical social and economic policies. At the 1933 General Army Convention there had been substantial opposition from the organisation's junior officers to association with communism and "anti-religious" beliefs. As a result the organisation had published a new 'Constitution and Governmental Programme' which it hoped would mollify "clerical opposition."[53] However this along with a ban on IRA members taking political initiatives without leadership sanction disillusioned many of the socialists within the movement's ranks. Other sections of the organisation continued to complain about too much emphasis being put on social policies, leading Twomey to ask in response just what "would they put before the people?"[54]

There was also increasing Garda and government attention focused on the IRA and growing numbers of its members were finding themselves behind prison bars as a result of their activities. While conflict with the Blueshirts had some support among the broader republican constituency the IRA's activities during 1934 and 1935 saw it increasingly in conflict with Fianna Fáil supporters. The launch of the Volunteer Reserve in 1934 had provided an alternative pole of attraction for republican minded young men. Most importantly the Fianna Fáil government was beginning to satisfy the aspirations of the majority of republicans. The base for militant republicanism began to contract and many of the IRA's rank and file simply drifted away from the organisation.

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[52] Twomey to Neenan, 15 September 1932, in MTUCDA, P69/185 (195-199).
[53] Notes of 1933 General Army Convention (GAC), in MTUCDA, P69/187 (90-117). C/S to Secretary Clan na Gael, (Clan) 21 March 1933, in MTUCDA, P69/185 (55).
[54] C/S to O/C Tralee No. 1 Batt, 17 May 1933, in MTUCDA, P69/53 (12).

However how dramatic that shift was is difficult to assess. The few figures we have for 1934 do not point to a collapse of membership.

Table No. 6

Belfast 460	Caherciveen 233	West Clare 66	North Clare 69	East Limerck 132.[55]

The Gardai reported that during late 1934 in Clare and Kerry the IRA was continuing to "flourish."[56] Furthermore the IRA's Wolfe Tone Commemoration that year drew 17,000 to Bodenstown, the largest attendance to that date.[57] The split that produced the Republican Congress led to the departure of many influential officers from the IRA, but the numbers involved were comparatively small. The decline in units such as those in Clare was certainly not due to defections to Congress, as all the local IRA had declared themselves against the new departure. Small numbers of men were lost to the IRA in the Dublin area but it was generally officers rather then the rank and file members who supported Congress. [58]

Seán Cronin has stated that the IRA's strength in September 1934 as 8,036.[59] This figure seems realistic as it points to a slow decline from around 10,000 members, rather than a dramatic collapse from 30,000. During 1935 the IRA's intervention in the Dublin Tram strike would lead to mass arrests of its members and its leadership having to go on the run for the first time since 1931. According to Cronin membership had fallen to 7,358 by the end of that year. By this stage Twomey was seemingly resigned to accepting a declining

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[55] Belfast figure from report of Belfast delegate, 1934 GAC, MacEntee Papers, P67/525 UCDA. Adjt Caherciveen to A/G, 29 October, 1934. Adjt, East Limerick to A/G, 7 November 1934. Adjt West Clare to A/G, 9 December, and Adjt North Clare to A/G, all in Jus 8/319 NAI.

[56] Garda Detective Branch, 16 November 1934 in Jus 8/319 NAI.

[57] Garda report, 20 June 1934 in Jus 8/310 NAI.

[58] See AC Correspondence Book entries, West Clare 27 April, Dublin Brigade, 15 May and 6 June, South Dublin, 6 September and West Mayo 26 May 1934 in Aiken papers, UCDA, P104/2854 (7-27).

[59] Seán Cronin, *The McGarrity Papers*, (Kerry, 1972) pp.166. Cronin's figures are based on those he found in McGarrity's Papers. However he does not give a reference for these important statistics. In correspondence with me, Cronin said he "had no doubt at all that the figures are correct," but could not help with an exact reference. Seán Cronin to author, 3/8/99.

'Army' telling McGarrity that the IRA would never be a mass force except in "time of war or of great enthusiasm".[60] After two particularly shocking murders in early 1936 the government was able to further clamp down on the IRA. The organisation was banned on the 18th of June, the following day Twomey was jailed for three years, and the Bodenstown commemoration was prohibited. By November 1936 the IRA had been reduced to 3,844 members, its lowest strength since the Civil War.[61]

The make up of the IRA leadership changed very little between 1926 and 1936. The organisation's Chief of Staff, Moss Twomey, was first elected onto the IRA Executive at the November 1925 General Army Convention. [62] During 1926 he acted as Chief of Staff in the absence of Andy Cooney, and in 1927 he was confirmed in that position. He remained the IRA's leader until his imprisonment in 1936.[63] Twomey was a native of Clondulane, near Fermoy Co. Cork.[64] The son of a labourer at Hallinan's Flour Mills in the town, Twomey went to work there at the age of 14. He rose to the position of works manager, but by 1917 he was becoming active in the Irish Volunteers. [65] By 1918 he was Adjutant of the Fermoy Battalion and a year later he became an Adjutant of the Cork No. 2 Brigade. Twomey took part in an ambush of British troops in Fermoy in September 1919, one of the first attacks on British soldiers in Ireland since 1916. During 1920 he helped direct IRA intelligence in his Brigade area.[66] He was a Staff Commandant of Liam Lynch's 1st Southern Division when he was captured and imprisoned on Spike Island during 1921.

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[60] Twomey to McGarrity, 7 October 1935, in McGarrity Papers, Ms. 17,490 NLI.
[61] Cronin *McGarrity*, pp.166.
[62] Twomey received 30 votes, only 2 behind the poll topper, Andy Cooney and ahead of Frank Aiken, Tom Derrig, Tom Maguire and Peadar O'Donnell. IRA Executive Election, November 1925 in MTUCDA P69/179 (190). See also Appendix 7 pp. 361.
[63] Cooney was active on IRA business in the US during 1926. Michael MacEvilly, *IRA Chief - a Life of Dr. Andy Cooney*. (Unpublished manuscript) pp. 138-147. Twomey's jailing in *Irish Independent*, 20 June 1936.
[64] He was born 10 June 1897. Copy of Birth Certificate in author's possession.
[65] Information from Maurice Twomey Jr. 26 February 1999, copy in author's possession. Peter Hart, *The IRA & its Enemies, Violence and Community in Cork, 1916-1923.* (Oxford, 1998). pp. 210.
[66] Florence O'Donoghue, *No Other Law*. (Dublin, 1996). pp. 60. Also Ernie O'Malley Notebooks, UCDA, P17b/96,107.

He managed to escape from the prison by rowing boat along with Dick Barret, Tom Crofts and Bill Quirke.[67] Twomey opposed the Anglo - Irish Treaty, although he was critical of the tactics adopted by the Anti - Treaty forces in Dublin during June 1922. He eventually became Adjutant General on Liam Lynch's staff and was with Lynch when he was killed on the Knockmealdowns in April 1923. Twomey was imprisoned at the conclusion on the Civil War.[68] During 1924 he became involved in reorganising the IRA, inspecting its southern divisions that summer and its northern units during 1925.[69] From 1926 Twomey was a full time IRA activist, although he listed his occupation as 'journalist' and did contribute regularly to *An Phoblacht.*[70] Twomey visited the United States during 1930. In that year he also married Kathleen MacLaughlin from Donegal, a UCD graduate who was five years his senior.[71]

Twomey has caused problems for historians of the IRA. His organisational ability is readily acceded to, but assessments of his politics are often based on lazy assumptions.[72] Coogan's description of Twomey as a "dedicated, right wing Fenian" is frequently quoted to explain Twomey's supposed opposition to radicalism within the IRA.[73] In fact far from being an "apolitical militarist" Twomey was central to the IRA's adoption of radical

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[67] William Quirke 'Escape from Spike Island' in Noel Hartnett, *Prison Escapes*, (Dublin, 1945). pp.33-39. & 'Second Escape from Spike Island' in F. O'Donoghue, *Sworn to be Free - The Complete Book of IRA Jailbreaks.* (Tralee, 1971) pp. 179-183.

[68] Michael Hopkinson, *Green against Green*, (Dublin, 1988) pp. 103 & 109. Liam Deasy, *Brother Against Brother*, (Dublin, 1999) pp. 46. JP Duggan, *A History of the Irish Army,* (Dublin, 1991) pp. 46. Twomey's own account of the death of Lynch was published in the *Wolfe Tone Weekly*, 9 April 1938 & *Evening Herald*, 2 February 1972.

[69] Inspection reports, 10 August 1924 and 10 May 1925, in MTUCDA, P69/179 (104) & P69/47 (242-243).

[70] Often under the pen name 'Manus O'Ruairc.' See *An Phoblacht*, 29 November 1930 & 14 February 1931. George Gilmore claimed Twomey wrote the "best left sounding editorials" in the paper. George Gilmore Notes, Private Papers, courtesy of Anthony Coughlan.

[71] There is a vivid description of the social circle frequented by MacLaughlin and her friends during the mid 1920s in C.S. Andrews, *Man of No Property,* (Dublin, 2001) pp. 26-31. Other women who moved in this circle included 'Kid' Bulfin who would marry Seán MacBride and Mary McCarthy who married George Plunkett. Twomey's biography is continued in Appendix 1 pp. 349-350.

[72] Twomey was "a tower of strength...an excellent organiser, a man trusted by all, with an almost faultless intuition." Bowyer Bell, *Secret Army*, pp. 57. Peadar O'Donnell described how Twomey "listened in on the organisation breathing." O'Donnell, *There Will Be Another Day.* (Dublin, 1963) pp. 104.

politics by the late 1920s.[74] Twomey's influence was crucial in convincing the militarists like Seán Russell and later Tom Barry, that the IRA should have social policies. Twomey argued that they should be "more than soldiers" and that the IRA had lost the Civil War because they had not developed a political strategy.[75] Twomey did not develop these ideas overnight, but as a response to the decline and stagnation of the IRA by the late 1920s. He was not a socialist, but he was content to allow those who were, like Peadar O'Donnell, help politicise the IRA. Twomey was highly regarded by all of the tendencies within the organisation because as well as his military record he was considered "reasonable and capable of seeing another's viewpoint."[76] Twomey however did regard "building up the military movement" as the key task of the IRA. Within that he was prepared to concede that "there was a great deal" in George Gilmore's argument for more open socialist policies, as well as tolerating Tom Barry's "reactionary" views.[77] When the expected disillusionment of republicans by Fianna Fáil did not occur however, and as the IRA became increasingly embroiled in confrontation the unity Twomey worked hard to maintain was sundered.

Table No. 7

The IRA Leadership March 1933

Name	Rank	Age	Birthplace	Occupation
Moss Twomey	General	36	Cork	Chief of Staff
George Gilmore	Staff Comdt	35	Dublin	F/T IRA
Michael Price	Comdt General	37	Dublin	Director of Training
James Killeen	Staff Comdt	40	Westmeath	F/T IRA
Frank Ryan	Staff Captain	31	Limerick	Editor, *An Phoblacht*

[73] Coogan, *The IRA*, pp. 59. Also Patrick Murray, *Oracles of God, The Roman Catholic Church and Irish Politics, 1922-37.* (Dublin, 2000). pp. 318.
[74] Patterson, *Politics of Illusion*, pp. 46.
[75] Notes of 1933 GAC, in MTUCDA, P69/187 (100).
[76] Hannah Sheehy Skeffington to Twomey, 2 April 1933, in MTUCDA, P69/53 (167-169).
[77] Twomey to Con Neenan, 21 & 28 March 1933, in MTUCDA, P69/185 (48) & (21-25).

Seán MacBride	Comdt General	29	France	Journalist
Peadar O'Donnell	Staff Captain	40	Donegal	Journalist
Patrick McLogan	Staff Captain	39	Armagh	Publican
John Joe Sheehy	Comdt	34	Kerry	Insurance Agent
Donal O'Donoghue	Staff Comdt	36	Cavan	Adjutant General
Seán Russell	Comdt General	40	Dublin	Quarter Master General
Michael Fitzpatrick	Staff Captain	40	Wexford	Trade Union Official
Seán O'Farrell	Comdt	n/a	Leitrim	Income Tax Inspector

Note: Prior to the 1933 Convention James Killeen was Adjutant General.[78]

Twomey as Chief of Staff was "supreme in all military matters" within the IRA. He was responsible for the appointment of all IRA officers and the general training of the organisation.[79] After the C/S the most important officer was the Adjutant General. The A/G was responsible for all disciplinary matters, the keeping of records and communication with local units. During Twomey's period of leadership three men, Jim Killeen, Seán MacBride and Donal O'Donoghue, held this position. The post of Quartermaster General was a vital one as whoever held it was responsible for the supply and distribution of IRA arms, equipment and ammunition. From 1927 to 1936 it was held by Seán Russell. The Director of Intelligence attempted to oversee the workings of Intelligence Officers in the IRA's local units. This involved building up information on the state forces, the IRA's political enemies and rival organisations.[80] Other positions such as Director of Engineering or Director of Training could also be filled according to the organisation's needs. Five of these men made up the Army Council which was the ruling body of the IRA

[78] Notes of 1933 GAC, in MTUCDA, P69/187 (86-87). Twomey to Neenan, 28 March 1933, in MTUCDA, P69/185 (21-25).
[79] In the case of local officers this was done with the recommendation of the local O/C and the IRA's Inspecting Officer. Notes on leadership positions (N/D) in MTUCDA, P69/146 (17-18).
[80] Notes on leadership positions, in MTUCDA, P69/146 (17-18).

appointed by a twelve man Executive.[81] The editor of *An Phoblacht* was usually a member of the IRA leadership, Peadar O'Donnell and Frank Ryan both having held this position.

Was Twomey typical of the men who made up the IRA leadership? In 1933 all of the leadership had some experience of military conflict from Seán Russell who joined the Irish Volunteers in 1913 to Frank Ryan, just old enough to have played a minor role in the Civil War. Most had been active from 1919-23, generally at officer level. The average age of the leadership was 36, the oldest being 40 and the youngest 29. Ten came from outside Dublin but all but three lived there by 1933. Only one, Patrick MacLogan, was from outside the 26 counties. Seven of them worked full-time for the IRA, while six held jobs outside the movement, although in the case of MacBride and O'Donnell their occupation allowed them to operate as essentially full time activists as well. All had experienced imprisonment at various stages. Two notable absentees from this list are George Plunkett, Director of Engineering for the IRA during the late 1920s and Tom Barry, who had only rejoined the organisation in 1932. Even with these additions the occupational background of these men although varied, was universally white collar.[82] The IRA's leadership therefore resembled IRA officers of the 1919-21 period in social background.[83]

Was this pattern continued at junior officer and rank and file level? The IRA described itself as an organisation "almost solely composed of workers and peasants."[84] It took almost for granted that "as a rule the Volunteer officer is a poor man."[85] Certainly in Dublin and Belfast its officer corps was overwhelmingly working class. In early 1933 out of 70 officers in the IRA's Dublin Brigade just 2 were businessmen and only 11 were in white collar occupations. This contrasts with the Dublin IRA of the 1919-21 period in which

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[81] 'Army Council' in MTUCDA, P69/181 (100).
[82] See Appendix 1 pp. 333-350.
[83] Peter Hart, 'The Social Structure of the Irish Republican Army, 1916-23' in *The Historical Journal*, 42, I, (1999), pp. 207-231.
[84] 'Mr. Ambrose' Outline of the Present Movement, 1927, in MTUCDA, P69/72 (3-14).

officers were more likely to be drawn from white collar occupations than was the case in 1933.[86]

Table No. 8

Occupations of IRA Dublin	Brigade Officers 1933
Labourers:	18
Unemployed:	11
Skilled and Semi Skilled:	20*
Clerks:	4
Shop Assistants:	3
Insurance Agents:	3
Businessmen:	2+
School Teachers:	1[87]

The IRA's Belfast leadership was captured in an RUC raid during April 1936. Their occupational background resembles that of the Dublin Brigade.

Anthony Lavery, O/C	Labourer
James Steele, Adjutant	Plasterer
Liam Mulholland, Finance	Labourer
Charles McGlade, QM	Printer
Michael Trainor, Communications Officer	Sheet Metal Worker[88]

Outside of Dublin and Belfast the picture was more complex. A sample of 17 officers shows a higher proportion of those in white collar occupations.

Table No. 9

Name	Area	Occupation
David Matthews	Belfast	House Painter
TJ Ryan	West Clare	Farmer
Terence Ward	Derry City	Journalist
James O'Connor	Waterford City	Carpenter
Michael Ferguson	Longford	Shop Assistant
Seán McCool	Donegal	Teacher
Patrick McKeon	North Roscommon	Road Ganger
Tadgh Lynch	West Cork	School Teacher

[85] Adjt Connemara to A/G, 3 November 1930, in MTUCDA, P69/153 (105).
[86] Joost Augusteijn, *From Public Defiance to Guerrilla Warfare - The Experience of Ordinary Volunteers in the Irish War of Independence 1916 - 1921.* (Dublin, 1996). pp. 358-359.
[87] Oglaigh na h-Éireann, General Headquarters Staff, January 1933, (IRA GHQ Staff) in Aiken Papers, UCDA, P104/2822 (1-7). * 6 printers, 3 electricians, 2 fitters, 2 painters, 2 sign writers, 1 fireman, 1 baker. + 1 shopkeeper, & 1 'Fish and Chip Saloon owner' Leo Burdock.
[88] RUC report, 22 May 1936, in Home Affairs (HA) File 32/1/628 in the Public Record Office of Northern Ireland, (PRONI).

Patrick Fleming	Killarney	Hospital Attendant
Brian Corrigan	West Mayo	Insurance Agent
John McAdams	Derry City	School Teacher
Michael O'Kane	Tyrone	Farmer
Seán McGuinness	Offaly	Farmer
Martin Kyne	Galway	School Teacher
Michael Gallagher	Tyrone	Farmer
Tomás Ó Maoileóin	Tipperary	School Teacher
JJ Rice	Tralee	Commercial Agent[89]

Of course a list like this hides a diverse range of experiences. Brian Corrigan from Achill became the officer commanding west Mayo in January 1933. He was employed as an agent for the New Ireland Assurance Company by that stage. However until 1931 Corrigan had supported his elderly parents by farming on Owenduff, Achill. During his imprisonment over the winter of that year, his potato crop had failed, hay had been lost and his parents got heavily into debt with local shopkeepers.[90] Similarly Seán McGuinness of Offaly had been a farmer but while spending some years on the run in the United States he had lost his farm. By 1932 he was dependent on his brother for a place to live.[91] In contrast Terry Ward, from Derry's Waterside, had been a journalist with the *Derry Journal*, while also the local IRA commander. Under the pen name 'Rory' he had written on GAA affairs for the newspaper.[92] The number of school teachers who were IRA officers continued a trend identified by historians of Irish nationalism, although there was also marked differences in

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[89] Sample spans 1929-36. David Matthews File, HA/5/2361, in PRONI. TJ Ryan, O'Duffy report, 5 July 1929, in Blythe Papers, UCDA, P24/477 & *Dail Debates*, Vol. 31, 31 July 1929. J. O'Connor, Notes of 1933 GAC in MTUCDA, P69/187 (74) and P. O'Connor, *Soldier of Liberty*, (Dublin, 1996) pp. 1. M. Ferguson, *Irish Independent*, 2 July 1935, J. McAdams & M. Gallagher, HA/32/1/628 in PRONI, P. McKeon, O/C N. Rosc to C/S, 28 March 1933, in MTUCDA, P69/53 (77-79). T. Ó Maoileóin, Secretary Dept of Education, 4 January 1933, in MTUCDA, P69/53 (356). JJ Rice, *Kerry Champion*, 16 December 1933, P. Fleming, 8 January 1935, in Jus 8/201 NAI. M. O'Kane, A/G to CRC, 13 February 1930, in MTUCDA, P69/152 (136) O'Kanes farm was just 10 acres. M. Kyne, A/G to Adjt, Galway City Batt, 2 July 1932, in MTUCDA, P69/155 (92). Kyne later gaelicised his to name to Máirtín Ó Cadhain. For T. Lynch, S. McCool, B. Corrigan & T. Ward see above.

[90] O/C North Mayo to C/S, 1 March 1933 in MTUCDA, P69/53 (114). 'Cases of Distress' 1926, in MTUCDA, P69/175 (4). O/C N. Mayo to A/G, January 1932, in MTUCDA, P69/155 (284).

[91] O/C Offaly Batt to A/G, 17 May 1932, in MTUCDA, P69/157 (34).

[92] Application for job as Editor, *An Phoblacht*, 29 March 1933, in MTUCDA, P69/53 (235). Garda report, 19 June 1933, in Jus 8/716 NAI.

the experiences of these men.[93] Tadgh Lynch, a head teacher at Mount Pleasant School in Bandon Co. Cork only joined the IRA in 1932.[94] However, Seán McCool from Stranorlar, Co. Donegal had been active in the Civil War, was jailed during the Anti - Annuities campaign and spent time undergoing hospital treatment in the USSR.[95]

The military experience of local officers was also varied. David Matthews was considered a "competent gunman" by the RUC having been involved in sniping in the Kashmir Road area of Belfast during 1922. He had been imprisoned on several occasions.[96] JJ Rice had been a officer in the Kerry IRA from 1919-23. Tomás Ó Maoileóin had been Brigade Commandant of the East Limerick IRA under the alias 'Seán Forde.'[97] By the mid 1930s however the number of IRA officers with direct experience of the Anglo-Irish War and the Civil War was declining. Men too young to have been involved like Patrick Fleming in Kerry and Con Lehane in Dublin increasingly gained prominence within the organisation.[98] One reason why the IRA favoured younger officers is that married men were sometimes unwilling to take risks or responsibility.[99]

Notable too were the number of prominent personalities who had family connections with the republican movement. George and Jack Plunkett were brothers of Joseph Mary Plunkett the executed 1916 leader.[100] Tomas MacCurtain, a young IRA member in the early 1930s, was the son of the

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[93] Tom Garvin, *Nationalist Revolutionaries in Ireland*, 1858-1928 (Oxford, 1997) pp. 24-29.
[94] Tom Barry to Twomey, 13 May 1932, in MTUCDA, (63-64).
[95] *Notes on Certain Individuals*, in Appendix IX, Departmental Notes on IRA Activities, 1941-1947, in MacEntee Papers, UCDA, P67/550. pp. 159-160.
[96] Matthews File, HA/5/2361 in PRONI.
[97] For Rice see O'Malley Notebooks, UCDA, P17b/102,139 & also TR Dwyer, *Tans, Terror and Troubles - Kerry's Real Fighting Story 1913 - 23.* (Dublin, 2001). For O'Maoileoin, O'Malley Notebooks, UCDA, P17b/106,124, S. Malone, *Alias Seán Forde* (Dublin, 2001) & MacEoin, *Suriviors*, pp. 75-104.
[98] Fleming was born in 1904 and joined the IRA in 1925. Lehane was born in 1905 and joined the IRA in 1929. *Notes on Certain Individuals*, pp. 156-157.
[99] See O/C North Wexford to A/G, 22 February 1930, in MTUCDA, P69/152 (193-196). The officer, a veteran of 1916 and 1919-23 resigned because he feared the consequences of arrest now that he had a family. "My wife and kiddies have made a coward of me."
[100] See Officer's Meeting, 9 April 1927, in MTUCDA, P69/48 (152-162).

murdered Mayor of Cork City.[101] Cork IRA officer Seán MacSwiney was a brother of Terence MacSwiney, MacCurtain's successor as Mayor of Cork, who had died on hunger strike in October 1920.[102] Dublin's Seamus Mallin was the son of executed Citizen Army officer, Michael Mallin.[103] At a rank and file level, the Walsh brothers of Galway, arrested for seizing a copy of the film 'Gallipoli' during 1933 were sons of an IRA man killed by the Black and Tans.[104]

In religious terms the IRA was an overwhelmingly Catholic organisation at both leadership and rank and file level. However there were Protestant IRA members, the best known being the Gilmore brothers of Dublin.[105] There were also a number of others including RG Bradshaw of Sligo, Victor Fagg of Athlone and Walter Mitchell from Offaly.[106]

Membership of the IRA did not preclude holding elected office in this period. The most prominent IRA member to do so was Army Council member Patrick McLogan, elected as a Stormont MP for South Armagh in 1933.[107] However several other IRA members were also elected as county councillors in the Free State during this period. The commander of the north Westmeath IRA, Thomas Maguire was chairman of Westmeath County Council during 1933.[108] Army Council member Seán O'Farrell was elected onto Leitrim County Council in June 1934, as were Seán Lynch in Longford and Michael O'Donnell in Kerry. In all 9 'Independent Republicans' as the IRA candidates titled

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[101] *Notes on Certain Individuals*, pp. 159. For praise for MacCurtain on his first court appearance see O/C Cork No. 1 to C/S, 14 December 1932, in MTUCDA, P69/54 (26-27).
[102] *Notes on Events*, in MacEntee papers, UCDA, P67/534 pp. 52.
[103] *An Phoblacht*, 14 October 1933 & Notes of 1934 GAC, in MacEntee Papers, UCDA, P67/525. Despite his father's ICA membership, Mallin opposed the left within the IRA at the 1934 GAC.
[104] *An Phoblacht*, 14 October 1933 & Padraic O' Farrell, *Who's Who in the Irish War of Independence and Civil War, 1916-1923*. (Dublin, 1997). pp. 119.
[105] George Gilmore was an AC member. Harry and Charles were variously O/C and QM of the South Dublin Battalion. George Gilmore Notes, PP. See also IRA GHQ Staff in Aiken Papers, UCDA, P104/2822 (1-2) & *Irish Press*, 1 April 1933.
[106] For Bradshaw see Chapter Three pp. 110. Fagg was I/O of the South Westmeath Battalion, in MTUCDA, P69/54 (150-155). For Mitchell, see MacEoin, *Survivors*, pp. 379-392.
[107] See Chapter Eight pp. 367-368.
[108] Notes of 1933 GAC, P69/187 (87) and *Westmeath Independent*, 30 June 1934.

themselves were returned in the 1934 Local Elections.[109] This was less part of a concerted strategy by the IRA and more a response to local pressures to challenge Fianna Fáil. [110] The organisation maintained a flexible attitude to electoral intervention throughout this period.[111]

The IRA rank and file were often drawn from the working class and rural poor. In 1934 nearly 70% of the Belfast IRA were unemployed.[112] The majority of the south Carlow IRA were also out of work in 1932.[113] In Cork during 1930 the IRA members who had worked at Ford's motor plant were now "idle."[114] The Drogheda IRA reported that because of unemployment they could not sell Easter Lilies during 1931 unless they were allowed keep some of the proceeds.[115] In Tralee during 1932 an IRA company refused to parade for fear that it might jeopardise their chances of being offered jobs as labourers on road schemes. Already several other IRA members had been given jobs labouring on the roads and at Tralee Hospital.[116] IRA organisation in Meath was said to be hampered by the lack of bicycles among its membership![117] That situation was similar in other parts of the west. Parades during summer 1931 were abandoned by the Donegal IRA because so many of its members had to leave for work in Scotland.[118] A year later the North Mayo IRA reported that greater numbers of their members were leaving for work as migratory labourers in Britain than ever before.[119] The failure of the Battalion to mobilise for a training camp that summer was explained by the fact that the IRA in Mayo "have not the richer element of the people ... but all who have to send their

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[109] *Leitrim Observer*, *Longford Leader*, *Kerry Champion*, 30 June 1934. *Cork Examiner*, 29 June 1934.
[110] I/O Kenmare Batt to I/O (D/I), 18 April 1934, in Jus 8/319 NAI.
[111] C/S to O/C Tirconaill No. 2 Batt, 13 May 1933, in MTUCDA, P69/53 (16).
[112] 310 out of 460 men according to their O/C. Notes of 1934 GAC, MacEntee Papers, P67/525.
[113] Adjt South Carlow to A/G, 20 May 1932, in MTUCDA, P69/157 (14-15).
[114] Adjt Cork City to A/G, 3 July 1930, in MTUCDA, P69/151 (216). Seán MacSwiney and Michael Burke, Cork IRA officers, both worked in Fords during 1929. O'Duffy report, 5 July 1929, in Blythe Papers, UCDA, P24/477.
[115] Adjt Drogheda Coy to A/G, 16 March 1931, in MTUCDA, P69/151 (178-179).
[116] Adjt Tralee Batt to A/G, 28 October 1932, in MTUCDA, P69/156 (56-58).
[117] 'M' report on Meath, 2 February 1930, in MTUCDA, P69/151 (200-203).
[118] Garda report, 27 July 1931, in D/T S 5864 B NAI.

boys to England and Scotland during summer and autumn."[120] 3 years later a member of the IRA in Achill forecast a low turnout from the area at Bodenstown because "the crowd who would support us are away in England."[121] The Gardai dismissed Drogheda IRA members as being of the "corner-boy type."[122] Of 7 Drogheda IRA members arrested for leading an anti-Blueshirt riot in 1934, five were labourers and two clerks.[123] An IRA man killed in a clash with Blueshirts in Ennis Co. Clare was a member of the local Ennis Labourer's Union, as was his father and brother.[124]

However the IRA also included students, some of whom would become doctors or solicitors.[125] The College Company of the IRA in Dublin had members at UCD, TCD and St. Patrick's Teacher Training College. At UCD a Republican Club had been formed during the 1920s which had organised protests against the establishment of an Officer Training Corps of the National Army at the university. Its members included Todd Andrews, Frank Ryan, Con Lehane and Cearbhall Ó Dálaigh.[126] The College Company was hostile to radical politics within the IRA and its membership were dismissed as "young prigs" by Peadar O'Donnell.[127] Militant republicanism continued to have an attraction for some of those from middle class backgrounds during the 1930s.

In general however the organisation does seem to have been composed of "poor working men."[128] This in turn contributed to the constant problem of funding the organisation. An attempt to raise extra revenue at the 1934

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[119] Adjt North Mayo Bdge to A/G, 2 August 1932, in MTUCDA, P69/158 (238).
[120] O/C North Mayo to C/S, 23 August 1932, in MTUCDA, P69/54 (194).
[121] Jack McNeela to Seán MacBride, June 1935, in Sighle Humphreys Papers, UCDA, P106/2106 (39).
[122] Garda report, 27 July 1931, in D/T S 5864 B NAI.
[123] Garda report, 21 April 1934, in Jus 8/108 NAI.
[124] *Clare Champion*, 5 & 12 May 1934. The locally based union had been involved in a gnereral strike in early 1934. Garda report, 1 March 1934, in Jus 8/337 NAI.
[125] Farrell Leddy of the Belfast IRA was a doctor. *Irish News*, 29 July 1932 and O/C Ulster No. 1 to A/G, 7 August 1932, in MTUCDA, P69/158 (218-222).
[126] For UCD Republican club see report, 27 November 1929, in D/T S 5864 A NAI. Eamon de Valera's son, Vivion, made it clear to the UCD authorities that he did not support the club's protests. Also see CS Andrews, *Man of No Property*, pp. 48-60. For TCD see Bob Clements in MacEoin, *Twilight Years*, pp. 463-470. For St. Patrick's Training College, AC Correspondence Book, 6 February 1934, in Aiken Papers, UCDA, P104/2854 (11).
[127] Notes of 1933 GAC, in MTUCDA, P69/187 (104).

Convention met with hostility as units argued their members could not afford to contribute extra money to the IRA. A Leix officer again stressed that his men were "farmer's sons and casual labourers" who simply could not afford extra contributions.[129] This intensified the reliance of the IRA on funding from supporters in the United States which because of the Great Depression was also greatly restricted.[130] A practical consequence of this for an IRA member was that imprisonment could affect their livelihood. An Offaly IRA member who made his living cutting turf in summer and selling it in winter found himself in dire straits having been jailed for a period over the summer.[131]

By 1932 the "bulk" of the IRA membership was dominated by young men who had "attained manhood" after the Civil War.[132] The appointment of young officers had helped generate enthusiasm and these men were considered the "heart and soul" of the organisation.[133] This occasionally still produced tension as "old Volunteers" resented the newer recruits.[134] Young men living at home could also face parental censure. An IRA member from Lisburn was thrown out by his parents after they learned of his arrest by the RUC at an IRA training camp.[135] More importantly the youth of the IRA's membership increasingly became a weapon used against the IRA by its political enemies. When a Drogheda IRA man facing charges of possessing ammunition refused to recognise the court, a Garda Superintendent pointed out that the defendant was only twelve when the Treaty was signed yet he called himself "a soldier of the IRA."[136] Objecting to the IRA's Boycott British campaign, Cork Labour TD TJ Murphy referred to Tadgh Lynch as the "kind of soldier" produced by

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[128] Twomey to McGarrity, 9 December 1931, in McGarrity Papers, Ms. 17,490 NLI.
[129] Notes of 1934 GAC, MacEntee Papers, UCDA, P67/525.
[130] See Chapter Nine.
[131] 'M' report on Offaly, April 1930, in MTUCDA, P69/151 (101-05).
[132] C/S to Count Plunkett, 19 January 1932, in MTUCDA, P69/52 (242-244). *An t-Óglách,* October 1931, in MTUCDA, P69/263 (9).
[133] Adjt Dingle Batt to A/G, 26 October 1932, in MTUCDA, P69/156 (50).
[134] Tom Barry to Twomey, 13 May 1932, in MTUCDA, P69/52 (63-64).
[135] O/C Ulster No. 1 to C/S, 30 July 1932, in MTUCDA, P69/54 (224-230).
[136] *An Phoblacht,* 12 November 1932.

peacetime.[137] When Fianna Fáil sought to stress its credentials as the bearers of revolutionary legitimacy it increasingly pointed to its leaders' records in the 1916-23 period and contrasted them with those of the IRA's membership. As Seán MacEntee reminded IRA members who were heckling him, he had faced a death sentence when they were "not even in the cradle."[138] In the Free State of that period there were many contenders for the title of true inheritors of the revolutionary flame of 1919-21 and several of them had convincing credentials.[139] However the claims by Fianna Fáil that by 1934 the IRA was not "the Army that fought the Black and Tans" did have an important impact on republican support.[140]

In numerical terms the IRA was consistently strongest in Dublin and Belfast. In contrast Mayo, Clare and Tipperary, very strong areas in 1926 and 1930, had declined by 1932. By 1933 Leitrim and west Cork were areas of substantial IRA strength. Kerry also saw impressive growth after 1932. Belfast also experienced growth between 1932 and 1934. These figures would seem to show some connection between confrontational activity and IRA strength as west Cork, Kerry and Leitrim saw considerable violence between the IRA and the Blueshirts. Dublin as the centre of the IRA's organisation as well as the largest centre of population might be expected to maintain a steady membership, not all of whom of course would necessarily be Dubliners.[141] The IRA's growth in Belfast would seem to be connected an increase in its activities following the Outdoor Relief Strike of 1932, culminating in the Stormont election campaign of November 1933.

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[137] *Cork Examiner*, 20 December 1932.
[138] *Northern Standard*, 19 January 1936.
[139] For example a Clare Blueshirt wanted in connection with the death of James Glynn had lost his father and brother during the War of Independence and another brother in the Civil War. *Clare Champion*, 29 September 1934.
[140] Mick Fitzpatrick at the 1934 GAC, Notes of 1934 GAC, UCDA, P67/525.
[141] See for example the transfer of two men from Laois who had gained employment in the city to the Dublin Brigade. A/G to Adjt Dublin Bdge, 18 June 1932, in MTUCDA, P69/155 (70).

Was there a connection between activity by the IRA during the revolutionary period and residual strength? West Cork saw an exceptional level of violence between 1917 and 1923.[142] However by 1933 the Blueshirts were numerically much stronger in that area than the IRA.[143] Belfast experienced intense if often confused conflict in that period, but the majority of its IRA members had taken the Pro-Treaty side in the Civil War, leaving the Anti-Treatyites to rebuild from a demoralised shell.[144] Leitrim saw comparatively little activity in either the 'Tan War' or the Civil War, yet by 1933 it had one of the IRA's strongest Battalions. This may suggest that people who would not have joined the IRA in 1920 may have been attracted to it by the 1930s.

Was there a connection between IRA strength and more generalised republican support? Certainly the rural areas where at various stages the IRA had sizeable units were also areas of strong support for Fianna Fáil. There was a slight decrease in Fianna Fáil support in Kerry in the 1937 election, which may reflect some republican disillusionment, but it was the Labour party that seems to have gained from this. Republican candidates who challenged Fianna Fáil at bye-elections were comprehensively defeated. Generally the IRA and its periphery were never large enough to have a serious impact on electoral politics.[145]

In Kerry over 67% of the vote went to Fianna Fáil in 1933, making it "the outstanding Republican county" in Ireland according to one local newspaper. There it does seem that there was a direct link between IRA

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[142] 39.1% of the entire violence of that period took place in Cork. Peter Hart, 'The Geography of Revolution in Ireland 1917-1923', in *Past and Present*, No. 155, May 1997, pp. 143-176.

[143] The Blueshirts in Cork had 9,955 members by March 1934. According to Seán Cronin the entire IRA may only have had 8,036 members by October of that year. Mike Cronin, *Blueshirts and Irish Politics*, pp. 115. Seán Cronin, *McGarrity Papers*, pp. 166.

[144] During 1922 1,685 IRA members had left to join the Free State Army. Enda Staunton, *The Nationalists of Northern Ireland, 1918-1973*. (Dublin, 2001). pp. 71. The IRA claimed only 240 members in the city by 1924. See above pp 3.

[145] Clare, Kerry, Mayo and Leitrim-Sligo figured among the highest FF voting constituencies in 1927 and 1933. Michael Gallagher (ed), *Irish Elections 1922-44: Results and Analysis*, (Limerick, 1993). pp. 115 & 176.

support and the regions history during the revolutionary period.[146] One Garda officer believed that because the county had been "ruthlessly treated in the past" the Civil War would remain "a bitter memory to a big section of the youth" and as a result the IRA would receive support. As if to prove his point the Killarney IRA demonstration he was reporting on had among its number the relatives of men killed during the Civil War.[147] This theory was echoed several years later when Irish Army Intelligence examined why the IRA, which had almost vanished elsewhere, was able to maintain an organisation in Kerry. One observer pointed to republican sympathies among the "poorer people" who lived along the seaboard and to an "under-current" of illegality which was said to prevail in Tralee.[148] Another officer believed that small groups of people in Kerry would aid the IRA despite knowing little about their "present day" policies. He believed that a family "tragedy ... in the Tan or Civil war period" was the reason for this residual support.[149] Whatever the reasons for it, the IRA's numerical strength in the Kerry region was something of a mixed blessing for its leadership as its membership there had an unrivalled reputation for indiscipline.[150]

The IRA was never a mass movement in this period. Following the Civil War it declined in strength and was stagnating until 1931. Then reorganisation and the effect of the Great Depression made the IRA a focus for opposition to the Free State. It benefited from the wave of popular republicanism following the coming to power of Fianna Fáil in 1932. By 1934 internal political turmoil about how to relate to the Fianna Fáil government began to divide the organisation. Its increasingly desperate tactics by 1936 had largely marginalised the IRA from broader republicanism. At its high point the IRA had no more than 12,000 members. Its leadership included many talented

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[146] *Kerry Champion*, 4 February 1933.
[147] Chief Superintendent's report, 10 January 1935, in Jus 8/201 NAI.
[148] Military Intelligence report, 31 August 1940, in G2/X/0093 Military Archives, (MA) Cathal Brugha Barracks.
[149] Military Intelligence report, 26 February 1942, in G2/X/0058 MA.

figures from a range of backgrounds. All had some experience of military conflict and imprisonment. Most had travelled abroad. The middle ranking leadership of the IRA still included many veterans of the 1916-23 period in 1930. This was less the case by 1933. Its urban officers were overwhelmingly from working class backgrounds, but its rural officers backgrounds were more diverse. Its membership was largely but not exclusively drawn from the ranks of the working class and rural poor.

[150] See Chapters Two & Four.

Chapter Two

The Day to Day Working of a "Secret Army."

Between 1926 and 1936 the IRA did not engage in any military campaign. In fact the average IRA member's activities were closer to those of a member of a political party than a soldier. It was largely IRA members themselves who pasted up wall posters advertising commemorations or Easter Lily sales.[1] It was also the IRA who painted slogans denouncing government repression or the treatment of imprisoned republicans on walls and roads across Ireland.[2] During election campaigns IRA members canvassed and did election work on behalf of republican candidates.[3] The organisation helped look after the financial needs of families of its jailed members.[4] It occasionally paid for medical care for members who could not afford it themselves.[5] The IRA would even organise visits for members from the country who were hospitalised in Dublin and had no relatives in the city.[6]

Despite these activities the IRA was not a political party or a welfare organisation for republicans. Political instruction for its membership was given by senior officers at parades rather than at political meetings. The IRA regarded itself as an army, dedicated to bringing about an independent Irish republic by

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[1] Ist Batt, Dublin Bdge report, 31 March 1932, in MTUCDA, P69/155 (134). See also arrest by RUC of Seamus McCann, O/C Derry for wall postering in November 1929. D/J report, 18 November 1929, in D/T S 5864 A NAI.

[2] See Garda report from Kilkenny, 20 March 1935, in Jus 8/206 NAI. See A/G to Adjt Dublin Bdge, 9 October 1930 on painting slogans at Croke park and Adjt Dub. Bdge to A/G, 5 August 1930, on painting the windows of Arnotts and McBirney's shops in MTUCDA, P69/153 (161) & (217-219).

[3] See Chapter Six pp. 211.

[4] See C/S to mother of George Gilmore, 14 March 1927 and 9 January 1928 for grants of £20 and £10 respectively. MTUCDA, P69/48 (243) & P69/60 (4). See J. Clarke to A/G, 7 January 1930, for £5 to family of Seamus McCann, MTUCDA, P69/152 (137).

[5] C/S to Seán O'Carroll, 19 September 1927, for grant of £15 towards cost of operation, in MTUCDA, P69/60 (11-17). A/G to Adjt Caherciveen Batt, 27 February 1931, for fare and expenses of member who needed to visit an oculist in Dublin, in MTUCDA, P69/151 (205-207).

[6] A/G to Run Onorach, CRC, 26 March 1930, for instructions to organise visitors to Clare man in hospital in Dublin, in MTUCDA, P69/152 (142).

force of arms.[7] To do this it would have to be at least as well armed as the forces of both states in Ireland. It had to train its membership in the use and care of arms and explosives. It needed to maintain a disciplined cohesive organisation, which could withstand bouts of government repression without fracturing. It also needed to ensure that its members did not engage in unofficial activities, or use their access to arms for criminal purposes. For most of this period the IRA was illegal or semi legal and therefore had to organise much of its activities in secret. It had to ensure its members did not reveal the whereabouts of its meeting places and arms dumps. It had to guard itself from infiltration but also attempt to develop its own intelligence network. The ways in which the IRA tried to carry out these tasks can help us to assess how much of a serious revolutionary threat the organisation posed during this period.

A year after the conclusion of the Civil War, the IRA's Quartermaster General, Andy Cooney, compiled a list of arms available to the organisation.[8] Although Cooney believed the list was not a complete one, it does give some sense of how well equipped the organisation was. What is immediately apparent is that the IRA had more members than it had weapons to arm them with.

Table No. 10

IRA Arms		July 1924	
Service rifles	3,801	Luger	4
Mauser rifles	171	.303 Ammo	140,154
Lewis MG	66	Mauser	610
Thompson MG	46	.45 Auto	16,895
Vickers MG	4	.45	10,386
Maxim MG	6	.38 Auto	1,900
Parabellum MG	2	Parabellum	2,543
Revolvers .45	1,232	"Peter"	1,057
Automatics .45	32	Mills Bombs	256
Revolvers .38	31	"our make"	465
Automatics .38	17	Explosives	3,211lbs
Parabellum	67	Detonators	3,438
"Peter"	43	Fuse	75 yds.

[7] Constitution of Oglaigh Na h-Éireann, March 1932, in MacEntee Papers, UCDA, P67/524 (10-14).

[8] Cooney had been appointed QMG that month. C/S report to Executive, 10 August 1924, in MTUCDA, P69/179 (126-129).

For an estimated 14,000 men the IRA could muster 3,900 rifles, 124 machine guns and 1,400 handguns.[9] This did mean that as the IRA shrunk in size over the next six years it was to become proportionally better armed. However large numbers of these weapons never left their hiding places and the organisation could never claim to be adequately armed. In Armagh during 1929 the IRA's paper strength was 357 men who could claim 117 rifles, 19 revolvers and 2 Thompson guns between them.[10] The results of another arms inspection in 1930 again illustrate how poorly armed the IRA actually was. Even in the areas that seemed relatively well armed such as Tipperary in reality few IRA members had access to the weapons the unit claimed. In the aftermath of the Civil War many arms were abandoned and knowledge of them completely lost to the IRA as was the case in west Limerick. In Sligo during 1930 there were weapons in dumps that had not been touched for almost five years.[11]

Table No. 11 Arms inspection 1930

Area	Rifles	Handguns	Machine-gun
West Limk	--------	----------	2
Limk City	6	----------	-------
West Clare	34	4	-------
East Clare	22	4	1
Kerry	110	10	2
Sth. Tipp	144	44	1
Nth. Tipp	47	11	-------
Cork no. 1	247	28	15
Nth. Cork	40	----------	1
Sligo	73	26	5
Galway C.	--------	6	-------
Connemara	38	4	-------
Clr/morris	4	----------	-------
N. Galway	1	----------	-------
Waterford	17	8	-------
Kilkenny	76	18	2
Totals	859	163	29

[9] Report, July 1924, in MTUCDA, P69/179 (115).
[10] Ulster no. 2 area report, 10 July 1929, in MTUCDA, P69/151 (349). However 11 of the rifles were not under IRA control and 5 were defective.
[11] 'Q' report, July 1930, in MTUCDA, P69/153 (228-234).

Control of its weapons was to remain a problem for the IRA. During 1925 substantial amounts of weapons in Tyrone, including 30 rifles in Omagh, were no longer under IRA control.[12] Following the formation of Fianna Fáil numbers of its adherents seem to have taken IRA weapons with them when they left the organisation.[13] As late as 1932 the IRA believed Fianna Fáil supporters had control of at least 50 rifles in north Cork.[14] For security reasons only a few IRA members could be aware of the location of arms dumps. However this also meant that if an individual emigrated for example, as occurred in Connemara during 1930, or Kilkenny a year later then the location of the local dump was lost.[15] Fear of being arrested with weapons meant that in many areas arms were left unattended in dumps for long periods.[16] The safe keeping of arms in dumps was dependent on great care being taken to ensure the dump was dry, had adequate ventilation and the weapons themselves were stripped, cleaned, and stored in greased cloth. If ammunition was allowed become dirty or explosives become damp then it was no longer safe to use them.[17] The IRA leadership were complaining during 1929 of its members "nervousness" which was leading to weapons becoming useless through neglect.[18]

As well as its own figures we know that the IRA lost substantial amounts of its weaponry due to capture by the police. Between 1923 and 1931, 985 rifles, 1,270 handguns and 9 machine-guns were seized by the Gardai.[19]

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[12] Report, 20 May 1925, in MTUCDA, P69/47 (242-243).
[13] See for example inspection report on west Limerick, 25 November 1930, in MTUCDA, P69/153 (72).
[14] QMG, Report, 10 June 1932, in MTUCDA, P69/155 (154-157).
[15] Adjt Connemara Batt, to A/G, 24 June 1930, in MTUCDA, P69/153 (254). A/G to O/C, North Kilkenny Batt, 6 March 1931, in MTUCDA, P69/153 (2).
[16] Report by 'McAndrews' to A/G, 21 January 1928, on condition of guns in Dundalk, in MTUCDA, P69/149 (62).
[17] *An t-Óglách*, December 1924, in Aiken Papers, UCDA, P104/1277.
[18] A/G to O/C NE Batt Cork, 22 July 1929, in D/T S 5864 A NAI.
[19] Over 114,000 rounds of ammunition had also been captured. 'Return of 'dumped' arms, ammunition and 'war material' discovered and seized by the Police from year 1923 to July 1931, in D/T S 5864 A NAI. See Appendix 2 pp. 351.

While not all of these arms necessarily belonged to the IRA we can be sure most of them did. Two of the organisation's biggest losses came in the Dublin area with the capture of dumps at St. Enda's College in 1926 and at Kilakee in 1931.[20] IRA units usually wanted more arms or ammunition than they had. During 1930 the IRA in Templemore complained that they had no rifles for training, in south Wexford they asked for a "few small guns" as they had almost no arms and the Dundalk unit made "anxious" inquiries for an ammunition drum for their one Thompson gun.[21] There were just 31 rifles and 4 revolvers among 147 IRA members in Offaly.[22]

As well as the shortage of arms and ammunition the IRA's weaponry was made up of a variety of types and calibres, most of which dated back to the 1916-23 period. The Monaghan IRA had among its arms in 1930 a Martini Henry rifle, which had been the British Army's rifle until 1907 and an 'Ulster Volunteer' rifle of unspecified type.[23] The Connemara IRA also had a Martini Henry, and several Mauser and Lee Enfield rifles.[24] The Mauser was of German origin, and numbers of these had reached Ireland pre 1914 for both Nationalist and Unionist use.[25] The great majority of the IRA's rifles seem to have been Lee Enfield Service rifles however. The Lee Enfield had been the standard issue British Army rifle of the First World War and was used by both the Irish National Army, the British Army and Commonwealth forces well into the 1950s.[26] Among the various handguns IRA members had access to were the Webley revolver, the Smith and Wesson revolver, the Colt Automatic and the

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[20] At St. Endas 47 rifles, 4 Thompsons, 1 Lewis & 9 revolvers were captured, along with over 7,000 rds of ammunition. *Irish Independent*, 3 February 1926. At Kilakee the IRA lost 29 rifles, 17 handguns, 1 Lewis gun and 3,000 rds of ammunition. *Notes on Events*, MacEntee Papers, UCDA, P67/534 pp. 6.

[21] Staff Captain "Jones" report on Tipperary, 6 November, Adjt. South Wexford Batt, to A/G, 13 May , and 'M' to A/G, 16 October, 1930 in MTUCDA, P69/153 (104), P69/152 (17) & P69/153 (160).

[22] Report from 'M' April 1930, in MTUCDA, P69/151 (101-105).

[23] Report to A/G, List of arms in units, 1930, in MTUCDA, P69/152 (66).

[24] Adjt, Connemara Batt, 24 June 1930, in MTUCDA, P69/153 (255-256).

[25] The Mauser 98 was the standard rifle of the German military from 1898-1918. Ian Hogg, *Jane's Guns Recognition Guide*, (Glasgow, 2000). pp. 252.

Parabellum and "Peter" automatics.[27] The two most common machine-guns were the Lewis and the Thompson. The Lewis was a light machine gun which had been widely used by Allied forces during the First World War.[28] The Thompson sub machine gun has become one of the most famous and recognisable weapons of all time, although during the 1920s it was associated more with American gangsters than with military use.[29] The IRA also developed its own explosives, of which 'Irish Cheddar' and 'Paxo' were the best known.[30]

Despite the problems outlined above it could be argued that the IRA possessed quite enough weapons to carry out a deadly, if limited armed campaign. Indeed given the use these weapons were put to during this period, largely assassinations, occasional destruction of war memorials and shooting up of houses and offices the organisation had more than enough equipment for its task. However the IRA did not envisage engaging in a guerrilla war against either government in Ireland. The organisation saw itself leading an insurrection or coup d'tat and then waging a revolutionary war against Britain. As early as

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[26] The Lee Enfield Mk III was the model most common in that period. It is regarded as the finest rifle of its type. About 3 million were produced between 1907 and 1943. Hogg, *Janes*, pp. 269.

[27] Reports on training with these weapons from Dublin Bdge, 30 April 1932, in MTUCDA, P69/155 (116) and Belfast Batt, 30 September 1932, in MTUCDA, P69/156 (110-122). The British Webley .45, and American Colt .45 and Smith and Wesson .38 & .45 had been widely used in World War One. Automatic pistols were rarer with the German Parabellum and the "Peter the Painter" a Mauser pistol, available in smaller quantities. Hogg, *Janes*, pp. 137, 145, 162, 48 & 45. Also *An t-Óglách*, April and June 1925, in MTUCDA, P69/44 (360) and Aiken Papers, UCDA, P104/1282.

[28] The Lewis, a light machine gun with a 47 rd drum, could be carried and used by one soldier. 40,000 had been used by British, Commonwealth, Italian and French armies during World War One. John Ellis, *The Social History of the Machine Gun,* (London, 1993) pp. 74-76.

[29] Ellis, *Social History*, pp. 149-164. The use of the 'Tommy Gun' in Ireland has spawned its own history industry. See Bowyer Bell, 'The Thompson Sub Machine Gun in Ireland, 1921,' in *The Irish Sword*, No. 31, (1967). P. Hart, 'The Thompson Sub Machine Gun in Ireland Revisited' in *The Irish Sword*, No. 77, (1995) pp. 160-170 & P. Jung, 'The Thompson Sub Machine Gun During and After the Anglo - Irish War - The New Evidence' in *The Irish Sword*, No. 84, (1998). pp. 190-218.

[30] 'Irish Cheddar' contained Potassium Chlorate, Di-nitro-toluene and castor oil. Once this was mixed it could be used as a "heaving explosive" against buildings for example. Jim O'Donovan, IRA Director of Chemicals in 1921, is credited with inventing this explosive. O' Farrell, *Who's Who*, pp. 79. 'Paxo' contained a mixture of Potassium Chorate and Paraffin wax which could be mixed when heated in a pan. *An t-Óglách*, April 1925, in MTUCDA, P69/44 (360).

1925 it was recognised that attempts to overthrow the government in the Free State by "obstructive or guerrilla tactics" would end disastrously. Instead a republican government would only come to power on the back of a coup d'tat.[31] Defeat in the Civil War was blamed on "hit and run" tactics and exaggerated sense of regional identity cultivated by the IRA during the 1919-21 period.[32] As the left within the IRA began to gain influence the language of "mass revolutionary" action became current. The IRA was to be the "Army of the revolution" containing the leadership of a mass popular movement.[33] It was this type of thinking that informed IRA decisions in 1932 and 1933 to concentrate their efforts on "building up the military movement."[34] Therefore IRA training was theoretically geared toward producing a regular soldier, not a guerrilla.

There were a number of occasions between 1926 and 1936 when the IRA leadership felt a "military situation" could emerge to their benefit. Prior to the May 1927 general election the IRA felt that if a republican coalition won a majority then the Free State Army could be demobilised and replaced by the IRA. Then a conflict might ensue with the British government over the Treaty.[35] During 1931 Twomey speculated that if the Cumann na nGaedheal government lost the forthcoming general election they might refuse to give up office. For the IRA that would have been "the very best thing to happen." It would expose the Free State as the dictatorship republicans already considered it to be and create division among the National Army, possibly opening the way for an IRA led seizure of power.[36] After 1932 the growing tension between the Irish and British governments which produced the Economic War was taken as evidence that an Anglo-Irish military conflict was in the offing.[37] By late 1932 the IRA

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[31] Motion from South Dublin Batt, at 1925 GAC, in MTUCDA, P69/179 (189).
[32] 'Lessons from 1922' in *An Phoblacht*, 12 August 1927.
[33] *An t-Óglách*, March 1931, in MTUCDA, P69/263 (7).
[34] Twomey to Neenan, 28 March 1933, in MTUCDA, P69/185 (21-25).
[35] IRA Officer's meeting, 9 April 1927, in MTUCDA, P69/48 (152-162).
[36] Twomey to McGarrity, 23 June 1931, in McGarrity Papers, Ms. 17,490 NLI.
[37] See Chapter Seven pp. 219.

was speculating that the Army Comrades Association might attempt a coup, which if met by an IRA counter attack would possibly unleash revolution.[38] By 1933 Twomey was still talking in terms of seizing power in Ireland "within the next twelve months."[39] In 1934 the IRA were still planning to intensify training so its men could "take the field within a year."[40]

To carry out such a revolution the IRA of course would need to be much better armed, equipped, and trained than it was.[41] Therefore much time and energy was spent by the IRA attempting to rectify these problems. One obvious way the IRA could arm itself was to steal weapons. Large numbers of people owned shotguns for example, and nearly 3,000 of these weapons were recovered from IRA dumps by the Gardai between 1923 and 1931.[42] However shotguns were not a match for rifles or machine guns and ownership of weapons like these was much more restricted. In Belfast, where after the turbulent events of the early 1920s there seemed to have been many arms in private hands, the IRA engaged in a number of arms raids.[43] There were dangers in attempting to steal from civilians, as the Mayo IRA discovered when a raid for arms resulted in the shooting of one of their members during 1932.[44] While elements within the IRA pushed for a mass seizure of arms from civilians during 1933 the organisation's Convention voted against this. It was argued that stealing shotguns would unnecessarily alienate farmers and that the IRA should recognise the right of private individuals to bear arms.[45] The tactic was not abandoned however, as the theft of explosives from the magazine at

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[38] AC to Secretary, Clan, 8 November 1932, in MTUCDA, P69/185 (153).
[39] Notes of 1933 GAC, in MTUCDA, P69/187 (95).
[40] Clan to AC, 8 October 1934, in McGarrity Papers, Ms. 17,539 NLI.
[41] In 1925 the Irish Army had access to 42,500 rifles, although only 8,000 were serviceable, and 1,002 machine guns of various types. Duggan, *History of the Irish Army*, pp. 163. The IRA of course had no mortars or artillery.
[42] 'Return of "dumped arms"', July 1931, in D/T S 5864 A NAI.
[43] See Adjt Ulster No. 1 to A/G, 6 April 1930, in MTUCDA, P69/151 (43) & O/C Ulster No. 1, 16 March 1931, in MTUCDA, P69/151 (166-167).
[44] The raid was on the home of an ex-National Army officer, Patrick Garvin, in Castlebar. The raid itself is examined below. *Notes on Events*, MacEntee Papers, UCDA, P67/534, pp. 10.

Ballymullen Barracks, Tralee, later that year showed.[46] As late as 1936 Cork IRA members were arrested for stealing arms from a dump controlled by Fianna Fáil TD Martin Corry.[47] The organisation could and did order former members to give up weapons in their possession, but it is hard to judge how successful this was.[48]

In Co. Tipperary during July 1932 a number of ex-IRA men formed a 'Land Settlement Committee' which became embroiled in a dispute with a local farmer. Using weapons which they had kept since their IRA days these men fired on the farmer's house and killed one of his livestock.[49] IRA members in Clare had a reputation inside the organisation for the use of arms in private disputes.[50] During October 1932 two ex-IRA members in the north of the county effectively "terrorised" their former comrades with a series of threats and violence which included an attack on local IRA leader Martin Whyte. The dispute was caused by the refusal of the men to hand over their weapons to the IRA. IRA members from west Clare were brought in to threaten the former members with retaliation if they persisted.[51]

The main way of gaining modern equipment was to purchase it abroad and smuggle it to Ireland. During the 1920s the IRA still had contacts in Europe from the revolutionary period. During 1925 an officer reported on the widespread opportunities for arms buying in Germany and Belgium. There was already 50,000 rounds of ammunition in Hamburg awaiting transport to Ireland and rifles, handguns and even light artillery were available for dealers there at reasonable prices. There was also a smuggling line controlled by the IRA

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[45] Notes of 1933 GAC, in MTUCDA, P69/187 (90). The Kildare IRA were ordered to return a shotgun they had stolen to its owner. A/G to Adjt Kildare Batt, 28 November 1932, in MTUCDA, P69/158 (10).

[46] *Notes on Events*, MacEntee Papers, UCDA, P67/534, pp. 13.

[47] The IRA men involved had also been involved in several cases of stealing arms from private individuals. *Notes on Events*, MacEntee Papers, UCDA, P67/534, pp. 48-49.

[48] QMG to O/C Galway City Coy, 2 July 1932, in MTUCDA, P69/155 (91).

[49] O/C Clonmel Batt to A/G, 29 July 1932, in MTUCDA, P69/158 (242).

[50] C/S to A/G, QMG & D/I, 29 May 1931, in MTUCDA, P69/51 (9-11).

[51] Reports by O/C North Clare & West Clare, 4 & 9 November 1932, in MTUCDA, P69/116 (1-20).

between Antwerp and Southampton.[52] One difficulty however was that the German dealers were untrustworthy, and it was suspected that if given the "slightest opportunity" for swindling the IRA they "would probably avail of it." Another firm had already apparently defrauded Robert Briscoe and Charles McGuinness on a earlier arms buying mission. Because the League of Nations had forbidden the export of arms from Germany to Ireland their transport would have to be consigned to "some South American Republic" which offered more problems with custom officials and consuls.[53] In contrast the Belgian suppliers were prepared to ship from Antwerp to the 3 mile limit off the Irish coast and offered machine guns and rifles at cheaper rates than the Germans. They were also willing to manufacture ammunition.[54] However there had been some weapons ordered but not collected by the IRA at an earlier stage so the Belgians were demanding assurances about any future deal.[55] The main difficulty for the IRA however was that it did not have the funds to pay for any large quantity of arms.

Other options open to the IRA in this period were link ups with Egyptian and Indian revolutionaries in Britain and the prospect of shipping small quantities of arms through London. However Jim Killeen was arrested in London during 1925 with a consignment of revolvers and this seems to have ended this route.[56] The IRA in Britain also opened up a connection with the Soviet Union in this period, and were prepared to trade information in return for military favours. However the IRA stressed they wanted to be given

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[52] Comdt Officer, Finance and Accounts to C/S & QMG, Report on Possibilities of Immediate Purchases in Germany and Belgium, 16 April 1925, in MTUCDA, P69/210 (13-17). Lee Enfields with 1,000 rds of ammunition were selling for £6 each. Mauser rifles for £4, Parabellums for £1-15/ and Spanish revolvers for 18/.

[53] It would mean bribing these officials, which one of the German arms dealers was in a position to do. Briscoe and McGuinness had worked for IRA HQ purchases during the 1919-23 period.

[54] Hotchkiss machine guns at £20 each, 400 Lee Enfields at £2 each and Smith and Wesson .45 revolvers at 13/ each.

[55] The late Director of Purchases had also left a young lady stranded in Antwerp with no fare back to Ireland after his last trip there.

[56] AC Minutes, 26 May 1926, in MTUCDA, P69/69 (2). Killeen served only six months for that offence. *Notes on Certain Individuals,* MacEntee Papers, UCDA, P67/550 pp. 155.

"absolute equality" with the representatives of the Russian government rather than be considered agents of theirs.[57] By the late 1920s the IRA was looking towards the United states as the main source of military technology. In 1932 Seán Russell visited the US and Twomey expressed the hope that as well as political work that Russell would do "something which we will all be pleased with - in his own particular line!"[58] By 1933 the Clan na Gael was holding nearly 490 Thompson guns and 100,000 rounds of ammunition for the IRA. However getting this material to Ireland was posing a major problem. There were routes used by the IRA for smuggling through Galway, Cobh and London.[59] The organisation also employed the services of sympathetic fishermen off the west coast of Ireland and Irish staff on board cruise liners. It also had contacts at the B and I depot at North Wall who could "get a packet through without being examined by Customs."[60] During 1932 the IRA also utilised returning emigrants from the US to smuggle in weapons, although it claimed not all these were making their way to its organisation.[61] However these were only capable of bringing in relatively small amounts of arms. In late 1932 the IRA were stressing that if the ACA did mount a coup the IRA did not have to ammunition to fight for more than a day.[62] The Clan on the other were suggesting selling half the Thompson guns in order to procure money for more ammunition, a suggestion the IRA reacted angrily to.[63] Many of the Thompsons did eventually reach Ireland during the 1930s and several theories exist as to how this occured. Certainly 40 Thompsons were delivered to the IRA in March

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[57] Deciphered document found in Killakee Dump, in FitzGerald Papers, UCDA, P80/869 (1).
[58] Twomey to Neenan, 8 November 1932, in MTUCDA, P69/185 (165-167).
[59] AC to Secretary Clan, 27 March 1933, in MTUCDA, P69/185 (32). These Thompsons were the remains of a shipment of 495 captured by the US authorities at Hoboken, New Jersey during 1921. They were released to the Clan's Attorney, JT Ryan in 1925. Hart, '*The Thompson Submachine Gun Revisited*' pp. 160-170.
[60] Not all the sympathisers were necessarily Irish, indeed one was a Spanish fisherman who regularly visited Valentia, Co. Kerry. Dublin Bdge Intelligence report, 20 August 1932, in MTUCDA, P69/199 (94) & A/G to QMG, 18 June 1932, in MTUCDA, P69/155 (153).
[61] Chairman AC to Secretary Clan, 15 September 1932, in MTUCDA, P69/185 (184).
[62] AC to Secretary Clan, 8 November 1932, in MTUCDA, P69/185 (153).
[63] Clan to Chairman AC, 24 March 1933 and AC to Secretary, Clan, 24 April 1933, in MTUCDA, P69/185 (45-46).

1937.[64] The Special Branch believed that Seán Russell organised the smuggling of 400 Thompson Guns through Cork in late 1936.[65] Irish Military Intelligence however thought that several hundred machine guns were brought through Cobh when the Kerry football team returned from a tour of the US in 1938.[66] There is however no evidence of smuggling during the early 1930s on the scale suggested in some contemporary reports.[67] Twomey believed that the Gardai, especially Eoin O'Duffy, and the British Press, were exaggerating tales of gun running to undermine the Fianna Fáil government.[68] The IRA's smuggling operations were small scale and never likely to bring the organisation the amount of arms it desired.

The IRA regarded the US as important for its military plans in a number of other ways however. It believed the US was the most militarily developed nation at the time and that the IRA's allies in America should make use of this. IRA men who emigrated were urged to join the US Army, Air Force or Reserve Forces in order to receive military training.[69] Manuals and publications issued by the US armed forces were supposed to be scrutinised for information that would be useful to the IRA. Information needed to be gathered about the latest methods of warfare, including developments in wireless and chemical technology. Of particular interest to the IRA were developments in armoured, mechanised, and aerial warfare and especially counter tactics to the use of these. The organisation wished to discover the best methods of securing a coastline against attack, "assuming little artillery and heavy guns are at the disposal of

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[64] Receipt in McGarrity Papers, Ms. 17,544 (2) NLI.
[65] *Notes on Individuals*, in MacEntee Papers, UCDA, P67/550 pp. 162.
[66] G2, Southern Command, 30 June 1941, in G2/X/0093 MA.
[67] During 1931 Gardai had reported that arms were being landed in Ballybunion, Co. Kerry, 31 June 1931, in D/T S 5864 A NAI. See *Evening Standard*, 19 October 1932, for reports of "Gun running by night." See also O'Halpin, *Defending Ireland*, pp. 108.
[68] Twomey to Neenan, 15 September 1932, in MTUCDA, P69/185 (195-199). Twomey felt that O'Duffy had "fooled" the last government and was now attempting to do the same to FF. Twomey remarked that if O'Duffy really had the information he suggested he had, only Twomey himself could have given it to him.
[69] AC to An Timthire, Clan, 25 February 1930, in McGarrity Papers, Ms. 17,535 (2) NLI & Memorandum to Members of AC on USA Organisation, 11 February 1926, in MTUCDA, P69/181 (62-64).

the defenders." The IRA were unhappy that the Clan seemed to be ignoring these developments and that IRA members were not taking an interest in improving their military skills. One exception was the training of five IRA men as pilots at Curtis Air School in Chicago.[70] Russell visited the air school and was very happy with the progress of the IRA fliers during 1932. While the training was proving costly, Russell stressed that if the IRA "ever go into active service we will need such men."[71] The IRA's interest in air and coastal defence point to its belief that after a successful revolution it would be engaged in defending Ireland against an external enemy. Despite the potential republican air force however it was to be largely disappointed in its hope that its US supporters would prove to be a source of military knowledge.

While procuring arms was one problem, the training of IRA members in their use presented other difficulties. In 1930 Russell complained about the limited number of Training Officers the IRA possessed.[72] A small number of officers, among them Donegal's Seán McCool were sent to different areas for weeks at a time in order to help train the local IRA.[73] When the IRA began recruiting heavily this problem became even more apparent.[74] During 1933 the IRA began to send instructors from Dublin, who were conversant in drilling and arms training to the countryside at weekends.[75] Among these was Bob Bradshaw, a young Belfast man on the run following the murder of an RUC officer in Belfast.[76] Another major difficulty was that the IRA could only carry out weapons training in secret. While lectures on arms and some instruction

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[70] Neenan to M. Hayes, 10 July 1930, in McGarrity Papers, Ms. 17,467 (50 & (8) NLI.
[71] 'Q' to C/S, 4 October 1932, in MTUCDA, P69/185 (173-175). The flying lessons cost $8 a hour, and each pilot would need 10 hours flying time before they were allowed a solo flight. Pete Kearney, the Clan's treasurer estimated the flight training had cost the Clan $400 in May 1932. Kearney to Chairman AC, 31 May 1932, in MTUCDA, P69/185 (291).
[72] 'Q' to C/S, 20 August 1930, in MTUCDA, P69/153 (211).
[73] McCool used the code name 'McAuley', C/S to O/C Tirconaill No. 1, 16 March 1933, in MTUCDA, P69/53 (248).
[74] 'Q' to C/S, 10 January 1933, in Aiken Papers, UCDA, P104/2835 (1-2).
[75] D/T to C/S, 18 May 1933, in MTUCDA, P69/53 (9-10).
[76] Bob Bradshaw Interview, courtesy of Eunan O'Halpin. Bradshaw and Seamus Mallin would leave Dublin on Saturdays and undertake training in a rural area on Sunday mornings.

could be given indoors, most weapons training had to take place outside.[77] Secure and secluded locations had to found by the IRA and scouts posted to warn of approaching strangers. The Dublin IRA for example carried out training at the Pine Forest, near Glencullen in the Dublin mountains, and explosive training at quarries in Crumlin and Rathfarnam.[78] Even then there was no guarantee of avoiding attention from the police as mass arrests at Carnlough outside Belfast in 1932 and Giles Quay outside Dundalk in 1935 showed.[79] Less dramatically bad weather could force the cancellation of training classes, as it did in Kerry during 1930.[80] The risk involved in being caught could cause fainthearted IRA officers to 'forget' to bring rifles to a training camp, as occurred in Leix.[81] Inattentive scouts who allowed local people to gather and become "interested onlookers" at a training camp in Westmeath forced its abandonment.[82] For theoretical knowledge of arms the IRA largely relied on British Army manuals, much of them collected by Russell himself.[83]

Even if training went ahead then the results were often very mixed. There was only a limited time period available to IRA members and the amount of time devoted to actually firing weapons was a fraction of this. Participants in a Dundalk Officer's Training Camp (OTC) were given only a half an hour to practise shooting after a seven hour training session. Even then most only got to fire one shot from a rifle.[84] This was not unusual. A major OTC was planned for west Cork during May 1933. Participants were guaranteed just one

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[77] Premises controlled by the republican movement such as Kevin Barry Hall in Parnell Square or Hardwicke Hall in Hardwicke Street, Dublin city and the McCurtain Hall in Cork's Shandon Street could be utilised for indoor training. MacEoin, *Twilight Years*, pp. 418-420.
[78] Garda reports, 30 May & 23 August 1933 and 11 February 1934, in Jus 8/713 NAI.
[79] Belfast Batt report, July 1932, in MTUCDA, P69/158 (228-233) and *Irish News*, 20 July 1932. *Notes on Events*, in MacEntee Papers, UCDA, P67/534 pp. 44.
[80] 'M' to A/G, 20 October 1930, in MTUCDA, P69/153 (159). See also report on north Cork Batt, 18 September 1930, in MTUCDA, P69/153 (200).
[81] Staff Captain 'W' to A/G, 29 September 1930, in MTUCDA, P69/153 (177).
[82] 'M' to A/G, August 1930, in MTUCDA, P69/153 (212-215). This camp was made up of men from Athlone, Mullingar and north Meath.
[83] 'Q' to C/S, 20 August 1930, in MTUCDA, P69/153 (211). A number of these manuals were captured at an IRA camp in Co. Dublin during 1933. They included 'Manual of Infantry Training, 1911' and 'Musketry Regulations Part 1, 1900.' Garda report, 27 August 1933, in Jus 8/713 NAI.
[84] 'M" to A/G, 29 August 1930, in MTUCDA, P69/153 (208-209).

shot with the rifle.[85] Similarly in Caherciveen during 1934 the standard rifle training involved firing just two shots a month.[86] At the Dundalk camp each man was also given an opportunity to fire a burst from a Thompson gun, but neither this nor a single shot from a rifle would be enough to gain proficiency. Aside from target practice, mastering the Lee Enfield rifle would require hours spent learning to judge distance, and take account of wind and cover. Not surprisingly it was difficult to train men in these skills in a limited period of time. While rural IRA men often had a better sense of the use of cover and skills of observation than those from urban backgrounds this was not always the case.[87] One instructor found it surprising that "country - bred" officers found it impossible to locate men placed in "rather ordinary cover."[88] IRA officers reports point to great variations in the level of military expertise among their rank and file. One officer judged the Midland Battalion as "hopeless" with military knowledge and arms training "non existent" in its ranks.[89] In west Clare however a visiting officer was pleased with the proficiency displayed by members in musketry.[90] The presence in that case of a "capable instructor" or a man with military experience made a major difference.[91] Most major training sessions had to take place on weekends when IRA members did not have work commitments as in Dublin during 1930, when members left the city for training on Saturday night and Sunday mornings.[92] For rural units however this could interfere with farm work as in Leix, where numbers of men decided to remain

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[85] O/C west Cork Batt to C/S, 18 May 1933, in MTUCDA, P69/53 (7).

[86] Acting T/O to D/T GHQ, 29 October 1934, in Jus 8/319 NAI. This is confirmed by veterans of the period. Neil Gillespie of Derry claimed his unit had "almost no armament" and only occasionally trained with it. MacEoin, *Survivors*, pp. 165. George Harrison of Mayo remembered being allowed only two rifle shots at training. Jack Holland, *The American Connection*, (Dublin, 1989) pp. 67-69.

[87] See instructions on rifle training in *An t-Óglách*, October 1931, in MTUCDA, P69/263 (9).

[88] Report on OTC, Westmeath Batt, August 1930, in MTUCDA, P69/153 (212-215).

[89] Staff Captain 'W' to A/G, 11 October 1930, in MTUCDA, P69/153 (148-149).

[90] Staff Captain 'McAuley' to A/G, 25 November 1930, in MTUCDA, P69/153 (63-67).

[91] As in Leitrim during 1932 where an ex-British soldier was helping train the local IRA. Adjt Leitrim to A/G, 6 October 1932, in MTUCDA, P69/156 (62-65). In 1939-40 International Brigade veterans Michael O'Riordan and Jim Regan gave instruction to Cork IRA men. Eamon Corcoran to author, 14 April 2000.

"working at the corn" while the weather was fine rather than attend a camp.[93] Even when a training session was successfully run, Russell noticed how men unused to military training tired after about five hours and were unable for "further exertion."[94] All the evidence points towards the IRA having great difficulties in training its membership in the use of arms.

The majority of the IRA's training was not in the use of weapons however. Most IRA parades and training camps involved hours of drilling. While this was partly so the IRA would look impressive in its public appearances at parades and commemorations there was a more important reason. As Jim Killeen explained it was "only on the parade ground that a sense of discipline and obedience can be instilled."[95] Drilling is how recruits to regular armies learn quick reactions to verbal commands. The IRA leadership knew many of its members felt parades were "irksome" and that repetition jarred on them. However they stressed that "constant training and parading and repetition" was absolutely vital.[96] The IRA believed a man who would not parade regularly would not be prepared to fight when necessary.[97] The weekly parade was the centre of the IRA man's activity. It was at the weekly parade that IRA members received political instruction and the leadership imparted their analysis to the membership.[98] It was at parades too, that recruits were sworn into the IRA in the presence of their peers.[99] Non attendance at parades was a cause for dismissal from the IRA and many IRA members were expelled from the

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[92] Lectures were held on the Saturday night and firing practice on Sunday mornings. Adjt Dub Bdge to A/G, 7 October 1930, in P69/153 (162).

[93] Leix report, 29 September 1930, in MTUCDA, P69/153 (177).

[94] 'Q' to A/G, 27 April 1931, in MTUCDA, P69/151 (33-34). The IRA complained too of members turning up for training in "light shoes and their best clothes" and without bringing "rations." *An t-Óglách*, October 1931, in MTUCDA, P69/263 (9).

[95] A/G to Ajdt, Ulster No. 1, 17 April 1931, in MTUCDA, P69/151 (68).

[96] *An t-Óglách*, July 1931, in Jus 8/681 NAI.

[97] A/G to Adjt Connemara Batt, 3 July 1930, in MTUCDA, P69/153 (253).

[98] See Garda report, 10 September 1933, on IRA parade at Tullyvin, Co. Cavan, in Jus 8/725 NAI. Also Dublin Bdge reports, March 1932, in MTUCDA, P69/155 (130-137) and Twomey at the 1933 GAC, MTUCDA, P69/187 (95).

[99] Prospective recruits were invited to a meeting and had the 'Aims and Objects' of the IRA explained to them. They were then sworn in front of their unit, "drawn up and standing to attention." *An t-Óglách*, July 1931, in Jus 8/681 NAI. Also O/C South Dublin Batt to A/G, 25 September 1932, in MTUCDA, P69/156 (105-106).

organisation for that reason. Whether or not an individual was prepared to give up their spare time to drill and be ordered about by another civilian was obviously a mark of their commitment to the IRA.[100] However given the nature of the IRA's membership there was rarely full attendance at its parades.[101] Members with valid reasons for non attendance would be excused but this could be taken too far, as in Dundalk in December 1930 when "owing to the Christmas rush" parades were sparsely attended.[102] If parade strength was an indication of a healthy state of organisation then this confirms that large numbers of IRA units were in a poor state during 1930.[103] Most IRA parades were taken up with forming fours, squad and section drill, and practice at extended order drill and section formations rather than weapons training.[104] Weapons were only carried when parades were held in secluded area.[105] However the IRA also realised that lectures on weapons and the promise of training with them were necessary to maintain member's interest in parading.[106] It was noted that men would not "cheerfully parade for squad drill" but would turn up when firing practice was promised.[107]

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[100] See A/G to Adjt South Carlow, 20 May 1932, in MTUCDA, P69/157 (13), Ulster No. 1 report, 31 October 1932, in MTUCDA, P69/156 (26-36) and Adjt Ulster No. 1 to A/G, 6 April 1930, in MTUCDA, P69/151 (41) for report of 20 dismissals for non attendance.

[101] In South Galway during April 1930 32 out of a possible 58 was the parade strength. Report in MTUCDA, P69/151 (36-37). In Dublin out of a potential 198 members parading, 57 were excused and 40 absent from parades during June 1930. Dublin report, June 1930, in MTUCDA, P69/153 (224-225).

[102] Adjt Drogheda to A/G, 29 December 1930, in MTUCDA, P69/153 (35-36).

[103] Outside of Belfast most of the northern IRA was judged "poor" with some units "hopeless." 'JJ' reports, 29 July 1930, in MTUCDA, P69/153 (235-240). Many units in both Galway and Mayo were "absolutely untrained" and some never paraded. Report, 16 July 1930, in MTUCDA, P69/153 (246-250). A sarcastic account of an IRA parade of the period is given in S. Edwards, *The Gun, the Law and the Irish People*, (Tralee, 1971) pp. 143-145.

[104] See Garda report, 4 June 1933, on drilling at Elphin, Co. Roscommon, in Jus 8/715 NAI. Also Belfast Batt report, July 1932, in MTUCDA, P69/158 (228-233) and Westmeath Batt OTC, August 1930, in MTUCDA, P69/153 (212-215).

[105] See Donegal Garda reports, 31 August 1933 on unarmed IRA parade at Convoy, and 30 November 1933 on smaller armed parade at Annagry, Thor. In Jus 8/723 NAI.

[106] Adjt Tralee Batt to A/G, 27 April 1931, in MTUCDA, P69/151 (13-14). Also 'McAuley' to A/G, on parades in Limerick, 25 November 1930, in MTUCDA, P69/153 (70).

[107] 'M' to 'Mr. B', 2 March 1930, in MTUCDA, P69/151 (191-192).

During 1932 the IRA decided to take advantage of the changed political circumstances to embark on intensified training.[108] The Army Council intended to organise week long training camps in various locations in the Free State. However only one went ahead, at Donamon castle in Co. Roscommon, where IRA officers from the north west gathered in August 1932.[109] From the course of activities held there we gain a sense of how the IRA would have liked to organise its training. From 6am every day IRA members were drilled, given lectures on arms and equipment and engaged in field exercises. In the evening they had an hour and half of football before "lights out" at 9pm.[110] The weeks activities were overseen by the IRA's Director of Training, Mick Price.[111] While those who attended were said to have benefited greatly from the experience the political reaction to the event meant the IRA were wary of organising similar events elsewhere.[112] The IRA leadership also complained however that the reaction to its plans for training camps had been very unenthusiastic within the IRA itself.[113] While a section of the IRA was conversant with arms and their use the majority of the membership had not enough opportunities to become proficient.

Armies by their very nature are not democratic institutions. They demand obedience to a chain of command and have the power to inflict punishments on members who disobey orders. However the IRA recruited on the basis that it was a revolutionary organisation, and it encouraged a certain level of political discussion in its ranks. Delegates to its Conventions were elected but this also meant that political disagreements could lead to splits within its ranks. It claimed

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[108] A/G to Commander of Each Independent Unit, 18 February 1933, in MTUCDA, P69/187 (1-3).

[109] The castle was unoccupied but had an English owner who had not visited it for 11 years. Nearly 40 officers from Roscommon, Leitrim, Mayo, Westmeath, Sligo and north Galway took part in the camp. Details in MTUCDA, P69/54 (150-155).

[110] In MTUCDA, P69/54 (156-158). See Appendix 3 pp. 352-354.

[111] Garda report, 21 August 1932, in D/T S 6328 NAI.

[112] 'Q' to C/S, 10 January 1932 (sic), in Aiken Papers, UCDA, P104/2835 (1-2) *Irish Times*, 22 August 1932. C/S to O/C Cork No. 1 Bdge, 10 September 1932, in MTUCDA, P69/155 (39). The IRA feared a "pitched battle" if the Gardai had attempted to retake the castle from them.

to depend on a "spirit" that members' duties were "voluntary and for Ireland."[114] Since the organisation was likely to attract those who were rebellious it faced a problem with how to maintain discipline. Its members had to accept orders which had no formal basis in Irish society. On paper the organisation laid down rigorous strictures which prevented its members recognising courts of law and answering police questions. Did the IRA's adherence to a formal military structure mask a more anarchic reality?

The best known of the IRA's rules and regulations was General Order No. 24 which forbid members from recognising courts in either the Free State or Northern Ireland. It also forbid the signing of statements, of undertakings of good behaviour and essentially any co-operation with the authorities. Permission to employ legal defence was only given in "very special" cases.[115] Members were also forbidden from having "voluntary communication" with the Police.[116] The reality was that these rules were broken on numerous occasions. In 1929 three Dundalk IRA men were dismissed for recognising the courts and employing legal defence.[117] A young IRA member in Dublin recognised the court and admitted involvement in an assault on a Guard during 1930.[118] Indeed Garda Commissioner Eoin O'Duffy was boasting of having at least 30 undertakings signed by IRA men in the Dublin area that year.[119] At a parade in north Kerry during 1930 the IRA's inspecting officer was outraged to discover that his visit was common knowledge among the local community. This meant that large numbers of people turned up to watch the parade, as did a number of Gardai and detectives. The local IRA commander then arrived, quite clearly

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[113] A/G to Commanders, 18 February 1933, in MTUCDA, P69/187 (1-3).
[114] Notes by Frank Aiken, undated, in MTUCDA, P69/144 (96-97).
[115] Restatement of General Order No. 24, 12 January 1932, in D/T S 5864 C NAI. An exception was where the death penalty was a possibility. See Appendix 4.
[116] C/S to O/C Dublin Bdge, 1 November 1927, in MTUCDA, P69/50 (13).
[117] A/G to O/C Dundalk, 2 December 1929, in MTUCDA, P69/151 (296-290).
[118] Garda report, 8 November 1930, in FitzGerald Papers, UCDA, P80/851 (24).
[119] O'Duffy to Members of the Executive Council, 27 July 1931, in FitzGerald Papers, UCDA, P80/856 (6).

drunk, and agreed to accompany the Gardai to a nearby pub![120] In 1931 a Battalion Adjutant was court-martialled in Leitrim for losing IRA weapons, recognising the court and giving an undertaking to the Gardai.[121] During 1932 a section leader in the IRA in Dungannon was dismissed for recognising the court after being arrested for possession of *An Phoblacht.*[122] During the same month a Dundalk man pleaded guilty to possessing ammunition and agreed to co-operate with Gardai.[123] IRA men questioned about slogan painting in Co. Roscommon willingly gave both their own names and that of their commanding officer to the Gardai.[124] In a highly embarrassing case for the IRA its Belfast O/C and a former election candidate both signed undertakings to discontinue political activity in early 1934.[125] At that year's Convention Moss Twomey described how "frightful humiliation" had been caused to the organisation by the numbers of men giving information when questioned.[126] Later that year Donal O'Donoghue complained that the "usual breaking down ... under interrogation" of IRA prisoners was occurring in Kerry.[127]

Over a ten year period these could be judged relatively isolated incidents. Indeed they were due to a variety of different factors. In a number of cases family pressure influenced men to recognise courts. The mother of the young IRA member on trial for assaulting a Garda accused Seán MacBride of "sheltering behind foolish young men" like her son and convinced him to participate in the trial.[128] The Dundalk man caught with ammunition initially refused to recognise the court, until his mother's "tears and entreaties" induced

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[120] Report on Causeway parade, 'JJ' to A/G, 18 January 1931, in MTUCDA, P69/153 (22-23).
[121] A/G to O/C Carrick on Shannon Batt, 24 February 1931, in MTUCDA, P69/151 (151).
[122] A/G to Adjt, Ulster No. 4, 6 December 1932, in MTUCDA, P69/158 (5).
[123] Adjt Dundalk to A/G, 19 November 1932, in MTUCDA, P69/158 (16-20).
[124] Garda report, 30 September 1933, in Jus 8/715 NAI.
[125] *An Phoblacht*, 3 February 1934 & *Northern Whig*, 23 December 1933.
[126] Notes of 1934 GAC, in MacEntee Papers, UCDA, P67/525.
[127] A/G to O/C Listowel Batt, 17 December 1934, in Jus 8/319 NAI. According to the Gardai, Twomey had lectured the IRA in Tralee on their record of indiscipline earlier that year. *Notes on Events*, MacEntee Papers, UCDA, P67/534 pp. 20.
[128] To the evident delight of the Gardai who believed it would effect IRA morale. Report, 8 November 1930, P80/851 (24).

him to do so.[129] The Dungannon IRA member was the son of a hotel owner and the IRA believed his social background convinced him he was untouchable. The shock of facing a prison sentence convinced him otherwise.[130] The three Dundalk men were likewise "young and inexperienced" and panicked when confronted with possible imprisonment.[131] The IRA was having difficulty getting what it described as "undisciplined ruffians" in its Kerry units to obey any of its directives by 1934.[132] The case of the parade fiasco in north Kerry illustrates another difficulty for the IRA. It was obvious to the inspecting officer that the local commander should be dismissed. However it was made clear to him that this would lead to the resignation of other officers in the area. In order to preserve its organisation the IRA was forced to tolerate this amazing display of indiscipline.[133]

When the IRA was faced with a major government crackdown however, sections of its organisation did show an alarming tendency to break ranks. In October 1931 the Cumann na nGaedheal government introduced the Constitution (Amendment 17) Act to halt what it saw as the alarming rise in subversive activity. The Act introduced a Tribunal made up of Army officers to try those charged with anti-state activities. This Military Tribunal had the power to impose the death penalty and there was no right to appeal its sentence. The IRA was banned along with ten other organisations, and the left and republican press censored.[134] The organisation responded with orders for its members to maintain "discipline and cohesion" and not to be provoked into violence.[135]

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[129] Adjt Dundalk to A/G, 19 November 1932, in MTUCDA, P69/158 (16-20).
[130] Adjt Ulster No. 4 to A/G, 27 November 1932, in MTUCDA, P69/158 (6).
[131] A/G to O/C Dundalk, 2 December 1929, in MTUCDA, P69/151 (296-300)
[132] A/G to O/C Listowel Batt, 17 December 1934, in Jus 8/319 NAI. See also IRA denials of involvement in shooting, assault and tarring and feathering incidents in Blennerville, Ballyard and Caherina in late 1933. *Kerry Champion*, 11 November 1933.
[133] 'JJ' to A/G, 18 January 1931, in MTUCDA, P69/153 (22-23).
[134] For various aspects of this see English, *Radicals*, pp. 143-146, JM Regan, *The Irish Counter Revolution 1921-1936*, (Dublin, 1999) pp. 288-291, & O'Halpin, *Defending Ireland*, pp. 79-80.
[135] A/G to the Commander of each Independent Unit, 27 October 1931, in D/T S 5864 C NAI. See Appendix 3.

Some of the first proceedings before the Tribunal saw two Achill men, Brian Corrigan and John Mulgrew breach IRA orders by pleading 'not guilty.' Two Leitrim men agreed to give undertakings to sever their connection with the IRA and to assist the Gardai in any way they could. It transpired that another 13 Leitrim men had given similar assurances.[136] A Kerry IRA officer agreed to leave the organisation and a Waterford youngster also severed his connection with the IRA.[137] Three IRA Company O/Cs in Listowel signed undertakings as did at least two men in Dublin. An IRA company commander in Strokestown Co. Roscommon also signed a Garda undertaking.[138] In Castlecomer, Co. Kilkenny two IRA members signed undertakings, one agreeing to help the Gardai find arms dumps in the area.[139] In a highly embarrassing case 7 Galway IRA men including a Fianna Fáil Councillor, Martin Fahy, admitted to several inept but destructive activities, revealed details of secret meetings and publicly denounced the organisation.[140]

It must be said however that many of the IRA men tried before the Tribunal conducted themselves in the manner the organisation expected. Once jailed most embarked on a protest at not being treated as prisoners of war and faced the winter of 1931-32 in solitary confinement.[141] Twomey actually claimed that the clampdown was increasing recruitment to the IRA, arguing that "times like these make an appeal to the best type of young men."[142] Certainly after the initial panic the IRA does seem to have weathered the storm reasonably well. In

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[136] *Irish Press*, 1 December 1931. In Mulgrew's case he faced the prospect of deportation as he was an American citizen. He was not actually an IRA member at the time of his arrest, but was in Saor Éire. AC to Clan, 30 July 1932, in MTUCDA, P69/185 (266).

[137] *Irish Press*, 15 December 1931.

[138] O/C Roscommon Batt to A/G, 27 April 1932, in MTUCDA, P69/155 (211-212). He had signed the undertaking in December 1931 but was not dismissed from the IRA until April 1932.

[139] Garda report, 7 November 1931, in D/J 93/3/14 (7-8) NAI. The two men were Nicholas and Martin Boran. Nicholas was a prominent communist organiser and IRA member.

[140] *Irish Press*, 11 February 1932.

[141] Over the winter of 1931-32 Frank Ryan, George and Charles Gilmore, TJ Ryan, Seán O'Farrell and Seán McGuinness were among the most prominent of the 34 IRA members jailed. TJ Ryan had expressed the fear that only "the two Gilmores and the two Ryans" would remain loyal to the IRA while in Arbour Hill. Captured communication to F. Ryan, 11 January 1932, in FitzGerald Papers, UCDA, P80/496 (2).

[142] Twomey to McGarrity, 9 December 1931, in McGarrity Papers, Ms. 17,490 NLI.

both Dublin and Cork the spirit of the organisation was said to be good and "encouraging" meetings were being held.[143] The clampdown certainly did put pressure on the IRA however and had it not been for its political unpopularity might have severely damaged the organisation.[144]

There could be a certain flexibility in the IRA's approach to General Order No. 24. Men who disobeyed it could be readmitted to the IRA but it largely depended "on the type of men and the circumstances" which induced their indiscipline.[145] Corrigan was allowed back into the IRA partly because he served his sentence but also because he was popular in Achill. It was noted that the welcome Corrigan received in Achill on his release showed that the IRA's image had not suffered because he pleaded 'not guilty.'[146] The IRA took into account that in cases where there was a possibility of the death sentence prisoners could employ a legal defence. However despite the fact that a Leitrim officer believed that "you could not blame" many of the men who signed undertakings there because they believed they were about to be executed, these men were not re-admitted to the IRA.[147]

At times the IRA's internal rulings could seem extremely petty. A Belfast man was refused membership because some years before he had been expelled from the IRA for being part of a band that had played "God save the King" at the conclusion of a concert![148] A double standard seems to have been employed at times. Another Belfast man, a veteran of the 1919-21 conflict and the Civil War had applied to Queen's University for a teaching diploma. However the school where he was to train was run by the Northern Ireland Ministry of Education and teachers had to swear an oath of allegiance. The man in question had never had a job due to imprisonment and IRA activity and he begged for a

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[143] AC correspondence book, 7 November & 15 December, 1931, 11 & 13 February 1932, in MTUCDA, P69/71.
[144] See resolutions condemning the treatment of IRA prisoners from County Councils in Youghal, Mountmellick, Sligo, Nenagh and Dublin City Council in FitzGerald Papers, UCDA, P80/497.
[145] A/G to Adjt Ulster No. 4, 15 November 1930, in MTUCDA, P69/153 (83).
[146] O/C North Mayo Batt to A/G, 26 March 1932, in MTUCDA, P69/155 (271-274).
[147] Adjt Leitrim to A/G, 6 October 1932, in MTUCDA, P69/156 (64).

chance to gain that "individual independence that we all crave for." However his request to be exempted from General Order No. 24 in this case was refused.[149] On the other hand, Seán MacBride's IRA career does not seem to have suffered after he undertook not to engage in "objectionable activity" if released from prison to complete audits for the Roebuck Jam Company in 1929.[150]

Despite the real problems the IRA faced in living up to what were often unrealistic expectations of refusal to deal with the process of law there is no doubt that in many cases their members did adhere to General Order No. 24. The real sacrifices that prisoners who experienced solitary confinement and withdrawal of privileges made in order to be considered republican soldiers undoubtedly helped IRA morale.[151] But discipline was not simply about obeying directions on dealing with the courts. There was also the question of obeying the IRA's political instructions and avoiding involvement in activities that would reflect badly on the IRA. Here the organisation was again publicly embarrassed on several occasions.

Tension which had existed between older more conservative officers and younger militants was defused with the departure of most of the older officers to Fianna Fáil. Until 1932 the IRA was not overly troubled with internal political problems. While political differences certainly existed there was little public reflection of these. This changed with the IRA's decision not to obstruct Fianna Fáil in government and the organisation's gradual disavowal of socialism. A minor dispute emerged after Dundalk IRA officers claimed that the local Fianna Fáil cumainn had been informed of the IRA's decision to support the party in the 1933 general election before they had.[152] A number of Dublin IRA members had formed a secret 'Republican Worker's Group' which was holding

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[148] Adjt Ulster No. 1 to A/G, 31 October 1932, in MTUCDA, P69/156 (26).
[149] PJ Cleary to C/S, 19 April & C/S to Cleary, 29 April 1927, in MTUCDA, P69/48 (87-88).
[150] MacBride to Secretary, Department of Justice, 20 April 1929, in D/T S 5864 A NAI.
[151] Three Dublin IRA men spent 14 months in solitary confinement from late 1929 to 1930. See A/G to all ranks, Dublin Brigade, 9 December 1930, in MTUCDA, P69/153 (51).
[152] O/C Dundalk to C/S, 10 January 1933, in MTUCDA, P69/55 (35-38).

its own meetings in early 1933.[153] The IRA leadership moved to ensure control over its members participation in non IRA activities by passing several related motions at its March 1933 Convention. The most important of these demanded that members seek permission before writing or speaking publicly on political matters. As a result some RWG members left the IRA and the issue festered to re-emerge at the 1934 Convention.[154]

Shortly after the 1933 Convention however, these issues were exposed publicly by events in Dublin. Premises owned or associated with communists in Dublin came under attack from large crowds. Over several nights mobs besieged the Communist headquarters, Connolly House, and eventually succeeded in storming it. An IRA member, Charles Gilmore, took part in the defence of the building, firing shots at the crowd and wounding a man. Gilmore was arrested and when questioned claimed he had the authority of the IRA to carry arms.[155] The IRA Adjutant General publicly disputed this in the daily newspapers. Gilmore's brother Harry, an IRA commander in south Dublin refuted the IRA leadership's claim in both the *Irish Press* and *An Phoblacht*. He argued that his brother had every right to defend Connolly House and to carry IRA weapons.[156] The potential consequences of this should not be underestimated. An IRA member had taken weapons from a dump and used them to shoot a civilian without official permission. The leadership's explanation had been publicly contradicted in the national press by a junior officer. It was a serious case of indiscipline but the IRA leadership took no action against the Gilmores. One part of the explanation for this is that politics aside, the Gilmores were popular within the IRA. A feeling that "Gilmore should not be let down" was

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[153] I/O Dublin report, 21 December 1932, in MTUCDA, P69/53 (252-254).
[154] Notes of 1933 GAC, in MTUCDA, P69/187 (78-79). RWG Members included Bill Gannon, Jack Nalty and Donal O'Reilly, all later members of the Communist party of Ireland.
[155] Garda reports, 27, 29 & 30 March 1933, in Jus 8/711 NAI. An anonymous account of the attack on Connolly House is contained in Humphreys papers, UCDA, P106/1421 (2-7).
[156] *Irish Press*, 1 April & *An Phoblacht*, 8 April 1933.

current among sections of the Dublin Brigade.[157] In fact while a dramatic case, the Gilmore was a symptomatic of numerous local affairs where IRA members became embroiled in unauthorised actions which the leadership was largely powerless to prevent.

It was obvious that an organisation like the IRA could be seriously effected by problems of indiscipline. While it considered itself an army in fact the link between the leadership and local units was often tenuous, depending on a visit from a touring officer. The fact that the members had some access to firearms meant the IRA could be drawn into all sorts of local disputes. If members did indeed involve themselves in unauthorised activities then how could the IRA punish them? How could it prevent others committing similar acts?

IRA members involved in a trade dispute attempted to blow up a bakery in Donnycarney during 1926.[158] Following the sacking of an IRA man in Belfast his comrades shot up his former employer's house, and boasted that he now lived in "constant dread."[159] In Kilrush armed and masked IRA men raided a farmer's house to force him to stop dealing with a local strike bound merchant.[160] In Roscommon, because of a perceived injustice to a local widow IRA members threatened the executor of her husband's will.[161] Not all these activities were connected to labour or land issues. IRA members in Clare asked for permission to threaten a hairdresser, whose "slush" was blocking a neighbour's drains![162] All these activities were capable of causing embarrassment to the IRA, especially if the participants were apprehended as they were in the bakery explosion case. An IRA member in Kildare who stole flour from a local merchant was arrested and arms and ammunition captured in his home, giving the IRA a "terrible" image locally.[163] A Dublin IRA man was dismissed publicly

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[157] C/S to O/C Dublin Bdge, 29 April 1933, in MTUCDA, P69/53 (87-88).
[158] C/S to O/C Dublin Bdge, 1 April 1926, in MTUCDA, P69/44 (36-38).
[159] Adjt Ulster No. 1 to A/G, 6 April 1930, in MTUCDA, P69/151 (43).
[160] O/C West Clare to D/I, 13 May 1932, in MTUCDA, P69/199 (179).
[161] O/C North Roscommon Batt to A/G, 5 September 1932, in MTUCDA, P69/158 (188).
[162] Adjt North Clare Batt to A/G, 15 June 1932, in MTUCDA, P69/155 (150-152).
[163] Adjt Kildare Batt to A/G, 19 August 1929, in MTUCDA, P69/151 (268).

from the organisation after he took part in a robbery during 1930.[164] A raid on the home of an ex-Free State officer in Sligo resulted in the wounding of an IRA member, whose comrades fled leaving him to be arrested.[165]

The IRA's dilemma was how to prevent members engaging in these acts but still maintain the loyalty of members who joined so they could take part in armed action. A great deal of IRA intervention in strikes and land disputes was sanctioned by the leadership, if sometimes only reluctantly. In some cases as in Kilrush, the members involved were demoted.[166] Here the IRA also publicly denied involvement in the dispute.[167] It also denied the authorship of dozens of threatening letters sent its name throughout Ireland in this period.[168] In some cases, as in that of a doctor in Clonmel, and a Kildare Cumann na nGaedheal TD, the IRA's denials were probably genuine.[169] In others however it is impossible to tell, as local IRA members obviously carried out activities without informing the Dublin leadership. Some of these exposed the levels of indiscipline, illpreparedness and local prejudice which informed many IRA activities. In the Sligo case the IRA were reacting to ACA provocation.[170] However they attempted a raid on an ex-soldier, who was known to be armed, with only one gun and two rounds of ammunition between them. When the first shots were fired they abandoned the raid. The IRA intended punishing their "cowardice" by dismissal from its ranks. In the end they were merely demoted and "severely lectured."[171]

The story of the Galway IRA unit which recanted before the Military Tribunal was an even more pitiful one. This unit had previously blown up an

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[164] A/G to O/C Dublin Bdge, 6 February 1930, in MTUCDA, P69/151 (231-232).
[165] Correspondence on the affair between O/C South Mayo and A/G, September 1932, in MTUCDA, P69/158 (151-162).
[166] A/G to O/C West Clare, 16 July 1932, in MTUCDA, P69/158 (267-271).
[167] IRA Statement to the press, 15 August 1932, in MTUCDA, P69/158 (217).
[168] See examples in *Kerry Champion*, 20 January 1934, *Westmeath Independent*, 14 April 1934 and *Dundalk Examiner*, 28 April 1934.
[169] A/G to Dr. FitzGerald, Mental Hospital, Clonmel, 16 April 1931, in MTUCDA, P69/151 (63). A/G to Adjt Kildare, 5 September 1932, in MTUCDA, P69/156 (152).
[170] See Chapter Four pp.
[171] O/C South Mayo to A/G, 19 September 1932, in MTUCDA, P69/158 (151-162).

unoccupied Garda post in Kilreacle and intimidated a teacher who was accused of taking a job from a local woman.[172] There was a strong suspicion that the attack they were charged with, a raid on the State Solicitor's office in Ennis, was less about the Anti - Annuities campaign and more about one of the IRA men involved family's debts. However it was decided after, it was alleged, direction from Peadar O'Donnell, to "wreck" the office and destroy all the Land Commission's ledgers and accounts. The affair was carried out with less than military precision. It was intended to borrow a car, but due to the owner's suspicions, permission was refused. The car was then stolen, despite its owner knowing most of the thieves. After arriving in Ennis one member of the group attempted to gain entrance to the office by stealth. While he knocked at the solicitor's door, his comrades became restless and made so much noise that the solicitor became suspicious. The IRA men panicked and sprayed the house with Thompson and revolver fire, nearly shooting their own comrade in the process. They then abandoned the raid and fled. On the way back to Galway there was a row about whether or not to shoot up the Garda station in Crusheen. It was intended to refill the car with petrol and leave near to its owner's home in order to mollify him. However it was left miles from its owners, with the tank almost empty.[173] Following the men's performance at the Military Tribunal they were denounced by the IRA as "arrant cowards" and dismissed with ignominy.[174] It is hard to see how dismissal from the IRA carried weight with the majority of those who broke its rules. Like much of the IRA's rules and regulations it only meant something if a person was a dedicated member. If they were already disenchanted or simply did not care, dismissal was hardly a frightening prospect.

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[172] *Irish Press*, 11 February 1932.
[173] Statements from Thomas 'Sonny' Breen and Mick Silver to C/S, 14 May 1932, in MTUCDA, P69/155 (239-241). O'Donnell did admit some involvement in the affair. *There Will be Another Day*, pp. 102-103.
[174] *Republican File*, 5 March 1932.

The alternative of course was for the IRA to impose its will on its members by fear. In Kildare during 1932 an IRA member was stripped and caned by his superior officer for an unnamed misdemeanour. Even the officer in this case admitted this treatment was likely to prove counter productive.[175] In the case of anonymous letter writers the IRA recommended chaining the culprits to chapel gates as punishment.[176] In general however the IRA was hidebound by its own nature, as an unofficial body which no man was "forced to join" but which demanded the discipline of a regular army.[177]

It became obvious during 1933 and 1934 that the IRA leadership's rulings on preventing clashes with the Blueshirts were being wilfully ignored.[178] The Army Council demanded stringent new powers to punish indiscipline at the 1934 Convention. The reaction from the majority of delegates was hostile. John Joe Sheehy objected to the "young lads" who were joining the IRA being described as "ruffians." He warned against giving "Dublin" too much power. Tadgh Lynch argued that the IRA could not have the "iron discipline" of regular armies. Another officer felt the Army Council's suggestions were "ridiculous" and were reminiscent of the Military Tribunal. George Gilmore weighed in to argue that the IRA's problems could not be solved by wielding the "big fist."[179] The problem facing the leadership was that the areas where their members were increasingly undisciplined like Kerry, Drogheda or Leitrim, were also areas where the IRA was strong. To dismiss large numbers of men or to take action against their officers would split their organisation. While some brutal and humiliating punishments were inflicted on individual IRA men who upset the organisation, to a large extent unauthorised activities by their members were tolerated.

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[175] O/C Kildare to A/G, September 1932, in MTUCDA, P69/156 (127).
[176] A/G to Adjt Ulster No. 4, 18 June 1932, in P69/155 (158).
[177] Notes by Aiken, in MTUCDA, P69/144 (96-97).
[178] See Chapter Four pp. 141-147.
[179] Notes of 1934 GAC, in MacEntee Papers, UCDA, P67/525.

The setting up of the Republican Congress following the 1934 Convention illustrated the unreal nature of the IRA's disciplinary procedure. Peadar O'Donnnell and Mick Price were court-martialled and dismissed with ignominy from the IRA, but as they had already left and were in the process of forming a new organisation this had absolutely no practical effect.[180] It was gleefully pointed out to the IRA that any of their members could secede with virtual impunity and that their Court-martial procedure was "futile."[181] It is relevant that later in 1934, IRA members who joined the Volunteer Reserve were subjected to violent attacks.[182] The embarrassment caused by the IRA's inability to stop the Congress defections may have influenced this shift in tactics.

Aside from political indiscipline did the IRA's armed capacity lend itself to involvement in crimes for personal gain? Some members of the IRA stole from their own organisation. One Galway man, resident in Detroit for a period, had been asked to bring £70 to the IRA by the Clan na Gael. He spent the money however and found himself court-martialled by the IRA. While "drastic action" of an unspecified nature was threatened against him the IRA eventually settled for repayment of the £70.[183] Patrick Hickey, the IRA commander in west Clare for a period, was dismissed from the organisation for stealing from his unit's funds. His dismissal was publicised in *An Phoblacht* and he agreed to pay back the misappropriated money.[184] In these two cases at least the IRA did not severely punish the offenders. In January 1927 a man was shot dead by Gardai during an attempted bank raid in Ballinamore, Co. Leitrim.[185] WT

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[180] A/G to Commanders of Each Independent Unit, 17 April 1934, in Jus 8/319 NAI.
[181] Fianna Fáil members in Kenmare pointed this out to the local IRA. I/O Kenmare Batt to I/O (D/I), 18 April 1934, in Jus 8/319 NAI.
[182] See also Chapter Four.
[183] A/G to O/C Connemara Batt, 27 July 1932, in MTUCDA, P69/158 (261) & O/C Connemara Batt to A/G, 5 November 1932, in MTUCDA, P69/156 (7).
[184] Ex-O/C West Clare to A/G, 30 October 1934, in Jus 8/319 NAI. *An Phoblacht*, 17 November 1934.
[185] *Leitrim Observer*, 28 January 1927.

Cosgrave claimed that the man was a member of an IRA gang.[186] The IRA denied this and claimed that the organisation had not carried out bank robberies since the Civil War.[187] There is evidence to support the IRA's claim in this case, as they had been attempting to ascertain the identity of the gang involved in a number of robberies in the area and were contemplating using violence against those involved.[188] During 1932 a visitor from the US was robbed by men claiming to be from the IRA in Elphin, Co. Roscommon. The local IRA commander claimed to have "some important clues" as to who was responsible but denied it had anything to do with his unit.[189] Eoin O'Duffy suggested that Fianna Fáil supporters in Co. Clare had made use of their previous career in the IRA to amass takings from robberies which never went into IRA coffers.[190]

A number of former members did carry out a robbery in Tipperary during 1929, which because of the later career of one of them, George Plant, has been described as an IRA operation.[191] However, Plant, who Gardai considered a "courageous" if "dangerous" man because of his record from the 1919-23 period, does not seem to have been acting on behalf of the IRA.[192] He had left Ireland with his brother, James, after the Civil War and Gardai believed he had returned in order to put the knowledge he had of the area to use in robbing several banks. Plant was believed to have been motivated by both personal gain and also a desire to clear debts on his elderly mother's farm. In April 1929 the Plants, along with another former IRA man robbed the Bank of Ireland in Tipperary town. Gardai were aware the Plants had returned

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[186] *Dail Debates*, Vol. 20, 26 June 1927. See also Conor Brady, *Guardians of the Peace,* (London, 2000) pp. 138.
[187] *The Nation*, 6 August 1927.
[188] C/S to O/C Carrick on Shannon Bdge, 2 April 1926, in MTUCDA, P69/44 (224-225).
[189] O/C North Roscommon Batt to A/G, 5 September 1932, in MTUCDA, P69/158 (188).
[190] Report by O'Duffy on Clare, 6 April 1929, in FitzGerald Papers, UCDA, P80/851 (5).
[191] Plant was executed for the murder of Michael Devereux, an IRA member accused of being an informer in 1942. He was a member of the Church of Ireland and when his body was released for burial in 1948 it was allowed lie over night in Christchurch Cathedral, Dublin. M. Mooney, *George Plant and the Rule of Law*, (Tipperary, 1989) pp. 3 & 9.
[192] Report by Chief Superintendent J. Hannigan, 16 May 1929, in FitzGerald Papers, UCDA, P80/851 (15). This contains extensive information on the Plant's activities from 1919-23 and overseas. The Gardai believed they had travelled in the US, Canada and possibly Mexico.

from the US and surprised the heavily armed gang three days after the robbery.[193] The men were jailed for seven years and the IRA gave no indication that they were members of its organisation.[194] There is little evidence to suggest the IRA involved itself in widespread criminal activity to finance itself in this period.

There were various means which the IRA adopted in order to safeguard their organisation's secrets. This was one area of their members activity that the IRA took extremely seriously. The only offence that the IRA killed its own members for in this period was for giving information to the police. At its most basic the IRA leadership had to find secure means of communicating regularly with its units. Routine, relatively non sensitive material was sent by post. The IRA operated a system of covering addresses, usually in women's names to which a letter could be addressed.[195] Inside this letter would be an envelope which was then passed on to the officer for whom the address covered.[196] Twomey for example, could be contacted via a Mrs. Emmet in Sandymount or a Mrs. Kelly in Marino.[197] For security reasons covering addresses for IRA units were usually located in another unit's area.[198] For more important communications a "hand-line" system was employed.[199] IRA members whose work involved travel or sympathetic non members who worked as drivers or travellers were used to bring messages from one area to another. This often meant that dispatches had to pass through several hands and it

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[193] Report by Chief Superintendent Hannigan, 23 April 1929, in FitzGerald Papers, UCDA, P80/851 (7). The gang had 8 firearms at their disposal. See also *Tipperary Star*, 27 April 1929.

[194] *Tipperary Star*, 15 June 1929.

[195] See names for dispatch of communications to Wexford IRA, 22 February 1930, in P69/151 (219-221) or Donegal, 13 February 1931, in MTUCDA, P69/151 (228). See also Athlone and Mullingar addresses, (nd) in MTUCDA, P69/157 (50).

[196] Officers were instructed to write on thin paper so ordinary envelopes that would not arouse suspicion could be used. A/G to Adjt Killarney Batt, September 1932, in MTUCDA, P69/158 (166).

[197] C/S cover address, 8 February 1933, in MTUCDA, P69/53 (303) & 4 February 1933, in MTUCDA, P69/55 (35-38).

[198] Dispatches for Mid Tipperary and West Limerick units were sent to an address in Limerick city. Messages for the Donegal IRA were sent via Derry city. AC Correspondence book, 26 February 1932, in MTUCDA, P69/71.

would take over a week for a message from Armagh to reach Dublin, as the message was sent to Keady then to Castleblaney and finally to Dublin.[200] A man whose work took him between Dublin and Belfast twice a week was used by the IRA to carry dispatches, dropping off messages from Belfast with a newsagent in Dublin's Talbot Street.[201]

These methods were obviously not completely secure. An IRA report form sent to a covering address in Dundalk was returned to the post office as it was undelivered. The post office attempted to forward it to "Adjutant General, Oglaigh na h-Eireann" in Dublin but not surprisingly this led to its interception by the Gardai.[202] The Gardai were aware that female sympathisers allowed their addresses to be used for communications and obtained Postal Warrants to search their mail.[203] When the woman whose address the Drogheda IRA used for communications left to join the Republican Congress the unit was temporally left without a safe address.[204] An uncollected parcel sent from Dublin to Armagh by bus aroused the suspicion of the Bus Inspector who opened it and contacted the RUC, leading to the arrest of a local IRA man.[205] Fear of arrest led IRA members in Lurgan to demand hand delivery of their dispatches instead of travelling to Armagh to collect them.[206]

A necessity for the IRA was the provision of safe accommodation for its members and secure premises for the holding of meetings and storing of documents. This largely depended on the goodwill of its supporters. An undated list of 45 Dublin 'safe houses' illustrates this. Only 5 of the householders wanted monetary reward for aiding the IRA although the IRA considered several of the others were "poor" and entitled to some remuneration. 32 of the houses

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[199] See A/G to O/C Derry, 12 May 1932, complaining that the posting of sensitive material could have led to the arrest of officers, in MTUCDA, P69/158 (27-28).
[200] A/G to O/C No. 2 Ulster, (nd) in MTUCDA, P69/151 (85).
[201] A/G to O/C No. 1 Ulster, 30 July 1932, in MTUCDA, P69/158 (225). Enclosed in envelopes addressed to 'Miss Thompson.'
[202] Garda report, 22 February 1933, in Aiken Papers, UCDA, P104/2845 (1-6).
[203] O'Duffy to Ministers, 5 July 1929, in Blythe Papers, UCDA, P24/477.
[204] AC correspondence book, 28 August 1934, in Aiken Papers, UCDA, P104/2854 (9).
[205] I/O No. 2 Ulster to A/G, 14 December 1929, in MTUCDA, P69/151 (276).

were listed in women's names. Some of these aided the IRA for reasons of family history. One of the women was a relative of Seán MacDermott, another the mother of an IRA man killed in the Civil War. A few could also offer rooms for meetings like the owner of a sweetshop in Thomas Street, or the use of space for an office over a shop near Hardwicke Street. 9 of the houses were compromised having been raided on occasion. Some had been used by the IRA during the 1919-21 period, one as a bomb factory, and so were also possibly known to the Gardai.[207]

The IRA's rejection of the label of being a secret society and its efforts to present a military image hindered the organisation in several ways.[208] It demanded local units store communications and orders from headquarters arguing that safe hiding places could always be found.[209] Units were also instructed to build up a supply of military manuals and maps.[210] Inevitably these meant that when IRA arms dumps were discovered or members homes raided, the authorities often captured IRA documentation as well.[211] The IRA's contacts with the Soviet Union came to light as a result of the Killakee arms find.[212] The practice of the IRA in drilling and parading openly where possible also gave the police an opportunity to observe its activists, its local leaders and estimate local support.[213]

The IRA of course also attempted to assess the strengths and weaknesses of its enemies, and to counter their efforts to undermine it. During late 1932 all its units in the Free State were instructed to ascertain the names and records of

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[206] A/G to O/C No. 2 Ulster, 5 December 1929, in MTUCDA, P69/151 (279).
[207] List of Dublin safe-houses, (nd) in MTUCDA, P69/157 (44-49).
[208] A/G to Editor, *Irish Times*, 22 August 1932, in MTUCDA, P69/158 (204).
[209] *An t-Óglách*, March 1931, in MTUCDA, P69/263 (7).
[210] *An t-Óglách*, October 1931, in MTUCDA, P69/263 (9).
[211] When a house used by Russell was raided during 1929 the Gardai found over 100 ordnance survey maps of locations from Birr to Belfast. A cynical civil servant noted that those maps "are to pseudo-generals as tin soldiers are to children." D. O'Hegarty to James Sheehan, 28 December 1929, in D/T S 5864 A NAI.
[212] Although most of the documents were 3 years old and relatively unimportant. Inventory of documents captured in Kilakee dump, in MTUCDA, P69/154.

the "principal people" involved in the local ACA.[214] The Belfast IRA compiled a list of those who it believed had been involved with the Ulster Protestant Association during 1922.[215] The value of such information could often be limited depending on the political judgement of the men concerned. For example the Belfast IRA were convinced that the British Fascisti would become a major force in northern politics for example. Similarly, the Leitrim IRA were informed that Dr. TF O'Higgins had been to Germany to buy arms for the ACA and that plans were afoot to land them by plane![216]

The IRA also made continual attempts to build up intelligence on the Army and Police north and south. The Kildare IRA were expected to supply regular reports on the Curragh Camp.[217] In Armagh the local IRA was supposed to gather information on the British garrison there.[218] RUC transfers to south Armagh were also reported to Dublin. For news of Garda movements the *Garda Review*, a "very useful publication" was scrutinised.[219] A more systematic effort to gather information on the Irish Army was attempted during 1930. The IRA had a number of incomplete maps of various Army Bases and hoped to update their knowledge. They also required details of army strengths, equipment and of sleeping quarters and billets within the barracks. They had some success with gaining information on the Islandbridge barracks in Dublin and on the Barracks in Athlone, Limerick and Templemore. They had also been supplied with estimates of the number of officers and men in the Curragh Camp and their armament.[220] However the response of the Dublin Brigade to

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[213] See Garda report, 10 December 1933, on 'Four Martyrs' Commemoration at Castleblaney for example, in Jus 8/725 NAI. Bob Bradshaw felt the IRA was slow to realise the "advantage" it was giving to the Gardai in holding open parades. Bradshaw tape.
[214] A/G to Adjt Caherciveen Batt, 19 September 1932, in MTUCDA, P69/158 (176).
[215] I/O Ulster No. 1 to D/I, 25 November 1926, in MTUCDA, P69/193 (86-94). A photograph of a British Fascist rally from the *Belfast Telegraph* of 23 November 1926 was included with the report.
[216] Adjt Leitrim Batt to A/G, 2 November 1932, in MTUCDA, P69/156 (10-11).
[217] D/I to I/O Kildare Batt, 26 November 1927, in MTUCDA, P69/196 (32).
[218] I/O Ulster No. 2 to D/I, 10 September & 6 November 1927, in MTUCDA, P69/196 (29-30).
[219] I/O Dublin Bdge to D/I, 5 July 1932, in MTUCDA, P69/199 (125).
[220] 'JJ' to C/S, 19 February 1931, in MTUCDA, P69/51 (14-15).

the intelligence gathering effort had been poor and information on McKee, Collins, Arbour Hill and Portobello barracks was still lacking. It was hoped that an "inside touch" the IRA had in Portobello barracks would be of some help.[221] The organisation also had detailed plans of Finner Military Camp and Maryboro' Prison in its posession.[222] The IRA was keen to cultivate contacts with sympathetic soldiers or policemen. During 1925 the IRA hoped to be able to make use of the friendly attitude of some of the British garrison based in Omagh.[223] A former Connaught Ranger's mutineer who had joined the National Army had supplied information on Renmore Barracks in Galway to the IRA during 1924.[224] It was claimed that a Garda had informed the IRA of checks taking place within the force on officers family's political links.[225] A "Detective friend" warned the IRA that the CID would be watching the 1927 Sinn Féin Ard Fheis for any appearance by Twomey. He also informed them that the Gardai had captured a dispatch for Russell at a shop used by the IRA and were now watching the premises.[226]

Much of the IRA's intelligence was based on attempting to prevent infiltration by civilian agents and betrayal by informers. A list of 20 alleged "Touts" was produced by Dublin IRA intelligence in late 1927. A number were Detectives and were therefore in the strictest sense not informers. A member of the British Fascisti was included but would hardly have been able to infiltrate the IRA if he was open about his politics. Another interesting suspect ran a troupe called the 'Black Jesters' who performed in cinemas in the Dublin area.

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[221] C/S to O/C Dublin Bdge, 11 March 1931, in MTUCDA, P69/51 (12-13).
[222] The plan for Maryboro' (Portlaoise) datted from September 1924. The IRA prisoners there were considering an escape attempt in that period. See O/C prisoners, 30 September 1924, and maps, in MTUCDA, P69/46 (54-57) & (59).
[223] Inspection Officer report, 20 May 1925, in MTUCDA, P69/47 (242-243).
[224] His name was Stephen Lally. Interview by Niall C. Harrington of Military Intelligence, 5 February 1942, in G2/X/0058 MA. Lally's account of the Mutiny in MTUCDA, P69/59 (14-49).
[225] 'William' to C/S, (nd) in MTUCDA, P69/196 (61).
[226] 'J' to D/I, 13 December 1927, in MTUCDA, P69/196 (18). The informant also claimed that the CID did not know Twomey by sight. However Twomey did attend the Ard Fheis, and his presence was recorded by the Gardai. Report, 15 December 1927, in Jus 8/675 NAI.

He apparently used this to help collect information.[227] The difficulty for the IRA was that fear of infiltration tended to generate a paranoia about informers.[228] During 1932 a Waterford IRA member who was "very loose in his talk and generally indiscreet" was suspected of being an informer.[229] The IRA in Armagh received notice that the RUC knew about a visit by Twomey to the area in May 1932. This was taken very seriously and the IRA leadership believed the "safety of the organisation in the six counties" depended on the informer being discovered.[230] During 1933 the IRA in Dublin became aware that former members of the organisation were now gathering information on it for the Fianna Fáil government. Twomey warned officers to be wary of discussing IRA business with former comrades who were now "Fianna Fáil CID."[231]

The IRA would operate its own counter intelligence system with greater or lesser degrees of efficiency. IRA misinformation led to a Garda Superintendent being dismissed on suspicion of passing information to them during 1928.[232] It made contact with the foreman of a jury in the case involving two of its Belfast members and gained a promise from him to split the jury.[233] However both men for jailed.[234] In Dublin its usual tactic in such cases was a little less sophisticated, amounting to threatening the jurors themselves which was occasionally effective.[235] In another case in Belfast a young IRA member was ordered to pose as an innocent bystander, caught up

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[227] List of alleged Touts, (November 1927?), in MTUCDA, P69/196 (34).
[228] Bob Bradshaw remarked that "every ejit" in the IRA discovered at least "half a dozen" informers. Bradshaw tape.
[229] A/G to O/C North East Cork Batt, 26 August 1932, in MTUCDA, P69/158 (197).
[230] Q/M Ulster No. 2 to C/S, 4 July & A/G to Q/M Ulster No. 2, 14 July 1932, in MTUCDA, P69/158 (273-275).
[231] C/S to O/C Dublin Bdge, 29 April 1933, in MTUCDA, P69/53 (87-88).
[232] Superintendent William Geary of Kilrush, whose name was cleared in 2000. Brady, *Guardians,* pp. 153.
[233] I/O Belfast Batt to D/I, 10 July 1932, in MTUCDA, P69/199 (126).
[234] *An Phoblacht*, 21 October 1933. The two men were released in October 1933 after 18 months in jail and promptly deported to the Free State.
[235] O'Halpin, *Defending Ireland*, pp. 66.

in a mass arrest in order to convince a judge that the accused had not been engaging in disruption. In that case the IRA ruse was successful.[236]

The IRA were correct to be wary because there were several informers in its ranks over this period. An IRA inquiry into the capture of the arms dump at St. Endas made such alarming reading that the IRA's commander in Dublin feared that if it became public knowledge the organisation would not have a "single Volunteer left" in the city. The IRA discovered that the officer in charge of the dump had revealed its whereabouts and that of others to a number of his friends. They included a number of inactive or ex-IRA members, some of whom being unemployed decided to put the knowledge to use. An old pre-truce dump was "given away" to the Gardai in exchange for monetary reward. Some of the men then suggested removing arms from St. Endas to commit a robbery but before this was done another member of the gang sold its location to the Gardai.[237]

Many informers may simply have supplied low level information of no great importance, like a young "boy" involved in Fianna Eireann in Limerick during 1929. However in the same period the Gardai claimed to have a "prominent and trusted" IRA member in Clonmel working for them.[238] As we have seen an organisation in which the poorer sections of the urban and rural population were over represented financial incentives could make supplying information seem attractive. In Dublin the IRA were informed that an ex-member who had been unemployed for a long period was offered a sum of £4.10 to begin work for the Gardai.[239] Two Cork IRA officers were offered the more considerable sum of a "couple of hundred" pounds to give away the location of dumps in their area during 1930.[240] In the case of a young Clare man, Patrick Murray, the loss of his job as a tailor, and the offer of "monetary enticement"

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[236] Adjt Ulster No. 1 to A/G, July 1932, in MTUCDA, P69/158 (228-233).
[237] O/C Dublin Bdge to C/S, 10 July 1926 and Inquiry into Capture of St. Endas Dump, in P69/57 (2-9).
[238] O'Duffy to Ministers, 5 July 1929, in Blythe Papers, UCDA, P24/477.
[239] I/O Dublin Bdge to D/I, 12 December 1927, in MTUCDA, P69/196 (19).

from a Detective who had been on friendly terms with him, induced him to become an informer. Unfortunately for him the local IRA commander, TJ Ryan who had trusted Murray "implicitly" was alerted to the possibility of an informer in his ranks, after an IRA court-martial had been raided. Murray disappeared from his home in May 1929 and was never seen again.[241]

As the IRA made clear the penalty for "treachery" to the organisation was death.[242] The IRA discovered during late 1927 that the man offering money to ex-members in return for information was Seán Harling a republican and former Dail courier.[243] He was confronted with this accusation in October 1927 but denied it.[244] An attempt to murder him in February 1928 resulted in the death of an IRA man, Timothy Coughlan.[245] Ironically Coughlan had been associated with the gang who had given information about St. Endas to the Gardai.[246] Harling left Ireland for a period but returned a few years later. Despite apparent IRA plans to avenge Coughlin he was not harmed.[247] In 1931 the organisation did succeed in killing Patrick Carroll, an officer of the Dublin Brigade's Third battalion. He had been an informer for 3 years and had supplied the Gardai with much "valuable information."[248] Carroll had also interested himself in the IRA's links with left wing groups and was a member of several of these as well.[249] That an agent was so well placed within the IRA created some unease within the organisation.[250] Not all those found guilty of

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[240] Adjt North Cork to A/G, 18 September 1930, in MTUCDA, P69/153 (200).
[241] O'Duffy to Ministers, 5 July 1929, in Blythe Papers, UCDA, P24/477 & Garda report, 7 June 1929, in D/T S 5864 A NAI.
[242] *An t-Oglach*, March 1931, in MTUCDA, P69/263 (7).
[243] I/O Dublin Bdge to D/I, 12 December 1927, in MTUCDA, P69/196 (19). O'Halpin, *Defending Ireland*, pp. 67.
[244] I/O Dublin Bdge to D/I, 27 October 1927, in MTUCDA, P69/196 (37).
[245] Gabriel Doherty, 'A Star Chamber Affair - The Death of Timothy Coughlan' in *History Ireland*, Spring 1993.
[246] Inquiry into Capture of St. Endas Dump, March - May 1926, in MTUCDA, P69/(5-9).
[247] Report in O'Duffy to Ministers, 24 June 1931, in FitzGerald Papers, UCDA, P80/856 (18).
[248] O'Duffy to Ministers, 24 June 1931, in FitzGerald Papers, UCDA, P80/856 (18-19).
[249] "Every phase of activity in the...Communist party is known through an agent within." O'Duffy, 5 July 1929, in Blythe Papers, UCDA, P24/477. Also list of members of Worker's Revolutionary Party including Carroll, in D/J report, 16 June 1930, in FitzGerald Papers, P80/911 (2).
[250] O/C North Monaghan to A/G, 1 March 1931, in MTUCDA, P69/151 (157-160).

informing were murdered by the IRA. A member who admitted to being an informer was chained outside a church in Collinstown with a sign bearing the slogan "spies and informers beware" hung round his neck during 1929.[251] While the IRA's Dublin commander had hoped the the "most extreme" punishment would be meted out to the informants in the St. Endas case, they were simply "debarred" from ever again being involved with the IRA![252] Initially exile was the punishment meted out to another alleged informer, Dan Turley from Belfast. Turley had been Director of Elections for Sinn Féin in Belfast during 1918, and had served numerous terms of imprisonment in Derry, Belfast and Larne and on the *Argenta* prison ship. During 1932 he was the subject of an affectionate tribute in *An Phoblacht* while he was serving another term of imprisonment in Belfast.[253] Turley had attended the meeting with Twomey in Armagh during May that year and this may be what drew suspicion upon him. After being accused of informing in August 1933 he left Ireland and lived for a period in Southampton.[254] In 1936 he returned home and was shot dead by the IRA.[255] In 1945 an RUC raid on the Turley home uncovered letters Turley had sent to his family from Southampton. In these Turley described how he had been taken for questioning by the IRA to a house across the border where he alleged he was beaten and tortured with pliers and a poker.[256]

In the most notorious IRA killing of this period, that of Kevin O'Higgins, the organisation seemed to have kept its secrets well. IRA members assassinated O'Higgins but the men involved were never arrested or imprisoned.

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[251] O/C Midland Batt to A/G, 25 November 1929, in MTUCDA, P69/151 (319-322) & *Westmeath Examiner*, 23 November 1929.
[252] Inquiry into Capture of St. Endas Dump, March - May 1926, in MTUCDA, P69/57 (5-9).
[253] *An Phoblacht*, 16 July & 1 October 1932.
[254] *Northern Whig*, 21 September 1945.
[255] *Irish News*, 4 December 1936.
[256] *Irish News*, 21 September 1945. Turley's family are still adamant that he was not an informer. See Raymond J. Quinn, *A Rebel Voice, A History of Belfast Republicanism 1925 - 1972.* (Belfast, 1999). pp. 49-51. Quinn locates Turley's exile in 1936, however the news reports from 1945 state he moved to Southampton in 1933. Jack McNally, a Belfast IRA member of the period, claimed that brutal methods were being used to discipline Belfast members routinely by the mid 1940s. J. McNally, *'Morally Good - Politically Bad'*, (Belfast, 1989) pp. 112-113.

The seriousness with which the Gardai took an accusation from Seán T O'Kelly that the men who had killed O'Higgins were still working for the state, points to the lack of real knowledge the state services had about the affair.[257] During 1930 the Garda found that the IRA too at least affected the regard the O'Higgins murder "as a mystery."[258] Evidence would actually point toward the IRA too being largely ignorant of its members involvement. During late 1927 the IRA believed the government was trying to blame the killing on Michael Price.[259] They also received information that former IRA Director of Training, General Emmet Dalton had carried out the assassination.[260] The three men involved seem to have acted spontaneously and it is likely that they never informed their superiors about their action, hence ensuring that it did remain a secret. One of the men was Timothy Coughlin, killed less than a year later by Seán Harling. Another was Bill Gannon, who remained active in the IRA until 1933 and was a founding member of the Communist Party of Ireland.[261] The final assassin was Archie Doyle, who by 1930 had been dismissed from the IRA for robbery.[262] The Gardai believed that Doyle had left the IRA some time before that.[263] After a spell in prison Doyle became active within the IRA again

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[257] *Dail Debates*, Vol. 29, 9 May 1929. Cabinet Document, 22 May 1929, in FitzGerald Papers, UCDA, P80/851 (13). The Gardai questioned O'Kelly and Gerald Boland but found that they had no knowledge of the crime. Accusations that the IRB were behind the killing were made reguarly at republican meetings. See Garda reports, 5 April & 7 June 1929, in D/T S 5864 A NAI.

[258] Garda report, 14 April 1930, in FitzGerald Papers, UCDA, P80/916 (3).

[259] I/O Dublin Bdge to D/I, 12 December 1927, in MTUCDA, P69/196 (19).

[260] O/C Dundalk to 'Q', (nd), in MTUCDA, P69/196 (75-76). Information originally from Waterford. Obviously an extremely busy man, Dalton has also been linked to the killing of Michael Collins. JM Feehan, *The Shooting of Michael Collins: Murder or Accident?* (Dublin, 1981) pp. 91-94.

[261] Gannon had served in Michael Collin's 'Squad' during the 1919-21 period. He was a member of the RWG mentioned above. See article by Gannon in *Irish Worker's Voice*, 24 June 1933. He claimed the killing was a spontaneous action on seeing O'Higgins walking alone. Gannon Statement in 999/591 NAI.

[262] A/G to O/C Dublin Bdge, 12 February 1930, in MTUCDA, P69/151 (231-232). Copies also sent to Fianna Fáil, Sinn Féin, Cumann na mBan, *An Phoblacht* and *The Nation*. Doyle too was an associate of the 'St. Endas gang.'

[263] Garda report, 13 September 1929, in D/T S 5864 A NAI.

and was suspected of involvement in a number of robberies during the 1940s.[264]

The IRA possessed enough arms to be a serious irritant to both Irish states and to carry out a terrorist campaign. However they did not possess the necessary equipment to carry out the insurrection they themselves envisaged. The majority of their membership were never sufficiently trained to master the skills of modern warfare. The organisation was prone to involvement in unauthorised activities and intervention in local disputes. The IRA was forced to tolerate these problems in order to maintain its organisation. To enforce discipline within the IRA the leadership veered from leniency to brutality, with neither tactic ever solving the problem. A major part of the IRA's attraction was its paramilitary nature but its real importance lay in its role as a force for opposition to the Irish states rather than in its prospects of actually overthrowing them.

[264] Garda report, (nd) D/T S 11552 B NAI. Doyle was suspected of the robbery of £4,300 from the Player Wills factory in 1943.

Chapter Three

The IRA and Nationalist Culture.

An important feature of the IRA's activity was its ability to mobilise numbers beyond its immediate membership in displays of support for its politics. One way of doing this was through commemorations such as the annual 'pilgrimage' to Bodenstown. Another was through sales of its newspaper, *An Phoblacht.* The IRA also attempted to relate to the struggles of people it considered part of the republican constituency by supporting strikes and campaigns against evictions. These activities were not universally approved of inside the organisation however, and the methods employed by the IRA were not necessarily welcomed by trade unionists or farm labourers. The belief in fostering indigenous Irish industries inspired the 'Boycott British' movement of 1932-1933. Culturally the IRA operated mainly within the Irish nationalist milieu, encouraging support for Gaelic games and the Irish language. How seriously did the IRA take these matters and how was it perceived by organisations like the GAA? Despite being largely made up of Catholics the IRA were often denounced by the Catholic Church. How did the organisation attempt to deal with this?

The annual Wolfe Tone commemoration at Bodenstown was the IRA's most important public event. Its successful defiance of a government ban in June 1931 had signalled the increasing confidence of the organisation. The IRA's failure to break a similar ban in 1936 illustrated its decline. The IRA's organisation for this event between 1932 and 1936 was very public. *An Phoblacht* published the mobilisation orders for the day, giving details as to which IRA units would lead the procession and assigning places to supporting organisations.[1] The organisation of the event required the IRA to book buses

[1] See Appendix 5 pp. 358-359. Speakers at Bodenstown from 1926-Dr. Madden TD, 1927- Art O'Connor, 1928- George Gilmore, 1929- Seán Buckley, 1930- Tom Maguire, 1931- Peadar

and trains from across Ireland and railway and bus companies facilitated this. For example Great Northern Railways (GNR) published posters advertising special trains to Bodenstown from Belfast and Derry.[2] In June 1931 the IRA was able to mobilise for Bodenstown despite the government's cancelling of rail traffic because the Irish Omnibus Company (IOC) agreed to allow passengers with train tickets to travel with them.[3] This was despite the IRA having attacked IOC staff and property during the bus strike of 1930. In 1933 the organisation would carry out similar attacks on GNR trains and buses. However it made economic sense for these companies to facilitate the IRA as Bodenstown generated considerable business. Gardai estimated 20 trains and 30 buses had brought people to the 1934 commemoration.[4] In 1935 advance rail bookings from Dublin totalled 2,000 places with 1,224 travelling in the end. A total of 2,765 tickets were booked from across the south and west. As well as train passengers at least 17 buses were travelling from Armagh, Tyrone and Derry.[5] The organisers of the 'pilgrimage' also faced the usual mundane difficulties of putting on a large scale public event, renting fields from local farmers and dealing with complaints about damage to their property.[6]

The entire spectrum of the IRA and its affiliates, Cumann na mBan, Cumann na gCailíní, the American Clan na Gael and the Womens Prisoners Defence League paraded at Bodenstown. Aside from these, at various stages Fianna Fáil, Sinn Féin, 'Old IRA', Citizen Army, trade union branches and the Communist Party all attended the commemoration. There is evidence that the

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O'Donnell (in place of Seán Russell), 1932, -S. Russell, 1933 - Moss Twomey, 1934 - Patrick McLogan, 1935- Seán MacBride, 1936- Banned. *An Phoblacht*, 1926-36.

[2] See 'GNR Annual Pilgrimage to the Grave of Wolfe Tone at Bodenstown, on Sunday 23 June. Special Train will run from Belfast to Dublin and Sallins.' in Humphreys Papers, UCDA, P106/2104 (2).

[3] *Irish Independent*, 22 June 1931.

[4] Garda report, 19 June 1934, in Jus 8/310 NAI.

[5] Wolfe Tone Commemoration Committee to Traffic Manager, Great Southern Railways, (GSR) 19 June 1935 and 10 July 1935, in Humphreys Papers, P106/2102 (3)&(7-8) & P106/2106 (26).

[6] The assembly and parade fields had to be hired from farmers, who complained of damage to crops and the debris left behind after the event. They also were annoyed at the slowness of

event only began to attract large numbers, even from the IRA itself after 1932. That year 70 IRA members from Sligo, 40 from Roscommon and 50 from Leitrim were expected to travel to Bodenstown. This figures were substantially smaller than the number of IRA members in each area.[7] Other areas reported difficulties in moblising for the event as well.[8] The Dublin IRA presence was also small that year due apparently to its more devout members attending a Retreat Sermon instead.[9] Attendances at Bodenstown also reflected the schisms within the republican movement. After 1931 Fianna Fáil no longer attended the event, organising its own commemoration from 1933 onwards.[10] Sinn Féin boycotted the event on several occasions.[11] In 1933 the Communist Party had literature seized from their members by the IRA.[12] The 1934 commemoration gained notoriety for the clashes between the IRA and the Republican Congress, which were replicated on a smaller scale a year later.[13] However confrontations at Bodenstown were the exception rather than the rule. In 1934 the Gardai noted how IRA stewards engaged in "friendly co-operation" helping Gardai manage the large numbers attending the event. The Gardai claimed that republicans "behaved with admirable restraint" when taunted by drunken Fine Gael supporters on their way back to Sallins.[14] The IRA itself specified that no alcohol be served on trains it booked for Bodenstown.[15]

While waiting in the assembly field at Sallins, IRA supporters could listen to the various marching bands and sample tea and packed lunch in tents

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payment from the organisers. Frank Driver to Seán MacBride, 13 June 1936, in Humphreys Papers, UCDA, P106/2114 (5-6).

[7] Report of Officers Meeting, Sligo (286 members), Leitrim (330), Roscommon (180) and Tirchonaill No. 1 & 2, May 1932, in MTUCDA, P69/155 (94-97).

[8] Adt. Tralee to A/G, 2 May, and O/C N.E. Cork Batt. to A/G, 7 May 1932 in MTUCDA P69/155 (214-215) & (223).

[9] Entry, Rosamond Jacob Diaries, 19 June 1932, in Ms. 32,582 (69) NLI.

[10] See condemnation of FF in *An Phoblacht*, 1 July 1933. See Chapter Seven pp. 239.

[11] See Chapter Five pp. 155-156 and also Sinn Féin to S. MacBride, 17 May 1935, in Humphreys Papers, P106/2113 (15).

[12] *Irish Workers' Voice*, 24 June 1933.

[13] See Chapter Five pp. 179-180.

[14] Garda reports, 20 June and 19 June 1934, in Jus 8/310 NAI.

[15] Secretary Wolfe Tone Commemoration Committee to Traffic Manager GSR, June 1935, in Humphreys Papers, UCDA, P106/2102 (49-50).

courtesy of the Nas Na Riogh Hotel in Naas.[16] Some of the bands featured were affiliated to the IRA like the Cork Volunteers Pipers' Band and the O'Rahilly Brass and Reed Band from Dublin.[17] The Workers' Union of Ireland (WUI) band supported the event for ideological reasons, while others were local bands who were offered discounted travel to play at the event.[18] Some, such as Dublin's Fintan Lalor Pipe Band played at both the IRA and the Fianna Fáil Bodenstown commemorations.[19] Traditionally a celidhe was held in Dublin's Mansion House following the event.[20]

Using attendances at Bodenstown to assess levels of IRA support is problematic. In 1934 the pro - Fianna Fáil *Irish Press* admitted that the IRA's event was the "biggest tribute" yet paid to Tone's memory with about 17,000 attending.[21] A week later Fianna Fáil's commemoration drew a crowd of between 8,000 and 10,000.[22] Yet this does not adequately reflect the balance of forces within republicanism at the time. Following the ban on the event in 1936 just 1,000 attended a protest rally in Dublin.[23] A year later the commemoration was allowed to proceed but only 1,140 were present, at what according to the Gardai was a "half hearted" affair.[24] This would suggest that while Bodenstown was a largely peaceful display of republican support it could draw large crowds, but when risk was attached to attending support would dwindle. While 1931 an exception, which was related to increasing IRA confidence, the largest turn outs

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[16] *An Phoblacht*, 18 June 1932. The proprietor Mrs. Lawlor catered for the event until 1936. Sighle Humphreys to Secretary, Commemoration Committee, 21 June 1935, in Humphreys Papers, UCDA, P106/2114 (14).

[17] List of bands to Traffic Manager GSR, 13 June 1936, in Humphreys Papers, UCDA, P106/2126 (17).

[18] The WUI Band planned to march in 1936 to show the "parasites in power" that "coercion will not work." Tony Brack to Secretary, Bodenstown Committee, 9 June 1936, in Humphreys Papers, P106/2126 (19). 130 tickets were issued to bands from Dublin in 1935. P106/2102 (3).

[19] *Irish Press*, 15 June 1935.

[20] One reason buses were favoured by northern visitors in 1935 was because they could attend the Mansion House event and travel home later. Secretary's note, 12 June 1935, in Humphreys Papers, UCDA, P106/2106 (24-26).

[21] *Irish Press*, 18 June 1934. The Gardai estimated 17,000 marchers and 4,000 onlookers. Report, 20 June 1934, in Jus 8/310 NAI.

[22] *Irish Press*, 25 June 1934.

[23] *Notes on Events*, P67/534 pp. 55.

at Bodenstown were from 1933 to 1935 when the occasion was largely risk free.[25] The numbers attending the event during the War years point to the steady decline of militant republicanism.[26]

It is clear that the IRA was capable of mobilising large numbers of people outside its own ranks for specific occasions, especially commemorations. However sometimes these numbers could mask the relatively small size of the IRA itself. The 30,000 strong crowd who gathered in Dublin's College Green to welcome released IRA prisoners in March 1932 contained just 620 members of the organisation's Dublin Brigade.[27] For major public occasions the IRA also attempted to persuade its old or inactive members to parade, which again would give an exaggerated impression of the number of active members in a particular area.[28]

The IRA also sought to mobilise its constituency through the newspaper *An Phoblacht*. From April 1926 when the IRA took control of the paper it was the movement's main method of publicising its views.[29] As the organisation's Adjutant General put it, *An Phoblacht* was 'the only means" the IRA had of giving "open expression" to its policies.[30] From Peadar O'Donnell onwards all its editors were IRA members though not all of their assistants were.[31] It was published on a weekly basis although because of government suppression there were several periods during which it did not appear or was replaced by a

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[24] Tom Barry gave the oration. Garda report, 22 June 1937, in Jus 8/475 NAI.
[25] The IRA's estimate for 1931 was 10,000. *An Phoblacht*, 27 June 1931. The Irish Independent estimated a crowd of 9,000 attended the 1935 ceremony. *Irish Independent*, 24 June 1935.
[26] In 1938 1,400 heard Twomey address the rally. Garda report, 20 June 1938, in Jus 8/475 NAI. In 1942 numbers had fallen to just 280. Garda report, 23 June 1942, in Jus 8/900 NAI.
[27] Garda report, 13 March 1932, in Jus 8/698 NAI.
[28] C/S to O/C Dublin Bdge, 31 March 1931, in MTUCDA, P69/51 (26).
[29] The paper's first editor PJ Little had joined Fianna Fáil. Notes of Army Council meeting, 21 April 1926, in MTUCDA, P69/181 (46).
[30] A/G to Adjt. Connamara Batt, 3 July 1930, in MTUCDA, P69/153 (253).
[31] O'Donnell was succeeded by Frank Ryan in May 1929. Ryan's assistant editor was Geoffrey Coulter. In 1931 Coulter was replaced by Hannah Sheehy Skeffington. Ryan and Sheehy Skeffington resigned in April 1933 and were temporarily replaced by Seán MacBride. From the summer of 1933 the paper was edited by Terry Ward and Liam McGabhainn. Donal O'Donoghue was editor for a period in 1934 and 1935.

similar publication.[32] From May 1929 it was officially published by the Republican Press Ltd.[33] The paper was sold by IRA members themselves, outside church gates for example, by 'newsboys' at Dublin's Nelson's Pillar and in shops such as Easons.[34] Despite its brushes with the law it secured advertising even from semi-state bodies such as the Electricity Supply Board.[35]

Despite its importance the IRA often had difficulty circulating the paper among its own members. During 1930 officers reported that "only a few" of the IRA's Midland Battalion read *An Phoblacht*.[36] In west Mayo many IRA members never saw the paper and there appeared to be a distinct "lack of interest" in it.[37] Two years later Jim Killeen had to remind Tralee officers that it was the duty of all IRA members to sell and support *An Phoblacht*. Furthermore he warned that unless "more interest" was taken in sales of the paper the IRA might be forced to close it down.[38] In Northern Ireland *An Phoblacht* could not be sold openly and had to be distributed in secret. Recurring problems seemed to have plagued the IRA as a result of this. In 1929 the paper was arriving in Belfast a fortnight or more out of date and

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[32] During December 1926 a one page edition was published because of censorship. Between April and May 1929 it was replaced by a typed sheet called *Dublin News*. From November 1931 to March 1932 the paper was banned and was replaced by *Republican File*. As Ryan was jailed during this period Sheehy Skeffington edited this paper. In December 1933 it was seized for the first time under Fianna Fáil. When it was published for a brief period from March to July 1936 it was officially the organ of Cumann Poblachta na h-Éireann. During 1937 *An Phoblacht* was allowed publish four special issues in the run up to the referendum on the 1937 Constitution.

[33] The Republican Press Ltd was established on the 10 May 1929. Ryan and Sheehy Skeffington were directors and Aine O'Farrelly was secretary. In July 1933 Seán MacBride and Michael Fitzpatrick took over as directors and O'Farrelly remained secretary. Report, 8 January 1934, in Jus 8/68 NAI.

[34] In 1932 the paper had 186 individual account holders for local distribution in Ireland and Britain. Many were local IRA figures such as Patrick McKeon in Roscommon and Patrick Fleming in Killarney. AP Accounts, 1 June 1932, in MTUCDA, P69/52 (177-180). Easons distribution, in P69/55 (55) and A/G to Adjt. Leitrim, 19 September 1932, in MTUCDA, P69/156 (129). See also *An Phoblacht*, 1 April 1927.

[35] See *An Phoblacht*, 11 March 1933 for the ESB advert. From 1926 onwards the most consistent advertiser was the New Ireland Assurance Company. At various stages McBirney's furniture store, Guiney's clothes stores and HB Dairies advertised in the paper.

[36] Staff Captain 'W' to A/G, 11 October 1930, in MTUCDA, P69/153 (148).

[37] Inspecting Officer to A/G, 16 July 1930, in MTUCDA, P69/153 (246 - 250)

[38] A/G to Adjt. Tralee, 22 June 1932, in MTUCDA, P69/155 (111).

could not be sold.[39] By 1933 the Belfast IRA were still finding that their supply would lie for weeks "somewhere between Dublin and Belfast."[40]

This evidence contrasts sharply with Garda perceptions of the extent of the paper's influence during 1931. *An Phoblacht* was said to have more influence in Tipperary "than all other papers combined" and to be "poisoning" the youth of Kerry.[41] However these reports were certainly exaggerating the papers influence. It is possible that *An Phoblacht* could be widely read in one area of the country and unknown in another, but the paper never had anything approaching a mass circulation. In January 1930 Frank Ryan was claiming *An Phoblacht* had a sale of 8,000.[42] Two years later during a period of intense republican enthusiasm following the election of Fianna Fáil, *An Phoblacht's* print run was 10,000 a week.[43] During May 1932 it sold 27,727 copies.[44] While the paper would be read by wider numbers than those who bought it this still reflects a relatively limited circulation.[45] Furthermore the paper was a financial drain on the IRA. In September 1932 it was amounting to 50% of the organisation's total expenses. Between March and November that year it cost nearly £1,500 to run *An Phoblacht.*[46] There were suggestions of reducing the paper's size and even of closing it down.[47] The paper survived but figures for numbers being printed two years later do not show evidence of a major increase in sales. In January 1934 just over 11,000 copies of the paper were being

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[39] O/C Ulster No. 1 to A/G, 5 October 1929, in MTUCDA, P69/151 (337).

[40] Note to *An Phoblacht*, 11 December 1933, in MTUCDA, P69/243 (29). 120 copies were being sent to one IRA contact in Belfast during that period. DM (Davy Matthews) to *An Phoblacht*, 30 September 1933, in MTUCDA, P69/243 (45).

[41] Garda reports from Kerry and Tipperary, in Commissioner O'Duffy to Secretary Dept. Justice, 27 July 1931, UCDA, P80/857 (41).

[42] Ryan to McGarrity, 25 January 1930, in McGarrity Papers, Ms. 17,535 NLI.

[43] Report, 1 October 1932, in MTUCDA, P69/55 (55).

[44] Sales for May 1932, in MTUCDA, P69/52 (175).

[45] The *Irish Press*, by contrast, had a daily circulation of around 100,000. John Horgan, *Irish Media, A Critical History Since 1922*. (London, 2001) pp. 30.

[46] Cost of printing, March to November 1932, in MTUCDA P69/55 (59)

[47] Chairman AC to Editor, AP, 28 September 1932, in MTUCDA, P69/55 (53 - 64) and C/S to 'Jack Jones' 1 October 1932, in MTUCDA, P69/54 (36). However it should be noted that Frank Ryan felt that economics were being made a cover for political disagreements with him. See P. Ó Rian to Chairman AC, 1 October 1932, in MTUCDA, P69/55 (54).

printed.[48] From that period onwards *An Phoblacht* was the subject of repeated seizures and proofs of the paper had to be supplied to Gardai before going to press. As a result many issues appeared with editorials or front page articles missing.[49] In June 1935 the paper ceased publication for almost a year, the IRA blaming government repression and the failure of debtors to settle accounts.[50] Just prior to its suppression the print run had declined to 7,500 copies. It was revived for a four month period in March 1936, with just 6,500 being produced weekly before being suppressed again in July that year.[51] Even at that stage the IRA leadership complained that few units made an effort to support it.[52]

The relatively limited sales of *An Phoblacht* mean some caution must be shown when examining the IRA's ideology in this period. While the paper was certainly a guide to the diverse strands of leadership thinking, questions must be asked as to how much of their ideology percolated to the rank and file.

The IRA began to identify with the poorer sections of the Irish population from the mid 1920s. This in itself was evidence of a shift in IRA thinking and the influence of a new, younger leadership.[53] By the 1930s IRA members were admitting that during the 1919-21 period the organisation had "protected employers" and had developed no social programmme to appeal to the working class.[54] This reappraisal meant that when *An Phoblacht* was taken over by the IRA for example, it was stressed that from then on there would be a

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[48] 11,120 copies were seized at the printers. Garda report, 18 January 1934, in Jus 8/68 NAI.
[49] Garda report, 1 January 1934, in Jus 8/68 NAI. See *An Phoblacht*, 5 January and 2 March 1935 for missing articles. The paper was printed in Longford by the Longford Printing and Publishing Company. The IRA made occasional attempts to move the type face elsewhere to avoid censorship. See Garda report, 11 April 1935, in Jus 8/68 NAI.
[50] AP to Secretary, T. MacSwiney Club, Massachusetts, 26 March 1936, in MTUCDA, P69/225 (1).
[51] Longford Printing and Publishing Company, 30 May 1935 & 8 May 1936 in MTUCDA, P69/244.
[52] AC Statement to GAC 1938, in Aiken Papers, UCDA, P104/2833 (1-3). For the issues produced in order to oppose the 1937 Constitution the IRA leadership had to borrow from personal friends.
[53] This was not the case between 1919-23. See for example, English *Radicals,* pp.29-52 & David Fitzpatrick, *Politics and Irish Life 1913-21*, (Cork, 1998) pp. 209-230.
[54] Tom Daly at the 1933 GAC, Notes of GAC, in MTUCDA, P69/187 (99).

"very friendly" attitude taken in the paper to labour and small farmers.[55] In 1925 Military Intelligence was noting how some IRA Dublin members were supporting Jim Larkin and attacking strike breakers.[56] Indeed the IRA claimed to have had high hopes that Larkin would ally himself with the republican movement when he returned from the US during the Civil War. However this "wonderful opportunity" was squandered when Larkin came home in a "maudlin and sentimental" mood and refused to back the Anti - Treaty forces.[57] By 1927 the IRA suggested that Larkin was a "spent force" whose personal ambition and temperament rendered him incapable of giving real revolutionary leadership. Instead it was suggested rather optimistically that following IRA members seizing control of the Irish Transport and General Workers' Union unity with Larkin's WUI would be restored.

Because of its position during the Civil War the Labour Party and especially its leader Thomas Johnson were damned as representing "anaemic liberalism" rather than genuine Labourism.[58] Indeed the IRA claimed that it reflected the attitudes of Irish workers more authentically than the Labour Party did. So local IRA officers could express the belief that the "so - called labour gang" should be "wiped out" but then suggest that independent "militant labour" might offer the best hope of re-vitalising their own organisation.[59] There were in fact occasions when members of the Labour Party associated with the IRA. In Leitrim the Mohill branch of the party marched in support of the IRA's Seán O'Farrell in 1934.[60] In Ennis there was also personal connections between the

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[55] 'Lines on which paper is to be run' AC meeting 29 April 1926, in MTUCDA, P69/181 (41).

[56] Commandant CJ O'Donohue to I/O Eastern Command, 22 October 1925, in FitzGerald Papers, UCDA, P80/847 (117).

[57] 'Mr.Ambrose' (James Killeen) 'General Outline of the Present Movement' August 1927, in MTUCDA, P69/72 (3 - 14) and 'Mr. Holmes' (Peadar O'Donnell) 'Notes on the Irish Labour Movement' in MTUCDA, P69/72 (15 - 18).

[58] 'Notes' P69/72 (16). Johnson was one of the founders of the Irish Labour Party. He had been President of the Irish Trade Union Congress and was a TD and leader of the Labour Party from 1922 - 27. The phrase is O'Donnells and he always nursed a particular dislike of Johnson. See also O'Drisceoil, *O'Donnell*, pp. 28 & 32.

[59] O/C Kerry No. 1 Batt. to A/G, 8 February 1930, in MTUCDA, P69/152 (217).

[60] *Leitrim Observer*, 30 June 1934.

Ennis United Labourers' Association, the IRA and the local Labour Party.[61] Twomey was also fulsome in his praise for Labour's "splendid" support of the first Fianna Fáil government.[62] In contrast Tom Barry claimed to be considering a physical attack on Cork Labour TD TJ Murphy because Murphy had criticised him publicly.[63] More often then not however the Irish Labour Party was ignored rather than attacked by the IRA.[64]

Peadar O'Donnell expressed hostility to the presence of British based unions in Ireland, believing that they had held back the Labour movement from the national struggle. In practice the IRA adopted a more flexible attitude backing the British based National Union of Railwaymen (NUR) in strikes during 1930 and 1933, but continued to hold that "Irish labour organised in Ireland" would be the best situation.[65] During 1929 IRA officers met with Communists to discuss the setting up of a 'Workers' Defence Corps' to take an active part in strikes. The IRA was to form the nucleus of this organisation. While the communists wished to confine membership to trade unionists the IRA successfully convinced them to allow those whose "social position does not admit membership of Trade Unions" to join.[66] Later that year the IRA were involved in the launch of the Irish Labour Defence League.[67] Dublin IRA officers donated money to strike funds and striking workers took part in IRA

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[61] The local Labour Party and the EULA Band had taken part in the Ennis Easter Commemoration. *Clare Champion*, 7 April, 5 & 12 May 1934.

[62] Twomey to Neenan, 15 September 1932, in MTUCDA, P69/185 (195 - 199).

[63] *Cork Examiner*, 20 December 1932 and Barry to Twomey, 23 December 1932, in MTUCDA, P69/155 (3).

[64] An exception being a debate between Frank Robbins, formerly of the ICA and the IRA, in *An Phoblacht*, 28 March 1936.

[65] At the beginning of the 1930 IOC strike *An Phoblacht* explicitly rejected claims that the NUR was a foreign union. By the strikes conclusion however it was claiming that the fact that the NUR was British based had contributed to the strikes defeat. *An Phoblacht*, 24 May and 2 August 1930.

[66] Garda report, 19 June 1929, in FitzGerald Papers, UCDA, P80/851 (20).

[67] Garda report, 16 July 1929, in FitzGerald Papers, UCDA, P80/907 (2). The ILDL was the Irish section of the Comintern's International Labour Defence League. Mick Fitzpatrick was one of its secretaries. See ILDL to IRA GHQ, April 1931, in MTUCDA, P69/151 (6).

commemorations.[68] In Newport, Co. Mayo during 1932 IRA members who worked on coal boats became embroiled in a strike over wage cuts.[69] In Kerry during late 1933 the ITGWU in Tralee threatened a General Strike in support of IRA members arrested following clashes with Blueshirts.[70]

Most IRA intervention during labour disputes was of a violent nature. At its 1933 convention delegates voted in support of a motion authorising military action in support of strikers, despite opposition from delegates from Armagh and Down.[71] The organisation had already been carrying out violent actions during strikes for several years prior to this. The first major IRA intervention in a national dispute was during the IOC strike of 1930. During the strike a bus was held up in Granard Co. Longford, its driver and conductor beaten up and the bus itself abandoned in a bog. Shots were fired at buses in New Ross, Galway and Clare and bus windows smashed in Cork and Limerick. Strike breakers were also attacked in Sligo town.[72] The IRA were certainly the driving force behind most of these incidents.[73] The extent that such violence helped cohere the IRA internally should not be underestimated. In Galway the IRA claimed that its organisation had improved since the "attack on buses commenced."[74] Similar tactics were to be used during the Northern rail strike three years later.[75] Employees of O'Mara's Bacon shops in Dublin struck for three months during late 1934 and early 1935. The dispute involved an inter union argument between the Shop Employees Society and the Commercial Employees Union (CEU) of which the IRA's Mick Fitzpatrick was an official. The Shop Employees were accused of being a 'company union' by the strikers.

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[68] Donation of £5 from IRA GHQ Staff to Greenmount Mill strikers, 5 May 1931, in MTUCDA, P69/151 (4 - 5). The Greenmount Mill strikers took part in Dublin's Easter Commemoration in 1931. *An Phoblacht*, 11 April 1931.

[69] O/C North Mayo to A/G, 2 August 1932, in MTUCDA, P69/158 (235).

[70] *Kerry Champion*, 16 December 1933.

[71] Notes of 1933 GAC, P69/187 (113).

[72] Reports in *Irish Independent*, 4 June 1930,

[73] See O/C North Wexford to A/G, 23 July 1930, in MTUCDA, P69/153 (186). One IRA man charged with the New Ross shooting gave an undertaking of good behaviour to the court.

[74] 'D' to A/G, 27 June 1930, in MTUCDA, P69/153 (255-256).

In late December four of O'Mara's shops were raided by armed men. Gardai were held up outside the premises while the raiders broke windows and smashed equipment inside.[76]

Similar tactics were envisaged by the IRA when it intervened in the Dublin tram and bus strike during March 1935. After several weeks the government moved to ease the lack of public transport by placing Army lorries on the streets.[77] The IRA saw this as an unacceptable strike breaking move. *An Phoblacht* denounced the government's move as an "extreme fascist step" and called for a general strike in protest.[78] The IRA issued a statement putting their organisation at the disposal of the Strike Committee.[79] There was initial hesitancy on behalf of the strikers, but eventually a meeting was organised between the Strike Committee and the IRA. The presence of at least one striking IRA member on the committee helped ease relations.[80] While the official Union leaderships of the ITGWU and the Amalgamated Transport Union professed no knowledge of the IRA's intentions, Gardai believed that there were plans to set fire to Army lorries.[81] The government responded to the IRA's intervention by arresting 44 republicans and the IRA leadership were forced to go on the run for the first time under Fianna Fáil.[82]

One exception to the IRA's normal practice in industrial disputes was its role during the Dublin newspaper strike of the autumn of 1934. With the three Dublin daily newspapers strike bound, and no English or provincial papers on sale in the city, the IRA received permission to publish *An Phoblacht* from the Strike Committee. Donal O'Donoghue boasted that at last *An Phoblacht* was

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[75] See Chapter Eight pp.
[76] *Irish Times*, 22 December 1934. *Notes on the Republican Congress Movement*, MacEntee Papers, UCDA, P67/527 pp. 15. The raiders were also accused of having made off with a "handsome turkey!"
[77] *Notes on Events*, MacEntee Papers, UCDA, P67/534 pp. 37.
[78] *An Phoblacht*, 23 March 1935.
[79] *Irish Times*, 25 March 1935.
[80] Garda report, 27 March 1935, in Jus 8/405 NAI.
[81] Garda report, 26 March 1935, in Jus 8/405 NAI.
[82] *Notes on Events*, P67/534, pp. 38-39.

"Ireland's only national paper!"[83] For the duration of the strike *An Phoblacht* published three special editions a week as well as its regular paper.[84] It was also the case that while Mick Fitzpatrick was very visible during a campaign by the CEU for shorter working hours the Gardai believed that there were no threats against shop owners by the IRA.[85]

Generally however the IRA response to industrial disputes was to intervene militarily on the striker's side. To what extent this aided the strikers' cause was open to question, but some trade unionists seem to have been prepared to co-operate with it.[86] However it meant the IRA tended to operate outside the mainstream of trade unionism. A similar rationale was applied in more localised disputes. When a number of striking members of the Irish Road and Rail Federation were sacked at Fenit Railway Station in Kerry the IRA responded by burning down the Railway Station House. In this case there was also a personal grievance as IRA member and Kerry County Councillor Michael O'Donnell had been one of those sacked.[87] In Clare during 1932 several violent incidents occurred during a strike, the origins of which the local IRA leader described as so "complicated and interwoven" that it was impossible for him to write a report on them. Local IRA members were jailed after taking part in an armed raid on the home of a farmer in an attempt to intimidate him into withdrawing support from a local employer.[88]

There were also differences of emphasis in the IRA's attitude to the labour movement. Peadar O'Donnell believed initially that the Irish "peasantry" were the "great force" that would overthrow Imperialism in Ireland. Indeed he

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[83] O'Donoghue to Sighle Humphreys, 30 August 1934, in Humphreys Papers, UCDA, P106/1644 (1-4).

[84] See *An Phoblacht*, Special Edition by Consent of Strike Committee, 11 August 1934.

[85] Garda report, 26 September 1934, in Jus 8/365 NAI.

[86] The IRA claimed to be supplying strikers with explosives in Belfast during the rail strike. See Chapter Eight pp. 262-263. Three rail workers were charged with bomb attacks during the strike. *Irish News*, 30 March 1933. Two of those arrested in connection with the Bacon Shop attacks were strikers. *Irish Times*, 31 December 1934. Two men arrested after shots were fired at Gardai during the Dublin Tram strike were bus drivers. *Irish Independent*, 25 March 1935.

[87] *Notes on Events*, P67/534 pp. 48. *Kerry Champion*, 23 March 1935 & 8 February 1936.

expressed some resentment of urban workers whom he claimed had excluded small farmers from trade unions in the 1919-21 period.[89] O'Donnell had a very ambitious and optimistic view of how to win the rural masses to the republican cause and it was to be centred on a campaign against Land Annuities.[90] Certainly the make up of the IRA in the countryside did mean many members would have instinctive sympathy for people engaged in land agitation. As a detective was alleged to observe in Carlow, it was only "the small farmers and the labourers" who made up republican support anyway.[91]

Despite the decline in the numbers of agricultural labourers and the lack of any great 'land question' there remained discontent among the rural population.[92] Land owned or with shooting or fishing rights in the hands of English owners was still a potent mobilising issue among sections of the rural populace. The Leitrim IRA were able to mobilise local support to forcibly re-instate a tenant of Lord Kingston's in a gate lodge after the man, who had lived in the lodge for 11 years, was evicted. The fact that he was unemployed, with seven children and forced to live in an "old shed" helped ensure almost all the local people along with the Keadeu Band turned out in a demonstration to support him. The IRA were then able to inform the landlord's steward that they did not recognise "planters" rights to Irish property.[93] After a controversial Land Commission descision to grant ownership of a quarry near Tralee to a local farmer, the IRA took over the quarry and removed stone the locals wanted to use in the building of a local school.[94] When blatant injustice was perceived as when a 78 year old woman with an unemployed son and four young

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[88] O/C West Clare to D/I, 13 May 1932, in MTUCDA, P69/199 (179).
[89] 'Mr. Holmes', Notes on the Labour Movement, MTUCDA, P69/72 (15-18).
[90] See Chapter Six pp. 204-205.
[91] O/C South Carlow to A/G, 8 July 1932, in MTUCDA, P69/158 (285-286).
[92] Down from 300,000 in 1911 to 150,000 in 1936. Lee, *Ireland 1912-1985; Politics and Society* (Cambridge, 1989) pp. 159. See also Paul Bew, 'Sinn Féin, Agrarian Radicalism and the War of Independence, 1919-1921' in DG Boyce, *The Revolution in Ireland, 1879-1923* (Dublin, 1988) pp. 217-234.
[93] Adjt. Leitrim to A/G, 24 August 1932, in MTUCDA, P69/156 (134).
[94] Adjt. Tralee Batt. to A/G, 28 October 1932, in MTUCDA, P69/156 (56-58).

grandchildren was threatened with eviction in Sligo the local IRA clamoured to be allowed take action.[95]

Again many local IRA units responded to attempts to collect annuities or perceived local injustices not with mass agitation but by violence or threats of violence. Galway IRA men fired into the home of the State Solicitor for Clare in a botched attempt to destroy Land Commission Warrants, although as we have seen personal factors were also involved in this case.[96] In Waterville Co. Kerry during 1929 an Under - Sheriff and his Garda escort came under attack from rifle fire as they attempted to seize cattle belonging to a debtor. Gardai believed the local IRA, whose leader was also secretary of the Anti-Annuities campaign, were responsible.[97] In that case as with several others local IRA members wanted to assist people they felt had made sacrifices for republicans in the past. When a man from a remote farm in the Nephin mountains faced eviction the Mayo IRA felt obliged to assist him as he had given refuge to men on the run during the Civil War.[98] Seán McGuinness of the Offaly IRA told his superiors he would not "stand idly by" while a man who had "beggered" himself providing assistance to the IRA from 1919-23 was evicted.[99]

The IRA leadership's attitude to these activities was generally lukewarm however. While expressing sympathy with individual cases there was a fear of the organisation getting involved in "bickering." Officially the IRA argued that where there was local injustice the "people in the neighbourhood can be got to protest" and that was a better remedy than the IRA taking action on its own.[100] In the case of the elderly Sligo woman, Twomey agreed that it was obviously an "outrageous case" but felt that organising a public meeting and mobilising local opinion in her support would be more effective than using violence.[101]

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[95] O/C Sooey Unit to O/C Sligo Batt., 6 October 1932, in MTUCDA, P69/158 (65).
[96] See Chapter Two pp. 58.
[97] Garda report, 25 May 1929, in FitzGerald Papers, UCDA, P80/851 (16).
[98] Adjt. North Mayo Bdge to A/G, 7 September 1932, in MTUCDA, P69/158 (182-186).
[99] O/C Offaly to A/G, 28 May 1932, in MTUCDA, P69/155 (171).
[100] A/G to O/C Tipperary Batt. 21 September 1932, in MTUCDA, P69/158 (128).
[101] C/S to O/C Sligo Batt, 26 October 1932, in MTUCDA, P69/158 (62-69).

There was also certainly a fear of what left wing officers like McGuinness could drag the organisation into. He was severely admonished for writing an article which fondly recalled the shooting of a Policeman during the Land War and for organising an anti-eviction protest meeting without informing IRA headquarters. The fact that Peadar O'Donnell had co-operated with McGuinness in doing this intensified growing divisions over tactics among the IRA leadership.[102]

The IRA declined to lead a potential movement for land reform despite being in a position to do so in the autumn of 1932. Meetings were organised by former IRA members in Tipperary and Limerick to demand that republicans benefit from any redistribution of land by the Land Commission. There was local IRA enthusiasm for the project but they were warned by the leadership that the meetings were probably an attempt by Fianna Fáil to establish 'Old IRA' clubs and undermine their organisation.[103] While the proposed campaign might be useful in help get unemployed IRA members work or land, the IRA was not to put itself at the head of any movement. Members attending the land reform meetings were instructed to raise issues which had been stressed in *An Phoblacht*, such as repeal of the 1923 Land Act and the seizing of grazing land for tillage.[104] Out of 42 delegates meeting in Thurles, 17 were IRA members including a representative of the leadership. The list of demands drawn up by the meeting reflected IRA thinking, with calls for "ranches" to be divided among "landless men", all farmers be required to till at least 50% of their arable land, long term credit to allow the purchase of houses and equipment and a commitment to develop industries in the towns.[105] Despite the election of 2 IRA members to a committee of 7 the organisation's leadership were too suspicious of the initiative to push it any further.

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[102] A/G to O/C Offaly, 19 May 1932, in MTUCDA, P69/157 (32) and A/G to O/C Offaly, 9 June 1932, in MTUCDA, P69/155 (169). Article in *Worker's Voice,* 14 May 1932.
[103] A/G to O/C Limerick, 18 October 1932, in MTUCDA, P69/54 (32).
[104] C/S to Jack Jones, 1 October 1932, in P69/54 (34-35). *An Phoblacht*, 1 October 1932.
[105] Report on Thurles Conference, 2 October 1932, in MTUCDA, P69/54 (37-41).

The most notorious example of IRA intervention in a land dispute concerned the Sanderson Estate in Edgeworthstown, Co. Longford. While attention has focused on the killing of Richard More O'Ferrall the nature of the dispute itself helps illuminate some aspects of rural politics at the time. The landlord of the estate, Maria Sanderson was mentally ill and confined to an asylum so her land was administered by the Chief Justice. Sanderson's brother in law, a Captain Montague, acted as Land Agent. Every householder in Edgesworthstown was a Sanderson tenant. Discontent with the rent being charged led to the formation of a Tenants' Association in May 1934.[106] The Association first approached local Fine Gael TD Seán MacEoin and his Fianna Fáil counterpart James Victory, with regard to them presenting their demand for a 50% reduction in rent to Captain Montague.[107] When this demand was rejected Montague's attempt to collect rent was blocked by pickets. Some months later a local Agent, Gerald More O'Ferrall was appointed whom the tenents initially felt would be "more disposed" to help them.[108] When tenants continued to withold payment of rent, evictions were threatened.[109] In early November the Tenants Association passed a resolution calling on the IRA to assist their fight against 'Landlordism.'[110] At a rally held in the town local speakers expressed the hope that they were no longer "isolated" and an IRA member stressed that landlords "deserved no pity." Another IRA member, Hugh Devine, became Secretary of the Association.[111] Two months later during a raid on the O'Ferrall home in Lissard the agent's son Richard was fatally wounded.[112]

What is notable about the shooting is despite a major Garda investigation and the eventual trial of seven men, the land agitation did not come to a halt.

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[106] F. Columb, *The Shooting of More O'Ferrall*, (Monaghan, 1996) pp. 3-16. *Longford Leader*, 5 & 12 May, 2, 9 & 30 June 1934.

[107] MacEoin alledgedly told the tenents that if he was still "leading soldiers" their fight would be over in "24 hours." *Longford Leader*, 23 March 1935.

[108] *Longford Leader*, 29 September 1934.

[109] *Notes on Events*, P67/534 pp. 32-33.

[110] Devine had asked IRA HQ for help on the 21st of October. AC correspondence book, in Aiken Papers, UCDA, P104/2839 (2).

[111] *Longford Leader*, 10 November & 8 December 1934, *An Phoblacht*, 8 December 1934.

Indeed during April the IRA tried to forcibly reinstate evicted tenants on the estate only to be prevented by Gardai. Another rally against evictions drew support from Labour as well as republican representatives.[113] The agitation was only halted after the Tenant's Association accepted terms negotiated by James Victory in June 1935.[114] The jury in the case of the IRA members involved eventually delivered a verdict of 'not guilty' in December 1935. The defendents were met by a torch light procession in Mullingar, a parade in Longford and 300 people welcomed them back to Edgesworthstown.[115] Where violent activity by the IRA was counter productive in some cases, in this instance local tension and a general dislike of what was seen as a relic of Ascendancy meant that even a killing had little effect on their support.[116]

In the case of a major IRA initiative to up the stakes in the Economic War however the organisation badly misjudged feeling both inside and outside their organisation. The 'Boycott British' campaign was a logical extension of the IRA's occasional attempts to implement opposition to British produce in Ireland. In 1927 British newspapers had been burnt in Dublin's streets and in 1931 an attempt had been made to burn a lorry containing Cadbury's chocolates at Dublin port.[117] However in the context of the change in government during 1932 and the growing economic tension with Britain the IRA felt a grassroots campaign against British imports could mobilise mass opinion behind the Economic War. In the autumn of 1932 the IRA leadership sanctioned the launch of a broad based campaign with the proviso that the IRA maintain ultimate

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[112] *Longford Leader*, 16 February 1935.
[113] *Longford Leader*, 27 March 1935.
[114] *Longford Leader*, 22 June 1935. These terms included a 25% reduction in rent and re-instatement of evicted tenants.
[115] *Irish Times*, 16 December 1935.
[116] See Vincent Gill, "Rack-Rented Tenants of Edgesworthstown', in *Republican Congress*, 1 June 1935.
[117] Copies of the *Sunday Times* and *News of the World* were destroyed. *Irish Independent*, 21 March 1927. O/C Dub Bdge to C/S, 21 March 1927, in MTUCDA, P69/48 (205) and *Notes on Events*, P67/534 pp. 6.

control of it.[118] The campaign's first National Executive of the campaign contained four IRA members, two from Cumann na mBan, one from the Fianna Eireann, Maud Gonne, a communist and a representative of the Indian - Irish Independence League.[119]

A decision was taken to form local committees throughout the country and to operate on an "activist" basis, with canvassing, bill pasting, and road painting to be standard activities. The National Executive of the campaign decided to concentrate on certain specified articles to be boycotted, with an intensive mobilisation against these items for about a fortnight. Then having been successful, the campaign would move on to the next items. The first items chosen were "British Ales and Sweets" and as Bass was the "only widely consumed" British ale in the Free State this was chosen as the first target. Hotels and pubs were to be visited, warned against stocking Bass and then given ten days to desist or face having their stocks destroyed. In case of opposition Irish ales such as O'Connells or Cairnes, and chocolates such as "Urneys" were to be suggested as alternatives.[120]

However the campaign immediately ran into difficulties. By November 1932 support for it within the IRA had been according to the Army Council "very disappointing."[121] Committees existed in twenty three areas across the Free State but with varying levels of activity. Only five were very dynamic with Waterford the most energetic area.[122] The IRA leadership decided that the only way to intensify interest would be by the "siezure and destruction" of British

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[118] A/G to Secretary, British Boycott Committee, 6 September 1932, in MTUCDA, P69/158 (191-193).

[119] 'Boycott British' National Executive Minute Book, 14 September 1932, in Humphreys Papers, UCDA, P106/2101.

[120] 'Boycott British' League, National Executive, Deire Foghmhair 1932, in MTUCDA P69/247 (2-4). Urneys were owned by a Fianna Fáil supporter Henry Gallagher, see McGarrity Papers, Irish Press subscriptions, 1928, in Ms. 17,441 NLI. Urneys Choclates and O'Connell's Ale were both regular advertisers in *An Phoblacht*. See *An Phoblacht*, 25 March 1927 and 1 July 1933.

[121] Chairman AC to Army Executive, 18 November 1932, in MTUCDA, P69/155 (30).

[122] Reports from Con Lehane, Secretary BBL to A/G, 22 November 1932, in MTUCDA, P69/247 (10-22).

goods.[123] Premises of Bass distributers were attacked in Dublin and Cork and casks of ale smashed.[124] Again the response was poor. By late December it was still the case that the campaign had not "much of a grip" on people's imagination.[125]

There were several reasons for this. Outside the ranks of the IRA many republicans, especially Fianna Fáil supporters, believed that the government's tariffs already provided a "sufficient boycott."[126] The hostility of the *Irish Press* to the boycott campaign was also thought to be influencing the IRA's rank and file. There were also claims that the newspapers were ignoring the campaign.[127] Rather than increasing support the IRA's moves to destroy stocks of Bass had frightened off Fianna Fáil supporters.[128] More importantly, little genuine interest had been shown by IRA members themselves, especially in Dublin. Even in Waterford the IRA had not played an active role in the local campaign. One explanation for this put forward by Donal O'Donoghue was that Bass was not widely consumed in Ireland, and especially not in Dublin.[129] Another problem O'Donoghue identified was that boycotting British goods and promoting Irish produce could be seen as "boosting up Irish capitalism" which meant that left leaning IRA members were uncomfortable with the campaign.[130] As a guard against this Twomey suggested that Boycott speakers stress that they were against profiteering by Irish manufacturers and that Irish business should be forced to pay decent wages.[131] However the contrived nature of the targeting of

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[123] Chairman AC to Army Executive, MTUCDA, P69/155 (30).
[124] Garda report, 13 December 1932 in D/T S 5864 D NAI & *Irish Press,* 14 December 1932.
[125] AC Memorandum on Boycott British Campaign, 21 December 1932, in MTUCDA, P69/54 (14).
[126] O/C South Mayo to A/G, 17 November 1932, in MTUCDA, P69/157 (7).
[127] AC Memorandum, P69/54 (14) and Con Lehane to A/G, MTUCDA, P69/247 (10-22). *Irish Press*, 19 & 21 December 1932.
[128] Tom Barry at the March 1933 GAC, MTUCDA, P69/187 (109).
[129] O'Donoghue at the 1933 GAC, MTUCDA, P69/187 (110). Waterford report, 22 November 1932, in MTUCDA, P69/247 (10-22).
[130] March 1933 GAC, MTUCDA, P69/187 (110). See also O'Connor, *Soldier of Liberty*, pp. 2 and Byrne *Republican Congress Revisited*, pp. 10. While the Republican Congress would later ridicule the "squabble over Bass bottles" none of its future members spoke against it at the 1933 GAC. *Republican Congress*, 29 June 1935.
[131] C/S to Chairman Boycott Committee, 20 October 1932, in MTUCDA, P69/247 (5-6).

Bass itself, on the basis that its owner, Colonel Gretton MP, was a "bitter public enemy" of the Irish people made it difficult enough to convince IRA members, let alone the public, that this was a serious campaign.[132] The campaign was also solely a 26 county affair. One northern IRA officer, on receiving notice of the initiative wished the leadership would "please point out how this concerns us in six counties."[133] At the 1933 Convention Seán MacBride suggested that the campaign be kept going in order to keep the IRA in "training" only to be contradicted by a delegate who argued it was actually obstructing training activities. It was decided to maintain the campaign but only to use violence if the necessary public support had been built up beforehand.[134]

In actual fact the campaign had almost collapsed when the IRA decided to revive it by widespread violence in late 1933. During September stocks of Bass were destroyed by the IRA in Dublin, Tralee, Lucan, Naas, Drogheda and Waterford. A number of publicans were assaulted and £161 of damage caused to Dublin pubs.[135] The IRA's activities led to the jailing of 13 of their members and hence to another round of campaigning but had no discernible interest in increasing support for a boycott.[136] De Valera's view that the raids were a "damn foolhardy business" was probably shared by most of the republican constituency, whose passive support was needed for an effective campaign.[137] By this stage there was little effort to boycott anything except Bass and the desperation of the IRA in hoping violence would revive the campaign was in fact an admission of its failure. At the 1934 Convention the campaign was quietly abandoned.[138]

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[132] Notes for defendants in Boycott case, December 1932, in MTUCDA, P69/53 (361-364)
[133] Adjt Ulster No. 4 to A/G, 27 November 1932, in MTUCDA, P69/158 (7).
[134] Notes 1933 GAC, MTUCDA, P69/187 (110).
[135] *Notes on Events*, P67/534 pp. 16-17.
[136] Despite bravado about the Bass firm being "broken" in Ireland. *An Phoblacht*, 16 September 1933.
[137] De Valera to McGarrity, 6 September 1933, (care of ST O'Kelly), in McGarrity Papers, Ms. 17,441 NLI. Three years later Seán MacEntee spoke contemptuously of how IRA "bottle smashing" almost provoked England into putting tariffs on Irish beer. *Irish Press*, 22 June 1936.
[138] Notes of 1934 GAC, MacEntee Papers, UCDA, P67/525.

The IRA's constitution committed to it to making the Irish language the "everyday language" of the Irish people.[139] Publicly the organisation stressed the need to "replace the English language...in the pulpit, platform and press."[140] All the organisation's political initiatives from the left wing Saor Éire to the non socialist Cumann Poblachta na h-Eireann stressed the importance of the revivial of the language.[141] In reality, like the majority of its constituency, the IRA was an English speaking organisation. Irish language enthusiasts like Frank Ryan were the exception among the leadership.[142] The IRA were not unique in this regard among republicans. At the 1925 Cumann na mBan Convention it was decided to reserve one third of the organisation's executive for Irish speakers but a year later this could not be done from the available candidates.[143] All the IRA's internal documents were written and all its discussions carried out in English. At the 1933 Convention a motion was passed *suggesting* the organisation's commands be given in Irish. This was agreed to, but only where "practicable."[144] In reality the IRA's verbal commands were almost always in English.[145] The IRA's Dingle Battalion, in which a majority were Irish speakers, had expressed a wish to become an completely Irish speaking unit. While the IRA leadership had no problem with this they did warn that a "great many technical difficulties" would have to be overcome first. They suggested that the National Army's Gaelic manuals would be of use![146] A plan by a Connemara

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[139] Constitution of Oglaigh Na h-Éireann, MacEntee Papers, UCDA, P67/524 (10-14).
[140] *An Phoblacht*, 14 March 1931.
[141] Saor Éire Constituion and Rules, September 1931, in D/T S 5864 A and Cumann Poblachta na h-Éireann, Fundementals of Political and Economic System, 7 & 8 November 1936, in Jus 8/68 NAI.
[142] Ryan was so upset by an article critical of Irish by Frank O'Connor in the left wing *Irish People* that he almost resigned from the paper. Entry, Jacob Diaries, 17 February 1936, Ms. 32,582 (78) NLI and Cronin, *Frank Ryan*, pp. 69. According to his son Twomey had "only the smallest smattering of Irish" although he was tried to learn more while imprisoned in the Curragh during 1936-37. Letter from M. Twomey Jr to author, 17 April 2000.
[143] Cumann na mBan Convention Notes, 4 May 1926, in Humphreys Papers, UCDA, P106/1144 (6).
[144] Notes of 1933 GAC, MTUCDA, P69/187 (118).
[145] See Garda report on IRA mobilisation at rally in Dublin, 13 March 1932, in Jus 8/698 NAI.
[146] Adjt. Dingle Batt. to A/G, 9 October, and A/G to Adjt Dingle, 24 October 1932, in MTUCDA, P69/156 (77-79).

officer to form an Irish speaking organisation involving his unit as well as the IRA in Dingle and Donegal, was coolly received in Dublin.[147] Young IRA members' inability to speak Irish was ridiculed on occasion by their adversaries. One judge asked of a Dundalk defendant if it was a rule of the IRA "not to speak Gaelic."[148] A Clare IRA man was similarly taunted by another District Justice.[149] *An Phoblacht* usually carried just one Irish language article a week and this reflects the fact that like much of nationalist Ireland, the IRA accepted in fact, if not in theory, that English was the language of the majority of Irish people.

The IRA's attitude to other areas of popular culture reflected both the bias of nationalist critics towards 'foreign' influences and the organisation's ambivalent but more open attitude to modern trends. *An Phoblacht* contained articles both critical of, and praising, writers like Seán O'Casey and Seán O'Faolain. Republicans, including Hannah Sheehy Skeffington disrupted performances of 'The Plough and the Stars' in 1925, yet by 1933 it was being praised by *An Phoblacht* for its "grim realism."[150] The widespread hostility to jazz music in the Free State received an echo with the report of a Gaelic League anti-Jazz rally in Leitrim while in contrast American singer Paul Robeson was hailed as the "vocalist of an oppressed race."[151] This coverage also reflects the fact that the IRA did not take these issues very seriously and generally left discussion of them to individual taste.

A good deal more serious was the IRA's enthusiasm for Gaelic games. *An Phoblacht's* coverage of Gaelic sport has been characterised as the paper at

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[147] Adjt Connemara Batt to A/G, 25 November 1932 & reply 5 December 1932, in MTUCDA, P69/155 (7-12).

[148] *Irish Independent*, 7 November 1932.

[149] *An Phoblacht*, 22 October 1932. He could not understand the questions the Judge put to him in Irish.

[150] Margaret Ward, *Hannah Sheehy Skeffington - A Life*, (Cork, 1997). pp. 273-278. *An Phoblacht*, 23 September 1933. The review was by Terry Ward. As early as 1928 O'Casey was being praised in *An Phoblacht*. See issue of 9 January 1928.

[151] *An Phoblacht*, 6 January 1934. Seán O'Farrell's involvement in the local Gaelic League may account for the appearance of this article. Robeson review in *An Phoblacht*, 23 February 1935.

its "narrowest, most exclusivist and racialist." Indeed Irish people who professed to enjoy both native and foreign games were condemned as "mongrels" and "traitors" by the paper's GAA correspondent.[152] This is a little unusual in that the IRA was strong in a number of areas where there was popular support for soccer, but there is no hint that any IRA member followed this game.[153] Interestingly the Republican Congress newspaper favoured similar coverage of GAA sports and again did not feature "foreign" games.[154] However most IRA members who played or followed Gaelic sports did so because they were popular across nationalist Ireland rather than for political reasons. It was also the case that the organisation's relationship with the Gaelic Athletic Association was often an uneasy one and reflected the GAA's ability to include within its ranks mutually hostile sections of Irish nationalist society.

In the immediate post Civil War period the IRA had high hopes of gaining political control of the GAA. In 1924 Kerry had refused to play the All Ireland Football Final and Limerick and Galway the Hurling Final as protests against the continued imprisonment of republicans.[155] The IRA were centrally involved in promoting this boycott within the GAA in the respective counties.[156] As a result the IRA ordered its members to begin to organise within the GAA

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[152] McHugh, *Voices of the Rearguard*, pp. 348 & 354.

[153] The IRA's Dublin membership was predominantly working class in a city with a strong soccer tradition. Gerald Boland claimed at least half the IRA's Dublin Brigade during 1919-21 had been soccer players or supporters. *Irish Times*, 19 October 1968. Certainly some prominent Fianna Fáil members such as Oscar Traynor and Todd Andrews were very enthusiastic soccer fans, sometimes to the discomfort of the GAA. Marcus De Burca, *The GAA - A History* (1999) pp 171-172 & Andrews, *Dublin* pp 45-47 & *Man of No Property*, pp. 41. There is an intriguing hint of non GAA support for republicans in the claim that "even Rugby clubs" in Tralee cancelled games in protest at the jailing of IRA members. *Kerry Champion*, 24 February 1934. Parts of Kerry, like Limerick, have a popular rugby tradition.

[154] 'Mutius' *An Phoblacht's* GAA correspondent from 1925-31 went on to *Republican Congress*. Frank Ryan apparently vetoed a proposal for 'soccer notes' in the *Irish People*. Cronin, *Ryan*, pp. 69.

[155] De Burca, *GAA*, pp. 129-130. JJ Barrett, *In the Name of the Game*, (Bray, 1997) pp. 68-69.

[156] A/G to O/C Divisions and Independent Brigades, 20 June 1924, in MTUCDA, P69/145 (231).

in the hope of gaining influence in it.[157] However this was not to happen and the IRA remained just one of the many political organisations represented within the GAA. Elements within the IRA remained suspicious of the widespread presence of National Army soldiers and Gardai within the Association. There were even suggestions that the GAA sought "deliberately" to divert young men from involvement in the IRA.[158]

A request by the Clan na Gael as to the affiliations of the visiting Mayo football team in 1932 gives an indication of the broad nature of the Association. Of 21 players listed just one was an IRA member, another was "republican labour" four were Cumann na Gaedheal supporters, five Fianna Fáil, three were Gardai, one was described as an "Imperialist" and four were "neutral."[159] The Kilkenny hurlers visiting the US that year again only contained "a few" IRA sympathisers.[160] The Clan na Gael did have some influence within the GAA in the US with a number of their supporters elected onto its Executive in 1927.[161] Teams from Ireland which included players who were prominent Cumann na Gaedheal supporters such as Con Brosnan of Kerry were guaranteed a "hostile reception" in America.[162] Brosnan, an IRA member from 1919-22 and later a National Army officer was Kerry organiser for the Army Comrades Association during 1932.[163] He was also a six times All Ireland winner with Kerry and an important figure in the GAA there.[164] The IRA leadership believed that its Kerry organisation had missed the opportunity to undermine Brosnan's influence within

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[157] Twomey to A/G, 25 September 1924, in MTUCDA, P69/141 (32). Report for IRA Executive, 10 August 1924, in MTUCDA, P69/179 (111).
[158] Draft notes on the GAA (1931) in MTUCDA, P69/73 (73-74).
[159] C/S to O/C North Mayo, 28 April 1932, and list in MTUCDA, P69/52 (199).
[160] Chairman AC to secretary Clan na Gael, 8 November 1932, in MTUCDA, P69/185 (154-156).
[161] An Timthire, Clan na Gael, 15 January 1927 in MTUCDA, P69/183 (134).
[162] Neenan to Twomey, 21 March 1933, in MTUCDA, P69/185 (26). Kerry player Johnny Walsh, a Cumann na Gaedheal supporter was told by an opposing player in New York that he would be sent "back to Cosgrave in a coffin." Barret, *Name of the Game*, pp. 128.
[163] Brosnan was involved in the killing of an RIC District Inspector during 1921. Dwyer, *Tans, Terror and Troubles*, pp. 270-272. An unsuccessful Cumann na Gaedheal candidate in 1933, he resigned from the ACA after the election, *Notes on Events*, P67/534, pp. 12 and *Kerry Champion*, 4 February 1933.
[164] Barret, *Name of the Game*, pp. 150-158.

the GAA during the 1920s. They lamented that it was also impossible to get republicans to complain about Cumann na Gaedheal supporters on the GAA's Connaught Council.[165]

One historian of the GAA has argued that the conflicts between the IRA, the Blueshirts and the De Valera government "hardly" affected the Association.[166] In general this was the case, so while individual IRA men may have gained some prominence as players, the GAA was not badly affected by their organisation's activities.[167] Depending on locality the GAA County Boards could be considered reasonably friendly to the IRA such as in Sligo or Donegal or hostile as in Leitrim or Roscommon.[168] The North Tipperary County Board gave permission for the IRA to organise a hurling tournament despite clerical opposition during late 1932. The local IRA were amused to report that several Cumann na Gaedheal supporters and a Garda played in the competition![169]

In Kerry, the one county where the IRA did have real influence among GAA officialdom the Association *was* badly affected by the conflicts of the period. The most senior IRA figure in the county, John Joe Sheehy, had captained the 1930 All Ireland winning side and was an official of Tralee's John Mitchel's club. Another leading IRA member JJ Rice was a member of the Kerry County Board and individual officers such as Patrick Fleming and Eugene Powell were also active in the GAA.[170] During 1934 and 1935 in Kerry the local sporting calendar was also severely disrupted as players and entire clubs such as John Mitchels and Austin Stacks stood down in protest against the

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[165] A/G to Adjt Killarney, September 1932, in MTUCDA, P69/158 (166).

[166] De Burca, *History of the GAA*, pp. 151 & 154.

[167] A defendant in the More O'Ferrall case, John 'Nipper' Shanley, was a Leitrim footballer. *Longford Leader*, 6 April 1935. Future Chief of Staff Stephen Hayes was Secretary of the County Board in Wexford. The unfortunate John Egan, murdered in 1936 was also a member of his local GAA club in Dungarven. *Irish Press*, 28 April 1936.

[168] Officers meeting, May 1932, in MTUCDA, P69/155 (94-97).

[169] Tomás Ó Maoileóin to A/G, 14 September 1932, in MTUCDA, P69/156 (139-140). Ó Maoileóin was later a member of the North Tipperary Board and the Munster Council. Malone, *Alias Seán Forde*, pp. 99.

[170] Sheehy was also Treasurer of the GAA's Munster Council. Fleming was a member of Killarney's Legion club and Powell of John Mitchels. *Kerryman*, 27 January 1934, *Kerry Champion*, 24 February 1934 & 1 June 1935.

jailing of IRA members by the government.[171] Kerry Fianna Fáil TDs were also put under pressure by the Munster Council of the GAA to give concessions to the IRA to allow games to resume.[172] The IRA did not have universal support among the local GAA for its protests and in fact was blamed for reducing the status of Kerry Gaelic games to "below zero." Soccer and rugby were said to gaining ground among youngsters in Kerry because the GAA was leaving the field open to them. While the IRA complained of ill treatment of its prisoners a member of the GAA Munster Council reminded them that it was unjust for them to "hammer young boys on the street" too.[173] The IRA's opponents within the Kerry association even called their Gaelic credentials into question. One member of the Tralee Gaelic League claimed that most of the IRA's membership attended 'foreign' dances and games anyway.[174]

An indication of the unpopularity of the boycott was that in May 1935 the IRA prisoners in the Curragh themselves called on the GAA in Kerry to resume play.[175] However this still did not resolve the problem as the IRA in Kerry was itself divided on the matter. During 1934 JJ Sheehy had argued for a conciliatory line, warning against disrupting the GAA's Jubilee year but had been publicly contradicted by JJ Rice who pressed for more confrontational tactics.[176] When disquiet mounted over the paralysis of the Association, Sheehy lamented that the whole affair was a "mess" brought about when the IRA "bit off more than it could chew."[177] IRA officer Eugene Powell not only declared that the boycott should continue despite the wishes of the prisoners themselves, but that the IRA could "eat all we have chewed off and more with it if necessary."[178] When the sport in Kerry returned to something approaching

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[171] *Kerry Champion*, 24 February 1934, *Kerryman*, 9 & 16 February 1935.
[172] T. McEllistrim TD, 4 February 1935, and D. Daly TD, 5 February 1935 to Frank Aiken, in Aiken Papers, UCDA, P104/2801 (80-83).
[173] *Kerry Champion*, 9 February 1935.
[174] *Kerry Champion*, 2 March 1935.
[175] *Kerry Champion*, 25 May 1935.
[176] *Kerryman & Kerry Champion*, 24 February 1934.
[177] *Kerry Champion*, 25 May 1935.
[178] *Kerry Champion*, 15 June 1935.

normality in 1936 the *Kerry Champion* reflected that while the Association nationally had carried on as normal, the government had remained in office and the IRA prisoners had stayed in jail, the only thing to have suffered from the boycott was the GAA in Kerry itself.[179] While the IRA had the influence within the GAA in Kerry to bring it to a halt for political purposes, it alienated much of that support by its tactics and ultimately failed to attain its demands.

The IRA membership was largely composed of Catholics yet was regularly denounced by the Catholic Hierarchy. During the Civil War the Bishops' pastoral of October 1922 had condemned the Anti Treatyite campaign as "murder before God."[180] In October 1931 the Bishops had issued a pastoral attacking the IRA for wanting through Saor Éire to "impose upon the Catholic soil of Ireland the same materialistic regime ... as now dominates Russia."[181] In 1934 and 1935 the Lenten Pastorals again denounced the organisation.[182] Individual Bishops such as of O'Doherty of Galway, Kinnane of Waterford and O'Brien of Kerry regularly reminded their flock that no Catholic could "lawfully belong to the IRA."[183] There is evidence that some clerical condemnation was directly due to state influence. Prior to William McNeely, the Bishop of Raphoe, administering confirmation in Dungloe during 1929 the local Garda Superintendent had spoken to the area's priests about the Anti-Annuities campaign. As a result the Bishop delivered a long condemnation of the campaign which the Gardai believed had a "good" effect locally.[184]

However as Patrick Murray has shown, even during the Civil War there remained an element within the Catholic Church who were sympathetic to Anti-Treatyite republicanism.[185] Most of this support was to gravitate towards Fianna

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[179] 'Liam' GAA columnist, *Kerry Champion*, 11 January 1936.
[180] Murray, *Oracles of God*, pp. 75-80.
[181] Quoted in *English,* Radicals, pp. 144.
[182] *An Phoblacht*, 17 February 1934, *Irish Press*, 12 February 1934, *Irish Press*, 4 March 1935.
[183] *Irish Press*, 4 March 1935.
[184] Eoin O'Duffy to Government Ministers, 5 July 1929, in Blythe Papers, UCDA, P24/477.
[185] Murray, *Oracles of God*, pp. 137-242.

Fáil however, and aside from a tiny minority of clerics the Church remained hostile to the IRA throughout this period.

Gauging the effect clerical hostility had on the IRA is difficult. On the one hand the organisation maintained itself right throughout the period from the Civil War onwards which would suggest most of its members were largely unaffected by the Church's hostility. This was certainly the view argued by the IRA itself. One senior officer conceded that the clergy's hostility had played a "fairly important" role in the IRA's Civil War defeat. However since then he claimed the Church had lost a "great deal" of its influence.[186] During the 'Red Scare' of late 1931 Twomey found it "very gratifying" that so few of his men seemed to have been affected by the Bishop's Pastoral. He argued that the Irish people despite being "overwhelmingly Catholic" took for granted the hostility of the Church to republicanism and were not influenced by it.[187] He also took issue with a plan by Count Plunkett of Sinn Féin to present an appeal to the Hierarchy. Twomey felt that this would only increase the Bishops' political influence.[188] Two years later Twomey again claimed that "70%" of his organisation were unaffected by clerical condemnation.[189] However the reality was that the IRA was damaged by the hostility of the clergy and particularly by the church's association of the movement with communism. A number of those who publicly broke with the organisation during the 'Coercion' period claimed it was because they had been convinced the IRA was "against religion."[190] The organisation declined to re-organise Saor Éire because the criticism of it by the "clergy and press" on the grounds that it was anti-religious had made it difficult to recruit men to the IRA.[191] The new programme that the IRA was drawing up during 1933 was designed to try to nullify these criticisms especially those from

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[186] 'Mr. Ambrose' General Outline of the Present Movement, August 1927, in MTUCDA, P69/72 (3-14).
[187] Twomey to McGarrity, 9 December 1931, in McGarrity Papers, Ms. 17,490 NLI.
[188] Twomey to Count Plunkett, 26 October 1931, in Jus 10/93/3/14 (3) NAI.
[189] Notes of 1933 GAC, P69/187 (95).
[190] See for example, *Irish Press*, 11 February 1932.
[191] Notes of 1933 GAC, P69/187 (77).

the church.[192] At its Convention that year many IRA members expressed their disquiet at the association between their organisation and "anti-religious" doctrines. Tom Barry argued that the Church's decree that no Catholic could be a communist was hurting recruitment to the IRA. A Dublin IRA member argued that as the Catholic Church was infallible and it said communism was wrong, he accepted that view. The attacks on the IRA in Catholic papers such as the *Universe* and the *Standard* was said to be causing further damage to its support.[193] Undoubtedly this influenced Twomey's speech at Bodenstown in 1933 when he disassociated the organisation from communism.[194]

The hostility of the clergy had been causing numerous problems for the IRA during 1932. During the 'Coercion' period from 1931-32 the IRA believed that the clergy in Mayo worked with the Gardai to try to get its members to leave the organisation. "Scarcely veiled" attacks were made from the pulpit on local IRA leader Brian Corrigan.[195] During the same period priests in Offaly put pressure on IRA members to leave the organisation.[196] An IRA officer inspecting units in east Clare found that a local priest had denounced the organisation and warned his parishioners not to allow strangers in the area. The local IRA were "very windy" about challenging the priest and hence the officer was left without a place to stay.[197] At a Mass in Anacarty, Co. Tipperary the Parish Priest used his sermon about the success of the Eucharistic Congress to remind parishioners that the clerical ban on Saor Éire still held and that it was a mortal sin to join it or the IRA.[198] In Cooraclare, Co. Clare, a Priest had told his congregation that the IRA was a communist organisation and that they should be forced from the area.[199] In Croghan, near Boyle Co. Roscommon, the Parish Priest told

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[192] C/S to Secretary, Clan na Gael, 21 March 1933, in MTUCDA, P69/185 (55).
[193] Notes of 1933 GAC, P69/187 (106-107).
[194] *Irish Times*, 19 June 1933.
[195] A/G to O/C North Mayo Bdge, 12 January 1932, in MTUCDA, P69/155 (287).
[196] AC Correspondence book, 5 November 1931, in MTUCDA, P69/71.
[197] 'R' to C/S, 3 June 1932, in MTUCDA, P69/155 (183-186).
[198] O/C Tipperary Batt. to A/G, 3 July 1932, in MTUCDA, P69/158 (284).
[199] P. Carrig to C/S, 6 December 1932, in MTUCDA, P69/54 (67).

parishioners that the local IRA leader, Patrick McKeon, was a member of an "anti-God organisation" and a follower of Leitrim socialist James Gralton.[200]

At organisational level this type of attack certainly had an effect with members leaving the IRA in Waterford and Offaly because of similar accusations.[201] Its effect on individuals at a personal level should not be underestimated either. The accusations against McKeon were made at a Station of the Cross, in the presence of his elderly father and many of his neighbours. The Parish Priest hinted that the deportation proceedings against Gralton in Leitrim should also be extended to McKeon.[202] In north Clare an IRA member who taught Irish had one of his classes broken up by people allegedly inspired by clerical accusations about him.[203] A republican teacher sacked from a Christian Brothers School in Kilrush blamed the loss of his job on a "campaign of slander" by the local clergy who accused him of being a supporter of the Friends of Soviet Russia.[204]

The situation was made even more tense by a revival of popular anti-Communist feeling in Dublin, which was accompanied by violent attacks on communists and those perceived to be their allies. Twomey was in no doubt that the campaign was clerically inspired as "nine tenths" of the sermons at Lenten Lectures were on the subject of communism.[205] He also received a report from Nora Connolly O'Brien which gave detailed examples of sermons given at churches in inner city Dublin which included instructions for listeners to attack communists in order to prevent them "burning your churches."[206] This atmosphere, which Gardai believed was partly motivated by news of the Gralton affair, eventually culminated in the storming of the Communist Party's

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[200] O/C North Roscommon Batt. to C/S, 28 March 1933, in MTUCDA, P69/53 (77-79).
[201] For Waterford see Notes of 1933 GAC, P69/187 (107). Offaly in Garda report, 27 December 1933 in Jus 8/733 NAI.
[202] O/C North Roscommon to C/S, P69/53 (77-79).
[203] Twomey to Mary MacSwiney, 27 June 1933, in MacSwiney Papers, UCDA, P48A/199 A.
[204] Seamus Ó Maoileóin, 12 May 1932, in MTUCDA, P69/52 (138-148). Ó Maoleóin produced an impressive set of references to prove he was a competent teacher. Interestingly his only job offer came from a Protestant school.
[205] Twomey to Con Neenan, 28 March 1933, in MTUCDA, P69/185 (21-25).

headquarters, Connolly House.[207] Despite Twomey's low opinion of the anti-Communists ("such a gang of rowdies") and his feeling that a few IRA men would have scattered the mob, the IRA officially ignored the rioting at Connolly House.[208] Instead they argued that the attack was brought about by the communists' own activities and it was not the IRA's responsibilty to defend them.[209] However the fact that a small number of IRA members attempted to defend the building, and used the IRA's stated aim of defending "religious and civil liberty" as their reason for doing so, provoked more dissension on the subject within the IRA.[210]

When the IRA defended itself from clerical accusations it tended to try to avoid any confrontation with the church itself. Even the most left wing members of the IRA usually stressed their Catholic credentials when replying to charges made against them. Seán McGuinness of Offaly argued that as a "sound Catholic" his membership of the IRA and Saor Éire proved that a person's faith was not impaired by these bodies.[211] This did not spare McGuinness from denunciation in the *Catholic Herald* or from losing members in Offaly due to clerical influence.[212] When an IRA member was sacked from his job as caretaker of a Catholic Young Men's society he defended himself by assuring the society's chairman that the IRA had never "transgressed the laws of God or the Holy Catholic Church."[213]

In the Roscommon case Twomey suggested that a public apology be demanded from the Parish Priest. Local people were asked to provide statements supporting McKeon, and the woman in whose house the station had been held

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[206] Notes recorded by Ms. Connolly O'Brien, (ND) in MTUCDA, P69/53 (236).
[207] Garda Commissioner report, 30 March 1933, in Jus 8/711 NAI.
[208] Twomey to Neenan, 28 March 1933, in MTUCDA, P69/185 (21-25).
[209] Unsigned representative for *An Phoblacht* to G. Griffen, 24 August 1933, in MTUCDA, P69/224 (24).
[210] See *An Phoblacht*, 8 April and *Irish Press*, 1 April 1933. Harry Gilmore argued that Patrick Pearse would have gone to James Connolly's aid in a similar situation. The former co-editor of *An Phoblacht*, Geoffrey Coulter told Twomey that the IRA's attitude would "make a dog vomit." Coulter to C/S, 3 April 1933, in MTUCDA, P69/53 (239).
[211] *Irish Times*, 14 March 1932.
[212] *Catholic Herald*, 2 April 1932. Garda report, 27 December 1933, in Jus 8/733 NAI.

agreed to give one. She argued that while she had the "highest respect" for the priest, the "information he got about Paddy McKeon is all wrong." The Priest however demanded that McKeon write a statement denouncing communism which he would then read out at Mass Even with some local support the last resort was a court case, "either civil or ecclesiastical" and Twomey considered McKeon's chances of winning in either were slim.[214] In most cases the IRA gave similar advice to its members facing these accusations. Local people should be canvassed for support and then the priests approached for an apology or retraction. However if the statements were made outside of a church, at a political meeting for example, then the press could be utilised.[215] There was a marked desire to avoid what could be construed as a "challenge to the priests, as priests."[216]

Occasionally republicans took a more openly defiant stand. When a priest told his congregation in Bushfield, Co. Mayo that the IRA were "blackguards" 15 local IRA men walked out of the church.[217] At an open air meeting in Achill, 200 young people were asked to give a show of hands against communism. One of the organisers, a local priest, expressed annoyance at the "lukewarm" atmosphere of the meeting. Things deteriorated further when he was challenged by Brian Corrigan to explain why the republican cleric Fr. Fahy was being called an "anti-Christ." Corrigan, by this stage a member of the Republican Congress, then mounted the platform and asked for three cheers for the Worker's Republic. The Gardai considered the crowd's reaction to his call to have been "very responsive."[218] The IRA nationally defied the Church on occasion, most notably after the sacking of Frank Edwards in Waterford because of his participation in Republican Congress activities. While the Bishop of

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[213] *An Phoblacht*, 23 December 1933.
[214] C/S to O/C North Roscommon, 25 April, O/C N. Rosc to C/S, 13 April, statement from neighbour, 27 April 1933, in MTUCDA, P69/53 (69-80).
[215] A/G to O/C Tpperary Batt. 12 July 1932, in MTUCDA, P69/158 (281-282).
[216] Twomey to MacSwiney, 27 June 1933, in MacSwiney Papers, UCDA, P48A/199A.
[217] Garda report, 19 January 1935, in Jus 8/323 NAI.
[218] Garda report, 24 September 1934, in Jus 8/342 NAI.

Waterford had issued a pastoral letter forbidding "under pain of sin" any one attending an IRA meeting in support of Edwards, hundreds of IRA members still participated in the protest.[219]

There did however exist within the church a number of clergymen who were prepared to support the IRA. Most notable was Fr. John Fahy, the 'Patriot priest of Clonfert' who was active in Co Galway with Peadar O'Donnell in land campaigns during the late 1920s.[220] There were other less well known individuals who also aided the IRA. Gardai in Co. Galway noted that the Parish Priest of Shanaglish, an "enthusiastic republican", had allowed the selling of Easter Lillies *inside* his church during 1931. He had also introduced the IRA speaker at the local commemoration.[221] In Tipperary following the murder of John Ryan by the IRA, Gardai noted whether priests were reading out a letter condemning the murder from the local Archbishop. Many condemned the killing, others read the letter and made no comment, while one did not read the letter but asked for prayers for both Ryan and his killers.[222] During 1932 a priest in Kill, Co Kildare actually advised the young men of his parish to join the IRA and overthrow the "only aggressor we have - England."[223] A priest in Waterford addressed a republican meeting that same month and as a result there was a "splendid feeling" in the area towards the IRA.[224] The existence of a pro-republican clergy could obviously make a major difference to the local perception of the IRA. After the denunciation of the IRA in Cooraclare, an IRA member wrote to the leadership asking if they could produce evidence that the organisation was not linked to communism "Russian or otherwise." This was important because another local priest, who was a regular reader of *An*

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[219] Edwards was a teacher at Mount Sion Christian Brother's School. *Notes on Events,* P67/534 pp. 32. *Irish Press*, 28 January 1935.

[220] The phrase is from a Comhairle na Poblachta leaflet of May 1929. Copy in D/T S 5864 B NAI. See also B. S. Murphy, 'The stone of Destiny: Fr. John Fahy (1884-1969) Lia Fail and Smallholder Radicalism in Modern Irish Society' in G. Moran (ed) *Radical Irish Priests*, (Dublin, 1998). pp. 185-218.

[221] Garda report, 8 May 1931, in D/T S 5864 A NAI.

[222] Garda report in Eoin O'Duffy to Ministers, 27 July 1931, in D/T S 5964 B NAI.

[223] O/C Kildare to A/G, 14 September 1932, in MTUCDA, P69/156 (128).

Phoblacht, wanted information in order to defend the IRA. Twomey replied that the IRA was "emphatically" not a communist organisation, but that all revolutionary bodies were slandered in this way when they became a threat. This satisfied the local men and the republican priest assured parishioners that there was "no communism in Cooraclare." Furthermore, the priest who had made the original accusation was apparently "laughed at" by parishioners following this.[225]

It must be stressed however that the number of clerics who would defend the IRA by 1933 was very small. While Fianna Fáil attained greater respectability the IRA remained outside the mainstream of Catholic life. When IRA members resigned because of alleged "communist" influence in Offaly the Gardai believed that an important influence on them was a local Fianna Fáil supporting priest. His record meant that he had "great influence" with the IRA in his parish.[226] The important point is that had he been a Cumann na Gaedheal supporter he would not have had the same influence. A hint of changing circumstances was given in a report written by a Mayo IRA officer during the general election of 1933. He noted how clergymen previously hostile to Fianna Fáil were now supporting de Valera's party.[227] Whereas clerical condemnation of the IRA before 1932 certainly had some effect, the fact that Fianna Fáil remained just outside the political mainstream insulated the IRA to a degree. In 1929 for example Fianna Fáil members of Galway County Council boycotted the town's Catholic Emancipation Centenary celebrations in protest against the jailing of Fr. John Fahy.[228] By 1933 the vast majority of Fianna Fáil activists had no

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[224] Adjt, Waterford City Unit to A/G, 20 September 1932, in MTUCDA, P69/156 (95-96).
[225] Carrig to C/S, 6 December 1932, C/S to O/C West Clare, 7 December 1932, O/C West Clare to C/S, 12 December 1932, in MTUCDA, P69/54 (67-71). Interestingly there was a suggestion that George Gilmore address an after Mass meeting to refute the priest's allegations. However Gilmore himself thought this a bad idea - whether for political reasons or because he was a Protestant is unclear.
[226] Garda report, 27 December 1933, in Jus 8/733 NAI.
[227] O/C North Mayo to A/G, 22 January 1933, in MTUCDA, P69/53 (121).
[228] O'Duffy to Minister for Justice, 5 July 1929, in Blythe Papers, UCDA, P24/477.

quarrel with the church and both the intensely anti-Communist atmosphere and the IRA's own increasingly violent activities left it open to clerical attack.

While the IRA publicly stated that as an Irish revolutionary body it expected nothing less than condemnation from the same church that had denounced the Fenians, the internal repercussions of such condemnation were important.[229] The popular mood of anti-communism was reflected among the IRA's officer corps and rank and file and forced the leadership to articulate their views in ways it was hoped would not draw criticism from the church. There had always been a tendency to present radical social views as in line with Catholic or at least Christian teaching and this was the case increasingly after 1933.[230] By 1935 the IRA was arguing that its economic and social policy would give "practical application to the teachings of Christianity."[231] They were not unique in this as even the left wing Citizen Army could accuse De Valera of having decided to serve "Mammon instead of Christ" by implementing capitalist policies.[232] It is important to stress that the worries about IRA policies being contrary to the church's teaching was not confined to any one region, and much of the most intense hostility to 'communism' came from within the Dublin Brigade.[233] The 1933 IRA Convention unanimously accepted the addition of a clause to the 'Constitution of the Irish Republic' which stressed that the "propagation of irreligious doctrines, or the suppression of religion" were not the aims of the IRA.[234] The period from 1929 onwards saw a major revival in popular Catholicism, with the Emancipation celebrations and the Eucharistic

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[229] *An Phoblacht*, 17 December 1932.

[230] Mick Price argued that Saor Éire's policies were ones "all Christians" could support. *Irish Independent*, 28 September 1931.

[231] IRA reply to Bishop Kinnane of Waterford, *An Phoblacht*, 19 January 1935.

[232] *Irish Citizen Army Bulletin*, 4 December 1934, in Humphreys Papers, UCDA, P106/3814 (1).

[233] See motions from College Company and 4th Battalion Dub Bdge and 2nd Batt Dub Bdge in Clár, 1933 GAC, in MTUCDA, P69/53 (273-286).

[234] Notes of 1933 GAC, MTUCDA, P69/187 (103).

Congress of 1932.[235] Many Belfast IRA members attended the Congress and it is probable that many others did also along with the large numbers of ordinary Irish Catholics.[236] Indeed the IRA ordered its units to take the opportunity of the return of emigrants for the Congress to explain its policy to the "exiles" and attempt to recruit them.[237] Although not all the IRA leadership were Catholic and certainly not all devout, they did operate largely within this milieu.[238] This was reflected in the practice of the IRA in saluting Catholic Churches while on parade and saying the rosary at commemorations.[239]

Given the atmosphere in Ireland during the 1930s could the IRA have reasonably expected to mount a successful attack on clerical influence, even accepting that it desired to. With the exception of the Edwards case, where popular opinion among local Fianna Fáil and trade union branches in Waterford seems to have been strongly against his dismissal, most of those who confronted the church during the 1930s were very isolated.[240] Again the IRA leadership could not expect to carry its rank and file along with it even if it did decide to do this. In the Gralton case the Dublin IRA leadership did initially support the campaign against his deportation only to find the Leitrim IRA wishing to stay neutral. Even those among that unit who wanted to defend Gralton stressed their opposition to "anti-God doctrines."[241] The IRA could do

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[235] See Gillian McIntosh, 'Acts of 'national communion': the centenary celebrations for Catholic Emancipation, the forerunner of the Eucharistic Congress' in Augusteijn (ed), *Ireland in the 1930s*, pp. 83-95.

[236] O/C Belfast to C/S, 10 July 1932, in MTUCDA, P69/52 (87).Twomey attended at least part of the Congress, C/S to P. Whelan, 1 July 1932, in MTUCDA, P69/54 (250).

[237] AC Minutes, 13 June 1932, in MTUCDA, P69/71.

[238] Coogan's claim that Twomey was "scrupulous in his religious practice" tells us little about the relationship or lack of it between his political beliefs and his religion. Coogan, *IRA*, pp. 59. Peadar O'Donnell remained a Catholic all his life while espousing radical politics. Donal Ó Drisceoil, *Peadar O'Donnell,* (Cork, 2001) pp. 129. Tom Barry was allegedly shocked at seeing O'Donnell saying the rosary as he had been led to believe that all 'communists' were atheists! Jim Savage to author, 3 April 2000.

[239] See 'Training Notes' in *An Phoblacht*, 8 April 1933.

[240] *An Phoblacht*, 12 January and *Republican Congress*, 5 January 1935. The mayor of Waterford, the local INTO, and several FF Cumainn supported Edwards. *An Phoblacht* reported that the local UIP and the Waterford Pig Buyers' Association passed resolutions supporting the Bishop. *An Phoblacht*, 19 January 1935.

[241] Twomey thought the campaign against Gralton was a "damn shame." Twomey to Neenan, 3 March 1933, in MTUCDA, P69/185 (78-79). Leitrim Batt Convention report, 1933, in

little except resort to terrorism when the Bishop of Galway forced Mártín Ó Cadhain to resign from his teaching post because of his IRA membership.[242]

The IRA did express more open hostility to lay Catholic organisations. The Ancient Order of Hibernians was seen as "exactly of the same nature" as the Orange Order.[243] The Irish National Foresters on the other hand were non-political and IRA members were allowed join them if they wished.[244] Twomey saw the emergence of the Knights of Columbanus as a "worst form of Hibernianism than the AOH." He believed that Catholic propagandists had exaggerated the influence of the Freemasons in order to create support for groups like the Knights. The Masons were only a "bogey" while the Knights were dangerous because they seemed to have some influence within Fianna Fáil.[245] He also considered the campaign against Gralton to have been inspired by the Knights.[246] Twomey was correct in his belief that the Knights had made inroads into Fianna Fáil. In fact several leading figures in the party were members.[247] The question of the Knights was kept in republican minds by the long running controversy over the non appointment of a Sligo republican to the Town Clerkship. Robert Bradshaw had been editor of the *Connachtman,* the only local newspaper to have taken an Anti-Treaty position during the Civil War.[248] He had been active in the IRA during that period and was still a supporter in 1932.[249] He was also a Protestant. He seemed to have strong

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MTUCDA, P69/187 (4-14). Delegates at the Battalion Convention voted 27 to 4 to remain neutral.

[242] *Notes on Events*, P67/534 pp. 64. Local IRA members beat up Ó Cadhain's replacement during May 1937.

[243] *An Phoblacht*, 21 July 1934.

[244] A/G to Adjt Ulster No. 4 Bat, 15 November 1930, in MTUCDA, P69/153 (83).

[245] C/S to 'Thomais', 23 March 1933, in MTUCDA, P69/53 (268-270). Although the Belfast IRA seems to have considered infiltrating the local Knights there during 1926. See Belfast I/O to D/I, 25 April 1926, in MTUCDA P69/193 (86-94).

[246] Twomey to Neenan, 3 March 1933, in MTUCDA, P69/185 (78-79).

[247] Among them Lemass, MacEntee and O'Kelly. E. Bolster, *The Knights of Columbanus*, (1979) pp. 70. The issue of the Knights was raised at the 1933 Fianna Fáil Ard Fheis. See Chapter Seven pp. 242.

[248] Michael Farry, *The Aftermath of Revolution, Sligo 1921-23*, (Dublin, 2000) pp. 19-20, 23-24, 29-30.

[249] He was the main speaker at the 1933 Easter commemoration in Roscommon. *An Phoblacht*, 15 April 1933.

support from Sligo Corporation when he was appointed temporarily to the position in 1933. However the Minister for Local Government overruled this decision and replaced him.[250] *An Phoblacht* denounced this as anti-Protestant sectarianism, inspired by a sinister secret society. Bradshaw took his case to the High Court where it was alleged that the Knights had instigated a whispering campaign against him, telling people that he was an atheist. Bradshaw lost his case and *An Phoblacht* bemoaned the influence of new "Irish Klux Klan." Certainly the Minister for Local Government, Seán T O'Kelly was a Knight of St. Columbanus, as several personalities involved in campaigning for Bradshaw's replacement seem to have been.[251] In a sequel to the case during 1937 Bradshaw regained the position of town clerk when the previous occupant of the job was dismissed.[252]

The IRA's protestations over the Bradshaw case would carry a little more weight had they not gone along with the tide of objection to the appointment of Letitia Dunbar Harrison as a librarian in Co. Mayo during 1930. The IRA accepted that as a non Irish speaker she was unsuited to the job, but realising that most objectors were more concerned about her religion then her mastery of the language also tried to condemn sectarianism. In this they took no different a position then many within Fianna Fáil.[253]

However while the IRA certainly made concessions to sectarianism it never tried to lead a movement based on it. The various Catholic Action groups drew their support from other sources. *An Phoblacht* was still the only newspaper where it was likely to find an attack on religious orders exploitation of children through the Industrial School system.[254] The IRA argued that the 1929 Emancipation celebrations presented a picture of Catholic suffering and Protestant tyranny only in order to turn young Catholics into "zealots" devoted

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[250] *An Phoblacht*, 17 June 1933.
[251] *An Phoblacht*, 21 April 1934. Bolster suggests Bradshaw's IRA sympathies rather than his religion was the key factor in the affair. *Knights,* pp. 71-73.
[252] *An Phoblacht*, 5 June 1937.
[253] *An Phoblacht*, Xmas Edition, 1930. See Lee, *Ireland 1912-1985*, pp. 161-166.

to hating "fellow Christians."[255] The reports of the vast Christian Front rallies during 1936 contain no mention of republican participation.[256] But it is notable too how little IRA concessions towards Catholic teaching muted clerical hostility. De Valera's populist republicanism satisfied those clerics who had been unhappy with the Treaty settlement and the IRA's radicalism, no matter how non threatening to Catholic power in reality, was still too dangerous for the Church to tolerate.

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[254] 'The Industrial School Scandal' *An Phoblacht*, 4 September 1934.
[255] 'Seachránaidhe' (Frank Ryan), *Irish Emancipation*, (Dublin, 1929) Foreward.
[256] *Irish Press*, 31 August & *Cork Examiner*, 21 September 1936. Indeed those involved in protesting against the Front later on seem to have been more likely to have been republicans. Garda reports, 28 February & 5 April 1937, in Jus 8/448 NAI.

Chapter Four

Enemies and Antagonists.

In the decade after 1926 the IRA was never engaged in an armed campaign. Yet it did involve itself in violent activity on a regular basis, often directed against particular targets. Some of these targets remained constant, others changed over time. Why did the IRA embark on particular campaigns and was its rationale always political? To what extent was it motivated by sectarian, local or personal factors? This chapter will attempt to answer these questions.

During the mid 1920s the IRA began to target what it considered symbols of British imperialism in the Free State. Over the next decade it organised demonstrations against the celebration of Poppy Day in Dublin, attempted to prevent the public display of Union flags and attacked British Legion halls and even Boy Scout huts. This campaign formed a major part of the IRA's activity until 1932, sometimes involving thousands of people, leading to arrests, violence and even deaths. The most obvious focus for the IRA's hostility to 'Imperialist' symbolism were the Remembrance Day ceremonies held every November. Poppy Day was observed by thousands of people, particularly in Dublin during the 1920s. Over 500,000 poppies were sold in the Dublin area in 1924.[1] From 1925 onwards it was also the occasion of republican counter demonstrations. These invariably took the form of public rallies featuring speakers from right across the republican spectrum. Twomey, MacBride and Ryan of the IRA, de Valera for Fianna Fáil, journalist Hannah Sheehy Skeffington, communist Seán Murray, and trade unionist Helena Moloney all appeared on anti Poppy Day platforms.[2] These rallies were usually held in College Green on the eve of Remembrance Day, attracting crowds of between

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[1] Jane Leonard, 'The Twinge of Memory - Armistice Day and Remembrance Sunday in Dublin since 1919' in G Walker and R. English (eds) *Unionism in Modern Ireland* (Dublin, 1996) pp. 99-114.

[2] Garda reports on Anti - Imperialist League (AIL) demonstrations, 10 November 1933, 10 November 1931 and 10 November 1930 in Jus 8/682 NAI.

5,000 in 1930 and 15,000 in 1932.[3] From the beginning there was substantial disorder associated with these protests. Republicans attacked premises displaying 'Imperialist' symbols, snatched poppies from sellers and fought running battles with Gardai. On Remembrance Day itself republicans would gather in the city centre and attempt to seize Union flags from supporters of the British Legion.[4] In 1930 detectives had to fire shots to disperse a crowd attacking two men wearing poppies in O'Connell Street and in 1932 a car displaying a poppy was overturned in Stephen's Green and its occupants assaulted.[5]

From 1927 the protests were organised under the auspices of the Anti-Imperialist League which had been formed by the IRA to co-ordinate these activities.[6] The IRA's publicly stated reasoning behind these activities was that it would not tolerate "the flying of the Union Jack and the singing of the English National Anthem in an unfree Ireland."[7] In Ireland the poppy was the "emblem of Ascendancy" and the British Legion's Remembrance Day ceremonies "nothing more or less than homage of loyalty to England's King."[8] Therefore a great deal of effort was put into disrupting these events as part of the struggle for the "complete overthrow of Imperialism in Ireland."[9]

The protests involved the mobilisation of the entire Dublin IRA.[10] A major attraction for the IRA must have been the opportunity to mobilise their forces in a confrontational manner, thus giving off a show of strength while being relatively insulated from arrest by the numbers of supporters on the street. In an organisation in theory preparing for war, but with few opportunities for

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[3] Garda report, 7 November 1931 (an account of the previous year's protest) in Jus 8/682 and 10 November 1932 in Jus 8/684 NAI.

[4] See for example *Irish Independent*, 12 November 1930. A graphic account of one such clash is given in Jacob Diaries, Entry, 11 November 1926, Ms. 32,582 (58) NLI.

[5] Garda reports, 7 November 1931 in Jus 8/682 and 11 November 1932 in Jus 8/684 NAI.

[6] Communication to Cumann na mBan, IRA and Fianna Eireann, 26 March 1927, in MTUCDA, P69/48 (67).

[7] *An Phoblacht*, 8 November 1930.

[8] *An Phoblacht*, 11 November 1933.

[9] Irish Anti Imperialist League, Aims and Objects, 26 March 1927, in MTUCDA, P69/48 (68).

[10] See reference to order for Dublin Brigade to assemble, *unarmed,* at Foster Place at 6.30 on Armistice night. O/C 4th Battalion to C/S, 3 December 1926, in MTUCDA, P69/47 (22).

activity, Poppy Day offered opportunities which could not be overlooked. There was a visible enemy, who could be demonised as representing the 'Black and Tans' only recently departed from Ireland's shores, being protected by the Free State's Police.[11] The younger generation of IRA officers, such as Frank Ryan clearly relished the street fighting that occurred before, during and after Poppy Day.[12]

There was also a class dimension to the disturbances. The Gardai noted that the republican rallies attracted some of the "roughest elements of the population" in Dublin.[13] While large numbers of ex-servicemen came from working class backgrounds as well, republican propaganda targeted the Unionist businesses in Grafton Street and College Green as displayers of "Imperialist Bunting."[14] The most exclusive areas of the city were therefore open to attack from mainly poor crowds. Frank Ryan speculated that the British Legion marchers would be largely composed of "bank clerks and students of Trinity College."[15] This of course was not true, and a section of working class Dublin continued to identify with its contribution during World War One well into the next decade.[16] However the image of well heeled pro British demonstrators was a powerful mobilising tool. As of course was the unsaid, but present sectarian

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[11] A poster for the AIL featured a map of Ireland with sites of British reprisals between 1919-21 highlighted. See *An Phoblacht*, 4 November 1933.

[12] Jacob described Ryan and others as "awful babies really" for their eager plans for conflict on Poppy Day. This activity was not risk free however and in 1930 she described how Ryan "had his face battered in." Entries, Jacob Diaries, 24 October 1926, Ms. 32,582 (58) & 11 November 1930, Ms. 32,582 (61) NLI.

[13] Garda report, 7 November 1931 in Jus 8/682 NAI. The attendance at an indoor AIL rally was also described by the Gardai as being mostly "working class." Report, 25 September 1930, in Jus 8/682 NAI.

[14] Among those listed were Hayes, Conyhgam and Robinson, Weirs, Brown Thomas and Wests in Grafton St and Trinity College, Prudential and Scottish insurance companies in College Green. Sinn Féin Anti-Imperialist Committee, September 1928, copy in Humphreys Papers, UCDA, P106/2090.

[15] *Irish Times*, 11 November 1932.

[16] Jacob mentions "women of the separation allowance kind" among the marchers. Entry, 11 November 1930, Jacob Diaries, Ms. 32,582 (61) NLI. The Gardai noted an incident where women "of the street dealing class" objected to the burning of a Union Flag at an AIL rally. Report, 20 August 1928, in Jus 8/682 NAI.

aspect to the imagery used by the IRA's propaganda, "bank clerks and students of Trinity College" in 1932 largely meaning Protestants.[17]

So were the protests an opportunity for the IRA to encourage sectarian violence? Whatever about the motivation of many who took part in their protests, the IRA denied that religious bigotry or prejudice against ex-servicemen played any role in its activities. In fact the IRA claimed to support the right of veterans to remember the dead and indeed to sympathise with the plight of ex-sevicemen. Furthermore the IRA accused the British Legion and Unionists of exploiting the suffering of veterans for their own ends. Motions expressing sympathy with the relatives of Irish war dead were passed at Anti Imperialist rallies.[18] Frank Ryan accused the British Legion of ignoring the poverty of ex-servicemen and using them as pawns every November 11.[19] According to the IRA the "Irishman who once wore khaki" was as welcome in their ranks as any other. Veterans should "remember your dead" but also remember that their reward for that sacrifice was "hunger, starvation (and) unemployment."[20] The IRA suggested anti-militarism as a reason to disavow Poppy Day, arguing that "illusions" that the Great War was a "noble" affair had to be "torn down."[21] Gilmore claimed that the IRA met with General Hickie of the British Legion to discuss how to avoid clashes on Poppy Day.[22]

What was significant for the IRA was that their activities around Poppy Day did have an appeal beyond their ranks. There was considerable resentment among many Dubliners towards some aspects of the Remembrance Ceremonies. Military Intelligence directly connected IRA revival in Dublin with the

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[17] According to one source in 1936 53% of bank officials in the Free State were from Anglo-Irish backgrounds. Bill Kissane, 'The not - so amazing case of Irish democracy' in *Irish Political Studies*, Vol. 10, 1995. pp. 43-68.

[18] *Irish Independent*, 11 November 1930.

[19] *Irish Times*, 11 November 1932.

[20] An Open Letter to Ex-Servicemen in *An Phoblacht*, 14 November 1931.

[21] *An Phoblacht*, 10 November 1928.

[22] Gilmore claimed to have had a very cordial meeting with Hickie at the Kildare Street Club. Hickie allegedly agreed to move the parades assembly point to the quays so as to avoid passing Trinity College. The Legion had moved its rallying point to Phoenix Park

organisation's first involvement in protests against Poppy Day. Because hostility to the event was not confined to them the IRA realised that they could appeal to "a large section of the public which would nominally be described as friendly to the government."[23] What annoyed many was the practice of Trinity students halting traffic in College Green "ostensibly to observe the 'two minutes silence'" but then regaling passersby with singing 'God save the King.'[24] At various stages senior Gardai complained that Poppy Day was becoming an excuse "for a regular military field-day" and an occasion for the display of "anti-Irish and pro-British sentiments." They argued that the display of Union Flags by shops and businesses was provocative and that much of the practices carried out by the British Legion would be illegal if indulged in by the 'irregulars.' They also noted how the IRA were being given opportunities for activity by the commemorations.[25] There was undoubtedly a section of those taking part in Remembrance Day ceremonies who used the occasion to demonstrate Unionist sentiment.

A minor though potent factor in the disturbances was the presence of blackshirted members of the British Fascists at the Poppy Day parades. In 1926 Gilmore was arrested after a violent clash between IRA men and Fascists.[26] Their attendance was also the source of complaint from the Gardai.[27] While the IRA in Dublin did have instructions that allowed "hitting up" the "Blackshirt crowd" if possible, they never made opposition to this group a focus for their

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after 1926 to prevent clashes in College Green but Gilmore gives no date for this meeting and violence continued up until 1933. Gilmore Notes, PP. and Leonard, *Memory*, pp. 102.

[23] A/Commandant Dan Bryan to C/S, 2 December 1925, in FitzGerald Papers, UCDA, P80/849 (11).

[24] Eoin O'Duffy to Minister for Justice, 21 September 1932, in Jus 8/684 NAI. TCD students had done this since 1919. Leonard, *Memory*, pp. 101.

[25] Chief Superintendent David Neligan to Commissioner, 7 November 1928, and O'Duffy, 21 September 1932. A Garda Superintendent in Ennis expressed the opinion that "Imperialistic display" was "hateful to nine-tenths" of the Irish people, report 12 November 1928. All in Jus 8/684 NAI.

[26] *Irish Independent*, 19 November 1926.

[27] The organisation was formed during the mid 1920s and existed largely as a social club, confining its activities to Remembrance Day. See Jus 8/719 NAI. See *Irish Independent*, 5 November 1928 for photograph of Fascists at Poppy Day parade.

Poppy Day protests.[28] Eventually an agreement was reached between the British Legion and the authorities which regulated the ceremonies and Fianna Fáil in power showed quite a flexible attitude to the event.[29] After 1932 its importance to the IRA also declined. By the mid 1930s, Ryan, now a member of the Republican Congress, was organising alternative Poppy Day commemorations featuring ex-servicemen.[30]

These protests were always largely a Dublin affair. Aside from the stealing of poppies from a supplier in Co. Cork in 1928 most of the IRA's aggressive 'anti-Imperialist' activities were concentrated in Dublin.[31] Partially this was because the main British Legion ceremonies occurred in Dublin, making it in the IRA's view the "headquarters for such rank Imperialist display."[32] Also outside Dublin the ceremonies do not seem to have raised local republican ire, with a Drogheda officer explaining that those attending the local commemoration were "in no way aggressive."[33] Gardai noted how peacefully commemorations passed off in Cork, Sligo, Tralee and Kilkenny during 1928.[34]

However while the Poppy Day protests involved the IRA in public activity, the organisation also carried out acts of terrorism against 'imperialist' symbols especially during the late 1920s. Beginning in 1925 when the Masterpiece cinema in Dublin was blown up for showing 'Imperialist' films, British Legion premises, Scout Halls and monuments to English monarchs were

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[28] During October 1930 a Webley revolver was taken from a Blackshirt by the IRA in Dublin. Adjt. Dublin Bdge to A/G, 1 October and A/G to Adjt. 9 October 1930, in MTUCDA, P69/153 (161-164). Gilmore later claimed that most of the IRA's Poppy Day activity was focused on the Fascists. Gilmore Notes, PP. Possibly he wished this was the case as he was critical of the republican preoccupation with symbols of Imperialism in later life. However the Gardai believed he and his brothers were the organisers of much of the Anti - Imperialist activity during the 1920s.

[29] Eamon Broy, Garda Commissioner after February 1932, wished to prohibit all but church services. The Department of Justice replied that the government did not wish to give offence to "the large body of ex-servicemen in this country" and permission should be granted for the march on November 11. Broy to D/J 18 October & Sec. D/J to Broy, 19 October 1932, in Jus 8/684 NAI.

[30] See *Republican Congress*, 17 November and *An Phoblacht*, 10 November 1934.

[31] Garda report, 21 November 1928, in Jus 8/684 NAI.

[32] A/G to Adjt. Dub. Bdge. 9 October 1930, in MTUCDA P69/153 (161)

[33] Adjt Drogheda, to A/G, 19 November 1930, in MTUCDA, P69/153 (38).

[34] Garda report, 21 November 1928, in Jus 8/684 NAI.

all targeted.[35] IRA units were also instructed to make off with any Union Flags that were prominently displayed in their areas.[36] Motion pictures like 'Mons' in 1927, were targeted on the basis that they were "glorification" of the British armed forces rather than "true representation of the horrors of the European war."[37] The Baden Powell Boy and Sea Scouts were seen, not just by the IRA, as "British Reservists." They were also presented as potential strike breakers.[38] During September 1928 attempts were made to burn huts and Boy Scout camps were raided in Wicklow and Dublin.[39] The British Legion hall in Inchicore was set on fire and then bombed on two occasions. The Legion's hall in Killester was also destroyed in an arson attack. On the 11th of November 1928 attempts were made to destroy the statues of George II in Stephen's Green, King William in College Green and the King Edward fountain in Herbert Park. [40] Again many of these activities were approved of outside the ranks of the IRA.[41]

A more dramatic form of anti-imperialist activity was uncovered by the Gardai during 1930. They discovered an IRA plot to kidnap Earl Jellicoe, the former First Sea Lord of the Royal Navy, during a visit to Dublin. As far as is known the IRA's plan was not to harm Jellicoe but to publicly humiliate him. They had planned to place Jellicoe in a box on top of a donkey cart and leave him chained in O'Connell Street surrounded by signs bearing slogans such as 'Earl Jellyfish.' The entire Dublin IRA had assembled at Amiens Street station on the morning of Jellicoe's visit but the Gardai ensured that there was no opportunity for them to get near their target.[42]

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[35] The cinema was showing a film called 'Ypres.' *Notes on Events*, in MacEntee Papers, UCDA, P67/534 pp. 211.
[36] A/G to O/C Sth. Dub. Batt., 11 September 1930, in MTUCDA, P69/153 (201).
[37] O/C Dub. Bdge. to Corinthian Cinema, 1 March 1927, in MTUCDA, P69/48 (275).
[38] Editorial in *The Nation*, 22 September 1928. O'Duffy also expressed his opposition to the Scouts, to Dept. of Justice, 8 November 1928, in Jus 8/684 NAI. Their role during the General Strike in Britain was described in *An Phoblacht*, 4 March 1927.
[39] Garda reports in Dept. Justice File H 280/37 NAI. The Gardai also believed that the IRA planned to bomb Elvery's sports shop in Dublin because it had a window display for the World Scout Jamboree! Garda report, 7 December 1929, in D/T S 5864 A NAI.
[40] *Notes on Events*, P67/534 pp. 214-216.
[41] See editorial in *The Nation*, 17 November 1928.
[42] D/J report, 31 October 1930, in D/T S 5864 A NAI.

In most cases these activities represented a low cost strategy to the IRA which provided excitement, and armed activity to their members, with little chance of the opposition hitting back. However they make IRA assertions of non-sectarian motives ring a little hollow. In theory the IRA was as opposed to the Catholic Boy Scouts, a "sectarian body" as it was to the Baden Powell version.[43] Despite this rhetoric which occasionally went as far as the call to "smash" the Catholic Scouts, they were never physically attacked, because this would surely have been highly unpopular in the Free State.[44] The anti - Imperialist activities also led to the murder of Albert Armstrong, who was shot dead following his giving evidence at the trial of IRA men who had removed a Union flag from his offices.[45]

The IRA's campaign was also largely restricted to the Free State. Their organisation in Belfast had produced an impressive list of bodies hostile to it in 1926. These included the British Fascists, the Orange Order, the Ancient Order of Hibernians and the Knights of Columbanus.[46] However possibly because of its own weakness, or simply because it was impossible to do so, the IRA in Northern Ireland did not generally carry out these type of activities.[47]

However evidence exists to suggest that the IRA in Belfast did consider carrying out an attack which would have been unparalleled in this period. In early 1930 a Belfast IRA report noted how an inquiry had been held to discover the reasons for the failure of a plan to "bomb the crowd at the City

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[43] Letter objecting to Catholic Scouts from Fianna Eireann, in *Irish Independent*, 14 August 1926 and *An Phoblacht*, 14 October 1933.

[44] *An Phoblacht*, 6 June 1931.

[45] *Notes on Events*, P67/534 pp. 216. There is a file on the Armstrong case in FitzGerald Papers, UCDA, P80/851 (8). See also Appendix 6, pp. 360.

[46] I/O Ulster No. 1 to D/I, 25 April 1926, in MTUCDA, P69/163 (86-94). The British Fascists were a rather more formidable organisation north of the border. During 1933 and 1934 they engaged in a number of serious attacks on Catholics in Kilkeel and Belfast. See James Loughlin, 'Northern Ireland and British fascism in the inter-war years' in *Irish Historical Studies*, No. 116 (Nov. 1995) and *Irish News*, 25 May 1934.

[47] One exception being the destruction of a war memorial in Armagh in 1934, believed to be in retaliation for permission being refused to construct an republican memorial at Carrickmore. See *Northern Whig*, 7 May 1934.

Hall" on November 11 1929.[48] That day had seen the unveiling of the Belfast Cenotaph and if the IRA was planning to use explosives then there would have been widespread casualties.[49] Because of a misunderstanding of signals between IRA members the plan did not go ahead, but it suggests that hatred of "Imperialist' symbols could have had grave consequences. However, again there was no repetition of this in Belfast or elsewhere, which either suggests that the plan was unauthorised or that it was not intended to produce fatalities.[50] The Belfast IRA also attempted to burn down a British Legion hall in 1931.[51]

The 'Anti-Imperialist' campaign has to be seen in the context of a relatively weak IRA recovering from defeat and in the process of reorganisation. Targeting Unionists and ex-servicemen offered opportunities for activities which were exciting and relatively popular. Blowing up monuments gave an impression of military prowess and achieved public notoriety. These activities reflected the new dominance of militants within the Dublin IRA who began to revive their organisation through violent activity.[52]

This analysis also helps explain one of the IRA's shortest lived campaigns, that against moneylenders during the summer of 1926. From July to August that year the IRA raided the offices and homes of moneylenders in Dublin and Limerick, taking away account books and notes of transactions.[53] It announced that it was going to "end to this practice" which exploited the misery and poverty of the "poorest citizens."[54] During the raids several IRA members abandoned their raids in the face of resistance or were captured by Police. Leading IRA members Mick Price and Donal O'Donoghue found themselves in

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[48] Adjt. No.1 Area to A/G, 6 April 1930, in MTUCDA, P69/151 (39 - 41).
[49] *Belfast Telegraph*, 11 November 1929.
[50] Had the IRA leadership authorised the bombing of people at a memorial service than they surely would have attempted it again, in Belfast or elsewhere. There is no reply to this report in the Twomey Papers so it is difficult to judge the context of this plan. Of course "bomb" could have referred to smoke bombs or other disruptive but non fatal devices.
[51] O/C Ulster No. 1, 16 March 1931, in MTUCDA, P69/151 (166-167).
[52] Col. Dan Bryan and Col. Costello to C/S, 2 & 4 December 1925, in FitzGerald Papers, UCDA, P80/849 (11) and (12)
[53] *Irish Independent*, 8 & 30 July, 18 August and 2 September 1926.
[54] *An Phoblacht*, 16 July 1926 and IRA statement, *Irish Independent*, 18 August 1926.

court charged with their involvement in the campaign.[55] After a raid in Limerick in early September the IRA ceased their activity on the issue. Negotiations between the IRA and representatives of the moneylenders produced an agreement in early 1927.[56]

What is of interest however is that many of those raided by the IRA were Jewish and there has been suggestion that anti-Semitism played a role in the IRA's motivation.[57] From the beginning the IRA denied this was the case arguing that their attack was on moneylending "not on Jewry." The IRA wished it to be known that they opposed moneylending for "reasons of principle only" and not religious prejudice.[58] They were supported in their claims by the most prominent Jewish politician in Ireland, Robert Briscoe of Fianna Fáil. He argued that he did not see the raids as anti-Semitic, and wished it to be known that he and "many other members of the Jewish community" abhorred moneylending and expressed his admiration for the IRA's attempts to end "this rotten trade."[59]

Like the campaigns against 'Imperialist' displays the IRA had chosen an unpopular target which was even more unlikely to retaliate. There were about 180 moneylenders the Free State during the late 1920s, of whom 147 operated in Dublin. Statements given to a Dail committee during 1930 point towards there being a large number of Jews involved in the trade in Dublin. There was often great hardship associated with owing debts to moneylenders so there was a possible return in popularity for the IRA in carrying out the raids.[60] Interestingly

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[55] One IRA man was captured by onlookers after the first raid, *Irish Independent*, 8 July 1926. A raid was abandoned on 5 August, *Irish Independent*, 18 August 1926, and a raid on an office in Limerick failed after the assistant manager exchanged blows with the raiders. *Irish Independent*, 2 September 1926.

[56] Text of undertaking given by moneylenders in Notes of Army Council meeting, 27 January 1927, in MTUCDA, P69/181 (3).

[57] Coogan, *The IRA*, pp. 47-48. Roughly 6 out of 12 of those raided were Jewish.

[58] *An Phoblacht*, 23 July and 13 August 1926.

[59] *An Phoblacht*, 16 July 1926. In a later letter Briscoe informed *An Phoblacht's* readers that a Liberal Jewish Synagogue in London refused membership to moneylenders. 3 September 1926.

[60] Figures from *Dail Eireann Report of Select Committee on the Moneylenders Bill*, 1929, in D/T S 5943 NAI. Briscoe had attempted to introduce a Private Member's Bill to regulate moneylending in 1929. In 1933 he sponsored the Moneylenders Act. Moneylenders in Dublin actually organised themselves into a trade association as a result of the raids. *Dail Report,*

however, oral testimony points to the relative popularity of Jewish moneylenders among working class Dubliners of the period, with non-Jewish moneylenders often regarded as far worse.[61]

Some of the IRA's propaganda about the evils of 'usury' did parallel contemporary anti-Semitic themes.[62] However evidence does not support this as a motivation for the raids. Quite possibly some IRA members harboured anti-Semitic prejudice (and certainly some Sinn Féin figures did) but it was not an important feature of the organisation's politics.[63] Aside from Briscoe, the artist Harry Kernoff would seem to have been the only other Jew publicly associated with the IRA in this period.[64] However *An Phoblacht* did condemn an attempt to stir up anti-Semitism during Municipal Elections in Dublin during 1933.[65]

The agreement eventually supported by the IRA involved an undertaking that moneylenders would not use the courts to collect arrears, that where re-payment was agreed it would be made through a committee so that the moneylender did not personally call to collect it and that Robert Briscoe and Peadar O'Donnell be appointed as conduits for negotiations between lenders and debtors.[66] Despite some opposition from IRA officers who argued that a satisfactory conclusion to the raids had not been arrived at, the agreement was

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pp. 2. See also Dermot Keogh, *Jews in Twentieth - Century Ireland, Refugees, Anti - Semitism and the Holocaust*, (Cork, 1998). pp. 89-90.

[61] See Kevin C. Kearans, *Dublin Tenement Life, An Oral History*. (Dublin, 1996). pp. 31, 146 - 148, 172, 205 & 215. Also see statement of witness to Dail Committee above, "I have no edge on Jewmen, because Irishmen are worse." pp. 55.

[62] See 'Usury' leaflet distributed by Political Prisoner's Committee in support of IRA members jailed in connection with the raids. The leaflet seems to have been written by Maud Gonne MacBride, who would become more obsessed with this theme during the 1930s. Copy in Humphreys Papers, UCDA, P106/1663.

[63] JJ O'Kelly (Scelig) was openly anti-Semitic. It was not until World War Two that IRA publications began to stress this theme. See for example *War News*, (nd, possibly 1941), in Jus 8/752 NAI. There was also a Garda suggestion however, of IRA involvement in the launch of the Anti-Semitic newspaper *Aontas Gaedheal* during 1935. The evidence however, is vague. See report, 18 June 1935, in Jus 8/406 NAI.

[64] Kernoff was involved with IRA members in Friends of Soviet Russia during 1930. Garda report, 9 November 1930, in FitzGerald Papers, UCDA, P80/905 (8). He also contributed sketches to republican publications and leaflets. See "Who is George Gilmore?", 1931, in Humphreys Papers, UCDA, P106/2430. Gardai reported that there were two Jewish members along with several IRA figures in the James Connolly Worker's Club. Report, 6 April 1930, in FitzGerald Papers, UCDA, P80/916 (2).

[65] See 'Dublin's Hitlerites' in *An Phoblacht*, 1 July 1933.

publicised in February 1927.[67] The IRA continued to monitor moneylenders for a period after this but never engaged on raids on them again, despite occasional calls for it to do so.[68]

Questions of sectarian motivation arise again however, with the IRA's mobilisation against Orange marches during 1931. The Royal Black Preceptory were prevented from holding a walk in Cootehill Co. Cavan by a major IRA demonstration. Several hundred men armed with hurleys, sticks and iron bars occupied the route of the walk, while local roads were blocked and telegraph wires cut. A force of Gardai backed by soldiers and an armoured car was required to keep the two sides apart although was little actual physical violence.[69] However the event sparked disturbances in Portadown, Armagh and Lisburn, where attempts were made to prevent Hibernian parades and a Convent was attacked.[70] The IRA claimed the credit for preventing "an Imperialist meeting" asserting that it had responed to "angry demands" from local people.[71] A statement had been issued prior to the walk by the IRA's 'Working Farmer's Committee' which attempted to convince "wage earners of planter stock" that their motives for opposing the Walk were not sectarian.[72] This was reiterated in all the IRA's satements on the affair, with the organisation claiming it would try to prevent victimisation of Protestants.[73]

The IRA's decision to mobilise against the parade was influenced by increasing tension in the border area following some of the first Orange parades in the region for several years. During July in Newtowngore Co. Leitrim the

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[66] Text of undertaking, 27 January 1927, in MTUCDA, P69/181 (3).
[67] Battn. Council, 4 Batt. Dub. Bdge. to C/S, 3 December 1926, in MTUCDA, P69/47 (22-23). *An Phoblacht*, 11 February 1927.
[68] Instructions to check if moneylenders were still charging exorbitant rates of interest. C/S to O/C Dub Bdge, 16 March 1924 (7) in P69/48 (178). See *An Phoblacht*, 14 June 1930 and motion from South Dublin Battalion to 1933 GAC, in MTUCDA, P69/187 (41).
[69] *Irish Independent*, 13 August 1931.
[70] Dennis Kennedy *The Widening Gulf; Northern Attitudes to the Independent Irish State 1919-49* (Belfast, 1988) pp. 164-165 and *Donegal Vindicator*, 22 August 1931. 2,000 people were invoved in clashes at Portadown's Tunnel area. *Leitrim Observer*, 22 August 1931.
[71] *An Phoblacht*, 15 August 1931.
[72] *An Phoblacht*, 8 August 1931.
[73] *Irish Independent*, 24 August 1931.

first Orange march for 34 years was disrupted by local nationalists, including both Fianna Fáil and government supporters.[74] At an Orange rally in Bailieboro, Co. Cavan, one speaker had made disparaging references to Catholicism as a 'moneymaking' religion which caused widespread consternation.[75] Therefore there was potentially local support for an aggressive action by the IRA and furthermore the opportunity for semi - military manoeuvres. Certainly the IRA was pleased at how its Leitrim and Cavan units sealed off Cootehill, took over its Town Hall and secured the surrounding area until Army and Garda reinforcements arrived.[76]

The amount of time the IRA spent denouncing sectarianism would suggest that in the aftermath of the Cootehill incident their leadership realised that *they* had stirred up the "sinister forces" they were now condemning. Threatening notices addressed to Protestants in Leitrim were denounced by local IRA leader Seán O'Farrell as the work of "contemptible blackguards."[77] The IRA praised their Armagh unit for taking "exemplary action" against sectarianism by punishing a group of men who had issued threats to local Protestants in the name of the IRA.[78] However in this case the local unit could very well have been objecting to non members using the IRA's name rather than objecting to their threats.[79] However there is no doubt that the leadership of the IRA did not want to be seen as sectarian and had realised that "much education" would be necessary in order to make sure republicans could distinguish "sectarian animosities" from "nationality." They also noted how "easily" sectarianism was aroused by these events.[80] Indeed this may have influenced the IRA's decision not to attempt this type of activity again. When the Donegal IRA reported local

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[74] *Leitrim Observer*, 18 July 1931.
[75] *Meath Chronicle*, 18 July 1931.
[76] One lesson the IRA claimed to have learnt from Cootehill was "That it is possible to mobilise large bodies of our troops, quietly and efficiently." *An t-Óglách*, October 1931.
[77] *Leitrim Observer*, 22 August 1931.
[78] *An t-Óglách*, October 1931, in MTUCDA, P69/263 (9).
[79] Five men were lured from their homes, and then blindfolded and chained to the City Market's Gates in Armagh for "using the name IRA to which they have no connection." RUC report, 11 September 1931, HA/32/1/584 in PRONI.

hostility to an Orange march during July 1932 they were denied permission for a counter protest, and ordered to avoid sectarian clashes.[81]

Later that year Twomey was asked to allow the IRA become involved in a case where a republican supporter claimed his cousin had lost her job due to discrimination in favour of Protestants. There had been a demand for IRA members from Leitrim to take action against the manager of Ballybofey station for his alleged bias but Twomey refused to allow IRA intervention.[82]

However it is doubtful if the suppression of an Orange march in the Free State would be seen as by northern loyalists as anything other than an attack on Protestants. Following the affair one Orange leader remarked that if Protestants were to be treated that way in the south than "let the other side take what they get from the men in the six counties."[83]

The identification of largely Protestant institutions with 'Imperialism' continued to lead the IRA into actions which could only be construed as sectarian. When the 'Boycott British' campaign was launched with a poster campaign in July 1932, TCD, the Masonic Hall and the Kildare Street Club were all covered with posters.[84] The paranoia that some republicans displayed about the Freemasons was reflected in an IRA raid on their hall in Cork during 1935. Shots were fired and furniture destroyed by the raiders but no explanation ever offered as to why the hall was targeted.[85] Again in theory the IRA was just as opposed to the Knights of Columbanus and the Ancient Order of

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[80] *An t-Óglách*, October 1931, in MTUCDA, P69/263 (9).
[81] O/C Tirconaill No. 2 to C/S, 4 July and reply, 6 July 1932, in MTUCDA, P69/52 (112-113). Also Chapter Eight pp. 252-253.
[82] PJ Neary to C/S, 27 October 1932 & C/S to Neary, 5 January 1933, in MTUCDA, P69/53 (343-355).
[83] The Reverand Fullerton at Aughnacloy. *Irish Independent*, 13 August 1931. He later apoligised for his remarks. *Leitrim Observer*, 29 August 1931.
[84] *Irish Press*, 18 July 1932.
[85] *An Phoblacht*, 2 February 1935. There is a claim that Tom Barry took part in the raid, in an attempt to force Protestant employers in Cork to employ Catholics. See Meda Ryan, *The Tom Barry Story*, (Cork, 1982) pp. 143 - 144. For republican attitudes to Freemasons see Murray, *Oracles of God*, pp. 274 - 280, 307 & 415.

Hibernians as it was to largely Protestant secret societies but these organisations were never physically targeted.[86]

The IRA regarded itself as the legitimate army of the Irish Republic, sworn to bring about that Republic by "force of arms."[87] Therefore the state forces north and south should have been among its foremost targets. In reality the IRA never attempted a sustained campaign against any of these bodies. Indeed when the IRA did attempt to confront the forces of the Free State directly, with raids on Garda Barracks during November 1926, it was quickly forced to realise that it had bitten off more than it could chew.

There is an important factor to be taken into account when dealing with IRA attitudes to the Gardai in particular but also to state forces in general. The IRA had emerged from a period when the entire structure of legal authority was effectively demionised in Ireland. Its leadership and middle ranking officers had experience of RIC and British Army atrocities during the War of Independence and also those of the C.I.D. in the Civil War.[88] Therefore to the IRA every Garda action was designed to enforce Free State rule and was therefore illegitimate. While difficult to understand for an outsider this meant that within the republican movement any claims of Garda brutality or harassment were believed without question, just as a supporter of the Gardai would automatically dismiss all such allegations as spurious propaganda. So while the IRA would claim the right to shoot Gardai if necessary, they would complain vociferously if questioned by the Gardai about such an action. Ordinarily they refused to recognise the courts but would then utilise them to sue Gardai for ill treatment.

While hostility to the Special Branch, the successors of the hated 'C.I.D.' of the Civil War era could be taken as given, the IRA had taken some time to clarify its view of the new Civic Guards. An Army Council member

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[86] Indeed Twomey himself did not adhere to conspiracy theories about the power of the Freemasons. See Chapter Three pp. 110.

[87] Constitution of Oglaigh Na h - Éireann, March 1932, in MacEntee Papers, UCDA, P67/524 (10-14).

writing during 1924 speculated that if the Gardai were "discreetly handled" they could be of use to the IRA. This was because, according to the IRA's information, the majority of the force was resisting government efforts to make it "similar to the RIC" by doing political work. Therefore except in areas where the Gardai were "hounding" republicans the organisation should have a flexible attitude towards them.[89]

However it was inevitable that conflict would emerge between the IRA and the Gardai as the uniformed Garda was more often than not the most apparent local symbol of Free State authority. It was uniformed Gardai who were likely to come across IRA members illegally drilling, or who were called upon to maintain order at political meetings. From an early stage an attitude of hostility to the "peelers" who were charged with "upholding His Britannic Majesty's rule" prevailed within the IRA.[90]

In 1929 the IRA reminded its members that the Police were not its main enemy. In fact it claimed that if it wished to, it could overcome them "tomorrow." The police were simply the "lowest and meanest types" employed by the government for its "lowest and vilest tasks." The "unfortunate renegades and perverted types" who were members of the police force should meet with contempt and amusement, but not with fear by IRA members.[91] The language employed by the IRA for its own members was moderated in public. Despite fierce attacks on "O'Duffy and his underlings" *An Phoblacht* would also claim that the "vast majority" of Gardai wanted to administer civil law and not interfere with the IRA.[92]

In reality the IRA had to be careful in how it dealt with the Gardai. Despite bluster about the Gardai playing the same role as the old RIC, violent IRA activity against uniformed officers was not popular. It also tended to lead

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[88] There were an estimated 150 unofficial killings of Anti-Treatyites during the Civil War. O'Halpin, *Defending Ireland*, pp. 35-36.
[89] D/I report, 9 August 1924, in MTUCDA, P69/179 (122).
[90] Draft document on IRA policy within the GAA, 1925, in MTUCDA, P69/73 (73-74).
[91] *An t - Óglách*, January 1929, in Jus 8/681 NAI.

to increased repression against the IRA, which the organisation wished to avoid as it rebuilt its strength during the late 1920s. The IRA learnt this lesson very quickly following its raids on Garda Barracks during November 1926. Groups of up to 30 IRA members armed with rifles and handguns seized 11 Barracks in Cork, Waterford and Tipperary, stealing or destroying official documents before they left. During the raids one Garda was killed and another fatally wounded. In their aftermath a Public Safety Bill was introduced and over 110 republicans arrested.[93]

The IRA claimed that the raids were a response to increased "spying" on the organisation and the raids were intended to make it understood that "Barracks are no safe strongholds." The IRA further claimed that Gardai would not have been hurt if they had not resisted.[94] In their aftermath the IRA attempted to present the raids as a success claiming that after them the Gardai "ceased their hunt for Volunteers and arms."[95] This interpretation is fanciful as after the raids dozens of republicans were arrested and a draconian Public Safety Bill passed.[96] More importantly the raids led to internal dissension. A number of republicans publicly distanced themselves from the IRA's actions and a number of IRA officers in Dublin threatened to resign over the affair. The Dublin officers argued that the "isolated raids" were instrumental in creating an atmosphere in which the government could institute a "state of war" against the IRA. They also openly stated that they did not find the IRA's explanation for the raids to be satisfactory.[97]

The IRA rode out the storm but it must have realised that clashes with uniformed Gardai were largely counter productive. However in one sense the

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[92] *An Phoblacht*, 16 May 1931.
[93] *Irish Independent*, 16, 17 and 18 November 1926. Garda Hugh Ward was killed in Tipperary and Sergeant James Fitzsimons in Cork. See Appendix 6.
[94] *Irish Independent*, 24 November 1926.
[95] 'Mr. Ambrose', (Jim Killeen) 'General Outline of the Present Movement', August 1927, in MTUCDA, P69/72 (3-14). This document was written for a foreign audience and obviously attempted to place the IRA in the best possible light.
[96] *Irish Independent*, 17 and 19 November 1926.

IRA did profit from the affair. It later transpired that prisoners in Waterford were subjected to repeated beatings from the Gardai. The Gardai were forced to discipline a number of officers, and the IRA were able to exploit this publicity.[98] However there was no repetition of a generalised attack on the Gardai over the proceeding years. Such violence that did occur between the IRA and the Gardai was of a much more localised nature.

The most notorious incidents occurred in west Clare during 1929, capturing nation-wide attention with Fianna Fáil allegations of widespread Garda brutality in the county, followed by the murder of a detective in June. Their roots lay in a long running and very personalised struggle between the local IRA commander TJ Ryan and Garda Detectives. Garda Commissioner Eoin O'Duffy regarded west Clare as an area "notorious" for agrarian and political crime, attacks on the person and "swilling poteen." By 1929 it was an area with a "flourishing" IRA unit and one in which O'Duffy believed the majority of the populace were hostile to the Gardai. The Gardai had been given instructions to "effectively ... harass" the IRA and there is no doubt that they were doing this as the IRA and Fianna Fáil's complaints signalled.[99] IRA reports from late 1926 show republicans being the subject of intense harassment involving house raids and searches but mention no violence being used.[100] However the IRA considered that the CID had employed "terrorism" in their investigations in west Clare.[101]

O'Duffy had feared an "outrage" was being planned by the IRA and he was proven correct with the killing of a Garda in June. A forged letter, purporting to reveal the location of a box containing ammunition, drew detectives to a trap mine at Tullycrine. O'Duffy had no doubt that TJ Ryan was behind

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[97] See Chapter Six pp. 191. The Battalion Council of the Dublin 4th Batt. threatened to resign. O/C 4th Batt. to C/S, 11 December 1926, in MTUCDA, P69/47 (22-23).
[98] *Notes on Events*, P67/534, pp. 212-213. Maud Gonne MacBride produced a detailed report on the Waterford events for the IRA see MTUCDA, P69/197 (43-49).
[99] Garda Commissioner report, 6 April 1929, in FitzGerald Papers, UCDA, P80/851 (5).
[100] O/C West Clare to D/I, 3 December 1926, in MTUCDA, P69/193 (80-83)

the murder, although he believed a different officer had been the target. Ryan was believed to have established a very efficient intelligence network in the area and had managed to evade Garda observation to that point. However a number of local Gardai had been having some success in "checking" IRA activity in the area and the murder was a response to this.[102] While the crime committed was extremely serious the IRA's actions were largely governed by local factors.[103] It did not signal a new phase of violence against the Gardai.

Indeed over the next year the IRA's only major activity directed specifically against the force was the chaining of a Garda to railings in Dublin, in revenge for his arrest of one their members. The Gardai successfully prosecuted the culprits.[104] IRA members during this period were instructed not to use violence to resist arrest and use passive means to draw the attention of the public to their plight.[105]

During 1931 however there was a serious escalation in IRA activity generally. As the organisation grew it became bolder and conflict escalated with the Gardai. Again, however, much of the confrontation was localised. In an attempt to check the IRA the government banned its Bodenstown commemoration in June, but the IRA successfully defied the ban. However the Gardai in Kerry were largely able to prevent the IRA from that county attending the event. In response the Kerry IRA tore up railway tracks and cut telegraph wires in an attempt to disrupt Garda sports in Tralee a month later.[106] In Donegal there was a shoot out between detectives and the IRA after they came upon men trying

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[101] Report on west Clare by Staff Captain 'McAuley', 25 November 1930, in MTUCDA, P69/153 (67).

[102] The Garda killed was Detective Tadg O'Sullivan. O'Duffy to Ministers, 5 July 1929, in Blythe Papers, UCDA, P24/477. O'Duffy was very critical of his officers for allowing themselves to be lured into the trap in the first place.

[103] The atmosphere of hatred that existed between the IRA and the Gardai in west Clare is described by Brady, *Guardians,* pp. 152-154.

[104] D/J report, 8 November 1930, in D/T S 5864 A NAI. The Gardai believed that the IRA men involved were instructed to wound but not kill if they were resisted. The aftermath of the case is described in more detail in Chapter Two pp. 49-51.

[105] A/G to O/C Dublin Bdge. 17 February 1930, in MTUCDA, P69/152 (203).

[106] Garda reports in O'Duffy to Secretary Department of Justice, 27 July 1931, in D/T S 5864 B NAI and *Kerry Champion*, 18 July 1931.

to tear up tracks in an effort to prevent Gardai travelling to a sports day in Letterkenny.[107]

The most serious occurrence was the murder of a Garda Superintendent by the IRA in Tipperary. This was almost certainly the result of local tension following prosecutions for illegal drilling, as Superintendent Curtin had managed to get IRA members to testify against their officers.[108] However the government believed it signalled the beginning of an offensive aganist the Gardai. Garda reports from that year reflect both a feeling of both helplessness in the face of, and a desire to hit back at, the IRA.[109] The destruction of an unoccupied Garda Barracks in Co. Galway did little to ease their fears. The Gardai believed that the IRA was preparing to respond to mass arrests by assassination of Gardai nation-wide.[110]

It was the case that the IRA was encouraging its local units to come out in to the open as much as possible, and some used this as an opportunity to test local Garda resolve.[111] In Offaly for example, Gardai claimed that Seán McGuinness had told them where he could be found drilling the local IRA unit and dared them to do something about it. He allegedly reminded them of what had happened to the Superintendent in Tipperary for "not minding his own business." However the Gardai accepted his challenge and arrested him on Easter Sunday.[112]

Despite Garda fears the IRA reacted to the Public Safety Bill of October 1931 not by assassinating policemen but by urging restraint among its members.[113] Another Garda did not to die at the organisation's hands until

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[107] *Donegal Vindicator*, 15 August 1931.

[108] O'Duffy claimed that Superintendent Seán Curtin had, by getting IRA members to give evidence, accomplished "something a Irish policeman has not done for at least one hundred years." O'Duffy to Ministers, 27 July 1931, FitzGerald Papers, UCDA, P80/856 (16).

[109] See reports from Chief Superintendents in Kerry and West Cork, 24 June 1931, in FitzGerald Papers, UCDA, P80/857 (37).

[110] Garda report, 1 September 1931, in S 5864 A NAI.

[111] Twomey to McGarrity, 26 June 1931, in McGarrity Papers, Ms. 17,490 NLI.

[112] Commissioner O'Duffy to Ministers, 27 July 1931, in FitzGerald Papers, UCDA, P80/856 (22).

[113] AC to Commander of each Independent Unit, 27 October 1931, in D/T S 5864 C NAI.

1940. During the clampdown of late 1931-32 the IRA recieved reports of "beatings and assaults" on its members in Leitrim and north Clare. Its Tipperary the local IRA commander had shots fired at him by Gardai.[114] A Leitrim IRA member, James Vaugh, died after being released from Garda custody during December 1931. An inquest ruled that he had died from the effects of influenza, measles and congestion of the lungs.[115] The IRA accused the Gardai of causing his death through ill - treatment.[116] Again what is important is that whatever actually occured while Vaugh was in Garda custody, republicans would always believe he was murdered.

Following Fianna Fáil's coming to power there followed a period of confusion for both the IRA and the Gardai. Contrary to previous interpretations the IRA leadership did not assume that the organisation had been given carte-blanche to behave as it liked.[117] The IRA's orders were to avoid confrontation but very rapidly IRA members were embroiled in street clashes which inevitably caused conflict with the Gardai.

There is some evidence that elements within the IRA believed that the Gardai would behave differently towards them under the new government. After an armed Garda search of IRA men in Leitrim, the local IRA officer sought clarification about whether the Gardai still had the power to carry out such searches.[118] More seriously in a sequel to the west Clare events of three years previously, TJ Ryan and George Gilmore were attacked by detectives in Kilrush and were badly injured. Ryan was clearly caught off guard by this as he had been telling associates the 'CID' would not dare touch him now that Fianna Fáil were in power.[119] Two Gardai were dismissed as a result of the affair, leading Twomey to speculate that the Detective Branch was about to be

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[114] AC correspondence book, 16 October 1931, 21 January 1932, in MTUCDA, P69/71 & O/C North Clare to A/G, 29 February 1932, in MTUCDA, P69/155 (277).
[115] *Notes on Events*, MacEntee papers, UCDA, P67/534, pp. 8.
[116] A/G condolences to T. Vaugh, 16 February 1932, in MTUCDA, P69/155 (296).
[117] Brady, *Guardians*, pp. 172-175. O'Halpin, *Defending Ireland*, pp. 112-113.
[118] Adjt. Leitrim to A/G, 6 October 1932, in MTUCDA, P69/156 (62-65).
[119] Entry in Jacob Diaries, 19 June 1932, Ms, 32, 582 (69) NLI.

dissolved.[120] Yet again the IRA did not respond with violence, instead actually issuing orders to continue to avoid conflict.[121]

Street violence however did occur increasingly during the autumn of 1932. On several occasions republican crowds were baton charged by the Gardai and Twomey believed known activists were deliberately singled out for a "bad battering."[122] At an Anti - Imperialist protest in Dublin two Kilrush based detectives were recognised by republicans and surrounded by a crowd who attacked them shouting "you're not in Kilrush now!" This occurred on the occasion of Peadar O'Donnell's statement that a "policeman who put his head between Mr. Cosgrave's head and the hand of angry Irishmen might as well keep his head at home."[123] Given the rhetoric of IRA leaders like O'Donnell and the Gardai's task of maintaining public order than some level of conflict between the IRA and uniformed Gardai as well as detectives was always likely.

More serious attacks on the Gardai during 1933 were related to local conflicts and unlikely to have been centrally directed. In February a Garda Sergeant in Tralee was shot and wounded because of his leading role in a baton charge the previous month and after rioting later that year the local Garda Barracks was fired on.[124] During July a Superintendent's house and car in Drogheda were riddled by gun fire late at night. Again he had been active in the prosecution of local IRA members.[125] A Garda was injured by a bomb thrown by the IRA at a bus passing through Dundalk during the Northern Ireland rail strike.[126]

By March 1935 Gardai were again being deliberately targeted by the IRA with shootings in Tralee and Dublin. The Gardai believed that the motive behind the Dublin shootings was revenge for baton charges against IRA demonstrators

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[120] Twomey to Neenan, 15 September 1932, in MTUCDA, P69/185 (195-199).
[121] C/S to O/C Cork No. 1 Bdge, 10 September 1932, in MTUCDA, P69/155 (39).
[122] C/S to O/C Cork No. 1 Bdge, 16 November 1932, in MTUCDA, P69/155 (33-34).
[123] Garda reports, 11 & 15 November 1932, in Jus 8/684 NAI.
[124] *Notes on Events*, P67/534 pp. 12 and 17.
[125] Garda report, 16 July 1933, in Jus 8/213 NAI.
[126] *Notes on Events*, P67/534 pp. 12.

on St. Patrick's Day. The Tralee shooting was the result of threats made against the local Detective Branch by IRA officers in the town.[127]

The IRA's main adversaries in terms of day to day activity were the Gardai. Despite being quite capable of killing individual policemen the IRA never mounted a generalised offensive against them. While the IRA's murders of four Gardai were terrible in themselves the organisation was capable of far worse violence, yet for a variety of reasons it chose not to engage in it. The IRA's attitude to the State Forces, north and south, was generally one of caution in this period.

Prison Warders accused of ill - treating IRA prisoners were named on republican posters, but were only actvely targeted on a couple of occasions.[128] The Head Warder at Mountjoy was shot and wounded by the IRA in early 1928. Two years later one of his colleagues was handcuffed to railings with a placard claiming he mistreated prisoners tied around his neck.[129]

While the National Army should have been at least in theory the IRA's main enemy, it was very rarely physically attacked. Generally these attacks occurred when the army was guarding individuals or attempting to quell riots. An Army Sergeant was wounded during a gun attack on the Ceann Comhairle's residence during late 1930.[130] Troops were used to quell disturbances in Tralee and Kilkenny during October 1933 and to seal off Bodenstown in 1931 and 1936.[131] In a solitary case a former IRA member who had joined the Irish Army was kidnapped and tied to railings in Limerick city during 1934.[132] The IRA claimed that it recognised young men joined the Free State Army for economic reasons and not through "hostility to Irish freedom." Therefore they

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[127] A Detective Sergeant was wounded in Tralee on 17 March. Two uniformed Gardai were shot in Grafton Street on 23 March. Another uniformed Guard was shot by the IRA in Leeson Street during May 1935. *Notes on Events*, P67/534 pp. 35-37 & 41.

[128] See 'Protect your Prisoners' (nd) in D/T S 5864 A NAI.

[129] *Notes on Events*, P67/534 pp. 214 & 217.

[130] A/G (National Army) to Minister for Defence, 26 November 1930, in FitzGerald Papers, UCDA, P80/851 (27).

[131] *Notes on Events*, pp. 17 and 55. *Irish Independent*, 22 June 1931, *Kerry Champion*, 14 October 1933, *Irish Press*, 22 June 1936.

also occasionally directed propaganda at rank and file soldiers, calling on "Brother Irishmen" to refuse to play the part of "Black and Tans."[133]

In Northern Ireland the RUC were attacked only in the context of strikes or public disturbances. Their first fatality at the hands of the IRA occurred during the 1933 Rail strike.[134] The British Army in the north was never targeted. There was only one rather pathetic attempt to attack British forces in the south, with a few shots discharged at a Royal Navy destroyer in Cobh Harbour during 1936.[135] The only other attack by the IRA which may be very vaguely described as connected to the British military was the murder of the retired Vice Admiral Boyle Somerville in Co. Cork. The stated reason, that the 73 old was a "British agent" for giving references to local young men who wished to join the Royal Navy hardly marked a high point in the IRA's campaign against 'Imperialism.'[136]

During 1934 the IRA clashed with Dublin street gangs. The so called 'Animal Gangs' of Dublin have entered Irish left wing folklore, being held responsible for almost every attack on socialists during the 1930s and alleged to have been allies of the Blueshirts.[137] While Dublin did see serious street violence against the left during this period, its perpetrators were more diverse than is often allowed.[138]

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[132] *Limerick Leader*, 31 December 1934.

[133] 'To the Soldiers of the Free State Army' 1931, in D/T S 5864 C NAI.

[134] See Chapter Eight.

[135] HMS *Tenedos* was fired on with rifles on the 19 of May, allegedly by Tom Barry among others. *Notes on Events*, MacEntee Papers, UCDA, pp. 53.

[136] *Irish Press*, 26 March 1936. It has been claimed that Tom Barry ordered the kidnapping of Somerville, and that he was shot accidentally. Ryan, *Tom Barry*, pp. 144 - 145. However Seán Russell subsequently claimed Sommerville was 'executed' by the IRA. *New York Daily News*, 15 August 1936, in Jus 8/802 NAI. An account of the affair, from a relative of one of the IRA men involved is given in Joseph O'Neill's *A Blood Dark Track: a Family History*. (London, 2000)

[137] See Michael O'Riordan, *Connolly Column*, (Dublin, 1979) pp. 34-35. Manus O'Riordan, 'The Struggle against Fascism in Dublin', in HG Klaus, (ed) *Strong Words, Brave Deeds. The Poetry, Life and Times of Thomas O'Brien*. (Dublin, 1994) pp. 220. George Gilmore, *The Irish Republican Congress*, (Cork, 1978) pp. 58. Contemporary accounts in letters by Frank Ryan and George Gilmore to *Irish Press*, 1 May 1936 and Brian O'Neill, 'Dublin Strike Episode' in *Left Review*, June 1935.

[138] Garda reports on the storming of Connolly House in March 1933 stress that the 5,000 strong crowd who assembled was "made up of persons of different walks of life in the city,

The 'Animal Gangs' themselves were territorially based groups involved in a variety of criminal activities as well as violence against rivals. Their reputation appears to have been a mixed one, occasionally seen as local heroes, or alternately as thugs.[139] In 1934 the IRA accused them of strike breaking on behalf of the Dublin newspaper employers and of attacking its members. *An Phoblacht* had been the only newspaper that the Print Union's Strike Committee allowed to publish during a two month strike in the autumn of 1934.[140] The IRA claimed that armed members had visited the Ardee Hall in Talbot Street, one of the 'Animal Gang's' meeting places and warned them to desist from interfering with the IRA. The Hall was a meeting place for the gangs many of whom worked as 'newsboys' selling papers in Dublin city centre.[141] The incident which gave rise to the threat was a clash between IRA members and 'newsboys' which led to 2 IRA men being hospitalised. 'Newsboys' had broken windows in *An Phoblacht's* office and the IRA had mobilised 50 men to guard it. Further clashes erupted with sticks and bottles being used by both sides.[142] After the injuries to their members the IRA then upped the stakes by threatening gang members with guns.

The 'newsboys' had a mixed relationship with the IRA. During the clampdown of late 1931 they had apparently "stood by" the IRA and distributed *Republican File*. In 1932 *An Phoblacht* praised them for attacking strike-breakers during the *Irish Press* dispute.[143] However Gardai believed that the violence had erupted when the 'newsboys' had refused to pay extra for the special strike editions of *An Phoblacht*. After they broke windows in republican premises the IRA had been forced to respond, and with many 'newsboys' being gang

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including a very large percentage of respectably dressed young women." Report, 30 March 1933, in Jus 8/711 NAI.

[139] Kearns, *Dublin Tenement Life*, pp. 55-57, 66-68, 77-78, 126, 153.

[140] See Chapter Three pp. 84.

[141] *An Phoblacht*, 29 September 1934. Kearns, *Dublin Tenement Life*, pp. 66-68.

[142] Garda report, 12 September 1934, in Jus 8/67 NAI. See also *Cork Examiner*, 12 September 1934.

[143] Report on *An Phoblacht* sales, May 1932, in MTUCDA, P69/52 (175). *An Phoblacht*, 25 October 1932. See also *Republican File*, 5 December 1931.

members, they then responded to the IRA's challenge themselves.[144] The Gardai's report did not mention any possible connection to strike breaking. However some 'newsboys' raided the Republican Congress offices during the strike, injuring Mick Price and stealing bundles of newspapers so a connection to the strike can not be ruled out.[145] In any case it was the last recorded clash between the IRA and Dublin gangs in that era.

Perhaps the best known conflicts that the IRA of this period were involved in were those with the Blueshirts.[146] The Blueshirts emerged from the Army Comrades Association in early 1933, and conflict between them and the IRA reached its height between 1933 and 1934. The violence of that period has been well chronicled, as has the implications of that violence for both the IRA and their opponents. Generally it has been argued that the period allowed Fianna Fáil to establish its credentials as the guardian of law and order, saw the majority of the Blueshirt's support opt for democratic parliamentary methods and contributed to the further marginalisation of the IRA.[147] The IRA never developed a consistent strategy for dealing with the Blueshirts and controversy over conflict with them contributed to the organisation splitting in 1934.

The IRA first began to pay attention to the 'Higgins Gang' as it called the ACA, in the autumn of 1932. Units were instructed to gather intelligence on the ACA, and to "send people to join it" if possible. The IRA wanted to know the "names and records" of its principal activists in every local area.[148] Reports from around the Free State suggested that the ACA was not recruiting widely

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[144] Garda report, 12 September 1934, in Jus 8/67 NAI.

[145] Entry in Jacob Diaries, 6 September 1934, Ms. 32,582 (26) NLI.

[146] Because of the rapid number of name changes forced upon the movement, largely through official suppression I have used the term ACA until 1933 and then Blueshirts to describe the organisation throughout this period. Founded as the Army Comrades Association in February 1932, the organisation adopted the blueshirt as a uniform in February 1933. In July 1933 it was re-named the National Guard. In September that year the United Ireland Party (Fine Gael) was founded and the National Guard became the Young Ireland Association. In December 1933 this became the League of Youth. See Cronin, *Blueshirts and Irish Politics*, pp. 17-27.

[147] See FSL Lyons, *Ireland Since The Famine,* (London, 1971) pp. 527-536. Lee, *Ireland 1912 - 1985,* pp. 179-181, and Regan, *Irish Counter-Revolution,* pp. 325-372.

[148] D/I to O/C Offaly, 17 September 1932 in P69/199 (65-68). A/G to Adjt, Caherciveen Battn. 19 September 1932 in MTUCDA, P69/158 (176).

but was largely composed of ex-Free State army "pensioners" with some access to arms. Incidentally the Gardai also noted how in some cases the ACA were "as well armed as the Irregulars."[149]

The emergence of the ACA gave the IRA a boost, giving units a focus and leading to increased recruitment. No doubt the appearance of a potential rival gave rise to the belief that conflict was at hand. Twomey stressed however that the IRA did not want street "brawls" as it was a "short distance" from "individual scrapping matches to guns." He also speculated that unless the National Army gave backing to the ACA they would "fizzle out."[150] Indeed one senior IRA figure surmised that if the ACA were ignored they would "peter out after a short time."[151] The IRA continued to emphasise this even as clashes did break out over the winter of 1932, most notably in Killmallock, Co. Limerick.[152] While it argued that anger against the "White Army" was inevitable it was up to the Fianna Fáil government to stamp out their "treason" by withdrawing state pensions from the ACA's membership.[153] Republican violence against the ACA while understandable, would only give them a focus for their activities.[154] A potential for clashes arose when Dublin publicans asked the ACA to protect their premises from attack by the IRA during the 'Boycott British' campaign but in the event conflict was avoided.[155] While belligerent speeches by Peadar O'Donnell and Frank Ryan at an Anti - Imperialist rally in Dublin during November 1932 have been seen as beginning the "no free speech for traitors" campaign and certainly increased the temperature politically, the Army Council did not discuss their policy towards meetings of Cumann na nGaedheal until

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[149] See for example Adjt Caherciveen to A/G, 10 September 1932, in MTUCDA, P69/158 (178). Chief Superintendent, Tipperary, June 1932, in Jus 8/446 NAI. The information contained in IRA intelligence reports on the ACA would be of value to anyone studying the emergence of the Blueshirt movement.

[150] Twomey to Con Neenan, 15 September 1932, in MTUCDA, P69/185 (195-199). Twomey described many ACA members as the "shopkeeper's son type" many of whom had never been "in any army!"

[151] Unsigned to Jack Jones, 1 October 1932, in MTUCDA, P69/54 (36).

[152] See Chapter Seven pp. 235-236.

[153] *An Phoblacht*, 10 September 1932.

[154] *An Phoblacht*, 15 October 1932.

later that month.[156] It is likely that the IRA leadership responded to grassroots pressure rather than initiated the campaign themselves.

Following the January 1933 general election victory of Fianna Fáil the IRA concluded that "as a serious force" the ACA was finished.[157] The IRA leadership's key note statement to be read to all units prior to the 1933 General Army Convention did not mention the ACA at all.[158] There was a brief but significant discussion on the ACA at the Convention in March. It was concluded that they were a "spent force" and any violent action against them by the IRA would only "justify their reorganisation" and therefore the IRA must exercise restraint. However in cases where the ACA became particularly aggressive towards the IRA, local officers could use their discretion in dealing with them.[159] The IRA's assessment was mistaken, as the summer of 1933 saw the blueshirted National Guard flourish under the leadership of Eoin O'Duffy and become a mass movement.[160] In August the government moved dramatically against the organisation, banning a proposed mass march in Dublin.[161] *An Phoblacht* ridiculed the Blueshirt's "phantom hundred thousand" and again speculated that the organisation was on the brink of collapse.[162] However O'Duffy's "fascists" as the IRA were now increasingly referred to them, instead embarked on a winter of intense activity which saw the most serious street violence since Fianna Fáil had come to power.[163] In October troops were called in to back up Gardai in both Tralee and Kilkenny as hours of street fighting

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[155] *Irish Press*, 13 December 1932.

[156] Ryan was speaking at the Anti - Imperialist League rally of November 1932. *Irish Independent*, 11 November 1932. Chairman AC to IRA Executive, 18 November 1932, in MTUCDA, P69/155 (30).

[157] Chairman AC to Secretary Clan na Gael, 13 February 1933, in MTUCDA, P69/185 (88).

[158] Statement, 18 February 1933, in MTUCDA, P69/187 (1-3).

[159] Notes of 1933 GAC, in MTUCDA, P69/187 (82-83).

[160] Cronin, *Blueshirts and Irish Politics*, pp. 21 and Maurice Manning, *The Blueshirts*, (1972) pp. 77-79.

[161] Regan, *Irish Counter - Revolution*, pp. 336-337.

[162] *An Phoblacht*, 26 August 1933.

[163] Although *An Phoblacht* had referred to the "Fascist or White Army" as early as 10 September 1932.

followed attempted Blueshirt rallies. In Tralee O'Duffy was assaulted, his car burnt out and the fighting only subsided after the Army had fired tear gas.[164]

The IRA's official response to these and smaller scale clashes throughout the winter was to blame government inaction for allowing "imperialist fascism" to thrive and to warn of more violence unless action was taken to prevent treason. It was also stressed that there were "definite Army Orders" instructing IRA members to avoid conflict with the Blueshirts.[165] Twomey claimed that most of this violence was "spontaneous" local reaction to Blueshirt provocations and that most of those involved in it were actually Fianna Fáil members and supporters. The IRA had made it clear to their members that they wanted no "local feuds."[166] Following arrests in connection with the Tralee riots the IRA was quick to claim that only six of its members were in jail for offences related to anti Blueshirt activities. Instead it suggested that it was the *Irish Press* whipping up "hysteria" about the Blueshirts that was contributing to more disorder.[167]

The IRA's condemnation of clashes with Blueshirts became ever more shriller during 1934, even as three people died as a result of violence associated with the conflict. The IRA now stressed that "militancy must be directed" into an attack on the "privileged interests" behind the Blueshirts. "Local and isolated clashes" were not the way forward.[168] In response to further clashes in May the IRA again condemned "meaningless violence" which only served to divert from the task of "smashing of the Capitalist system."[169] Twomey warned IRA members not to "interfere with individual wearers of Blueshirts ... but to get out after the financiers of the organisation."[170] In Ballybunion, Co. Kerry, he

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[164] *Notes on Events*, P67/534 pp. 17 and *Kerry Champion*, 14 October 1933.
[165] Tom Barry, quoted in *An Phoblacht*, 9 December 1933.
[166] Twomey to McGarrity, 26 October 1933, in McGarrity Papers, Ms. 17,490 NLI.
[167] *Kerry Champion*, 10 February 1934. Local IRA officer Seán Ryan had earlier claimed that no orders had been issued to the Tralee IRA to mobilise on the occasion of the October riot. *Kerry Champion*, 2 December 1933.
[168] *An Phoblacht*, 17 February 1934.
[169] *An Phoblacht*, 5 May 1934.
[170] Garda report, Roscommon, 22 May 1934, in Jus 8/313 NAI.

described attacks on Blueshirts as "nothing better than ... faction fighting" which was carried out by people who considered fighting with "imperialists" more important than a real challenge to "Imperialism."[171]

During this period the Blueshirts were also engaged in a campaign against the payment of annuities which involved them in widespread sabotage and clashes with the Gardai, leading to the death of one young man in August 1934. This was arguably more important to them than fighting the IRA, something which they did with much less regularity during late 1934. By 1935 the violence between republicans and Blueshirts had declined perceptibly.[172]

Despite their leadership's very vocal denunciations of it, the IRA were heavily involved in anti Blueshirt violence. Much of the tempo of the conflict was governed by local conditions, and betrayed how little central control the IRA could exercise over its local units. From an early stage IRA units had expressed a desire to confront the ACA. An IRA officer in Kildare wanted to organise attacks on ACA members parading in Celbridge and Naas in September 1932, but was denied permission from his superiors until official instructions were received from Dublin.[173] In Castlegregory, Co. Kerry the local IRA felt that if the ACA tried to hold a meeting it should "hunt them out of the place."[174] Some sections of the IRA expressed a fear that if Cumann na nGaedheal were given free platforms they could "stampede the people" against the government.[175]

An important factor in the escalation of conflict was that the ACA seem to have been making their presence felt to the IRA in several districts. In Caherciveen three IRA members were held up by a detective who threatened them with his revolver and told them that there was now an "army that would quieten them." According to the IRA this detective had been seen in the

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[171] *Kerry Champion*, 28 July 1934.
[172] Much of the violence was directed against rate collectors, and occasionally Gardai and Fianna Fáil members. Reports in Jus 8/355 NAI.
[173] O/C Kildare to A/G, September 1932, in MTUCDA, P69/156 (126).
[174] Adjt. Castlegregory to A/G, 7 November 1932, in MTUCDA, P69/156 (16).

company of the local ACA.[176] In Sligo an IRA member was abducted, questioned and beaten up by masked and armed men during late September 1932. The IRA locally were convinced that this was the work of the ACA.[177] In Belcara, Co. Mayo an ex Free State officer had drawn a gun on IRA members heckling a speech by former Cumann na nGaedheal minister FitzGerald Kenny. The IRA retaliation for this incident resulted in the shooting of one of its members.[178] Fianna Fáil sources were also informing the IRA of threats they had received which they believed came from the ACA.[179]

In some cases a contributing factor to the animosity was the fact that the participants had clashed in different guises before. The two detectives dismissed over the Kilrush attack on Gilmore and Ryan subsequently took a "prominent part" in Blueshirt activities.[180] In Offaly an ex-army officer who the IRA had campaigned against during a land dispute became vice-chairman of the local ACA and a member of its National Executive a year later.[181] The IRA were also receiving reports that ACA members had fired shots during fighting in Mallow and Cork in early November.[182]

Therefore while the IRA leadership dithered as to what policy to adopt towards Cumann na nGaedheal meetings, local IRA members took the opportunity that these meetings provided to let the ACA know that they would not tolerate them in *their* areas. The IRA leadership could disavow knowledge on the basis that many other non-affiliated republicans would also be involved in disturbances at these meetings. This too helps explain the often localised nature

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[175] Adjt. North Mayo to A/G, 2 August 1932, in MTUCDA, P69/158 (238).
[176] Adjt. Caherciveen to A/G, 10 September 1932, in MTUCDA, P69/158 (178).
[177] O/C Sligo to C/S, 27 October 1932, in MTUCDA, P69/158 (67-69).
[178] O/C Mayo to A/G, 19 September 1932, in MTUCDA, P69/158 (151-162). See also Chapter Two. This case was also one of those raised by TF O'Higgins to prove how ungovernable the Free State was becoming during August 1932. *Irish Independent*, 24 August 1932.
[179] Robert Briscoe TD and Frank Fahy TD were the source of this information. Dub. Bdge. I/O to D/I, 28 September 1932, in MTUCDA, P69/199 (35).
[180] *Notes on Events*, P67/534. pp. 11.
[181] See Chapter Seven for details of the land dispute. See *Offaly Independent*, 1 April 1933 for report on the local ACA.
[182] Chairman AC to Secretary Clan, 8 November 1932, in MTUCDA, P69/185 (154-156).

of the conflict. While the set piece battles during the 1933 election campaign and during the winter of 1933-34 drew much attention, unreported local clashes probably produced more intense bitterness. This situation was still not general in early 1933 however, although the election campaign produced several confrontations. In Kiltimagh Co. Mayo, the IRA claimed that it had disarmed ACA members who had beaten up two local youngsters.[183]

At the IRA's 1933 Convention the only area that demanded action on the issue of the ACA was west Cork. There the ACA was said to be "strong in numbers and rather aggressive."[184] Tom Barry claimed the ACA was "wreaking havoc" among the local IRA. He asserted that young IRA members were being intimidated by the ACA and asked for permission to "execute" their local leadership. Twomey argued that whatever was the case in west Cork, the ACA nationally were "not a menace" to the IRA. Shooting their leaders would simply bring them sympathy and help revive their organisation. However Barry was given permission to take measures short of this to defend his men.[185] The fact that the IRA were outnumbered by the ACA in many parts of Ireland may have contributed to the intensity of their violence against them. It is not surprising that the first fatality of Blueshirt-IRA violence took place in west Cork. In retaliation for an assualt on an IRA member in Bandon during October 1933, two Blueshirts were abducted and beaten up with one of them being shot in both legs. He recovered but the other man died of his wounds in December.[186]

There has been much speculation as to what the IRA had planned for the proposed Blueshirt march on Dublin. Rumours of snipers being placed on rooftops to machine gun marchers, or of armed units taking over train stations

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[183] O/C North Mayo to A/G, 20 and 22 January 1933, in MTUCDA, P69/53 (121-124).
[184] Chairman AC to Secretary Clan na Gael, 21 March 1933, in MTUCDA, P69/185 (55).
[185] Notes of 1933 GAC, in MTUCDA, P69/187 (114-115).
[186] Hugh O'Reilly of Bandon. *Notes on Events*, P67/534 pp. 17-18. *An Phoblacht*, 4 November 1933 for original case. West Cork was an area of strong support for the Blueshirts. See Cronin, *Blueshirts and Irish Politics*, pp. 115. McGarry, *Irish Politics and Spanish Civil War*, (Cork, 1999) pp. 33.

have become accepted as fact.[187] Whether the IRA would risk this is open to question. Having spent so much time trying to convince its members that confrontation was counter productive why would it have authorised the use of arms, with the potential for mass carnage?[188] In fact the IRA's preparations may have been a little less grandiose but more in keeping with the temper of the times. It was claimed that groups of men had gathered at Cabra, Kingsbridge station, and the Royal and Grand Canals, equipped with sticks and stockpiles of stones on the day.[189]

Clashes between the two organisations took several forms. One was mass rioting as seen in Tralee, Kilkenny and Drogheda during late 1933 and early 1934. Here the IRA were not the only participants, but their involvement was very important. In Drogheda for example, a large crowd had gathered outside a Blueshirt dance. While there was much heckling and abuse it was not until the IRA arrived that an attempt was made to storm the dance hall. There followed a night of stone throwing and baton charges. Of the 21 republicans arrested, 7 were IRA members. On occasions like this the IRA's organisation provided leadership for larger groups of people.[190] The type of incident that typified the conflict in the localities is well illustrated by one which occurred at Ballyclough, Co. Cork in August 1934. A small group of Blueshirts taunted a passing IRA man, who summoned help from his comrades and a fight took place involving no more than 12 men. Neither side would talk to Gardai about the affair, and no court cases resulted from it.[191] To these IRA men their leadership's orders to

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[187] See Bowyer Bell, *Secret Army*, pp. 107-108 & Mike Cronin, 'The Blueshirts in the Irish Free State, 1932-1935: the nature of socialist republican and governmental opposition' in Kirk and McElligot, *Opposing Fascism - Community, Authority and Resistance in Europe.* (Cambridge, 1999). pp. 80-96.

[188] Twomey writing to McGarrity some weeks later gives no indication that the IRA had planned a major armed operation for August 12. Twomey to McGarrity, 26 October 1933, Ms. 17,490 NLI. Neither do the discussions at the 1934 GAC, MacEntee Papers, UCDA, P67/525.

[189] See claim by Senator Michael Staines, *Seánad Debates*, 22 August 1933, Vol. XVII, pp. 1137-1139.

[190] Garda report, 9 Febraury 1934, in Jus 8/108 NAI.

[191] Garda report, 16 August 1934, in Jus 8/36 NAI. Injuries amounted to bleeding mouths and broken teeth.

ignore "provocations" and instead concentrate their efforts on attacking "Imperialist strongholds" must have seemed rather abstract.[192] When the organisation was challenged locally, the instinct was to respond, whether in order to gain revenge or not to lose face.

Much of the violence was of a tit for tat nature. It was violence too which was not completely one sided. There has been a recent tendency to see the activities of the Blueshirts as purely defensive. Yet that the IRA was responsible for two deaths and the Blueshirts for only one is more due to accident than design.[193] During early 1934 for example Blueshirts shot two IRA men, one of whom died, and were involved in another eighteen incidents involving firearms.[194]

It was also the case that anti Blueshirt feeling had a popular basis in some parts of the Free State. Cork Fianna Fáil Cumann called on the government to provide Garda protection for them because of the "menacing attitude" of local Blueshirts.[195] After riots in Waterford during May 1934, the Gardai explained that the trouble resulted when Blueshirts armed with batons attacked Labour and Fianna Fáil supporters who had taken part in a trade union march.[196] In Leitrim and Kerry labour and trade union branches took part in anti Blueshirt rallies.[197] During February and March 1934 schools in Tipperary,

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[192] Orders given to meeting of IRA unit commanders, October 1933, see Twomey to McGarrity, 26 October 1933, in McGarrity Papers, Ms. 17,490 NLI and *An Phoblacht*, 17 February 1934.

[193] Michael Laffan argues that the Blueshirts were "basically defensive and harmless...less violent than republican extremists, and - with one exception they never killed anyone." *The Resurrection of Ireland,* (Dublin, 1999) pp. 448.

[194] James Glynn of Ennis, see *Clare Champion*, 5 May 1934. See reports of 30 cases of violence by Blueshirts during 1934 in Jus 8/355 NAI. Blueshirts also carried out sectarian attacks on Protestants in Kerry and Tipperary during July 1935. Garda estimate of gun attacks in Jus 8/446 NAI.

[195] Secretary, Ballynoe FF Cumann, East Cork, to Department of Justice, 10 October 1933, in D/J H306/31 NAI.

[196] Garda report, 23 July 1934. 18 of 20 men arrested were Blueshirts. The Gardai also felt that a fair trial would not occur because the local District Justice was of "Blueshirt tendencies." Jus 8/167 NAI.

[197] *Leitrim Observer*, 16 June 1934 and *Kerry Champion*, 16 December 1933. The British Ex-Servicemen's Association in Kerry also condemned the Blueshirts, after O'Duffy referred to Tralee protesters as ex-British soldiers and "cornerboys." *Kerry Champion*, 21 October 1933.

Limerick, Cork and Waterford were disrupted by walkouts in protest at the wearing of Blueshirts by pupils. While there was republican involvement in some cases in others the action seems to have been spontaneous.[198] In Dublin, Labour, Communist and later Republican Congress groups all took part in clashes with the Blueshirts.[199]

The IRA's involvement in violent anti Blueshirt activities did have a damaging effect on the organisation. Firstly the obvious participation of its members in actions which it publicly disavowed showed how little control it had over its own ranks. Secondly it was allowing itself to be further and further associated with disorder and chaos, points made by de Valera when he visited Kerry in December 1933. Twomey claimed that the government was using the violence, even that which involved its own supporters, to attack the IRA.[200] Yet the IRA leadership could do little about this. Their own ranks were split on the issue. By 1934 the left, represented by O'Donnell, Ryan and Gilmore were arguing that the fight against Irish fascism was the most important task for the IRA. Following their departure to the Republican Congress they claimed that the IRA leadership had failed to give a lead to the struggle against the Blueshirts.[201] However non left wing leaders such as Seán O'Farrell and John Joe Sheehy were also centrally involved in clashes with the Blueshirts in their localities.[202] At its 1934 Convention these differences were expressed openly. Michael Kelly complained that it had been an "honour" to put the Blueshirts off the streets, but the Army Council had then forbidden the IRA rank and file from even "attending the Blueshirt meetings." Tadgh Lynch of west Cork claimed that the

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See also Garda report of Fianna Fáil members joining an IRA parade to a Blueshirt meeting in Dunlavin, Co. Wicklow, 9 April 1934, in Jus 8/315 NAI.

[198] Over eight schools were affected. In most cases the parents of children wearing Blueshirts or Fine Gael badges were convinced by Gardai, school teachers or Parish Priests to discontinue the practice. See Garda reports, February and March 1934, in Jus 8/258 NAI.

[199] See *Notes on Events*, P67/534 pp. 28 and *Notes on the Republican Congress Movement*, P67/527 pp. 7-8 and 17. Both in MacEntee Papers, UCDA.

[200] De Valera in Tralee, *Kerry Champion,* 23 December 1933 and Twomey to McGarrity, 26 October 1933, Ms. 17,490 NLI.

[201] Gilmore, *Irish Republican Congress*, pp. 15.

Blueshirts were still "sapping" the morale of the IRA in his area and that action had to be taken against them. In contrast Seán McCool argued that it was "foolishness to be attacking Blueshirts" as instead the IRA should be attacking what they stood for. However John Joe Sheehy put the case for aggressive action when he stated that unless the Blueshirts were "squelched" quickly they would "spring up like daisies" and crush the IRA.[203]

In the case of the Blueshirts the majority of the IRA, of all political hues, were in agreement on the need for confrontation. Whether this was because the Blueshirts were led by the man who made "Kerry a graveyard in 1922" or because they represented "dictatorship as exemplified in Germany (and) Italy" it meant that the IRA were never likely to avoid conflict with them.[204] While evidence exists of some co-operation between imprisoned members of the two organisations the self sustaining nature of the conflict between them meant there was little room for rapprochement.[205] O'Duffy's occasional praise of the IRA was never going to inspire an already unlikely alliance.[206] A degree of toleration for violence against the Blueshirts had to be allowed by the IRA leadership, especially when it could be presented as defensive. When it was highly embarrassing, as with the fatal injuring of an elderly woman in Dundalk, it was disowned.[207]

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[202] O'Farrell led 200 IRA men into Mohill where they burnt a platform erected for a Blueshirt rally. *Leitrim Observer*, 5 May 1934.

[203] Notes of 1934 GAC, in MacEntee Papers, UCDA, P67/525.

[204] Kerry IRA leader Seán Ryan, quoted in *Kerry Champion*, 2 December 1933. 'How Fascism must be Fought' in *Republican Congress*, 27 October 1934. In many cases the arguments that the Blueshirts were both fascists *and* the old enemy from the Civil War were used interchangeably.

[205] A disgusted Blueshirt prisoner complained that his superior officer in Arbour Hill was co-operating with the IRA inmates. He reminded Commandant Ned Cronin that the IRA O/C was Seán Ryan who should have been "fresh in your memory" since the Tralee riot of 1933. K. Holland to Director General, League of Youth, 3 June 1935, in Aiken Papers, UCDA, P104/2801 (67-68).

[206] Despite Garda speculation after the appearance of "up the IRA" and "up O'Duffy" graffiti in Ballaghdeeren in 1933. Garda report, 13 October 1933, in Jus 8/715 NAI. O'Duffy also told his followers in July 1934 that there were "some good men in the IRA." *Kerry Champion*, 7 July 1934. See also McGarry, *Irish Politics and Spanish Civil War*, pp. 20-21.

[207] Mrs. Frances McGrory was injured when a mine was thrown into her house in February 1934. She died in April. Her son, a Fine Gael supporter, had been involved in a dispute

It was when Fianna Fáil launched an obstensibly republican reserve of the Irish Army that the IRA found itself in widespread conflict with a 'republican' force. The IRA was aware of Fianna Fáil's plans to launch a Volunteer Reserve force from an early stage. Frank Aiken had made it clear the government were going ahead with plans to do so during discussions with the IRA in July 1932.[208] Twomey expressed the fear that the force would exert a great pull on young republicans, because of the likely "glamour and intense propaganda" that would be behind it.[209] Tom Barry felt that such a force would "sweep the unattached youth into its ranks."[210] The IRA realised that when the force was launched "a high percentage of the youth" who normally might join the IRA would be attracted to it. The IRA decided to do "everything possible" to discourage the launch of the reserve. However this essentially meant rhetorical opposition to the idea of such a force rather than anything concrete. A suggestion that the IRA threaten "the extreme penalty" (death) to discourage members from joining the reserve was voted down at the 1933 Convention.[211]

The Volunteer Reserve was finally launched in 1934.[212] By then the IRA had still not developed any strategy to deal with the Volunteers aside from accusing them of being a "Free State Militia." Clear divisions on the matter emerged at the 1934 Convention where sections of the IRA wanted violent action taken against members of the force. Seán O'Farrell stated that the IRA "should attack their meetings and bomb and burn their halls."[213] A Tralee officer claimed that the 'militia' would meet the same reception in Kerry as the

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with the local IRA. *An Phoblacht* "unhesitatingly" condemned the "deplorable" outrage in Dundalk. *AP*, 17 February 1934.

[208] Confidential record of meetings with Fianna Fáil, sent to O/C Cork No. 1 Bdge, 19 July 1932, in MTUCDA, P69/52 (54-57).

[209] Twomey to McGarrity, 26 October 1933, in McGarrity Papers, Ms. 17,490 NLI.

[210] Barry at the 1933 GAC, MTUCDA, P69/187 (113).

[211] Notes of 1933 GAC, MTUCDA, P69/187 (82) and (114).

[212] There was a long period of financial wrangling as Aiken's ambitious original plan of November 1932 was considered too costly. See Dept of Finance memorandum, 25 September 1933, in D/T S 6327 NAI.

[213] Notes of 1934 GAC, MacEntee Papers, UCDA, P67/525. The Gardai believed the IRA were planning to do this in Roscommon during late 1934. Garda report, 14 December 1934, in Jus 8/144 NAI.

Blueshirts did. An officer from Tipperary felt that he would be unable to prevent his men attacking the Volunteers, and that he had only narrowly prevented them burning a Volunteer organiser's car. Senior figures such as Seán MacBride and Tom Barry counselled caution. Attacking the Volunteers would only give the government an excuse to "crush the IRA." Barry warned that it would be unwise if the 'militia' were made the "victims of aggression." However all realised that the Volunteer Reserve was a threat to the IRA's position as the republican military force. The fact that the men leading it were "of good records" meant that it was the "greatest menace" to the IRA.[214] This point was also admitted in the IRA's publicity attacking the new force. "Young Irishmen" were warned not to "misled" by "plausible" arguments of the promoters of the Volunteers.[215]

While the convention had agreed that opposition to new force should be confined to "posters and propaganda" by the autumn IRA members would be carrying out violent attacks on its members. Partially this response can be explained by cases of 'treachery' where IRA members went over to the new force. This occurred particularly in Kerry where IRA members in Dingle, Castlegregory, Ardfert and Listowel left to join the new force. A section of the north Carlow IRA also joined the Volunteers as did members in Longford.[216] While this was not a mass phenomenon, where it did occur the IRA was obviously put under pressure to show that it could not be tolerated. The vast majority of violence against the Volunteers would take place in Kerry, where the IRA waged a vindictive campaign against the force during the winter of 1934-35. Outside Kerry such incidents were more unusual although a Volunteer was

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[214] Seán O'Farrell and Tom Barry, Notes of 1934 GAC, in MacEntee Papers, UCDA, P67/525.

[215] 'Young Irishmen Beware', January 1934, copy in Jus 8/738 NAI.

[216] Listed in AC Correspondence Book, in Aiken Papers, UCDA, P104/2854 (1), (4), (23), (24) and Garda report, 27 November 1934, in Jus 8/68 NAI. I underestimated the extent of this in my article 'The Volunteer Reserve and the IRA' in *The Irish Sword*, No. 83, 1998, pp. 93-98.

shot and wounded in Clare and another had his home raided in Roscommon.[217] In the longer run this led to the jailing of substantial numbers of IRA men and their isolation from wider republican support.

The following examples were typical of the IRA's campaign in Kerry: In Tralee the IRA raided the home of a Volunteer and stole his uniform. After an IRA man was jailed because of the incident, the Volunteer was beaten up by armed and masked men. A dance hall used by Volunteers in Lixnaw was riddled with rifle and Thompson gun fire. The Ballymullen Barracks in Tralee was bombed. Volunteers on recreation in Tralee were subjected to a mass physical attack involving almost all of the local IRA.[218]

Where former IRA members joined the Volunteers they were singled out for particularly harsh treatment. A man was tied to the railings of Toomevara church, Co. Tipperary and had a sign reading "Deserted from IRA to join Free State Imperial Militia" pinned to his coat. An ex-captain in the Tralee IRA who joined the Volunteers was badly beaten up by armed men.[219]

By February 1935 28 IRA members were in jail for attacks on Volunteers.[220] Unlike the IRA's conflict with the Blueshirts there was no popular basis for their violence against members of the Volunteers. Nor is there any evidence that Volunteers responded to these attacks with violence of their own.[221] The IRA activities against the Volunteers, in the absence of any political strategy, appeared to be those of a bully who had been disobeyed.[222] The extent to which the IRA leadership controlled their Kerry organisation's behaviour is of course open to debate. The leadership had made it clear that they did not want attacks on Volunteers, and communications to Kerry units about discipline would

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[217] *Notes on Events*, P67/534 pp. 29 and 31.
[218] *Notes on Events*, P67/534 pp. 27-31 and *Kerry Champion*, 10 November and 1 and 8 December 1934.
[219] *An Phoblacht*, 29 September 1934 and *Notes on Events*, P67/534. pp. 26 and 29.
[220] See *Notes on Events*, P67/534 pp. 26-31.
[221] The Blueshirts also occasionally attacked the Volunteers, see report of November 1934 in Jus 8/355 NAI.
[222] Their former comrades in the Republican Congress denounced the IRA's "silly attacks" on the "neighbourhood lads" of the Volunteers. *Republican Congress*, 26 June 1935.

seem to bear this out.[223] However the fact that the IRA did not disown any of its Kerry members for attacks on Volunteers would point to tacit acceptance of their activities at least. The strong influence of Civil War bitterness in Kerry, recognised in contemporary Garda reports, is possibly another factor in the violence being concentrated in that county.[224] Possibly because the IRA came under more pressure from the government during 1935 the attacks on Volunteers came to an end.

The IRA's range of antagonists was informed by ideology but governed by practical considerations. From 1926 onwards targets were chosen which were relatively unpopular and which were unlikely to respond aggressively. Where this was not the case, as with the Gardai, serious conflict was generally avoided. The IRA's two most serious campaigns of the post 1932 period, against the Blueshirts and the Volunteer Force exposed the extent of regional and factional differences within the organisation and in the case of the Volunteers contributed to its marginalisation. Often the character and tempo of IRA violence was governed by the reaction of local activists rather than centrally directed.

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[223] A/G to O/C Listowel 17 December 1934, in Jus 8/319 NAI.

[224] See Chapter One pp. 28-29 and Garda report, 8 January 1935, in Jus 8/201 NAI. Of course Fianna Fáil could, and did, claim as great an Anti-Treaty heritage in Kerry as the IRA. See *Kerry Champion*, 9 February 1935.

Chapter Five

Allies and Rivals.

Outside of the IRA a number of other organisations formed the wider extra-parliamentary republican movement. The Sinn Féin party considered itself the authentic political voice of republicanism. Explicitly allied to the IRA was Cumann na mBan, the republican women's organisation. From 1934 the IRA faced competition from a rival political organisation, the Republican Congress, which was itself briefly allied to a military grouping, the Irish Citizen Army (ICA). There also existed a number of organisations claiming the title of the 'Old IRA.' This chapter will assess the IRA's relationship with these organisations.

In 1925 the IRA had withdrawn itself from the authority of the Second Dail.[1] From then on the IRA operated as a force independent of any political body. However the organisation still contained officers who were members of Sinn Féin or Fianna Fáil. The IRA attempted to organise a united republican effort for the June 1927 General Election but their efforts foundered mainly due to Fianna Fáil's resistance.[2] Sinn Féin then put forward 15 candidates in the election.[3] As three were IRA officers they were threatened with court martial for disobeying G.O. 28 which forbid IRA members standing for election. One candidate, Tom Maguire, withdrew, but the others, Dr. John Madden and Seán O'Farrell, stood with Madden managing to hold his seat.[4] Sinn Féin's electoral effort was completely overshadowed by that of Fianna Fáil. In the event the party won just five seats and 41,400 votes, with Austin Stack and Oscar Traynor being its most prominent members elected. Leading figures such as

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[1] See Bowyer Bell, *Secret Army*, pp. 52-53, and English, *Radicals and the Republic*, pp. 66-71.

[2] See Chapter Six pp. 195-197.

[3] Gallagher, *Irish Elections*, pp. 57-94.

[4] List of officers who disobeyed General Order No. 28, May 1927, in MTUCDA, P69/149 (6). Tom Maguire explained his standing down in Ruairí ó Brádaigh, *'Dílseacht' - The Story of General Tom Maguire and the Second Dail*, (Dublin, 1997) pp. 30.

Mary MacSwiney and Count Plunkett, lost their seats.[5] The party lacked the resources to contest the September General Election and forfeited its parliamentary representation.

Thereafter Sinn Féin drifted further and further from the IRA. Leading Sinn Féiners became increasingly critical of IRA policies and many IRA members dismissive of Sinn Féin, a trend that was already apparent at the time of the September elections. Then *An Phoblacht* had criticised the party's abstentionist policy and stated that it believed "not much can come out of Sinn Féin."[6] Sinn Féin's Ard Fheis of December 1927 saw an early example of this tension. A number of delegates claimed that they had been secretly canvassed by Peadar O'Donnell and Donal O'Donoghue on behalf of the IRA to ensure the election of IRA supporters onto the Sinn Féin Standing Committee. A heated discussion followed with much "dirty linen" being aired. A number of delegates then complained that the IRA had allowed the Police to capture too many arms from them in the past two years. This discussion apparently upset the IRA members, including Moss Twomey and Seán MacBride, who were present, but took no part in the discussions. The detective who reported on the Ard Fheis described it as "more or less farcical" and unlikely to increase Sinn Féin's standing in political circles.[7]

The persistent campaigning of Mary MacSwiney, in particular, kept Sinn Féin's name in the pages of *An Phoblacht*, but she and her fellow Sinn Féin leaders, J.J. O'Kelly (Sceilg) and Brian O'Higgins had little direct influence with the IRA.[8] Indeed MacSwiney would later claim that her attempts to raise the

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[5] Gallagher, *Irish Elections*, pp. 92-93. The absence of Traynor and Stack from the list of IRA officers indicates that they had left the organisation before 1927.

[6] See *An Phoblacht*, 24 September, 5 and 29 October 1927 for debate on these issues between Peadar O'Donnell and Mary MacSwiney.

[7] Garda report, 15 December 1927 in Jus 8/675 NAI.

[8] J.J. O' Kelly was Sinn Féin President from 1926 until 1931. He had been editor of the *Catholic Bulletin*, President of the Gaelic League and Minister for Education in the First Dail. Brian O'Higgins became President in 1931. He had been a TD for Clare from 1918 to 1927. In 1923 he received the lowest ever first preference vote (114) for a successful candidate in a Dail election. He ran a newsagents in Dublin which specialised in republican greeting cards. O'Higgins was succeeded as president by Fr. Michael O'Flanagan in 1933.

"fundamental points at issue" failed because there was "no free discussion in *An Phoblacht*."[9] Instead the organisation began to rely on the monthly *Irish Freedom*, owned by Sinn Féin member Gobnait Ni Brúadair, to publicise its views.[10]

Sinn Féin took no organised part in the campaigns against the Land Annuities or the IRA's Anti-Imperialist protests.[11] The IRA continued to send observers to Sinn Féin Ard Fheisanna but the discussions there were dominated by statements of loyalty to the Second Dail's shadow government and denunciations of those who had betrayed it.[12] Sinn Féin's non attendance at Anti-Imperialist events was explained by the fact that Fianna Fáil supporters were allowed attend. Republicans who wanted to play a more active role drifted away from the party. Women Workers Union leader Helena Molony argued that to stay loyal to SF's rules meant that "one could not go through ordinary life" because "one could not fight for the republic if one did not mix with people."[13] Maire Comerford, a member of the party's Executive, was expelled from Sinn Féin because she voted in a Free State election.[14] Not surprisingly numbers attending the annual SF Ard Fheis declined from 100 in 1929 to 60 in 1931.[15]

Sinn Féin even declined to attend the IRA's Bodenstown commemoration in June 1931 because of the participation of Fianna Fáil and other "Free State" organisations.[16] The Dublin Brigade of the IRA had earlier refused to have Brian O'Higgins as a speaker for their Easter Commemoration because they wanted a

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[9] MacSwiney to Twomey, 8 June 1933, in Mary MacSwiney Papers, UCDA, P48a/59 (30). Three years earlier Sinn Féin had complained that the editor of *An Phoblacht* "just publishes what suits him." SF to MacSwiney, 16 December 1930, in P48a/46 (3).

[10] The Kerry based Honourable Albina Broderick, sister of the Earl of Midleton, who gaelicised her name and became a fiercely orthodox republican. She was also a member of Cumann na mBan until 1933.

[11] Count Plunkett and Austin Stack apparently believed that it was a breach of honour to withhold the Annuities. See MacEoin, *Survivors,* pp. 396.

[12] Mick Price, Seán MacBride and Frank Ryan attended the 1929 Ard Fheis but did only as observers. Garda report, 8 December 1929 in Jus 8/675 NAI.

[13] *Irish Independent*, 1 December 1930.

[14] See MacEoin, *Survivors*, pp. 52.

[15] SF claimed to have 71 Cumainn in Ireland and Britain in 1929. Garda reports, 10 December 1929 and 5 October 1931 in Jus 8/675 NAI.

speech identifying the IRA with social revolution and they knew O'Higgins was "personally opposed" to that idea."[17]

Sinn Féin was not banned under the Public Safety Act of October 1931. Its Ard Fheis that month heard ritual denunciation of the 'Coercion Act' but this was tempered by the fact that the impression given by several Sinn Féin speakers was that the IRA had drawn trouble unto itself by flirting with "communistic doctrines." The Gardai also speculated that Sinn Féin resented being "excluded from the list of proclaimed organisations."[18] Perhaps this was as they perceptively noted because Saor Éire was "intended to replace Sinn Féin although the latter body will not admit the fact."[19]

Sinn Féin played no role in the elections of March 1932 having already signalled that republicans should take "the hard road of abstention"[20] Twomey had spelt out his frustration with that policy to Count Plunkett earlier that year, arguing that if they wanted an end to coercion then "what can those to whom they appeal do except vote them out? that is what it amounts to as far as ordinary citizens are concerned."[21]

Later that year an IRA officer in Mayo complained that Tom Maguire of Sinn Féin refused to call on men to join the IRA when speaking at commemorations. When questioned as to why he replied that the IRA were "not the same as they used to be" and that he himself disagreed with them. The exasperated officer informed HQ that Maguire's attitude showed the "mentality of our Sinn Féiners in the west."[22]

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[16] Sinn Féin Standing Committee to MacSwiney, 25 June 1931 in MacSwiney Papers, UCDA, P48a/48 (25-26) and *Irish Freedom*, June 1931.
[17] O/C Dublin Brigade to A/G, 14 March 1931 in MTUCDA, P69/151 (174).
[18] Garda report, 2 November 1931 in Jus8/675 NAI.
[19] Garda report, 6 October 1931 in Jus8/675 NAI.
[20] *Irish Freedom*, February 1932.
[21] Twomey to Count Plunkett, 19 January 1932 in MTUCDA, P69/52 (242-244).
[22] O/C South Mayo to A/G, 1 August 1932, in MTUCDA, P69/158 (161-162). Maguire occupies an exalted position for republican legitimists, as the survivor of the Second Dail who refused to endorse any moves towards constitutional politics, in 1946, 1969 or 1986. In reality he was an inactive, marginal figure during the 1930s.

Again Sinn Féin stood aloof from the General Election in 1933 and Twomey was aware that some in SF were of the opinion that the IRA had "gone Fianna Fáil."[23] There were complaints from SF that IRA recruitment posters called on people to join the IRA, Cumann na mBan and Na Fianna but not their party.[24] O'Higgins claimed that the IRA "ignored us (SF) completely" in arrangements for Easter Commemorations and that the IRA's explanation about this matter had only "added insult to injury."[25] There was a further blow to Sinn Féin's influence when the Cumann na mBan decided to belatedly follow the IRA's example and withdraw recognition from the Second Dail. The Cumann na mBan Executive justified its decision on the grounds that to "ask young girls and women to render allegiance to a government which does not and cannot function is simply taxing their powers of credulity beyond reason."[26] This in turn provoked the departure of Sinn Féin supporters from Cumann na mBan leaving Sinn Féin even more isolated from militant republicanism.[27] Sinn Féin also refused to support the IRA's election effort in Northern Ireland in late 1933 because the IRA were not in MacSwiney's view "prepared to stand as Dail Eireann candidates and give allegiance to the government of the Republic."[28]

Following the split in the IRA during March 1934 a meeting was organised between the IRA, Sinn Féin and representatives of "The Government of the Republic" to discuss possible co-operation but so little was agreed that one Sinn Féin delegate wrote afterwards that it was time they formed their own military force as the IRA were only interested in setting up its own

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[23] C/S to MacSwiney, 8 April 1933, in MTUCDA, P69/53 (160).
[24] MacSwiney to C/S, 12 April 1933, in MTUCDA, P69/53 (157-158).
[25] Brian O'Higgins to MacSwiney, 12 April 1933, in MacSwiney Papers, UCDA, P48a/49 (3).
[26] Cumann na mBan Convention Notes, 10 and 11 June 1933, in MacSwiney Papers, UCDA, P48a/17.
[27] *Irish Freedom*, July 1933.
[28] MacSwiney to JJ O'Kelly, 20 November 1933, in MacSwiney Papers, UCDA, P48a/59 (32).

dictatorship.[29] Sinn Féin again attempted during 1935 to convince the IRA to recognise that "the field of civil activity" belonged to it but once again the discussions failed to produce any concrete result.[30] Once again the IRA decided to launch a new political party in 1936, rather than revert to allowing Sinn Féin to play this role.[31] Sinn Féin denounced the IRA's 1935 electoral intervention in the north and made it clear they would not support candidates who had not been "selected upon purely republican principles."[32] Even MacSwiney found that statement "superfluous and provocative," since she claimed that the party had no organisation in the north by that stage.[33] Further evidence of how little importance was placed on the organisation by the authorities came in 1936 when after making a major effort to prevent the IRA's Bodenstown commemoration going ahead, the Gardai allowed Sinn Féin to hold theirs.[34]

There is evidence that elements within Sinn Féin occasionally took a more pragmatic view than their leadership. Gardai believed that the local Sinn Féin organisation in Leitrim worked for Fianna Fáil in the July 1929 bye-election there.[35] Despite the acrimonious relationship between the two bodies there were still Sinn Féin members active within the IRA. Both Army Council member J.J. Sheehy and Belfast commander Davy Matthews were members of the party in 1933.[36] The politics of Sinn Féin certainly had an influence among the northern IRA. There was criticism of the decision to launch Saor Éire among the IRA in Monaghan, who favoured promoting Sinn Féin instead.[37] At the 1933 General Army Convention there were motions, from Belfast, Armagh

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[29] Seán O'Deorain to MacSwiney, 4 June 1934 in MacSwiney Papers, P48a/246 (3). Meeting between JJ O'Kelly, MacSwiney and John O'Mahoney - Second Dail, Twomey, Fitzpatrick - IRA and Fr. O'Flanagan and Seán O'Deorain, Sinn Féin, 18 May 1934, in P48a/246 (4).
[30] SF Meeting with IRA, 4 October 1935 in MacSwiney Papers, UCDA, P48a/51 (2).
[31] The Cumann Poblachta na hÉireann, launched in March 1936. See *Notes on Events,* MacEntee Papers, UCDA P67/534 pp. 49.
[32] *Irish Independent*, 11 November 1935.
[33] MacSwiney to JJ O'Kelly, 19 November 1935, in MacSwiney Papers, P48a/60 (16a).
[34] Garda report, 10 August 1936, in Jus 8/1053 NAI.
[35] Report in Blythe Papers, 5 July 1929, UCDA, P24/477.
[36] Standing Committee, Sinn Féin Ard Fheis, 1 October 1933, in MacSwiney Papers, P48a/49 (8).
[37] O/C Monaghan Batt, 16 March 1931, in MTUCDA, P69/151 (155).

and Down, all calling on the IRA to restore relations with Sinn Féin as its "political arm."[38] However this did not prevent Matthews working as an IRA election organiser during the November Stormont election campaign, which his party was boycotting.[39]

In ideological terms aside from its unshakeable belief in the legitimacy of the Second Dail, the most notable aspect of Sinn Féin's politics was its association of Catholicism with Irish republicanism. In 1929 the SF Standing Committee had addressed a remonstrance to Pope Pius XI in which they declared themselves "faithful children of the one Holy Catholic Church."[40] Sinn Féin considered that "Christian Social Justice" based on the Encyclicals of Pope Leo XIII were the best alternative to "pagan capitalism" and "eastern materialism." The IRA's adoption of radical social policies was condemned by O'Higgins as an attempt to link up "stark, gross materialism" with Irish republicanism, which was "clean, spiritual and unselfish."[41] MacSwiney interpreted the 1931 Public Safety Bill as an attempt by Cosgrave's "Freemason Junta" to bring about a state of affairs where it would be impossible to hold the Eucharistic Congress.[42] In JJ O'Kelly's case he added a large dose of anti-Semitism to this ideological hotchpotch, believing that Britain was ruled by "unscrupulous Jews."[43] Ironically the one dissident from this clericalist ethos was a priest, Fr. Michael O'Flanagan. With his long record of activity he was a respected figure with all factions within the republican movement and he became the party's president in 1933.[44] He had caused a sensation at the 1931 Ard Fheis when he denounced the Pope as an "enemy of Ireland." O'Higgins

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[38] Clar, General Army Convention 1933, in MTUCDA, P69/53 (276).
[39] *An Phoblacht*, 2 December 1933.
[40] SF Standing Committee 'A Remonstrance to Pope Pius XI', 16 December 1929, copy in Jus 8/675 NAI.
[41] O'Higgins to SF meeting, quoted in *Irish Press*, 2 November 1931 and Padraig O'Tuile, *Life and Times of Brian O'Higgins*, (Navan, nd) pp. 21.
[42] Garda report, 5 October 1931 in Jus 8/675 NAI.
[43] JJ O'Kelly, *The Sinn Féin Outlook,* (Dublin, 1930) pp 15. In later years O'Kelly's racism would grow more vicious. See for example praise for Hitler rescuing Germany from the 'Jewish white slave trade' in O' Kelly, *Stepping Stones*, (Dublin, 1939?) pp 23.

disassociated himself from this statement and refused to share a platform with O' Flanagan until he withdrew it. However, O'Flanagan declined to back down, and on most of the major issues of the day he consistently criticised clerical interference in politics.[45] When O'Flanagan was given the task of editing county histories for use in schools by the Department of Education, this provoked another schism within Sinn Féin. J.J. O'Kelly argued that the project was of a valuable enough national character to excuse acceptance of government money. O'Higgins and MacSwiney disagreed and MacSwiney subsequently quit the party in protest.[46] Despite the controversy O'Flanagan was elected President of Sinn Féin in October 1933. O'Flanagan was dismissed from the organisation himself for the crime of taking part in a state radio re-enactment of the First Dail in January 1936.[47]

These developments were largely ignored by the IRA leadership. But Sinn Féin ideas did find important echoes inside the organisation itself. There was substantial rank and file hostility to the IRA's radical political policies and while this did not necessarily denote sympathy with Sinn Féin, militarists often allied with proponents of "Christian Social" policies in order to minimilise the influence of the left.[48] After the departure of the socialists in 1934, support for the IRA began to contract, and governmental pressure on the organisation increased. *An Phoblacht* was frequently suppressed and eventually banned. Sinn Féin's *Irish Freedom* and later O'Higgin's *Wolfe Tone Weekly* were generally left unmolested and as the only republican publications freely available were able

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[44] See Denis Carroll, *They Have Fooled You Again*, (Columba, 1993) & *Unusual Suspects - Twelve Radical Clergy,* (Columba, 1998) pp 205-246.

[45] Garda report, 5 October 1931, in Jus 8/675 NAI. See also Murray, *Oracles of God*, pp. 306-310.

[46] See Carroll, *Unusual Suspects*, pp. 236-238. MacSwiney explained her resignation, 10 December 1937, in MacSwiney Papers, P48a/53 (3). Belfast IRA member Jack McNally claimed that he and his O/C Davy Matthews successfully argued for O'Flanagan to be allowed take the Departmental position. McNally, *Morally Good*, pp. 28-29.

[47] Carroll, *Unusual Suspects*, pp. 241.

[48] See also McHugh,*'Voices of the Rearguard'* pp. 493-494.

to frame republicanism in their image.[49] O'Higgins *Wolfe Tone Annual* was certainly very influential in later years. In the longer run the purist Sinn Féin view came to dominate the public perception of republicanism, despite what many militants thought of its exponents.[50] Ultimately the IRA leadership asked the seven remaining members of the Second Dail to give it powers of government, although this was driven more by the desire to give the Russell leadership political clothing than by respect for their authority.[51]

Unlike Sinn Féin, Cumann na mBan was quite explicitly linked to the IRA in this period. The organisation was pledged to organise and train the women of Ireland to take part in the "military, political and economic movements towards the enthronement of the Irish Republic." A major element in this was to assist the IRA in whatever way possible.[52] Despite the perception of Cumann na mBan as an auxiliary of the IRA its leadership were not afraid to undertake activity on their own initiative, or to argue against IRA policies. Indeed on several occasions they clashed with the leadership of the larger organisation. At the first Cumann na mBan convention since the conclusion of the Civil War the organisation claimed just 648 members organised in 54 branches.

Table No. 12 Regional distribution of Cumann na mBan branches 1925

Munster	11	Ulster	4	Leinster	27	Connaught	6	Britain	4[53]

[49] *Irish Freedom* ceased publication in August 1937 to make way for the *Wolfe Tone Weekly*. See also Pat Walsh, *Irish Republicanism and Socialism*, (Belfast, 1994). pp. 37.

[50] Marie Comerford found Brian O'Higgins a "bitter little man...always ready with a graveside speech, yet he scarcely volunteered himself." MacEoin, *Survivors* pp. 53. Twomey was less scathing, allegedly calling O'Higgins just an "old fogey." Military Intelligence File, 5 February 1942 in G2/X/0058, MA.

[51] The seven were Tom Maguire, Mary MacSwiney, JJ O'Kelly, Count Plunkett, Professor Stockley, Brian O'Higgins and Cathal Ó Murchadha. See Bowyer Bell, *Secret Army*, pp. 154-155 and English, *Radicals*, pp. 257-259. The republican legitimist view of this event is given in O'Bradaigh, *Dílseacht,* pp. 37-43.

[52] Cumann na mBan Constitution, 1934, in Sighle Humphreys Papers, UCDA, P106/1126 (5).

[53] Cumann na mBan Convention, 18 November 1925, in Humphreys Papers UCDA, P106/1136 (1136).

The organisation's President, the Countess Markievicz, withdrew at this convention, and joined Fianna Fáil when it was founded the following year.[54] The organisation experienced decline during 1926 and its convention that December was its smallest since 1914. Emigration had hit the organisation badly in Kerry, Cork and Connemara, and the split with Fianna Fáil had seen 30 members leave in Dublin. There were now just 70 members in that city and 31 branches nation-wide. The organisation elected a new president, Eithne Coyle, with Mary MacSwiney as vice-president.[55] Coyle would remain president of the organisation until 1940, while Sighle Humphreys, as Director of Publicity, would be the main driving force behind it in Dublin for the next decade.[56] Cumann na mBan would remain largely southern based with only a handful of branches in Northern Ireland, although Belfast member Mary Donnelly was prominent at *An Phoblacht*.[57] In the years following 1926 the Cumann na mBan only really existed as an active organisation in Dublin, where in early 1928 it claimed just 50 members.[58] In 1929 Humphreys suggested that if there were not major changes in the organisation's activities it would collapse in twelve

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[54] Margaret Ward, *Unmanageable Revolutionaries, Women and Irish Nationalism*, (London, 1995). pp. 201-202.

[55] Cumann na mBan Convention, 4 and 5 December 1926 in Humphreys Papers, P106/1144 (1-10).

[56] Coyle (1897-1985) was from a farming background in Donegal. She was involved in Cumann na mBan from 1917. She was imprisoned and escaped from Mountjoy during 1921, and endured a hunger strike during the Civil War. She worked in the Irish Hospital Sweep Stakes. She was married to Saor Éire activist Bernard O'Donnell. Humphreys (1899-1994) came from a Kerry republican family. She was jailed after the capture of Ernie O'Malley in her family home in November 1922, and endured a 31 day hunger strike. She was imprisoned on three occasions between 1926 and 1932. She was joint treasurer of Saor Éire, and on the Executive of the Boycott British Committee. She married IRA officer Donal O'Donoghue in February 1935. See O'Malley Notebooks, UCDA, P17b/91. See also MacEoin, *Survivors*, for Coyle pp. 151-160 and Humphreys pp. 331-353.

[57] Just 3 branches out of 74 at the 1935 Convention, in Humphreys Papers, UCDA P106/1152 (1-8). Donnelly edited the first edition of *The Last Post* in 1932.

[58] Cumann na mBan report, 27 February 1928 in Humphreys Papers, UCDA, P106/1147 (1-2).

months.[59] Cumann na mBan did step up its activities but these were still the work of a handful of activists, with the Gardai estimating about 50 women active in the Dublin area during 1931.[60] Unlike Sinn Féin, the organisation was banned in October 1931 and Humphreys jailed along with two colleagues by the Military Tribunal.[61]

The organisation's next convention was held in very different political circumstances in June 1933. The more relaxed atmosphere following the coming to power of Fianna Fáil meant that Cumann na mBan was able to organise openly and parade in uniform. There were now 32 branches of the organisation, and 5 of the newly formed republican girl scouts, Cumann na gCailíní.[62] The departure of Mary MacSwiney and a small group of supporters, who subsequently formed Mná na Poblachta had little effect on the organisation's strength.[63] In fact the winter of 1933 and spring of 1934 saw a major attempt at expansion by the Cumann na mBan as it appointed a full time recruitment organiser, May Lavery. Lavery toured country towns in the west and south meeting IRA officers and being introduced to interested local women. Her activities were not especially clandestine as she often wore Cumann na mBan uniform as she cycled from town to town, but her progress was dutifully recorded by the Gardai.[64] The expansion of Cumann na mBan to 74 branches, including many in small towns, was attributed by Coyle to Lavery's work. The gCailíní also grew to 27 branches.[65] At Bodenstown in 1934 an estimated 1,500

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[59] Suggestions for future activities of Cumann na mBan, (N/D) captured by Gardai in raid on Humphreys home, 30 January 1929 in FitzGerald Papers, UCDA, P80/879 (2).

[60] List of Revolutionary Organisations, April 1931, in D/T S 5864 A, NAI. Cumann na mBan members were allowed attend the IRA Convention that year. Humphreys memior, Humphreys Papers, UCDA, P106/1426 (8).

[61] Maeve Phelan and Kathleen Merrigan were jailed along with Humphreys. See *Republican File*, 9 January 1932.

[62] Cumann na mBan Convention, 10 and 11 June 1933 in MacSwiney Papers, UCDA, P48a/17.

[63] Draft Constitution for Mná na Poblachta, in MacSwiney Papers, UCDA, P48a/11 (3).

[64] In February 1934 Lavery visited Kinsale, Bandon, Clonmel, Carrick-on-Suir, Thurles, Waterford and New Ross. In March she was active in Athenry, Clifden, Galway, Tuam, Newport, Castlebar and Claremorris. Garda reports in Jus 8/717 and Jus 8/317 NAI.

[65] Cumann na mBan Convention, 15 and 16 September 1934, in Humphreys papers, UCDA, P106/1152 (1-8).

women and girls marched in uniform.[66] Despite many innovative activities organised by the Cumann na mBan leadership for its rank and file, the general political situation could not fail to affect the organisation. While 1932 to 1934 was a period of "comparative peace", the next two years saw republicans under increased pressure. By its 1936 convention Cumann na mBan was again in decline, with only 27 branches registered. Coyle blamed the introduction of pensions by the Fianna Fáil government which led to "demoralisation ... in the face of such odds and many members grew disheartened." She also believed that many who joined in the 1933-34 period did not understand the organisation's politics and were attracted by the image of an organisation "for hey-days and holidays, for showing off a uniform."[67] How many women those 27 branches represented is difficult to assess, but 597 entered the organisation's examination in June 1936 and we can presume that it was the most active members who would be interested in this.[68] Of those who added a prefix to their surname 195 were single and 25 married women. Garda reports point to it being mostly young women who Laverty addressed on her travels and in Templemore at least all those who joined were of "the domestic servant type."[69] While the organisation was not banned along with the IRA in 1936 its activities contracted sharply.

The most successful activity initiated by the Cumann na mBan was the sale of Easter Lilies to mark the memory of Irish republican dead. This was suggested in March 1926 by Sighle Humphreys and Fiona Plunkett, and the Lily was chosen because "we consider this would be the most suitable for Easter, and it has also the republican colours."[70] Within a few years the Easter Lily had become the main republican emblem. As well as honouring republican

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[66] Garda Superintendent's estimate, 19 June 1934, in Jus 8/310 NAI.
[67] Cumann na mBan Convention, 1936, in Eithne Coyle O'Donnell Papers, UCDA, P61/7 (a).
[68] Cumann na mBan examination entrants, June 1936, in Humphreys Papers, P106/1239.
[69] Chief Superintendent, Thurles, 30 April 1934, in Jus 8/317 NAI.
[70] Fiona Plunkett and Sighle Humphreys to all Branch Secretaries, 15 March 1926, in Humphreys Papers, UCDA, P106/1138 (1).

dead the Cumann na mBan also believed that the spread of the Lily could eventually "rival in magnitude the British Imperialist Poppy Day."[71] Sale of the Lily took several years to fully attain popularity, and some IRA units were slow to take up the practice. During 1930 a Cork IRA officer claimed that as it was only "the gentler sex" who could sell Lilies his area with few Cumann na mBan members would be able to do little at Easter.[72] In contrast at the same time northern IRA units were ordering 8,000 Lilies and west Limerick 5,000.[73] Since open sale of Lilies was not possible in the north and difficult in the south, these are impressive figures.[74] After Fianna Fáil came to power in 1932 the sale of Lilies became easier in the Free State.[75] By 1934 the Cumann na mBan were satisfied that the "object for which the Easter Lily was initiated" had been realised as sales of half a million Lilies had made them "the emblem of commemoration for Ireland's dead."[76] Monies from the sales of Lilies were divided equally between Cumann na mBan and the IRA, as outside Dublin it was the IRA who sold most of them.[77]

It was not for the sale of Lilies however, that Cumann na mBan was described by W.T. Cosgrave as "women who give moral, financial and active support to the (IRA), whose activities include propaganda in favour of violence ... the terrorisation of jurors and citizens and interference with the administration of justice."[78] From 1926 the organisation had decided that efforts should be made to create hostility to "all visible connections with England, viz.: Governor

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[71] Cumann na mBan to An Timthire, Clan na Gael, 23 December 1929, in McGarrity Papers, Ms, 17,534 (3) NLI. The extent to which the Easter Lily campaign was consciously emulating the sale of Poppies is emphasised in *An t-Óglách*, March 1931, in MTUCDA, P69/263 (7).

[72] HQ Cork No. 1 Brigade to A/G, 5 February 1930 in MTUCDA, P69/152 (221).

[73] Staff Officer 'JJ to C/S', and O/C west Limerick to A/G, Easter 1930 reports in MTUCDA, P69/152 (153-161) and (163).

[74] See report to Inspector General RUC, 20 March 1929, for the Police attitude to the sale of "Republican Poppies" in HA/32/1/465 in PRONI.

[75] See letter from Fianna Fáil TDs and senators to Minister for Justice, asking that permits be granted for lily sales, letter of 16 March 1932 in Jus 8/699 NAI.

[76] The profit made from these sales amounted to £648.3.9, which was divided equally with the IRA. Cumann na mBan Convention 1934, Humphreys papers, UCDA, P106/1152 (5).

[77] Cumann na mBan Convention 1933, in MacSwiney Papers, UCDA, P48a/17.

[78] Memorandum from W.T. Cosgrave to Bishops, 17 September 1931 in D/T S 5864 B NAI.

Generals, Free State Ministers, Free State Army Officials, Police ... British Baden Powell Scouts ... etc."[79]

Cumann na mBan therefore took an enthusiastic part in the anti-Poppy Day demonstrations in Dublin, and in campaigns against British products. Sometimes these campaigns took on a rather surreal quality like the attempts to prevent British sweets being sold in Ireland, where shopkeepers were urged to ask customers who wished to purchase an English made chocolate "if for the sake of a sweet they are willing to starve 3,200 of their fellow country men."[80] After 1927 Cumann na mBan were involved in attempts to intimidate jurors in trials involving the IRA. Leaflets signed 'Ghosts' were posted or hand delivered to homes of jurors, creating an atmosphere of fear especially when the IRA escalated the campaign to shooting jurors. Some 'Ghosts' ranged from appeals to jurors to "show your appreciation" of the principles of "one of Ireland's noblest patriot soldiers" by demanding the defendant be set free.[81] Others took a more threatening tone by listing the names and addresses of jurors who had "helped the infamous 'Judge' Sullivan to send the Irish Patriot Con Healy to penal servitude" and announcing that "these men are traitors ... Death would be their fate in any free country of the world."[82]

The 'Ghosts' campaign was a Cumann na mBan initiative. Initially the IRA reacted with hostility to the circulation of letters to jurors and demanded Cumann na mBan cease this practice. The IRA's Adjutant General informed the Cumann na mBan leadership that in the cases of IRA prisoners, "it is we who are responsible for deciding the action to be taken regarding their cases." What was more, Cumann na mBan's "futile threats" were considered "detrimental" to the interests of the prisoners, and the IRA resented their action. In future he stressed, Cumann na mBan were not to involve themselves in matters in which

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[79] Cumann na mBan Convention, 1926, in Humphreys Papers, UCDA, P106/1143.
[80] 'To the Shopkeepers of Ireland' October 1930, in Humphreys Papers, UCDA P106/2419.
[81] 'Ghosts' to each member of the Jury Panel, Dublin, 20 April 1931, in FitzGerald Papers, UCDA, P80/893.
[82] Copy in D/T S 5864 B NAI.

IRA members were involved. Cumann na mBan replied that they as an organisation had not issued the circular, but they agreed with its contents. More importantly they stated that they were an independent body who were not "dependent on the goodwill, or approval of any other organisation" in actions they undertook in defence of republicanism. Sighle Humpheys subsequently contacted Moss Twomey, admitting that she and a "few other members" had drawn up the circular, but also criticising the A/G's "impertinent" letter and asking to be informed in future when IRA members would be seeking legal assistance to prove "what good little boys" they were. Twomey rather dismissively replied that he would not comment on Humphrey's letter as it seemed to have been written from "irritation" which "prejudiced a reasonable statement."[83]

The IRA obviously changed its position during 1928, as the 'Ghosts' became a regular feature of republican trials. The campaign caused real problems for the government, leading them to introduce a Juries Protection Act in 1929.[84] At one stage the Gardai were convinced Frank Ryan was the author of 'Ghosts' but a raid on the home of Humphreys in August 1929 produced evidence that she was responsible for at least some of the leaflets.[85] More importantly a document was discovered in which Humphreys argued that rather than Cumann na mBan cease to exist it should devote its energies to the disruption of the business of "enemy administration" particularly in the legal sphere.[86] 'Ghosts' continued to circulate right up to winter 1931. After the release of prisoners by the new government in 1932 the practice ceased for a period. However as increasing numbers of IRA members found themselves before the courts in 1933 and 1934 Cumann na mBan made an attempt to return to the propaganda of the

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[83] A/G to Runaidhte Onoracha Cumann na mBan, 30 November 1927, Cumann na mBan to A/G, 2 December 1927, Sighle Humphreys to C/S, 5 December 1927 and C/S to Humphreys, 9 December 1927 all in MTUCDA, P69/67 (1-4).

[84] See O'Halpin, *Defending Ireland,* pp. 66-68.

[85] Report on Ryan, 26 March 1928 and on Humphreys, 23 August 1928 in FitzGerald Papers, UCDA, P80/851 (1) and P80/879 (5).

'Ghosts' era. In December 1933 the Gardai discovered that jurors in a Dublin trial had received copies of an appeal from Cumann na mBan through the post. The defendants had been acquitted before Gardai were aware of the circular. A Garda noted that it was the "first case of this nature" in several years. Humphreys had been spotted in the court on the day of the trial. [87] However with the reintroduction of trial by Military Tribunal these tactics became of limited usefulness. Agitation on prisoners would continue to be a major part of Cumann na mBan's work. Local branches were instructed to paint "every dead wall" in their locality with slogans attacking Fianna Fáil. Ceilidh, concerts and plays were organised to raise funds to support the prisoner's dependants. [88]

A great deal of the Cumann na mBan's appeal after 1932 was not in these activities but in its public appearance. Unlike the IRA, Cumann na mBan paraded in full uniform at Easter commemorations and at Bodenstown. Their uniform consisted of "grey green skirt, grey green military pattern tunic coat, brown beret, brown shoes and stockings." Officers wore a Sam Browne belt and all ranks wore gloves on parade. Appearance in uniform was the pride and joy of the organisation and like the IRA a great deal of emphasis was put on drilling and perfecting a military appearance. [89] A strict set of guidelines was laid down as to members behaviour while in uniform with no smoking or talking allowed and the wearing of furs, flowers, and carrying of handbags forbidden. Members without uniforms were instructed to wear white blouse, green tie and dark clothes. The Cumann na mBan badge was worn on the beret.[90] Other regular activities included the organisation of entertainment after republican events particularly the major ceilidhte organised in Dublin's Mansion House after Bodenstown Sunday. Also present in uniform at republican gatherings from 1932

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[86] Suggestions for future activities of Cumann na mBan, FitzGerald Papers, UCDA, P80/879 (2).
[87] Garda report, Bray 22 November 1933 and Detective Branch report, 7 December 1933 in Jus 8/717 NAI.
[88] Cumann na mBan, Ard Oifig, 11 October 1935, in Jus 8/326 NAI.
[89] Garda report, 22 March 1934, in Jus 8/317 NAI.

onwards were members of the Cumann na gCailíní. This organisation was open to girls between 8 and 16 years of age and were obviously less political and confrontational than the Cumann na mBan. The Cailíní were encouraged to learn "Irish, Irish singing and Irish dancing and the teaching of Irish history through ballads." This would help foster a "desire for the freedom of their country and the welfare of its people" in their ranks.[91]

There were attempts by Cumann na mBan members to militarise their organisation. At the 1926 convention it was suggested that members be trained "in the use of firearms and other weapons of war." One delegate backed this proposal by arguing that "in other countries women used firearms particularly in Russia and it would be a very good thing to be able to use them even if the occasion never arose." She felt that being relagated to carrying arms for the IRA was degrading. There were objections to this from other delegates, who did not wish to use guns. Eventually a compromise was reached whereby members who wanted to, could train with firearms.[92] The monthly report to Cumann na mBan branches asked if members wished to be trained in the "care and use of arms."[93] How often this offer was taken up is difficult to assess. I have found no evidence of republican women using firearms in this period.

The Cumann na mBan also placed a great deal of importance in the political education of its members especially from 1933 onwards. A educational programme involving lectures and readings of the works of Connolly, Fintan Lalor and Pearse was drawn up. Eventually an examination was devised to test members' knowledge of republicanism and prepare them for questions or criticism. Humphreys complained that many older members had adopted an attitude of "indifference if not discourtesy" to the exam but stressed the

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[90] Cumann na mBan, circular to Branch Secretaries, 2 November 1934, in Humphreys papers, UCDA, P106/1158 (1-2) and 25 May 1935, in Jus 8/326 NAI.

[91] Cumann na gCailíní, Rules in Humphreys Papers, UCDA P106/1243 and 1934 Convention report, in Humphreys Papers, UCDA, P106/1152 (4).

[92] Cumann na mBan Convention 1926, in Humphreys Papers, UCDA, P106/1143 and P106/1144.

[93] Cumann na mBan Report Form in Humphreys Papers, UCDA, P106/1250 (2).

enthusiasm of the younger women made up for this. Cumann na mBan members were instructed to read Connolly's 'Labour in Irish History' and 'The Re-Conquest of Ireland', and to be able to explain how a 'Worker's Republic would differ from a Capitalist Republic.'[94] Nothing similar existed for education within the IRA. In part this is because the IRA was seen primarily as a military force. It also however points to the leadership of Cumann na mBan's adherence to left wing republicanism. Cumann na mBan had held a flag day in support of the striking Outdoor Relief Workers in Belfast during October 1932. Members were encouraged to join Trade Unions and there were plans to organise boycotts of employers who paid low wages. Local groups were instructed to compile information about the conditions for women working in factories and shops.[95] At its 1933 convention the organisation committed itself to the "social policy of James Connolly." One delegate hoped that this meant that "The days of drilling and first aid in the ranks of Cumann na mBan are over and done with."[96] However it should be noted that only 37 women attended this convention, and that the Cumann na mBan leadership was a great deal more politically sophisticated than the rank and file. This was alluded to by Mary MacSwiney in her letter of resignation, when she noted how she, a member since 1914, had been outvoted by "youngsters of two months standing" who she claimed knew "nothing" about the issues before the convention.[97] The organisation too placed a much greater emphasis on the Irish language than did the IRA. Every member was "bound" to learn Irish and branches were questioned monthly on how many members were taking Irish classes and how many had earned the Fainne.[98] During September 1933 representatives of the Cumann na mBan met members of

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[94] Notes for instructors on economics, May 1934 in Humphreys Papers, UCDA, P106/1231 (1-3) and Convention 1934 op.cit. P106/1152 (7).

[95] Monthly Report Form in Humphreys Papers, UCDA, P106/1250 (2) and 1933 Convention, P48a/17.

[96] Cora Hughes of UCD. 1933 Convention notes, MacSwiney Papers, UCDA, P48a/17.

[97] Mary MacSwiney to Eithne ni Cumaill, 13 June 1933, in Coyle O'Donnell Papers, UCDA, P61/7 (4).

[98] Circular, 11 October 1935 in Jus 8/326 NAI. Although this did not mean that Cumann na mBan leaders were all able to speak Irish themselves. See Chapter Three pp. 94.

the IRA leadership to formulate a common social policy.[99] However this process was halted by the divisions within the IRA which led to the split at their 1934 Convention.

The split in the IRA produced the most serious dispute between the two organisations. The call by ex-IRA members for a Republican Congress was endorsed by Coyle and Humphreys.[100] During late April the Cumann na mBan Executive met firstly representatives of the IRA Army Council and then with the resigned officers. The IRA's report of their discussion further alienated Sighle Humphreys who felt that her opinions were misrepresented by MacBride among others.[101] The IRA attempted to prevent defections to Congress by informing a number of Cumann na mBan branches that participation in Congress was prohibited. However the Cumann na mBan leadership argued that they were "an independent organisation with a constitution of its own" and there was nothing to prevent their members from working for the Congress if they wished to. Members were reminded that they were only answerable to the Cumann na mBan Executive.[102] Coyle and Humphreys continued to be associated with the Republican Congress until July 1934 when they resigned from its Organising Bureau.

In their letter of resignation they argued that instead of building a movement to end capitalism in Ireland the Congress was dominated by people who wished to wreck the IRA. They claimed that Frank Ryan had stated that his aim was to destroy *An Phoblacht* within six months. George Gilmore allegedly wanted to atone for the "folly and his dishonesty" of his IRA membership by damaging the organisation. Coyle and Humphreys felt that the IRA was still the vehicle that would "eventually overthrow capitalism." They also argued that Congress was abandoning "Connolly's philosophy" for a

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[99] Cumann na mBan Convention, 1934, in Humphreys Papers, UCDA, P106/1152 (6).
[100] Call for Congress, 9 April 1934 in Humphreys Papers, UCDA, P106/1480 (4).
[101] Meeting between Executive Cumann na mBan and Donal O'Donoghue, Seán MacBride and Jim Killeen (IRA) 18 April 1934 in Humphreys Papers, UCDA, P106/1153 (1-4).

"foreign pagan and materialist philosophy." This was a strange argument from two of the most prominent left wingers within the republican movement. There must have been intense personal pressure on Coyle and Humphreys after they linked up with Congress - they were after all close personal friends with leaders on both sides.[103] However their only significant political argument with Congress was a perceptive one. They asked if one of Congress's main criticisms of the IRA was that it concentrated too much energy on military affairs, why had Congress spend so much time attempting to form its own armed force with elements from the Irish Citizens Army? Did this not prove the "inability" of Congress to "hold men together" by other than military means? Furthermore, if the IRA were untrustworthy, what then were the ICA who had not identified with republicanism for 14 years and had allegedly taken part in Free State commemorations?[104]

Following their departure Coyle and Humphreys were subject to a stinging attack by Peadar O'Donnell. He insinuated that Cumann na mBan existed to "ginger up" the IRA and push it towards "headless" activities.[105] Cumann na mBan continued to be relatively open to discussion on these subjects however, and at their 1934 convention, it was admitted that there was still a "diversity of opinion" on the Congress within its ranks. However opinion among the rank and file would seem to have been heavily pro-IRA and this no doubt also affected Coyle and Humphrey's decision.[106] Cora Hughes the former commander of UCD Cumann na mBan and Bobbie Walsh of its Waterford Branch remained with Congress.

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[102] Blathnaid Ni Charthaigh and Sighle Nich an Airchinnigh to Each Branch, 18 May 1934 in Humphreys Papers, UCDA, P106/1157.

[103] Humphreys would marry IRA A/G Donal O'Donoghue in 1935. Letters from O'Donoghue to Humphreys written while jailed in the Curragh, reveal a deep affection and also respect. See O'Donoghue's apology for fellow prisoners use of the term "Donal's wife." 12 April 1934, in Humphreys Papers, UCDA, P106/1746 (1).

[104] Coyle and Humphreys, 18 July 1934, in Humphreys Papers, UCDA, P106/1490 (1-2).

[105] *Republican Congress*, 11 August 1934.

[106] There were 12 motions supporting the IRA and 5 supporting Congress at the 1934 Convention, Humphreys Papers, UCDA, P106/1152 (1-8).

The Cumann na mBan went through two distinct phases in this period. From 1926 to 1932 it was a small tightly knit relatively clandestine group which pursued various means of disrupting the administration of the Free State and issued propaganda vilifying it. After 1932 it expanded in strength and became in many ways the colourful face of republicanism with its uniformed members visible at demonstrations, collecting money on Flag Days or selling Easter Lilies. Its leadership were highly politicised and eager to maintain an independence from the IRA. However its fortunes were largely dependent on those of the IRA which remained the dominant republican organisation.

The role of women in the broader republican movement was not confined to Cumann na mBan. There were several other women prominent in republican circles in that period. Helena Molony was a regular contributor to *An Phoblacht* and a speaker at IRA events. The writer Rosamond Jacob contributed to both *An Phoblacht* and *Republican Congress*.[107] Hannah Sheehy Skeffington, whom Twomey considered a "fine writer", was deputy editor of *An Phoblacht* until March 1933, and a regular speaker at rallies and demonstrations.[108] She was arrested at a banned meeting and spent two months in Armagh Jail in early 1933.[109] Former Sinn Féin Executive member Maire Comerford was also active on the republican fringe during this period.[110] Maud Gonne MacBride was involved in almost every republican initiative of that era, (she was a member of five of the organisations banned in 1931) but she concentrated on mobilising support for IRA prisoners. During the Civil War Maud Gonne and Charlotte Despard had formed the Women's Prisoners' Defence League which held weekly meetings to highlight the cases of IRA prisoners.[111] Throughout the 1920s the WPDL Sunday morning meetings at the corner of O'Connell Street were a feature of Dublin life. The group was tiny however with perhaps 20 members at

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[107] See Mary Cullen and Maria Luddy (eds) *Female Activists, Irish Women and Change 1900-1960* (Dublin, 2001) for chapters on Jacob, Molony and Sheehy Skeffington.
[108] Twomey to Joseph McGarrity, 23 June 1931 in McGarrity Papers, Ms, 17,490 NLI.
[109] Margaret Ward, *Hannah Sheehy Skeffington, A Life*, (Cork, 1997) pp. 306-312.
[110] See MacEoin, *Survivors*, pp. 33-55.

most.[112] After being banned during the coercion period, it changed its name to the People's Rights' Association and continued holding protest meetings. The League briefly disbanded in April 1932 but later that year they were revived. During 1934 weekly meetings were held in Cathal Brugha Street. The Sunday morning crowds, usually numbering between 200 to 500, heard furious denunciations of the government, but the Gardai reported no trouble arising from them. Maud Gonne spoke every Sunday and was usually accompanied by Helena Molony and 'John Brennan' (Sidney Gifford). Rarely were issues other than prisoners' welfare mentioned and as the IRA only occasionally had a presence at the meetings they were allowed proceed by the Gardai.[113] The WPDL published a magazine, *Prison Bars* for a period in the late 1930s, following the ban on *An Phoblacht.* One writer has argued that the relatively high profile given to reports on women's issues by *An Phoblacht* reflected the "major role" women contributors played at the paper.[114]

The split at the IRA's March 1934 General Army Convention was the first major cleavage in the IRA since the formation of Fianna Fáil. The split cost the IRA a number of leading officers. The most senior figure to align himself with the call for a Congress was Michael Price, the IRA's Director of Training. The IRA leadership complained bitterly after Price's departure that he had given no indication that he was dissatisfied with the organisation's political development.[115] Indeed it was the case that Price had publicly argued against the leftward shift in the IRA during 1930.[116] Ironically in the light of later events it was Price who ordered the confiscation of communist literature at Bodenstown

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[111] Ward, *Unmanageable Revolutionaries*, pp. 190-192.
[112] List of Revolutionary Organisations, April 1931, D/T S 5864 A NAI.
[113] Usually matters of Maud Gonne's preoccupation's such as 'Financial Freedom' or the conditions in Industrial Schools, Garda report, 10 June 1934. See Jus 8/316, Jus8/387 and Jus 8/425 NAI.
[114] James McHugh, *Voices of the Rearguard*, pp. 240.
[115] Meeting between IRA and Cumann na mBan, 18 April 1934, Humphreys Papers, UCDA, P106/1153 (1-4).
[116] See *An Phoblacht*, 7 February 1931.

in 1933.[117] Despite his walking out of the Convention, Price still received 46 votes for the IRA Executive, the seventh highest vote, and enough to elect him had he decided to remain.[118] Peadar O'Donnell was probably the best known left winger in the IRA. He was less prominent in 1934 than he had been during the late 1920s and early 1930s, and claimed that following the 1933 GAC his articles for *An Phoblacht* been censored by the Army Council.[119] At the 1934 Convention he argued the left within the IRA had been "handcuffed" by restrictions on the right of IRA members to air political views without Army Council permission.[120] However he was still an Army Council member as well as being nationally known.[121] George Gilmore had been unhappy with IRA policy for some time and had tried to resign from the Army Council in September 1932.[122] He was already of the opinion during 1933 that there was "little hope" for the IRA unless it embraced more openly socialist policies.[123] However like Price he had a record of militancy that meant he was admired by all sections of the IRA. Unlike O'Donnell, he was suspicous and critical of, the Irish communists.[124] Gilmore was again elected to the IRA Executive at the March 1934 GAC and had to return and inform the Convention that he was actually leaving the IRA![125] Frank Ryan had been increasingly dissatisfied with the IRA, resigning from editorship of *An Phoblacht* in 1933 and refusing to stand for the IRA Executive at the GAC that year. He had been engaged in a bitter row with the IRA over *An Phoblacht* and his alleged presence at a

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[117] Entry, 18 June 1933 in Rosamond Jacob Diaries, Ms, 32,582 (72) NLI.
[118] Notes of 1934 GAC, in MacEntee Papers, UCDA, P67/525.
[119] Meeting between O' Donnell and Mick Price with Cumann na mBan Executive, 20 April 1934 in Humphreys Papers, P106/1154 (1-5). At this meeting O'Donnell, slightly overstating the case, claimed that the Congress "would be the most historic thing that would *ever* happen."
[120] Notes of 1934 GAC, in MacEntee Papers, UCDA, P67/525.
[121] He received 28 votes for the IRA Executive at the 1934 GAC, not enough to secure a place. Notes of 1934 GAC, MacEntee Papers, UCDA, P67/525.
[122] Gilmore to Chairman, Army Council, 16 September 1932, in MTUCDA, P69/53 (367-369).
[123] Twomey to Neenan, 28 March 1933, in MTUCDA, P69/185 (21-27).
[124] Entries, Jacob Diaries, 9 January 1934, 14 August 1934, 26 May 1936. Ms. 32,582 (74), Ms. 32,582 (75), Ms. 32,582 (78) NLI.
[125] He received 36 votes. Notes of 1934 GAC, MacEntee Papers, P67/525.

communist meeting in early 1933.[126] However he was one of the IRA's best known street agitators and was immensely popular with its rank and file. All of the four disputed the IRA's claim that they had engaged in a conspiracy to disrupt the 'Army'. O'Donnell claimed that he did not know Price was going to present his resolution to the GAC.[127] However Price had met Gilmore a week before the Convention and he may have used this opportunity to discuss his plan.[128]

The departure of the four officers and their call for a meeting of republicans to discuss the idea of a Republican Congress had obvious implications for the IRA. After a meeting in Athlone in early April an Organising Committee was set up to co-ordinate the Congress. As well as the two most important figures in Cumann na mBan the committee also included 10 other IRA officers. These included the commanders of Battalions in Offaly, North and South Westmeath, Galway, Mayo and junior officers from Leitrim, Galway and Mayo.[129] Also siding with Congress were Brian Kelly the O/C of Dublin South, Harry Gilmore, that Battalion's former O/C and Charles Gilmore its QuarterMaster.[130] Ascertaining how many of the IRA's rank and file sided with these officers is extremely difficult and figures given in other accounts are an overestimation.[131]

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[126] For dispute over *An Phoblacht*, see Ryan to Chairman, AC 1 October 1932 in MTUCDA, P69/55 (54). On communist meeting see A/G to Staff Captain 'O'Reilly' 13 May 1933 and 'O Reilly' to A/G, 14 May 1933, in Humphreys Papers, UCDA, P106/2038.

[127] O'Donnell to Cumann na mBan Executive, 20 April 1934, hand-written version, in Humphreys Papers, UCDA, P106/2040.

[128] Entry, 10 March 1934, Jacob Diaries, Ms.32, 582 (74), NLI.

[129] Appeal for Congress, Humphreys Papers, UCDA, P106/1480. Officers from list for Donamon training camp, July 1932, MTUCDA, P69/54 (150-155). Seán McGuinness, Offaly O/C, Tom Maguire, North Westmeath O/C, Patrick Norton, South Westmeath O/C, Charles Reynolds, Séamus de Búrca, O/C and Adjutant, Galway, Brian Corrigan, O/C North Mayo. 2nd Lieutenant Patrick Gralton and Section Leader JJ Hoey, Leitrim. The former Derry City O/C Seamus McCann also endorsed the call.

[130] George Gilmore Notes, PP. The records of the 1934 GAC list Kelly as O/C of South Dublin.

[131] Coogan mentions a figure of 4,000 defections, *The IRA*, pp. 79. Patrick Byrne, former joint secretary of Congress put the number of Congress recruits from the IRA at 'about 6,000 to 8,000' quoted in English, *Radicals*, pp. 208. Both these figures are serious overstatements. The number of defectors would certainly be in the hundreds rather than thousands.

Of particular concern to the IRA however was that the Congress contained members who had information about IRA weapons. Indeed the Congress itself attempted to organise its own 'army.' Ex IRA members were instructed to hold onto their weapons (and funds) as "arms would be neccessary" for the new organisation. O'Donnell claimed that the body required would be a "defence force" for use during strikes for example rather than a new IRA.[132] During the summer of 1934 negotiations began between the Congress leadership and the tiny Irish Citizen's Army about the fusion of Congress's "armed groups" with the ICA. The ICA had been kept alive in Dublin by a small group of veterans led by Seamus MacGowan, Dick McCormick and Frank Purcell.[133] Apparently in response to the warnings of Labour Party leader William Norton about the threat of fascism, the ICA had decided to re-organise. They approached Congress to suggest co-operation and Gilmore, Price, O'Donnell and Nora Connolly O'Brien were co-opted onto the ICA Army Council.[134] Another reason why the ICA may have been needed was that Congress were subject to accusations that they would in time become just another political party and the appearance of an armed wing might appeal to IRA members who were wary of politics. Indeed Ryan suggested as much when he argued that "now ... that the existence of the Irish Citizen Army is more generally known, Volunteers are not so much afraid that they will cease to be fighters if they participate in Congress."[135]

The IRA took steps to prevent the formation of a rival armed body when they kidnapped the former quartermaster of their Dundalk unit and questioned

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[132] O'Donnell at meeting with Cumann na mBan Executive, 20 April 1934, in Humphreys Papers, UCDA, P106/1154 (4).

[133] The organisation still had about 200 members with access to 90 firearms in Dublin during 1922. Adjt to Assistant C/S, 26 July 1922, in Humphreys Papers, UCDA, P106/1954 (8). McGowan, a 1916 veteran, was one of those who held the organisation together through activity in the James Connolly Workers Club. See report of ICA activities during the Civil War in Cowan Papers, UCDA, P34/D/45.

[134] Price to Humphreys, 13 and 19 July 1934, in Humphreys papers, UCDA, P106/1489 and P106/1491 (1-2).

[135] *Republican Congress*, 18 August 1934.

him about the whereabouts of weapons he controlled in October 1934.[136] Whether or not the Congress armed groups engaged in much activity is hard to verify. They were probably responsible for armed raids on De Selby quarry during a strike in June 1934.[137] One veteran claimed that after a period Congress realised militarism was counter-productive and handed its guns back to the IRA.[138] There seems to have been elements within Congress who did favour using arms, with one Achill Congress supporter telling a meeting that "they had the guns and ... would use them too."[139] However O'Donnell had suggested at an early stage that if the IRA demanded the return of arms, Congress members were not to resist them.[140] Congress members could also find themselves in embroiled in local feuds like those which plagued the IRA. Three Kerry members were arrested for beating up the chairman of the ITGWU in Tralee after he refused to allow the union's band to welcome Nora Connolly O'Brien to the town.[141]

The IRA also took early steps to neutralise the organisational threat of Congress. Within a week of the Congress appeal the IRA's Galway O/C Charles Reynolds and Adjutant Séamus de Búrca had re-sworn allegiance to the IRA and pledged to resist "any attempts by you others, (Congress) to seduce volunteers from their allegiance."[142] Price and O'Donnell were court-martialled (in absentia) and dismissed with ignominy from the IRA.[143] J.J. Hoey remained in the IRA despite his signing the Congress appeal, as did Walter Mitchell of Offaly who had attended the Athlone meeting. Officers such as Seán McCool and Donal O'Donoghue, who were regarded as being the left of the organisation

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[136] *Notes on Events*, P67/534 pp. 27.
[137] *Republican Congress*, 23 June 1934.
[138] Patrick Byrne, *The Irish Republican Congress Revisited*, (London, 1994) pp. 15-16. Gilmore's *Republican Congress* argues that the ICA enabled men " used to military formations to keep their units intact." pp. 44.
[139] Garda report, 24 September 1934, in Jus 8/342 NAI.
[140] O'Donnell to Cumann na mBan Executive, 20 April 1934, in Humphreys Papers, P106/1154 (4).
[141] *Kerry Champion*, 1 September 1934. These men were members of the Republican Labour Party which was the Kerry section of Congress.
[142] De Búrca to Michael Price, 12 April 1934, in Jus 8/319 NAI.

remained within its ranks.[144] However one IRA officer later claimed that in the struggle with Congress the IRA's "company units lost heavily."[145] The Department of Justice suggested too that the IRA lost a substantial number of members to Congress.[146] However the IRA's Bodenstown commemoration three months after the split drew an estimated 17,000 participants, the largest to that date, which does not point to the IRA having lost many members.[147] An estimate of number of IRA members in Northern Ireland who were attracted to Congress puts their numbers at less than 70.[148] Nevertheless even when units remained loyal to the IRA such as in Kenmare, Co. Kerry, where officers had destroyed letters from Congress, the split "had a very bad effect on Volunteers."[149] Congress would seem to have done moderately well in the first few months of its existence but it was never in a position to challenge the IRA. At the June 1934 local elections it did succeed in getting two candidates elected to County Councils in Westmeath and Dundalk.[150]

Any republican schism would lead to some degree of bitterness, and this was the case particularly between Seán MacBride and George Gilmore, although both sides seem to have respected Twomey and Ryan.[151] Donal O'Donoghue was jailed along with Price during April 1935, and claimed to have done "his

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[143] IRA to the Commander of each Independent Unit, 17 April 1934, in Jus 8/319 NAI.

[144] For Hoey see MacEoin, *Twilight Years* pp. 607-616. For Mitchell, MacEoin, *Survivors*, pp. 379-392.

[145] Stephen Hayes, 'My Strange Story' in *The Bell*, July 1951 pp. 11-16. However it is possible Peadar O'Donnell may have ghost-written this article and therefore retrospectively given Congress more weight.

[146] *Notes on the Republican Congress Movement*, in MacEntee papers, UCDA, P67/527 pp. 2-3.

[147] Garda estimate, 20 June 1934 in Jus8/310 NAI. See also *Irish Press*, 18 June 1934.

[148] Around 50 in Belfast, 10 in Tyrone and 6 in Derry. Enda Staunton, *Nationalists of Northern Ireland, 1918-1973*, (Dublin, 2001). pp. 116.

[149] I/O Kenmare Battalion to I/O (sic) 18 April 1934, in Jus 8/319 NAI.

[150] Four Congress members stoood as 'Worker's Republicans.' Tom Maguire who took a seat in North Westmeath, was a former chairman of the County Council. The other successful candidate was John O'Byrne. Notes on *Republican Congress*, pp. 7 and *Republican Congress*, 30 June 1934.

[151] "Fianna Fáil at heart" was Gilmore's judgement on MacBride. He also claimed MacBride was pro-Nazi for a period. Twomey, however, was "a good man..always a good friend...even after we split." Gilmore Notes PP.

best" to help out his former comrade. However he noted that many in the IRA regarded Price as someone who had done "his best to smash the army."[152]

There was also some violent confrontation between the two groups most notably at successive Bodenstown commemorations in 1934 and 1935. The 1934 clashes are an established part of left wing republican folklore. The Congress contingent, including a number of Protestant socialists from Belfast were attacked on the orders of the IRA leadership and their banners destroyed. The IRA claimed to have made it clear that no unauthorised banners would be allowed into the cemetery, an instruction that was obeyed by the Communist Party, who were not involved in the fracas.[153] Accounts differ as to whether the Congress retreated and held an alternative rally or fought their way through to Tone's grave.[154] In reality it seems to have been a brief scuffle which went largely unnoticed by most of the people attending the event.[155] The size of the Congress contingent and the numbers of northern Protestants accompanying them are imprecise. The Gardai estimated that the Congress contingent numbered about 600, while one participant claimed Congress had 2,000 supporters present. A contemporary estimate of the east Belfast marchers was just 36.[156] However a number of things are notable about the affair. Congress persistently claimed that the IRA members ordered to seize their banners showed no enthusiasm for the task.[157] This would seem to indicate that Congress wanted to retain some contact with the IRA rank and file. It could also mean of course that they wished to deny that IRA members might be hostile to them. It was never alleged that religious sectarianism played a role in the attack.[158] Finally Gilmore was

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[152] O'Donoghue to Humphreys, 12 April 1935, in Humphreys Papers, UCDA, P106/1746 (1). O'Donoghue claimed IRA prisoners in the Curragh had attempted to make Price feel welcome but he was deliberately antagonistic towards them. April 1935, P106/1748. He also suggested that the "adoration" of women was what had "spoiled Mick."

[153] *An Phoblacht*, 23 June 1934.

[154] See Foley, *Legion of the Rearguard*, pp. 140. and Byrne, *Revisted*, pp.24.

[155] Garda report, 19 June 1934, in Jus 8/310 NAI.

[156] Detective Branch estimate, 18 June 1934 in Jus 8/310 NAI. Byrne, *Revisited* pp. 23. *Northern Whig*, 18 June 1934.

[157] *Republican Congress*, 23 June 1934.

[158] "It was sectarianism but not of the religious kind". Byrne, *Revisited,* pp. 24.

allegedly pleased that the fight occurred because of the publicity it gained Congress, and presumably the embarrassment it would cause the IRA.[159] Strangely enough, Eithne Coyle, still at this stage associated with Congress presented medals to Cumann na mBan members from the official platform and Cora Hughes, also of Congress, was one of the recipients.[160]

These clashes were repeated on a much smaller scale in 1935. Again there was a struggle over banners, which seems to have been more violent than in the previous year and again Congress claimed that many IRA men would not join the attack. The Congress contingent only numbered 42, the organisation having split itself in September of 1934.[161] However there is some evidence of increased bitterness in that Gilmore felt that if the IRA leaders had shown themselves during the fight it would have been his "pleasure to hurt them."[162] Congress contacted the IRA about participation in the 1936 Bodenstown commemoration with a view to avoiding clashes. They again stressed that they felt previous attacks had been a "half hearted affair", but had been "humiliating" for the republican movement generally.[163] However their request was superfluous as the commemoration was banned and only a token ceremony took place. Aside from a complaint by Sighle Humphreys about a minor incident in Castlecomer and claims of a kidnapping in Belfast the Congress-IRA relationship largely was a peaceful if uneasy one.[164]

There were several violent attacks on Congress members during 1936, beginning with assaults on left wing contingents at the Easter Commemoration in Dublin, and culminating with the sacking of the Congress premises after an abortive rally in College Green. There has been speculation that the IRA

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[159] Entry, Jacob Diaries, 18 June 1934, Ms, 32,582 (75) NLI. Gilmore also wrote a letter to *Republican Congress*, stressing how the incidents would open the eyes of Protestant workers to "reactionary republicanism" under the pseudonym 'Ballymoney' see issue of 30 June 1934.
[160] *Irish Press*, 18 June 1934.
[161] *Republican Congress*, 29 June 1935.
[162] Entry, Jacob Diaries, 23 June 1935, Ms, 32,582 (77) NLI.
[163] Ryan and Gilmore to Run Onor, Wolfe Tone Commemoration, 13 May 1936, in Humphreys Papers, UCDA, P106/ 1864 (9).

participated in these assaults.[163] This is unlikely however as Gilmore claimed that "known Blueshirts" were among those instigating attacks on the left at the Easter procession.[165] *An Phoblacht* also strongly condemned the incidents.[166] Incidentally these attacks almost led to the establishment of another armed force. A meeting of Congress and Communist Party activists, many of whom had IRA backgrounds, set up a 'defence corps' to be led by Gilmore. However, despite opposition from some at the meeting it was decided that it would be unarmed.[167]

There was occasional co-operation between the IRA and Congress. The Department of Justice speculated on widespread fraternisation during attacks on Blueshirts and support for industrial disputes, such as the 1934 Bacon shops strike.[168] Much of this united activity was probably of the opportunistic type rather than directed by the respective leaderships. However *An Phoblacht* did occasionally report Congress activities and also listed Congress (and ICA) members in jail as 'Anti-Imperialist Prisoners'. That decision was taken at IRA leadership level with the proviso that non-IRA members' credentials were vouched for by the IRA in their locality.[169] In late 1934 Congress and IRA speakers shared the same public platform for the first time since the split, at an unemployed workers' protest in Dublin.[170] The IRA also held a rally, at which Twomey spoke, to support Congress member Frank Edwards who had been sacked from his teaching post at a Waterford Christian Brothers school because

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[164] Twomey to Humphreys, 11 June 1934 in Humphreys Papers, UCDA, P106/2120 for Castlecomer incident and *Republican Congress*, 17 November 1934 for the Belfast affair.
[163] McGarry, *Irish Politics and the Spanish Civil War*, pp. 91.

[166] Entry, Jacob Diaries, 14 April 1936, in Ms. 32,582 (78) NLI. *An Phoblacht*, 18 April 1936.
[167] *Notes on Events*, pp. 51. Bill Gannon, Jack Nalty, Larry O'Connor and Bill Scott were among the members of the 'Defence Corps'. Nalty died fighting with the International Brigades in Spain.
[168] *Notes on Republican Congress Movement*, pp. 7-8.
[169] A/G to Commander each Independent Unit, 31 August 1934 in Jus 8/319 NAI. See *An Phoblacht*, 8 December 1934 for list of prisoners. Reporting even the existence of prisoners from an organisation that had split from the IRA would generally be unheard of in republican publications.
[170] *Notes on the Republican Congress Movement*, MacEntee Papers, UCDA, P67/527, pp. 14.

of his political views.[171] This lack of hostility may be partially explained by the fact that after the Congress itself split in September 1934 there was little threat of it becoming an alternative to the IRA. Instead Congress began to co-operate more closely with the Communist Party, and remained a small if active fringe group.

The Irish Citizens' Army having been given a new lease of life by the advent of Congress then played a role in Congress's own rupture. The ICA delegates at the Rathmines conference supported Price's and Roddy Connolly's call for Congress to become an openly socialist political party, agitating for a 'Worker's Republic.' O'Donnell and Gilmore, supported by the communists present, argued that Congress instead attempt to build a united front of republican forces. When this view narrowly prevailed, Price and his supporters left the Congress.[172] They then concentrated their efforts on organising the ICA. The core group of veterans who had maintained the ICA allied themselves with Price. However by this stage the ICA had suffered a split of its own. The organisation had initially been maintained, according to its veteran leadership, for the "day when the militant members of the Irish Working Class would realise their need" for a body like the ICA. The organisation of the Republican Congress had been seen as that day. After the Congress split the ICA dismissed Peader O'Donnell and Gilmore from its leadership. It accused them of attempting to disrupt the ICA by "unscrupulous, dishonest and disloyal" tactics. O'Donnell in particular was singled out as someone who was "notorious for his disruptive and destructive activities in all organisations to which he belonged."[173]

Roddy Connolly was also accused of support for the "ex-IRA" faction. However to confuse matters further Connolly refused to be dismissed and instead continued to claim to have the support of the ICA! Connolly had been

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[171] *An Phoblacht*, 12 and 19 January 1935. MacEoin, *Survivors*, pp. 10-11 and Murray, *Oracles of God*, pp. 337-338.
[172] Various accounts in *Notes on Republican Congress*, pp. 12-14, English, *Radicals*, pp. 216-231, and Bowyer Bell, *Secret Army*, pp. 117.
[173] ICA *Army Council Bulletin*, November 1934.

involved as early as 1929 in efforts to form an armed 'Worker's Defence Corps' as he believed that the IRA "should not have the monopoly on armed force in Ireland."[174] In an appeal to his supporters, he claimed that Price was supported only by units which "sprung to light" by the "touch of Mick's magic wand."[175] By January 1935 there were two ICAs one led by Michael Price and Nora Connolly O'Brien and the other by her brother Roddy! This situation was the subject of some derision in the pages of *Republican Congress* and the Communist *Irish Worker's Voice*.[176] Roddy Connolly's ICA continued to have a loose association with the Republican Congress. Its importance was dismissed by Price who claimed it only had about 60 members and that its claim to be the real ICA should simply be ignored by his followers.[177]

The ICA's structure was similar in many respects to that of the IRA. Units were drilled and trained in the use of small arms, the Lee Enfield rifle and in handling explosives.[178] In Dublin the ICA drilled in the Connolly Mallin Hall in Parnell Street, or in Commons Street on the docks.[179] Unlike the IRA however, the ICA allowed women to become members, and Nora Connolly O'Brien served on its Army Council as Director of Finance.[180] It also encouraged its members to recognise the courts if brought before them so as not to give an easy victory to the "enemy."[181] The Adjutant of the Kilkenny ICA was a member of the National Army Reserve and was encouraged by his superiors to report for training to the Curragh, use the experience to broaden his military knowledge and also to distribute ICA material to any potential sympathisers. Members were also allowed to claim Military Service Pensions

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[174] Garda report, 7 May 1929, in FitzGerald Papers, UCDA, P80/906 (2).
[175] RJ Connolly, A/G ICA, 20 November 1934, in Jus 8/320 NAI.
[176] *Republican Congress*, 8 December 1934, *Irish Worker's Voice*, 1 December 1934.
[177] ICA *Army Council Bulletin*, 16 January 1935 in Jus 8/322 NAI.
[178] A/G ICA to Adjutant, Kilkenny, 5 December 1934, in Jus 8/320 NAI.
[179] Memoirs of Liam MacGabhann, *Sunday World*, 27 April 1975.
[180] Garda report, 18 November 1934, in Jus 8/320 NAI.
[181] ICA GHQ, 4 September 1934, in Jus 8/320 NAI.

from the Free State.[182] Its membership were also encouraged to remain on friendly terms with their local IRA units and co-operate with them if possible. There seems to have been a degree of co-operation in Belfast.[183] In Kilkenny members were urged to assist IRA disruption of a visit by Eoin O'Duffy in November 1934.[184] Unlike the Congress however, the ICA forbid members of the Communist Party from joining because it considered that they were "rigidly controlled and directed" by the British CP and Russia.[185]

The Price faction had almost 300 members in early 1935, with the two largest units in Dublin and Belfast.

Table No. 13 ICA Membership January 1935[186]

Dublin 105	Cork 40	Kildare 7	Limerick 25	Kilkenny 7
Belfast 59	Westmeath 25	Carlow 6	Ballymore Eustace 10	Glasgow 25

There was no thaw in the relationship between the ICA and Congress. In May 1935 Price claimed that Congress had ceased to exist except for its paper "which nobody reads."[187] By June that year he was urging his followers north and south to join their respective Labour Parties. The intention was to bring about a merger of the Irish and Northern Irish Labour Parties, and force them to take an active role in strikes and unemployment agitation.[188] By November, Price still Chief of Staff of the ICA, was calling on his followers to push for

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[182] A/G ICA to Adjutant Kilkenny City Company, 5 December 1934, in Jus 8/320 & ICA GAC, 13 June 1935 in Jus 8/322 NAI.
[183] See Peter Carleton in MacEoin, *Survivors,* pp. 304-310.
[184] ICA GHQ, 17 November 1934 in Jus 8/320 NAI.
[185] ICA GHQ, 4 April 1935 in Jus 8/322 NAI.
[186] ICA report, 31 January 1935, in Jus 8/322 NAI.
[187] C/S ICA to Kilkenny City Company, in Jus 8/322 NAI.
[188] ICA GAC 13 June 1935, and ICA GHQ to Kilkenny City Company, 23 June 1935 in Jus 8/322 NAI.

Labour to declare its commitment to a Worker's Republic.[189] Indeed Price would later become a member of the Labour Party Administrative Council, and joined ironically by both Nora and Roddy Connolly, managed to convince the 1936 Labour Conference to adopt the 'Worker's Republic' as an objective.[190] Price later became secretary of the Dublin Labour Constituencies' Council and the ICA seems to have disappeared with his immersion into Labour politics.[191] It never seriously posed a threat to the IRA's "monopoly on armed force."[192]

Throughout this period there existed in the Free State a number of organisations claiming the title of 'Old IRA.' As early as 1926 the IRA was keeping an eye on the 'Old IRA Man's Association' which it saw as a front for those involved in the National Army mutiny of 1924.[193] Indeed the IRA had been approached by elements among the Army Mutineers in 1924 but was wary of involvement with them.[194] A year later the IRA was warning its members against participation in these associations. While claiming to be interested in the welfare of veterans the IRA considered that these organisations were in fact attempting to exploit "good Volunteers" for political motives. Members were advised to keep away from them.[195] In 1928 a number of veterans of the revolutionary period formed Clann na nGaedheal, the 'Pre-Truce IRA.' Its aim was to foster unity between men who had fought on both sides of the Civil War as well as those who had remained neutral. Among the founders were Liam Tobin who had fought on the Pro-Treaty side and Leo Henderson, an

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[189] Garda report, 6 November 1935 in Jus 8/322 NAI.

[190] See Dunphy, *Fianna Fáil Power* pp. 200-201. Connolly was a Labour TD for Louth from 1943-1951 and later Chairman of the party. He supported coalition with Fine Gael and bans on republican commemorations of the 1916 Rising during 1976. He died in 1980. Browne & Farrell, *Magill*, pp. 271. Nora Connolly O'Brien remained a supporter of the republican movement, siding with the Provisionals, and also being associated with the IRSP, until her death in 1981. See N. Connolly O'Brien, *We Shall Rise Again*, (London, 1981).

[191] See his obituary, *Irish Press*, 17 January 1944. Recruitment posters for the ICA were pasted up around Drumcondra in 1940. See Jus 8/867 NAI.

[192] Neither did short lived organisations such as the 'Irish Republican Worker's Guard' four members of whom were charged with riot and possession of firearms in Cork during early 1934. Garda report, 9 February 1934 in Jus 8/318 NAI.

[193] D/I to C/S, 1 May 1926, in MTUCDA, P69/44 (65).

[194] C/S to IRA Executive, 9 August 1924, in MTUCDA, P69/179 (126-129).

[195] *An t-Óglách*, April 1927, in Jus 8/681 NAI.

Anti-Treatyite. Also involved was Dr. Patrick McCartan formerly of Clann Eireann.[196] At this stage it clearly represented many of those who had been Pro-Treaty but felt betrayed by the perceived abandonment of republicanism by the Free State. Tobin had been a central figure in the 'IRA Organisation' within the National Army involved in the Army Mutiny of March 1924.[197] The IRA was naturally suspicious of these developments. The O/C of Cork was warned in the Autumn of 1930 to be wary of the activities of "Tobin and co." Allegedly a number of Cork republicans including Tom Barry and Florrie O'Donoghue were involved in some alliance with the 'Old IRA' and were claiming to have access to arms. O'Donoghue and his allies were "more dangerous than the enemy" according to Jim Killeen.[198]

At Easter 1931 the Clann held its own commemorations where it stated that it was in favour of "complete independence under a Republican form of Government" but criticised the adoption of "foreign doctrines" by the IRA. It also claimed to have more '1916 men' in its ranks then any other organisation in Dublin, and pointed out that membership was only open to men who had served in the IRA prior to the Truce of 1921.[199] Twomey replied on behalf of the IRA charging that the Clann had forgotten the lessons of the 1918-21 period, when the Independence movement lost because it lacked a clear political and economic strategy. He also made it clear that any republican organisation that was serious about making progress would have to gain support from those too young to have been involved in the pre-Truce era.[200]

The Clann was not the only veterans organisation in existence during the 1930s. Twomey told Mary MacSwiney in 1933 that the government wanted to use the 'Old IRA' associations to undermine the IRA and then form the nucleus

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[196] Army Intelligence had noted the close co-operation between Clann Eireann and the 'Old IRA' during 1926. Eastern Command Intelligence report, February 1926, in FitzGerald Papers, UCDA, P80/847 (174).

[197] Regan, *Irish Counter-Revolution*, pp. 166-170.

[198] A/G to O/C Cork No. 1, 27 September 1930, in MTUCDA, P69/153 (122).

[199] *An Phoblacht*, 2 and 9 May 1931.

[200] *An Phoblacht*, 16 May 1931.

for a "National Guard."[201] The involvement of former Sinn Féin TD and IRA officer Dr. JA Madden in a meeting with several Fianna Fáil TDs under the auspices of a 'Mayo Old IRA' greatly worried Twomey. He argued that these "freakish combinations of Republicans -Free Staters" had hurt the IRA in the past.[202] The IRA leadership continued to worry about the machinations of the "Crofts-Donoghue-Deasy clique."[203] The IRA's paranoia reached fever pitch during late 1932 when movements for land redistribution in Tipperary and Limerick were adjudged to be efforts of behalf of Fianna Fáil to create 'Old IRA' bodies.[204] The Clann on the other hand was eager to promote some form of joint activity with the IRA. Their position was that all nationalist organisations should unite at one event and end rivalry over "sectional" commemorations. As a result of this they began to attend IRA commemorations such as Bodenstown.[205] In some areas co-operation was closer as in Leitrim where the IRA and the 'Pre-Truce' body held joint election rallies.[206] The Clann also held their own events such as a rally in Roscommon in December 1933 where over 140 men heard Frank Thornton and Simon Donnelly appeal for unity among veterans and for support for any government making strides towards the Republic.[207] However on other occasions such as in Crossbarry, Co. Cork at Easter that year, the 'Old IRA' association led by Tom Crofts, Liam Deasy and Florrie O'Donoghue refused to join in an IRA procession because of IRA hostility to the Volunteer Reserve.[208]

In other parts of the country separate IRA (Old Comrades) associations were established whose main activity was agitating for compensation for veterans

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[201] C/S to MacSwiney, 25 March 1933, in MTUCDA, P69/53 (95).
[202] C/S to Dr. JA Madden, 27 March 1933, in MTUCDA, P69/53 (99).
[203] Twomey to Con Neenan, 15 September 1932, in MTUCDA, P69/185 (199).
[204] C/S to O/C Limerick City Batt, 14 December 1932, in MTUCDA, P69/54 (28-29). See also Chapter Three pp. 88.
[205] Clann na nGaedheal National Executive to Army Council IRA, 6 May 1933, in MTUCDA, P69/53 (60-61).
[206] See *Irish Press*, 8 and 15 of May and 8 June 1934 for reports of Old IRA participation in IRA election and anti-Blueshirt meetings.
[207] Garda report, 17 December 1933 in Jus 8/718 NAI.
[208] *Irish Independent*, 2 April 1934.

of the War of Independence and for grants of land by the Land Commission. Those taking part in one such Tipperary meeting in early 1934 were known to the Gardai as "men of good character' who were Fianna Fáil supporters and not connected to the IRA.[209] The Dublin Clann remained in existence for several years, remaining non political in theory but generally verbally critical of government moves to suppress the IRA. Occasional statements were issued deploring the showing of "Imperial propaganda" in Cinemas and supporting anti-British demonstrations.[210] The Clann also objected to De Valera's 1937 Constitution as a retreat from the republic.[211]

While the IRA was initially suspicious of the organisation of this group of men with substantial military records, by the mid 1930s the Clann was something of an ally, verbally at least, and certainly no longer a potential threat.[212]

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[209] Garda report, 18 February 1934 in Jus 8/718 NAI.

[210] Garda report, 30 November 1934 in Jus 8/319 NAI. See also letter in *Irish Independent*, 29 November 1934. The Clann also produced occasional publications such as *Sean Oglach* and *The Sentry*.

[211] *Irish Independent*, 30 June 1937.

[212] Several Old IRA members such as Seán Fitzpatrick and Simon Donnelly would later be involved along with their IRA contemporaries of the 1930s in Clann na Poblachta. See Eithne MacDermott, *Clann na Poblachta*, (Cork, 1998) pp. 10-11.

Chapter Six

The IRA and Fianna Fáil in Opposition 1926-32.

The formation of Fianna Fáil in May 1926 did not see an immediate severing of ties with the IRA by its members. At officer level many held joint membership of the two organisations until mid 1927. Among the rank and file there existed examples of dual membership until 1932. Both enemies and supporters of republicanism often presumed that both organisations shared broadly the same outlook. Nevertheless there remained important differences between them which would eventually surface more intensely after 1932.

Following its November 1925 General Army Convention the IRA elected a "Composite Executive" composed of members both supportive of and opposed to de Valera's new departure.[1] The most senior IRA figure to support de Valera was Frank Aiken, who despite being replaced as Chief of Staff by Andy Cooney was re-elected to the IRA's Executive. Aiken suggested that IRA members who supported his stand should not be debarred from holding positions within the organisation.[2] The IRA agreed to this in order to prevent the split in Sinn Féin from adversely affecting the IRA. This fluid situation existed even after the formation of Fianna Fáil. For a period an Advisory Council combining the IRA, Sinn Féin and Fianna Fáil members met with a view to co-ordinating republican activities, but as relations worsened between Sinn Féin and Fianna Fáil the council was disbanded.[3]

There are indications that sections of the IRA were unhappy with the what they saw as a "passive" leadership during 1925. At that year's Convention a motion from the Dublin Brigade argued that the "spirit and discipline" of the

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[1] Notes of Statement by C/S, 9 April 1927, in MTUCDA, P69/48 (154).
[2] Aiken to Chairman of Army Council, 18 November 1925, in MTUCDA, P69/181 (77-78). Aiken came ninth in the election for the Executive. See Appendix 7. The IRA were still unsure about Aiken's status within the organisation as late as April 1927. See Notes of Army Executive, 27 April 1927, in MTUCDA, P69/48 (104-105).
[3] 'Mr. Ambrose', General Outline of the Present Movement, August 1927, in MTUCDA, P69/72 (3-11).

IRA was being destroyed by inactivity. The Tipperary Brigade also expressed suspicion of the "constitutional" methods of the IRA leadership.[4] The IRA Executive was still dominated by men who would support de Valera after 1926.[5] These tensions came to a head after the deaths of two Gardai during IRA raids on Garda Barracks in November that year. As a result a State of Emergency was declared and large numbers of IRA members arrested.[6] Among those detained were a number of Fianna Fáil supporters including Mayo TD Michael Kilroy, Cork County Councillor Michael Corry and IRA Executive member Michael Murphy. De Valera called for an emergency meeting of IRA officers from all parties, as he believed a "national crisis" was at hand, but it soon became apparent that numbers of the arrested men were unhappy with their predicament.[7] Several, including Michael Murphy, Thomas Crofts and Frank Buckley publicly disassociated themselves from the IRA's actions.[8] Murphy and his fellow Executive member Patrick Murray were suspended from the IRA for their attitude to the raids.[9] Although a public breach was avoided, it was clear that a new IRA leadership were edging out the more cautious supporters of Fianna Fáil.[10]

The wholesale departure of Fianna Fáil supporting officers from the IRA did not take place until May 1927 just prior to the General Election. In October 1926 the Army Council had issued General Order No. 28 which forbade IRA members standing as parliamentary candidates.[11] However twenty three officers allowed themselves to be selected the vast majority as candidates for Fianna Fáil.

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[4] Agenda for Convention, 1925, in MTUCDA, P69/179 (185-189).
[5] Executive membership 1925: T. Derrig, E. O'Malley, M. Kilroy, PJ Ruttledge, J. O'Connor, S. Robinson, S. MacSwiney, F. Aiken, P. O'Donnell, L. Pilkington, S. Hyde, T. Maguire, C. Maloney, P. Whelan, P. O'Brien, S. Moylan. List in MTUCDA, P69/179 (184).
[6] See Chapter Four pp. 129.
[7] QMG to C/S, 4 May 1927, in MTUCDA, P69/48 (47).
[8] *Cork Examiner*, 23 November 1926.
[9] Acting Secretary, AC to Murphy, 8 December 1926 and IRA Executive report, 27 April 1927 in MTUCDA, P6948 (104-105) and (318).
[10] This trend was already apparent to Military Intelligence in late 1925. See Dan Bryan to C/S, 2 December 1925 in FitzGerald Papers, UCDA, P80/849 (11-12).
[11] G.O. 28, 21 October 1926 in MTUCDA, P69/149 (38). See Appendix 8.

Among them were Aiken, Tom Derrig, Mark Killelea and Neil Blaney.[12] Despite the threat of court martial only one, Tom Maguire of Sinn Féin, agreed to stand down.[13] This was highly embarrassing for the IRA because the existence of G.O. 28 was public knowledge and the IRA feared its being disobeyed would "gravely prejudice discipline within the army, and the prestige of the organisation among citizens generally."[14]

The pressures which led to IRA officers taking the decision to sever ties with the organisation are illuminated by the explanations given by two of them. These explanations also show a continuing attachment to the use of physical force. Patrick Houlihan of Caherfeakle Co. Clare had been imprisoned for two years during the Civil War, leaving him a "physical wreck." He had tried to organise the IRA in his area, but found it impossible as "the few who have not boarded the immigrant ship are down and out." Local republicans had "built their hopes on De Valera" and as he saw no way of "overthrowing the present government in a hurry" except through Fianna Fáil, he had agreed to stand as one of their candidates. However he stressed that if circumstances changed then he would rejoin the IRA "as a private Volunteer."[15] These sentiments were echoed by Patrick Smith of Cavan who while believing that the place for republicans was now in Fianna Fáil, stressed that "if our present attempt (politically) should be doomed to failure, I hope my action will not prevent me in future taking a line of action in which I have not lost faith."[16] Both men were elected.[17]

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[12] Disobeyal of General Order No. 28, May 1927 in MTUCDA, P69/149 (6). See Appendix 9.

[13] Ó Bradáigh, *'Dílseacht'* pp. 30.

[14] W.T. Cosgrave had quoted G.O. 28 in the Dail following the capture of IRA documents in November 1926. See *Irish Independent*, 10 November 1926. A/G to O/C South Galway, (Mark Killelea) 17 May 1927 in MTUCDA, P69/149 (23).

[15] Patrick Houlihan to A/G, 6 May 1927 in MTUCDA, P69/149 (28).

[16] Patrick Smith to A/G, 13 May 1927 in MTUCDA, P69/149 (22).

[17] Houlihan lost his seat in 1932, regained it in 1933 and lost again in 1937. Smith held his seat until 1973, and twice served as Minister for Agriculture and as Minister for Local Government. Browne and Farrell, *Magill*, pp. 43 and pp. 57.

Fianna Fáil had 44 candidates elected but refused to enter the Dail. However a decision to do so was forced on them by the government's response to the assassination of Kevin O'Higgins in early July.[18] One of O'Higgin's killers, Timothy Coughlan, was a member of Fianna Fáil as well as the IRA.[19] As well as an Electoral Amendment Act, disqualifying any parliamentary candidate who refused to take the Oath, a stringent Public Safety Act was also introduced. 20 republicans were arrested for questioning about the assassination and IRA officers were encouraged to go on the run to avoid arrest.[20] One of those arrested, Frank Kerlin, decided to resign his membership of the IRA Executive for "family, business and ... serious financial" reasons. However within a month he stood and was elected as a Fianna Fáil TD.[21]

After Fianna Fáil took their seats in Leinster House there ceased to be a crossover in membership at leadership level with the IRA. However among the rank and file the situation remained more fluid. Defections of officers to Fianna Fáil badly affected IRA organisation in Limerick and Mayo during 1930, leaving it without capable organisers. In Doon, Co. Limerick almost all the local IRA were also members of Fianna Fáil. A similar situation existed in Drumkeen Co. Donegal and Ballymacelligot and Scratnaglen, in Kerry. During early 1930 the IRA's south Wexford commander was suspended for his continuing connections to Fianna Fáil.[22] While membership of Fianna Fáil was forbidden by IRA General Orders the organisation seems to have been forced to tolerate this situation in certain areas. Some of the IRA's "considerable quantity" of arms in

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[18] O'Higgins was described by the IRA as "the brains of the government." 'Mr. Ambrose' Outline of the Present Movement, MTUCDA, P69/72 (14).
[19] Various accounts of the assasination and its aftermath in Regan, *Irish Counter - Revolution*, pp. 244-276, Lee, *Ireland 1912-1985,* pp. 154-155, English, *Radicals*, pp. 104-105.
[20] *An Phoblacht*, 22 July 1927. C/S to local commanders, 29 July 1927 in MTUCDA, P69/50 (27).
[21] Staff Commandant 'J. O' Neill' to C/S, 28 July and C/S to Frank Kerlin, 29 July 1927 in MTUCDA, P69/49 (7-8). Kerlin's election in Gallagher, *Irish Elections*, pp. 101.
[22] Report for A/G, 17 February 1930, in MTUCDA, P69/151 (225-227).

west Limerick were also held by Fianna Fáil members.[23] Martin Fahy, a Galway Fianna Fáil councillor was also an officer in his local IRA unit. As late as 1932 the local IRA commander in east Clare was secretary of his local Fianna Fáil cumann.[24] However the available evidence suggests that such cases were uncommon. The IRA regarded Fianna Fáil influence among its units as undesirable, and a factor which induced "listlessness" and inactivity.[25]

Of more significance was the IRA's political reaction to the electoral potential of Fianna Fáil. In the spring of 1927 speculation was rife that a majority of republican TDs could be returned in that summer's election. Public appeals for republican unity were being made by figures like Dr. Patrick McCartan of Clann Eireann and approaches were made to the IRA leadership to help bring this about.[26] The IRA leadership believed that the opportunity presented itself for the defeat of the Cumann na nGaedheal government and an overthrow of the Treaty settlement, provided they secured an electoral pact between Fianna Fáil and Sinn Féin. This would help maintain unity within the IRA's ranks, which contained supporters of both parties, as well as those who favoured neither; it could also possibly produce a situation where the IRA could seize power bloodlessly.[27] While this seems a highly unrealistic prediction the IRA leadership used this argument to convince its sceptical officers about the value of the effort at unity.

There was substantial resistance to the leadership's initiative from within the IRA. At a meeting to discuss the proposal several officers declared that "they had no faith in politicians", and that "Fianna Fáil had already let them down." Jack Plunkett spoke for this grouping when argued that he was against

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[23] Limerick report, 26 November 1930, in MTUCDA, P69/153 (70-72), Donegal report, 18 September 1930, in MTUCDA, P69/153 (178-183), Kerry report, 18 January 1931, in MTUCDA, P69/153 (18-20).
[24] AC Correspondence book, 11 January 1932, in MTUCDA, P69/71.
[25] Fahy was prosecuted before the Military Tribunal in early 1932 see *Irish Press*, 11 February 1932. Limerick report, 26 November 1930, in MTUCDA, P69/153 (73).
[26] See *Honesty*, 19 March 1927 and statement by C/S, 9 April 1927 in MTUCDA, P69/48 (154).

"anything that savoured of going near Leinster House" and his brother George felt the proposals would lead to the IRA becoming "overflooded with compromise talk." To convince this current the IRA leadership argued that the return of a republican majority would open up military possibilities. Twomey used the example of the December 1918 election, saying that the majority of the Dail elected then were not in favour of war, but war had resulted from their election. Furthermore the proposal would help maintain IRA unity as supporters of both political parties were willing to "co-operate in the army." He also sounded a note of warning that if the Cumann na nGaedheal government were re-elected it would be very difficult to maintain the IRA "for another six years" under what he presumed would be a very repressive regime. The alternative would be to attempt an "armed revolution" but Twomey suggested that the IRA was not in a position to bring that about successfully. [28] While his officers believed an armed revolt against the Free State was preferable to its overthrow by electoral means they surely realised that the IRA had been severally weakened since the Civil War, and was in no position to carry out a coup.[29] A republican majority on the other hand could change the situation drastically, opening possibilities of being handed control of the state machine. Seán Russell, while assuring the meeting he had "no liking for political parties" felt that a situation could arise from the election that the IRA could take advantage of. The proposals to bring about unity were passed by a majority of 31 to 9.[30]

The IRA then set about attempting to convince both republican parties of the desirability of a united effort. Its strategy for doing so however betrayed a fundamental misunderstanding of Fianna Fáil's raison d'être. The IRA believed unity could be achieved with a few concessions on either side as the differences between the organisations were merely tactical. However Fianna Fáil had begun

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[27] C/S to officer's meeting, 9 April 1927 in MTUCDA, P69/48 (152-162).
[28] All quotes, C/S, O/C Boyne Batt, O/C Carrick on Shannon, Jack and George Plunkett from officer's meeting, P69/48 (152-162).
[29] IRA membership had fallen from 14,541 in 1924 to 5,042 in 1926. See Chapter 1 pp. 3-4.

the process of freeing themselves from ideological straitjackets like absentionism and were not keen on returning to them. The IRA drew a Memorandum of proposals for co-operation and circulated it among to Sinn Féin and Fianna Fáil. Its main suggestions were that a 'National Board' consisting of representatives from the IRA, Sinn Féin and Fianna Fáil be established which would choose a panel of candidates for the election. A manifesto from the National Board would centre on four points:

> "(a) The repudiation of the Treaty
>
> (b) The repudiation of Partition
>
> (c) The repudiation of all financial and other arrangements or obligations entered into with the Government of Great Britain.
>
> (d) The abolition of a Standing Army and the Organisation of the Defence Forces on a territorial basis."

The last point was of particular significance to the IRA because they also proposed that if a republican majority was secured all the National Army's weaponry be put under the IRA's control. All candidates would pledge not to take any oath to the Free State or British government.[31]

Sinn Féin's reaction to these proposals was reasonably positive with their only worry being that Fianna Fáil would enter Leinster House even if they were in a minority once the Oath of Allegiance were removed. If Fianna Fáil could assure them this would not happen then there was a possibility of a united effort.[32] Fianna Fáil were predictably less positive. They pointed out that it was their policy of agreeing to take their seats if the Oath was removed that had made them a political force and to revert to the old absentionist policy would undermine their progress. They also argued that Fianna Fáil would do

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[30] Russell voted against the proposals but made it clear he would not work aganist them if they were accepted. Officer's meeting, P69/48 (152-162).

[31] Memorandum of suggested basis for co-operation between Republican bodies for General Election and after if a majority of Republicans are elected, April 1927, in MTUCDA, P69/48 (35-36).

better electorally without being allied to Sinn Féin. While "some" of the Fianna Fáil representatives apparently were favourable to the IRA's proposals for dealing with the situation if a majority of republicans were elected, they insisted that they should have "absolute freedom" to act as they thought fit if a minority were returned. The IRA felt "no progress" had been made at the meeting.[33]

Nevertheless the IRA again approached the Executive of Fianna Fáil with the proposals in late April. The reply by Gerald Boland and Seán Lemass was swift and disappointing, dismissing the proposals as "not acceptable as a basis for discussion." Furthermore the IRA were informed that their proposals had not been "discussed in any detail." Another IRA appeal to de Valera himself was met with the reply that he was in "complete agreement" with the views expressed by his Executive.[34]

The IRA's efforts were motivated first of all by a desire to avoid a split in its ranks. Most of its leadership understood the need for some political action but it remained first and foremost a military organisation and the unity effort had to be sold to its members on that basis. However while Fianna Fáil contained many who had sympathy for the IRA its leadership were not about to sacrifice their newly found independence for a an alliance of dubious value.

Just prior to the General Election the IRA publicly announced that its efforts to secure unity had failed. It criticised both Fianna Fáil and Sinn Féin for being unable to come to an agreement with each other but called on its supporters to "Vote Solidly Republican."[35] This also meant that its members could work for Fianna Fáil and Sinn Féin at the election, as neither party was

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[32] Joint meeting of representative members of Sinn Féin and representatives of the Army Council, 14 April 1927, in MTUCDA, P69/48 (116). Among those in the SF delegation were Mary MacSwiney, Austin Stack, J.J. O'Kelly and Tom Maguire.
[33] Joint meeting of representatives members of Fianna Fáil and of representatives of the Army Council 15 April 1927, in MTUCDA, P69/48 (115). Seán T. O'Kelly, P.J. Ruttledge, Padraic Fleming, Tom Derrig, Dr. Jim Ryan and Dr. P. MacCarvill represented Fianna Fáil.
[34] Secretary Army Council (AC) to Run Onoracha, Fianna Fáil, 28 April, reply, 29 April. Secretary AC to Run Onoracha, FF, 3 May, reply 4 May. Secretary AC to de Valera, 11 May, reply, 13 May 1927. All in MTUCDA, P69/48 (29-34).
[35] *An Phoblacht*, 3 June 1927.

prepared to enter Leinster House. The situation drastically changed following the O'Higgin's assassination. On the 11th of August Fianna Fáil TDs took their seats in the Dail. *An Phoblacht* announced itself "profoundly disturbed" at Fianna Fáil's decision. But it stressed that while some bitterness among republicans was inevitable they should realise that "thousands of people ... are in the same mood and in the same position as the Fianna Fáil TDs would have done the same thing ... yet one feels that ... if Separatist Ireland tomorrow took to the street barricades, the Gerry Bolands would be among the first to answer the call." Fianna Fáil were not denounced as traitors, but patronised as a "tired wing" of republicanism that "surrendered" in order to prevent wholesale repression of republicans.[36] However there were no talks on united electoral efforts prior to the September general election.[37]

More significantly Twomey outlined his view of the events later that month. He was "not very angered" by their entering the Dail, as he had "for years" felt absentionism was a "futile and wrong" policy. He did however feel that Fianna Fáil had now "abandoned orthodox republicanism" and was no longer a revolutionary organisation. Nevertheless it was "certainly not hostile" to the IRA and it would be wrong for the IRA to antagonise a potentially friendly political party.[38]

This relatively pragmatic view was to inform the IRA's attitude to Fianna Fáil over the next five years. While membership of Fianna Fáil was later forbidden by General Order No. 28, as we have seen it was reluctantly tolerated.[39] There is also evidence of electoral co-operation. At the June 1929 Sligo-Leitrim bye-election for example, "practically all" the IRA members in the

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[36] *An Phoblacht*, 19 August 1927.

[37] Although an unamed FF TD did approach the IRA to ascertain their attitude on a possible FF led coalition government. C/S to President, Cumann na mBan, 7 September 1927, in MTUCDA, P69/67 (5).

[38] C/S, 25 August 1927, in MTUCDA, P69/72 (27-28).

[39] At the 1929 GAC the IRA revised G.O. 28 to outlaw working or voting for parties that entered the Free State or Northern Parliaments. See A/G to Commander of each Independent Unit, 12 January 1932 in D/T S 5864 C NAI.

region "gave active assistance" to Fianna Fáil.[40] Similarly IRA officers recognised that in the parts of Kerry local members would "undoubtedly" support and work for Fianna Fáil during elections.[41]

The next five years would see the IRA undertaking more and more aggressive activities as it slowly rebuilt its organisation. In terms of social policy it moved steadily leftwards, supporting strikes and land agitation. All these actions brought it into violent conflict with the state. In this period Fianna Fáil vocally supported many of the IRA's activities and championed the cause of IRA prisoners. Some of its members were also attracted by the IRA's radicalism. However there was to be a limit to Fianna Fáil's endorsement of both IRA actions and radical agitation.

As early as November 1926 Fianna Fáil had reacted to arrests of IRA members following the raids on Garda barracks by demanding the release of republicans detained on "trumped up charges."[42] Once inside the Dáil Fianna Fáil TDs kept up a steady stream of attacks on the Garda Special Branch or "CID." De Valera claimed that there were "more gun bullies in the service of the Minister for Justice than in any other organisation in the country."[43] Robert Briscoe accused the Special Branch of encouraging young men in the west of Ireland to rob banks so as to smear republicans.[44] Tom Derrig explained IRA attacks on the Gardai as actions by individuals "goaded into desperation by incessant raids and attacks by the CID."[45] Fianna Fáil's newspaper *The Nation* regularly reported 'outrages' by the "licensed thugs" of the CID.[46] There seems

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[40] Garda Commissioner report to Ministers, 5 July 1929, in Blythe Papers, UCDA, P24/477.
[41] Report by 'JJ', 18 January 1931, in MTUCDA, P69/153 (14-18).
[42] *Irish Independent*, 26 November 1926.
[43] *Dail Debates*, Vol. 29, 8 May 1929.
[44] *Dail Debates*, Vo. 22, 15 February, 1928.
[45] *Dail Debates*, Vol. 29, 9 May 1929.
[46] *The Nation*, 24 September 1927. The paper was edited by Seán T O'Kelly until July 1929 when he was relaced by Frank Gallagher.

little doubt that most Fianna Fáil TDs agreed with Todd Andrews assessment of the Special Branch as a "pretty low form of humanity."[47]

Fianna Fáil loudly championed the grievances of imprisoned IRA members. *The Nation* carried weekly 'Prisoner's Notes' by Maud Gonne and printed lists of IRA detainees.[48] TDs regularly asked Dail questions about the ill-treatment of IRA men and harassment of republican supporters. Leading members of the party openly stated where their sympathies lay. Gerry Boland, questioning the arrest of Peader O'Donnell, ("a friend of mine") claimed that the case proved that the government was trying to ensure that the "civil war would not die out."[49] On another occasion he warned that the government would not be allowed make criminals of "men like (George) Gilmore, Seán Russell and Mick Price."[50]

Briscoe was particularly active in support for republican prisoners. He infuriated Gardai by arriving "hot foot" to stations following the arrest of IRA suspects and demanding their release. The Gardai sought means of having him removed as he was causing them considerable problems. This they managed to eventually do, to Briscoe's annoyance.[51] The propaganda value to the IRA of this support for their prisoners was considerable; but also important was its use in keeping up the morale of those in jail. In late 1927 after a debilitating protest in Maryboro' Jail (Portlaoise), the IRA sought to encourage an officer by telling him that Fianna Fáil had raised questions in "parliament", spoke on platforms and were meeting the Minister for Justice to discuss his case.[52]

Two major cases where Fianna Fáil became entangled in confrontation between the IRA and the state were those of Timothy Coughlan and TJ Ryan.

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[47] Andrews, *Man of no Property*, pp. 71.
[48] See for example *The Nation*, 15 October 1927, 28 January and 11 August 1928.
[49] *Dail Debates*, Vol. 26, 2 November 1928.
[50] *Dail Debates*, Vol. 28, 21 March 1929.
[51] Complaint about Briscoe by Superintendent J. O' Gorman to Commissioner, 9 November 1929 in Jus 8/682 NAI. Complaint by Briscoe in Garda report on speech at WPDL meeting, 24 October 1930 in D/T S 5864 A NAI.
[52] D/I to O/C Prisoners, Maryboro', 5 December 1927, in MTUCDA, P69/197 (58).

Coughlan was shot dead by a Garda informant, Seán Harling, in early 1928.[53] The circumstances of his death raised several questions and Fianna Fáil were foremost in demanding an enquiry. Large numbers of Fianna Fáil TDs attended Coughlan's funeral and one of the party's Dublin Cumann was renamed in his honour.[54] Seán Lemass warned that as long as "men like Harling" held positions in the Gardai there was the potential for violence against them. Seán MacEntee promised that when Fianna Fáil came to power "the murder of Timothy Coughlan will not go unpunished."[55]

TJ Ryan, the IRA's leading officer in West Clare became the focus of national attention in 1929 after allegations that a sustained Special Branch vendetta, including violent attacks, was being waged against him. Fianna Fáil dominated Clare County Council and Kilrush Urban District Council passed motions demanding a halt to Garda harassment of Ryan.[56] *The Nation* told its readers that the CID were "on the rampage" in Clare.[57] Finally De Valera, visiting the Ryan family home, which he found surrounded by detectives, attested to the fact that Ryan bore the marks of severe beatings. This drew the celebrated reply for the Minister for Justice that Ryan had been kicked by one of his own cows![58]

Government attempts to get to grips with violent IRA activities met consistent resistance from Fianna Fáil within Dáil Eireann. De Valera accused the Minister for Justice of sounding "like Foster or Balfour .. or Sir Hamar Greenwood" when he attempted to introduce the Juries Protection Bill in 1929. Seán T. O' Kelly told the House on the same occasion that the IRA would

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[53] See Chapter Two pp.69.
[54] Lemass, Boland, O'Kelly, Briscoe, MacEntee and Aiken were among the mourners. *Irish Independent*, 2 February 1928. For naming of Cumann, *Dail Debates*, Vol. 29, 17 May 1929.
[55] *The Nation*, 4 February, 1928. Harling fled Ireland for two years, on return made his peace with the IRA, obtained work in the Civil Service and lived until 1974. O'Halpin, *Defending Ireland*, pp. 67.
[56] *Dail Debates*, Vol. 29, 24 April 1929.
[57] *The Nation*, 16 March 1929.
[58] *The Nation*, 27 July 1927 and *Dail Debates*, Vol. 31, 31 July 1929.

continue to exist until Ireland was free.[59] MacEntee warned that when Fianna Fáil came to power the 'CID' would be punished for their "illegal acts."[60] Garda Commissioner Eoin O'Duffy claimed that this type of rhetoric from Fianna Fáil had placed a "halo of righteousness" around the IRA. He felt that since Fianna Fáil had entered the Dáil the situation had become much worse for his men, as they feared condemnation from these parliamentary "inciters and sympathisers" of the IRA.[61]

While this verbal support encouraged the IRA it also undoubtedly enabled Fianna Fáil to maintain the support of young republicans. West Clare, for example, was an area where Eoin O'Duffy claimed most people were "actively or passively hostile" to the Gardai.[62] Follwing an armed attack on debt collecters in Co. Kerry, Gardai reported that they were recieving "no help or information" from the local population.[63] Throughout the Free State there existed areas where the government and the Police were resented. Therefore Fianna Fáil was reassuring its own activists and a section of its electorate by this stand.[64] However as we will see Fianna Fáil did not simply echo the IRA on this issue.

An important area of IRA activity by the late 1920s was opposition to 'Imperialist' symbols and ceremonies. Fianna Fáil generally expressed support for these IRA actions. *The Nation* publicised the 'Anti-Imperialist' protests and questioned whether 'British Reservists' like the Boy Scouts should be allowed organise in Ireland.[65] The success of anti-Poppy Day protests in 1929 was hailed by *The Nation* as evidence that the "Garrisons day was passing."[66] De

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[59] *Dail Debates*, Vol. 29, 8 and 9 May 1929.
[60] Garda report, 11 November 1929, in FitzGerald Papers, UCDA, P80/904 (5).
[61] O'Duffy to Minister for Justice, 27 July 1931, in FitzGerald papers, UCDA, P80/856 (2).
[62] Report by O'Duffy, 6 May 1929, in FitzGerald Papers, UCDA, P80/851 (5).
[63] Garda report, 25 May 1929, in FitzGerald Papers, UCDA, P80/851 (16).
[64] Garda reports from 1931 cited areas of west Cork where "75%" of the people alledgedly supported the IRA and few spoke to Gardai, especially "none in public." The entire population of Carnew village in Co. Wicklow apparently refused to speak to Gardai. See reports in D/T S 5864 C NAI.
[65] *The Nation*, 22 September 1928.
[66] *The Nation*, 9 November, 1929.

Valera spoke at the IRA's anti-Poppy Day rallies in 1927 and again in 1930. That year Fianna Fáil in Dublin had promised a full turnout of its members to ensure the IRA's demonstration was a success.[67]

A deadlier consequence of the IRA's campaign followed the jailing of a number of their members for attacking premises displaying Union Flags. A juror in this case, Albert Armstrong, was murdered in early 1929. One of the jailed IRA members had been an election agent for Robert Briscoe, who was questioned about the murder. While the Gardai did not believe Briscoe was involved in the killing, his attitude is indicative of those Fianna Fáil members who remained close to the IRA. Briscoe claimed that he personally did not approve of the use of arms, but he did not consider Armstrong's death murder, as his killers had surely only meant to frighten their victim.[68] While the Armistice Day protests often involved street disturbances Fianna Fáil had little to lose by supporting them as not only republicans but also large numbers of Dubliners, including even some Gardai, disliked the ceremonies.[69]

Politically more interesting was the relationship between Fianna Fáil and the IRA's intervention in social agitation. The Special Branch certainly thought that a section of Fianna Fáil were immersed in radical politics. During 1930 it identified the existence of a Fianna Fáil "left wing" thought to include Frank Aiken, Frank Kearney, Eamonn Cooney, "Briscoe the Jew", and Senator

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[67] Seán Lemass and Gerald Boland, Fianna Fáil, to Seán MacBride, Irish section of the League Against Imperialism, 5 November 1930 in Jus 8/682 NAI.
[68] Garda report, 2 May 1929, in FitzGerald Papers, UCDA, P80/851 (8).
[69] See Chapter Four pp. 117.

Seamus Robinson.[70] Oscar Traynor, the "personification of subterranean crime", was also alleged to be in sympathy with this grouping.[71]

There certainly was an effort by the IRA to involve Fianna Fáil in its most important radical venture of the late 1920s, the Land Annuities campaign. In August 1927 Peader O'Donnell had outlined a plan whereby resistance among small farmers and rural labourers to the payment of annuities to Britain could be channelled into a mass campaign of non payment. The government would be forced to seize livestock in lieu of the withheld money and the IRA would carry out a campaign to prevent any sale of the livestock within Ireland. Attempts to export the livestock would meet with strike action by dockers and as the confrontation escalated appeals would be made to the rank and file of the "largely peasant" National Army to refuse to carry out their orders. Thus a revolutionary situation would be brought about.[72]

What gave this ambitious plan some reality was the fact that large numbers of rural dwellers were in desperate straits by 1927. In March of that year four members of a family in Adrigoole, Co. Cork had died from influenza and starvation, having been denied state assistance because they owed Land Annuities.[73] While elements within the IRA were suspicious of O'Donnell's plans, he gained official Army Council backing for them in January 1928.[74] He had already begun using his journalistic talent to promote the idea through *An Phoblacht*. From the beginning attempts were made to persuade Fianna Fáil to back the non-payment campaign. Some early successes were recorded. In

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[70] Report on Revolutionary Organisations, 4 April 1930, in FitzGerald Papers, UCDA, P80/916 (3). The report further stressed that Briscoe should be investigated further as "it is often suggested that the Irish was not his first venture in revolutionary activities." Political enemies of Briscoe would return to this theme often during the 1930s. See for example, Cumann na nGaedheal's *North Dublin News*, 1932, in Arthur Mitchell & Pádraig Ó Snodaigh, (eds) *Irish Political Documents 1916-1949*, (Dublin, 1985) pp. 192-194. Ironically by 1940, the IRA would also use anti-Semitic slurs against Briscoe. *War News,* 4 July 1940, in HA4/2/32 PRONI.

[71] Eoin O'Duffy's description, report to the Executive Council, 27 July 1931, in FitzGerald Papers, UCDA, P80/856.

[72] Notes on the Irish Labour Movement by Mr. Holmes, (O'Donnell), August 1927, in MTUCDA, P69/72 (15-18).

[73] Hegarty, *O'Donnell*, pp. 167. *An Phoblacht*, 8 April and *The Nation*, 23 April 1927.

February 1928 Paddy Ruttledge, Dr. Jim Ryan and Gerald Boland spoke at an Anti-Annuities rally at Dublin's Rotunda. Shortly afterwards TDs Frank Fahy and Hugo Flinn shared a platform with O'Donnell in Loughrea Co. Galway.[75] Clare County Council endorsed the campaign, and its chairman Frank Barret helped it organise a rally in June 1928 at which de Valera shared the stage with O'Donnell.[76]

However Fianna Fáil was not endorsing O'Donnell or the IRA in its support for the campaign. The policy adopted by Fianna Fáil was for the retention of the annuities money in Ireland not their abolition.[77] O'Donnell's own rhetoric became muted as he tried to entice Fianna Fáil speakers on to Anti-Annuities platforms. At rallies in Dungloe in early 1929 and Kinsale that summer, where O'Donnell shared platforms with Councillor Eamon Corbett and TDs Tommy Mullins and Martin Corry, he stressed that there was no need for people to resort to "other than constitutional methods." O'Donnell also conceded that he had no objection to the Fianna Fáil policy of collecting the annuities but retaining the money in Ireland.[78]

There is also evidence that in some districts the campaign of non payment had ground to a halt by the beginning of the 1930s. During early 1929 there were popular expressions of support for the campaign in Donegal with crowds stoning Gardai escorting summons servers in Dungloe. However by May that year strong condemnation of the campaign by the Bishop of Raphoe was said by the Gardai to have almost brought it to an end in that distict.[79] During 1930 an IRA officer found that in Donegal, the birthplace of the campaign, from Letterkenny to Gweedore, "not a single individual" was holding to non payment of their annuities. In Dungloe there were a few still

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[74] A/G to O/C Tirconaill Battalion, 12 January 1928, in MTUCDA, P69/149 (70-71).
[75] *An Phoblacht*, 18 February, 1928.
[76] Hegarty, *O'Donnell*, pp. 178-179.
[77] See English, *Radicals*, pp. 86-95, Patterson, *Politics of Illusion*, pp. 35-43 and Richard Dunphy, *The Making of Fianna Fáil Power in Ireland*, (Oxford, 1995) pp. 97.
[78] Garda reports, (Dungloe) 12 February and (Kinsale) 16 May 1929, in FitzGerald Papers, UCDA, P80/916 and P80/856 (10).

withholding payment but "nothing approaching organised resistance." Many locals were cynical about the agitation, claiming that some who "would be foremost" in calling for non payment would be the first "to go to the Land Commission and settle on the quiet." Many people who had made sacrifices at the beginning of the agitation felt that the rest of the country had let them down. Even more worringly large numbers of people expressed "utter indifference" to the whole question, which led the officer to conclude there was no future for the campaign.[80] Eoin O'Duffy also claimed that his officers had effectively defeated the campaign in Donegal during 1931.[81] It is possible that O'Donnell's persuasive retelling of the agitation has given it a prominence it does not deserve.[82]

The limits of Fianna Fáil's commitment to social agitation have been widely discussed.[83] But there is no doubt that many of the party's rank and file were open to elements of the radicalism encouraged by the IRA. In its most negative form it meant simply obstructing the normal process of government, driving Eoin O'Duffy to describe the Clare Fianna Fáil councillors as "irresponsible blackguards who have nothing in the world ... except malicious tongues and facility for playacting and posing."[84] The fact that rank and file Fianna Fáil members faced occasional Garda harassment themselves meant that they also instinctively sided with the IRA when it confronted the state forces.[85]

There were also small number of party members who were prepared to work more closely on left wing IRA initiatives. Several Fianna Fáil councillors

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[79] O'Duffy to Government Ministers, 5 July 1929, in Blythe Papers, UCDA, P24/477.
[80] Staff Officer 'Jack Jones' to A/G, 22 September 1930, in MTUCDA, P69/153 (178-183).
[81] O'Duffy to Government Ministers, 24 June 1931, in FitzGerald Papers, UCDA, P80/856 (10).
[82] See O'Donnell, *There Will Be Another Day*, and Michael McInerney, *Peadar O'Donnell Irish Social Rebel*, (Dublin, 1974) pp. 119-130.
[83] See Dunphy, *Fianna Fáil Power*, pp. 39-49, English, *Radicals*, pp. 95-108, Paul Bew, Ellen Hazelkorn and Henry Patterson, *The Dynamics of Irish Politics*, (London, 1989) pp. 41-47.
[84] Eoin O'Duffy, 6 April 1929, in FitzGerald Papers, UCDA, P80/851 (5).
[85] Claims of Gardai beating up Fianna Fáil canvassers were raised by P.J. Ruttledge in the Dail. See *Dail Debates*, Vol. 21, 12 October 1927. See *Tipperary Star*, 20 April 1929 for claims of ill-treatment of Fianna Fáil members by the Gardai in Cahir.

were involved with the Irish Working Farmer's Committee, an affiliate of the Kristertern, the Comintern's 'peasant' section. These included Seán Hayes of Clare, and Eamon Corbett and Martin Fahy of Galway. The IWFC was a tiny organisation with only 43 attending its conference in Galway during March 1930, but the Special Branch believed Fahy and Corbett were the "soul of the movement" in the county. All three councillors applied for passports to attend the Kristertern congress in Berlin, but in the end only Peadar O' Donnell represented the Irish section there.[86] The depth of these men's commitment to radicalism is of course open to question. Fahy, who had once told republicans to "pay no heed whatsoever" to criticism from the Bishop of Killaloe, reversed his anti-clerical stance when faced with serious charges before the Military Tribunal in late 1931. There he announced that he had severed his connections with the IRA, since the Bishop's Pastoral had convinced him that the organisation he had thought was "patriotic and Christian" was actually neither.[87] Hayes however chaired the launch of the Saor Éire organisation in September that year and remained associated with IRA initiatives well into the 1930s.

The IRA and Fianna Fáil had very different objectives even if this was not readily apparent to their supporters during the late 1920s. Despite their denunciations of the CID and defence of IRA prisoners, Fianna Fáil were careful to disassociate themselves from unpopular IRA activities. The IRA murder of a Garda in Clare was denounced by *The Nation* as an "act of utter cowardice."[88] Gerald Boland commented after the killing of a young man in Tipperary later that year that the IRA had "unknowingly gone from the moral plane right down to criminal status."[89] Of course these condemnations always occurred in the context of denunciation of the government's response to IRA

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[86] Report on Revolutionary Organisations, (1931) in MacEntee papers, UCDA, P67/522 (7) and report on Galway conference, 27 March 1930 in FitzGerald Papers, UCDA, P80/909 (2).
[87] Fahy had taken part in the raid on the State Solicitor's office in Ennis discussed in Chapter Two. For his earlier remarks see *An Phoblacht*, 12 January 1929. For trial see *Irish Press*, 11 February 1932.
[88] *The Nation*, 28 March 1931. In reply *An Phoblacht* accused *The Nation* of "felon - setting." *AP*, 25 April 1931.

activity but it was becoming clear that Fianna Fáil did not believe that physical force remained a viable option. As *The Nation* commented after the Tipperary murder, "the conditions which justify the taking of human life were not present" in the Free State.[90] Fianna Fáil also increasingly differentiated between the 'CID' and the "ordinary Police" who they generally felt were not politically biased.[91]

There were similar processes at work in Fianna Fáil's attitude to the IRA's radical experiments. When the weight of the Hierarchy and government launched its attack on Saor Éire in the winter of 1931, Fianna Fáil skilfully avoided the taint of communism while denouncing Cumann na nGaedheal's hypocrisy. Boland explained his 1925 IRA mission to Russia as simply following a "line that was followed by Irish nationalists from the days of Elizabeth" in seeking aid from England's enemies. Seán Lemass taunted the government that while 78,000 Dubliners lived in rooms unfit for habitation, it was creating a communist bogey rather than implementing a housing programme.[92] De Valera denounced the new Public Safety Act while declaring his commitment to Catholicism and the rights of private property.[93] The one major exception to this was Tommy Mullins of Cork who proudly told the Dail that he belonged to four of the organisations banned under the new Act. He also suggested that Saor Éire was simply following the policy of James Connolly and that he saw nothing wrong in the efforts of 'Revolutionary Worker's Groups' to improve conditions in factories and coal mines. Furthermore he agreed with their aim of overthrowing "British Imperialism and its ally, Irish capitalism" to begin with.[94]

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[89] *Dail Debates*, Vol. 40, 15 October 1931.
[90] *The Nation*, 1 August 1931.
[91] *Dail Debates*, Vol. 26, 1 November 1928 and De Valera at republican rally in Dublin, Garda report, 8 November 1929, in D/T S 5864 A, NAI.
[92] *Dail Debates*, Vol. 40, 14 October 1931.
[93] Quoted in Murray, *Oracles*, pp. 257. See also Dermot Keogh, 'De Valera, the Catholic Church and the 'Red Scare' 1931-32' in JP O'Carroll and JA Murphy, (eds.) *De Valera and His Times*, (Cork, 1983) pp. 134-157.
[94] *Dail Debates*, Vol. 40, 14 October 1931. Mullins did not name which four organisations but one was the Irish Friends of the Soviet Russia. He was TD for Cork West but did not stand for re-election in 1932. He however remained active in Fianna Fáil and became a

But Mullins was far from representative of Fianna Fáil thinking on this and other matters.[95] While the IRA still saw military force as the *only* method of establishing the Republic, and inaugurating a new society, Fianna Fáil had slowly but definitely chosen a different path *and* objective. This was signalled as early as 1929 when *The Nation* replied to criticism in *An Phoblacht* by pointing out that it was "not possible to free a people without their support." It claimed 75% of the Irish people did not endorse physical force methods and to ignore that was foolish.[96] De Valera stressed that IRA arms dumped at the end of the Civil War were never intended for use in another civil or indeed class war.[97] Fianna Fáil managed a very delicate but successful manoeuvre in remaining close to militant republicanism but gathering moderate electoral support.[98] It was not that the IRA leadership were blind to this but that much of the time they were so concerned with problems of training and maintaining their 'army' that they paid little attention to Fianna Fáil's pursuit of the middle ground.[99]

The background to the Public Safety Act had been a period of increased IRA mobilisation and activity during 1931. The organisation had also carried out three killings by the autumn. Less dramatically but more importantly the IRA was growing again after a period of stagnation. It was now their policy to march and drill as openly as was possible. Even with the government preventing special trains running to Bodenstown in June that year, at short notice the IRA hired buses and cars and thousands defied the ban.[100] Significantly, de Valera and leading members of Fianna Fáil marched with the

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Senator and Secretary of the party. Ironically Mullins was chosen as FF candidate for County Dublin in 1948 in an attempt to prevent Seán MacBride holding that seat. Gallagher, *Irish Elections*, pp. 153 and Doherty and Hickey (eds) *A Dictionary of Irish History 1800 - 1980*, (Dublin, 1987) pp. 378-379, MacDermott, *Clann na Poblachta*, pp. 51-52.

[95] Although Mayo Fianna Fáil member John Mulgrew was on the Saor Éire National Executive, he left the party for the IRA after his imprisonment during late 1931-32. AC to Clan, 30 July 1932, in MTUCDA, P69/185 (266).

[96] *The Nation*, 3 August 1929.

[97] *Irish Press*, 29 October 1931.

[98] For a discussion of this see Lee, *Ireland 1912-1985*, pp. 167-168.

[99] See Twomey, in *The Nation*, 10 August 1929.

IRA to Tone's grave.[101] It was after this event that the IRA feeling the government was "undoubtedly losing their grip" decided to launch the "civil revolutionary organisation" which became Saor Éire. Twomey also felt that if the government lost at the polls, there was a chance that they would refuse to step down, creating a crisis the IRA could take advantage of.[102] However that challenge was met by the Public Safety Act and the 'Red Scare' which while not destroying the IRA did cause it severe problems, organisationally and ideologically.

As the general election of 1932 approached the IRA leadership suspended its orders forbidding members to work for political parties in elections and urged its members to "vote against the candidates of the Cumann na nGaedheal party."[103] Twomey had signalled the likelihood of this when he informed Joseph McGarrity that he was doubtful if the IRA's attitude to elections could be maintained in the present circumstances. He felt that Fianna Fáil, by in the IRA's view, accepting the "Free State position" had made things easier for the organisation. Where in the past support for Fianna Fáil would have been "misinterpreted by our own people" now it would be seen as simply tactical.[104] However the decision was not simply brought about by the opportunity of defeating the government at the polls but also by pressure from the IRA's own ranks. The effects of the clampdown on the organisation meant that their "Volunteers could not be restrained from voting" even if the leadership had tried to prevent them doing so. The Army Council realised too the potential effect on the IRA's morale if large numbers of members "insisted on taking part in the

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[100] Twomey to Joseph McGarrity, 23 June 1931 in McGarrity papers, Ms. 17,490 NLI.
[101] See *Irish Independent*, 22 June 1931. *The Nation* described the commemoration as "one of the greatest tributes ever offered to Wolfe Tone's memory" 27 June 1931.
[102] Twomey to McGarrity, 23 June 1931 and Army Council to Secretary Clan na Gael, 7 May 1932, in MTUCDA, P69/185 (298-302).
[103] A/G to Commander of each Independent Unit, 12 January 1932, in D/T S 5864 C NAI. See Appendix 10 pp. 365-367.
[104] Twomey to McGarrity, 9 December 1931, in McGarrity Papers, Ms. 17,490 NLI.

election." There had been no discussion with Fianna Fáil about this decision and it was taken solely to "drive out" the "coercion regime."[105]

Certainly grassroots pressure played a role with Twomey claiming that 90% of his organisation, in particular its younger members, was anxious to take part in the ousting of the Cumann na nGaedheal government. However strategically he also believed that a "Fianna Fáil phase" of the Irish revolution was inevitable. The IRA were not strong enough to overthrow the Cosgrave government and Fianna Fáil's arguments that peaceful change was possible held sway among the mass of republicans. This would only change when Fianna Fáil was tested in power, when Twomey believed they would "inevitably lose much of the support they have now."[106]

So in the spring of 1932 the IRA threw its weight behind Fianna Fáil's election effort.[107] In practice it meant the IRA undertook election work in their various areas, with Dublin's 3rd Battalion canvassing Donnybrook, Rathgar and Ranelagh during early February, while their 1st Battalion "worked 100%" at canvassing. Most of the Dublin Brigade's work was geared towards the Fianna Fáil election effort.[108] While the Gardai feared that the IRA was planning to disable vechicles used by the government party on the eve of the election this did not come to pass.[109] Indeed canvassing, putting up posters and attending election meetings probably accounted for the majority of the IRA's election effort rather than the more dramatic claims of some writers.[110] However having at least 5,000 extra election workers across the state must have been a considerable boost to the Fianna Fáil election effort.

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[105] Army Council to Secretary Clan na Gael, 7 May 1932, in MTUCDA, P69/185 (298-302).

[106] C/S to Count Plunkett, 19 January 1932, in MTUCDA, P69/52 (242-244).

[107] IRA members were permitted to work for other genuinely anti-government parties, so Waterford City IRA Adjutant Frank Edwards supported his local Labour party candidate. MacEoin, *Survivors*, pp. 6.

[108] Dublin Brigade reports, February - March 1932, in MTUCDA, P69/155 (130-137).

[109] Garda report, 9 February 1932, in D/T S 8878 NAI.

[110] Bowyer Bell claims the IRA recieved lists of absent voters and its members used them to vote up to 50 times each. *Secret Army*, pp. 93. Conor Foley claims an IRA officer

Fianna Fáil secured 72 seats at the polls, enough to form a minority government with Labour party support. On the 9th of March De Valera became head of the new administration.[111] One of the first acts of his government was to release the IRA prisoners in Arbour Hill. Two days later the IRA's Dublin Brigade marched in military formation to a rally in College Green, where 30,000 people greeted the released men.[112] Crowds cheered Peadar O'Donnell's assertion that the Cumann na nGaedheal leaders must never again be allowed a public platform but instead be "put out of public life." Seán MacBride stressed that the change in government did not mean a change in the policy of the IRA which would remain active until the republic was achieved.[113] To many it must indeed have seemed that the road to the "republic' would now be a shorter one. Frank Ryan's belief that the IRA would now have a "soft and easy time ... maybe too soft and easy" was the one note of caution in the otherwise triumphant atmosphere for republicans.[114] The following week these scenes were replicated in smaller scale across the country as ex-prisoners returned home.[115] On the 18th of March the government suspended the Public Safety Act. The IRA's Easter Commemorations were notable for the presence of Fianna Fáil TDs and for the first time the sale of Lilies went unhindered by the Gardai.[116] To supporters of Cumann na nGaedheal it must have seemed that the 'Second Apocalypse' had indeed arrived, with Fianna Fáil and the IRA working hand in hand.[117] In reality the contradictory nature of the personal, social and political

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named David Fitzpatrick organised this with Lemass. Presumbly this character is a combination of Michael Fitzpatrick and David FitzGerald. *Legion of the Rearguard*, pp. 102.

[111] See TP Coogan, *De Valera, Long Fellow, Long Shadow*, (Dublin, 1993) pp. 433-435.

[112] This figure is a Garda estimate. Report, 13 March 1932, in Jus 8/698 NAI.

[113] *An Phoblacht*, 19 March 1932.

[114] Entry in Jacob Diaries, 13 March 1932, Ms. 32,582 (69) NLI.

[115] See for example *Kerry Champion*, 19 March 1932 for claim of 2,000 welcoming Seán O'Shea to Caherciveen.

[116] See next chapter for details of commemorations. Fianna Fáil TDs and Senators had lobbied the Minister for Justice to allow the sale of Easter Lillies. See PJ Little, BM Maguire, MJ Corry, Wm Quirke and S. Robinson to Minister, 16 March 1932, in Jus 8/699 NAI.

[117] See Regan, *Counter - Revolution*, pp. 279-304.

relationships between the two organisations were to undergo their most serious tests.

Chapter Seven

The IRA and Fianna Fáil in Government 1932-1936.

At leadership level the IRA's policies remained remarkably consistent towards Fianna Fáil in the aftermath of their election victory in 1932. The "breathing space" created by the victory of Fianna Fáil was to be used by the organisation to recruit and train.[1] At the same time critical support was to be given to the new government and clashes with state forces avoided, as it was possible that Fianna Fáil would take steps towards the declaration of a republic. Any discussions with Fianna Fáil were to stress the need to mobilise support through a united front of republican and labour bodies and galvanise public opinion. After the failure of these policies the IRA leadership clung to the belief that Fianna Fáil would inevitably disillusion its republican supporters. However rather than Fianna Fáil rupturing, disagreement as to how to deal with the government split the IRA.

Just after polling day in the 1932 general election Twomey received a dramatic proposal from Frank Aiken. Aiken argued that their two organisations should "be fused at once." Such a fusion would "double" their strengths and provide a huge boost to republican morale. Furthermore, if as expected the British Government and other "reactionary forces" brought intense pressure to bear on the new administration union with the IRA would greatly increase its strength. Such a re-alignment was possible, Aiken argued, because "at bottom" the IRA and Fianna Fáil shared the same outlook with "less friction between them to-day than often exists within one organisation." Social justice for the "labourers and working farmers" would also be achieved rapidly if the IRA could align itself with Fianna Fáil. But this had to be agreed to while neither organisation was in a position of power over the other, rather than when Fianna Fáil took over government. Aiken believed that the 'Cease Fire Proposals' of

[1] A/G to O/C Limerick City Batt, 12 May 1932, in MTUCDA, P69/155 (228).

1923 were now applicable to the current situation and that the IRA could put its arms at the disposal of a government that would work towards achieving the republic. Aiken's proposal suggested that Twomey's "splendid record" would be rounded off by his agreeing this act of "everlasting value to the cause of freedom and social justice."[2]

While there was no suggestion of material reward for the IRA leadership if they chose this course it must have been probable that Twomey and other senior figures would have secured positions within the army or government.[3] However it seems clear that Aiken's interest was in ensuring that the IRA was brought under the authority of the new government and effectively neutralised. With its arms and men under the control of Fianna Fáil it could be used to siphon off republican enthusiasm among the young and at the same time be unable to launch its own initiatives which had the potential to destabilise the government. Whether Twomey realised this or not he was sufficiently wary to avoid replying to Aiken before putting the proposals to the Army Council. They unanimously rejected them and Twomey eventually informed Aiken that there was little point in further discussing the matter.[4]

Fearing that a public statement by Fianna Fáil of its proposals would confuse its rank and file the Army Council placed the Aiken correspondence before its Battalion Conventions and again the Fianna Fáil proposals were overwhelmingly rejected. At its Convention that Spring the IRA outlined its determination to remain an independent body and to retain control of its arms and equipment. While there were many different political viewpoints represented among the IRA leadership one point which united all factions was the desire to remain an independent force.

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[2] Frank Aiken to Twomey, 19 February 1932, in Aiken Papers, UCDA, P104/1322 (1-2).
[3] There were persistent claims that commissions in the National Army were offered to IRA officers. See Tomás Ó Maoilóin and Seán MacBride in MacEoin, *Survivors*, pp. 100 and 123.
[4] AC to Secretary Clan na Gael, 7 May 1932 in MTUCDA, P69/185 (298-302) and Twomey to Aiken, 1 March 1932, in Aiken Papers, UCDA, P104/1322 (9).

However the IRA also decided not "to hamper" Fianna Fáil in any "advance it may make towards National Independence." Noting that the government claimed to seek the establishment of a "republic for Ireland" then the IRA also asked it not to hamper their activities towards the same goal. The organisation also decided that while Fianna Fáil faced attack over its position on the Oath of Allegiance the IRA would not act aggressively towards them.[5]

Formal discussions between the two organisations occurred again in July 1932. On a visit to Cork, de Valera had met Tom Barry and told him of Fianna Fáil's plans to launch a volunteer force for 'National Defence.' Barry, who was not an IRA member at this stage, told de Valera that he was impressed by the progress of Fianna Fáil, especially the challenge to Britain posed by the withholding of Land Annuities.[6] He felt that he could speak to the IRA and possibly convince them of the value of being a part of the new force. Barry spoke to Twomey about the matter on several occasions and Twomey stressed that the IRA saw the situation as one which demanded political rather than military action. Barry however was convinced that if the IRA agreed to join the new force they could "practically control it" and prepare the ground for a military confrontation with Britain.

Barry arranged a meeting between de Valera, Aiken and the IRA leadership to discuss these matters. In the event Aiken represented Fianna Fáil, while Twomey, MacBride and George Gilmore were present for the IRA. They argued that what was the key was the organisation of popular agitation against Britain in the 26 counties and the formation of some form of united front to co-ordinate this. Aiken "said very little" except to stress that a volunteer force would definitely be launched. Aiken felt that since the Oath was no longer relevant, the Land Annuities being withheld and the Governor General "put in his place" there was no barrier to IRA participation in such a force. With regard

[5] AC to Secretary Clan, 7 May 1932, in MTUCDA, P69/185 (298-302)

to any popular agitation, Aiken made clear that the government would have to have full control of its organisation. Fianna Fáil had created the current political situation and could not allow any other groups to take advantage of it. The meeting ended without any decision being made.

The IRA impressed upon Barry that for him to call for recruits to the new volunteers would cause them severe problems. He in turn argued that he felt Fianna Fáil were "travelling as fast" as they could towards the establishment of a republic. The Army Council then forwarded a proposal to the Fianna Fáil Executive suggesting the formation of a conference of "national organisations and labour bodies" which could organise a campaign in support of the government's position in the Economic War. Fianna Fáil replied that the proposals were unacceptable and that they were organising a series of public meetings which the IRA should attend if it wished to support the government.[7]

Again Fianna Fáil had held out a tentative prospect of some IRA involvement in the national forces, but only on their terms. As Twomey noted later, the IRA had tried to reach an understanding with the government but Fianna Fáil had held out the choice of merging with it or becoming part of its militia.[8]

After these discussions there was little leadership contact between Fianna Fáil and the IRA aside from a series of meetings between Seán MacBride and de Valera during 1932 and 1933.[9] These meetings lasted several hours and were usually to deal with a specific problem such as the Donamon Castle affair.[10] MacBride tried to raise the question of co-operation between the two

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[6] Barry had been out of the IRA since the conclusion of the Civil War but was considering rejoining in the Summer of 1932. He had discussed this with Twomey in May of that year. See Barry to Twomey, 13 May 1932, in MTUCDA, P69/52 (63-64).

[7] All details of the meetings are contained in Confidential record of meetings with Fianna Fáil (nd) enclosed in communication from C/S to O/C Cork No. 1 Bdge, 19 July 1932, in MTUCDA, P69/52 (54-57). Twomey felt that Barry had left Dublin agreeing more with the IRA than Fianna Fáil but "then one never knows!"

[8] Twomey to Joseph McGarrity, 26 October 1933, in McGarrity Papers, Ms. 17,490 NLI.

[9] The IRA claimed in late 1932 that it "no regular direct contact" with the Fianna Fáil leadership. Chairman AC to Secretary, Clan na Gael, 8 November 1932, in MTUCDA, P69/185 (158).

organisations but he claimed de Valera constantly avoided dealing with political questions and instead reiterated the need for the maintenance of law and order. De Valera argued that the barriers to the Republic would be removed gradually and that the IRA should recognise majority rule and cease to oppose the government. MacBride's statement of the IRA's position, that in order to carry through the economic war successfully, a united front was needed, and that that would involve sacrifices and compromises on all sides was never answered by de Valera. MacBride's impression was that unless the IRA undertook to recognise "the authority of the elected Government of the people" de Valera felt it should disband. As a result MacBride felt that no useful or practical purpose came from their meetings, which in any case had ended by the Autumn of 1933.[11]

While the IRA harboured hopes of some form of united front involving Fianna Fáil, the government had no intention of allowing itself to be dragged into something it did not fully control. As its representatives had pointed out in July there was only one government in Ireland, not two.[12] Despite Aiken's assertion that the two organisations held essentially the same outlook there were very real differences, which were illustrated in the IRA's belief that the Economic War could be utilised to rouse the masses into a fight for the republic. At an early stage Twomey realised that Fianna Fáil had no "desire to rouse up the people."[13] Fianna Fáil hoped to incorporate and neutralise the IRA seeing it as a potentially disruptive force. The IRA for their part, ideological concerns aside, were obsessed with the maintenance of organisational independence and were never going to join someone else's army.

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[10] Explained in Chapter Two pp. 48.

[11] MacBride to Joseph MacGarrity, 19 October 1933, in McGarrity Papers Ms. 17,546 NLI. There were five meetings in all. Seán Russell accompanied MacBride to the last of these meetings.

[12] Report on the July discussions sent to Connie Neenan, the IRA's representative in the USA. Twomey to Neenan, 19 July 1932, in MTUCDA, P69/185 (269-271).

[13] C/S to Seamus Lennon, 23 July 1932, in MTUCDA, P69/52 (9).

The IRA's policy of using 'Anti-Imperialist' events to up the tempo of anti-British feeling was not unrealistic given the mood of republican supporters in the summer of 1932.[14] Fianna Fáil speakers took part in IRA organised rallies in Cork, Sligo and Limerick during July.[15] After the government's withholding of the Land Annuities a sense of defiance seems to have gripped republican Ireland, with County Councils and trade union branches proclaiming support for de Valera. The IRA felt that if it could "develop" this anti-British mood it could arouse enthusiasm for a campaign of non payment, which it feared the government would undermine by relying on legal tactics.[16] With the *Irish Press* enthusiastically reporting Army manoeuvres in the Curragh, the IRA could be forgiven for assuming renewed conflict with Britain was at hand.[17]

In the aftermath of Fianna Fáil's victory there did exist belief among the IRA that the new government might be able to lead the way to a republic. A senior IRA officer, writing in late March 1932, felt that if the Oath was removed and the Land Annuities withheld, the whole basis of the Cumann na nGaedheal party would be removed, leaving it a "conservative and reactionary" rump. A republican majority could then be easily secured, and a (26 county) republic declared. If this occurred the IRA might be able to put itself at the disposal of the government.[18]

The IRA felt at this stage that "aggressive" criticism of Fianna Fáil would only be used by the "Imperialists" to strengthen their position.[19] Twomey expressed the contradictory situation the IRA found itself in later that year. On

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[14] GHQ Order to local units, calling on them to organise rallies with speakers from "national, revolutionary and Trade Union" bodies, 6 July 1932, in MTUCDA, P69/158 (287).
[15] Frank Ryan and Peader O'Donnell were the IRA speakers. In Cork they were joined by TDs TP Dowdall and Martin Corry, in Limerick by Alderman D. Bourke TD and in Sligo by Mayor Lynch. *Irish Press*, 16, 18 and 22 July 1932.
[16] Chairman AC to Acting Secretary Clan na Gael, 30 July 1932, in MTUCDA, P69/185 (253-255).
[17] See reports of support from Clare, Kerry and Limerick County Councils and the Limerick Labour Party and ITGWU in *Limerick Leader*, 23 July 1932. For report on Army manoeuvres see *Irish Press*, 29 July 1932.
[18] Policy Document, 23 March 1932, in MTUCDA, P69/53 (377-380). The implicit acceptance of partition in this scenario will be returned to in a later chapter.
[19] AC to Secretary Clan na Gael, 7 May 1932, in MTUCDA, P69/185 (298-302).

the one hand Fianna Fáil seemed to be gaining in strength and Twomey felt that if De Valera went to the US he "would sweep everybody off their feet" and leave the IRA's supporters there isolated. Unless the IRA was careful the same thing would happen to them in Ireland during the next period. The problem was that any successful demonstrations carried out by the IRA seemed to reflect well on the government, but they also benefited republicans generally so the IRA could not cease to carry them out.[20] As Twomey exclaimed "nobody visualised a Free State which Republicans were not supposed to attack!" But that was what they now faced in the 26 counties. While there were many problems with this state the key issue was that the IRA did not want the return of the "Cosgrave Imperial Gang" and therefore had to avoid activities that might weaken Fianna Fáil.[21] However over the next year the IRA initiated or was drawn into conflicts which worsened the relationship between itself and the government. This also had the effect of exacerbating divisions within the IRA itself.

The question of supporting Fianna Fáil in an electoral contest was again put to the IRA by the announcement of a general election in January 1933. An indication of both changed attitudes and circumstances is given in an exchange of letters between Twomey and an old comrade, Senator Bill Quirke. Twomey expressed the view that as much as he "would hate" to see Cumann na nGaedheal in office again, he was "not enthusiastic" about supporting the government. He was "frankly very disappointed" with Fianna Fáil and could not tell what position the IRA would take until a special meeting was held. Quirke replied to Twomey's "rather depressing letter" by urging him to make every effort to secure co-operation. He raised the spectre of what would happen if Cumann na nGaedheal was returned. The world would look "on us (the lot) as the greatest bunch of slaves that ever got a chance of liberty and refused to be freed." British economic warfare would have succeeded and Ireland set back to "the time of the Act of Union." However Quirke's letter also asserted that

[20] Twomey to Neenan, 19 July 1932, P69/185 (269-271).

whatever difficulty Twomey may have had with the election if "left to themselves the Volunteers will decide to co-operate."[22] This was also implied by Twomey when he explained the fear within the IRA of being seen to help the "Imperialists" by attacking Fianna Fáil. "Most" of the IRA supporters simply expected it to back Fianna Fáil.[23]

The IRA decided to support Fianna Fáil again at an Extraordinary Convention held on 8 January. The tone of the IRA's manifesto made it clear that they were supporting Fianna Fáil reluctantly, as they in no way committed themselves to the policy of that party. They supported Fianna Fáil only to drive out of "public life a party that has sold itself to the British Empire, and which would, if returned to office ... force Civil War."[24] In the event the election saw a record turnout of 80% and the return of 77 Fianna Fáil TDs. The party was now able to form a majority government.[25]

Prior to the IRA's March 1933 Convention the leadership outlined their view of the previous year. Disappointment was expressed that while the IRA had avoided action which could have impeded the government, in return "to put it mildly, not much assistance" was given by Fianna Fáil. Instead the Police and "CID" tried to provoke conflict, and IRA members increasingly found themselves in jail. The government's economic policy had "upheld and bolstered the capitalist system" with the result that they could clearly state that Fianna Fáil policy ran counter to the aims of the IRA. Now for the first time the Army Council expressed the belief that Fianna Fáil's policies were "bound to lead to widespread disillusionment amongst great proportion of its republican supporters,

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[21] Twomey to McGarrity, 25 August 1932 in MTUCDA, P69/185 (216).
[22] Twomey to Quirke, 4 January, and Quirke to Twomey, 7 January 1933 in MTUCDA, P69/53 (357-360). Quirke had escaped with Twomey from Spike Island in 1921. See Chapter One.
[23] Twomey to Neenan, 15 September 1932, in MTUCDA, P69/185 (190-191).
[24] *An Phoblacht*, 14 January 1933.
[25] Gallagher, *Irish Elections*, pp. 175-176.

and of the workers and working farmers." The IRA hoped that the convention could decide how best to harness this discontent.[26]

What the convention did clearly show was that there were growing divisions among the IRA's leadership on how to deal with Fianna Fáil. Already in September 1932 George Gilmore had tried to resign from the Army Council citing his belief that all anti-Free State opinion in Ireland was now "hopelessly Pro-Dev." He felt that Fianna Fáil would "hold the field for a long time to come" and that there was little the IRA would be able to do about it. However Gilmore was eventually persuaded to reconsider, on the basis that the political situation "far from being settled" was actually in a "very fluid state." In reality Gilmore's assertion that a revolutionary situation did not exist in Ireland and that the IRA were in for "a pretty bad time" was more realistic than he probably realised.[27] At the convention his close ally, Peadar O'Donnell, re-iterated that the IRA had supported Fianna Fáil only "because it was a stick to beat Cosgrave." But now he felt that some within the movement were "adjusting themselves to the Fianna Fáil policy." He implied that Seán MacBride had stated if the Oath and the Governor General were abolished then the IRA would have to think seriously about its position as an independent force.[28] MacBride denied this, but O'Donnell would persist with his allegation.[29] Frank Ryan warned that unless the IRA returned to its policies of 1930-31 they would become a "left wing of Fianna Fáil." George Gilmore agreed, stating that unless the IRA formed its

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[26] A/G to Commanders of Independent Units, 18 February 1933, in MTUCDA, P69/187 (1-3).

[27] Gilmore to Chairman AC, 16 September and Chairman AC to Gilmore, 6 October 1932, in MTUCDA, P69/53 (367-369). Gilmore contrasted his views on the likelihood of revolution with those of Peadar O'Donnell, who Gilmore suggested believed that all that was lacking in Ireland was "someone to assume leadership."

[28] Notes of General Army Convention, (GAC) March 1933, in MTUCDA, P69/187 (90-118). The fact that MacBride had briefly been on the staff of the *Evening Press* had also led to some suspicion of him within the IRA. A/G to O/C Dublin Brigade, 6 June 1932, in MTUCDA, P69/155 (73).

[29] O'Donnell to Cumann na mBan Executive, 20 April 1934, in Humphreys Papers, UCDA, P106/1154 (4). At that meeting O'Donnell claimed that MacBride had stated that he would favour the IRA giving up its arms if Fianna Fáil abolished the Oath, the Governor Generalship and withheld the Annuities. Gilmore alleged that MacBride had made this statement to him in Elliot's Hotel in Dublin during 1932 following a meeting between Gilmore, Twomey and de Valera. Gilmore Notes, PP.

own political organisation and challenged the government, they would simply be a "safety valve" for de Valera's party. Nevertheless we should not underestimate the existence within the IRA of those who felt that the organisation was *too* critical of the government. Certainly Tom Barry would have fallen into this category in early 1933 although his attitude was to change later.[30]

As the convention admitted attempts by the IRA to involve Fianna Fáil in its 'Boycott British' campaign had been a failure.[31] However despite passing resolutions which indicated a harder line towards Fianna Fáil, the majority at the convention disagreed with Ryan and Gilmore. The IRA was to make clear its belief that the Fianna Fáil government was not a "legitimate national authority' and was not therefore entitled to the allegiance of Irish citizens. The IRA demanded the repeal of all "coercive" legislation as it was the organisations "National right" to drill and hold arms. Furthermore a resolution was passed banning members of "Free State" parties from speaking at IRA events. This would in theory, exclude Fianna Fáil members from IRA platforms. Most importantly however the majority at the convention agreed that "politically the IRA would have to take a back seat for some time as Fianna Fáil held political sway...owing to their so-called popular National advances." The majority of the convention decided to leave the matter of separate political organisation for the next convention and concentrate on building up the IRA's military expertise.[32]

The disputes over the attitude to Fianna Fáil showed the increasing disenchantment of O'Donnell, Gilmore and Ryan. O'Donnell would claim that he had been ordered in March 1932 not to criticise Fianna Fáil publicly, and that several articles he submitted to *An Phoblacht* were censored. Shortly after the Convention Ryan resigned as editor of *An Phoblacht*, and was soon followed

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[30] Barry complained that *An Phoblacht* spent too much time attacking the goverment and not enough attacking the British. C/S to Seán Buckley, 6 December and reply, 11 December 1932, in MTUCDA, P69/54 (46-47) & (50-51).

[31] During November 1932 only three local FF Cumann had sought information about the boycott campaign. Report by Secretary National Committee Boycott British League, 22 November 1932, in Humphreys Papers, UCDA, P106/2101 (10-22).

[32] Notes of 1933 GAC, P69/187 (75-79).

by his deputy Hannah Sheehy Skeffington, who told Twomey she was worried that the IRA was moving to the right and becoming a "Bulmer Hobson-MacNeill wing of Fianna Fáil."[33] The experience of Fianna Fáil in power was the catalyst for the split in the IRA.

Twomey remained convinced that the IRA's policies were framed correctly to appeal to disillusioned Fianna Fáil opinion, despite relations growing even more hostile during the summer and autumn of 1933. De Valera even took the step of writing to Joseph McGarrity to ask him to use his influence with the IRA to ask not to continue to "embarrass" the government by their activities.[34] While Twomey now believed that some of the Fianna Fáil leadership hated the IRA more than they did the Blueshirts he remained convinced that 75% of the government's supporters desired some co-operation between Fianna Fáil and the IRA. He had seen signs of a "left-wing" developing in Fianna Fáil but the emergence of the Blueshirts had frightened them back into De Valera's hands. Nevertheless he felt it was only the fear of a return to power of the "imperialist amalgamation" that held Fianna Fáil together. Within the IRA there was now considerable hostility to supporting Fianna Fáil again and increasing demands that the organisation challenge them in the 1934 local elections.[35] Twomey believed that the time had come to discuss the formation of a political organisation to challenge Fianna Fáil, and take advantage of the discontent both he and MacBride were sure existed among the government's supporters.[36]

The IRA had fundamentally misconcevied the political situation confronting it in the Free State. Firstly they could not see that Fianna Fáil's policies might be satisfying the aspirations of most republican voters, rather then simply

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[33] Ryan's resignation was announced in *An Phoblacht*, 1 April 1933. Sheehy Skeffington to Twomey, 2 April 1933, in MTUCDA, P69/53 (167-169).

[34] McGarrity to Twomey, 3 October 1933, in McGarrity papers, Ms. 17,490 NLI.

[35] Twomey to McGarrity, 26 October 1933, in McGarrity Papers, Ms. 17,490 NLI. The issue of standing candidates in the Local Elections had been discussed at the 1933 GAC but voted down. Notes of 1933 GAC, in MTUCDA, P69/187 (90-118)

[36] MacBride was convinced that "great pressure" was being exerted from within Fianna Fáil on De Valera to make him enter into an agreement with the IRA. MacBride to McGarrity, 19 October 1933, Ms. 17,456 NLI.

"popularising the Treaty" and making the IRA's task more difficult.[37] Because of their belief that they had every right to arm, train and carry out their activities they could not understand how this was not tolerated by a 'republican' government. Their relative lack of violent activities during 1932 was something they thought they should be complimented on rather than something that the government expected of them. When they did find themselves on the wrong side of the government they felt that instinctively the republican rank and file would defend them.

This contradiction shared by all factions within the IRA came to the fore again during the acrimonious 1934 convention. Both those who supported the call for a republican congress and those who stayed loyal to the IRA held that Fianna Fáil had failed and was losing support. O'Donnell, stating that Fianna Fáil could not "possibly unite the country" used this as an argument for the launch of a political challenge to them. However opponents of any new direction such as Mick Fitzpatrick argued that Fianna Fáil now claimed the IRA was not the same organisation as during the 1919-23 period and that a new departure would give them more ammunition for this claim. The basis of the IRA's constitution had been drawn up by Frank Aiken during 1925 and this made it more difficult for Fianna Fáil to argue that they were a "new" IRA.[38]

There was general agreement that there was a pronounced difference in the government's attitude to the IRA, with Ryan, MacBride and JJ Sheehy all noting a new hostility to the organisation. This was also used by some to argue against confrontation.[39] MacBride felt that any new initiatives could give the government an excuse to clampdown on the IRA. He also claimed however, that "the people who supported them are now leaving Fianna Fáil disappointed" leaving a vacuum in leadership. A supporter of the Congress proposal, Tom

[37] Notes of 1933 GAC, P69/187 (75-76).
[38] Notes of March 1934 GAC, in MacEntee Papers, UCDA, P67/525.
[39] Ryan noted how at one time FF claimed to value the IRA but "now they treat us with contempt." MacBride argued it was the intention of Fianna Fáil to "crush the IRA", while JJ

Maguire of Westmeath, used an example of "whole Fianna Fáil clubs" coming over to the IRA as proof that the government had indeed failed to fulfil its supporters expectations. Following the Convention Donal O'Donoghue also claimed that the IRA had drawn numbers of Fianna Fáil into its organisation and too radical a departure politically would only antagonise the people who were gradually realising the government was failing them.[40] Even as late as 1935, with the leadership of his organisation on the run and Twomey himself in hiding he could on the one hand admit that it was "a waste of time" to hope for revolts within Fianna Fáil, but at the same time claim that "people are being rapidly disillusioned" by the government's policies.[41]

At the same time there existed a belief among some of the IRA leadership at least, that de Valera and the government were still concerned about their opinions. This belief was certainly encouraged by Joseph McGarrity of the Clan na Gael whose long distance misinterpretations of the relationship between de Valera and the IRA have been much commented on.[42] It was this belief which saw a meeting between Seán Russell and de Valera at Government Buildings during 1934, where Russell pledged that the IRA would not cause the government difficulties if they agreed to declare a republic within five years. De Valera, who continued to demand a hand over of arms from the IRA would not consider the proposal, and indeed there was no reason why a popularly elected leader should defer to suggestions from an organisation of declining importance with a contracting base of support.[43]

Sheehy felt that with the Blueshirts defeated De Valera would now "hit out" at the IRA. Notes of 1934 GAC.

[40] Meeting of Cumann na mBan Executive and AC Representatives, 18 April 1934, in Humphreys Papers, UCDA, P106/1153 (1-4).

[41] Twomey to McGarrity, 7 October 1935, in McGarrity Papers, Ms. 17,490 NLI.

[42] See comments on De Valera's reply to a letter from McGarrity asking him to bring about an "understanding" with the IRA in Ronan Fanning, 'The Rule of Order': Eamon de Valera and the IRA, 1923-40' in O'Carroll and Murphy (eds) *De Valera and His Times*, p. 161-171 and English, *Radicals*, pp. 173-174 and 240.

[43] *Irish Independent*, 10 December 1936. Whether or not Russell was acting on official IRA instructions is harder to judge. His visit to De Valera was revealed by him two years later (in a letter to the press!) and was one of the charges made against him at his IRA Court Martial. Russell to McGarrity, 29 January 1937, in McGarrity Papers, Ms. 17,485 NLI.

Why did men as capable, if disimilar in outlook as Twomey, MacBride, O'Donnell and Gilmore envisage the prospect of republicans benefiting from a collapse in Fianna Fáil's support? Partially the answer must lie in the self sustaining nature of their ideology, the belief that ultimately they were right and that the Irish people would eventually realise that. But there were also more practical reasons for believing such an outcome was possible, particularly when one looks at the relationship between the two organisations at rank and file level. For a period it did seem as if the Fianna Fáil government was leading Ireland to a confrontation with Britain. There was also considerable evidence that much of the Fianna Fáil organisation found it difficult to sever ties with the IRA.

Incidences of cross over in membership continued to trouble the IRA for a period. In May 1932 two companies in north Clare had to be disbanded because their membership were all "Fianna Fáil and would not leave it."[44] A year later Twomey found the IRA in Kilmallock Co. Limerick was dominated by Fianna Fáil members. The treasurer of the local Fianna Fáil cumann was also an IRA member.[45] Indeed in Limerick a local officer complained that there was not enough distinction between Fianna Fáil and his organisation.[46] During 1932 at least three IRA members were employed as drivers for government ministers, including Seán T. O'Kelly.[47] More importantly there was a widespread perception that the Fianna Fáil government would take care of republicans who had been discriminated against under the previous government.

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[44] O/C North Clare to A/G, 23 May 1932, in MTUCDA, P69/155 (195).

[45] 30 IRA members were also FF and their O/C was "very inclined" to that party. Kilmallock had been the site of the first serious confrontation between republicans and the ACA in October 1932. C/S to M. MacNamara, 23 February 1933, in MTUCDA, P69/53 (290-292).

[46] Seán Lanigan at the 1933 GAC, Notes of GAC, P69/187 (103).

[47] A/G to O/C Dublin Brigade, 6 June and C/S to O/C Dublin Brigade, 10 June 1932, in MTUCDA, P69/155 (71-73). There seem to have been at least six IRA members or reservists who worked as drivers for ministers. I/O Dub. Bdge. to D/I, 28 July 1932, in MTUCDA, P69/199 (102). See also Kevin Boland, *The Rise and Decline of Fianna Fáil*, (Dublin, 1982) pp. 30-31.

The IRA leadership received many requests to use their perceived influence with Fianna Fáil to secure employment for their supporters. One Mitchelstown man, who had heard Twomey enjoyed great influence with Tom Derrig, the new Minister for Education, wrote hoping a position as a teacher could be arranged for his son.[48] A republican from Carrick on Suir wrote hoping to secure compensation for his mother, who had lost her job in 1922 because her sons had fought with the Anti-Treaty forces. Local Fianna Fáil supporters had convinced him to write to Twomey, because they believed the IRA had "tremendous influence" on the new government and their intervention would "practically ensure its success."[49] The IRA leadership did urge its officers and "intelligent Volunteers" in Cavan to apply for work at the Labour Exchanges in Cavan Town and Bailieboro, on the basis that local Fianna Fáil TDS had control of appointments there.[50] There were also attempts to use the IRA's influence to prevent Cumann na nGaedheal supporters being appointed, as in the case of a doctor in Carrickmacross, Co. Monaghan. IRA leaders were urged by their local officers to pressurise Frank Aiken to prevent the post going to an ex-Free State officer.[51]

How much real influence the IRA leadership did have is harder to judge. Twomey asked Tom Derrig to help attain a teaching position for the wife of Army Council member Mick Price, but Derrig, while sympathetic to her case, was not hopeful of being able to help her.[52] Even in the case of a leading figure like Andy Cooney, who had applied for the post of Dublin City Coroner, meetings with Derrig and Seán MacEntee failed to secure him the post.[53]

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[48] WJ Ryan to Twomey, 2 August 1932, in MTUCDA, P69/54 (219-220).
[49] D. Healy to Twomey, (nd) in MTUCDA, P69/55 (26-27).
[50] A/G to O/C Cavan Batt, 28 January 1933, in MTUCDA, P69/55 (30).
[51] O/C, Carrickmacross Batt. to A/G, 14 March 1933 in Aiken Papers, UCDA, P104/2848.
[52] Tom Derrig to Twomey, 4 February 1933, in MTUCDA, P69/55 (33).
[53] MacEvilly, *IRA Chief* pp. 176-181.

However Twomey's relationship with Derrig does seem to have secured Tomás Ó Maoileóin's registration as a Secondary School teacher.[54]

Nevertheless the IRA informed one veteran from Enniskillen who inquired about compensation for Civil War service that the organisation had "no intimate connection" with the government at all.[55] There is some evidence of concrete assistance in Kerry, where the secretary of Kenmare Fianna Fáil was instrumental in gaining employment for some local IRA members.[56] Fianna Fáil were later to claim that they had provided numerous "positions and favours" to IRA members in the county.[57] Indeed a Westmeath IRA officer complained that men were joining the IRA and Fianna Fáil simply to get jobs.[58] However the IRA leadership had made it clear that while they had no objection to their members in Kerry leading deputations to Fianna Fáil TDs seeking work, they were to do so as civilians, not as IRA officers.[59]

The mood of euphoria among republicans made the Easter 1932 commemorations the largest in many years, conjuring up images of "the old Sinn Féin and IRA days."[60] Seán McCool described how Easter 1932 "did one's heart good after all the black years ... the youth are with us and that's everything."[61] What was notable throughout the year was the participation of Fianna Fáil TDs and councillors in events organised by the IRA. This clearly gave the impression that the two organisations were working in tandem. When Gilmore spoke in Ballymahon, Co. Longford his meeting was presided over by local councillor Thomas Carter. A talk by Frank Ryan on 'Republicanism and

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[54] Secretary, An Roinn Oideachais, to Ó Maoileóin, 4 January 1933, copy forwarded to Twomey, in MTUCDA, P69/53 (356).
[55] Unsigned letter to Joseph J. Maguire, 5 January 1933, in MTUCDA, P69/55 (17-18).
[56] I/O Kenmare to D/I, 9 April 1934, in Jus 8/319 NAI.
[57] See statement in *Kerry Champion*, 26 January 1935.
[58] Tom Maguire at the 1933 GAC, Notes of GAC, P69/187 (116).
[59] A/G to Adjt. Dingle Batt. 25 August 1932, in MTUCDA, P69/158 (201).
[60] 10,000 in Dublin, *Irish Press*, 28 March 1932, 8,000 in Galway, *Connaught Tribune*, 2 April 1932, 5,000 in Drumshambo, *Sligo Champion*, 2 April 1932, 4,000 in Tipperary Town and 10,000 in Stranorlar, Co. Donegal, 3,000 in Castleisland, 2,700 in Caherciveen and 500 in Listowel Co. Kerry. *Kerry Champion*, 2 April 1932.
[61] Seán McCool, Donegal, to Frank Ryan, 28 March 1932, in MTUCDA, P69/235 (5-6). McCool estimated 10,000 had marched at Drumboe, headed by 350 IRA members.

the IRA' in Sligo was chaired by Alderman J. Lynch. TDs Tom McEllistrim, John Flynn and Eamonn Kissane were present at several IRA commemorations in Co. Kerry that spring.[62] Three TDs also attended the Wolfe Tone commemoration at Bodenstown in June.[63] Even with the growing division between the two organisations nationally over the next two years, incidences like these continued to be relatively commonplace. 1933's Easter commemorations saw Fianna Fáil participation in IRA events in Sligo, Kilkenny, Wexford and Offaly.[64]

At Sligo's Easter commemoration in 1934, Alderman Lynch, now Mayor of the town, read the IRA's statement.[65] In Ennis, Councillor Seán Hayes presided over the commemoration and urged young men to "join the republican army."[66] Neal Blaney TD marched in the IRA's Drumboe commemoration in Donegal and in Arklow, Co. Wicklow there was a strong showing by the local Fianna Fáil Cumann at the IRA's Easter ceremony.[67] Even as late as 1935 some Fianna Fáil members from Cork and Wexford were expected to travel to Bodenstown with their local IRA units.[68] Earlier that year when Fianna Fáil attempted to introduce a new badge, the 'Torch,' in place of the Lily, there was a backlash from the organisation's rank and file.[69] The party's North Leitrim Executive condemned the move as a "weakening from the Republican idea." Cumainn in Listowel Co. Kerry refused to display or distribute the new

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[62] *Longford Leader*, 15 October 1932, *Sligo Champion*, 8 October 1932 and *Kerry Champion*, 16 and 30 April 1932.

[63] Richard Walsh, (Mayo South), Stephen Jordan, (Galway) and John Flynn (Kerry). *Irish Press*, 20 June 1932.

[64] In Dublin the Noel Lemass Cumann marched with the IRA, in Sligo Alderman Lynch again chaired proceedings, and in Tullamore Councillor PF Adams chaired the commemoration. *Irish Press*, 17 April 1933 and *Offaly Independent*, 22 April 1933.

[65] Garda report, 4 April 1934, in Jus 8/314 NAI.

[66] *Clare Champion*, 12 May 1934.

[67] *An Phoblacht*, 7 April 1934 and Garda report, 1 April 1934, in Jus 8/315 NAI.

[68] Local reports to Secretary Wolfe Tone Commemoration, 19 June 1935, in Humphrey's Papers, UCDA, P106/2107 (20) and (31).

[69] The 'Torch- symbol of a resurgent nation' was chosen "so the men of 1916 could be honoured without contributing to another organisation." FF Ard Fheis, *Irish Independent*, 5 December 1935.

badges.[70] The party's Roscrea Cumann was dissolved for refusing to sell the new emblem.[71] News of the "great upset" within Fianna Fáil gave heart to Twomey who was on the run following arrests during the Dublin Tram strike.[72]

Much of that could be considered sentimental attachment to republican symbolism. However the reaction within Fianna Fáil to the IRA's activities shows that at rank and file level considerable sympathy for the organisation continued to exist despite the growing chasm at leadership level. Despite warnings from De Valera that illegal possession of arms would not be tolerated by the government, the November 1932 Fianna Fáil Ard Fheis was dominated by calls (22 motions in all) for the disbanding of the 'CID.'[73] Already that month a Fianna Fáil Cumann in Ballinrobe had threatened to resign from the party over the jailing of a local IRA member.[74] 1932 had been a reasonably peaceful year so perhaps there was little reason to expect a breach between the IRA and the Fianna Fáil rank and file. However 1933 saw increasing violence, and provocative activities by the IRA leading to arrests and jailings. But the Fianna Fáil Ard Fheis again heard calls from the floor for the release of republican prisoners, or the granting of political status to IRA men in Mountjoy and Arbour Hill. Delegates raised accusations of ill-treatment and compared government policy to that of Cumann na nGaedheal. The MC of the Ard Fheis Ceilidhe interrupted the proceedings to inform delegates that he agreed with the actions of Galway IRA men jailed for seizing a British war film.[75] The South East Cork Comhairle Ceanntair of the party also condemned these arrests.[76] Fianna Fáil cumainn praised the efforts made by Senator Michael Comyn in "upholding the honour of the IRA" against a "scurrilous" attack by an

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[70] *Irish Independent*, 27 March and *Kerry Champion*, 6 April 1935.
[71] *Irish Press*, 18 April 1935.
[72] Twomey, 29 March 1935, in Humphreys Papers, UCDA, P106/1688.
[73] *An Phoblacht*, 5 November 1932 and *Irish Independent*, 7 November 1932.
[74] Séamus de Búrca to Peadar O'Donnell, 7 November 1932, in MTUCDA, P69/158 (34-35).
[75] *Irish Press*, 9 November 1933 and *An Phoblacht*, 11 November 1933.
[76] General Secretary Fianna Fáil to Minister for Justice, 17 October 1933, in D/J H306/31 NAI.

opposition senator.[77] Following the arrest and jailing of leading Kerry IRA members after a serious riot in Tralee, the Kerry Comhairle Ceanntair of Fianna Fáil called for their release. Tralee Fianna Fáil member Ned Drummond claimed that almost all the Kerry Fianna Fáil Cumainn had passed resolutions demanding the release of the prisoners.[78]

By 1934 the breach between the IRA and Fianna Fáil should have been complete. *An Phoblacht* was increasingly seized or censored by the authorities and every week brought new cases of IRA prisoners tried before the non jury Military Tribunal.[79] Pressure from within the IRA meant the organisation stood candidates against Fianna Fáil in many areas during the June local elections. Nine were elected as 'Independent republicans', providing evidence of a small base for the IRA electorally.[80] However even then, in some areas IRA members continued to give assistance to Fianna Fáil candidates.[81] *An Phoblacht* regularly carried reports of Fianna Fáil Cumainn who called for the release of IRA prisoners at various stages between 1933 and 1935.[82] The Fianna Fáil Kerry County Executive grew exasperated with its members who "having been silent in the face of brutal attacks on their own supporters" had rallied around the cases of IRA prisoners who had made "unproven allegations" about ill treatment.[83]

Even so during 1935 both in public and in private Fianna Fáil members continued to attack the government's policies towards the IRA. The Fianna Fáil dominated Clare County Council voted unanimously to call on the government to repeal the Public Safety Act, Seán Hayes describing it a law designed to keep

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[77] *An Phoblacht*, 23 September 1933.
[78] *Kerry Champion*, 25 November, 9 and 16 December 1933.
[79] Despite the advice of the Attorney General who did not favour censorship of it, *An Phoblacht* was subject to repeated raids and seizures from late December 1933 onwards. See Att. Gen. to Dept of Justice, 27 November 1934 in Jus 8/68 NAI.
[80] Seán O'Farrell topped the poll in Carrick on Shannon. As well as another councillor in Leitrim, IRA supporters won seats in Longford (2), Westmeath (2), Ennis, Tralee, and Letterkenny. *Leitrim Observer, Longford Leader, Westmeath Independent, Clare Champion* and *Kerry Champion*, 30 June 1934.
[81] See GHQ to Listowel, 16 July 1934, in Aiken Papers, UCDA, P104/2854 (23).
[82] Between 10 October 1933 and 16 February 1935 *An Phoblacht* carried reports of 24 FF Cumann passing anti-government motions.
[83] *Kerry Champion*, 26 January 1935.

Ireland "in subjection." [84] Fianna Fáil's members on Tralee Urban District Council backed a motion calling for an inquiry into ill-treatment of IRA prisoners in the Curragh.[85] Similar motions were submitted from Cumainn in Tipperary and Kerry.[86] Fianna Fáil members on Donegal County Council, including Neal Blaney TD, endorsed the Republican Congress appeal for unity between all republican organisations.[87] A unity meeting also sponsored by Congress was initially endorsed by Fianna Fáil TD Dan Breen and by representatives of four of the party's Cumainn.[88] Pleas for the removal of IRA prisoners from the Curragh, or the unconditional release of others were forwarded through Kerry TDs Kissane, McEllistrim and Denis Daly.[89] With that background it is understandable that Twomey could believe in January 1935 that the movement was "going to gather great strength very rapidly" because Fianna Fáil Cumann were "speaking out openly against the coercion of Republicans."[90]

The reasons for these motions help illustrate several different reasons for the lingering sympathy within Fianna Fáil for the IRA. Duagh Fianna Fáil in Co. Kerry wanted clemency for local IRA men because they came from "a badly hit section of the community, who have up to now helped our party."[91] One of the Tralee IRA prisoners was the son of a Fianna Fáil UDC member. His father expressed the continuing contradiction in rank and file Fianna Fáil attitudes to the state when he claimed his son was only in jail because "like all young Kerry lads" he refused to give Gardai an account of his movements.[92]

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[84] Report, 27 February 1935 in Jus 8/398 NAI.
[85] Tralee Urban District Council to Secretary Department of Justice, 10 January 1935, in Aiken Papers, UCDA, P104/2801 (100).
[86] Gortagarry FF Cumann, 21 January, Ballymackey Cumann, 16 January, Toomevara Parish Council, 22 January, all Tipperary and Thomas Ashe FF Cumann, Tralee, 11 January 1935. All in Aiken Papers, UCDA, P104/2801 (85, 87, 93, 100, 103).
[87] *Donegal Democrat*, 29 June 1935.
[88] *Notes on the Republican Congress Movement*, MacEntee Papers, UCDA, P67/527, pp. 18.
[89] Kissane to Frank Aiken, 13 February, McEllistrim to Aiken, 4 February and Daly to Aiken, 5 February 1935, in Aiken Papers, UCDA, P104/2801 (77-83).
[90] Twomey to Mary MacSwiney, 24 January 1935, in MacSwiney Papers, UCDA, P48A/199.
[91] Duagh FF to Eamon Kissane TD, 8 February 1935, in Aiken Papers, UCDA, P104/2801 (77-78).
[92] D. Curran to Secretary Dept. of Defence, 31 December 1934, in Aiken Papers, UCDA, P104/2801 (108).

Tipperary Fianna Fáil members demanded the release of a local IRA man because in 1931 he had been secretary of their Cumann and had done "a lion's share" to "oust the Cosgrave government."[93] More concerned with political factors both Daly and McEllistrim felt clemency would improve support for the government in Kerry where sympathy for IRA prisoners was "general" and would also remove a propaganda weapon from the IRA.[94]

Why were Fianna Fáil members so eager to protest on behalf of an organisation that was undermining their government? Initially at least, it was because the IRA was *not* trying to impair the government. Its policy was to support Fianna Fáil in so far as it challenged Britain. Therefore many Fianna Fáil members could happily attend IRA events and cheer speakers who called for a stepping up of pressure against the 'Imperialists.'[95] After all there was nothing in the IRA that was "inimical to the people of the country" according to Paddy Ruttledge, Minister for Lands and Fisheries.[96] Unlike for example the ACA, Fianna Fáil representatives could argue that the IRA had "their roots in the sentiments of our people."[97] There was nothing surprising then in Seán Moylan TD being asked by the IRA to help recover rifles they felt may have been hidden by Fianna Fáil supporters in Cork.[98] In Stranorlar, Co. Donegal, Seán McCool was proposed and seconded as a council candidate by the area's Fianna Fáil Cumann, even though he was not a member of the party![99] Moreover organisations dominated by Fianna Fáil such as the United Farmer's

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[93] PA Tierney to Frank Aiken, 18 January 1935, in Aiken Papers, UCDA, P104/2801 (94-95).

[94] Daly to Aiken, 5 February and McEllistrim to Aiken, 4 February 1935, in Aiken Papers, UCDA, P104/2801 (80-83). McEllistrim believed that it was sometimes necessary to "go out of ones way to please small boys."

[95] The IRA's Anti-Imperialist rally in Sligo saw crowds cheer O'Donnell and Ryan with shouts of "up De Valera." *Irish Press*, 18 July 1932. At a commemoration in Clara, Co. Offaly in April 1932 the IRA's Seán McGuinness had told the 6,000 strong crowd that a least now an "honest man - De Valera" was at the helm of government. *Offaly Independent*, 2 April 1932.

[96] Speech in Longford quoted in *Kerry Champion*, 27 July 1932.

[97] Senator Michael Comyn speaking on the 22 August 1933, in *Seanad Debates*, Vol. XVII.

[98] Seán Russell report on North Cork Battalion, 10 June 1932, in MTUCDA, P69/155 (154-157).

[99] McCool to C/S, 10 January 1933, in MTUCDA, P69/53 (16-17).

Association in Cork could pledge "complete support to the Irish Republican Army."[100] Given that the IRA was again putting its weight behind Fianna Fáil's re-election effort that month such pronouncements seemed natural.

The practical value to Fianna Fáil of the IRA's support is illustrated by reports on election work from north Mayo. There 215 IRA men were "working day and night" on the election campaign. In a show of strength over 100 men had marched in formation to the Fianna Fáil election rooms on 10 January. A week later they had provided stewards for a visit by De Valera, disarming some members of the Army Comrades Association who had beaten up a local republican youngster. An IRA reserve of 60 men was on hand to give help wherever it was needed.[101]

The attitude of many Fianna Fáil supporters to IRA involvement in clashes with the newly formed ACA is not difficult to explain. During 1932 and 1933 supporters of Fianna Fáil were as likely to have been involved in violence against Cumann na nGaedheal supporters as IRA members were. While the IRA's clashes with the ACA are often seen as part a policy summed up by Frank Ryan as not allowing "free speech for traitors" the organisation did not have a policy on meetings of Cumann na nGaedheal in the autumn and winter of 1932.[102] The first major clash between republicans and the ACA occurred in Kilmallock, Co. Limerick on the 9 of October 1932. Several hours of rioting only ended after the ACA were escorted out of the town by soldiers. During the disturbances the republicans had been addressed by the Chairman of East Limerick Fianna Fáil and at court cases following the events Gardai referred to

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[100] *An Phoblacht*, 1 January 1933. Twomey assessed the makeup of the UFA as "largely Fianna Fáil, Republican and a few sort of neutral." Twomey to McGarrity, 26 October 1933, in McGarrity Papers, Ms. 17,490 NLI.

[101] O/C North Mayo Batt to A/G, 20 and 22 January 1933, in MTUCDA, P69/53 (121-124).

[102] Ryan was speaking at an Anti-Imperialist League rally in Dublin. See *Irish Independent*, 11 November 1932. The IRA leadership had their first formal discussion on how to approach these meetings on 24 November that year. Chairman AC to each member Army Executive, 18 November 1932, in MTUCDA, P69/155 (30).

rioters as the "Fianna Fáil crowd."[103] As we have already seen the IRA in Kilmallock was dominated by Fianna Fáil members. Twomey later argued that violent clashes with the Blueshirts were largely "spontaneous" and very often carried out by Fianna Fáil supporters.[104]

There were three occasions in late 1932 when the IRA's policy of avoiding conflict with the state forces was put to the test. The first and the most serious occurred in August when Gilmore and TJ Ryan were arrested in Kilrush, Co. Clare by detectives and in the process shot and wounded. The IRA's response was to demand the disbandment of the 'CID' but not to allow any "pretext for armed clashes."[105] An inquiry found that the detectives were guilty of violation of duty and they were dismissed.[106] The second case involved the training camp established by the IRA for several years in Donamon Castle Co. Roscommon. Despite there being no problems with the Gardai, the IRA considered that training efforts on that scale made confrontation inevitable and as the "temper of the enemy forces, as disclosed in Kilrush" made armed conflict likely, they should not be attempted.[107]

Later that year there were serious clashes at a Cumann na nGaedheal meeting in Cork City, and Gardai dispersed republican counter demonstrators with baton charges.[108] The IRA in Cork felt constrained because they were under orders not to confront police and therefore had to stand by as "some of our men got beaten up yesterday."[109]

During August 1932 Dr. TF O'Higgins published a list of 12 incidents which he claimed proved that the ACA was needed to protect free speech. Only three were actions carried out by the IRA and two of these were without

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[103] Manning, *Blueshirts*, pp. 41-42. and *Irish Independent*, 10 November 1932.
[104] Twomey to McGarrity, 26 October 1933, in McGarrity Papers, Ms. 17,490 NLI.
[105] C/S to O/C Cork No. 1 Bgde, 10 September 1932, in MTUCDA, P69/155 (39).
[106] See O'Halpin, *Defending Ireland*, pp. 112-113, and Findings of Kilrush Inquiry, 7, 8, 9, 10 September 1932 in Jus 8/376 NAI.
[107] C/S to O/C Cork No. 1, 10 September 1932, in MTUCDA, P69/155 (39).
[108] Brady, *Guardians*, pp. 185-186 and *Cork Examiner*, 6 November 1932.
[109] O/C Cork No. 1 Bdge to C/S, 7 November 1932, in MTUCDA, P69/155 (34).

official sanction.[110] It is difficult to confirm many of the examples often cited of widespread republican intimidation during 1932.[111] What is certainly true is that there was a widespread feeling of euphoria among republicans, with the IRA feeling that they had "an opportunity now that we have been looking for years."[112] That confidence among republicans was summed up by one leading IRA officer when he exclaimed that "the country is splendid just now!"[113] No doubt to their opponents this triumphalism was seen as evidence that the IRA was closer to power than was the reality.[114] To illustrate the disparity in preception, even as late as December 1933 Fianna Fáil supporters in Achill could still conclude that they were more likely to be batoned by Gardai than the Blueshirts and that the law was protecting supporters of the opposition.[115]

The intensity of the violence that became associated with republican-Blueshirt confrontations during late 1933 certainly dismayed the government, but not many of its rank and file supporters who were still inclined to engage in physical battles with their 'Free State' enemies. This was certainly the case in Kerry, where Civil War bitterness was often sharpest felt. The real turning point for the IRA came when its violence began to be targeted at government supporters. However even then the reaction was complex and differed from region to region.

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[110] Manning, *Blueshirts*, pp. 33-34. The incidents were the arrest of Gerald Dempsey for possession of firearms, the Kinnity eviction discussed later in this chapter and an armed raid in Co. Mayo discussed in Chapter Two pp. 38.

[111] Numerous examples are cited by Brady in *Guardians*, pp. 163-164, Foley, *Legion*, pp. 107-108, and Coogan, *De Valera*, pp. 465. Brady believes all his sources for these events were oral, citing David Neligan, Bill O'Connell and James Moore, all of Garda 'S' Branch as sources. To author, 29 May 2001. *Garda Review* during this period, while outspoken on issues like pay cuts and voting rights for Gardai does not mention any cases of intimidation by the IRA. See *Garda Review*, December 1931 to December 1933.

[112] A/G to Adjt Tralee Battn. 22 June 1932, in MTUCDA, P69/155 (113).

[113] Secretary AC to Secretary Clan, 30 July 1932, in MTUCDA, P69/185 (253-255).

[114] This was mirrored in the reaction in Britain to Fianna Fáil's election victory. See Deirdre McMahon, *Republicans and Imperialists, Anglo-Irish Relations in the 1930s*, (Yale, 1984) chapter 2 and Eunan O'Halpin, 'Weird Prophecies': British Intelligence and Anglo-Irish Relations, 1932-3' in Kennedy and Morrison Skelly, (eds) *Irish Foreign Policy 1919-1966*, (Dublin, 2000) pp. 61-73. Headlines in the British press such as "Fear gripped Ireland dreads the coming of the morrow" were not uncommon. *Sunday Express*, 24 July 1932. Twomey collected cuttings of a number of these type of reports. See MTUCDA, P69/52 (266-267).

[115] Secretary, FF Club, Achill to Secretary D/J, 30 December 1933, in D/J H306/31 NAI.

There is evidence of a desire on Fianna Fáil's part to put some distance between itself and the IRA as early as the summer of 1932. Firstly the IRA were informed that Fianna Fáil would organise their own Wolfe Tone commemoration unless de Valera was the main speaker at the IRA's event. The IRA refused the demand and in the event Fianna Fáil did not organise a rival commemoration although senior figures did not attend the IRA's rally.[116] From 1933 onwards however there was a separate Fianna Fáil commemoration at Bodenstown. After the first jailing of an IRA member under the Fianna Fáil government it was reported to the IRA that Oscar Traynor TD had complained that the IRA had no right to publicly protest about the arrest and were not giving Fianna Fáil a "chance to govern."[117] At this stage divisions seemed to have been more marked at leadership level and in the capital. The IRA had organised a number of rallies under the auspices of the Anti-Imperialist League in an effort to increase the level of anti British feeling. In Cork, Sligo and Limerick Fianna Fáil sent speakers but in Dublin they refused to do so.[118] Instead Fianna Fáil held its own rally with 30,000 hearing De Valera speak in College Green.[119] In the aftermath of the Kilrush incidents a delegation of Fianna Fáil supporters had visited De Valera and Gerald Boland with demands for the 'CID's disbandment. They were allegedly told that an "established body" such as the Special Branch could not be disbanded as easily as people imagined and more importantly that "delegations such as theirs" could not be allowed to run the government.[120]

During 1933, with Fianna Fáil in office with a secure majority and IRA activities leading to more arrests and jailings the organisation's condemnations of the government became shriller. In some areas this led to a definite break in

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[116] The IRA saw the threat as evidence that FF "intended to fight for revolutionary leadership." Army Council to Clan, 7 May 1932, in MTUCDA, P69/185 (298-302).
[117] Dublin Bdge. I/O to D/I, 28 July 1932, in MTUCDA, P69/199 (102).
[118] AC to Clan, 30 July 1932, in MTUCDA, P69/185 (253-255).
[119] *Irish Press*, 29 July 1932.
[120] Dublin Bdge I/O to D/I, 20 August 1932, and I/O to D/I (nd) in MTUCDA, P69/199 (90) and (94).

relations between the two organisations. In Dublin the IRA realised as early as April 1933 that ex- members were being utilised by the government to use the ties they maintained with old comrades to collect information on the organisation.[121] The actions of the United Farmer's Association in Cork caused distress too for their President, Tom Hales TD, who "soundly rated" them for their pro-IRA resolution of January and remarked that the IRA leadership were a "harebrained lot.[122] In Ballaghadereen, Co. Roscommon, Fianna Fáil members on hearing of an IRA plan to paint slogans before a visit by De Valera, confiscated paint and brushes and gave the names of the IRA men involved to the Gardai![123] This however was very unusual behaviour even by late 1933. In most areas there was still a good deal of rank and file fraternisation. Neither leadership were necessarily happy with this. Twomey complained to one local IRA officer that if "these Fianna Fáil people are pretending to be friendly" they should support the IRA's Bodenstown commemoration and not the rival Fianna Fáil event.[124] Personal relationships between individuals suffered increasingly as well, with Twomey objecting to Bill Quirke's interest in a memorial to Liam Lynch, as he was someone "doing their best to smash the army" and as such should no longer had "any rights" in the matter.[125]

Another area where divisions between the IRA and Fianna Fáil became apparent was that of social radicalism. An attempt by the IRA to enlist Fianna Fáil support to prevent an eviction in Offaly helps illustrates this growing division. The case was tailor-made for radical republican intervention. Property in Kinnitty formerly owned by a British Army Colonel was granted by the Land Commission to an ex-Free State Officer, and a family who had been living on the estate's gate lodge for several years ordered to leave.[126] The local IRA

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[121] C/S to O/C Dublin Bdge, 29 April 1933, in MTUCDA, P69/53 (87-88). Five men were mentioned as part of this grouping.
[122] Tom Barry to C/S, 3 April 1933, in MTUCDA, P69/53 (212).
[123] Garda report, 13 October 1933 in Jus 8/715 NAI.
[124] C/S, 11 May 1933, in MTUCDA, P69/53 (20).
[125] Twomey to Seán Lynch, 23 March 1934, O' Mahony PP.
[126] *Offaly Independent*, 23 July 1932.

commander Seán McGuinness led 35 men in an occupation of the lodge.[127] His brother Patrick, president of the local Fianna Fáil club sent a telegram asking for intervention from the Minister for Justice. However, despite being informed, official Fianna Fáil circles were silent on the matter.[128] The IRA leadership too was wary of McGuinness's enthusiasm for this agitation.[129] Eventually the intervention of Fianna Fáil TD Patrick Gorry secured an end to the occupation with the assurance that no eviction would take place until he discussed the matter with the Minister. However the following day the family were evicted. Accommodation was secured for the family in Tullamore workhouse, while McGuinness attempted to continue the campaign. A rally in Tullamore heard him attack the government for "spouting and prattling about national unity ... against British Imperialism, but when an old man of 70 years and his wife and family challenge the same Imperialism they are catapulted to the roadside." The Kinnitty Fianna Fáil club demanded that the government re-instate the family and take them out of the workhouse, an institution that had "its root in the conquest."[130] However when the Fianna Fáil organisation in Tullamore discussed the issue divisions emerged. While one councillor argued strongly for support for the IRA's campaign he was warned that the party should not involve itself in any action that could harm the government, who were "up against bigger things than an eviction."[131] The matter was eventually left to rest, disillusioning McGuinness and his allies within the IRA and exposing the limits of Fianna Fáil's commitment to land reform.[132]

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[127] McGuinness claimed the "local IRA and Fianna Fáil" were instigators of the occupation. F. Ryan to Twomey, July 1932, in MTUCDA, P69/158 (259-260).

[128] Reports by McGuinness, 20 & 25 July 1932, in MTUCDA, P69/158 (246-256).

[129] C/S to O/C Offaly, 27 June 1932 in MTUCDA, P69/158 (245).

[130] Report on affair by Frank Ryan, 24 June 1932, in MTUCDA, P69/158 (259) and *An Phoblacht,* 30 July 1932.

[131] Exchange between Councillor P. Adams and Offaly Chairman James O'Connor, reported in *Offaly Independent*, 30 July 1932. The ex-army officer who gained possession of the land later became vice chairman of the Offaly ACA and a member of its National Executive. *Offaly Independent*, 1 April 1933.

[132] Peadar O'Donnell had enthusiastically reported from Offaly in *An Phoblacht*, 6 August 1932.

The IRA were also accused of being behind an industrial dispute in the *Irish Press* in late 1932. Despite the fact that as the IRA wryly noted, the paper on occasion liked to "pretend that everybody employed is a Volunteer" in fact only six IRA members worked there.[133] Nevertheless the organisation did support a strike at Fianna Fáil's most important ally and therefore exacerbated tension between itself and the government.[134]

The government's decision to deport Leitrim socialist Jim Gralton in March 1933 also marked a clear shift for Fianna Fáil. The demands to deport Gralton came in the midst of the most sustained anti-Communist campaign in the Free State since the 1931 'Red Scare.'[135] However this time elements within Fianna Fáil were promoting the campaign with Leitrim TD Ben Maguire in particular vocal in denouncing Gralton.[136] Only three Fianna Fáil clubs supported Gralton's demand to stay in Ireland showing a much more marked tendency among the party to adjust to anti-Communist hysteria.[137] The IRA publicly defended Gralton but at local level in Leitrim were divided on the issue, contributing to more tension within the organisation.[138]

Indeed the occasion of the government's major clampdown on the IRA was one where the organisation had intervened in an industrial dispute: the Dublin transport dispute of March 1935. After the government ordered the Army to begin transporting passengers in Dublin city, the IRA denounced this and offered their services to the strikers.[139] The government used the IRA's intervention as an opportunity to round a large number of its Dublin activists,

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[133] Chairman AC to Secretary Clan, 8 November 1932, in MTUCDA, P69/185 (154-156).
[134] The IRA issued a statement to Dublin Trades Council denying instigating the strike, 11 November 1932, in MTUCDA, P69/71.
[135] For the background to the case see Luke Gibbons, 'Labour and Local History - The Case of Jim Gralton' in *Saothar*, No. 14, (1989) pp. 85-95.
[136] Pat Feeley, *The Gralton Affair*, (Dublin, 1983) pp. 30.
[137] Erskine Childer's Cumann, Arklow, Patrickswell Cumann, Co. Limerick and Fr. John Murphy Cumann. Gralton himself had been a member of the Drumsna FF club. Feeley, *Gralton*, pp. 46. In what may have been a precursor of this feeling within FF, the chairman of Stranorlar FF had also objected to the possible candidature of Seán McCool because of the IRA's "communistic" policies. McCool to C/S, 10 January 1933, in MTUCDA, P69/53 (17).
[138] *An Phoblacht*, 4 March 1933 and Leitrim Battalion Convention report, March 1933, in MTUCDA, P69/187 (17).

although Twomey, Russell and MacBride evaded capture.[140] Only one Dublin Fianna Fáil Cumann came out in support of the strikers, and even that body was divided on the issue.[141]

All of the various political tendencies within the IRA believed that elements with Fianna Fáil were sympathetic to them. After they split from the IRA, O'Donnell and Gilmore's Republican Congress continued to highlight any hint of radicalism from Fianna Fáil's rank and file. Motions at Ard Fheisanna complaining about the slow pace of land reform, calling for the release of imprisoned IRA members or a ban on Knights of Columbanus membership were seized upon as evidence of grassroots revolt.[142] While motions on these topics appeared regularly at Fianna Fáil gatherings they represented an increasingly marginalised section of the party.[143] Republicans failed to grasp the fundamentally conservative nature of the Fianna Fáil project.

This was apparent too in Twomey's own views on social affairs. In 1933 he argued that Fianna Fáil could be more dangerous than Cumann na nGaedheal because they were encouraging *Irish* capitalism. Twomey believed that this would inevitably lead to economic chaos.[144] Later that year he criticised the government for yielding to the "clamour of the Imperialist - rancher - banker - Chamber of Commerce element."[145] In early 1935 he complained that Fianna Fáil were being dominated by the industrialists who were possibly "the most

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[139] See Chapter Three pp. 84.

[140] *Confidential Notes*, MacEntee Papers, UCDA, P67/534 pp. 38.

[141] The O'Flannagan Cumann, North City. A resolution from this cumann distributed at strike meetings also called for the release of IRA prisoners. Garda report, 13 March 1935 in Jus 8/405 NAI. Other members of the cumann contested the right of its members to make such a statement and claimed that only one sixth of the membership had been present when the resolution was passed, and all of those bar one, were connected with the strike themselves. *Irish Press*, 23 March 1935.

[142] See report on the Fianna Fáil Ard Fheis in *Republican Congress*, 14 December 1935. The belief in radicalism within Fianna Fáil was general across the Irish left. See Communist *Irish Worker's Voice* 18 November 1932.

[143] Patrick McGuinness of Kinnitty was to the fore in raising protests about republican prisoners at the 1933 Ard Fheis. That Ard Fheis also saw complaints that the Knights of Columbanous represented "a new ascendancy." See *Irish Press*, 9 November 1933.

[144] Twomey at the 1933 GAC, Notes of GAC, P69/187 (100).

[145] Twomey to McGarrity, 26 October 1933, McGarrity Papers, Ms. 17,490 NLI.

powerful menace to republicanism."[146] Whatever about Twomey's analysis, it is clear that he had expected Fianna Fáil to pursue very different policies. It was not just the IRA left that that held a different vision of 'the republic' from Fianna Fáil's but the IRA 'mainstream' as well.[147]

The IRA's belief in the inevitable disillusionment of rank and file government supporters is a major factor in explaining its decline under Fianna Fáil. However as we have seen, left to their own devices many Fianna Fáil supporters would have allowed the IRA considerable lee way. How the Fianna Fáil leadership neutralised the IRA, at remarkably little political cost to itself, is the other major factor that must be considered. Again the IRA's own tactics also often played into their opponent's hands.

A defining factor in transforming IRA-Fianna Fáil hostility was the launch of the Volunteer Reserve. The reasoning behind the formation of this force was clearly political.[148] The IRA had known and been worried by the possibility of such a development since 1932. Twomey admitted that the launch of such a body would "impose a great test on young and untried republicans."[149] At its 1934 Convention the organisation's leadership had stressed that opposition to the new force should be political rather than military. However both Leitrim and Kerry delegates had openly forecast a violent reaction in their areas.[150] Indeed while the IRA nationally distributed thousands of posters calling on republican youth to 'Shun the Murderers' it was in Kerry in particular that violence once reserved for Blueshirts was now directed at young men who joined the Volunteers. During the winter of 1934-35 there were dozens of violent incidents

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[146] Twomey to Mary MacSwiney, 24 January 1935, in MacSwiney Papers, UCDA, P48A/199.

[147] English has made this point about the republican left, but it applies to the entire IRA leadership in this period. English, *Radicals*, pp.194.

[148] As Seán Lemass explained, there were in Ireland "young men to whom military manoeuvres are an attraction and who if they do not get the military associations they desire in an official organisation may be induced to seek it in illegal organisations." Lemass to Secretary, Dept of the President, 23 October 1933, D/T S 6327 NAI. See also L. Joye, 'Aiken's Slugs': The Reserve of the Irish Army under Fianna Fáil' in J. Augusteijn (ed). *Ireland In The 1930s*, pp. 143-162.

[149] Twomey to McGarrity, 26 October 1933, McGarrity Papers, Ms. 17, 490 NLI.

ranging from assaults on individuals to gun and bomb attacks on Volunteer halls.[151] The IRA representative on Kerry County Council proposed that Council facilities be denied to the new force, gaining the support of Fine Gael councillors but obviously worsening relations with Fianna Fáil.[152] While it was the case that even after these events there remained reluctance among sections of Fianna Fáil to confront the IRA, the brutality displayed by the organisation (with or without leadership sanction) undoubtedly made it easier for the government to isolate them. How many men who joined the Volunteers were lost to the IRA as potential recruits is difficult to judge, but the organisation did lose some of its own members to the new body.[153] Some recruitment seems to have been accompanied by the promise of preferences being given to Volunteers in local public works.[154] This would suggest that Fianna Fáil 'bought off' much of the IRA through military service pensions and other preferential treatment.[155] While this cannot be discounted in individual cases, the IRA's shortcomings in strategy combined with an ideological attack from the government were more important factors.

From 1933 onwards Fianna Fáil challenged the IRA's claim to revolutionary legitimacy, claiming that its activities aided the enemies of Irish republicanism, and increasingly appealed to the concept of majoritarian democracy. One important contention was based on the claim that the IRA of 1933 represented a 'new IRA' quite different from the organisation of 1919-23. As early as July 1932 this phrase was being used by elements within Fianna Fáil in Dublin, one of whom, an ex-IRA member himself, claimed that the

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[150] Notes of 1934 GAC, MacEntee Papers, UCDA, P67/525.

[151] See *Confidential Notes*, MacEntee Papers, UCDA, P67/534 pp. 28-31.

[152] *Kerry Champion*, 4 August 1934.

[153] See Chapter Four pp. 150.

[154] In Kenmare the local FF secretary expected 3 IRA men he helped gain employment for to join the new force. Promises of work on their return from training was also made in a "covert way." I/O Kenmare Batt. to D/I, 9 and 18 April, 1934, in Jus 8/319 NAI.

[155] The Military Service Pensions Act was introduced to provide pensions for Anti - Treaty veterans. The IRA regarded this as a 'bribe.' However the organisation did favour pensions for disabled veterans. *An Phoblacht*, 18 September 1934. By late 1937 4,155 people had been

Army Council were a "cowardly pack" who had refused to fight during the 'coercion' period.[156] As tension between the organisations increased this argument was expressed more publicly. Fianna Fáil speakers and publications consistently referred to the military record of their leaders, "nearly all" of whom were 1916 veterans as the *Irish Press* reminded its readers.[157] Contrasting with what he claimed was the liberal regime for IRA prisoners in Arbour Hill, de Valera reminded a Kerry audience that "prison was never easy" which he could testify having been jailed on several occasions but that both himself and Austin Stack had endured far worse conditions during 1919 but did not "grumble about it."[158] In 1935 Fianna Fáil in Kerry claimed that it contained far more veterans of the Civil War in its ranks than the "new IRA."[159] What was more this 'new IRA' in many cases contained a "rabble ... each member of which is a law unto himself" which sheltered behind the "honoured name of the IRA."[160]

Fianna Fáil also consistently argued that the IRA had departed from its traditional aims. During the Dublin transport strike de Valera contrasted the 'old IRA' which regarded itself as "the army of the nation ... of the whole people" with the instigators of "sectional strife" who lent themselves out like some "racketeering organisation."[161] Fianna Fáil noted too the extent to which "class propaganda" had supplanted nationalism for the 'new IRA.'[162] Concern was also expressed by Fianna Fáil speakers for the young IRA men who were being

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awarded pensions under the Act. See statement by Frank Aiken in *Dail Debates*, Vol. 69, 10 November 1937.

[156] I/O Dub. Brigade to D/I, 28 July 1932, in MTUCDA, P69/199 (102).

[157] *Irish Press*, 6 April 1935.

[158] *Kerry Champion*, 23 December 1933. This speech was to a crowd of 12,000 in Tralee, where FF were under pressure following the arrest of local IRA men in connection with anti Blueshirt violence.

[159] *Kerry Champion*, 9 February 1935.

[160] *Kerry Champion*, 26 January 1935.

[161] De Valera to National Executive of Fianna Fáil, 28 March 1935, in D/T S. 7495 NAI.

[162] *Kerry Champion*, 9 February 1935.

"duped" by the "hot air" talked by their leaders.[163] De Valera warned youngsters not to be seduced by the "glamour attached to the name 'IRA'."[164]

The credentials of IRA leaders themselves were also challenged. When Frank Aiken was heckled by IRA supporters shouting "up Tom Barry" he replied that the young men shouting this obviously knew little about the Civil War, when while he and others were fighting "Tom Barry was running around trying to make peace."[165] Seán MacEntee reminded IRA hecklers that he had fought in 1916, the "Black and Tan war" and the Civil War, before asking them "can you tell me where you served?"[166]

It was also stressed that whatever their intentions, the actions of the IRA played into the hands of Ireland's enemies. In late 1933 Aiken had referred to the "foolish friends" of republicanism who unknowingly were doing more damage to it than its enemies.[167] The *Irish Press* in 1935 claimed that the IRA's complaints about Fianna Fáil were being "greeted eagerly by Ireland's enemies" and contributing to a possible return to power of Fine Gael.[168] The paper was adept at portraying their administration as being under siege "from three sides" with the IRA playing the worst role of all by undermining the government from the "left."[169]

Fianna Fáil also increasingly justified their stance in terms of majority rule. As De Valera warned "we are either going to have democracy ... or dictatorship of one kind or the other."[170] Aiken made clear to those who objected to the jailing of IRA members that the government was elected

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[163] Miss Kay Breen of Kerry Co. Council and the FF National Executive, one of the party's most dogged defenders in these debates. *Kerry News*, 7 January 1935.
[164] Speech at Galway, 11 August 1936, in *National Discipline and Majority Rule*, (Dublin, 1936). pp. 11.
[165] This incident occurred at a Ceilidhe in Dundalk during May. Quoted in *Irish Independent*, 4 June 1935. Barry replied to this accusation and the debate continued through the letters pages of the *Irish Press* for several weeks. Copies in Aiken Papers, UCDA, P104/1283 (1-5). Among a number of Anti-Treaty veterans who defended Barry's record was FF TD Tom Hales. See *An Phoblacht*, 25 May 1935.
[166] *Irish Press*, 22 June 1936.
[167] *Irish Press*, 9 November 1933.
[168] *Irish Press* editorial, 5 April 1935.
[169] *Irish Press* editorial, 2 April 1935.

promising to "protect all citizens and their person and property."[171] While the use of force may have been justified in the past, now the government had created a situation where "peaceful ordered progress on the basis of majority decision" was possible.[172] Those within Fianna Fáil who raised objections to government policy towards the IRA or who questioned the government's progress towards republican goals were told to "get rid of their inferiority complex."[173] Those who clung to traditional demands were "too provincial, narrow and small minded" to see the greater strategy the government was employing.[174]

Despite the evidence of rank and file unease Fianna Fáil managed to carry the majority of its supporters with remarkably few losses. Indeed it claimed that even on contentious issues like the Easter 'Torch' the majority of the party had refused to be "misled by IRA propaganda."[175] Just one TD, Tom Hales, resigned because of government policy towards the IRA, and republican opponents of the government were trounced in two bye elections during 1936.[176]

Again the IRA's own tactics during 1935 and 1936 played an important role here. The increasingly desperate propaganda about "Fianna Fáil Fascism" and the violence used against members of the Volunteer Force illustrate how politically bankrupt the organisation had become.[177] While the killing of Richard More O'Ferrall during a land dispute did not necessarily widen the gap between the IRA and rank and file Fianna Fáil members, the murders of John Egan and

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[170] *Kerry Champion*, 23 December 1933.
[171] Aiken to D. Curran, 10 January 1935, in Aiken Papers, UCDA, P104/2801 (113).
[172] De Valera at Enniscorthy, 2 August 1936, in *National Discipline*, pp. 3.
[173] Seán Moylan at the 1933 FF Ard Fheis, *Irish Press*, 9 November 1933.
[174] Seán T. O'Kelly at the 1932 FF Ard Fheis, *Irish Independent*, 9 November 1932.
[175] FF claimed that of 1,800 cumann only 12 had refused to distribute the emblem. *Irish Press,* 18 April 1935.
[176] For Hale's resignation see *Irish Times*, 26 June 1936. In Galway on the 13 August Count Plunkett polled just 2,696 votes to Fianna Fáil's 39,982 and in Wexford on the 17 of August Stephen Hayes only 1,301 to Fianna Fáil's 23,263. Gallagher, *Irish Elections* pp. 206.
[177] In protest against the censorship of *An Phoblacht* posters bearing the slogan 'Down with Fianna Fáil Fascism' were distributed throughout the Free State. Garda reports, 31 December 1934, in Jus 8/68 NAI.

Admiral Townsend Sommerville certainly did so.[178] Fianna Fáil made great play of how these "callous and cowardly" murders made nonsense of the IRA's claims to patriotism.[179] Frank Gallagher expressed his disgust to Joseph McGarrity at those who believed the way to further their cause was by "stealing up to an old man's door, calling him out, shooting him down, and running away."[180]

The IRA's strategy towards Fianna Fáil was based on the belief that once in government it would inevitably disappoint its republican supporters. In fact Fianna Fáil managed to broaden its base of support while maintaining the loyalty of most of its rank and file. While sympathy existed for them at grassroots level in Fianna Fáil, the IRA overestimated the extent of this. The organisation's confrontational policies, particularly during 1934, further alienated potential sympathisers within Fianna Fáil. The government's skilful presentation of themselves as both the inheritors of the revolutionary tradition *and* the defenders of democracy in Ireland forced the IRA onto the defensive politically. The IRA's attempts to deal with this led to the departure of its left wing during 1934 and the dominance of militarism within the organisation meant it reacted to its political isolation by belligerent attacks on government supporters, further increasing that isolation. The IRA misjudged not just Fianna Fáil but the extent to which republican supporters in the Free State desired radical change. The evidence suggests that Fianna Fáil satisfied the majority of Irish republican aspirations.

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[178] Fine Gael's attempts to link Fianna Fáil to the killing of More O'Ferrall meant that at local council level FF members often refused to condemn the IRA's action. There was also the reality that landlord's agents were not popular with republicans. See *Dail Debates*, Vol. 55, 7 March 1935, and FF reaction to motion calling for condemnation of the killing on Longford Co. Council, *Irish Press,* 11 March 1935.

[179] De Valera at Galway, 11 August 1936, in *National Discipline*, pp. 8.

[180] Frank Gallagher to McGarrity, 25 June 1938, in McGarrity Papers, Ms. 17,544 (1) NLI.

Chapter Eight

"A battalion of armed Catholics"?

The IRA in Northern Ireland.

The circumstances in which the IRA operated in Northern Ireland were very different to those in the Free State. From 1929 for example, the sale and distribution of *An Phoblacht* was illegal in the six counties.[1] After 1928 republican commemorations were banned.[2] Northern republicans arrested for IRA activity could be deported to the Free State.[3] Politically the IRA faced a Nationalist Party machine with strong links to the Catholic Church who regarded it at best with suspicion, and regularly denounced it as a 'communist' secret society. All IRA activity took place in the shadow of the violent origins of the state itself, which had seen almost 500 people killed and thousands driven from their homes. Nationalists remembered these events as pogroms designed to terrorise them into submission.[4] To them, as the IRA was to discover, the fight was "not so much one of Republic versus Free State" but for their very "existence."[5] In contrast to the majority community in the north the IRA simply meant "violence and terror in the name of Irish nationalism."[6] For Unionists the birth of the state had not been seen an anti-Catholic pogrom but an attempt to "strangle Northern Ireland at birth."[7]

As a result of these influences a consensus exists about the northern IRA. Both supporters and detractors are content to claim that its main role was as a sectarian militia. As Laffan has stated "for most of the 1920s and 1930s

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[1] See A/G to O/C Ulster No. 4 Bdge. 23 January 1930, for report on arrest of Tyrone officer for posession of 21 *An Phoblachts*, in MTUCDA, P69/152 (114-117).
[2] See reports from 1928 in Prohibited Meetings File, HA/32/1/465 in PRONI.
[3] Patrick Thornbury from the Falls Road, a former O/C of IRA prisoners on board the *Argenta* was arrested in 1926 and deported on release in 1927. P. Thornbury File, HA/32/1/513, in PRONI.
[4] Éamonn Phoenix, *Northern Nationalism, Nationalist Politics, Partition and the Catholic Minority in Northern Ireland, 1890-1940* (Belfast, 1994) pp.251.
[5] IRA GHQ Report, 15 April 1924, in MTUCDA, P69/145 (310).
[6] Kennedy, *The Widening Gulf,* pp.202.
[7] Bryan A. Follis, *A State Under Siege, The Establishment of Northern Ireland, 1920-1925* (Oxford, 1995) pp. 115.

the Northern units of the IRA saw their role as a defensive one, protecting the Catholic minority against the Protestant majority."[8] More sympathetic accounts have also described the IRA as the "only defenders of the Catholic communities in the north, especially in Belfast; 'a Catholic defence force'."[9] I will contend that while there certainly existed an element of "defenderism" that cannot be discounted as unimportant, for a period during the 1930s, under pressure from its national leadership the IRA made serious efforts to win cross community support.[10] Even when called upon to "defend" in this period the IRA displayed little enthusiasm for that role.

The problems the IRA faced when attempting to reorganise in Northern Ireland during the 1920s cannot be overstated. The majority of the Northern IRA had been Pro-Treaty, but had engaged in a major offensive in the Summer of 1922. A smaller Anti-Treaty force had also been involved in conflict with the Northern security forces at this stage. Both were essentially crushed by the Autumn of that year, with over 1,000 men going south to join the National Army.[11] During 1924 a report by the IRA's Director of Intelligence found that there was little enthusiasm for republicanism among many nationalists. Instead they were "keeping quiet - satisfied that they are allowed to live ... I should say the vast majority look upon the satisfactory solution of the Boundary question as the most that could possibly be achieved. They regard Republicans as attempting the impossible and as a menace to their peace."[12] IRA strength in Northern Ireland that year was just 628.[13] A year later Twomey himself gained first hand experience of the north when he inspected units in Tyrone and Derry.

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[8] Michael Laffan, 'Violence and Terror in Twentieth-Century Ireland: IRB and IRA' in Mommsen and Hirschfeld (eds.) *Social Protest, Violence and Terror in Nineteenth- and Twentieth-Century Europe*. (London, 1982) pp. 155-174.

[9] Ballymacarrett Research Group, *Lagan Enclave- A History of Conflict In The Short Strand 1886-1997*. (Belfast, 1997) pp. 41. See also Jim McDermott, *Northern Divisions, The Old IRA and the Belfast Pogroms 1920-22*, (Belfast, 2001) pp. 244-279.

[10] Especially an abortive plan to bomb a gathering at the Belfast Cenotaph in 1929. See Chapter Four pp. 120-121.

[11] Staunton, *Nationalists of Northern Ireland*, pp. 71. MacDermott, *Northern Divisions*, pp. 161-176.

[12] D/I Report, 9 August 1924, in MTUCDA, P69/179 (123).

[13] General Report for IRA Executive, 10 August 1924, in MTUCDA, P69/180 (25).

In Tyrone he found the IRA's organisation to be "exceedingly bad." There was little civilian support for the IRA and the Catholic population seemed to be "cowed completely by the Specials." He also found that nationalists who wanted inclusion in the Free State feared that IRA activity would prejudice their chances. Their main anxiety was to get away from what they termed the "terror of the Specials." In military terms there was no proper IRA organisation in Derry City or County. Most nationalists there too seemed desperate to find some way of being included in the Free State. He also suggested that many northern Catholics seemed to "slavishly follow" the clergy and that this was a factor in their passivity.[14]

Two years later and the IRA was forced to acknowledge that its northern "military organisation is in a most backward state, and in many areas non-existent ... morale is very low and distrust amongst comrades is widespread."[15] By November of that year the IRA's strength in the six counties had shrunk to 517 men, with 242 of these based in Belfast.[16] All the evidence points towards the IRA in Northern Ireland stagnating for several years. In 1930 the RUC noted the low turnouts for Easter commemorations and felt that in Derry City, for example, there had never been less public sympathy for the IRA.[17] Perhaps because of its own weakness as early as 1924 the IRA was hoping that the Labour movement might make gains which would allow more space for a republican opposition to develop.[18] Just two years later the belief that people were "flocking" towards Labour and even that the nucleus of a "Citizen Army" was being formed seemed to give some solace to the Belfast IRA.[19] By 1931 the IRA in that city had 260 active members. 40 of these men were based in

[14] Report of Inspection Officer, 20 May 1925, in MTUCDA, P69/47 (242-243).
[15] AC Report 11 February 1926, in MTUCDA, P69/181 (60).
[16] AC Estimates, 1 November 1926, in MTUCDA, P69/181 (5). Other units numbers stood at Armagh (142), Antrim (23), Derry (40), Down (40) and Tyrone (30).
[17] RUC report, 24 April 1930, in HA/32/1/465 in PRONI. Only 20 had attended the banned commemoration in Derry, with around 450 turning out in Belfast.
[18] D/I Report, 9 August 1924, MTUCDA, P69/179 (122).
[19] I/O Ulster No. 1 to D/I, 25 November 1926, in MTUCDA, P69/193 (86-94).

the Ardoyne area and 30 in Ballymacarret and the Markets.[20] Substantial growth in the northern IRA did not occur until 1932.

Politically the northern IRA was hostile to much of the radicalism espoused by their comrades in Dublin. Unlike in the south, Sinn Féin enjoyed some influence among the northern IRA. Belfast IRA commander Davy Matthews was a member of the party for example.[21] After the IRA's 1932 Convention where the Saor Éire programme had been re-approved, Matthews informed IRA Headquarters in Dublin that his unit were of the "firm opinion that the army has deviated from the path of nationalism and has taken to the road of materialism through Saor Éire." [22] Similar attitudes were expressed by IRA units in Down and Armagh, who proposed that Saor Éire be "absolutely abolished." An exception was the Derry City IRA however, who supported the launch of a new radical political organisation.[23] This does not mean that the IRA in Belfast was necessarily hostile to *activity* on social issues however, as we shall see from the events of 1932.

In July of that year the IRA leadership decided to issue an appeal to the Orange Order. At first glance the summer of 1932 would seem an inauspicious time for the IRA to consider issuing an such appeal. The level of inter communal tension was high, following widespread attacks on Catholics travelling to the Eucharistic Congress in Dublin, during June. There were assaults on Catholic travellers in several towns including Belfast, Ballymena and Larne, and a mob stormed the railway station at Portadown, where pilgrims were trapped on a train.[24] Early July saw more violence as Catholic homes and businesses were attacked on Belfast's Crumlin Road. There is no doubt that the IRA could have made use of the tense atmosphere to launch attacks on the Orange Order.

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[20] O/C Ulster No.1 to A/G, April 1931 in MTUCDA P69/151 (70-71).
[21] See Chapter Five pp. 158. Matthews, from Bombay Street, had been interned on the *Argenta.* Matthews File, HA/5/2361 in PRONI.
[22] O/C Belfast to C/S, 8 May 1932, in MTUCDA P69/52 (190).
[23] Clar 1933 GAC, in MTUCDA, P69/53 (276-277&286).
[24] *Irish News,* 27 June 1932. However there had also been clashes in Autumn 1931 and an Ancient Order of Hibernians parade had been shot at in Co. Derry in March 1932.

Seán McCool reported considerable hostility to a planned Orange march in Co. Donegal, largely springing from the attacks on people travelling to Dublin for the congress, and asked permission to issue a press statement denouncing 'Imperialist displays.' Twomey refused the request, telling McCool that "all our energies should be directed to preventing and discouraging any clashes, even in the face of provocation. Clashes just now would be very bad."[25] All Ulster units were also issued with these instructions. They were ordered to use their influence with non IRA members to prevent them engaging in sectarian clashes.[26] Seán Clerkin of the Monaghan IRA, responded to rumours of attacks on local Protestants by issuing a statement declaring that "all Irishmen, Protestant and Catholic ... will condemn the dastardly actions of the hooligans who attacked the six county Catholics while on their way to Dublin for the Eucharistic Congress" but that "these attacks must not be made an excuse for future conflicts between Catholics and Protestants ... suppress any effort to start a religious war here or elsewhere ... The enemies of Irish freedom are to be found equally within the Catholic and Protestant communities, and their role is to keep the masses of the Irish people divided by sharpening religious antagonisms."[27]

The IRA issued their 'Address to the Men and Women of the Orange Order' in July. The 'Address', written by Peadar O'Donnell, was in reality an appeal to Protestant workers and small farmers to unite with their Catholic counterparts in a struggle for "the transfer of power over production, distribution and exchange to the mass of the people."[28] The IRA admitted that they were "mainly Catholics" but reassured their Protestant audience that "in Southern Ireland the same political and economical interests and voices that tell you we are Catholics, tell the Catholic population of the South that we are

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[25] O/C Tirconaill No. 2 Batt to C/S 4 July & C/S reply, 6 July 1932 in MTUCDA, P69/52 (112-113).
[26] A/G to O/C No. 3 Ulster, 9 July 1932, in MTUCDA, P69/155 (64).
[27] *Irish Independent,* 11 July 1932.

Anti-God fanatics." It concluded with an appeal to the memory of "your illustrious ancestors and co-religionists, the United Irishmen."[29] The 'Address' itself betrays confusion on the IRA's part as to who they were addressing. The terms 'Orange' and 'Protestant' are used interchangeably, if inaccurately. The Order itself had opposed the United Irish radicals of the 1790s, and was not in any way a descendant of theirs. While the IRA in Northern Ireland was also the subject of Catholic clerical condemnation, this did not make it any more attractive to Protestants.[30]

Unionist reaction to the 'Address' was predictably hostile. The Unionist MP, Captain Chicester-Clark, speaking at Kilrea, Co. Derry, denounced the IRA for appealing "to the small farmer and to the wage earner-whom they claim are being exploited ... they talked about Capitalism - forgetting that it is merely a nickname for civilised life, forgetting that there is no alternative but barbarism and death." The IRA talked of religious toleration , he said, but "they mean the destruction of all religion, and the return to the barbarism and paganism of the dark ages."[31] At Ballinderry, Co. Tyrone, Sir Joseph McConnell MP claimed the IRA's statements were "very similar to those which enticed the Huguenots into Paris on the eve of the slaughter of St. Bartholomew."[32] The *Belfast Newsletter* considered that "For sheer impudence it would be difficult to beat ... that murderous organisation known as the "IRA."[33] The *Northern Whig* simply found the "curious document" an example of IRA "humour."[34] At Newry the Rev. Canon McGarvey told Orangemen that they had been invited to "join with the IRA but oil and water could not mix, (and) neither would the Orange

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[28] O'Donnell to Cumann na mBan Executive, 20 April 1934, in Humphreys Papers, UCDA, P106/1154.
[29] *An Phoblacht*, 16 July 1932 & Coogan, *IRA*, pp. 170-172.
[30] Some months later an IRA unit in Cabra Co.Down was on the verge of collapse because the local parish priest had "refused the boys absolution unless they gave up the army. He has warned them off the pulpit, stressing the Communistic danger." Adjt No.1 Area Ulster to A/G, 20 November 1932, in MTUCDA, P69/158 (26-31).
[31] *Belfast Weekly Telegraph,* 16 July 1932.
[32] *Belfast Newsletter,* 13 July 1932.
[33] *Belfast Newsletter,* 11 July 1932.
[34] *Northern Whig,* 11 July 1932.

colours mix with those of the Pope."[35] JC Crosbie at Aughnacloy, who claimed he had received a copy of the 'Address' that morning, asserted that Orangemen would never join hands with republicans until the IRA "pulled down the tricolour, hoisted the Union Jack, proclaimed the King as sovereign, and sang the National Anthem."[36] There was a smaller Independent Orange Order, which promoted a more populist brand of Orangeism, which perhaps might have contained people receptive to the 'Address'. At its rally in Ballymoney, Co. Antrim on the Twelfth, one speaker asserted that "working men should stand together, if they did not do so their cause would go down ... (because) The capitalist...had everything his own way."[37] However the IRA showed no sign they had any knowledge of the existence of this strand of Orangeism. What reaction could the IRA have expected from members of the Orange Order to their arguments? After all they had just 11 months before physically prevented an Orange Walk in Co.Cavan, which was widely seen by Protestants as a sectarian action.[38] It should also be noted that the perception of IRA growth in the Free State following the entry of Fianna Fáil into government had caused alarm among northern Protestants.[39]

More important is how the northern IRA itself reacted to the spirit of the 'Address.' All the organisation's Ulster units were issued with instructions to distribute it in Loyalist areas, and take note of the reaction to it. The leadership stressed that it wanted the 'Address' posted up in "Orange districts." They also wanted "cuttings from any newspapers" mentioning the 'Address' and they especially wished to hear "the comments on this Address by Orangemen."[40] Twomey himself stressed to Matthews that he hoped "note will be taken of this (Address) in the Falls Road as well as in Sandy Row!" Furthermore all units were put on alert to discourage nationalists from engaging in clashes with

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[35] *Irish Independent,* 13 July 1932.
[36] *Northern Whig,* 13 July 1932.
[37] *Ballymoney Free Press,* 21 July 1932.
[38] See Chapter Four & Kennedy *Widening Gulf,* pp.164-165.
[39] Kennedy, *Widening Gulf,* pp.196-199.

Orange marchers. Twomey told Matthews that he "hoped that things will pass over" without violence. He instructed Matthews to keep an eye on "elements on the fringe of our movement" who might be intent on trouble.[41] Matthews agreed to distribute the 'Address' in Belfast, but considered that it would be "sheer madness" to order his men to post them up in "hostile areas", so his battalion delivered the appeal door to door in Sandy Row. Some were delivered to hairdressers and boot repairers, who Matthews believed did "all the talking in their districts."[42] However one IRA source reported that recipients of the 'Address' regarded them as "warning notices."[43] Among nationalists the reaction was confused. In Derry, the local IRA commander, Terry Ward, reported that the document was "much resented by the Catholic population who argued (unreasonably I think) that it was a sign of weakness." Ward also felt that not only were the Orangemen themselves, "scarcely aware of the appeal" but that "most republicans, including Volunteers, regard it as a gesture which will not have the least effect."[44] Nevertheless, his unit distributed the 'Address'. The IRA's Armagh unit on the other hand, refused to, with their Commander JJ Murray telling the 1933 Convention that they had "burnt them."[45] The Belfast IRA's Intelligence Officer was not hopeful of the 'Address' receiving much of a hearing among working class Protestants believing that they "can still be gulled by their leaders, as the whole driving force behind them is fear. The IRA and De Valera are thrown up to them in their churches ... (and) the real economic state of the city is glossed over."[46] In the south one of the few reactions to the 'Address' was that of the *Dundalk Examiner* which called it "an expression of naked and undisguised Communism" and argued that it justified the Catholic

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[40] A/G to O/C No.3 Ulster, 9 July 1932, in MTUCDA, P69/155 (64).
[41] C/S to O/C No.1 Ulster, 7 July 1932, in MTUCDA, P69/52 (103).
[42] O/C Belfast to C/S, 10 July 1932, in MTUCDA P69/52 (85).
[43] I/O Belfast to D/I, 21 July 1932, in MTUCDA P69/199 (111-114).
[44] O/C Ulster No.3 to A/G IRA 12 September 1932, in MTUCDA, P69/158 (163-166).
[45] Minutes of 1933 GAC in MTUCDA P69/187 (90-118). Murray's Battalion stood at 240 Volunteers in July 1932. Report, Adjt. Ulster No.2 to A/G IRA 8th July 1932 in MTUCDA, P69/156 (175).
[46] I/O Belfast to D/I, 21 July 1932, in MTUCDA, P69/199 (111-114).

Hierarchy's condemnation of the IRA.[47] While the 'Address' shows naiveté and political confusion on the IRA's part, the fact that most of its Northern units distributed it would point to the lack of a sectarian mentality among its membership.

The Orange celebrations of that year, when tension would be heightened between nationalists and unionists, were an opportunity to test the response of the IRA to the spirit of the address. A concrete example of how the IRA reacted to a potential threat can be seen from their mobilisation in the Ardoyne, following rumours that the area was to be attacked after an Orange parade. Matthews mobilised 60 men, and had them order crowds off the streets and away from 'danger points', stressing to them it was their duty to avert trouble. By 6pm the area was deserted, except for IRA units, hidden indoors close to 'danger points'. Matthews claimed the RUC knew the IRA were in position to defend the area, and kept the Orange marchers well away.[48] However the "Greatest Twelfth That Ever Was" did not pass off peacefully. [49] Shots were fired at Catholic homes in Armagh, stones thrown at Catholics on the Falls, and a Catholic was stabbed in Aughnacloy. Catholic ice cream vendors and confectionery sellers were attacked after the traditional sham battle on the 13th at Scarva, Co. Down.[50] On the night of the 14th, there were clashes between Catholics and Protestants on the Shankhill and the Falls Roads.[51] There was no suggestion at the time that the IRA was involved in these disturbances, but its members been mobilised in anticipation of an attack. Two companies of the IRA were undergoing training at camps at Carnlough and Carlingford but when reports were received of mobs gathering near the Falls Road on Thursday the 15th, 2 sections of 14 men each were recalled to Belfast. [52] The fact that the IRA's Belfast leadership was prepared to allow 2 companies to leave Belfast at

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[47] *Dundalk Examiner,* 16 July 1932.
[48] O/C Belfast to C/S, 10 July 1932, in MTUCDA P69/52 (85).
[49] Headline in *Belfast Weekly Telegraph,* 16 July 1932.
[50] *Irish Independent,* 15 July 1932.
[51] *Irish News,* 13 & 14 July 1932.

this tense time is evidence of some reluctance, at least, to regard defending Catholic areas as the IRA's primary duty. Even stranger is that while the Belfast IRA Intelligence Officer informed his superiors that "sectarian hatred is running high here at present" and that "several cases of grievous assault" had been reported he did not anticapate serious trouble. Priests had implored mass goers to avoid trouble spots over the coming week.[53] Nevertheless the IRA in Belfast was pleased to report to HQ in Dublin that their orders to "avert sectarian trouble and at the same time, to stand by and be prepared, if required to take action" had been carried out successfully.[54] Other IRA units within Belfast were mobilised over the Twelfth period. The Intelligence officer confirmed that in areas like Cupar St. sectarian feelings ran high "on account of the beatings administered during the week to stray partisans of the opposite camps." According to his report, the IRA in Belfast "kept patrols of Volunteers in all Catholic districts in the city, to disperse all crowds, and allowing no-one to stand at street corners."[55] This evidence would point to the IRA wanting to avoid sectarian violence rather than provoke it.

If the IRA leadership were eager for an opportunity to intervene in a struggle which involved both sides of the sectarian divide, then they were soon to be presented with one, in the shape of the Outdoor Relief (ODR) Strike of October 1932. The ODR strike is remembered as "one of the few instances of inter-community action", in Northern Ireland's history.[56] The strike was primarily the result of the effect of mass unemployment, and the low levels of relief open to the unemployed. Anger over the rigorous and demeaning means tests applied to those seeking relief was effectively channelled into action by the organisation of a relief workers committee, dominated by members of the Revolutionary Worker's Groups (RWG), the forerunners of the Communist

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[52] Adjt No. 1 Ulster to A/G, July 1932, in MTUCDA P69/158 (228-233).
[53] I/O to D/I, 10 July 1932, in MTUCDA, P69/199 (126).
[54] Adjt. Ulster No.1 to A/G, July 1932, in MTUCDA, P69/156 (167).
[55] I/O Belfast to D/I, 21 July 1932, in MTUCDA, P69/199 (111-114).
[56] Thomas Hennessey, *A History of Northern Ireland, 1920-1996.* (London, 1997) pp.59.

Party of Ireland. The dispute led to two weeks of street demonstrations, rioting and clashes with the Police, in which two people (one Protestant and one Catholic) were killed.[57] The Police came under sniper fire on several occasions.

The IRA's attitude to the ODR strike and the role it played within it, was almost immediately a source of controversy. *An Phoblacht* was ecstatic about the strike, its headline declaring "Orange and Green United in Belfast" and that the "Irish Revolution" had begun.[58] Sections of the Unionist Press were anxious to assign a leading role to the IRA in the dispute with one writer claiming "the Communist element, backed by the local IRA forces, essayed the traditional Red tactics of trench and Barricade"[59] IRA members were certainly involved in the marches, rallies and riots of October 1932. Testimony from veterans of the period confirms this, but also confirms that their involvement was largely as individuals.[60]

The IRA should not have been taken by surprise because its Belfast Intelligence Officer had been providing in Dublin with reports on the worsening economic conditions in the city since the early summer. In May he had written that the "economic situation is gradually becoming worse. The Orange quarters of the city are coming to the point of desperation, as shown in Police reports and court cases ... The unemployment question here is becoming more desperate and confused." There were reports that the RUC were guarding shops as rumours of looting were current. One reason why the IRA may not have responded quickly enough, was that its Belfast Officers feared that this economic discontent was going to exacerbate sectarianism with "everything

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[57] Both men were killed in Nationalist areas. It has been asserted by both Chris Ryder and Paddy Devlin that the RUC were given permission to use guns in Nationalist areas but only their batons in Unionist districts. See Chris Ryder, *The RUC-A Force Under Fire* (London, 1989) pp.68-69. and Paddy Devlin, *Yes-We Have No Bananas. Outdoor Relief in Belfast 1920-39.* (Belfast, 1981) pp.130-131. Another memoir of the period that covers the ODR strike is Leo Wilson's *Growing Up in the Hungry, Violent Thirties.* (Belfast, 1997). pp. 14-15 & 30-35.

[58] *An Phoblacht,* 22 October 1932 and 15 October 1932.

[59] *Northern Whig,* 17 October 1932.

[60] Those include Liam Mulholland, Bob Bradshaw, Eamon Ó Cianáin and Barney Boswell. For Mulholland and Boswell, see Munck and Rolston, *Belfast*, pp. 169 & 176. For Bradshaw and O'Cianain, see MacEoin, *Twilight Years*, pp. 425 & 690.

pointing to another pogrom in the city."[61] Later in the summer Dublin were informed that "discontent is rapidly growing in the city ... Transitional Benefit and Outdoor relief are making matters worse, the working man finding that he cannot hope for any help from either."[62] Seán MacBride replied that "it is a pity that some of our people is not close enough to Labour elements to do some propaganda amongst them."[63] During September it was reported that the unemployed were becoming "stronger and better organised."[64] Finally in october he reported that among the unemployed a "great deal of talk is going the rounds of action to be taken ... they are very well organised in the various districts and mass meetings have been arranged for all districts in the city." The IRA also believed that some of the unemployed had access to arms.[65]

However the IRA did not take an *organised* part in the upheavals of October. One of its Belfast officers bemoaned the fact that recruiting had been slow that month. He considered that "one would have thought the recent trouble in the city would have brought large numbers into the army." But he also provided a clue as to why that was not the case. While he argued that "some weeks prior to the strike special men should have been allotted the work of getting on these worker's committees" he admitted that the IRA did not take part as an organisation in the movement. Matthews himself took part in rioting in Sandy Row and attempted to encourage others there to do the same. Two republicans were also jailed for stone throwing.[66] Given that the majority of Belfast IRA members came from working class backgrounds it is not surprising that many were involved in the ODR strike.[67] There was however a significant difference between the IRA in Dublin and Belfast. In Dublin many of the small number of Communists were former IRA members and knew the IRA

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[61] I/O Belfast to D/I IRA, 24 May 1932, in MTUCDA, P69/199 (166).
[62] I/O Belfast to D/I IRA, 21 July 1932, in MTUCDA, P69/199 (111-114).
[63] D/I IRA to I/O Belfast, 30 July 1932, in MTUCDA, P69/199 (111-114).
[64] I/O Belfast to D/I IRA, 15 September 1932, in MTUCDA, P69/199 (99).
[65] I/O Belfast to D/I IRA, 10 October 1932, in MTUCDA, P69/199 (12).
[66] Acting Adjt. Belfast Batt to A/G, October 1932, in MTUCDA, P69/156 (25-38).
[67] By 1934, of the IRA's 460 members in Belfast, only 150 were employed. See Chapter

leadership personally. There was also a considerable social interaction between figures such as Hannah Sheehy-Skeffington (the deputy editor of *An Phoblacht*) Seán Murray of the RWG and IRA members such as Frank Ryan and the Gilmore brothers. This relationship did not exist in Belfast. RWG leaders such as Tommy Geehan and Betty Sinclair had never been republicans.[68] The suggestion by the IRA in Belfast that the unemployed leadership were "not the right type" points to a suspicion of the communists which made co-operation unlikely.[69] During the strike itself Davy Matthews is alleged to have refused an order from Dublin, because he considered it to be "Communist philosophy", but his own actions show that he clearly supported the strike, if not all of his leadership's analysis.[70] Indeed at the 1933 IRA Convention he enthusiastically informed delegates that the masses had united for the first time in the history of Belfast during the ODR strike.[71]

The IRA seem to have decided that following their relative inactivity during the ODR strike they would not pass up such an opportunity again. Just two months later a bitter dispute broke out on the railways, which partially as a result of IRA action, would become the one of the bloodiest in the north's history. During November 1932 the Irish railway companies announced their intention of cutting wages by 15%. In the Free State the Government stepped in and subsidised the rail workers' wages. However in Northern Ireland 5 of the 6 rail companies went ahead with the cuts. From January 31st 1933 the rail worker's unions began strike action. The rail companies utilised office staff and Queens University students as strike breakers and on the first day of the strike a train was derailed at Dromiskin, Co. Louth and two workers from Dublin

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One pp. 24.

[68] Although Geehan had been a member of the anti-partitionist West Belfast branch of the Northern Ireland Labour Party. See Mike Millote, *Communism in Modern Ireland-The Pursuit of the Worker's Republic Since 1916.* (Dublin, 1984). pp.125.

[69] I/O Belfast to D/I, 10 October 1932, in MTUCDA, P69/199 (12).

[70] See interview with Peter Carelton in MacEoin, *Survivors*, pp.308.

[71] Notes of 1933 GAC, MTUCDA, P69/187 (95).

killed.[72] As the strike spread, 'strike-breakers' began to be boycotted, with towns-people in Glenties, Co.Donegal for example, refusing them refreshments.[73] Trains and buses were routinely stoned even in remote areas and sniper fire was directed at strike-breakers. During February GNR buses were attacked in Dublin and 'strike-breakers' beaten up in Dundalk. The RUC set up a 100 strong flying squad to patrol the rail network and they too became the target of snipers. The IRA were the driving force behind the widespread use of guns and explosives, with its whole organisation involved.[74] As the strike wore on more violent tactics were used to disrupt the rail network and an attempt was made to blow up a railway bridge at Dunmurray.[75] Seán Russell was sent to Belfast to direct the IRA's military intervention. One of his reports confirms the truth of long standing rumours that the IRA co-operated with members of the B Specials during the strike.[76] Russell informed Twomey that it was "promising to find "'B' Specials who are on strike in search of IRA assistance...they realise that we are the only people capable of assistance - seemingly the only organisation that has their confidence and sympathies. What a change to find one group of 'Specials' searching the houses of our men, whilst another can be found collaborating with them!" Russell claimed that "bombs used upon the railway station in Belfast a few days (ago) ... were supplied by the O/C Belfast and thrown by 'B' Specials." Russell also supplied mines and grenades to the IRA in Newry for use there.[77] During the strike an RUC man was killed in a IRA attack on strike breakers.[78] The young IRA men involved fled south.[79]

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[72] The dead men were James McWilliams and James Patterson. *Irish News,* 2 February 1933.
[73] *Irish News,* 10 February 1933.
[74] It has been asserted in the past that only "leftist" sections of the IRA were active during the strike. See Michael Farrell, *Northern Ireland, The Orange State.* (London, 1980) pp.133 and Devlin *Yes,* pp.141.
[75] *Irish News,* 13 February 1933.
[76] See Coogan, *The IRA,* pp.172 for rumours.
[77] 'Q' to C/S, 28 February 1933, in MTUCDA, P69/53 (296-298).
[78] Constable John Ryan, a native of Tipperary. *Irish News,* 1 March 1933.
[79] They included Bob Bradshaw. MacEoin, *Twilight Years,* pp.425-426.

While four Gardai had been killed by the IRA in the late 20s and early 30s, this was the first time an RUC officer had died at their hands.[80]

That the IRA leadership saw the strike as very significant is again confirmed by Twomey in a letter to a republican who feared sectarian riots in Belfast. Twomey did not believe such strife was likely because "even if they tried very hard the Orange command would find it almost impossible to work up an atmosphere. There is an amazing change up there ... this railway strike is doing great damage to the Craigavon gang amongst the very people who would in ordinary circumstances, be the pogromists."[81] These communications were private and the IRA did not publicly claim that they were involved with 'B' Specials during the strike. But was there any long term benefit? The IRA believed there would be because there had been "a realignment within the ranks of the Orange population upon a class basis, leading to a partial disintegration of the Orange machine. This tendency has even, in some cases, brought the Catholic and Protestant workers into joint armed conflict with the six-county Government on issues of mutual interest."[82] The strike itself ended in March, with a compromise involving a wage cut but with the promise of no sackings of strikers.[83] The IRA's intervention had been of a military nature, secretive by necessity, and there is no indication that they gained any Protestant recruits from it. However in what may have been a sequel to the strike, Matthews wrote to inform Twomey that he had been offered 10 rifles and ammunition from an 'Orange' source. However, the necessary cash was unavailable to the Belfast Battalion and the deal fell through.[84] We do know however that the Belfast IRA did contain some Protestant members, such as William 'Liam' Tumilson, who joined the IRA in Short Strand during this period [85] There are

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[80] Ryder, *RUC,* pp.69.
[81] C/S to 'Thomais,' 23 March 1933, in MTUCDA, P69/53 (268-270).
[82] A/G IRA to Commander of every Independent Unit, statement to be read at all Battalion Staff Meetings in preparation for GAC, 18 February 1933 in MTUCDA, P69/187 (1-3).
[83] *An Phoblacht,* 15 April 1933.
[84] O/C Belfast to C/S 30 April 1933, in MTUCDA, P69/53 (83).
[85] Quinn, *A Rebel Voice.* pp.21.

also claims from other IRA members that Protestants were involved in the Belfast IRA during the 1930s.[86] The IRA's intervention was not universally approved of in its own ranks. Again the Armagh IRA objected that they had "no right to take life in a labour dispute" and did not mobilise during the strike.[87]

The experience of the ODR dispute and the Railway strike certainly influenced the IRA's decision to contest the November 1933 Stormont elections. The IRA argued that while the withdrawal of Nationalist MPs from Stormont had not meant "a change of mind" in that party it indicated that "they realise that their followers are becoming disillusioned, and see the futility of parliamentary methods." This was leading to increasing support for the IRA. The IRA's Convention would have to consider how the "disillusioned elements amongst the Orange workers, and that leaderless section of Nationalist opinion, can be welded into the movement for the overthrow of Imperialism and exploitation."[88] Matthews told that Convention that the IRA needed "to have the people behind us, so that when we take military action, both are compact ... It is our opportunity of going direct to the people. I understand that the greatest impediment is getting out of the way (Devlin). He has declared in private that he will not oppose the only organisation that counts - the organisation that has kept up the fight."[89] This statement confirms that Joseph Devlin, the leading nationalist figure in Northern Ireland politics, disillusioned with the lack of progress of mainstream nationalism, had decided to retire in 1933.[90] The IRA leadership were aware of these developments as early as the previous

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[86] "There were Protestants in a fair amount of the companies, odd ones you know, but there were Protestants...there was no such thing, to be honest about it, as sectarianism" Liam Mulholland in Munck and Rolston, *Belfast*, pp.189. A number of IRA members from Protestant backgrounds are mentioned in Uinseann MacEoin, *Harry: The Story of Harry White of Belfast*. (Dublin, 1985). They include John Graham, the editor of the 1940s *Republican News*, Gideon Close and Bill Smith. pp. 147.

[87] Minutes of GAC 1933, MTUCDA, P69/187 (113).

[88] A/G to Commander of every Independent Unit, MTUCDA, P69/187 (1-3).

[89] Minutes of GAC, MTUCDA, P69/187 (110).

[90] Joseph Devlin (1871-1934). Irish Parliamentary Party MP for North Kilkenny 1904-6, West Belfast 1906-1922, Grand Master AOH from 1904, defeated de Valera in West Belfast 1918, Stormont and Westminster MP until his death. Rumours that he had met the IRA are

November, when they were informed that there had been contact between Devlin and their members in Belfast.[91] Some IRA officers raised worries about the prospect of electoral defeat. Twomey explained that he did "not care whether we win or not. We do not expect to win by Parliamentary methods." The decision to stand was then supported unanimously.[92]

Prior to the elections sectarian tension had been on the increase. On 8 October an RUC officer was shot dead and in the aftermath of this 33 republicans arrested though none were charged with the murder. A few days later a Catholic publican was murdered in York Street and angry exchanges followed in Stormont between Nationalists and Unionists over the responsibility for these deaths.[93] For a period after the "shooting and counter shooting" the IRA leadership feared a "pogrom" was likely.[94] The elections of November 1933 were contested by four IRA candidates. It had been planned that an IRA prisoner, Arthur Thornbury, would contest Belfast Central, but his nomination papers were not allowed inside the jail. His brother Patrick, living in Westmeath since his deportation in 1927, was selected in his place.[95] Also selected to stand were Thomas McGrath in South Down, Seán McCool in Foyle, (Derry City) and Patrick McLogan in South Armagh. McGrath was a former republican prisoner and a butcher.[96] McLogan from Armagh, but resident in Portlaoise,

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mentioned in Phoenix, *Northern Nationalism* pp. 372 & Munck & Rolston, *Belfast*, pp. 188.

[91] Chairman Army Council to members of the IRA Executive, 18 November 1932, in MTUCDA P69/155 (30).

[92] Minutes of GAC 1933, MTUCDA, P69/187 (110). There was some surprise at the decision to stand a candidate among some Belfast IRA members however. See McNally, *Morally Good*, pp. 24-25.

[93] *Irish News,* 9, 14, 16 and 18 October 1933. The RUC Constable was Charles Glennon, a native of Westmeath. *An Phoblacht* claimed the dead Catholic, Dan O'Boyle, was a republican sympathiser, 21 October 1933.

[94] Twomey to McGarrity, 26 October 1933, in McGarrity papers, Ms. 17,490 NLI.

[95] Thornbury File HA/32/1/513 in PRONI and *An Phoblacht,* 25 November 1933. Thornbury's exclusion order was not lifted until November 1946, along with those of Moss Twomey and Maud Gonne.

[96] McCool would remain active in the IRA until the late 1940s. He became the organisation's Chief of Staff in 1942 and was also interned in the Curragh that year. He was proiment in the various factional disputes there. On release he stood as a Republican candidate in the 1943 General Election contesting Donegal East and secured 1,961 votes. McCool was an unsuccesful Clann na Poblachta candidate at the 1948 general election. See *Notes On Certain Individuals* in MacEntee Papers UCDA P67/550 pp.159-160 and 'Internee Groups' File PM 1498, MA.

was a member of the Army Council and McCool was commander of the IRA's Donegal No. 2 Battalion.[97] In a surprise move de Valera was persuaded to contest South Down for the Nationalists. *An Phoblacht* declared that this was the "last kick of the Hibernians" arguing that the Nationalists had only been pursuing a "mock opposition" to the Unionist government. The IRA accused de Valera of deliberately splitting the nationalist vote in South Down.[98] His decision to stand was a massive blow to any Republican hopes of capturing that seat. Devlin also decided to contest the elections, despite his earlier misgivings and the onset of illness. This too was a major blow to the IRA and Thornbury now faced a uphill battle against Devlin in Belfast.

The contest was a bitter one, and the Nationalist press lost no opportunity to characterise the IRA as outsiders and traitors to the nationalist cause. The *Derry Journal* stated that the IRA were guilty of "treachery towards the very cause of Irish unity." Derry Nationalist MP JJ McCarroll, in a special appeal to his "Catholic and Nationalist Electors" claimed that the IRA was anti-Catholic and that it was more at home with the "Orange masses whose goodwill it has never tired of courting."[99] On election day itself the *Journal* advised its readers to "Vote early, and ensure that these IRA incursionists are sent back to their secret bailiwicks - taught such a lesson that they will never again attempt to sow seeds of disunion in Nationalist Derry." The *Journal's* tone is not altogether surprising since its proprietor was McCarroll himself.[100] However, the *Irish News* was if anything more vitriolic. It approvingly quoted Nationalist speakers as claiming the IRA was "closely associated with Communism", was "immoral and irreligious" and its canvassers were composed of "usurpers from Cork." It claimed that "Unionists had never stooped so low as the Republicans had done in this election" and that "Cromwell was the first

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[97] See Chapter One pp. 22.
[98] *An Phoblacht,* 25 November 1933.
[99] *Derry Journal,* 20 November 1933.
[100] *Derry Journal,* 28 November 1933 and Eamonn McCann, *War and an Irish Town.* (London, 1993) pp. 253.

Republican who came to Ireland, and every school boy knew what his record against the church was."[101] The *Irish News* stressed that "Orangeism's one ray of hope in this election is the internal dissension introduced by the IRA." Nationalist MP Cahir Healy stated that "no Catholic could vote for the IRA." The *Irish News* even claimed that "the restless malcontents" of the IRA, had been given "freedom of the 6 counties" by the Unionists.[102]

Far from being given lee-way by the Unionist authorities, *An Phoblacht* claimed republicans were being prevented from campaigning by systematic RUC harassment. By December forty two republicans were imprisoned in Crumlin Road.[103] One of these was Matthews, who had been republican Director of Elections.[104] Republican speakers stressed that sectarianism was being used to divide the people of the north. 15,000 people attended a rally for Thornbury in Belfast, and heard Donal O'Donoghue claim that "the only concessions ever coming from the 'Northern Government' were when Catholic and Protestant stood shoulder to shoulder in the streets of Belfast." Dublin IRA officer Con Lehane told the crowd that "the real issue was not Catholic versus Protestant, but the struggle between exploited versus exploiter."[105] The results of the election were relatively good for the IRA; McLogan was elected in South Armagh and Thornbury was only 2,761 votes behind Devlin in Belfast.

Table No. 14 Stormont Election Results 1933

Belfast Central:	Foyle:	S. Armagh:	S.Down:
J. Devlin (Nat.L)-7,411	JJ McCarroll (Nat.L)-6,557	PJ MacLogan (Rep)-4,803	E. de Valera(Nat)-7,404

[101] *Irish News*, 27 November 1933.
[102] *Irish News*, 28 and 30 November 1933. Cahir Healy, (1877-1970). Active in Sinn Féin from 1916-22, interned on the *Argenta*, Westminister MP for Fermanagh and South Tyrone 1931-35, and Stormont MP for Fermanagh 1925-65.
[103] *An Phoblacht,* 2 December 1933.
[104] He was replaced by Mick Price of the Army Council.
[105] *Derry Journal,* 27 November 1933 and *An Phoblacht*, 2nd December 1933.

P.	Thornbury	S.McCool	(Rep)-	JG	Lennon	JG	McGrath(Rep)-
(Rep)-4,650		3,031		(Ind.Nat)-2,211		622	106
				B.O'Neill	(Nat.L)-		
				1,627			

These results were hailed by the IRA as proving that the election bid had been successful. The Belfast vote was seen as the most significant because despite having all the forces of "Devlin reaction" against him Thornbury secured "1,605 more votes than de Valera secured in 1918 against Devlin" in what was by 1933 a much smaller constituency.[107] Perhaps because of his decision to stand, republican propaganda was very hostile to Devlin and betrayed no hint that there had between discussions between the IRA and him.[108] The Nationalists in Derry were accused of drawing their election workers from the Knights of Columbanus and the St. Vincent de Paul Society, and of distributing material claiming McCool was an atheist. The poor result in South Down was put down to the confusion sown by De Valera's candidature. Only 50% of those eligible to do so voted in the constituency, and the IRA attributed this to nationalist disgust at De Valera's last minute recruitment to the 'Hibernians'.[109]

The results were significant. They showed that there was a sizeable urban base for radical Republicanism, as well as strength in areas like South Armagh. Obviously the IRA had benefited from its higher profile and activity during the previous year. The results certainly shook the Nationalists with JJ McCarroll telling Cahir Healy that "it is a serious business that over 3,000 people voted against us."[110] The IRA proclaimed that the "fight in the North

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[106] *Irish News,* 2 December 1933.
[107] *An Phoblacht,* 9 December 1933.
[108] Devlin himself claimed that his illness meant he could not campaign effectively and that he would have otherwise claimed an extra 2,000 votes. He also suggested the IRA employed widespread personation during the voting. Joe Devlin to Hannah Keating, 13th December 1933, in Devlin Papers T/2424 (3) in PRONI.
[109] *An Phoblacht,* 9 December 1933.
[110] McCarroll to Healy 4 December 1933. McCarroll could not resist a last dig at his opponents telling Healy that "From what I saw of them on polling day, I am glad not to

has been given new life" and that Protestants now understood that the IRA was fighting for "equal rights" and not religious bigotry.[111] However the IRA's successes were in the contest with conservative nationalism, with the contest so bitterly fought that young republicans had to depend on the RUC to protect them from enraged Devlin supporters outside the count in Belfast.[112] The elections did not show Protestants were being convinced by the Republican message. Nor did republicans necessarily continue to promote a message of unity after the elections. In May 1934 MacLogan was quoted as telling a rally in Derrycash that "let those in Ulster or in any part of Ireland who boast of and pride themselves that they are Britons ... clear out of Ireland."[113] There were distinct regional and personal differences in how IRA leaders interpreted their politics. Armagh was after all the only seat they actually won, and was an area where the local IRA was resistant to the leadership's instructions during 1932. Within a year and a half widespread sectarian warfare would once again be forcing the IRA into its "traditional" role.

Matthew's IRA career came to a end when he was court-martialled and dismissed from the organisation in January 1934.[114] He had given an undertaking to the Northern Ireland authorities to cease membership of the IRA and was accused of attempting to convince other IRA men to do the same.[115] The Communist *Irish Workers' Voice* hoped Matthew's departure signified a new direction for Northern republicans, as they held him responsible for what they called "anti-working class" policies within the IRA.[116] However, Matthews who attempted to organise rioters on Loyalist Sandy Row during the ODR

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have their support for their chief agent in one centre is a jail-bird while another was a professional boxer of no character." Cahir Healy Papers D2991/A-B in PRONI. It was anything but a "comfortable" victory for the Nationalists. McCann, *War*, pp. 255.

[111] *An Phoblacht,* 20 December 1933.

[112] MacEoin, *Harry*, pp. 43.

[113] Patrick MacLogan File, HA/32/1/610 in PRONI. A civil servant has scribbled around the above quote from the *Armagh Guardian* of 25th of May 1934 "Isn't this enough to warrant exclusion?"

[114] *An Phoblacht,* 3 February 1934.

[115] *Northern Whig,* 23 December 1933. One of the other prisoners who signed the undertaking was George Nash, who had been the prospective IRA candidate for Co.Down.

[116] *Irish Workers' Voice,* 13 January 1934.

strike is hardly deserving of that particular label. It is more likely that years of intense underground activity took their toll on him, and worth considering that thousands of young men passed through the IRA in this era and simply left, never having attained sufficient notoriety to be denounced on their departure.

From 1931 onwards loyalist extremism had emerged in the shape of the Ulster Protestant League (UPL). The UPL was involved in attacks on Labour and Communist meetings, as well as assaults on Catholics. Their activities helped create the atmosphere which led to the 1935 riots.[117] Already in September of 1934, a Catholic man had been killed when loyalist mobs attacked Catholic homes in Marine Street.[118] From April 1935 onwards there was a series of violent sectarian incidents. In mid May Catholics were shot and bombs thrown into the Catholic part of Vere Street. The UPL also broke up four Communist meetings. The authorities reacted by imposing a curfew. In June there were several shooting incidents, with both Catholic and Protestant casualties. The Northern government attempted to prohibit all public gatherings, but the Orange Order stated it would break such a ban.[119] In this atmosphere it was obvious there could be serious violence during July, and when clashes broke out between Catholics and Protestants in York Street following an Orange march through there on July 12th, it developed into the worst sectarian violence seen in Belfast since 1922. At first involving rival crowds throwing stones and bottles, soon guns were brought into play, and the night of the 12th saw two deaths, that of a Protestant youth, and a Catholic woman. Forty people were hospitalised, twenty with bullet wounds.[120] By Monday the 15th, five people were dead, fifty eight homes had been looted or burnt out and British troops were called in to back up the RUC. The violence had a profound effect on

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[117] Hennessey, *Northern Ireland,* pgs.62-68. Paul Bew has argued that the fragmentation of Unionism during the early 1930s was reflected in both the ODR riots and the growth of the UPL. See P.Bew and C.Norton., 'The Unionist state and the Outdoor Relief Riots of 1932' in the *Economic and Social Review* Vol.10, No.3, 1979. pp.255-265.

[118] Jonathan Bardon, *A History of Ulster.* (Belfast, 1992) pp. 539.

[119] Keith Jeffery, 'Parades, Police and Government in Northern Ireland, 1922-1969', in TG Fraser (ed) *The Irish Parading Tradition*, (Basingstoke, 2000) pp. 78-94.

Belfast's Nationalist population, reviving memories of 1922.[121] The violence continued, although decreasing in ferocity, until two weeks later. Unionist politicians blamed nationalists for the trouble in the city with the *Belfast Newsletter* claiming that an "unprovoked attack on the Orange Procession" on the 12th had caused the bloodshed.[122] A few days later it attacked Nationalist MPs for petitioning Westminster for aid, when it was really the IRA with its avowed policy of "using the gun against Ulster," that was responsible for the "dreadful bloodshed which is scourging Belfast." The Imperial Grand Master of the Orange Order claimed that "Communists and members of the IRA" had attacked the march on 12 July, thus igniting the rioting.[123] However the RUC suggested that earlier disturbances in York Street had occurred because of the Orange Bandsmen's conduct.[124]

More Protestants were killed in the violence than Catholics. However attempting to establish who was responsible for the deaths is difficult. At various stages, while thousands rioted, nationalists and loyalists were engaged in gun battles, and the RUC and British troops opened fire on rival crowds at several locations. During 1932 the IRA had noted the formation of 'Catholic Defence' groups, which it believed had access to arms.[125] It is quite possible elements such as these were active in 1935 as well. The majority of those wounded during the disturbances were Catholic, as were most of the 2,000 driven from their homes, and 95% of the compensation was paid out to Catholics.[126] There is no doubt the IRA were active during the July events. IRA members had brought arms into areas where trouble was expected, and had been assigned to defensive duties. It has been claimed that the July riots were the first occasion the IRA used Thompson Guns in Belfast. One IRA man

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[120] *Irish News*, 13 July 1935.
[121] *Irish News*, 15 July 1935.
[122] *Belfast Newsletter*, 13 July 1935.
[123] *Belfast Newsletter*, 17 July and *Irish News*, 1 August 1935.
[124] Jeffery, 'Parades, Police and Government' pp. 85.
[125] I/O Belfast to D/I, 10 July 1932, in MTUCDA P69/199 (126).
[126] Bardon, *History of Ulster*, pp.539-542.

claimed his Ballymacarret unit were "in the thick of it" around York Street for two days. However, as in 1932, a substantial section of the Belfast IRA were not on duty in the city at all, but training outside Dundalk! Indeed the Ballymacarret unit was the only full strength section of the IRA left in Belfast.[127] Over 70 Belfast IRA members were among those present at Giles Quay in the Louth mountains when Gardai raided the camp on July 14th. All of the twelve IRA men arrested were northerners, including several from Belfast.[128] Given the long and violent build up to the July riots, the IRA in Belfast seems to have again been neglecting its duty as defenders. What would the frightened Catholic citizens of Belfast made of the reports in the *Irish News* of July 15 of how in a "repetition of the terrible happenings of the Pogrom of 1920 to 1922" Catholic areas were being invaded, while elsewhere the paper reported the arrest of 70 of their 'defenders' in Dundalk?[129] While the violence ebbed in intensity after about a week, large numbers of Catholics were forced from their workplaces over the next fortnight.[130] There was ample opportunity for the IRA to wage a sectarian war in July 1935: again it refused to do so. Protestants were not shot at or bombed after the rioting had ceased, while Catholics were.[131]

The riots and their aftermath dominated nationalist politics for the rest of 1935. In November of that year there was a general election in the United Kingdom. The Nationalist party was in some disarray, following Devlin's death and the bloodshed of that summer. The Nationalists in West Belfast issued a statement explaining why they would not contest the Westminster elections. They outlined what they considered dangerous threats to Catholics and concluded that "it is not the time to dissipate their energies in a hopeless fight on a register

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[127] MacEoin, *Harry,* pp. 44 and Munck and Rolston, *Belfast,* pp.182. The quote is from Jack Brady.
[128] *Notes on Events*, in MacEntee Papers, UCDA, P67/534 pp.44.
[129] *Irish News,* 15 July 1935.
[130] *Irish News,* 20 July 1935.
[131] Munck and Rolston, *Belfast,* pp.57. Unfortunately the RUC's reports on the riots are as yet unavailable to researchers.

which has a Unionist majority of over 15,000." The Nationalists made clear that they would not support an IRA candidate as they refused to "share the title of Irish Nationalists with any element which is ready to fight against its fellow countrymen."[132] Nevertheless the IRA intervened in the election aiming to stand in four constituencies. Charles Leddy, serving a two year sentence since his arrest in Dundalk the previous July, was nominated for West Belfast, Patrick O'Hagan, for Down and Charles McGlennon, for Armagh.[133]

The Nationalists only ran two candidates, both in the two seat Fermanagh/Tyrone constituency. This was done after discussions with the IRA, despite Cahir Healy's misgivings about the republicans' ability to run an effective campaign.[134] A reflection of the Nationalist Party's frustration with Northern Ireland's politics was that both these candidates ran on an abstentionist basis. The IRA had also put considerable pressure on the Nationalists to agree to an election pact.[135] The Republican Congress also planned to back a candidate in North Down, a Protestant farmer who would stand on an anti-partition platform. However the Congress claimed what they called the "coercive power of his environment" forced him to withdraw from the election.[136] That Cahir Healy was also in correspondence with George Gilmore of the Congress is a reflection of how far the violence of the summer had pushed the Nationalists towards co-operation with republicans.[137] As in 1933 the four Republicans were IRA candidates, Sinn Féin having declared that they would not support them.[138]

Despite the difference in political atmosphere from the Stormont election campaign of two years previously, the IRA attempted to raise similar issues

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[132] *Irish News,* 4 November 1935.
[133] *Irish News,* 5 November 1935.
[134] See Healy to R.O'Connor of Omagh, 5 October 1935 & to De Valera 23 October 1935 in Cahir Healy Papers D2991/A-B in PRONI.
[135] See David Kennedy, 'Catholics in Northern Ireland, 1926-1939' in Francis MacManus (ed) *The Years of the Great Test 1926-39.* (Dublin, 1967). pp.138-149.
[136] *Republican Congress,* 11 November 1935.
[137] See Gilmore to Healy 25 October 1935 suggesting Healy convene a conference of Republican and Labour opinion to fight the election on an anti-partition basis. Healy reply, 27 October 1935. While there were major political differences between Healy and the Congress, he had spoken at a London rally organised by them the previous summer. Cahir Healy Papers D2991/A-B in PRONI.

during its campaign. Seán MacBride claimed in Belfast that republicans "wanted to end (the) system by which the workers were exploited by a handful of capitalists, whether British or Irish." In Portadown, Seán Russell told his listeners that the "day (was) fast approaching when the sectarian catch cries, which were dividing the people of the north, would disappear." Tom Barry spoke to an estimated 10,000 strong crowd in Belfast, warning of an approaching war, in which Britain would attempt to conscript nationalists, and declaring republicans to be believers in religious freedom. However he warned "that if you are tramped down by armed force, the only way to defeat that slavery is with a gun in your hand."[139] In contrast to 1933, the Nationalist press did not attack the republican campaign.[140] George Gilmore suggested this was because the IRA did not raise any strong criticisms of mainstream nationalism during the election.[141] As in 1933 however republicans complained of RUC harassment. When Donal O'Donoghue and Maud Gonne McBride were arrested in Lurgan, Maud Gonne was deported, while O'Donoghue was jailed in Crumlin Road. More seriously, two people, including a 15 year old girl, were wounded when shots were fired from a passing car at a republican rally in west Belfast. More violence occurred on polling day itself with the RUC baton charging rival crowds in Lurgan, nationalists in Dungannon attacked at polling stations and a republican election agent injured in Co.Down.[142] The results of the election saw Unionist victories everywhere except Fermanagh/Tyrone where the Nationalists took both seats. In West Belfast, Leddy received 20,313 votes, in Armagh the republican vote was 16,284 and in Co. Down, Patrick O'Hagan won 20,236 votes. Leading Belfast IRA member James (Jimmy) Steele optimistically told supporters at the election count that "this fight will inevitably bring all creeds and classes to realise that their political spirit, political needs,

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[138] *Irish News*, 11 November 1935. See also Chapter Five pp. 158.
[139] *Irish News,* 7 and 11 November 1935.
[140] Although there were hostile references to the IRA's percieved disdain for sectarian politicking. Staunton, *Nationalists of Northern Ireland*, pp. 123-124.
[141] *Republican Congress,* 23 November 1935.

and economic necessities can best be served in a united Ireland in which every citizen will be given an opportunity to have equal liberty." Perhaps symbolically Charles McGlennon's post-election address, where he declared "one day in the near future Orange and Green would unite and their Protestant neighbours would see eye to eye with their Catholic fellow countrymen" was cut short because of the "pandemonium of Orange drumming." The *Irish News* reported that many of the voting papers in West Belfast had been spoiled, with slogans mourning the loss of Devlin written on them.[143] Sectarian violence continued, with celebrating Nationalists in Irvinestown, Fermanagh, attacked by mobs, and bombs thrown into Catholic Little Ship street in Belfast. Nevertheless, a republican statement claimed satisfaction with their effort saying that while they "recognised that the seats they contested could not be won in this election ... (the) Imperial contention that the Six-county area is a satisfied statelet of the British Empire has been challenged."[144]

Again despite there being potential to exploit sectarian feeling, the IRA avoided the temptation to do so, calling for unity across the divide in circumstances even bleaker than those of 1933. If the IRA were simply a Catholic militia, then surely these election campaigns would have reflected that. But the IRA consistently promoted, rhetorically at least, cross community unity.

What then of Peadar O' Donnell's oft quoted assertion that the IRA in Belfast were just "a battalion of armed Catholics"?[145] O' Donnell's statement owes more to the failure of the Republican Congress to make many gains among Belfast republicans than to any objective analysis. The IRA nationally was dominated by Catholics, and as an Army Council member O'Donnell knew this. All republican commemorations featured the rosary, even though O'Donnell claimed to be shocked at seeing republicans saying it in Belfast. The situation

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[142] *Irish News,* 14 and 15 November 1935.
[143] Such as "Our Joe is gone." *Irish News,* 16 November 1935.
[144] *Irish News*, 18 November 1935.
[145] Munck and Rolston, *Belfast,* pp.184, English, *Radicals*, pp.138, Marianne Elliot, *The Catholics of Ulster,* (London, 2000) pp. 403.

in the north was complicated by the fact that after 1928 all republican commemorations faced bans. On Easter Sunday the RUC would surround Milltown cemetery in Belfast and prevent anything other than a religious service taking place.[146] Unlike in the Free State where political speeches would follow the saying of a decade of the rosary, in Northern Ireland an attempt to do this would lead to arrest. Therefore the religious service was an expression of defiance that republicans could attend in place of a commemoration.[147] While it is quite true that the "only constituency from which the IRA could realistically hope to draw support in Northern Ireland was comprised by Catholic communities," it was not the case that this meant that it necessarily defined itself "largely in terms of sectarian rationale."[148] Neither the national IRA leadership, nor the majority of its northern members can be said to have simply acted as 'Catholic Defenders' in this period. What is true is that the IRA leadership displayed little understanding of Unionist hostility to republicanism. Their impression often seemed to be that once the IRA explained that it was not sectarian Protestants would flock to it. Hence Twomey's assertion that it was the Nationalist Party that had "knit the Orangemen together and brought things back on sectarian lines." Had Devlin and his supporters not committed that "crime" the labour movement and other sectional interests would have combined to oust the Unionist Party.[149]

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[146] The RUC would also prevent possible breaches of the ban elswhere. In 1931 the visiting speaker and the local IRA O/C were arrested at an attempted commemoration in Newry. Acting O/C Newry to A/G, 6 April 1931, in MTUCDA, P69/151 (65).

[147] Prohibited Meetings File HA/32/1/465 in PRONI. The RUC claimed it was seditious speeches made by Frank Ryan in Belfast and Seán MacSweeney in Derry at Easter 1928 that prompted the ban. The reaction to Ryan's speech does point to contradictions within republican support in the north. While Ryan told the crowd that the "fight was not one of religion...but..to drive the English out of the country" many in the audience sang 'Faith of our Fathers' as well as 'The Soldiers Song'. The RUC used the ceremonies to assess the ebbs and flows of republican support. From 1930 onwards they were noticing increasing numbers of young people in Belfast wearing Easter Lilies. After some deliberation, the RUC decided that while sale of these 'Republican Poppies' was prohibited, wearers would not be interfered with unless they were in an area where their presence could lead to a breach of the peace.

[148] English, *Radicals*, pp.201.

[149] Twomey to McGarrity, 23 June 1931, in McGarrity Papers, Ms. 17,490, NLI.

It is significant that during this period there was no direct Northern influence on the IRA Army Council, MacLogan being resident in Portlaoise since the end of the Civil War. The IRA leadership in Dublin directed northern policy. This is not so surprising given the weakness of the IRA in Northern Ireland until 1932. However with increased activity and growth the Northern IRA would begin to demand a greater say in the organisation. An example of early tension is well illustrated by messages sent by Belfast to Dublin in late 1932 and during 1933. The first was a complaint about the lack of coverage in *An Phoblacht* for imprisoned Belfast IRA men, the writer claiming that he was "sick asking publicity for our prisoners." More serious were Matthew's claims that the three IRA men who had fled south during the railway strike were being neglected, and being given little money and few comforts. He contrasted that with the treatment of Dublin IRA members on the run in Belfast and considered that "these cases speak well for the manner that HQ treats Belfast when in difficulty." Wondering how much money was spent on southern IRA matters, he asked if even with a £1,000 reward on their heads "these boys" might have to return to Belfast. He concluded by asking "is the north forgotten or is it not worthwhile keeping a promise when a Belfast man is in question?"[150]

The suspicion of the Dublin leadership by the Belfast IRA may well have contributed to the northern IRA's support for the ousting of the remnants of the early 1930s leadership in 1938.[151] While the southern IRA had often displayed a lack of understanding of northern political life the Belfast IRA's failure to grasp the realities of southern politics eventually led to the absurdity

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[150] JB to Editor, *An Phoblacht*, 21 November 1932, & O/C Belfast to C/S, 17 April 1933 in MTUCDA, P69/158 (28) and P69/53 (131-134).

[151] There were accusations that the Belfast IRA, in alliance with Seán Russell and Joe McGarrity sabatoged planned IRA operations in order to undermine the Dublin leadership. See Statement to GAC 1938, from the outgoing AC and Executive in Aiken Papers, UCDA, P104/2833 (1-3).

of the Stephen Hayes affair.[152] However this should not obscure the fact that the IRA believed that the sectarian divide could be bridged during the early 1930s and did not see itself primarily as a defence force.

[152] Stephen Hayes, the IRA C/S was kidnapped during 1941 by Belfast IRA members in the belief that he was a government spy. He was due to be murdered but managed to escape. A fantastical confession was produced which claimed the Irish government was behind most of the IRA's activities from 1939 onwards. Copy in Humphreys Papers, UCDA, P106/2097. A summary of the affair is contained in Bowyer Bell, *Secret Army*, pp. 199-214.

Chapter Nine

The IRA Outside Ireland

The two most important areas of IRA activity outside Ireland were the United States and Britain. While there were IRA members and supporters in other countries, in terms of numbers and influence their importance was minimal. By far the most important area was the US, as the IRA depended to a great degree for both financial and military support from its American supporters. It was also to the US that most of those Anti Treaty IRA men who emigrated went. The IRA leadership maintained a constant line of communication with its American representatives and leading supporters. They were kept well informed of events in Ireland, and their advice was sought and listened too. Leading IRA officers visited the US on a regular basis.[1] In contrast the IRA in Britain remained small and did not play a major role in its leadership's calculations.

How to deal with the loss of its members through emigration faced the IRA almost immediately following the Civil War. In theory emigration was tantamount to treachery and the IRA had actually forbidden it during the 1919-21 period, and did so again in July 1922.[2] Initially this view continued to be expressed following the Civil War, *An t-Óglách* warning in May 1925 that those who emigrated became "Ireland's foe."[3] There was a certain pressure from local officers in hard hit areas to support this view, with one from the west arguing that as only 2 men out of an 18 strong active service unit were left in Ireland, the IRA should make clear that those who emigrated were playing "the

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[1] Andy Cooney during 1926 and 1929, Frank Ryan in early 1930, Moss Twomey later that year, Mick Price during the 'coercion' period of late 1931, and Seán Russell in the autumn of 1932.

[2] Fitzpatrick, *The Two Irelands,* pp. 214. Also see Cancellation of General Order No. 22, in MTUCDA, P69/206 (52).

[3] *An t-Óglách,* May 1925, in Aiken Papers, UCDA, P104/1281.

enemy's game."[4] However the scale of the situation facing them eventually forced a reassessment from the IRA. In August 1924 the organisation was already acknowledging that unemployment, despite not being as much of a problem as had been feared, was affecting the IRA badly in the west of Ireland. There, it was stated that IRA members "cannot get work" and as a result "hundreds" had emigrated without informing the IRA. The situation worsened in the following years. In 1925 an officer from Connemara considered that due to poverty, emigration from his area was impossible to prevent, and that soon "very few who took part in the fight for independence" would be left.[5] The IRA was faced with a choice of prohibiting members leaving Ireland and being ignored, or at least making an effort to maintain some authority among those who left. In order to do this it cancelled its previous ruling on emigration in July 1925.

From that date onwards IRA members were permitted to leave Ireland for treatment of medical problems, provided they supplied a Doctor's Certificate, and for economic reasons provided they agreed to enrol in the IRA's Foreign Reserve.[6] The Foreign Reserve was established to ensure "that men who were forced to emigrate should be kept in touch" with the IRA, and be kept under its authority.[7] To be transferred to the Reserve, an IRA member had to provide reasons why he wished to emigrate, agree to be bound by IRA discipline while abroad, and be prepared to return to Ireland if so ordered by the IRA.[8] IRA members who had left Ireland after May 1923 and before July 1925 could be retrospectively enrolled in the Reserve.

From the beginning there were problems with this system and an Army Council member pointed out in 1926 that when the Reserve was formed the IRA leadership did not have a "decided view" on its function. It was never

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[4] O/C Western Division, 18 May 1925 in MTUCDA, P69/207 (86).
[5] O/C Connemara, 28 April 1925 in MTUCDA, P69/207 (97).
[6] Cancellation of GO. 22, (N/D) in MTUCDA, P69/206 (52).
[7] AC Report to GAC, Autumn 1925, in MTUCDA, P69/181 (91).
[8] Application Form for Transfer to Foreign Reserve List in MTUCDA, P69/167 (49). See Appendix 11.

explained how an IRA member would maintain contact with the organisation at home or fellow reservists abroad for example.[9] This, the Army Council member felt, reflected a deeper confusion about the role of the IRA abroad and more particularly in the US. There was also the added problem that many IRA members must have left Ireland without informing their officers, and began lives abroad without reinvolving themselves in republican politics.[10] Units seem to have been lax in getting the addresses of men who emigrated making it difficult to make contact with the American Clan na Gael.[11] Therefore we can only gain a partial picture of the IRA abroad from the surviving Foreign Reserve lists. The vast majority of those who returned forms went to the US, a smaller number to Britain and a handful elsewhere.

Table No. 15 Destinations of IRA Emigrants 1924 - 1926

USA	200	Australia	7
Britain	101	New Zealand	2
Canada	9	Others	1.[12]

The route that emigrating IRA men took was similar to that of many southern Irish emigrants during the 1920s. The majority of those going to the US went to New York, which remained the most popular destination for Irish emigrants in that period. By the late 1920s however, Irish emigration to the US had begun to decline, mainly due to restrictive Immigration laws and the impact of the Great Depression.[13] As with emigrants generally, IRA men from the

[9] Memorandum to Members of Army Council on USA Organisation, 11 February 1926, in MTUCDA, P69/181 (62-64).

[10] In 1932 the Clan was complaining about how few Tipperary IRA members in the US had contacted it. A/G to O/C Tipp. Battn., 3 July 1932, in MTUCDA, P69/158 (284). The IRA in Mayo felt many of those who left had "forgotten the homeland" or "fallen victims to booze." Report on North Mayo Bdge, 23 January 1929, in MTUCDA, P69/151 (259-262).

[11] An *t-Óglách*, April 1929, in FitzGerald papers, UCDA, P80/881 (7).

[12] Foreign Reserve Lists, 1924-1926 in MTUCDA, P69/167 (94-99), P69/168 (1-5), P69/170 (1-50), P69/172, P69/183 (7) (91-92). The 'other' was Argentina.

[13] See Kevin Kenny, *The American Irish-A History*, (Harlow, 2000) pp. 182 and Chris McNickle, 'When New York Was Irish, and After', in RH Bayor and TJ Meagher, (eds.) *The New York Irish*, (Baltimore, 1996) pp. 337-356.

same areas tended to travel to the same destinations and family members often emigrated together. The Shannon brothers from Clare emigrated to Chicago, while three Fennells and three McGraths from the same battalion went to New York during that period.[14]

Table No. 16 Destinations for IRA emigrants in the United States

New York	Cleveland	Chicago	Boston	Others
130	29	13	8	20 [15]

The majority of these men came from Kerry, Mayo, Clare and Leitrim. One reason the figure for Cleveland is relatively high was its popularity with Mayo men, with 20 members of the IRA's Achill company travelling there from 1924-25. During 1926, 27 members of the Carrick on Shannon Battalion made their way to New York.[16] The most senior IRA figure to emigrate in this period, Michael McLoughlin, was also attached to that unit.[17] The Officer Commanding the Clare Brigade, Martin Shanahan, also emigrated to New York, despite the "very utmost" efforts of the AC to dissuade him.[18] In general however it seems to have been mainly junior officers and rank and file IRA members who left Ireland.[19] In the case of at least two IRA men, Seán

[14] Applications for transfer to Foreign Reserve List for Patrick, Martin, Michael, Peter and John Shannon of 4th Battalion, Clare Brigade, (N/D) in MTUCDA, P69/169 (22-26). Applications for Francis, William and Frederick Fennell in MTUCDA, P69/169 (62-64) and Patrick, Martin and John McGrath in MTUCDA, P69/169 (65-69).

[15] Calculated from Foreign Reserve Lists, in MTUCDA, P69/167 (94-99), P69/168 (1-5), P69/170 (1-50), P69/172, P69/183 (7) & (91-92). Newhaven, Connecticut, Northampton, Cambridge and Dorchester in Massachusetts and San Francisco were among the more numerous other choices of location.

[16] List for transfer to Foreign Reserve, (N/D) in MTUCDA, P69/183 (91-92).

[17] McLaughlin held the rank of Brigadier General and was Commandant of the Carrick on Shannon Brigade. He travelled to new York in October 1925. Transfer form in MTUCDA, P69/169 (4). McLaughlin was shot dead during a robbery at the store where he worked in December 1930. The return of his remains to Ireland saw a major IRA mobilisation and confrontation with the Gardai and Army at his funeral. See *An Phoblacht,* 14 and 20 June 1931 and Calendar, in *Notes on Events* , in MacEntee Papers, UCDA, P67/534 pp. 6.

[18] Transfer Form, 20 August 1926 in MTUCDA, P69/167 (4). On efforts to persuade Shanahan to remain in Ireland see Chairman AC to An Timthire, IRA, 3 June 1927 in MTUCDA, P69/183 (6).

[19] 37 out of 41 on lists for transfer, P69/183 (91-92). Among the rank and file IRA men who left Ireland in those years was Jerimiah Murphy of Kerry, whose memoirs of the 1916-22 period, *When Youth Was Mine*, were published in 1998. Murphy's transfer form is in

McGuinness and Jack Keogh, the US was a refuge following escape from prison in Ireland.[20]

Of course the US was not important to the IRA simply because its members emigrated there. Since the 1860s, the large Irish American population had been of vital importance to revolutionary movements in Ireland. Following the Civil War the base for militant republicanism in the US had shrunk considerably, but it was still a substantial one. The IRA therefore had both military and financial reasons to attempt organisation in the US. In 1926 the leading Anti-Treaty Irish American organisation was the Clan na Gael, originally founded in 1867, whose leading personality was Joseph McGarrity of Philadelphia.[21] The Clan and the IRA had come to an agreement in 1926 that the two organisations recognise each other as the only revolutionary bodies in their respective countries, and that the Clan give undivided financial and military aid to the IRA. Furthermore any changes in policy by either could not take place "until the party contemplating the change has officially notified the other and their consent obtained."[22] During 1927 the IRA also appointed a full time representative, Connie Neenan, to be responsible for communication between the Army Council and the Clan. Neenan, an IRA veteran from Cork was also given responsibility for recruiting IRA members to the Clan, for procuring arms and equipment and collecting funds in the US for the organisation.[23] Neenan was the central US link with the IRA for the next decade.

MTUCDA, P69/170 (49).

[20] McGuinness escaped from Mountjoy in November 1925 and returned to Ireland during 1930. O/C Offaly to A/G, 17 May 1932, in MTUCDA, P69/157 (34-36). Keogh escaped from Dundrum Asylum in May 1926. Report, 7 May 1929, FitzGerald Papers, UCDA, P80/851 (11).

[21] Cronin, *McGarrity Papers*, pp. 16-17, & 28-36 for background to McGarrity's early career. Also see Sister MV Tarpey, 'The Role of Joseph McGarrity in the Struggle for Irish Independence'. PHD Thesis, (St. Johns University, New York, 1970).

[22] Text of Agreement, 15 September 1926 in MTUCDA, P69/185 (257). The agreement was signed by Andy Cooney for the IRA and Luke Dillon for the Clan. Dillon had served 14 years in jail for attempting to blow up the Welland Canal in Ontario, Canada during the Boer War. He also had been involved in a bombing campaign in Britain during 1883-84.

[23] AC to An Timthire, (Neenan's title) Oglaigh na h-Éireann, USA and Canada, 9 February 1927, in MTUCDA, P69/183 (113-114). Neenan a former Adjutant of the IRA's 1st Southern Division, left for the US in April 1926. See MTUCDA, P69/169 (2) and interview in MacEoin, *Survivors* pp. 235-258. Also O'Malley Notebooks, UCDA, P17b/112. Neenan's allowance from the IRA was $40 a week. See Dispatch, 10 November 1926, in MTUCDA,

While the IRA did receive arms and ammunition from the Clan, the US was never the source of as much military expertise as they hoped it would be.[24] The Clan was more important in terms of raising finance. At one stage the IRA was claiming it needed at least $1000 a month from the US for it to operate effectively.[25] Clan na Gael camps (branches) existed right across the US from Boston to San Francisco. It was strongest on the east coast and in traditional centres of Irish settlement such as Chicago, Cleveland and Butte, Montana. As might be expected however, New York City was the "mainstay" of the Clan.[26] Here the organisation owned and operated a headquarters, the 'IRA Halls', which functioned as a meeting place and social centre.[27] At the 'IRA Halls', Clan supporters could listen to music by the 'IRA Orchestra', purchase *An Phoblacht,* and women supporters could even participate in a yearly beauty contest.[28] Every year a boat trip on the Hudson river was organised to raise funds, and in 1930 the Clan attracted 2,700 people to this fund raiser, making it the "biggest, best and greatest success" the organisation had in fund raising until that date. In that year the Clan had 19 functioning branches in New York.[29] *An Phoblacht* was also available from 17 news stands in Manhatten and Brooklyn.[30]

P69/183 (175).

[24] See Chapter Two pp. 42-43.

[25] Memorandum for Clan na Gael Executive from IRA Representative, 25 August 1932, in MTUCDA, P69/185 (220).

[26] List of camps in records of Clan Convention, 12-14 July 1929, in McGarrity papers, Ms. 17,534 (4) NLI. "Mainstay" quote from An Timthire Dispatch, 18 May 1927 in MTUCDA, P69/183 (36). There were also a small number of branches in Canada such as the Irish Unity Club of Montreal.

[27] From 1927 until 1931 the halls were situated at 66th St Broadway, and from 1931 at 147 Columbus Avenue. An Timthire Dispatch, 18 May 1927 in MTUCDA, P69/183 (35) and Charles McGinnitty to *An Phoblacht*, 5 March 1931 in MTUCDA, P69/233 (186). The atmosphere is described in Dermot O'Reilly (ed) *Accepting The Challenge, The Memoirs of Michael Flannery*, (Dublin, 2001) pp. 123-124. Flannery was helping with *An Phoblacht* distribution during 1933. See McGinnity, 27 February 1933, in MTUCDA, P69/233 (17). He became a key figure in Irish Northern Aid during the 1970s and a supporter of Republican Sinn Féin after 1986.

[28] Leaflet advertising Labor Night dance, 7 September 1931 and 'Message to all Lovers of Irish Freedom' from the Brooklyn and Queens Ladies IRA Auxiliaries, (N/D) in MTUCDA, P69/233 (117-118).

[29] Figure for boat trip from Clan Secretary to P. Castiglioni, 8 July 1930 and Neenan to Gannon, 15 men's clubs and 4 women's, 11 June 1930, in McGarrity Papers, Ms. 17,467

The Clan was a relatively small organisation however, and in 1929 its membership in its strongest area, New York, was just 620. The Clan's overall membership is difficult to estimate, but incomplete figures for 1929 add up to just 1,722.[31] In June 1931 only 385 copies of the IRA's journal *An-tÓglách* were being sent to the US.[32] Another rough indicator of the scale of republican support is the number of copies of *An Phoblacht* the Clan recieved from Ireland. During 1930 the Clan was receiving only 480 copies a week.[33] In May 1932 the paper had just 100 subscribers in the entire United States.[34] Again, when the record of republican deaths from 1913 onwards, *The Last Post,* was published in 1932, only 350 copies were sent to the Clan.[35] This was a publication that all republicans could have been expected to want to own. Therefore, the suggestion is that the Clan in this period was not a mass organisation, and this alone would have made it difficult for it to raise the contributions the IRA expected it to.

The Clan's fund raising activities were fairly mundane and unspectacular. Dances and dinners were held at Easter or on St. Patrick's Day, and Easter Lillies sold. In 1928 a total of just £73 9 shillings and 3 pence was raised in the US through Lily sales.[36] However, nearly $3,000 was raised in New York on St. Patrick's Day in 1930 by the holding of three dances.[37] In that case the Clan had been allowed to use the names of the Tipperary, Clare, and Tyrone

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(5) NLI.

[30] Leaflet in MTUCDA, P69/233 (118).

[31] Clan Convention Notes, July 1929, in McGarrity Papers, Ms. 17,534 (4) NLI.

[32] List of areas to receive copies during June 1931 in MTUCDA, P69/52 (271). The New York area received 120 of these.

[33] New York were sent 100, Boston 40, Chicago 75, Cleveland 35 and Philadelphia 40. List in MTUCDA, P69/222 (5).

[34] List of subscribers, May 1932 in MTUCDA, P69/233 (69). They included one James Gralton of New York, who would return home to Leitrim later that year.

[35] For complaints about *An Phoblacht's* circulation see letter from Chairman of the Army Council to the Secretary of the Clan, 13 February 1933 in MTUCDA, P69/185 (91). For *The Last Post* see letter from Seán Fitzpatrick of the National Graves Association to the Clan, 28 January 1933, in P69/185 (108). 2,500 was the initial print run of the book. The IRA offered to help sell the book, but argued they could not pay for their production. Bill from Fodhla printing Company, 23 June, and C/S to NGA, 27 June 1932, in Gerard Tighe Papers, Ms. 28,894 (b) 1 NLI.

[36] See Cumann na mBan to An Timthire, 23 December 1929, McGarrity Papers, Ms. 17,534 (3) NLI.

[37] Neenan to J. Stanton, 24 March 1930 in McGarrity Papers, Ms. 17,467 (7) NLI.

county organisations in its publicity. This was important, because the majority of Irish Americans did not identify explicitly with any one political organisation but often with organisations which brought together emigrants on a regional basis.

More practically two IRA veterans suffering from TB were treated at the Clan's expense in a sanatorium in Chicago during 1930.[38] A Limerick IRA veteran, who had lost his job through ill health, was sent to the US for treatment after his comrades and the IRA in Dublin raised his fare during 1931.[39] By 1932 13 disabled IRA members were receiving medical help in the US, with the Clan again paying for their treatment.[40] Treatment for 'disabled' IRA members was costing the Clan about $6,000 a year in 1932.[41]

As far as political action went, the Clan occasionally held protests during the visits of Free State politicians, such as when they successfully disrupted a speech by Eoin MacNeill to the Ancient Order of Hibernians in Holyoake, Massachusetts during May 1930.[42]

The Clan did not operate in a situation of mass support for militant republicanism. The majority of Irish Americans had supported the Treaty in 1921.[43] The Civil War had then demoralised many former supporters of the IRA.[44] Even the arrival in the US of Anti-Treaty veterans did not necessarily lead to a growth in support for the Clan, as many men simply left Irish politics behind them. The IRA were aware of this and with the launch of

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[38] J. Keating, Chicago to Neenan, 18 May 1930 and Neenan to Keating, 8 July 1930 in McGarrity Papers, Ms. 17,467 (1) NLI.

[39] John O'Shaughnessy from Rathkeale. O/C West Limerick to A/G, 28 March 1931 & A/G to O/C W. Limk, 31 March 1931, in MTUCDA. P69/151 (106-113).

[40] Pete Kearney to Chairman Army Council, 9 September 1932 in MTUCDA, P69/185 (180). Of these men, 1 died, while the rest recovered, 7 going back to Ireland and 5 remaining in the US.

[41] Secretary Clan na Gael to Chairman AC, 7 September 1932, in MTUCDA, P69/185 (209-212).

[42] Report by Jack Ashe of Springfield, Mass, 9 May 1930 in McGarritty Papers, Ms. 17,467 (3) NLI.

[43] Kenny, *American Irish*, pp. 199. See also report that 1923 AOH Convention strongly supported the establishment of the Free State, in British Consulate General, (NYC) report, 26 July 1923, in D/T S 1976 NAI.

[44] For the disillusioning effect of the split on Irish American activists see FM Carroll, *American Opinion and the Irish Question 1910 - 23.* (Dublin, 1978) pp. 177-187.

Comhairle na Poblachta in Ireland during 1929, briefly considered setting up a new open support organisation in the US.[45] This was to be called the Councils of the Irish Republic. Former IRA leader Andy Cooney visited the US in the hope of getting in touch with "those many thousands who gave active support to the Republic in 1922-23 and who have in recent years become inactive." He also wished to make some contact with the many emigrants who were members of the IRA but had "not joined over there."[46] However he met with considerable hostility from the Clan leadership, who opposed the new organisation from the beginning, and Cooney adjudged his mission a failure. The IRA then abandoned their attempt to set up an alternative organisation to the Clan.[47]

A year later Twomey himself arrived in America, speaking at the Clan convention in New York and spending the following four months visiting Clan camps in over 20 cities across the US.[48] He was not impressed with the situation he found there. Twomey found an organisation seemingly content to remain small, unable to attract the most recent Irish emigrants and in some cases showing a "definite inclination to limit the membership." The Clan, as he found it was "not suited to embrace the general mass of our people" and its organisation in general was "very poor." Twomey also noted a tendency among the Clan to associate the IRA entirely with military action with many considering "that because there are no shootings or military operations at home ... we are not sincere."[49] This certainly was the case for the Clans most

[45] AC to An Timthire, 1 August 1929 in McGarrity Papers, Ms. 17,534 (3) NLI. Comhairle na Poblachta was a short lived political initiative launched by the IRA in late 1928. For complaints that local IRA units were not keeping GHQ informed of the whereabouts of emigrating IRA men see *An t-Óglách*, April 1929, copy in FitzGerald Papers, UCDA, P80/881 (7).

[46] Secretary Army Council to Chairman Clan na Gael, 21 November 1929, in McGarrity papers, Ms. 17,534 (3) NLI.

[47] Clan Executive Report, 28 October 1929, in McGarrity Papers, Ms. 17,534 (3) NLI. For more on Cooney's mission see MacEvilly, *IRA Chief* pp.159-164.

[48] The Clan Convention was held on the 30 and 31 of August and the 1st of September 1930. Twomey was introduced by McGarrity as the "ablest leader of our forces in Ireland." McGarrity Papers, Ms. 17,535 (3). Twomey travelled from Ireland as Mr. Holmes. His tour cost the Clan $837.45 in train and bus fares, in MTUCDA, P69/222 (7).

[49] C/S to Chairman and Executive, Clan na Gael, 11 December 1930, in MTUCDA, P69/61 (5-10). Personally Twomey hugely enjoyed his travels in the US. He travelled from New

important leader, McGarrity. Throughout the whole period of his involvement with republicanism, he stressed the necessity for military action, pure and simple. For McGarrity, political activity was the "grave" of militant nationalism.[50] As a result of this belief he clashed with the IRA leadership on numerous occasions, especially about their decision to support Fianna Fáil in the General Elections of 1932 and 1933. Fearing a turn to constitutionalism he asked had the IRA become "spineless and afraid?"[51] McGarrity told Seán Russell that he regarded political activity as a diversion, feeling that "all energies should be put into the military side."[52] This attitude was reflected in the Clan more generally, and it was claimed the organisation did lose members in New York, Jersey, Boston, Detroit and Chicago when the IRA changed its policy on electoral support for Fianna Fáil. Rumours were also current in the Clan during 1932 that the IRA was going to hand over its arms to the new government.[53]

The most heated debates at the 1932 Clan Convention however, centred on the fact that the IRA did not *consult* the Clan before it made these decisions. This, it was argued was a breach of the agreement signed by both organisations in 1926. The Clan felt that the IRA had deliberately kept "them in the dark" and that they only found out about the IRA's policy through letters to Clan members from Ireland.[54] These suspicions continued with the Detroit Clan demanding an extraordinary convention be held to discuss the support for Fianna Fáil in late 1932.[55] These worries were only finally dealt with by the promptness of the IRA's notification of the Clan of their policy with regard to

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York, through Cleveland, Chicago and Buffalo to San Francisco. See letters to Kathleen Twomey, 28 September, and 13 and 17 October 1930. Fr. Maurice Twomey Jr PP.

[50] Report of Chairman, Clan na Gael Executive, Clan Convention, 5-7 September 1936, in McGarrity Papers, Ms. 17,542 (4) NLI.

[51] Proposed circular to Clan, 15 June 1932. McGarrity also included a warning to the IRA to "beware of spineless inaction." The Clan Executive convinced him not to send out the circular. In MTUCDA, P69/185 (287).

[52] 'Q' to C/S, 4 October 1932 in MTUCDA, P69/185 (172-175).

[53] Clan na Gael to Chairman Army Council, 4 August 1934 in McGarrity papers, Ms. 17,539 NLI and Neenan to Twomey, 28 August 1932 in MTUCDA, P69/185 (213).

[54] Russell report on Clan Convention of 3 September 1932. McGarrity was not present at this Convention because his son died shortly before it. Report dated 20 November 1932 in MTUCDA, P69/185 (148-152).

[55] Secretary Clan na Gael to Chairman Army Council, 18 December 1932 in MTUCDA, P69/185 (97-99).

the 1933 General Election and the signing of a new Clan/IRA agreement. However the new agreement made it clear that while consultation and exchanges of viewpoints were necessary, the IRA's Convention remained the highest authority.[56] By contrast violent activities, which often cost the IRA support in Ireland, seem to have had the opposite effect in the US. Con Neenan wrote that the raids on Garda stations in November 1926 had given rise to "great enthusiasm here among all the boys and we believe will gain us new members."[57] McGarrity continued to argue for offensive action by the IRA at regular intervals. He had warned the IRA in 1929 that money could not be expected unless "reports of active work are most convincing."[58] Again in 1934 the Clan leadership were urging that the IRA attack Northern Ireland.[59]

There are grounds for arguing then that one reason why the IRA found it hard to obtain funding from the US between 1927 and 1934 was because of the organisation's political direction.[60] The IRA leadership themselves also seem to have occasionally harboured this suspicion.[61] In May 1932 money *was* withheld from the IRA on the basis that the Clan had not been informed of the launch of Saor Éire and the IRA's decision to support Fianna Fáil in the general election.[62] The IRA's response was to demand the money immediately, and dismiss the Clan's objections.[63] The Clan eventually sent £500 (about $2,000) at the end of May.[64] However, throughout this affair, Pete Kearney, the Clan's treasurer, stressed that the Clan's objection was not to IRA policies themselves, but to the lack of consultation. They claimed that they felt that Saor

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[56] IRA Statement on 1933 Election, to all Clan Districts and Camps, 10 January 1933 in MTUCDA, P69/185 (75). The new agreement was signed on behalf of the IRA by Twomey and Mick Price, 27 March 1933 in P69/185 (31).
[57] An Timthire Dispatch, 21 December 1926, in MTUCDA, P69/183 (157).
[58] McGarrity to Army Council, 7 December 1929, quoted in Tarpey, op.cit. pp.257.
[59] Clan to Chairman Army Council, 8 October 1934 in McGarrity Papers, Ms. 17,539, NLI.
[60] See Richard Dunphy, 'The Soldiers Set Out: Reflections on the Formation of Fianna Fáil.' in Hannon and Gallagher (eds) *Taking the Long View- 70 Years of Fianna Fáil.* (Dublin, 1996). pp. 7-20.
[61] Army Council to Chairman Clan na Gael, 27 January 1930 in McGarrity Papers, Ms. 17,535 (1) NLI.
[62] Kearney to Chairman Army Council, 10 May 1932, in MTUCDA P69/185 (294-297).
[63] Telegram from 'Collins' to Clan, "Must have remittance immediately, and protest your reason for withholding it." (N/D) in MTUCDA P69/185 (290).
[64] Kearney to Chairman Army Council, 31 May 1932, in MTUCDA, P69/185 (291-293)

Éire was a good initiative, and they felt whatever the IRA did politically within Ireland was not the Clan's concern. Kearney even urged that the IRA make a "bold attack" on the Catholic Bishops' political pronouncements.[65] Opposition to IRA social policies was not voiced at the Clan's 1932 Convention.[66] Kearney stressed that in public and to their membership the Clan Executive would defend the IRA's position.[67] At the 1933 IRA Convention, Clan delegate Tom Magill supported a call for the IRA to develop a social and economic programme.[68] Therefore reasons other than political ones were central to the Clan's failure to adequately fund the IRA.

As in Ireland, US republicans were also divided and confused over the issue of Fianna Fáil's foundation and eventual entry into Leinster House. Even McGarrity himself maintained correspondence with de Valera until 1936. The Clan found that some of its members left to join Fianna Fáil and others who remained within the Clan were also supporters of the new party. Neenan felt to exclude such men would greatly weaken the organisation, so in order to avoid a split they were allowed to remain.[69] De Valera's organisation was to prove much more successful at fund raising in the US over the next few years then the IRA would be.[70] However, as in Ireland initially there was a degree of co-operation between both organisations. The main Irish American Anti-Treaty newspaper *The Irish World,* gave coverage to both Fianna Fáil and IRA events.[71] In 1929, Andy Cooney found the Clan in Seattle to be largely "pro-Dev" and in Minneapolis to be divided on the issue.[72]

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[65] Kearney to Chairman AC, 10 May 1932, in MTUCDA, P69/185 (294-297). It should be noted that at the IRA's 1933 and 1934 Conventions, Kearney, by then resident in Ireland would defend the need for radical social policies. See Notes of 1933 GAC, in MTUCDA, P69/187 (99-100) and Notes of 1934 GAC, MacEntee Papers, UCDA, P67/525.

[66] Russell Report, 20 November 1932, in MTUCDA P69/185 (148-152).

[67] Kearney to Chairman Army Council, 26 June 1932, in MTUCDA P69/185 (279-281). Kearney was in the US from 1924 until 1933, when he returned to Ireland and took up a position with IRA GHQ.

[68] Notes of 1933 GAC, in MTUCDA, P69/187 (100).

[69] An Timthire Dispatch, 18 May 1927 and 20 May 1927, in MTUCDA P69/183 (35-36) and (45).

[70] Dunphy, 'The Soldiers Set Out' & Tim Pat Coogan, *De Valera, Long Fellow, Long Shadow*. (London, 1995). pp. 389-398.

[71] Founded in the 1870 as a populist radical newspaper by Patrick Ford. It strongly supported the Land League in Ireland and trade unionism in the US. During the late 1920s

In 1932 the Clan admitted that there was still an "FF tendency" within its ranks.[73] Initially the victory of Fianna Fáil and the release of IRA prisoners in March 1932 generated enthusiasm among the Clan.[74] However by 1933 the IRA were bemoaning the influence the now strongly pro-Fianna Fáil *Irish World* was having in Irish America, especially as the Clan seemed powerless to resist it, and noted that because of *An Phoblacht's* low circulation it was no surprise that the IRA's policies were so "badly understood."[75] Indeed one of the Clan's most high profile members, its attorney, JT Ryan, resigned from the organisation, after the IRA criticised articles he had written for the *Irish World* as being too pro-de Valera.[76] A measure of the lack of understanding that the Clan sometimes displayed about Irish political realities is shown in their suggestion that the Fianna Fáil government be asked to facilitate the shipment of the arms and ammunition they held for the IRA![77]

The most important factor in the inability of the IRA to secure large scale funding in the US lies in the nature of its constituency and the period in which it operated. Firstly the IRA had by no means an open field to organise among Irish Americans. Aside from established organisations such as the Ancient Order of Hibernians, there was also a plethora of sporting and local county clubs, which fulfilled the social needs of many Irish emigrants.[78] Politically there remained the remnants of John Devoy's Friends of Irish

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it featured Hannah Sheehy Skeffington and Frank Gallagher as contributors. The *Irish World* defended IRA activities in Ireland as well as supporting Fianna Fáil, and denounced Free State government as British puppets. The paper supported some labour organisations while also containing Anti-Semitic and anti-Communist articles.

[72] Report, 6 November 1929, in McGarrity Papers, Ms. 17,534 (1) NLI.

[73] Kearney to Chairman AC, 10 May 1932, in MTUCDA, P69/185 (294-297).

[74] McGinnitty to Manager, *An Phoblacht*, 28 April 1932, in MTUCDA, P69/233 (164). McGinnitty wrote that newsreel footage of the release of IRA prisoners during March 1932 had provided Clan members with a morale booster before their Easter commemorations.

[75] Chairman Army Council to Secretary Clan na Gael, 13 February 1933, in MTUCDA P69/185 (91).

[76] See *Irish World,* 3 and 10 December 1932, and IRA criticism 14 December 1932 in MTUCDA, P69/185 (138). Ryan's resignation letter to Connnie Neenan, 20 December 1932 in MTUCDA P69/185 (132). Ryan had been a Clan member since 1892, see interview in *An Phoblacht*, 29 October 1932.

[77] Secretary Clan na Gael to Chairman AC, 3 October 1932, in MTUCDA, P69/185 (159-161).

[78] The "dance hall element" as McGinnitty referred to them. To Manager, *An Phoblacht*, 6 May 1931, in MTUCDA, P69/233 (173-174).

Freedom and the Fianna Fáil supporting American Association for the Recognition of the Irish Republic. While many of these groups were prepared to endorse resolutions criticising repression under Cosgrave for example, only the Clan was engaged in full time support for revolutionary activity.[79] McGarrity, a businessman who on occasion donated large sums of his personal fortune to the IRA, was not typical of the average Clan member.[80] While middle class Irish Americans such as JT Ryan, were also active in the Clan, the majority of its membership were working class or lower middle class. In Butte, for example, almost the entire Clan membership worked as miners.[81] In New York many Clan members were employed in work in the transit industry, whose workforce was at least 50% Irish born during the 1930s.[82] While by the 1920s Irish Americans were moving steadily upward in comparison to newer immigrant groups, the Great Depression in 1929 seems to have had a devastating effect on the majority of them.[83] After 1929 the Clan na Gael faced a situation where large numbers of its members were out of work and were unable to contribute to its fund raising efforts. Even McGarrity himself was reduced to relying on his teenage daughters' wages from waitressing for support by 1933.[84]

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[79] See *Irish World*, 7 November 1931 on the 'New Penal Laws.' The paper itself was banned in Ireland under the new legislation in October 1931. *An Phoblacht* of 12 March 1932 published a list of over 200 Irish American sporting and political bodies that had denounced the 'Coercion Bill.'

[80] In February 1923 McGarrity had sent $41,700 of his own to Germany in an attempt to purchase arms for the Anti Treaty IRA. Tarpey, *Joseph McGarrity*, pp. 200.

[81] Report by Seán O'Deorain to McGarrity, 6 November 1929, in McGarrity Papers, Ms. 17,534 (1). At one stage Butte had the highest Irish percentage population of any city in the US. It had a long Irish nationalist and labour tradition. See David M. Emmons, *The Butte Irish 1875-1925.* (Chicago, 1990).

[82] Joshua B. Freeman, 'Irish Workers in the Twentieth Century United States: The Case of the Transport Worker's Union.' in *Saothar* No. 8, 1982. pp.24-45.

[83] McNickle argues that as the many of the Irish were part of an aspiring middle class at the time, the Depression seemed to cut off their hopes of 'making it' and was relatively worse for them than other sectors of society. McNickle, 'When New York was Irish' in *New York Irish,* pp. 352-353.

[84] He had lost his position on the Curb exchange in December 1932. According to Neenan, McGarrity's two daughters were not earning more than $10 between them. The Clan helped McGarrity financially through his wife, with the IRA's knowledge, but without that of McGarrity himself. See Neenan to Twomey, 17 December 1932 and 21 March 1933 in MTUCDA P69/185 (137) and (50).

There is widespread evidence of this from 1929 on. Only one third of the funds the IRA claimed it needed to function was supplied to them in that year.[85] At the 1930 Clan Convention McGarrity admitted that the organisation had failed to raise funds they had pledged to the IRA. He put this down to "the depressing economic conditions prevailing in the country at large."[86] Earlier that summer Clan activists in Chicago had reported that "working conditions were never as bad here" and that most of their membership were unemployed.[87] During that autumn Twomey was able to assess the state of the US for himself as he travelled from coast to coast. He found "things are awful at present- such unemployment and uncertainty among those who have jobs."[88] In Butte nearly all the Irish miners were out of work and American people in general seemed to be facing the winter "with a feeling of despair."[89] The economic situation continued to worsen and by 1932 the Clan's contributions to the IRA were a fraction of what was demanded. From November 1931 to June 1932 just £500 was sent from the US.[90] Following that donation Pete Kearney informed the IRA that the Clan "treasury was depleted."[91] He later explained that the depression had affected "our people much more than the average" and that the unemployment rate was exceptionally high among Clan members, most of whom had not "put anything by for a rainy day."[92] The prospects of getting any more did not look good as Neenan informed Twomey in August that "New York is broke."[93] Furthermore he claimed that many unemployed IRA veterans would return home if they could. Seán Russell arrived in the US that month and the IRA hoped that Russell's visit would lead to some arrangement with the Clan

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[85] Army Council to An Timthire, 27 January 1930 in McGarrity Papers, Ms. 17,535 NLI.
[86] Clan Convention, 30 August to 1 September 1930 in McGarrity Papers, Ms. 17,535 (3) NLI.
[87] PJ Gannon and W. Kerrisk, 4 May and 4 June 1930 in McGarrity papers, Ms. 17,467 (1) NLI.
[88] Moss Twomey to Kathleen Twomey, Detroit, 28 September 1930, PP.
[89] Moss Twomey to Kathleen Twomey, Butte, 13 October 1930 and Klamath Falls, Oregon, 17 October 1930. PP.
[90] Memorandum for Clan, 25 August 1932 in MTUCDA P69/185 (220) op.cit.
[91] Kearney to Chairman Army Council, 31 May 1932 P69/185 (291-293) op.cit.
[92] Kearney to Chairman Army Council, 26 June 1932, P69/185 (279-281) op.cit.
[93] Neenan to Twomey, 28 August 1932 in MTUCDA, P69/185 (213).

whereby they would be spared "recurring nerve wracking experiences" about money.[94]

While in some respects Russell was happy with his American tour, principally with how military training was going ahead, in general he found the Clan in a poor state. Membership was decreasing, and the majority of members were unemployed. New York was "in a bad way", Philadelphia "just paddling", Chicago "finding it very hard", Detroit was "very bad" and Butte "gloomy". In contrast, though, Boston, Cleveland and San Francisco were managing to hold their own.[95] In December the IRA leadership were forced to accept that "owing to the terrible economic conditions in the USA, no money can be expected until next year."[96] The same month Neenan informed *An Phoblacht* that most of their debts in the US could not be paid, and that in the case of some areas they "may as well forget them."[97] *An Phoblacht* had earlier been told that Chicago could not pay their bills, due to "old man depression". Their major annual source of income, a fund raising picnic, had only just broken even that year.[98] In late December the IRA received just £150 from the Clan, with a note saying that this would "practically drain" the organisation's treasury.[99] Late in 1933 McGarrity informed Twomey that with half the Clan out of work it was now "well nigh impossible" to collect money.[100]

In early 1933 the IRA attempted to convince the Clan of a scheme to secure more funds. The episode would illustrate that while the Clan often misunderstood the situation in Ireland, so too could the IRA misjudge American affairs. During 1920 de Valera had succeeded in securing nearly 6 million

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[94] Memorandum, 25 August 1932, P69/185 (220) op.cit.
[95] 'Q' to C/S, 7 September 1932 in MTUCDA, P69/185 (209-212).
[96] Army Finances Report, December 1932 in MTUCDA, P69/54 (58-59).
[97] Neenan to Manager *An Phoblacht*, 30 December 1932 in MTUCDA, P69/234 (4). For example, he reported that the only one Clan member in Buffalo had a job.
[98] Edward Quinn, Chicago to *An Phoblacht*, 30 November 1932, in MTUCDA, P69/227 (37).
[99] Clan na Gael to Army Council, 30 December 1932 in MTUCDA, P69/185 (103).
[100] McGarrity to Twomey, 3 December 1933, in McGarrity Papers, Ms. 17,490 NLI. McGarrity also informed de Valera that "empty pockets and empty stomachs make people very indifferent." McGarrity to de Valera, 2 October 1933, in McGarrity Papers, Ms. 17,441 NLI.

dollars in the US, through the issue of 'republican bonds'.[101] Some $3 million of this money was left in the US, and became tied up in the wrangling between pro and anti Treaty factions. Both the Free State government and de Valera made efforts to recover the money, but finally in 1927 the courts in the US ruled that the money should be returned to its original Bond holders. De Valera made an audacious appeal to the Bond holders to subscribe their shares towards the setting up of a republican newspaper, the *Irish Press*. In government by 1932, de Valera announced that the Bond holders in the US were to be repaid.[102] The IRA seem to have believed that the Bond holders could be convinced to assign their Bonds "for the benefit of the Army." They wanted the Clan to set up a committee to appeal for Bond-holders to subscribe to the IRA, and draw up a list of Bond-holders to be written to. The IRA demanded that the "whole weight of the Clan" be thrown behind the project as "money is vital to progress here" and this scheme was considered "one of the few means offering by which it can be secured."[103]

In a detailed reply the Clan explained that they believed the whole idea to be seriously misjudged. They estimated that here were about 400,000 Bond-holders, and it was "inconceivable" that they would turn their share over to the IRA as most of them were "destitute" and desperately needed the money. The Clan stated that they would not "get a DOLLAR in such an appeal." They also felt that such an appeal would antagonise the Bond-holders, as it would be perceived as an attack on de Valera. Most of the Bond-holders believed that the IRA were supporting Fianna Fáil and did not understand the internal politics of the Free State. The appeal would not "bring any fruitful results" and indeed would embarass the IRA later on.[104] The IRA were forced to drop the plan.

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[101] Fitzpatrick, *Two Irelands*, pp. 80.
[102] For the background to this issue see Coogan *Long Fellow*, pp.391, 416-418 and 439-441.
[103] Army Council to Secretary Clan na Gael, 13 February 1933, in MTUCDA, P69/185 (86).
[104] Clan na Gael to Chairman, Army Council, 7 March 1933, in MTUCDA, P69/185 (60-62).

As was the case with the IRA, the Clan also contained members who were eager to promote action on social and economic issues. The James Connolly club of the Clan in New York included among its members former Meath IRA man Gerald O'Reilly, Charles MacGinnitty, who was *An Phoblacht's* distributor in the city, and Michael Quill, from Co. Kerry.[105] For a period McGinnitty had also sold the Communist *Irish Workers' Voice* from the Clan's Halls at Columbus Avenue, until he received orders from Dublin to cease doing so.[106] When the IRA split in 1934 these men remained members of the Clan, while supporting the new Republican Congress. A similar situation existed in Chicago with the Irish American Labour League. It was not until July 1935 that a branch of the Congress was officially launched in New York.[107] However a cross over in membership with the Clan seems to have continued until Twomey wrote to McGarrity to complain about it.[108] In late 1934 George Gilmore visited the US on behalf of the Congress and spent eight months there, mainly in New York. He also travelled to Boston, Buffalo, Chicago and Philadelphia. Gilmore claimed that Congress knew little money would be forthcoming from the US, so he concentrated on trying to win political support there. He managed to convince a number of republican supporters in the US to sign an appeal for unity between the IRA, Fianna Fáil and unaffiliated republicans in order to avoid another civil war in Ireland. The appeal was vague enough to be supported by a broad range of Irish Americans, but largely fell on deaf ears in Ireland.[109]

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[105] James Connolly IRA Club Agenda, 31 October 1932, in MTUCDA, P69/223 (4). McGinnitty had taken charge of *An Phoblacht* in New York during the spring of 1931. MTUCDA, P69/233 (186).

[106] McGinnitty to Manager *An Phoblacht,* 1 August 1932, in MTUCDA, P69/233 (43). A 'McGinty' was reported to have sent messages of support to the Republican Worker's discussion group set up by IRA members in late 1932. O/C Dublin to C/S, 9 January 1933, in MTUCDA, P69/53 (252).

[107] Letter to Manager *An Phoblacht*, October 1934 in MTUCDA, P69/227 (5) and *Republican Congress*, 13 July 1935.

[108] Twomey to McGarrity, 7 October 1935 in McGarrity Papers, Ms. 17,490 NLI.

[109] Gilmore Notes PP. See Chapter Seven pp. 233.

In the longer term Quill and O'Reilly, along with at least two dozen former IRA veterans who worked on the subways, successfully built the Transport Workers Union as a major force in New York labour politics, with over 30,000 members.[110] The union took a strongly Irish republican stance while also opposing anti-Semitism at a time when there was considerable Irish-Jewish conflict.[111] Quill's support for IRA internees during World War Two *and* his denunciation of de Valera's visit to the German Legation in 1945 made him the subject of much criticism in Ireland.[112] One author has argued that the Clan, though largely unknown outside Irish circles played a "crucial role in the creation of modern transit unionism."[113] The views of this group were not representative of the majority of the Clan however.

The views the IRA expressed publicly on American politics deserve some attention. From 1926 onwards *An Phoblacht* was highly critical of many aspects of American society. Support was expressed for anarchists Sacco and Vanzetti in 1927 and for the Scottsboro Boys about to be "burned alive by American "justice"' in 1932.[114] A long campaign was waged by the paper for the release of Tom Mooney, an Irish American labour radical.[115] Strikes and labour agitation in the US were supported, while US foreign policy was criticised, most notably in Nicaragua.[116] In 1927 the Chairman of the Army Council had asked if the US was pursuing an "imperialist policy" in Nicaragua,

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[110] Freeman 'Irish Workers' in *Saothar* No. 8, pp.25. *Irish Democrat*, 26 June 1937.

[111] See Seán Cronin, *James Connolly and the Transport Workers Union of America: The Ideological Links with Mike Quill and his Associates.* (Dublin, 1983) and RH Bayor, *Neighbors in Conflict- The Irish, Germans, Jews and Italians of New York City, 1929-1941.* (Baltimore, 1978).

[112] His attack on de Valera was contained in the TWU's *Transport Bulletin*, May 1945. While Ireland's neutrality was not popular with Irish Americans the attack on de Valera did cause much dissension. *The Irish Press,* 21 June 1945 quotes the *Gaelic American*, 19 May 1945, describing Quill a "half-baked Red from the Bronx". Quill's activities gained him a substantial Garda file. See Jus 8/931 NAI. His nephew was active in the IRA during the 1940s.

[113] J.B. Freeman, *In Transit-The Transport Workers Union in New York City, 1933-1966.* (Oxford, 1989) pp. 34.

[114] Sacco and Vanzetti faced execution on bombing charges. The Scottsboro boys were a group of young Blacks on Death Row following accusations of rape. *An Phoblacht,* 17 August 1927 and 5 November 1932.

[115] *An Phoblacht*, 27 September 1930 and 3 June 1933.

[116] See support for San Francisco General Strike, *An Phoblacht,* 21 May 1934 and US textile strike, 8 September 1934.

arguing that as far as he could see they were.[117] *An Phoblacht* referred to US Marines in Nicaragua as "America's Black and Tans" and congratulated nationalist leader Sandino on "winning his war."[118] While the US circulation of *An Phoblacht* was low, these articles placed it on the left of American politics. However *An Phoblacht* also published articles praising the right wing populist Fr. Charles Coughlin.[119]

There was no immediate recovery in fortunes for the Clan, and in 1935 Twomey expressed the view that the organisation seemed to have "ceased to exist outside of New York."[120] Sales of *An Phoblacht* in the US had almost completely collapsed by that time.[121] Ironically despite the Clan's decline, the connection with the US became crucial to the IRA following the clampdown by the Fianna Fáil government in 1936. McGarrity and Russell developed a plan for a bombing campaign in Britain which had far reaching consequences for the IRA.[122] The ending of the Depression in the US had encouraged Twomey to hope that the Clan would revive again.[123] During the preparations for the bombing campaign Russell again toured the local branches of the Clan, and there certainly seems to have been a new enthusiasm within them.[124] However the McGarrity/Russell relationship is primarily important in how it was used to deceive and actually disrupt the plans of Russell's rivals in the IRA leadership after 1936.[125]

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[117] Chairman Army Council to An Timthire, 9 February 1927 in MTUCDA, P69/183 (111).
[118] *An Phoblacht,* 25 February 1933 and 23 May 1933.
[119] See Chapter Ten pp. 322.
[120] Twomey to McGarrity, 7 October 1935, in McGarrity Papers, Ms. 17,490 NLI.
[121] See for example Paul O'Connor, Boston, to *An Phoblacht,*, 24 July 1934, asking that the paper no longer be sent because "it has such a small circulation here" in MTUCDA, P69/232 (3). Philadelphia was receiving just 6 copies of the paper in 1934 in comparison to 40 in 1930. 20 February 1934, in P69/225 (4) and P69/222 (5).
[122] See Cronin, *McGarrity Papers*, pp. 160-174 and also *Frank Ryan*, pp. 175-179. Also JB Bell, *Secret Army*, pp. 145-167.
[123] Twomey to McGarrity, 27 December 1937, in McGarrity Papers, Ms. 17,490, NLI.
[124] There were 500 present at a republican gathering in San Francisco, 50 in Butte, but only 24 in Chicago. Cleveland and Pittsburgh were judged as "poor" by Russell, but Boston and New York were better. Reports 3 August and 16 August 1937 in McGarrity Papers, Ms. 17,485 NLI.
[125] See Statement to the General Army Convention (1938) from the outgoing IRA leadership in Aiken Papers, UCDA, P104/2833 (1-3). Also Russell to McGarrity 29 January, 7 May, and 5 November 1937 in McGarrity Papers, Ms. 17,485 NLI.

Unlike the United States, the IRA in Britain was directly under the control of the Dublin leadership. It was organised into three regional areas in England, and one in Scotland. The No.1 Area covered London and the Home Counties, No.2 Manchester, Salford and parts of Yorkshire and No.3 Liverpool and the surrounding region.[126] Despite Britain being the main destination for Irish immigrants during the 1920s, and the IRA being based in areas where there was a large Irish population, its organisation remained tiny. In late 1926 it claimed just 189 members in Britain.[127] Between 1926 and 1927 only 93 IRA members requested transfers to the British organisation. Most settled in the English north west.

Table No. 17 British destinations of IRA emigrants

London 28	Manchester 31	Liverpool 34	Scotland 20 [128]

In 1926 an Army Council member had asked whether any serious thought had been given to the function of the IRA in Britain. He felt militarily it was incapable of carrying out offensive action against the British state and that it was possibly better to disband the British units and replace them with tightly organised cells. However his proposals were not acted on.[129] Nor did the IRA dramatically increase its strength in the following years. In 1930 the Manchester region's strength was still only 38.[130] Two years later it had declined to just 20.[131] However there was a larger constituency for republicanism among the Irish in Britain than these figures would suggest. Both Sinn Féin and the Cumann na mBan organised in England and Scotland also, and in many ways these organisations fulfilled a social function for a section of

[126] Foreign Reserve List, in MTUCDA, P69/172.
[127] Army Council Report, 1 November 1926, in MTUCDA, P69/181 (5).
[128] Foreign Reserve reports, in MTUCDA, P69/171 (2), & P69/172.
[129] Memorandum to members of the Army Council on future organisation in Britain, 21 February 1926, in MTUCDA, P69/181 (65-66).
[130] Report, August 1930 in MTUCDA, P69/153 (203).
[131] O/C No.2 Area Britain, to A/G 23 April 1932, in MTUCDA, P69/121 (27).

the Irish in Britain.[132] Activists like Joseph Fowler carried on the work they had begun in the Irish Self Determination League during the early 1920s into Sinn Féin.[133] Large numbers attended events organised by Sinn Féin's Roger Casement club in London, the Cathal Brugha club in Manchester, or by the Manchester Martyrs Committee in that city. During the early 1930s several thousand people were drawn to republican commemoration events in the north of England.[134] Dances and social events were organised regularly at premises like the Shamrock Hall in Manchester's Roachdale Road, under the direction of that city's leading republican personality, Seamus Barrett.[135]

Until 1930 there were still 4 IRA prisoners held in British jails and the IRA instructed its British organisation to organise campaigns among the Irish community to raise their case, and put pressure on the Labour party.[136] In January 1930 a delegation of IRA supporters actually met JR Clynes MP, the Secretary of State for Home Affairs, in Manchester. Clynes "was very nice" to the delegation, but warned them he could not speak for the Cabinet as a whole on the prisoners issue.[137] In May of that year, however, two IRA members, Bernard Iago and J. Foley, jailed for a bank raid in Manchester during 1922, were released from Maidstone prison. A welcome rally was held for them in Manchester in late May, at which two Labour councillors, JP Mannion of Wigan and George Hall of Manchester spoke.[138] Iago resumed activity with the IRA in Manchester, becoming its Intelligence Officer, and within two years had embroiled it in a serious factional dispute with Seamus Barrett and the

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[132] There were 14 Sinn Féin Cumann in Britain in December 1929, see report in Jus 8/675, NAI.

[133] See for example, Easter Week commemoration events, 17 April 1933 in Joseph H. Fowler Papers, Ms. 27,097 (2/1) NLI.

[134] See *Manchester Guardian,* 23 November 1931 for estimate of "over a thousand Irish men and women" attending ceremony in Bootle cemetery, Liverpool and 28 November 1932 for a procession, "some thousands strong" in Moston, north Manchester.

[135] See MTUCDA, P69/121 (1-28). Barrett owned a grocers and wholesalers shop in Deansgate. *An Phoblacht,* 4 March 1927.

[136] A/G to O/C No.2, (n/d) in MTUCDA, P69/152 (214). All of the prisoners were being held in Maidstone prison, *An Phoblacht*, 8 December 1928.

[137] O/C No. 2 Area, Britain to A/G, 10 February 1930 in MTUCDA, P69/152 (215).

[138] *An Phoblacht,* 10 May and 24 May 1930.

Manchester Martyrs Committee. During this dispute the tiny IRA unit was split in half, with Iago and the Adjutant opposing the Unit's Commander and Quartermaster. There were accusations of assaults on Seamus Barrett and of drunken young IRA men causing disorder in the Shamrock Hall. Barrett was sent a forged letter dismissing him from the IRA, and both sides appealed to Dublin for backing. Eventually the IRA ordered Iago's faction to cease interfering with Barret's supporters, who had "served (the) movement faithfully for years." The IRA also warned Iago that the setting up of a rival Manchester Martyrs Committee would not be tolerated.[139] That such a inconsequential dispute was able to take up almost a year of the Manchester IRA's time is evidence of the impotence of the IRA in Britain. Indiscipline seemed to have been a feature of the IRA in Scotland as well. The Glasgow IRA was badly affected by a violent feud during 1925.[140]

While the Police in Britain maintained a watch on republican activities there, the IRA was in no way a serious threat for most of this period.[141] Nor does the Dublin leadership seem to have paid a great deal of attention to it. There was no discussion of its British organisation at either of the IRA's 1933 or 1934 General Army Conventions.[142] A veteran of the period described how a handful of IRA men would meet weekly in a trade union hall in Blackfriar's Road in London, but carried out no activity because "GHQ had over the years no policy as to what role the organisation was to fulfil." The majority of IRA members worked in construction and therefore travelled from place to place to where ever work could be found. Contact between them was often very tenuous.[143] After the IRA split in 1934 the Republican congress also organised in Britain, publishing the *Irish Front* newspaper, edited by the Tyrone poet

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[139] Various reports, October 1932, in MTUCDA, P69/121 (1-28).
[140] Pete Hughes to Frances Carty, 8 May 1925, in MTUCDA, P69/62 (17-18).
[141] See O/C No. 1 Area Britain to A/G, 9 May 1932, for complaints of intimidation of republicans and surveillance of Irish clubs and dance halls, in Aiken Papers, UCDA, P104/2836.
[142] Notes of these Conventions in MTUCDA, P69/187 and MacEntee Papers, P67/525.
[143] Frank Corrigan, "The Bombing Campaign" O'Mahoney PP.

Charles Donnelly.[144] Communist initiatives such as the Irish Anti - Imperialist League also courted IRA support but its Dublin leadership remained suspicious, and its British organisation aloof, from participation in them.[145]

As early as 1926 there had been suggestions that the IRA should concentrate on military operations in Britain itself.[146] However the IRA's attention at the time was concentrated on opposition to the Free State government. This changed in the late 1930s with the acceptance of the Russell/McGarrity plan for a bombing campaign in Britain. It is a measure of how desperate the IRA was at this stage that this plan was embraced with enthusiasm, when an inspection of the British units by Twomey had shown them to be "poor and loose, and militarily ... almost elementary." Twomey found that the IRA in Britain had few links with the Irish community at large, and most IRA men who had emigrated there avoided the IRA, whose central activity appeared to be "the running of dances and ceilidhthe."[147] Nevertheless the IRA leadership pushed ahead with its campaign which eventually led to the deaths of 7 civilians, the execution of 2 IRA members and the jailing or deportation of over 200 republicans.[148]

Only a handful of IRA members who completed the Foreign Reserve list emigrated to Australia and New Zealand. In 1931 just 90 *An Phoblachts* were being sent to Australia and 15 to New Zealand.[149] Again, by the mid 1930s many were cancelling their orders claiming that "the exiles are very apathetic-due

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[144] Joseph O'Connor, *Even the olives are bleeding. The Life and Times of Charlie Donnelly.* (Dublin, 1992). pp. 78-79.
[145] B. McWilliams, Irish Anti-Imperialist League, to *An Phoblacht*, 25 September 1932, in MTUCDA, P69/158 (52-53) and A/G to O/C No.1 Area Britain, 12 October 1932, in MTUCDA, P69/158 (50).
[146] See Memorandum, MTUCDA, P69/181 (65-66). It is possible Seán Russell was the author of this document.
[147] A/G to C/S, 6 May 1938 in McGarrity Papers, Ms. 17,544 (5) NLI.
[148] See Bowyer Bell op.cit. for deaths. 98 IRA members were jailed and 164 men and women deported. See *Notes on Events*, in MacEntee Papers, UCDA, P67/534 (Appendix).
[149] List, 60 went to Melbourne and 24 to Sydney, 1 April 1931, in MTUCDA, P69/233 (92).

no doubt to the very keen economic struggle."[150] Others suggested that more mainstream Irish publications had achieved dominance among immigrants.[151]

Most of the IRA's other international contacts were from anti-colonial movements in Aisa or left wing organisations in Europe. *An Phoblacht* gave extensive coverage to the movement for independence in India and during the late 1920s and early 1930s. Indian speakers were a regular feature of republican rallies in Ireland.[152] The presence of Indian speakers was thought by the IRA to have been useful when promoting the 'Boycott British' campaign during 1932.[153] The support given seems to have been largely rhetorical however. But in the case of the Chinese revolution from 1926 there does seem to have been an effort by the IRA to secure practical help for the rebels. As well as *An Phoblacht's* enthusiastic coverage, the IRA leadership asked Con Neenan in New York to organise pro-Chinese demonstrations if it were possible.[154] Neenan was already attempting to use Clan influence on behalf of a Chinese representative in the city.[155] He asked the *Irish World* to give prominence to the Chinese fight for independence, as the rest of the US "Government and Press (was) Imperialistic."[156] Even more interestingly, the IRA leadership actually discussed the possibility of sending volunteers to aid the Chinese rebels, and it was agreed to do so if "conditions for service, (and) cost for travelling were satisfactory."[157] However this proposal does not seem to have gone any further. One other example of practical solidarity was the claim that in October 1930 Clan na Gael members in Detroit helped guard an Indian independence march

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[150] Seán O'Carroll, Sydney, to *An Phoblacht,* 15 May 1934, in MTUCDA, P69/224 (12-13).
[151] Manager, *The Tribune* to *An Phoblacht,* "People here seem to prefer reading *'The Irish Review'* an Australian Irish monthly." 6 June 1935, in MTUCDA, P69/224 (4-5).
[152] See Garda report on rally in Dublin's Mansion House, 24 September 1930 with Indian speaker Krishno Deonarine, along with Seán MacBride and Peadar O'Donnell, drew a mainly "working class" audience of over 1,000. Report in Jus 8/682 NAI. The IRA also made an unsuccessful attempt to bring Mahatma Gandhi to Dublin during 1931. Political Prisoners Committee to Gandhi, 19 September 1931, in Humphreys Papers, UCDA, P106/1314.
[153] Chairman AC to Secretary Clan, 8 November 1932, in MTUCDA, P69/185 (157-158).
[154] An Timthire dispatch, 9 February 1927, in MTUCDA, P69/183 (110). Also see *An Phoblacht,* 2 July 1926, 27 August 1927.
[155] An Timthire dispatch, 3 February 1927, in MTUCDA, P69/183 (121).
[156] An Timthire dispatch, 20 April 1927, in MTUCDA, P69/183 (45). The *Irish World* did feature pro-Chinese articles in April 1927. See issue of 23 April.
[157] Army Council Report, 17 February 1927, in MTUCDA, P69/48 (118-119).

against a threatened attack. Among the marchers was Captain Robert Moneith, a member of Roger Casement's Irish Brigade in 1916.[158] This activity was possibly the result of IRA criticism that the Clan was not making contact with other anti-colonial organisations in the US.[159]

By the late 1920s the IRA was also rethorically very pro-Soviet Union. Contacts had been established during between the IRA and the Russian government during 1925, when Seán Russell along with Gerald Boland and 'Pa' Murray had visited Russia.[160] By the late 1920s the contacts were largely political in nature. Leading IRA members visited the Soviet Union on several occasions. Mick Fitzpatrick was in the USSR as a delegate to congresses of Friends of the Soviet Union in 1927 and 1932. David Fitzgerald and George Gilmore visited the country in 1930.[161] Seán McCool recieved medical treatment from the Soviets during 1931.[162] Individual IRA members such as Nixie Boran of Kilkenny also visited Russia during those years, but in his case without notifying his superiors.[163] The IRA leadership also sent delegates to Comintern supported organisations such as the League Against Imperialism. Frank Ryan and Donal O'Donoghue attended one such conference in Brussels during 1927, and Peadar O'Donnell and Seán MacBride represented the IRA at the League's second conference in Frankfurt.[164] Within Ireland the Gardai considered the Friends of the Soviet Union to be an IRA, rather than a communist, front organisation.[165] Indeed three of the major Comintern sponsored international

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[158] *An Phoblacht,* 6 December 1930.
[159] Army Council to An Timthire, 25 February 1930, in McGarrity Papers, Ms. 17, 535 (2) NLI.
[160] See Michael McInerney, 'Gerry Boland's story' in the *Irish Times,* 11 October 1968. Documents relating to their contacts were discovered by the Gardai in 1931. See Chapter Two pp. 41.
[161] Dates from *Notes on Communism in Saorstat Eireann* in MacEntee Papers, UCDA, P67/523.
[162] See Notes on Certain Individuals, Appendix IX, in MacEntee Papers, UCDA, P67/550.
[163] See Adjt North Kilkenny Batt, to A/G, 19 September 1930, in MTUCDA, P69/153 (4-5). Boran was company O/C for the IRA in the Castlecomer district.
[164] *Notes on Communism,* P67/523.
[165] Garda report, 3 September 1930, in FitzGerald Papers, UCDA, P80/905.

organisations, the League against Imperialism, the Labour Defence League and the Irish Working Farmers' Congress were largely run by the IRA in Ireland.[166]

It is worth noting, particularly in the light of later events, that publicly the IRA's press was completely hostile to Nazi Germany from the beginning and to Fascist Italy after 1926.[167] However there was contact during the early 1930s between a group of German nationalists studying at Trinity College and the IRA in Dublin. Two of these students, Jupp Hoven and Helmut Clissman, became Abwehr (German Military Intelligence) agents during the Second World War and played a significant role in Germany's policies towards the IRA.[168]

Despite the dependence of the IRA on American funding, the Clan na Gael was never able to adequately fulfil this function, largely for reasons beyond its control. Even with the huge numbers of Irish Americans, and the post Civil War exodus of republicans to the United States the Clan na Gael was never a dominant force in émigré politics. In Britain the IRA was a marginial force, largely fulfilling a social function. The IRA's international policy was largely governed by hostility to Britain, and while support was expressed publicly for anti colonial revolts in other parts of the world, this was generally rhetorical. Following the commencement of the bombing campaign in Britain, the IRA's leadership was to establish operational and ideological links with Nazi Germany, the extent of which are still a matter of controversy today.[169]

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[166] Emmet O'Connor, 'Jim Larkin and the Communist Internationals, 1923-9', in *Irish Historical Studies*, No. 123, May 1999. pp. 357-372.

[167] See *An Phoblacht*, 7 July 1934, 'German Fascist Blood Bath' and 28 March 1936, "Every genuine Irish man and women is in sympathy with Abyssinia."

[168] See Hoven and Clissman's analysis of the IRA in *Der Vorkampfer*, October 1932 in MTUCDA, P69/157 (12). Hoven had met MacBride at the 1929 Frankfurt Anti-Imperialist conference. In 1937 he allegedly accompanied Tom Barry on a visit to Germany. Clissman returned to Dublin in 1936 where he again met members of the IRA and Republican Congress. 'The German Agents' in *Notes on IRA Activities*, MacEntee Papers, P67/550 pp. 131.

[169] For various views see Richard English, 'Socialist Republicanism in Independent Ireland, 1922-49' in Regan and Cronin, (eds). *Ireland: The Politics Of Independence, 1922-49.* (London, 2000) pp. 84-97. Bowyer Bell, *Secret Army*, pp. 215-235, MacEoin, *Twilight Years*, pp. 857-862 and Jim McVeigh, *Executed: Tom Williams and the IRA.* (Belfast, 1999) pp. 16-17. Republican writers have singularly failed to come to terms with this area of the IRA's history.

Chapter Ten

The IRA and Irish Society 1926-1936.

The politics of the IRA were influenced by a variety of political currents, both Irish and international, and its leadership formulated their ideas in response to developments within Ireland and abroad. Within the IRA there existed support for often very contradictory ideas and this is reflected in the stances the organisation took on particular issues. These policies reflected the fact that the IRA in this period was largely composed of members from the urban and rural working and lower middle classes. The overriding belief that held the IRA together was that military force was the most effective means to achieve its aims.

The central feature of the IRA's politics was its belief in the use of force to bring about political change. As Twomey argued the two governments in Ireland had been "imposed by force" then it was the duty of Irishmen to overthrow them by that method.[1] This belief was shared by all the factions represented within the organisation and was the aspect of the IRA best known to people outside its ranks.[2] This belief in armed force informed the IRA's attitude to almost all its activities, from involvement in nation-wide industrial disputes to arguments between neighbours. Without the belief that the IRA was preparing for war the organisation would have found it even more difficult to hold its disparate factions together. While there may have been differences in attitude as to how that force would be used the belief that it eventually would be was central to the IRA.

This expressed itself in the widespread attachment within the IRA to the idea that social and political campaigns interfered with preparation for war. The belief in "physical force as the only means of securing freedom" and that

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[1] *The Nation*, 10 August 1929.

[2] As Twomey put it "Everybody is agreed armed force must be the ultimate weapon." Twomey to McGarrity, 26 October 1933, in McGarrity Papers, Ms. 17,490 NLI.

politics would divert "our mind and divides our energies" were raised consistently against arguments for new political departure.[3] Tom Barry could argue that the IRA had a "moral right to make war and kill when necessary" but only in a struggle for national freedom not for a social policy.[4] To maintain unity within the organisation the IRA repeatedly shelved political initiatives in favour of concentrating all its effort on the "perfection of the IRA as an efficient military force."[5] There was a distinct feeling that entering politics itself was compromising and that those involved were only interested in "what they can get."[6] The IRA's main argument against the Republican Congress departure was not that they disagreed with the politics of the new group but that it would lead to participation in Leinster House.[7] Even those who did agree with political initiatives accepted the need for physical force whether to make the IRA a "bully" for striking workers or a new Citizen's Army.[8]

While the militarist ethos may have helped hold an organisation together it also meant that frustration developed when years passed and the organisation did not go to war. Decisions to concentrate "all effort and energy" into the training of the IRA as a military force prepared to "take the field" within a short period of time simply raised expectations only to dash them again.[9] One of the factors behind the IRA's stagnation between 1927 and 1931 was the complaint from members that if the organisation was not going to fight then what was the point of parading, drilling, and recruiting.[10] This accelerated disputes between those who favoured a political direction to break the deadlock and those who argued for military action.

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[3] O/C Boyne Batt. at Officer's Meeting, 9 April 1927 and Seán Lanigan, Limerick, at 1933 GAC, in MTUCDA, P69/48 (162) & P69/187 (94).
[4] Barry to Twomey, 13 May 1932, in MTUCDA, P69/52 (63).
[5] Notes of 1933 GAC, MTUCDA, P69/187 (77).
[6] Seamus Mallin at the 1934 GAC, MacEntee Papers, in UCDA, P67/525.
[7] MacBride at the 1934 Convention, P67/525, *An Phoblacht*, 21 April 1934,
[8] O'Donnell in *Republican Congress*, 5 May 1934 and Ryan at the 1933 GAC, MTUCDA, P69/187 (94).
[9] Report on 1933 GAC, MTUCDA, P69/187 (77) & Clan to AC, 8 October 1934, in McGarrity Papers, Ms. 17,539 NLI.
[10] Staff Officer 'JJ' report on Kerry, 18 January 1931, in MTUCDA, P69/153 (14-18).

The IRA during this period contained several competing factions, not all of whom put forward coherent viewpoints and many IRA members did not necessarily support any of them. In his perceptive study of *An Phoblacht*, James McHugh noted the existence of four separate tendencies within the IRA - apolitical militarists, conservative supporters of Sinn Féin, socialists and a broad layer committed to armed force but receptive to radical policies.[11] The reality is even more complex. For example Seán Russell openly admitted having to "no liking for political parties."[12] Yet he organised IRA intervention during the northern railway strike and enthused about the prospect of co-operation with Protestant strikers.[13] Tom Barry could argue that the IRA should have no social policy at all during 1932 but make a nod towards radicalism two years later by declaring that he had not fought at Crossbarry so that Irish workers could be exploited by employers.[14] JJ Murray of Armagh belonged to the faction of the IRA which endorsed Sinn Féin policy. He argued that the IRA had no right to take armed actions during labour disputes and refused to distribute the appeal to the Orange Order. However another northern officer and *member* of Sinn Féin, Belfast's Davy Matthews, both circulated the appeal and intervened personally in the ODR and railway strikes.[15] Individuals prominent on the left of the IRA during the late 1920s such as Seán McCool and Mick Fitzpatrick remained loyal to the organisation when it split in 1934, while Frank Ryan and Michael Price who were not sympathetic to socialism during the early 1930s would help found the Republican Congress.[16]

The IRA's politics are best understood as attempts to respond to conditions within Ireland by developing policies drawing on contemporary native and foreign influences. It was hoped that these would attract popular support.

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[11] McHugh, *Voices of the Rearguard,* pp. 493.
[12] Officer's meeting, 9 April 1927, MTUCDA, P69/48 (162).
[13] See Chapter 8.
[14] Notes of 1933 GAC, MTUCDA, P69/187 (97) and *An Phoblacht*, 7 April 1934.
[15] See Chapter 8.

However many of these policies faced intense political and clerical censure and provoked internal dissension with the IRA. Twomey's own political evolution offers a guide to shifts within leadership thinking. Initially Twomey expressed the traditional militarist distrust of politics. In 1924 he complained that most of those holding positions within the IRA had no "military outlook" but were "politicians."[17] Three years later he gave a conventional republican explanation as to how British "intrigue" and the weakness of Irish negotiators had allowed the Treaty to be signed.[18] However by 1931 he was arguing that the "lack of an economic and political policy" was more responsible for defeat in the Civil War than treachery.[19] He now argued that the republican movement would be inevitably composed of the poor in the countryside and towns, as the wealthy would never favour real national independence.[20] At the 1933 Convention Twomey warned the militarists that it was dangerous to "preach that we are soldiers only. We are revolutionaries."[21] As Twomey later explained to Joseph McGarrity, the organisation could not expect to convince people to support it by simply repeating that it wanted "the Republic." To succeed the IRA needed to have its policies understood as widely as possible and the "active sympathy" of a civilian political party.[22]

Why did Twomey arrive at these conclusions? Undoubtedly his close association with the left within the IRA meant that he was familiar with their arguments, but the key factor was the impact of the Great Depression on Irish society. As he noted during 1931 the ending of emigration was leaving large numbers of young people looking for alternatives to their plight. The IRA's growth after several years stagnation was obviously related to this as the

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[16] Fitzpatrick was singled out along with MacBride by Mick Price as the principal opponents of the left by 1934. Meeting between Cumann na mBan Executive and resigned IRA officers, 20 April 1934, in Humphreys Papers, UCDA, P106/1154 (1-5).

[17] Twomey to C/S, 10 November 1924, in MTUCDA, P69/46 (32-33).

[18] Interview with the Chief of Staff of the IRA, 1927, in MTUCDA, P69/73 (65-72). The interview was conducted for representatives of a Chinese revolutionary organisation.

[19] *An Phoblacht*, 2 May 1931.

[20] *An Phoblacht*, 16 May 1931.

[21] Notes of 1933 GAC, MTUCDA, P69/187 (100).

organisation represented the most radical, if confused, opposition to the Free State. Twomey saw conditions in Ireland as "very bad and worsening" with those with wealth frightened and the poor hoping "that out of the breakdown something better" would emerge.[23] He believed that the more people thought about their economic plight the better for the IRA, as long as it took an interest in economic and social conditions.[24] In order to win wider public support and avoid its military organisation becoming isolated the IRA decided to launch a 'Civil Revolutionary Organisation' in early 1931.[25] This was the background to Twomey's endorsement of the Saor Éire initiative, which was necessary for it to gain the support of the majority of the IRA leadership.[26] Saor Éire was not "forced" upon a reluctant IRA leadership. Neither was Twomey opposed to it, for if he had been it would not have been launched.[27]

Outside of the economic background what were the ideological influences on the IRA's politics? One clearly evident strain was the rejection of majoritarian democracy. The IRA did not believe "national feeling, sentiment, and desires" could be judged by election results.[28] What is more the organisation claimed for itself the right to hold power in Ireland until such time as it was ready to give way to a republican government. At its most extreme IRA members believed that their organisation should have the "supreme power over life and death."[29] This could lead to farcical situations such as the IRA seriously demanding that De Valera release a prisoner arrested for arms possession, on the basis that his

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[22] Twomey to McGarrity, 26 October 1933, in McGarrity Papers Ms. 17,490 NLI.
[23] Twomey to McGarrity, 9 December 1931, in McGarrity Papers, Ms. 17,490 NLI.
[24] Twomey to McGarrity, 23 June 1931, in McGarrity Papers, Ms. 17,490 NLI.
[25] AC to Secretary, Clan na Gael, 7 May 1932, in MTUCDA, P69/185 (298-302). The AC discussed it at their meeting of 14 January 1931, in MTUCDA, P69/69 (2).
[26] After he left the IRA Michael Price claimed 1930 was the year the leadership made a definite shift towards taking a radical social and economic position. Meeting with Cumann na mBan Executive, 20 April 1934, in Humphreys Papers, UCDA, 1154 (1).
[27] WK Anderson, *James Connolly and the Irish Left*, (Dublin, 1994) pp. 134. Coogan, *IRA*, pp. 59.
[28] Twomey writing in *The Nation*, 10 August 1929.
[29] Seán Ryan, Tralee IRA O/C at the 1933 GAC, MTUCDA, P69/187 (96).

membership of the IRA meant he was entitled to be armed.[30] The fact that De Valera was the elected head of the Irish state and that the IRA leadership represented 10,000 men at most did not strike the authors of this letter as ironic. Their reasoning was that while Ireland was ruled by puppet governments north and south, the IRA could not be "bound by election results on the issue of sovereignty."[31] Seán MacBride argued that "majority rule might be a good rule for people in a free country but ... it could not be enforced as a rule of morality in a country which was not free." In fact for the IRA progress towards freedom could not be made through majority rule as they believed the 1916 Rising and support for the Treaty had proven. [32] However the contradictions inherent in holding this view and claiming to desire freedom forced the IRA to explain that "there was no question of forcing the people against their will" to accept IRA policy. Instead when the IRA had governed for "a reasonable length of time" they would then allow an election.[33] Interestingly those within the IRA who questioned this view were often conservatives who feared the imposition of socialism under an IRA regime.[34] Another attempt to work around an essentially undemocratic viewpoint was to argue, as Twomey did, that the IRA really did represent the Irish people but their policies had been so "misrepresented" that the people themselves were unaware of that fact.[35]

The reality of political life meant that the IRA had to attempt to win public support by the launch of support organisations or by standing in elections. As early as 1927 the IRA leadership had accepted the need for a "civilian" revolutionary organisation.[36] However their dismissal of majoritarian democracy meant that IRA leaders often displayed disdain for the opinions of

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[30] AC to President of the Executive Council, 25 November 1932, in MTUCDA, P69/155 (18-19).
[31] AC Statement, August 1932, in MTUCDA, P69/53 (375-376).
[32] MacBride to McGarrity, 19 October 1933, in McGarrity Papers, Ms. 17,456 NLI.
[33] MacBride at the 1933 GAC, MTUCDA, P69/187 (102).
[34] JJ Sheehy and Tadgh Lynch for example at the 1933 GAC, MTUCDA, P69/187 (100-101).
[35] Twomey to Tom Barry, 24 May 1932, MTUCDA, P69/52 (63-64).
[36] Notes of AC meeting, 27 January 1927, in MTUCDA, P69/181 (3).

the population at large. Arguing against attempts to call a congress of republicans in order to galvanise popular support MacBride declared that he had "very little faith ... in the opinion of the mass of the people."[37] Donal O'Donoghue described how Tom Barry had the "utmost contempt for what the phrasemongers describe as the masses." O'Donoghue then confessed that he shared this contempt with Barry, but while Barry believed there was no point in trying to win popular support, O'Donoghue thought it was possible to educate the "non-thinking persons of no property."[38] Frustration at failure to achieve their aims was easily transferred into a belief that the Irish people themselves had let the IRA down. This in turn could lead to justifying dictatorship on the basis that "Ireland intellectually, morally and physically requires discipline."[39] This opposition to democracy was not the preserve of the militarists within the IRA. It was Frank Ryan and Peadar O'Donnell who signalled in November 1932 the beginning of the "no free speech for traitors" campaign. Supporters of the left within the IRA also argued that there was a limit to "tolerance" and that O'Duffy and his supporters should be "swinging from lampposts" rather than allowed freedom to organise.[40]

Opposition to the parliamentary system helps partially explain how the major European political trends which reflected opposition to democracy found an echo within the IRA. By far the most important for the IRA in this period was communism. Between 1928 and 1932 communist ideas had influence within the IRA and interaction with Irish and foreign communists was tolerated by the IRA leadership. Army Council members visited the USSR and these liaisons were approved of by the leadership. Added to this was the public association of leading IRA members with Comintern affiliated organisations such as the League

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[37] Notes of 1934 GAC, MacEntee Papers, UCDA, P67/525.

[38] O'Donoghue to Humphreys, April 1935, sent from 'Glasshouse' in Curragh Camp, in Humphreys Papers, UCDA, P106/1748. O'Donoghue displayed some awareness of political reality, telling Humphreys that he knew he and his colleagues were "not going to be national heroes" when they were released.

[39] George Plunkett at the 1933 GAC, MTUCDA, P69/187 (104).

[40] C. MacGinnity to AP, 16 January 1933, in MTUCDA, P69/233 (19-21).

against Imperialism in Ireland during the same period.[41] The Comintern bypassed the Irish communists and instead made Mick Fitzpatrick became their main link to Irish politics for a period.[42] Communist membership of the IRA was tolerated with nearly half of the membership of the Workers Revolutionary Party in Dublin also IRA members.[43] Leading IRA figures were not afraid to confront charges of being communist sympathisers. MacBride argued to allow private capitalism to exist in any form guaranteed social inequality.[44] More significantly Twomey replied to charges of communism by arguing that if it was communism "to undo the conquest ... to destroy landlordism ... to end robbery and exploitation by a privileged minority, then Tone, Emmet, Mitchel, Lalor, Connolly, Pearse and Mellows were Communists, and the Irish Republican Army is a Communist organisation."[45] The important point is that two years later Twomey would reply to charges of communism in very different terms. Indeed by 1933 membership of the IRA by communists would be outlawed by the Army Council and a number of communists left the IRA following its 1933 Convention.[46]

Between 1931 and 1933 significant changes occurred in the general political atmosphere in Ireland. Before 1931 communism was hardly popular but was not subject to the same level of denunciation that it would be from that year onwards. The scale of the economic crisis facing Ireland made radical

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[41] Mick Fitzpatrick in 1927 and 1932 and David FitzGerald in 1930. The Irish section of the League against Imperialism was led by Seán MacBride and Seán McSwiney from 1928. *Notes on Communism in Saorstat Eireann*, in MacEntee Papers, UCDA, P67/523. See also AC and Executive Minutes, 18 June and 1 August 1930, in MTUCDA, P69/69 (2).

[42] Emmet O'Connor, Jim Larkin and the Communist Internationals, 1923-9' in *Irish Historical Studies,* No. 123, May 1999. pp. 357-372.

[43] Garda report, 16 June 1930, in FitzGerald Papers, UCDA, P80/911 (2). Garda informant Patrick Carroll reported that 30 out of 63 WRP members were IRA. The WRP was succeeded by the Revolutionary Workers' Group which then became the Communist Party of Ireland.

[44] *An Phoblacht*, 14 February 1931. This was in reply to an attack on nationalisation by Mick Price himself a proponent of the 'Worker's Republic' in 1934. See *An Phoblacht*, 7 February 1931.

[45] *An Phoblacht*, 16 May 1931.

[46] Notes of 1933 GAC, MTUCDA, P69/187 (78).

solutions seem reasonable to a section of the population.[47] During 1930 two communist candidates had been elected to Dublin City Council.[48] The fact that Fianna Fáil councillors joined organisations affiliated to the Comintern meant that there was a certain insulation to attack from anti communists.[49] This also helps explain the IRA leadership's decision to launch the "emphatically socialist" Saor Éire.[50] As the largest revolutionary organisation in the country, with a section of its leadership already sympathetic to socialism, the IRA was receptive to the rhetoric of communism particularly when embellished with references to republican heroes of the past. Twomey, MacBride and Jim Killeen among others were not ideologically committed to socialism but were open to policies which not only addressed social injustices but which also might reinvigorate a stagnant IRA.[51]

The intensity of the church's condemnation of Saor Éire undoubtedly helped force a rethink among the IRA leadership about association with such an openly socialist body. They themselves noted that an organisation on "purely nationalist lines" might have escaped censure.[52] However what was key was the hostile reaction to Saor Éire by large sections of the IRA itself, which intensified as anti-communism became a more central feature of Irish politics during 1933. In late 1931 the Belfast IRA were already complaining that *An Phoblacht* had become "too communistic" and asking why Sinn Féin had not been chosen as the IRA's political voice instead of Saor Éire.[53] In the aftermath of Fianna Fáil's election victory during 1932 the IRA committed itself to

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[47] Mary M. Banta, The Red Scare in the Irish Free State, 1929-37, MA Thesis, UCD, 1982 pp. 238.
[48] Dunphy, *Fianna Fáil Power*, pp. 135.
[49] O'Connor, 'Jim Larkin', *Irish Historical Studies*, no. 123 pp. 371.
[50] English, *Radicals*, pp. 126.
[51] McHugh, Voices of the Rearguard, pp. 494. Jonathan Hamill's point that Saor Éire was a "response to class divisions" rather than their "instigator" is correct but hardly surprising since most political organisations develop policies in response to social conditions. 'Saor Éire and the IRA: An Exercise in Deception?' in *Saothar* 20 (1995), p.56-66.
[52] AC to Secretary Clan na Gael, 7 May 1932, in MTUCDA, P69/185 (298-302).
[53] 'Jim' to Annie O'Farrelly *(An Phoblacht)*, 2 December 1931, in MTUCDA, P69/243 (142). AC Minutes, 29 December 1931, in MTUCDA, P69/71.

supporting Saor Éire's ideals without publicly organising Saor Éire.[54] Only a few officers, such as Offaly's Seán McGuinness were in favour of openly re launching the latter body.[55]

By 1933 the hostility of broad sections of the IRA to Saor Éire, communism and even politics in general was apparent. Twelve units put forward motions to that year's Convention arguing that the IRA concentrate on military affairs and avoid social policy while several called for the organisation to disassociate itself from communism.[56] During discussion on these issues delegates expressed the belief that the IRA was thought to be "anti-religious" and that its social policies were keeping recruits out of the organisation.[57] Seán MacSwiney, a former Secretary of the Irish section of the Comintern's League against Imperialism, now argued that no Christian could be a communist.[58] The constant attempts by IRA left wingers like O'Donnell and McCool to gain support by claiming the mantle of Liam Mellows were now contested. Tom Barry pointed out that Mellows was not infallible and reminded delegates that in 1922 most of the IRA had rejected his ideas.[59] There is no doubt the IRA's decision to stand aside from the mob attacks on Connolly House just a week after their Convention was influenced by their junior officers' hostility to association with communism.[60]

At Bodenstown that June Twomey signalled the IRA's intention to disassociate itself from communism by denying it was the movement's policy and stating there was no alliance with the Communist movement. *An Phoblacht*

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[54] AC to Clan, 7 May 1932, in MTUCDA, P69/185 (298-302).
[55] O/C Offaly to A/G, 19 May 1932, in MTUCDA, P69/157 (22).
[56] The 12 units were Meath, North Cork, North Tipperary, Mayo South, Drogheda, Listowel, Limerick City, Clare West, Sligo, Dublin No. 2, Cork No. 1 and Caherciveen. Specifically anti-Communist motions came from Dublin No. 4, the Dublin College Coy, and West Cork. Clár, 1933 GAC, in MTUCDA, P69/53 (273-286).
[57] C. Boyle, Donegal and Dick Batterbury, Dublin at 1933 GAC, in MTUCDA, P69/187 (96 & 106).
[58] Notes of 1933 in MTUCDA, P69/187 (107-108).
[59] Notes of 1933 GAC, in MTUCDA, P69/187 (101).
[60] Twomey had no sympathy with the attackers, thinking them mobilised by Dublin's populist Lord Mayor Alfie Byrne. Twomey to Neenan, 28 March 1933, MTUCDA, P69/185 (21-25).

made public the order forbidding dual membership of the IRA. However Twomey's speech did not mark a retreat from radicalism per se. He stressed that the communist label was being used to smear anyone who was against "existing social and economic conditions." He suggested that everyone bar those "who gain by robbery and by sweating the very bones of the people" should oppose the economic and social system in Ireland.[61] While those on the republican left were disappointed by Twomey's speech they too were affected by the new atmosphere within the Free State.[62] Such was the hostility to communism following 1933 that even Republican Congress supporters would deny being associated with it.[63] As Twomey himself admitted the Saor Éire project had been "engineered from the top" and local officers had been inclined to shy away from defending it.[64] More importantly the clerical and political attacks on Saor Éire had made it more difficult to recruit to the IRA.[65] The aftermath of the 1933 Convention marked the IRA's abandonment of openly socialist policies. Those within the IRA with an *ideological* commitment to these policies would either reavaluate them or leave the organisation.

However an element of communist rhetoric remained in use among the IRA's propaganda. During the early 1930s the Comintern was arguing that capitalism had entered a 'Third Period' of crisis during which even social democratic and liberal parties were preparing the ground for fascism. During 1934 the IRA was labelling both Roosevelt's New Deal and Fianna Fáil's economic policies as fascist attempts to reform capitalism.[66] Outside of international communism the IRA was possibly unique in those interpretations.

George Gilmore had tried without success to get permission to take men to defend Connolly House. Entry, Jacob Diaries, 8 April 1933, Ms. 32,582 (72) NLI.

[61] *Irish Times*, 19 June 1933. *An Phoblacht*, 17 June 1933.

[62] Jacob Diaries, 18 June 1933, Ms. 32,582 (72).

[63] Achill's Brian Corrigan told listeners he was not a communist but a supporter of a "worker's republic" during September 1934. See Jus 8/342 NAI and Chapter 3 pp.105. See also Thomas Maguire at Westmeath County Council, where he answered the "slur" that he was a communist. *Westmeath Independent*, 14 July 1934.

[64] Notes of 1933 GAC, MTUCDA, P69/187 (95).

[65] Notes of 1933 GAC, MTUCDA, P69/187 (77).

[66] *An Phoblacht*, 10 & 17 November 1934.

An easy assumption would be to imply that the IRA rank and file had no understanding, still less sympathy for any of these radical policies. There is some evidence for this view. JJ Sheehy claimed his men in Kerry had just "their own local thought - sometimes Fianna Fáil thought." Others stressed that the "ordinary Volunteer" had no understanding for political documents issued by the leadership. However others claimed their men did ask "what are we fighting for - is it just to put up another flag?"[67] During 1931 officers of the Dublin Brigade had indicated that they wished to have a speaker at the Easter commemorations who would identify the IRA with "social revolution."[68] In contrast reports from the large Leitrim unit in early 1933 stress how slow ordinary members were to voice opinions and how they had to be prompted to answer questions by their commanding officer.[69] On questions of radicalism the IRA leadership were generally more radical then their junior officers and certainly more so then their rank and file. This obviously impacted on how far they promoted these policies.[70] This is reflected in the internal IRA reaction to the Gralton case. There was widespread disquiet within the IRA with leadership statements and *An Phoblacht* articles defending Gralton.[71] At the 1933 Convention a committee of inquiry into the Gralton case stated that while deportation without trial went against the "first principles of liberty" that the IRA's interests would be best served by avoiding further statements on the matter.[72] While Twomey had personally supported Gralton the local IRA in Leitrim not only refused to do this, but were probably responsible for a gun

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[67] Sheehy, Tom Maguire (Westmeath) and Seán Mitchell (Cork), Notes of 1933 GAC, MTUCDA, P69/187 (98, 101-102).

[68] O/C Dublin Bdge. 14 March 1931, in MTUCDA, P69/151 (174).

[69] Leitrim Batt. Convention report, 1933, MTUCDA, P69/187 (13). This also may have reflected lack of confidence in speaking in front of visiting senior officers.

[70] Twomey himself made a similar point to Uinseann MacEoin, in *Twilight Years*, pp. 843.

[71] *An Phoblacht*, 4 & 11 March 1933. The IRA's A/G statement to the Gralton Defence meeting in Dublin's Rotunda is often quoted as an example of the IRA's reluctance to defend Gralton. The Leitrim IRA condemned it as *too* sympathetic to him. Clár, 1933 GAC, in MTUCDA, P69/53 (278-279).

[72] The committee consisted of Andy Cooney, Tom Barry, JJ Sheehy, Davy Matthews and George Plunkett. Possibly not the most sympathetic quintet the IRA could have chosen. Notes of 1933 GAC, MTUCDA, P69/187 (79-80).

attack on his dance hall![73] The IRA were not unique in facing these problems, as the Labour Party was forced to drop its commitment to the slogan of the 'Worker's Republic' because of both internal and external pressure after 1936.[74]

However after 1933 the IRA continued to promote radical economic policies. These actually reflected more clearly the thinking of Twomey, MacBride and O'Donoghue than O'Donnell or Gilmore. These policies were also influenced by European trends as well as by the experiences of IRA members at local level. They were outlined in the 'Constitution of Governmental Programme for the Republic of Ireland'. This was a slightly updated version of a constitution adopted at the IRA's 1931 Convention. In a further reflection of internal hostility to communism additions to the constitution made it clear that the IRA was not "irreligious."[75] The 'Constitution' *was* a radical document. It outlined plans for decentralised government through local assemblies, free education, a minimum wage and unemployment benefits. Private property would be allowed to exist as long as it was not "detrimental to the common good." However land not being used productively would be seized and redistributed and the majority of Irish farm land would be used for producing food rather than grazing. The judicial system would be modernised and legal aid available to all, with a penal system geared towards "reforming" offenders rather than punishing them. Landlordism would be abolished in cities and towns, with housing provided for all by the state, although private ownership of individual housing would be encouraged. The transport system would be state run. The state would also encourage manufacturing and regulate private industry. Industry would run a distributive system through co-operatives ensuring goods were supplied throughout the whole community. Finally the banking system would be taken

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[73] Twomey to Neenan, 3 March 1933, see Chapter Three. Luke Gibbons, 'Labour and local history: the case of Jim Gralton', in *Saothar* 14, (1989), pp. 85-95. A member of the Leitrim IRA at the time, Packy Earley, believes it was IRA members who fired on Gralton's hall. To author, 30/8/2001.

[74] Fearghal McGarry, ''Catholics First and Politicians Afterwards': The Labour Party and the Workers' Republic, 1936-39' in *Saothar* 25, (2000).

[75] Notes of 1933 GAC, in MTUCDA, P69/187 (77) This was passed unanimously.

over by the state and wealth and credit of the nation used to benefit the community.[76] This programme was much further to the left of anything the Irish Labour Party advocated in that period.

The influence of Patrick Pearse's 'communalist' ideas in this programme have been noted. While the ideas were radical they did not suggest any practical steps to achieve them through class struggle for instance.[77] However there were also other influences apparent in the IRA's programme. Elements within the IRA were influenced by theories of Distributism developed by the English Catholic intellectuals G.K. Chesterton and Hilliare Belloc.[78] There was also a pronounced interest in the ideas of Social Credit, popularised by Clifford Douglas.[79] These beliefs stressed community rather than class, allowed for private property but were highly critical of capitalism. They had some influence during the Depression among those who shied away from socialism or communism.[80] Distributism also had the advantage of claiming Christian, especially Catholic, roots.[81] The IRA too increasingly referred to the capitalist system as "pagan and unchristian."[82] There was also a great emphasis on the need to control credit and the banking system. Twomey believed that banking was "the corner-stone of the Imperialist system" and he was for "knocking it down."[83] He outlined his own ideas of how a republican government would deal with the Free State's economic difficulties during 1932. Tillage farming should replace grazing land as

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[76] Oglaigh na h-Eireann, *Constitution and Governmental Programme for the Republic of Ireland*, (Dublin, January 1934).

[77] English, 'Socialism and republican schism in Ireland: the emergence of the Republican Congress in 1934' in *Irish Historical Studies*, no. 105 (May 1990). pp. 49-65.

[78] Organised around a Distributist League in Britain. Barberis et al, *Encyclopaedia of British and Irish Political Organisations*, (London, 2000) pp. 209-210.

[79] In Britain represented by the Social Credit Party. In Alberta, Canada, the Social Credit Party actually formed a government in 1935 and existed until the 1980s. *Encyclopaedia of British and Irish*, pp. 226-229. Twomey was critical of the Douglas variant of Social Credit however. *An Phoblacht*, 9 February 1935.

[80] See motion from Glasgow Sinn Féin at 1932 Ard Fheis, that as the banking system was the root of "social evils" that the Douglas Social Credit scheme be proposed as an alternative. In MTUCDA, P69/54 (159-165).

[81] Distributist ideas were still apparent within Provisional Sinn Féin's policies during the 1970s. Bob Purdie, 'Reconsideration's on Republicanism and Socialism' in Morgan and Purdie (eds), *Ireland, Divided Nation, Divided Class*, (London, 1980). pp.74-95.

[82] *An Phoblacht*, 17 June 1932.

much as possible, with land redistribution in favour of the small farmers and rural poor. Cheap milk and food should be provided to city dwellers and manufacturing industries developed to provide work and increase prosperity. Since industrialists were hostile to republicanism, the government would have to take control of credit and the banks.[84]

It was not the case that the IRA's politics reflected "fantasies" rather than the needs and concerns of any social strata.[85] The politics of the 'Constitution' reflect both the ideas of the leadership and the concerns of the strata most heavily represented within the IRA. Outside Dublin the IRA's officer corps was largely lower middle class or from small farming backgrounds. During 1932 there was a desire for social change among this section of the population which is reflected in communications between local officers in the west of Ireland and the IRA leadership. A Dingle officer remarked on how because of "capitalistic swindling" the small farmers and fishermen of the Gaeltacht were suffering but had nobody to voice their grievances. He felt that the local IRA could become the vehicle for a movement to improve conditions in the area.[86] In north Mayo the IRA reported that the farmers were in a "bitter mood." Small farmers in particular were impatient with the pace of change and desired industrial development so that there would a large urban population for them to feed.[87] The IRA leadership in turn encouraged their officers to take up agitation on these issues but stressed that rural demands be linked to those of the unemployed and urban poor.[88] Twomey warned that much of the discontent among larger farmers was aimed at destabilising the Fianna Fáil government and that republicans should encourage the poorer farmers to make their demands

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[83] Twomey to Seamus Lennon, 6 August 1932, in MTUCDA, P69/52 (2-3).
[84] Twomey to Neenan, 15 September 1932, in MTUCDA, P69/185 (195-199).
[85] Richard Dunphy, 'The Enigma of Fianna Fáil: Party Strategy, Social Classes and the Politics of Hegemony' in Cronin and Regan, *The Politics of Independence*, pp. 67-83.
[86] Adjt. Dingle Batt. to A/G, 12 September 1932, in MTUCDA, P69/156 (88-90).
[87] Adjt. North Mayo to A/G, 2 August 1932, in MTUCDA, P69/158 (236-239).
[88] A/G to Adjt Dingle Batt., 7 October 1932, in MTUCDA, P69/156 (83-84).

heard instead.[89] These ideas were reflected in the demands the IRA made to conferences of farmers in Tipperary and Limerick during 1932 and in *An Phoblacht* articles on the land situation.[90] Demands for tillage rather than "bullock raising" and appeals to small farmers and "landless men" who made a living in "bogs and hills" to rally against the "ranchers" did have a basis in real grievances. Similarly the demands that food be provided to the urban poor and work found for the unemployed were hardly the stuff of fantasy.[91]

There was a strong sense of impending crisis in much of the IRA's analysis of Irish society in that period. It was continually stressed that there was "no hope of improvement" in economic conditions and that capitalism was facing an inevitable collapse.[92] This was allied to a belief that if the Fianna Fáil government would only "harness all this discontent" they would have popular backing for carrying through major reforms. However the IRA were hamstrung by their desire not to be seen as antagonistic to Fianna Fáil by leading agitation themselves and also by their belief that the government would disillusion its supporters in the longer term anyway.[93]

It should be noted that even these amended policies came under internal attack by militarists within the IRA who still believed the leadership was "too communistic" and who suspected "confiscation" of land lay behind the idea of "co-operative redistribution."[94] While many of these policies were based on the experience of the IRA nationally the IRA membership was not generally consulted about them. It was pointed out by one IRA officer that all the organisation's political initiatives had been "handed down by the Army Council"

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[89] Twomey to Seamus Lennon, 6 August 1932, in MTUCDA, P69/52 (2-3). Lennon had been a member of the Second Dail for Carlow-Kilkenny.
[90] Report on conference of 2 October 1932, in MTUCDA, P69/54 (37-41). See also Chapter Three.
[91] *An Phoblacht*, 1 October 1932.
[92] A/G to Adjt Dingle Batt, P69/156 (83-84) and A/G to Commander of each Independent Unit, 18 February 1933, in MTUCDA, P69/187 (1-3).
[93] Twomey to Neenan, 8 November 1932, in MTUCDA, P69/185 (165-167) and A/G to Commander, P69/187 (1-3).
[94] MacBride and Donal O'Connor at the 1934 GAC, MacEntee Papers, UCDA, P67/525.

and that the rank and file had never had a say in their formulation.[95] In an Ireland with increasing Catholic social power and strong popular anti-Communist feeling these ideas offered the IRA a chance to promote radical views without being associated with socialist class struggle. The IRA's involvement in land agitation and the Dublin Tram strike were in part justified by the ideas outlined in the 'Constitution.'[96] However the accusation of having communist sympathies followed even those sections of the IRA who went "constitutional" during the 1940s.[97]

These ideas were also highly ambiguous politically, appealing to a sense of radicalism which was not necessarily left wing. The obsession with banking and control of credit led the IRA to champion opponents of the "International Bankers" like Fr. Charles Coughlin, the phenomenally popular US "radio priest."[98] Coughlin, one of the "great populist demagogues" of American history had a mass audience in the US for his appeals for social justice and attacks on big business.[99] However by the late 1930s Coughlin had become one of the foremost defenders of Nazism within the US and a virulent anti-Semite.[100] Some enthusiasts for Social Credit in Ireland took the same route.[101] However the IRA did not in this period transfer its hostility to banking and sloganeering against capitalism into support for fascism. There were elements within the IRA, as

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[95] Donal O'Connor at the 1934 GAC, MacEntee Papers, UCDA, P67/525.

[96] "That the complete transport system of Dublin should be at the mercy of a private monopoly is a matter affecting the welfare of all Dublin citizens...further the AC is interested as the governmental programme of the IRA on the question of transports provides:-Railways, canals, air and waterways...shall be operated as a body set up by the National Economic Council." AC Statement, *Irish Press*, 25 March 1935.

[97] See *Explanations Please - They say they are Not Communists!* an anti Clann na Poblachta pamphlet produced during the run up to the 1948 general election. The pasts of MacBride, O'Donoghue and Fitzpatrick are used to claim that they were still under communist influence. Copy in MacEntee Papers, UCDA, P67/522 (1).

[98] *An Phoblacht*, 21 July & 27 October 1934 and 19 January 1935.

[99] Kenny, *American Irish*, pp. 207-208.

[100] Albert Fried, *FDR and His Enemies*, (New York, 1999) pp. 110-120, 145-158. While *An Phoblacht* was promoting Coughlin he was claiming he disavowed "racial Hitlerism" and "industrial Fascism" along with Communism. *An Phoblacht*, 18 May 1935.

[101] Speakers at Dublin street meetings organised by the Financial Freedom Federation occasionally used anti-Semitic rhetoric. See Garda report, 17 December 1934, in Jus 8/341 NAI. Seamus Lennon, would write for the anti-Semitic publication *Penapa* during 1940. Copy of December 1940 in MacEntee Papers, UCDA, P67/544 (1).

early as 1926, who suggested forming an Irish "Milesian Legion" in a conscious emulation of Italian Fascism. The Legion, which would serve "God and Ireland" would be hostile to "destructive and despotic Communism" but would also be democratic. The fear was expressed that unless the IRA formed an Irish "Fascisti" some other political force would get there before them.[102] However these suggestions were not acted on. Given the disregard for majority rule which existed within the IRA and its militarist ethos, there was certainly a potential for fascist influence.[103] However whether because it had already successfully applied that label to its enemies the Blueshirts, or because of the hostility to fascism promoted by the left within the organisation, IRA sympathy for fascism was marginal in this period. Twomey worried that if Fianna Fáil disappointed its supporters there was an "awful possibility" that they would "lose heart" and fling themselves into "the arms of re-action" as had happened in Germany.[104] *An Phoblacht* published the German Social Democrats' verdict on the 1934 elections in Germany and commented that "Nazi terrorism" had guaranteed an outcome favourable to Hitler.[105] Republican hostility to fascism contained distinctive appeals to Irish conditions. After describing in detail how Hitler and Mussolini had destroyed trade union and women's rights in Germany and Italy Eithne Coyle then argued that fascism would also be "alien to our Celtic nature."[106] Elements within the IRA's last political initiative of this period, Cumann Poblachta na h-Eireann argued that members of the "Fascist" Irish Christian Front should be forbidden from joining the party.[107] However by 1940 a younger IRA leadership would no longer have a political problem with fascism and they too would couch their rhetoric in terms of "Christian Justice."[108]

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[102] To C/S, 9 December 1926, in MTUCDA, P69/47 (200-232).
[103] As suggested by Garvin in *1922 - The Birth of Irish Democracy,* (Dublin, 1996) pp. 22.
[104] Twomey to McGarrity, 26 October 1933, in McGarrity Papers, Ms. 17,490 NLI.
[105] *An Phoblacht*, 21 August 1934.
[106] Address to Cumann na mBan Convention, 1934, in Humphreys Papers, UCDA, P106/1152 (1).
[107] National Convention report, 7&8 November 1936, in Jus 8/68 NAI.
[108] 'An Open Letter to Young Irishmen' December 1939. More explicit anti-Semitism is to be found in *War News*, Southern Command, issues of February & 2 March 1941 in Jus 8/752

The IRA did not devote as much attention to partition as it did to social and economic matters. When *An Phoblacht* became the IRA's newspaper "north east Ulster" ranked seventh in a list of subjects it would focus on.[109] Indeed in 1933 the paper had admitted that the IRA not "spoken specifically of partition as often as other sections in the country." Furthermore it suggested that it was only when "unscrupulous" politicians were meeting political problems in the south that they resorted to "maudlin sentiment" about the border.[110] At both the 1933 and 1934 Conventions only a fraction of the discussions involved events in Northern Ireland. These largely concerned the possibility of political advances among the Protestant working class following the 1932 and 1933 strikes and the IRA's decision to stand candidates against the Nationalist Party, rather the issue of reunification. In 1933 the IRA leadership considered that how to weld a movement from "disillusioned elements amongst the Orange workers" and the "leaderless section of Nationalist opinion" was the most important aspect of its northern policy.[111] Just two motions at that Convention, both from northern units, suggested military operations in the north should be a priority.[112] The fact that the majority of the IRA, leadership and rank and file, was southern based obviously had some bearing on their attitude to the north. Their organisation in the north did not really begin to expand until after 1932 and then it remained the subject of perspectives about the area developed in Dublin.[113] The IRA leadership regarded unionism as having a very fragile basis which was dependent to a large degree on the activities of the Nationalist Party. Again and

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NAI. There was unquestionably ideological support for fascism among sections of the IRA by 1940. There also remained those who did not care about the political issues as long as there was a chance of material aid from Germany. Seán Russell was probably one of the latter faction. As late as 1938 he was still arguing that he had no more love for a potential German regime than a British one. Garda report, 9 October 1938, in Jus 8/334 NAI. That view was also represented in *War News* of the period.

[109] 'Lines on which paper is to be run' 1926, in MTUCDA, P69/181 (41).

[110] *An Phoblacht*, 29 July 1933.

[111] A/G to Commanders, Each Independent Unit, 18 February 1933, in MTUCDA, P69/187 (1-3).

[112] Clár 1933 GAC, in MTUCDA, P69/53 (281-282).

again the IRA stressed that "Devlin and company will only play into the hands of Craigavon" or that the Nationalists had united "the loyal elements" by talking "nothing except religion."[114] This was also reflected in the propaganda the IRA used during its northern election campaigns which was very much centred around calls for unity across sectarian lines. The IRA leadership did not want to have to face the implications of Joseph McGarrity's statement that "every second man, woman and child" in the north was an "enemy."[115] In many ways the IRA leadership had little understanding of the culture of its organisation in the north, especially in Belfast. For the southern IRA the overthrow of the Free State was very much its principal focus. This is not to ignore that there were often sectarian implications of IRA assumptions about the north but to stress that the issue of partition came second in the IRA's world view anyway.[116]

This changed when the growth of the IRA in the north coincided with growing difficulties for the organisation south of the border. The suggestion of a campaign in the six counties as a method of winning wider support and regaining the initiative in Irish politics seems to have originated with the Clan na Gael.[117] It was taken on board partially out of desperation by an increasingly marginalised southern IRA. A last echo of the older IRA perspective was given by Twomey at Bodenstown in 1938 when he warned the IRA not to believe partition was the "only obstacle before them."[118] In reality from that period onwards ending partition became the raison d'être of the IRA in the south.

The IRA's attitude to the southern state also needs re-examinination. It appears that for a period it believed that the Fianna Fáil government could declare the 26 counties a republic, and that they would accept this. Prior to the

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[113] See a complaint that leaflets from Dublin were "a little too much inclined to the economic side of our freedom." O/C No. 1 Ulster to C/S, 10 July 1932, in MTUCDA, P69/52 (84).

[114] Chair AC to Secretary Clan, 13 February 1933, in MTUCDA, P69/185 (89). Unsigned to McGarrity, 23 April 1937?, in McGarrity Papers, Ms. 17,490 NLI.

[115] McGarrity, 13 September 1930, in MTUCDA, P69/61 (1-4).

[116] Patterson, *Politics of Illusion*, pp. 62-66 and English, *Radicals*, pp. 132-138.

[117] Clan na Gael to Chairman AC, 8 October 1934, in McGarrity Papers, Ms. 17,539 NLI.

[118] *Irish Independent*, 20 June 1938.

1932 Convention a senior officer put forward a series of alternative policies in the event of this occurring including handing over IRA arms to the government, becoming part of a volunteer force or forming a new republican party. In the case of a republic being declared the IRA would then be free to concentrate its attention on Northern Ireland but not necessarily in terms of military operations.[119] This points to a pragmatic tendency among many of the IRA about political affairs which perhaps explains how so many of the organisation were eventually able to make the transition to democratic politics. The majority of the IRA officer corps who remained politically involved were to become members of a party that was in government when an Irish republic was declared.[120] Even Tom Barry confessed during 1935 that if De Valera declared a republic he would have no right to oppose it militarily.[121] Peadar O'Donnell consistently claimed that MacBride's position was that if Fianna Fáil removed the Oath of Allegiance and the Governor Generalship then he would have no problem with the southern state.[122] The fact that long standing officers like Seán Buckley and Michael Hilliard could as late as the mid 1930s leave the IRA and become elected Fianna Fáil politicians would point to there being a section of the organisation which did not differ politically very much from Fianna Fáil.[123]

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[119] Unsigned pre-Convention document, 23 March 1932, in MTUCDA, P69/53 (377-380).

[120] The first Clann na Poblachta National Executive included MacBride, O'Donoghue, Killeen and Fitzpatrick from the 1933 AC, and former leading officers like McCool, Con Lehane, (who became a TD in 1948), Tomás Ó Maoileóin, Michael Ferguson, Mick Kelly, Dick Batterbury and James Hannigan were all involved at various stages. *Irish Times*, 8 July 1946 and 1 December 1947. Clann candidates for Ard Chomhairle, Ard Fheis, 1953, in Humphreys Papers, UCDA, P106/2152. In contrast Padraig MacLogan and JJ Sheehy were the only senior figures to remain within the ranks of mainstream republicanism. Twomey and Barry effectively retired from active politics. O'Donnell and Gilmore remained left wing commentators rather than activists. Price was active in the Labour Party before his death. Russell and Ryan did not survive the war.

[121] O'Donoghue to Humphreys, April 1935, in Humphreys Papers, UCDA, P106/1748.

[122] Notes of 1933 GAC, in MTUCDA P69/187 (92) and meeting wth Cumann na mBan Executive, 20 April 1934, in Humphreys Papers, UCDA, P106/1154 (4).

[123] Buckley became a TD for Cork West in 1938. Gallagher, *Irish Elections*, pp. 221. Hilliard who the Gardai had once considered a "dangerous type" was elected for Meath-Westmeath in 1943. He later served as Minister for Post and Telegraphs and Minister for Defence between 1959-69. Eoin O'Duffy to Ministers, 27 July 1931, in D/T S 5864 B NAI. Browne & Farrell, *Magill Book of Irish Elections*, pp. 293.

What strategy, if any, did the IRA have between 1926 and 1936? Peter Berry of the Department of Justice, an astute if hostile observer, believed the IRA leadership felt they had a "prescriptive right" to their positions as inheritors of the physical force tradition. Their strategy was simply to preserve this tradition and hand on the torch to another generation. In the meantime the tradition was maintained by speeches, parades, commemorations and by "letting a few of their supporters go to gaol from time to time."[124] This echoed comments of Peadar O'Donnell's that the problem with the IRA was not that they were not socialist, but that they were not "taking steps to get the Republic."[125] There is some evidence to support these assertions. The IRA continually avoided having to set up a political wing from 1932 to 1935, every year deferring on the basis of perfecting their military organisation. This was partly because of the reaction to their launch of Saor Éire during 1931 but it also reflected a desire to avoid political confrontation with the government. The key impulse for the IRA leadership was survival and avoiding costly schisms. The preparation for 'war' would help prevent internal fracturing. Training and drilling was to take place until an "opportune time" arrived to begin an insurrection.[126] However as the years went on and the IRA did not "take the field" frustration and a desire for action meant some members indulged in unofficial violence or were caught up in local feuds, while others left disillusioned for personal or political reasons. Richard English has characterised republicans during this period as "solipsists" acting as if their own beliefs were the only really existent ones.[127] This certainly is apparent in the ability of republicans to deny to themselves as well as to others their responsibility for unpopular actions. Maud Gonne could blame "secret detectives" of the government for the murder of Albert Armstrong and Donal O'Donoghue was still denying IRA involvement in the Sommerville and

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[124] *Notes on the Republican Congress Movement*, MacEntee Papers, UCDA, P67/527, pp. 22.
[125] Meeting with Cumann na mBan Executive, 20 April 1934, in Humphreys Papers, UCDA, P106/1154 (4).
[126] Twomey at Roscommon, Garda report, 22 May 1934, in Jus 8/313 NAI.
[127] English, *Radicals*, pp. 240.

Egan murders over a decade later.[128] What mattered of course, was not whether or not non republicans would believe these statements, but that the faithful would.

Not only was the IRA's ideology self sustaining, but much of its activity was as well. The IRA could mount an attack on a pub selling Bass providing excitement and activity for its members. The arrest of IRA men for this attack would then lead to protest marches, postering, wall painting and another round of activity. In the longer term this would achieve nothing concrete but would keep the membership busy and maintain the facade that they were preparing for war.

While the solipsist characterisation is useful there was also a material basis to the IRA's existence in this period. If their only attraction was their quaint belief that they represented the legitimate government of Ireland they would have remained as isolated as Sinn Féin. However over this period they recruited several thousand members, many of whom were talented and capable individuals. One attraction was obviously the appeal to the Irish physical force tradition. There is nothing particularly surprising in this as Irish society had seen an intense militarisation between 1900 and 1914, then participation in the greatest human conflict to that date, followed by a revolution and civil war.[129] The use of force was not beyond the life experience of a substantial section of the Irish people in this period. Whats more the dominant political culture of the Free State looked back to its violent origins with pride. The appeal to this tradition was important, which is why it was so heavily contested between the main political forces in the Free State. Fianna Fáil, the Blueshirts and the IRA would

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[128] Garda report, 2 December 1929, in D/T S 5864 A NAI. O'Donoghue to Donnybrook Clann na Poblachta meeting, 4 March 1948, in Humphreys Papers, UCDA, P106/2142. That O'Donoghue was making this statement 12 years on is also evidence of how unpopular those murders were.

[129] D. Fitzpatrick, 'Militarism in Ireland, 1900-1922', in Bartlett and Jeffery (eds) *A Military History of Ireland.* (Cambridge, 1996) pp. 379-406.

all claim to be the legitimate inheritors of the revolutionary tradition.[130] The attraction to young men (and women) of military organisation is no mystery then. This must be put in context however. From 1917 to 1923 an estimated 3,269 people died in political violence in Ireland.[131] Between 1926 and 1936 just 38 people died because of violence linked to politics.[132] Compared to contemporary European events this figure reflects that however dramatic they seemed domestically, political violence in post revolutionary Ireland was a fraction of that in much of Europe.[133] It is significant that none of the republican schisms of the period produced any serious bloodshed for example. It may even be the case that the majority of the IRA leadership, having had experience of serious guerrilla conflict desired, if at all possible, to avoid such a conflict again.

While the IRA was often very wrong in its analysis of developments within Ireland there was a real basis for many of their calculations. There was still in the late 1920s a substantial section of the Free State's population who felt alienated from the new state and who regarded its institutions with less than respect. This resentment fed into toleration and among a section of the young, admiration, for those who completely rejected the Treaty settlement. The Great Depression did produce both despair and radicalisation in Ireland and the IRA benefited from this. The Outdoor Relief rioting and the rail strike did seem to signal a breakdown in sectarian division within Northern Ireland. The IRA's belief that the tension between the Free State and Britain would lead to armed

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[130] In 1934 Ernest Blythe argued that the Blueshirts were the "authentic successors" of the IRA of 1919-21. As the author of a article arguing for "ruthless warfare" in *An t-Óglách* of 1918 he was in a position to do this. *Irish Press*, 19 November 1934 & Fitzpatrick, *Two Irelands*, pp. 73.

[131] Figure from Hart, 'The Geography Of Revolution In Ireland 1917-1923' in *Past and Present*, No. 155. pp. 142-176.

[132] Estimated from fatalities caused by the IRA (16), IRA fatalities *directly* caused by external violence not accidents or suicide (2), and deaths of RUC (1), Blueshirt (1), Rail Strike (2), sectarian assassination (2). Victims of the Belfast riots of 1935 (13) responsibility for which cannot be assessed.

[133] 155 died in political violence in the German state of Prussia alone between January and September 1932. Eve Rosenhaft, *Beating the Fascists? The German Communists and Political Violence* 1929-1933. (Cambridge, 1983) pp. 7.

conflict during 1932 was not wildly unrealistic given the atmosphere of the time. Elements within the state forces did consider attempting to prevent Fianna Fáil's asscession to power and had they acted then the IRA could possibly have benefitted from a republican backlash.[134] The IRA only began to founder when the Fianna Fáil government began to solidify its support rather than disillusion it, and the frustration of the IRA's own members began to express itself in political disagreement or violence. While a sizeable number of people remained estranged from the Free State the IRA had a base from which to recruit, but that base had shrunk by 1935.[135] The progress of Fianna Fáil in government allied to the violently anti-left wing atmosphere after 1931 seriously diminished the attraction of the IRA's social policies. North of the border however, conditions for the Catholic minority meant there remained a constituency for militarist conspiracy.

What other factors could have drawn men towards the IRA in this period? Unfortunately the motivation of ordinary IRA recruits is hard to assess. There are few documentary sources which point towards anything more concrete than a desire to "obtain Irish Freedom."[136] Therefore we can only speculate on other factors. For most of the decade in question the IRA was not an attractive option for young men who sought advancement in society. Membership meant giving up time for largely boring parades and having to take orders and obey rules which had no formal basis. It could mean imprisonment and certainly harassment by the police, although it was unlikely to lead to great physical danger for most of this period.[137] The exception to this was the period between 1932 to 1934 in the Free State where there was relative freedom to organise and some prestige in association with the republican movement. There may also

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[134] Brady, *Guardians*, pp. 167-168.

[135] Though it had not disappeared. See the *Irish Press*, 11 December 1935, bemoaning the "objection of giving information to the Gardai" which was a "relic" of the past when conditions "were very different" than in 1935.

[136] Letter seeking information on how to join the IRA from James O'Keeffe, Cashel, Co. Tipperary, 19 April 1932, in MTUCDA, P69/155 (261).

have been some sense of status that went with IRA membership in strongly republican areas before 1932. There was the social element that parading and drilling provided, as well as the opportunity to meet female supporters of the movement at socials and 'Aeridheacht.' The clashes and street fighting of the Blueshirt period were attractive to some and having access to arms and the potential to use them was no doubt also a factor. We have seen that the IRA was wracked by disputes over its allegedly communist nature. Its members were obviously affected by the broader political atmosphere in Ireland. However the IRA's radicalism was also an attractive feature for some, appealing to a belief that injustice and inequality should not exist in an Irish republic. A less admirable attraction may have been the ability to bully which membership of an armed group gave to some young men.[138] The IRA was capable of including those who joined to fight Blueshirts, to be seen parading on Easter Sunday, to get to fire a rifle, to defy the local police or to attack strike breakers. It could appeal to those for whom the republican ideal was a "spiritual" one and also those who believed unless the republic brought change for "the man in the street" then it would have failed.[139] It is quite possible that all of these things could at different stages, appeal to the same individual.

When WT Cosgrave wrote to ask Cardinal McRory for support for the clampdown on the IRA during 1931 he outlined his analysis of how the organisation was gaining support. As well as their claim to the revolutionary nationalist tradition, Cosgrave argued that the IRA appealed to the "poverty of the poor...the cupidity of the dishonest and the envy of the unsuccessful."[140] Cosgrave was more correct than he probably realised as discontent was the

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[137] The clampdown of late 1931-32 and the rioting in Belfast during 1935 being two exceptions.

[138] This especially seems to have been the case in Kerry. See comments by Frank Aiken to D. Curran, 10 January 1935, in Aiken Papers, UCDA, P104/2801 (113).

[139] Seán Ryan of Tralee, Notes of 1933 GAC, In MTUCDA, P69/187 (105) and O/C Caherciveen, Notes of 1934 GAC, MacEntee Papers, UCDA, P67/525.

[140] Liam T. Cosgrave to Cardinal McRory, 10 September 1931, 'Memorandum Regarding the Activities of Certain Organisations' in D/T S 5864 B NAI. James Hogan made a similar point

motor of IRA support. The IRA was made up largely of those who did not believe they had benefited from the revolution of 1917-21 and who sensed that the revolution was unfinished. By 1933 this belief was only going to appeal to a minority of the Irish population, generally those who lacked any concrete stake in society or felt they deserved more. Therefore the IRA of 1926-1936 became more radical politically, but less violent than their predecessors of 1919-23. Most of its members came from humbler backgrounds than the 'Old IRA' and their organisation identified with workers and small farmers in a way the IRA had never done before. They drew their revolutionary legitimacy from the conflicts of 1916-1923 but most of their members had not been involved in these events. In many ways confused and contradictory as they were, the IRA represented some of the losers of Ireland's revolution, the republican section of the population who only began to see positive changes occurring during the post 1932 period.[141] However the majority of their constituency were satisfied by the limited constitutional and economic reforms carried out by Fianna Fáil rather than the revolutionary vision of the IRA. The IRA's successors too would claim legitimacy from the revolutionary period, but differ significantly from the IRA of 1926-1936 by their single minded obsession with partition and narrower social vision.[142] The IRA during the 1930s represented the last fading embers of the revolutionary period.

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that "many a good Catholic has become a revolutionary socialist before he realised it at all." Hogan, *Could Ireland Become Communist? The Facts of the Case.* (Dublin, 1935) pp. xxvi.

[141] Real improvements in housing, and increased spending on unemployment insurance and assistance, old age pensions and on public works were achieved under Fianna Fáil. Cormac Ó Gráda, *Ireland: A New Economic History 1780-1939*, (Oxford, 1994) pp. 420 & 440-441.

[142] Compare for example *An Phoblacht* from 1926-1936 with the post war *United Irishman.*

Appendices

1

Biographical Notes

Tom Barry. Barry who became the IRA's Chief of Staff in 1937 had only rejoined the organisation during 1932 after several years outside it. His reputation as one of the most successful IRA commanders during the War of Independence masked the fact that he was distrusted by the organisation for a long period.[1] In 1923 he proposed that the IRA destroy all its arms and ammunition. Following the rejection of this proposal he had left the organisation.[2] He became active again during 1932 although he continued to have reservations about the IRA's social policies.[3] Barry was born in 1897 in Bandon, Co. Cork the son of a former RIC officer who had become a shopkeeper. He was educated for a period at Mungret College, Co. Limerick. In 1915 he joined the British Army and served in Mesopotamia. On his return to Cork he was involved with Ex-Servicemen's organisations. During 1919 he joined the IRA and eventually led the West Cork Flying Column, which was involved in two of the best known engagements of the period at Kilmichael and Crossbarry.[4] During 1921 he married Leslie Price, the Director of Organisation of Cumann na mBan.[5] In 1927 he became a Superintendent of Cork Harbour Commission and held this post until 1965.[6] Barry was given to threatening

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[1] A/G to O/C Cork No. 1, 27 September 1930 in MTUCDA, P69/153 (122).
[2] C/S report, 9 August 1924, in MTUCDA, P69/179 (126-129). Minutes of IRA Executive, 11-12 July 1923, in MTUCDA, P69/179 (68-70).
[3] Barry to Twomey, 13 May 1932, in MTUCDA, P69/52 (63-64).
[4] Ryan, *Tom Barry Story*, pp. 12, & 17-19. Peter Hart, *The IRA and its Enemies, Violence and Community in Cork 1916-1923*. (Oxford, 1999) pp. 30-32.
[5] A sister of Michael Price she had participated in the 1916 Rising. As Leslie de Barra she was a founder of the Irish Red Cross and its chairwomen for over 20 years. McRedmond, *Irish Lives*, pp. 73. Also 'Leslie Bean de Barra' in Donncha Ó Dulaing, *Voices of Ireland*, (Dublin, 1984) pp. 90-106.
[6] Ryan, *Tom Barry Story*, pp. 153.

violent retribution against the IRA's enemies.[7] Although this sometimes belied a more compassionate side to his nature.[8] A leading figure in the IRA by 1934 he was jailed that year and again in 1935. He succeeded MacBride as C/S in 1937. Barry became embroiled in a conflict with the supporters of Seán Russell and claimed that they sabotaged a planned IRA offensive in Northern Ireland.[9] Barry would assert in later life that he opposed both the bombing campaign in Britain and IRA contacts with Nazi Germany.[10] He briefly joined the Irish Government's defence efforts during 1940. In 1941 he was denounced by the IRA for writing for the Defence Force's journal. Barry was an unsuccessful candidate at the 1946 Cork Borough bye-election.[11] His account of the War of Independence, *Guerrilla Days in Ireland*, was published in 1949.[12] Barry has been claimed as a supporter by Provisional Sinn Féin but evidence suggests he was disillusioned by the killing of civilians in Britain and Northern Ireland by the mid 1970s. He died in 1980.[13]

David Fitzgerald. A little known figure outside republican circles, Fitzgerald was credited by Peader O'Donnell as a key figure in the radicalisation of the IRA during the late 1920s. A native of Tipperary Fitzgerald was active in the 1916 Rising and the War of Independence. An engineer by profession he was

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[7] He expressed disappointment that Cork Labour TD TJ Murphy had a paralysed arm and therefore could not be "dealt with in a fitting manner." Barry to Twomey, 23 December 1932, in MTUCDA, P69/155 (3).

[8] During 1925 he was paying the hospital expenses of a young women badly injured during fighting in Clonmel in the Civil War. As he commanded the Anti-Treaty forces in the town he felt responsible for her injuries. Barry to Aiken, 29 January 1925, in MTUCDA, MTUCDA, P69/141 (4).

[9] Oglaigh na h-Éireann Statement to General Army Convention, (1938), in Aiken Papers, UCDA, P104/2833 (1-3).

[10] Barry to Humphreys, 12 June 1976, in Humphreys Papers, UCDA, P106/839. Irish Military Intelligence however believed Barry had made contact with the Nazis before his resignation as C/S. Report, 16 November 1942, in G2/X/0093 MA. Ryan, *Barry Story*, pp. 146.

[11] Ryan, *Barry Story*, pp.153-155 & *War News*, early 1941, in Jus 8/752 NAI.

[12] It has remained in print ever since. Latest edition, Tralee, 1989.

[13] Fionntan O'Laighin, 'Tom Barry' in *Spirit of Freedom - The Bobby Sands Commemoration School Prize Essay*, (Dublin, 1983) pp. 60-67. Barry refused a request to sign an appeal for IRA prisoners during 1976. He argued that the IRA had "only themselves to blame" for

jailed during 1925. In 1930 he visited the Soviet Union as a guest of the FOSR. He was a member of the National Executive of Saor Éire and author of its *Indictment of Capitalism in Ireland.* After a long period of illness Fitzgerald died of cancer in 1933.[14]

Michael (Mick) Fitzpatrick. Fitzpatrick was a central figure on the IRA leadership between 1926 and 1937 when he eventually became its Chief of Staff. Born in Wexford in 1893 he was one of the "driving forces" behind the Anti-Treaty IRA in Dublin during the Civil War. He was briefly the O/C of the IRA's Dublin Brigade and was interned in 1923.[15] During this period he was also involved with the first Irish Communist Party.[16] Fitzpatrick was a full time official of the Grocer's trade union and Secretary of its social club at the Banba Hall in Dublin's Parnell Square. He also managed the Balalaika Ballroom in the same area.[17] Fitzpatrick was the key figure in IRA contacts with the Soviet Union during the late 1920s. In 1927 he attended the first International Congress of the Friends of the Soviet Union in Moscow. In 1928 he helped establish the Irish branch of the FOSR. During 1929 he was involved in launching the Irish Labour Defence League and the Workers Revolutionary Party.[18] He visited Russia again in 1932. Fitzpatrick chaired the 1933 IRA GAC. At the 1934 Convention he disagreed with the call for a Republican

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losing support after some recent activities. Barry to Humphreys, (N/D) in Humphreys papers, UCDA, P106/1566. Also *Sunday Independent*, 7 March 1976.

[14] *Notes on Communism*, in MacEntee Papers, UCDA, P67523. Donation of £55 towards Fitzgerald's medical bill in C/S to Irish National Aid, 12 December 1932, in MTUCDA, P69/54 (64). *An Phoblacht*, 9 September 1933, *Republican Congress*, 8 September 1934.

[15] *Notes on Individuals*, in MacEntee Papers, UCDA, P67/550 pp. 156. Report on revolutionary organisations, 4 April 1930 in D/T S 5864 A NAI. Garda report, 14 April 1930, in FitzGerald Papers, UCDA, P80/916.

[16] Department of Defence mss, in Mulcahy Papers, UCDA, P7a/87. I am grateful to Emmet O'Connor for bringing this to my attention.

[17] The union's full title was Irish National Union of Vintners Grocers and Allied Trades Assistants. *Notes on Individuals*, in MacEntee Papers, UCDA, P67/550 pp. 156. Garda report, 9 January 1934, in Jus 8/68 NAI.

[18] *Notes on Communism*, in MacEntee Papers, UCDA, P67/523.

Congress and remained within the IRA.[19] His union was involved in a strike with O'Mara's Bacon Shops in late 1934 in which the IRA intervened violently. During 1935 he was involved in the IRA's intervention in the Dublin transport strike.[20] In 1936 he was an unsuccessful candidate for Cumann Poblachta na h-Éireann. Fitzpatrick succeeded Barry as IRA leader in 1937 only to be ousted by Russell at the 1938 Convention. He was involved in the launch of Clann na Poblachta in 1946 and a member of its National Executive. Fitzpatrick was elected as a TD for Dublin North West in 1948 and held his seat until 1951.[21]

George Gilmore. One of the best known IRA leaders of the period Gilmore was born in Dublin in 1898. He played a minor role in the 1916 Rising and was active in the South Dublin Brigade of the IRA from 1920. He was jailed in Mountjoy during the Civil War.[22] In November 1925 he helped organise the mass breakout of IRA prisoners from Mountjoy. He was imprisoned on several occasions during the late 1920s and early 1930s. His two brothers, Harry and Charlie, were also active in the Dublin IRA.[23] Gilmore was O/C of the Dublin Brigade for a period and was believed to be responsible for at least one murder.[24] He visited the Soviet Union in 1930.[25] Gilmore was arrested and jailed during the winter of 1931-1932 after the discovery of an arms dump near his family home in Killakee, Rathfarnam. He was wounded in a clash with Gardai in Kilrush in August 1932. Gilmore was a popular figure within the IRA but was not a comfortable public speaker or agitator. He was cynical about the prospects of revolutionary change and attempted to resign from the AC in

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[19] Notes of 1933 GAC, in MTUCDA, P69/187 (87) & Notes of 1934 GAC, in MacEntee Papers, UCDA, P67/525.
[20] *Irish Times*, 22 December 1934. Garda report, 27 March 1935, in Jus 8/405 NAI.
[21] *Notes on Individuals*, in MacEntee Papers, UCDA, P67/550 pp. 156. *Irish Times*, 8 July 1946. Browne and Farrell, *Magill Book*, pp. 126.
[22] McRedmond, *Irish Lives*, pp. 116. O'Farrell, *Who's Who*, pp. 160. 'Who is George Gilmore?' in Humphreys Papers, UCDA, P106/2436. O'Malley Notebooks, UCDA, P17b/106.
[23] Garda report, 7 May 1929, in FitzGerald Papers, UCDA, P80/851 (11). MacEoin, *Survivors,* pp. 393-395.
[24] D/J report on Patrick Carroll murder, 24 June 1931, in FitzGerald Papers, UCDA, P80/856 (19).

late 1932. At the 1933 Convention he warned that the IRA was becoming a "safety valve for Fianna Fáil."[26] He supported Mick Price's proposal at the 1934 Convention and after the failure of the Convention to endorse the Congress idea he left the IRA. He was subsequently a member of the AC of the Irish Citizens Army. Gilmore collaborated closely with Peadar O'Donnell for whom he had a high regard.[27] He was active in the Republican Congress from 1934, visiting the US to raise support in 1935. He continued to work with O'Donnell on left republican projects into the 1940s.[28] By the 1960s his advice was sought by sections of the IRA who were moving towards the left. Gilmore however remained outside political organisation and died in 1985.[29]

James (Jim) Killeen. Killeen was appointed Adjutant General of the IRA in 1927 and held that position until 1933. Born in Westmeath in 1893 Killeen had joined the Irish Volunteers in 1918. He was arrested in Britain during 1926 and jailed for attempting to smuggle arms.[30] Killeen was not prominent in the political debates within the IRA but closely worked with Twomey and MacBride. He was arrested in Belfast in 1936 and jailed for four years in Crumlin Road.[31] He did not resume IRA activity on his release but was involved in re-organisation talks among republicans in 1945. In 1946 Killeen became a member

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[25] Gilmore Notes PP.

[26] Brady, *Guardians of the Peace*, pp. 173. Entry, Jacob Diaries, 13 March 1933, in Ms. 32,582 (69) NLI. Gilmore complained during 1932 that he was "completely fed up...past, present and future." Gilmore to Chairman AC, 16 September 1932, in MTUCDA, P69/53 (367-369). Notes of 1933 GAC, in MTUCDA, P69/187 (103).

[27] Notes of 1934 GAC, in MacEntee Papers, UCDA, P67/525. Gilmore thought O'Donnell the only man he knew who had the "power to be a political leader." O'Donnell considered that Gilmore had the "best mind" since Liam Mellows and was actually "rather better than Mellows." Entries Jacob Diaries, 11 & 31 October 1934, Ms. 32,582 (76) NLI.

[28] Gilmore Notes PP. O'Donnell & Gilmore, 'Invasion! What if the British come back? If the Germans land? If both come - What then? A Republican Answer.' (1941) in Arthur Mitchell and Padraig O'Snodaigh, (eds.) *Irish Political Documents, 1916-1949*, (Dublin, 1985) pp. 225-228.

[29] Bowyer Bell, *Secret Army*, pp. 345. Richard English, *Socialist Intellectuals and the 1916-23 Irish Revolution* paper delivered at Symposium 'The Nature of the Irish Revolution, 1913-23' at Queens University Belfast, 1999.

[30] *Notes on Certain Individuals*, in MacEntee Papers, UCDA, P67/550 pp. 157.

[31] RUC report, 22 May 1936, in HA/32/1/628 PRONI.

of the National Executive of Clann na Poblachta and was active in that party until the late 1950s.[32]

Seán MacBride. MacBride was widely believed to have been the IRA's Adjutant General during the late 1920s and early 1930s.[33] While he may not have actually held this position he certainly was a key figure within the IRA and effectively Twomey's closest collaborator. He was IRA Director of Intelligence in 1933. The son of Major John MacBride and Maud Gonne, he was born in Paris in 1904. MacBride was involved in the Irish Volunteers from 1918 and in the Dublin Brigade Active Service Unit from 1920. He was attached to IRA GHQ Staff and served as an Aide-de-camp to Michael Collins during the Treaty negotiations. Jailed during the Civil War he escaped with Mick Price in 1923. He married Catalina (Kid) Bulfin in 1926.[34] MacBride was arrested in connection with the Kevin O'Higgins assassination in 1927 but successfully defeated the state's case. During that period his official occupation was Managing Director of the Roebuck Jam Company, operating from the family home at Roebuck House, Clonskeagh. In 1929 he was arrested at an IRA meeting in Tullamore.[35] MacBride attended the Congress of the Anti-Imperialist League in Frankfurt during 1929. He was arrested in Listowel during 1931 and found to have documents relating to Saor Éire. He was a member of the National Executive of that body.[36] MacBride was involved in IRA negotiations

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[32] Republican re-organisation minutes, 25 February 1945, in Humphreys Papers, UCDA, P106/2140. *Irish Times*, 8 July 1946. Clann Ard Chomairle, 1953, in Humphreys Papers, UCDA, P106/2152. Killeen owned a grocers shop in Dublin in that period. Advertisment in Gerard Tighe Papers, Ms. 28,894 (B) 1 NLI.

[33] See GHQ Staff IRA, January 1933, in Aiken Papers, UCDA, P104/2822 (1). O'Duffy to Blythe, 5 July 1929, in Blythe Papers, UCDA, P24/477. RUC report, 17 January 1933, in HA/32/1/465 PRONI.

[34] MacEoin, *Survivors,* pp. 105-126. Anthony J Jordan, *Seán MacBride - A Biography*, (Dublin, 1993) pp. 19-27. Political History of Seán MacBride, in MacEntee Papers, UCDA, P67/539 (1-2). O'Farrell, *Whos Who*, pp. 189. O'Malley Notebooks, UCDA, P17b/87.

[35] Garda reports, 20 April and 24 June 1929, in D/T S 5864 A NAI. Jordan, *MacBride*, pp. 46.

[36] *Notes on Communism*, UCDA, P67/523. Garda reports, 24 September 1930 & 30 July 1931, in D/T S 5864 A NAI. *An Phoblacht*, 14 February 1931. *Notes on Republican Congress Movement*, in MacEntee papers, UCDA, P67/527 pp. 25.

with Frank Aiken in the summer of 1932 and later met De Valera on behalf of the IRA.[37] He was briefly editor of *An Phoblacht* during 1933 and also worked for the *Evening Press* for a period.[38] He was firmly against the Congress proposal at the 1934 Convention and was bitterly disliked by Congress supporters such as George Gilmore. He was involved in IRA intervention in the Dublin transport strike and went on the run following the government clampdown during March 1935.[39] He was the Secretary of Cumann Poblachta na Éireann during 1936. He became IRA C/S following Twomey's arrest in May that year. He handed over this post to Barry in 1937. MacBride was called to the Bar that year and to the Inner Bar in 1943. He defended all the IRA members tried for murder by the Special Criminal Court and Military Court from 1940 to 1946. The Gardai suspected that he maintained links with the IRA despite having signed an undertaking not to do so in 1940.[40] He founded Clann na Poblachta in 1946 and was elected a TD for County Dublin in 1947. He became Minister for External Affairs in the 1948-51 Inter Party government. MacBride remained a TD until 1957. He was a founder and Chairman of Amnesty International and a winner of both the Nobel and Lenin Peace prizes in 1974 and 1977 respectively.[41] MacBride maintained a deliberate vagueness about his political positions in later years claiming that he was not involved in Cumann Poblachta na h-Éireann and to have left the IRA because he supported the 1937 Constitution. He also denied having had any contact with Nazi Germany when the IRA's leader.[42]

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[37] C/S to O/C Cork No. 1 Bdge, 19 July 1932, in MTUCDA, P69/52 (54-57). MacBride to McGarrity, 19 October 1933, in McGarrity Papers, Ms. 17,456 NLI.

[38] Twomey to Sheehy Skeffington, 31 March 1933, in MTUCDA, P69/53 (170). A/G to O/C Dublin Bdge, 6 June 1932, in MTUCDA, P69/155 (73).

[39] Notes of 1934 GAC, in MacEntee Papers, UCDA, P67/525. Garda report, 27 March 1935, in Jus 8/405 NAI.

[40] *Irish Times*, 4 May 1936. *Notes on Individuals*, in MacEntee Papers, UCDA, P67/550 pp. 158.

[41] McRedmond, *Irish Lives*, pp. 179-180.

[42] MacEoin, *Survivors*, pp. 123. For a critical examination of various MacBride claims see MacDermott, *Clann na Poblachta*, pp. 172-173. For connection to Germany, undated Army Intelligence File file in G2/X/0093 MA and Gilmore Notes PP.

Patrick McLogan. The only member of the IRA leadership to come from what became Northern Ireland, McLogan was born in Markethill, Co. Armagh in 1894. After a period in Scotland he returned to Ireland and joined the Irish Volunteers in 1917. After the Civil War he settled in Portlaoise where he owned a public house.[43] McLogan opposed IRA involvement in land agitation in Laois-Offaly during 1932. He was elected as an MP for Armagh in the Stormont elections of November 1933. He chaired the 1934 IRA Convention and was involved in Cumann na Poblachta h-Éireann during 1936.[44] He was interned from 1940-1941. McLogan remained active within the IRA during the 1940s and was later President of Sinn Féin from 1950 until his death in 1964.[45]

Peadar O'Donnell. Possibly the best known, after MacBride, of the IRA leadership from this period is O'Donnell, largely due to the volume of literature produced by or about him.[46] Born in 1893 in Dungloe Co. Donegal, O'Donnell became a school teacher in 1913. He was active in the Irish National Teachers Organisation and later became a full time organiser for the ITGWU in 1918.[47] He joined the Irish Volunteers in 1918. Despite retrospective claims that he was "not the military type" O'Donnell was O/C of 2nd Brigade of the IRA's Ulster Division and a member of the Anti-Treaty Executive by 1922. He was elected a TD for Donegal in 1923.[48] A member of the IRA Executive from 1924, he became editor of *An Phoblacht* in 1926 and held this post until 1929. He married Lile O'Donell during 1924. He was jailed in 1929 for assaulting a

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[43] RUC report, 5 June 1934, in HA/32/1/610 PRONI. *Notes on Individuals*, in MacEntee Papers, UCDA, P67/550 pp. 160.
[44] O/C Offaly Batt to A/G, 28 May 1932, in MTUCDA, P69/155 (171). Notes of 1934 GAC, in MacEntee Papers, UCDA, P67/525. See Chapter Eight for Stormont election.
[45] MacEoin, *Twilight Years*, pp. 875-877.
[46] By O'Donnell himself, *There Will be Another Day*. About O'Donnell, McInerney, *Peadar O'Donnell: Irish Social Rebel*, Grattan Freyer, *Peadar O'Donnell*, (Lewisburg, 1973), Hegarty, *Peadar O'Donnell* & Ó Drisceoil, *Peadar O'Donnell*.
[47] Anton McCabe, 'The Stormy Petrel of the Transport Workers': Peadar O'Donnell, Trade Unionist, 1917-1920, in *Saothar* 19, (1994) pp. 41-51.

Garda. From 1927 O'Donnell attempted to organise a mass Anti-Annuities campaign. In 1929 he attended the Frankfurt anti-imperialist congress with MacBride. In 1930 he was a delegate to the Congress of the European Peasants Movement, the Krestintern. He established an Irish section of the Krestintern called the Irish Working Farmers Committee. He was a member of the National Executive of Saor Éire in 1931.[49] O'Donnell authored several novels and pamphlets during this period. He was disillusioned from an early stage by the refusal of the IRA to undermine Fianna Fáil. He wrote the IRA's 'Appeal to the Orange Order' during 1932. O'Donnell considered the IRA to be the "most intense form" of the working class movement. He complained of censorship of his views by the IRA and left the organisation after the 1934 Convention. He was then court-martialled and dismissed by the IRA.[50] He was involved with the Republican Congress from 1934 until 1936. O'Donnnell was in Spain at the beginning of its Civil War in 1936. He then helped edit and produce the *Irish Democrat* in 1937. O'Donnell also established and edited *The Bell* from 1940 until 1954. He was active in the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament and against the Vietnam War during the 1960s. With Gilmore he was involved in giving advice to republicans during the 1960s. With age became the "grand old man" of the Irish left active in various causes until his death in 1986.[51]

Donal O'Donoghue. O'Donoghue became the IRA's Adjutant General in March 1933. Born in Cavan in 1897 he had been a member of the 5th Battalion (Engineers) of the IRA's Dublin Brigade. He was interned during the

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[48] MacEoin, *Survivors*, pp. 21-34. O'Malley Notebooks, UCDA, P17b/87,98. IRA Executive, 20 September 1924, in MTUCDA, P69/179 (130). Ó Drisceoil, *O'Donnell*, pp. 34-36.
[49] *Notes on Communism*, in MacEntee Papers, UCDA, P67/523. *Notes on Individuals*, in MacEntee Papers, UCDA, P67/550 pp. 160. *Notes on Republican Congress Movement*, in MacEntee Papers, UCDA, P67/527 pp. 1-2 & 25.
[50] O'Donnell to Cumann na mBan Executive, 20 April 1934, in Humphreys Papers, UCDA, P106/1154 (1-5). Notes of 1933 GAC, in MTUCDA, P69/187 (104). Complaint over censorship in letter to Twomey (N/D) in Aiken Papers, UCDA, P104/2855.
[51] Ó Drisceoil, *O'Donnell*, pp. 110-115 & 118-124. McCabe, pp. 41.

Civil War.[52] O'Donoghue was jailed in connection with the IRA's moneylending raids during 1926. He attended the 1928 Congress of the Anti Imperialist League in Brussels.[53] He was Director of the Boycott British Campaign during late 1932 and later editor of *An Phoblacht*. He was arrested during the Dublin transport strike and jailed in the Curragh in March 1935. He married Cumann na mBan activist Sighle Humphreys that year. Later that year he was arrested in Lurgan during the 1935 Westminster elections and jailed in Crumlin Road. O'Donoghue left the IRA in 1938. He edited *Republican Review* from 1938-39.[54] He worked as an accountant for An Solus Teo and was a founding member of Clann na Poblachta in 1946. A member of that party's Executive he was an unsuccessful candidate in Dublin South West in 1948. He died in 1957.[55]

Séan O'Farrell. A commander of one of the IRA's strongest battalions in the west midlands and Leitrim O'Farrell was a former Sinn Féin TD for the area. He remained active in that party until the late 1920s. He was also a member of the Provisional Committee of the Irish Working Farmers movement during 1930.[56] O'Farrell did not agree with informing recruits to the IRA about the movement's social policies and he favoured neutrality on the Gralton issue during 1933.[57] He was a member of the Gaelic League and active in its anti-Jazz campaign in Leitrim. He was jailed following a clash with Blueshirts in 1934 and was elected to Leitrim County Council after topping the poll in

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[52] Introduction to Sighle Humphreys Papers, UCDA. O'Malley Notebooks, UCDA, P17b/91. Twomey to Neenan, 28 March 1933, in MTUCDA, P69/185 (24).
[53] *Notes on Communism*, in MacEntee Papers, UCDA, P67/523.
[54] 'Boycott British' National Executive Minute Book, 1 November 1932, in Humphreys Papers, UCDA, P106/2101. *Irish News*, 14 November 1935. The Russell leadership informed O'Donoghue they could no longer rely on his "loyalty." A/G to Staff Comdt 'E', 11 May 1938, in Humphreys Papers, UCDA, P106/2042.
[55] Clann na Poblachta election leaflet, February 1948, in Humphreys Papers, UCDA, P106/2160. O'Donoghue's running mate, Noel Browne was elected.
[56] Gallagher, *Irish Elections*, pp. 36. O'Duffy to Ministers, 5 July 1929, in Blythe Papers, UCDA, P24/477. *Notes on Communism*, in MacEntee Papers, UCDA, P67/523.
[57] Report on Leitrim Battalion Convention, March 1933, in MTUCDA, P69/187 (4-14).

Carrick on Shannon that year.[58] He resigned his position on the council later that year and left the IRA shortly afterwards.[59]

George Plunkett. Plunkett served as the IRA's Director of Engineering in 1933. Born in Dublin in 1896 he was the son of Sinn Féin's Count Plunkett and the brother of executed 1916 leader Joseph Mary Plunkett. He fought in the 1916 Rising and from 1919-1923. His privileged background meant his occupation was listed as 'Gentleman' by the Gardai.[60] He was hostile to the IRA's invlovement in politics during this period.[61] He supported Russell in 1938 and became a member of his Army Council. Plunkett was interned briefly during 1940 and died in an accident in 1944.[62]

Michael (Mick) Price. Price was the IRA's Director of Training in 1933, having previously been a Director of Intelligence for the organisation. He was born in Dublin in 1896. He served in the British Army during World War One and joined the Irish Volunteers in 1918. He was jailed in Belfast later that year, and took part in a hunger strike there. He was a Staff Officer in West Cork by 1921. Three of his brothers and a sister were involved in the republican movement during that period.[63] During the Civil War Price was QM and then O/C of the IRA's 1st Eastern Division. He escaped from prison along with

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[58] O'Farrell claimed to have forced the expulsion of a Garda from a GAA club over the Guard's attendance at a Jazz dance. *Irish Press*, 26 June 1934. *Leitrim Observer*, 30 June 1934.

[59] *Leitrim Observer*, 3 November 1934. Foley, *Legion of the Rearguard*, pp. 149.

[60] IRA GHQ Staff, January 1933, in Aiken Papers, UCDA, P104/2822 (1). Garda report, 4 July 1929, in D/T S 5864 A NAI. *Notes on Individuals*, in MacEntee Papers, UCDA, P67/550 pp. 161.

[61] Officer's meeting, 9 April 1927, in MTUCDA, P69/48 (152-162). Notes of 1933 GAC, in MTUCDA, P69/187 (104).

[62] *Notes on Individuals*, in MacEntee papers, UCDA, P67/550 pp. 161. *Irish Press*, 22 January 1944.

[63] Copy of entry in Register of Births. MacEoin, *Survivors*, pp. 369. *Irish Press*, 17 January 1944. Brothers Jack, Eamon and Charles were in the IRA. Sister Leslie was in the Cumann na mBan. She married Tom Barry. See above.

MacBride in October 1923.[64] He became the O/C of the Dublin Brigade and was one of those pushing for more militant activity during 1925. He was jailed after the moneylending raids in 1926. He was regarded by the Gardai as one of the "most dangerous" IRA activists in Ireland during that period.[65] Price was arrested on the eve of the Bodenstown commemoration in June 1931 and was sent to the US later that year during the government's clampdown. Twomey felt that there was no one in the IRA "more sincere" or "prepared to make sacrifice" than Price.[66] Price was a member of the Executive of Saor Éire but had been hostile to radical ideas within the IRA until 1931. He voted against setting up a political organisation in 1933. However at the 1934 Convention he put forward a motion calling for the IRA to commit itself to remaining in existence until a Workers Republic was achieved.[67] When this was rejected he left the Convention and was court-martialled and dismissed from the IRA. He helped found the Republican Congress. He was also a member of the AC of the ICA. He left the Congress over its failure to form an openly socialist party in late 1934 and led his own faction of the ICA. He was jailed in the Curragh during the Dublin transport strike of 1935.[68] He led his followers into the Labour Party later that year. Price was elected to the Labour Party's Administrative Council in 1937 and later became Secretary of its Constituency's Council. He died in 1944.[69]

Seán Russell. Of all his colleagues on the 1933 Army Council Russell had held the highest position in the IRA prior to the Civil War. Born in Dublin in 1893 Russell joined the Irish Volunteers in 1913. He took part in the Easter

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[64] O'Farrell, *Who's Who*, pp. 189.
[65] A/Commandant Dan Bryan to C/S, 2 December 1925, in FitzGerald Papers, UCDA, P80/849 (11). Report on revolutionary organisations, 4 April 1930, in D/T S 5864 A NAI.
[66] Twomey to McGarrity, 9 December 1931, in McGarrity Papers, Ms. 17,490 NLI.
[67] *An Phoblacht*, 7 February 1931. *Notes on the Republican Congress Movement*, in MacEntee papers, UCDA, P67/527, pp. 25. Notes of 1933 GAC, in MTUCDA, P69/187 (90-117). Notes of 1934 GAC, in MacEntee Papers, UCDA, P67/525.
[68] A/G to Commanders, 17 April 1934, in Jus 8/319 NAI. Price to Humphreys, 13 & 19 July 1934, in Humphreys Papers, UCDA, P106/1489 & P016/1491 (1-2).

Rising as an officer in Dublin Brigade's 2nd Battalion. Following the Rising he was interned in Frongoch and Knutsford. From 1919 he was attached to the IRA's Headquarters Staff and became Director of Munitions in 1920.[70] Russell travelled to the USSR on an arms buying mission in 1925. Later that year he was jailed in Mountjoy but escaped in November in a breakout he helped organise. Russell was one of those within the IRA pushing for more militant activities in 1926. He was appointed QMG in 1927 and held that position until 1936. He travelled widely within Ireland reorganising the IRA during 1929-1931.[71] Russell was due to give the oration at the 1931 Bodenstown commemoration but was arrested on its eve. He visited the US in the autumn of 1932. During the Northern Ireland rail strike of 1933 he organised IRA intervention from Belfast.[72] Russell remained aloof from the IRA's political debates and following the split of 1934 chaired the court-martial of Price and O'Donnell.[73] He met de Valera at Government Buildings during 1934. While in the US during 1936 seems to have conceived along with Joseph McGarrity, the plan for the bombing campaign in Britain. He was accused of misappropriating funds by the IRA leadership and was court martialled.[74] Along with McGarrity and elements among the IRA in Northern Ireland colluded in a take over of the IRA in 1938. After becoming C/S he put into motion the bombing campaign and contacts with Nazi Germany. His letters to both McGarrity and German contacts betray astonishing political naiveté.[75] Arrested in the US during 1939, Russell was released on bail and spirited to Europe. He arrived in Nazi

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[69] Dunphy, *Making of Fianna Fáil Power*, pp. 201. *Irish Press*, 17 & 20 January 1944.
[70] Copy of entry in Register of Births. Notes on Individuals, in MacEntee Papers, UCDA, P67/550 pp. 162. Seán O'Mahony, *Frongoch - University of Revolution*, (Dublin, 1995) pp. 218. O'Farrell, *Who's Who*, pp. 91 & 192.
[71] Michael McInerney, Gerry Boland's story, *Irish Times*, 11 October 1968. Army Intelligence report, 4 December 1925, in FitzGerald Papers, UCDA, P80/849 (12). See for example, 'Q' to A/G, report on South Galway, 27 April 1931, in MTUCDA, P69/151 (33-34).
[72] See Chapters Eight & Nine.
[73] A/G to Commanders, 17 April 1934, in Jus 8/319 NAI.
[74] *Irish Independent*, 10 December 1936. Russell to McGarrity, 29 January 1937, in McGarrity Papers, Ms. 17,485 NLI.
[75] IRA statement to GAC, 1938, in Aiken Papers, UCDA, P104/2833 (1-30). Russell to Dr. Hans Luther, German Ambassador to the US, 15 October 1936, in Ms. 17,485 NLI.

Germany during 1940 and agreed to return to Ireland with Frank Ryan. He became ill on board a U-Boat and died at sea.[76] Russell became the idol of traditionalist republicanism during the 1950s and a memorial to him was unveiled in Dublin's Fairview Park during 1951.[77]

Frank Ryan. Ryan remains a recognisable figure in Ireland both politically and in popular culture.[78] He was born in Limerick in 1902 and joined the IRA in 1921 too late to take part in the War of Independence.[79] During the Civil war he was interned in the Curragh where he edited an Irish language journal, *An Giorrfhiodh*. Ryan had won a scholarship to UCD which he took up when he was released from jail. There he was an active member of An Cumann Gaedhealach and won their gold medal for oratory.[80] Ryan was active in the UCD Republican Club and in the Dublin IRA. He worked briefly as a teacher and at the Irish Tourist Association but was a full time IRA activist by 1928. He was arrested on several occasions after clashes with the Gardai. Ryan attended the 1928 Brussels Anti-Imperialist congress. In 1929 he became editor of *An Phoblacht* and also an IRA Inspection Officer.[81] Ryan visited the US during 1930 and spoke at the New York Easter commemoration. He was jailed twice during 1931, once for assaulting a Garda and again during the clampdown of winter 1931-1932. He refused to wear prison uniform or obey regulations and his health may have begun its long term decline in this period. During 1932 he became increasingly dissatisfied with the IRA's policies towards Fianna

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[76] *Notes on Individuals*, in MacEntee Papers, UCDA, P67/550 pp. 162.
[77] Garda report in Jus 8/802 NAI & *United Irishman*, October 1951.
[78] Mentioned in songs by The Pogues and Christy Moore. See Victoria Clarke, *A Drink with Shane MacGowan*, (London, 2001) pp. 274-280 and Fearghal McGarry, *Irish Politics and the Spanish Civil War* (Cork, 1999) pp. 48-49.
[79] Cronin, *Frank Ryan*, pp. 17-19. According to Gilmore, Ryan was "very sensitive" about his lack of involvement in the War of Independence. Gilmore Notes PP.
[80] Cronin, *Frank Ryan*, pp. 22-31.
[81] *Notes on Individuals*, in MacEntee Papers, UCDA, P67/550 pp. 162. Notes on Communism, in MacEntee Papers, UCDA, P67/523. 'Eilis Ryan in Her Own Words' in *Saothar*, 21, (1996) pp. 129-146. Andrews, *Man of No Property*, pp. 71-72. As Staff Captain 'O'Reilly' Ryan displayed a little black humour sending to Jim Killeen, "the names of men

Fáil and moved politically towards a socialist position. At the 1933 Convention he expressed dissatisfaction with the IRA's failure to become a "Citizens Army." He resigned as editor of *An Phoblacht* and from the IRA Executive in April 1933.[82] Ryan was further alienated by an IRA investigation into his alleged presence at a communist meeting that year and he always denied being a communist.[83] Twomey described Ryan as a "bad man in a team" but he was a popular figure even among his political opponents within the IRA. At the 1934 Convention he sided with O'Donnell and Gilmore and became editor of the new Republican Congress paper in May of that year.[84] Ryan helped organise alternative Armistice Day parades in November 1934 and 1935 and also stood as a Congress candidate in the 1936 Dublin Municipal elections.[85] With the outbreak of war in Spain in 1936 Ryan decided to aid the Spanish Republic directly as a volunteer. He made it clear that he still regarded himself as a Catholic despite criticism from the Irish Church during that year. He was the highest ranking Irish officer in the International Brigades and was wounded at the battle of Jarama in 1937. Ryan returned to Ireland to convalesce and was involved in Anti-Coronation protests alongside the IRA. He also ran as an 'Anti-Fascist' candidate in the 1937 elections. Ryan returned to Spain and was captured by Italian troops in 1938. He was imprisoned under harsh conditions at Calaceite and eventually sentenced to death. Ryan refused to give the fascist salute or co-operate with his captors and his health declined further while in captivity. An international campaign succeeded in having his death sentence commuted.[86] In 1940 German Military Intelligence negotiated his release into their custody and he was taken to Germany. He intended to travel back to

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I have inspired to die for Ireland. Trusting you can facilitate." 'OR' to A/G, 9 November 1929, in MTUCDA, P69/152 (254).

[82] *Notes on Individuals*, in MacEntee Papers, UCDA, P67/550 pp. 162. Notes of 1933 GAC, in MTUCDA, P69/187 (94).

[83] A/G to Staff Captain O'Reilly, 13 May 1933, in Humphreys Papers, UCDA, P106/2038. Mary MacSwiney to Ryan, 1 July 1936, in MacSwiney Papers, UCDA, P48a/248(1)/3.

[84] Twomey to Neenan, 28 March 1933, in MTUCDA, P69/185 (21-25).

[85] Cronin, *Frank Ryan*, pp. 54-71.

Ireland with Russell but the latter's death saw him returned to Germany. Ryan suffered a stroke in 1942 and died in Dresden in 1944. Almost all shades of republicanism claim Ryan as a hero but his co-operation with the Nazis means his legacy remains controversial.[87]

John Joe Sheehy. The Gardai regarded JJ Sheehy as being "chiefly responsible" for the existence of the IRA in Kerry during the 1920s and 1930s.[88] Born in Tralee during 1899 Sheehy joined the IRA in 1920 and was an officer in Tralee's Boherbee Company. He became Commandant of the Kerry No. 1 Brigade during the Civil War. As an outstanding Gaelic footballer he won four All-Ireland medals, twice captaining his county to the title.[89] Sheehy used his prominent position with the Irish National Assurance Company to help secure work for IRA members.[90] He was regarded by the Gardai as a moderating influence on the IRA in Kerry. A member of Sinn Féin, Sheehy was wary of, if not completely hostile, to the IRA's social policies.[91] He resigned from the IRA in 1938 in protest at the take-over by Russell's supporters. However he became active again during the 1940s, aiding German spy Hermann Goertz in Kerry, although the Gardai still felt his leadership in Kerry was preferable to that of a more militant activist.[92] He was interned during 1944 and jailed again in 1946. Sheehy remained supportive of the republican movement during the 1950s and maintained his prominence within the

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[86] McGarry, *Irish Politics*, pp. 49-60 & 101-108. *Notes on Individuals*, in MacEntee Papers, UCDA, P67/550 pp. 162.

[87] English, *Radicals*, pp. 273. Enda Staunton, 'Frank Ryan & Collaboration: a reassessment', in *History Ireland*, Autumn 1997.

[88] *Notes on Individuals*, in MacEntee Papers, UCDA, P67/550 pp. 162.

[89] JJ Barrett, *Name of the Game*, pp. 112-122. Dwyer, *Tans, Terror & Troubles*, pp. 299 & 378.

[90] See Seán McCool to C/S, 28 April, and C/S to McCool, 11 May 1932, in MTUCDA, P69/52 (117).

[91] He opposed the Kerry IRA's disruption of Garda sports in 1931. Garda report, 27 July 1931, in D/T S 5864 B NAI. See also Chapter Three. Notes of 1933 GAC, in MTUCDA, P69/187 (101).

[92] Defence Conference Notes, 22 December 1942, in Mulcahy Papers, UCDA, P7a/217. *Notes on Individuals*, in MacEntee Papers, UCDA, P67/550 pp. 162. MacEoin, *Survivors*, pp. 354-362.

GAA. The road which runs alongside the Kerry GAA headquarters is named after Sheehy, who died in 1980.[93]

Maurice (Moss) Twomey. Twomey and MacLaughlin had two children both born in the early 1930s.[94] Following his arrest in 1936 Twomey served over a years imprisonment in the Curragh. During his period of imprisonment his family depended heavily on money lent to them by McGarrity of the Clan na Gael.[95] On his release Twomey became Adjutant General on Russell's Army Council. He travelled to Britain and inspected the IRA's units there. Twomey concluded that the IRA was in no position to launch a campaign and withdrew from IRA activity.[96] In 1939 he opened a newsagents and confectioners in Dublin's O'Connell Street. He was interned for two weeks during 1940.[97] He remained close to the IRA, giving assistance to republicans deported from Britain and mediating in disputes between IRA factions.[98] He was not active in politics after the 1940s, although he did speak at a number of commemorations, most notably at the restoration of Wolfe Tone's grave at Bodenstown in 1971.[99] He never claimed an IRA pension or gave an account of his record to the Bureau of Military History.[100] Twomey considered writing a memoir of his period in the IRA but felt that much of the memoirs published were "myths and legends" which he had no wish to add to.[101] He was badly injured in an accident in 1971 and was deeply affected by the death of his wife in April 1978.[102] Twomey himself died in October of that year. The presence at his funeral of

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[93] Barrett, *Name of the Game*, pp. 122. *An Phoblacht*, 19 January 1980.
[94] Maurice Jr, born 11 June 1932 & Máire, born 8 November 1933. Information from M. Twomey Jr.
[95] Twomey to McGarrity, 27 December 1937, in McGarrity Papers, Ms. 17,544 NLI.
[96] A/G to C/S, 6 May 1938, in McGarrity Papers, Ms. 17,544 NLI.
[97] Internment File, No. 96 CP 627, 3-20 June 1940 MA.
[98] *Notes on Individuals*, in MacEntee Papers, UCDA, P67/550 pp. 163. Republican re-organisation minutes, 25 February 1945, in Humphreys Papers, UCDA, P106/2140.
[99] *Irish Times*, 26 April 1971. His reiteration of Tone's non sectarian message received praise in an *Irish Times* editorial, 29 April 1971.
[100] Twomey File, S.2136, 30/3/53-31/3/53 MA.
[101] Twomey to JA Murphy, 30 August 1976, PP.
[102] *Irish Times*, 9 October 1978.

members of both Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael, Official and Provisional Sinn Féin, the labour movement and old comrades from the 1930s was evidence of his enduring popularity.[103]

[103] *Irish Press*, 10 October 1978. Among the mourners were Todd and Neil Andrews of Fianna Fáil, Garrett FitzGerald of Fine Gael, Tomás MacGiolla of Official SF, Ruairí Ó Brádaigh and Dáithí Ó Conaill of Provisional SF and Michael Mullin of the ITGWU.

2

IRA weaponry captured in the Free State from 1923 to 1931.

Firearms

Year	Rifles	Revolvers	Pistols	Shotguns	Machineguns
1923	31	53	12	38	----------
1924	63	155	24	127	----------
1925	244	306	54	1190	----------
1926	273	299	47	1243	----------
1927	112	102	21	42	5
1928	86	72	16	22	1
1929	92	81	5	6	2
1930	47	61	---	8	----------
1931	37	27	6	3	1
Total	985	1156	185	2979	9

Ammunition and Explosives

Year	Rifle	Revolver	Shotgun	Bombs	Mines	Explosives
1923	6916	1587	52	72		114
1924	1814	1198	7108	24		37
1925	1426	11766	5025	206		2897
1926	10487	40766	8055	588		6578
1927	12274	5174	21	21	1	66
1928	6181	2324	276	98	2	74
1929	3896	2020	---------	190	1	41
1930	1724	422	---------	12	--------	133
1931	2533	2232	3	51	1	262
Total	47261	67499	20540	1262	5	10200 (lbs)

"Return of "Dumped" Arms, Ammunition and War Material Discovered and Seized By The Police From Year 1923 to July 1931."

Source: D/T S 5864 A NAI.

3

IRA Training Course at Donamon Camp, August 1932.

Sunday: Reveille 6am. Parade (Physical jerks) 6.30-7am.

Breakfast 7-8am.

Parade 8am - 12.30pm. (5 minutes rest each hour).

Company Drill - without arms.

Dinner 12 - 2pm.

Parade 2 - 5.30 Company Drill.

Tea 5.30 - 6.30pm.

Lecture 6.30 - 7.15pm (Discipline).

Football 7.15 - 9pm.

Lights out 9.30pm.

Monday: Reveille 6am. Parade 6.30am (Close Order Drill).

Breakfast 7 - 8am.

Parade 8am - 12.30pm. (Extended Order Drill).

Dinner 12.30 - 2pm.

Parade 2pm - 5.30 (Extended Order Drill, Musketry instruction).

Tea 5.30 - 6.30pm.

Lecture 6.30 - 7.30pm (Care of arms, theory of rifle fire, direction of fire).

Football 7.30 - 9pm.

Lights out 9.30pm.

Tuesday: Reveille 6am. Parade 6.30 (Close order drill).

Breakfast 7 - 8am.

Parade 8 - 12.30am. (Extended order).

Dinner 12.30 - 2pm.

Parade 2 - 5.30pm (Close and extended order drill).

Tea 5.30 - 6.30pm,

Lecture (Open air). 6.30 - 7.30pm (Judging distance).

Football 7.30 - 9pm.

Lights out 9.30pm.

Wednesday: Reveille 6am Parade 6.30 (Company drill).

Breakfast 7 - 8am.

Parade 8am - 12.30pm. (Extended order 2 hours; musketry instruction 2 hours)

Dinner 12.30 - 2pm.

Parade 2pm - 5.30pm. (Company drill - usual rest).

Tea 5.30 - 6.30pm.

Lecture 6.30 - 7.30pm. (Duties of sentry and sentry groups, telling off and posting of sentries).

Football 7.30 - 9pm.

Lights out 9.30pm.

Thursday: Reveille 6am. Company Drill 6.30 - 7am.

Breakfast 7 - 8am.

Parade 8 - 12.30pm. (Extended order 3 & half hours; 1 hour lecture "Section in attack.").

Dinner 12.30 - 2pm.

Parade 2 - 5.30pm (Extended order 2 and a half hours; 1 hour lecture "Section in defence.").

Tea 5.30 -6.30pm.

Lecture 6.30 - 7.30pm (Use of cover - open air).

Football 7.30 - 9pm.

Lights out 9.30pm.

Friday: Reveille 6am.

Parade 6.30 - 7am.

Breakfast 7 - 8am.

Parade 8am - 12.30pm. (Extended order 1hour; lecture - use of cover 2 hours; musketry 1 and a half hours).

Dinner 12.30 - 2pm.

Parade 2 - 5.30pm (Attack and defence of an agreed post).

Tea 5.30 - 6.30pm.

Lecture 6.30 - 7.30pm. (Thompson or grenade).

Night operations 10 - 12 midnight.

Saturday: Reveille 6am.

Company Drill 6.30 - 7am.

Breakfast 7 - 8am.

Parade 8 - 11.30am. (Company drill and lecture on Lewis Gun).

Class dismissed 12 noon.

Source: MTUCDA, P69/54 (156-158).

4

27 October 1931

A/G to Commander of each Independent Unit.

A Chara,

The Coercion Act - Our Attitude And Tasks

1 The Army Council directs that the following statement be communicated to all Volunteers:-

"The Army Council believe that the party in power in the 26 Counties aims at using the Coercion Act to reap the greatest possible party advantage from it. The prime motive is to enable them to retain and extend their period of office.

"They believe it would serve their aims if a state of war and turmoil could be provoked, so that they may be afforded a pretext for a great onslaught on Republicans, especially on Volunteers. In other words, they wish to promote another civil war now, and so prevent us from developing the full strength of the Army, or from securing an organised mass backing of the people."

"On no account must we fall into the trap which is being laid for us. Any violence or sporadic outbursts now on our part would supply the pretext our enemies desire."

"At the present time, discipline and cohesion are of vital importance. It may be expedient, in Units which have been very active, to curtail training activities, in public, but Companies and Sections must continue to parade frequently, for orders and instructions.

"Recruiting should not be relaxed. The present excited and roused state of feeling is favourable to recruiting, and the fullest advantage must be taken of these circumstances."

"As regards the pronouncement of the Hierarchy this must be regarded as inspired by the desire to rescue the Free State Government from its difficulties, political and economic, and to attempt to check the organising of the people against Imperialism and the chronic conditions arising out of it. Again, as in 1922 the Hierarchy are lending their sanction to brutal and repressive measures against Republicans. They are taking advantage of the religious feelings and scruples of our people, to promote certain interests and political opinions that they hold. The role of the Hierarchy should be exposed, when necessary."

"In the present situation there is a considerable amount of useful work which Volunteers can do, working amongst the people. They can use their influence to steady those who may feel nervous in the face of the threats and penalties of the Coercion Act. They must calm those inclined to be stampeded by the pronouncement of the Hierarchy."

"The enemy wishes to deprive Republicanism of public expression. Where possible local meetings should be held. At those meetings demands should go forth for the resignation of those who voted for the Coercion Act. Local publicity could be very useful at the present time, and Units are asked to take up this activity."

"We must fight the campaign of misrepresentation and calumny directed against us from so many directions. The best method is for Volunteers to get amongst neighbours and friends and let them know exactly what it is we stand for. The campaign will be fought down as the days go by."

"The worsening of the economic crisis must inevitably deprive the present Government party of support, but we must not be content with this, we must work to attract the greatest measure of support to us. Concrete programmes must be put forward dealing with the immediate problems and hardships under

which the mass of the people are suffering in the countryside and town. The enemy is trying to rob us of the initiative which we had recovered and to isolate us once more so that we could be crushed. We must not allow this, and it will not occur if Volunteers in their own localities not only use their influence but supply local leadership."

"The future is with us: the spirit of National revolt and discontent will collect around the most courageous minds, and a free Ireland will become the clear ideal and hope of salvation for the enslaved people of the country. In God's name then let us build and wait confidently for the day that is coming when the Irish people will again take the road of revolt against British rule and Imperialism, and call on the youth of Ireland to get to the front to clear the way.

2. It is very important that every Volunteer should be acquainted with the policy of the Army Council just now. You will therefore arrange without delay to have copies of the above statement circulated, with definite orders that it is to be communicated to every Volunteer.

3. Please acknowledge receipt of this communication.

D

Adjutant General.

Source: D/T S 5864 C NAI.

5

National Pilgrimage to Bodenstown, June 19 1932.

Orders of Procession from Sallins to Bodenstown.

"Fall-In" will be sounded at 2.30 by Fianna Trumpeters.

(1) Advance Guard, O'Rahilly Brass and Reed Band (Dublin)

(2) Contingents Irish Republican Army.

(a) Dublin Brigade (2nd, 3rd, and 4th Battalions). Fintan Lalor Piper's Band.

(b) South Dublin Battalion.

(c) Clare Battalion.

(d) Clann na Gaedheal (sic) USA. Cork Volunteers Pipers' Band.

(e) Cork Brigade.

(f) Tralee Battalion. Killarney Pipers' Band.

(g) Killarney Battalion.

(h) Listowel Battalion.

(I) Castlegregory and Castleisland Battalions.

(j) Dingle Battalion.

(k) Galway Battalion.

(l) Belfast Battalion.

(m) Kilkenny Battalion. Wexford Pipers' Band.

(o) Wexford Battalion.

(p) Leitrim and Longford Battalions.

(q) Roscommon Battalion.

(r) Louth Battalion. St. Mary's Band, Limerick.

(s) Limerick Battalion

(t) Meath Battalion

(u) Mayo Battalion

(v) Tipperary and Clonmel Battalions.

(w) Mid. Tipperary, Nenagh, Ciamalta Battalions.

Kilmeade Fife and Drum Band.

(x) Offaly Battalion.

(y) Monaghan Battalion.

(z) Waterford Battalion. Monasterevan Fife and Drum Band.

(aa) Kildare Battalion. Clonaslee Pipers' Band.

(bb) Leix Battalion. Baltinglass Pipers' band.

(cc) Carlow Battalion.

(dd) Cavan Battalion. Ballynoggin Fife and Drum Band.

(ee) Westmeath Battalion.

(3) St. Laurence O'Toole Pipers' Band.

(4) Cumann na mBan.

(5) Clann na nGaedheal (Republican Girl Scouts)*

(6) Fianna Eireann.

(7) American Friends of the Irish Republic.

Nenagh Castle Brass and Reed Band.

(8) Fianna Fáil.

(10) People's Rights Association.+

(11) Revolutionary Workers' Party. St. Kevins' Fife and Drum Band.

(12) 1916 Club. (13) Labour Bodies. (14) General Public.

* Later Cumann na gCailíní.

+ Women's Prisoners Defence League. Source: *An Phoblacht*, 18 June 1932.

6

Fatalities caused by the IRA, 1926 - 1936.

NAME	DATE	LOCATION	DESCRIPTION
James Fitzsimons	14 November 1926	Cork City	Garda Sergeant
Hugh Ward	14 November 1926	Tipperary	Garda
Kevin O'Higgins	10 August 1927	Dublin	Minister for Justice
Albert Armstrong	20 February 1929	Dublin	Insurance Agent
Patrick Murray*	----------	Clare	IRA member
Tadgh O'Sullivan	11 June 1929	Clare	Garda Detective
Patrick Carroll	30 January 1931	Dublin	IRA member
Seán Curtin	31 March 1931	Tipperary	Garda Superintendent
John Ryan	20 July 1931	Tipperary	IRA member
John Ryan	28 February 1933	Belfast	RUC Constable
Hugh O'Reilly	29 October 1934	Cork	Blueshirt
Mrs. Frances McGrory	11 February 1934	Dundalk	Civilian
Richard More O'Ferrall	9 February 1935	Longford	Civilian
Vice Admiral Henry Boyle Somerville	24 March 1936	Cork	Civilian (retired Royal Navy)
John Egan	26 April 1936	Waterford	IRA member
Dan Turley	4 December 1936	Belfast	IRA member

* Missing presumed dead.
Sources;
Murders and Principal Outrages Committed By Irregulars Since the "Cease Fire" Order, April 1931, in D/T S 5864 A NAI.

Notes on Events, 1931 - 1941, in MacEntee Papers, UCDA, P67/534.

Irish News, 1 March 1933.

Fatalities suffered by the IRA 1926-1936

Name	Location	Date	Cause of death
Timothy Coughlan	Dublin	28 January 1928	Shot by Garda agent
Michael McLaughlin	New York (ex Roscommon)		Shot by robbers
James Vaugh	Leitrim	25 December 1931	Died following release from Garda custody
James Glynn	Ennis, Co. Clare	29 April 1934	Shot by Blueshirt
William Brett	Kilkenny	14 August 1936	Accidental shooting
Seán Glynn	Arbour Hill Prison (ex Limerick)	13 September 1936	Suicide

7

IRA Executive Election

General Army Convention 14-15 November 1925.

Name	Votes	Placing
Cooney	32	1
Kilroy	31	2
Twomey	30	3
Maguire	28	4
O'Donnell	26	5
Daly	25	6
Murphy	23	7
Derrig	22	8
Aiken	20	9
Price	20	10
Murray	20	11
Plunkett	20	12
Sheehy	18	Not elected
Ruttledge	18	-
MacSwiney	17	-
Lemass	15	-
Hyde	13	-
Mangan	12	-
Reilly	11	-
Corvin	6	-

Source: MTUCDA, P69/179 (190).

8

General Order No. 28. Volunteers as Parliamentary Candidates.

Dept. A/G 21 October 1926.

To Commanders of all independent Units.

1. The Army Council has directed that the following statement and order be circulated:

"Oglaigh-na-hEireann was created and is being maintained primarily for the following object:

"To establish and uphold a lawful government in sole and absolute control of the Republic."

The primary, and it is believed by the Army Council the only effective means by which this object can be achieved are:

1. Force of arms

2. Organising, training and equipping the manhood of Ireland as an effective military force.

The Army Council is decidedly of opinion that these means can best be promoted when a volunteer is free to concentrate is free to concentrate on them and is not distracted by holding the responsible position of T.D. and endeavouring to fulfil the duties attaching to it. Further and especially bearing in mind late experiences, there is the danger of military discipline being impaired by actions taken by T.D.'s who are also volunteers.

To ensure that the energies of volunteers are concentrated on volunteer activities and on promoting the means outlined and in the interests of military discipline the Army Council hereby order:

"That a member of Oglaigh-na-hEireann shall not permit himself to be put forward or accept nomination as a candidate in any constituency for which Teachtai are being elected, and that this order be transmitted to all ranks."

2. You are hereby ordered to have the above transmitted to all ranks in your area at once.

_____Adjutant General

Source: MTUCDA, P69/149 (38).

9

IRA Officers Standing in General Election, June 1927 in contravention of General Order No. 28.

Candidate	Unit	Constituency	Party
Denis Allen	North Wexford	Wexford	Fianna Fáil
Frank Aiken	GHQ	Louth	Fianna Fáil*
Neil Blaney	Tirconnaill	Donegal	Fianna Fáil*
Michael Cleary	North Mayo	Mayo North	Fianna Fáil
Daniel Corkery	Cork No. 1	Cork North	Independent*^
Seamus Colbert	Limerick	Limerick	Fianna Fáil*
Michael Corry	Cork No. 1	Cork East	Fianna Fáil*
Tom Derrig	GHQ	Carlow	Fianna Fáil*
Seán Hayes	Tpperary	Tipperary	Fianna Fáil*
Patrick Houlihan	East Clare	Clare	Fianna Fáil*
Mark Killilea	South Galway	Galway	Fianna Fáil*
Michael Kilroy	North Mayo	Mayo South	Fianna Fáil*
T Mac'Ellistrim	Kerry No. 2	Kerry	Fianna Fáil*
Dr. JA Madden	North Mayo	Mayo North	Sinn Féin*
Tom Maguire	Claremorris	Mayo South	Sinn Féin+
Eamonn Moane	North Mayo	Mayo South	Fianna Fáil
Seán O'Farrell	C. on Shannon	Leitrim-Sligo	Sinn Féin
Tom Powell	Claremorris	Galway	Fianna Fáil*
Tim Sheehy	Tipperary	Tipperary	Fianna Fáil
Mick Sheridan	Cavan	Cavan	Fianna Fáil
Patrick Smith	Cavan	Cavan	Fianna Fáil*
Dr. S. Tubridy	Claremorris	Galway	Fianna Fáil*
Dick Walsh	Claremorris	Mayo South	Fianna Fáil

* Elected
\+ Withdrew
^ FF September 1927

Sources: Disobeyal of General Order No. 28, May 1927, in MTUCDA, P69/149 (6).
Michael Gallagher (ed) Irish Elections 1922-44: Results andd Analysis, (Limerick, 1993).

10

Suspension of General Order No. 28.

Ard Oifig, Ath Cliath.

12 January 1932.

A/G

B.B. 48

To:

The Commander of each Independent Unit.

A chara,

The following has been ordered by the Army Council to be communicated to all ranks:-

(1) At the General Army Convention, January 1929, an order was made forbidding Volunteers to work or vote at Elections for membership of the so-called Northern Ireland or Free State Parliaments.

(2) The Army Council is aware that there is throughout the Army a feeling that this order should be reviewed and that those who are at present in control of the 26 counties should be deprived of power.

In the present circumstances it is not feasible to hold a General Convention before the Elections in the 26 Counties take place. This question of the General Election was considered by the Army Executive who advised that the order be suspended.

The Army Council made the following decisions:-

(a) That the order be suspended which forbids Volunteers to work or vote at elections for membership of the so-called Northern Ireland or Free State Parliaments.

(b) That the pending election in the 26 counties Volunteers and supporters are recommended to vote against the candidates of the Cumann na nGaedheal party and other candidates who actively support the policy support the policy of that party.

(c) That while volunteers and supporters are recommended to vote it must be clearly understood that Oglaigh na h-Eireann do not accept or approve of the policy of any of the parties contesting the elections.

(d) Volunteers shall not become candidates nor shall they speak on the platforms of any of the parties.

3. It is strongly recommend that the Election campaign be availed of for the holding of meetings in every unit. At these meetings the policy of Oglaigh na h-Eireann shall be put before the people from our own platforms.

4. Realising the natural urge to end the rule of a party which has been responsible for so much national disaster and economic distress, the Army Council would, however, emphasise to Volunteers that while advocating voting at these elections, our objects cannot be achieved by the methods or policies of the parties seeking election.

This fact should be borne in mind by Volunteers throughout the Elections.

5. Please acknowledge receipt.

Source: copy in D/T S 5864 C NAI.

11

Application for Transfer to Foreign Reserve List

To

The Adjutant General

I am forced to leave Ireland through extreme economic distress in order to obtain a livelihood (or for reasons stated in attached sheet). I wish to be transferred to the Foreign Reserve List for a period of five years: I promise to return at the end of that time if I do not get an extension, and to abide by the conditions set out hereunder:

1. To be bound by the same disciplinary code as active Volunteers, i.e. all my actions to be sober and upright and a true soldier of the Republic.
2. To save up as soon as possible and keep intact the price of a return journey to Ireland.
3. To return to Ireland immediately General Headquarters informs me that my presence in Ireland is necessary and orders me to return.
4. To keep the Adjutant General informed of my address through the prescribed channels.
5. To endeavour to increase my efficiency as a soldier and as a citizen in order to be of greater use in defending and building up the country when I return.
6. To do my utmost to promote the interests of the Republic and to help all organisations working for that object in the country to which I go.
7. Not to organise or join any organisation into which it is proposed to admit only Foreign Reservists of the Irish Republican Army.

(Signed)_____

Unit and Appointment_____

I, the undersigned, hereby declare that the statements in above application are true, and I believe the applicant will, as he has promised, abide faithfully by above conditions.

(Signed) _____

Unit and Appointment_____

Date_____

Source: MTUCDA P69/167 (49).

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