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TACTICS, POLITICS, AND PROPAGANDA

IN THE IRISH WAR OF INDEPENDENCE, 1917-1921

by

MIKE RAST

Under the Direction of Dr. Ian C. Fletcher

ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the influences on and evolution of the Irish Republican Army‘s guerrilla war strategy between 1917 and 1921. Utilizing newspapers, government documents, and memoirs of participants, this study highlights the role of propaganda and political concerns in waging an insurgency. It argues that while tactical innovation took place in the field, IRA General Headquarters imposed policy and directed the conflict with a concern for the political results of military action. While implementing strategies necessary to effective conflict of the war, this Headquarters staff was unable to reconcile a disjointed and overburdened command structure, leading its disintegration after the conflict.

INDEX WORDS: Ireland, Irish War of Independence, Anglo-Irish War, Guerrilla warfare, Military history, Rebellion, Insurgency, Terrorism, Propaganda

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MIKE RAST

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

Master of Arts

in the College of Arts and Sciences

Georgia State University

2011

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2011

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IN THE IRISH WAR OF INDEPENDENCE, 1917-1921

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May 2011

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CHAPTER ONE:

INTRODUCTION

In 1832, Prussian General Carl von Clausewitz published *On War*, which would become one of the most famous and influential works of European military theory. One major claim of this volume is that war is politics by other means, stating, "The political view is the object, War is the means."[1] This unity of military strategy and political policy forms the cornerstone of modern state relations. Lacking a unified state, such a marriage of military and political concerns was slow to develop in Ireland. For centuries violent outbursts against colonial interference from neighboring Britain had little political guidance except in emulation of English institutions.[2]

The doctrine of republicanism, expounded by the United Irishmen in the 1790s, gave Irish nationalists a distinct political goal, embodying complete independence from Great Britain and a workable alternative government. Inspired by the American and French examples, the Irish republican ethos held that complete autonomy could only be achieved through conflict. The military doctrine that the United Irishmen developed centered on a mass popular uprising with international support, particularly from the French. Goaded into premature rebellion by an efficient British secret service, the United Irishmen's uprising of 1798 turned into a series of military fiascos repeating themselves in different areas of the island. The British finally extinguished the uprising by defeating a small, belated French landing in August.[3]

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[1] Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, ed. Anatol Rapoport (Middlesex, U.K.: Penguin Books, 1981), 119.
[2] R.F. Foster, *Modern Ireland: 1600-1972* (London: Penguin, 1988), 89.
[3] Foster, *Modern Ireland*, 277-280.

The 1798 rebellion prompted the Act of Union in 1800. Passed by both the British and Irish parliaments, this act closed the Irish legislature, compelling its elected representatives to sit in the Westminster parliament. Following the United Irishmen's example, republicans attempted similar rebellions in 1803, 1848, and 1867. The result was always the same. In each case, the British government was able to infiltrate the republican movement, provoke its followers into open conflict, and crush them with superior military force. In 1857, a group of radical nationalists led by James Stephens formed the secret Irish Republican Brotherhood (IRB) to direct revolutionary efforts. Widely known as the "Fenians," this group's ultimate goal was to foment open rebellion, but its members engaged in many different schemes to undermine or embarrass the United Kingdom. They received financial support from Irish people abroad, particularly the Clan na Gael in the United States. In the 1880s, the Fenians sent individuals armed with dynamite to Britain to terrorize the government and populace into recognizing Irish nationalists' demands. Even these isolated incidents were meant to provoke a mass uprising in which the British government of Ireland could be overthrown.[4]

Faced with the apparent futility of violence, Irish political leaders steered the electorate toward extracting the maximum concessions by working within the United Kingdom's constitution.[5] While using much of the same rhetoric and symbolism of republicanism, the constitutional movement eschewed violence and committed itself to improving Irish people's status within the United Kingdom. Daniel O'Connell led a popular movement for "Catholic Emancipation," meaning the final removal of the so-called penal laws that barred non-Anglicans from sitting in Parliament or attaining

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[4] Foster, *Modern Ireland*, 316, 393-395.
[5] Oonagh Walsh, *Ireland's Independence, 1880-1923* (London: Routledge, 2002), 9-10.

government and judiciary positions. O'Connell was leading a movement to repeal the Act of Union when he died in 1847.[6]

In the 1860s Isaac Butt guided the constitutional movement to press for Home Rule, a settlement that would reestablish an Irish parliament in Dublin subordinate to the United Kingdom legislature, with the King as head-of-state. The most auspicious time for Home Rule came while Charles Parnell led the Irish Parliamentary Party (IPP) in the 1880s, and allied their interests with the Liberals. The nationalists were opposed by the Irish Unionist Party, those representatives who believed that Ireland should remain a part of the United Kingdom, and saw Home Rule as the first step towards complete separation.[7] Their power-base was in Ireland's northernmost province of Ulster, but there were significant Unionist populations scattered throughout the country. Liberal Prime Minister William Gladstone introduced the first Home Rule Bill in 1886, but it was defeated in the House of Commons by the Unionists and their Conservative allies. A second effort in 1893 passed the Commons but was defeated in the House of Lords.[8]

The Liberal-IPP alliance gained power again in 1910, and its first legislative priority was to reduce the power of the Lords. This paved the way for the Third Home Rule Bill, which Prime Minister Herbert Asquith introduced in 1912. The Liberal-IPP majority ensured the act passed the Commons, and under the new arrangement, the Lords could not veto legislation but only delay it for two years.[9] Thus, the IPP and its leader John Redmond delivered a constitutional settlement that had eluded O'Connell, Butt, and

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[6] R.F. Foster, "Ascendancy and Union," in *The Oxford History of Ireland*, ed. R.F. Foster (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), 157-159; Foster, *Modern Ireland*, 291.
[7] Edward Carson, "Introduction," in *Against Home Rule: The Case for the Union*, ed. S. Rosenbaum (London: Frederick Warne, 1912), 18.
[8] Walsh, *Ireland's Independence*, 9-10, 16.
[9] Walsh, *Ireland's Independence*, 28.

Parnell, and by 1914 Ireland was to reestablish its legislative independence for the first time in more than a century.

The situation changed dramatically in that two-year span. Upon the Home Rule Bill's passage, Unionists led by Edward Carson founded the Ulster Volunteer Force (UVF), a paramilitary body pledged to resist its implementation by force. The movement enrolled nearly 85,000 Irishmen, and garnered support from sections of the British populace and army.[10] Nationalists formed the Irish Volunteers in 1913, which leaders insisted was not directly opposed to its Ulster counterpart, but aimed at pressuring the government into implementing Home Rule as planned.[11] By 1914, the year Home Rule was to come into force; the United Kingdom faced possible civil war over the Irish question, and was suddenly engaged in the most difficult struggle against a continental foe since the Napoleonic Wars. Redmond and the IPP pledged their support to the war effort, on a promise that Home Rule would be implemented following the war.

Many Irishmen joined the British army to fight the Central Powers, but a small group of republicans were determined to take advantage of the foreign war to mount an insurrection. The IRB, which had been influential in the Irish Volunteers from their foundation, intensified their infiltration and began planning a rebellion.[12] The result was the Easter Rising—a conflagration mostly confined to Dublin that cost the lives of more than 100 British soldiers, approximately sixty rebels, and caused the arrests of more than 3,500 suspected Irish republicans. The British military court-martialed and executed

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[10] For Ulster Volunteer numbers, see *Intelligence Notes, 1913-1916: Preserved in the State Paper Office*, ed. Breandán Mac Giolla Chiolle (Dublin: Oifig an tSoláthair, 1966), 100. For unionist support within the British army, see Hubert Gough, *Soldiering On: Being the Memoirs of General Sir Hubert Gough* (New York: Robert Speller and Sons, 1957), 100-110; Henry Wilson, *Field Marshal Sir Henry Wilson: His Life and Diaries*, ed. C.E. Callwell, 2 vols. (New York: Charles Scribners Sons, 1927), 1:140-141.
[11] Eoin MacNeill, "The North Began," in *The Irish Volunteers, 1913-1915: Recollections and Documents*, ed. F.X. Martin (Dublin: James Duffy, 1963), 57-61.
[12] Michael Foy and Brian Barton, *The Easter Rising* (Thrupp, UK: Sutton Publishing, 2000), 8-9.

sixteen rebel leaders. Frustration with the British war effort and the seemingly heavy-handed reaction to the Rising culminated in a popular turn against British government in Ireland. Within weeks of the rebellion's suppression, its leaders were turned into martyred heroes in the tradition the United Irishmen and the Fenians.[13]

In Yeats's words, Ireland after the Rising was "changed, changed utterly."[14] The political strategies that had guided moderate Irish nationalism no longer seemed appealing compared to the republican ideal. The failed rebellion also changed republican military strategy, convincing many that if they were to defeat the British army, they would need a campaign based not on popular insurrection but tactical innovation. This thesis will examine the combined political and military strategies that republicans pursued after 1916, during what has come to be called the Irish War of Independence.

Early histories of this period were often written to serve political ends. While writers close to the events and their protagonists were uniquely qualified to write their narratives, and had access to records other chroniclers did not, they often could not separate personal feeling or political views from their work. Piaras Béaslaí, a republican General Headquarters Staff member, wrote one of the earliest histories of the period. His *Michael Collins and the Making of a New Ireland* (1926) contains a wealth of inside information and reproductions of documents, but serves as both a sympathetic biography and an explanation of the mindset of supporters of the Anglo-Irish Treaty, which ended the conflict. Dorothy Macardle's *The Irish Republic* (1937) is an impressive record of the 1916-1923 period, but also an emphatic vindication of the anti-Treaty stance,

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[13] Foy and Barton, *The Easter Rising*, 210-211, 242.
[14] William Butler Yeats, "Easter 1916," in *"Easter 1916" and Other Poems* (Mineola, NY: Dover Publications, 1997), 53.

particularly Eamon de Valera's actions. De Valera even supplied a preface to the work, calling it "the complete and authoritative record" of the time.[15]

Academic historians have generally approached the period with a view to illuminating other perspectives than those of republican leaders. Charles Townshend was among the first historians not connected with republicanism to write an authoritative work on the period. His *British Campaign in Ireland, 1919-1921* (1975) provides a thorough discussion of high-level British military and governmental policy, but little information from the republican side and virtually none from the everyday soldier of either force.[16] David Fitzpatrick's *Politics and Irish Life, 1913-1921* (1977) argues that the political upheavals of the period were a bottom-up phenomenon, and that radical ideas and general dissatisfaction with the status quo were more widespread than scholars had hitherto admitted.[17] More recent scholarship attempts to highlight individual experiences of the war. Joost Augusteijn's *From Public Defiance to Guerrilla Warfare* (1996) combines republicans' personal experiences with statistics to trace increasing trends of radicalization and violence.[18] Other scholars have attempted to find non-political causes for violence during the conflict, including Peter Hart in *The I.R.A. and Its Enemies* (1998).[19] Hart's work has drawn criticism for its assertions that violence during

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[15] Eamon de Valera, "Preface," in Dorothy Macardle, *The Irish Republic* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1965), 20.
[16] Charles Townshend, *The British Campaign in Ireland, 1919-1921: The Development of Political and Military Policies* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975), 204-206.
[17] David Fitzpatrick, *Politics and Irish Life, 1913-1921: Provincial Experience of War and Revolution* (Dublin: Gill and MacMillan, 1977), 284-285.
[18] Joost Augusteijn, *From Public Defiance to Guerrilla Warfare: The Experience of Ordinary Volunteers in the Irish War of Independence 1916-1921* (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 1996), 335, 342.
[19] Peter Hart, *The I.R.A. and Its Enemies: Violence and Community in Cork, 1916-1923* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998), 17-18.

the period was random, vengeful, or religiously motivated.[20] In *Armed Struggle* (2003), Richard English also suggests religion as a motivating factor, and that the war became a self-perpetuating cycle of violence.[21] Michael Hopkinson's *Irish War of Independence* (2002) represents a recent attempt at a cohesive history of the conflict, addressing the academic arguments raised by previous scholars, incorporating various political perspectives, and tracing the war's progression in multiple localities.[22]

While noting the importance of popular opinion during the conflict, most histories do not analyze the methods and rhetoric combatants used to influence the press and public.[23] Ian Kenneally's *The Paper Wall: Newspapers and Propaganda in Ireland* (2008) gives a broad overview of official publications, both from the republican and government sides. However, he does not analyze the language they employed, instead focusing on mainstream press treatments of the conflict from such publications as the *Freeman's Journal*, the *Irish Independent*, the *Irish Times*, and *The Times* of London.[24]

Throughout the conflict, republicans attempted to convey political messages and validate their military campaign through the press. As military historian Michael Howard observes, "War in the twentieth century was not, as it had been in the past, a conflict between armed forces alone, or even between treasuries. It was one between the will-

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[20] For collections of historians' critiques on Hart's work, see Jack Lane and Brendan Clifford, eds., *Kilmichael: The False Surrender* (Millstreet, Ireland: Aubane Historical Society, 1999); Brian P. Murphy and Niall Meehan, *Troubled History: A 10th Anniversary Critique of Peter Hart's The I.R.A. and Its Enemies* (Millstreet, Ireland: Aubane Historical Society, 2008).

[21] Richard English, *Armed Struggle: The History of the IRA* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 17-18.

[22] Michael Hopkinson, *The Irish War of Independence* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2002), xx-xxi.

[23] For example, in an otherwise thorough treatment of the conflict, Michael Hopkinson calls the *Irish Bulletin* "predictable propaganda" and does not mention the *Weekly Summary* at all. Hopkinson, *Irish War of Independence*, 81.

[24] Ian Kenneally, *The Paper Wall: Newspapers and Propaganda in Ireland 1919-1921* (Doughcloyne, Ireland: Collins Press, 2008).

power and the morale of the belligerent populations."[25] Therefore, newspapers are important primary sources. The Irish Republican Army's official journal *An t'Óglác* provides valuable insights into the influences, evolution, and goals of the organization's military strategy. GHQ staff provided its content, printed it secretly in Dublin, and sent copies to every IRA unit in Ireland, despite the fact that possession of *An t'Óglác* meant a sentence of six months hard labor as of 1919.[26] Throughout the conflict this publication served mainly as an instructional journal and to broadcast republican GHQ orders, but late in the war plans were underway to emphasize its propaganda value.[27]

The republican parliament's *Irish Bulletin* and Dublin Castle's *Weekly Summary* represent propaganda efforts by the opposing sides to influence the mainstream press and public opinion. The *Irish Bulletin* was specifically aimed at press and policy-makers; intended to influence the international press in particular. Quoting mainstream publications from Ireland and Britain, its editors put its own spin on news of the conflict, emphasizing government forces' misdeeds and only gradually acknowledging the relentless IRA offensive. The *Weekly Summary* was similar to *An t'Óglác* in that it was intended to boost morale and give instruction to combatants, but its format imitated the *Irish Bulletin* and, like that publication, found its way into the hands of the press, republicans, and legislators.

Utilizing propaganda sources such as *An t'Óglác*, the *Irish Bulletin*, and the *Weekly Summary* poses problems for historians. Propaganda is defined in this study as information issued by a political body designed to persuade people to support its ideas. This does not make such information incorrect in terms of bare facts such as names,

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[25] Michael Howard, *War in European History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 128.
[26] *Irish Bulletin* (Dublin), July 19, 1919.
[27] Piaras Béaslaí, "Departmental Reports. – Publicity," Dáil Éireann – Volume 1 – 10 May, 1921.

dates, or activities, but the editorial comment that accompanies such details heightens the importance of cross-checking multiple sources and comparing their descriptions of events. These comments also provide insight into how the writers wished to portray their adversaries; a key component to understanding how combatants behaved in action, and how such behavior was interpreted by the non-combatant public. Both sides attacked the veracity of the other, and even these denunciations hold insights into the participants' attitudes and how they wished the conflict to be perceived. For example, government officials' descriptions of the *Irish Bulletin* as "the murder gang's publication" reflect consistent attempts to undermine not only that organ but the entire republican campaign by taking it out of the political context and describing it as mere criminality.[28]

Where possible, this thesis will contrast information contained in these sources with that from mainstream news sources, particularly *The Times* of London and the *New York Times*. While these are also prone to carrying propagandistic information from either side, they provide a third-party perspective that changes in tone as events unfold, whereas the official publications maintain static support for their faction.

Other primary sources used to supplement news accounts are participants' memoirs. These publications have long influenced how the War of Independence is studied and understood. Subsequent writers allege that the Soloheadbeg ambush on January 21, 1919 became interpreted as the starting point of the war because Dan Breen, one of the participants, wrote one of the earliest memoirs of the conflict (*My Fight for*

[28] For this description, see Hamar Greenwood, "Murders and Reprisals," House of Commons Debates (HC Deb) 24 November 1920 vol 135 cc487-601.

Irish Freedom, 1924), and claimed this was the first action.[29] Some memoir writers approach the subject openly, claiming merely to put their remembrances on paper, while others consciously attempt to influence the dialogue on the period, asserting that their book will "set the record straight." Issues of memory recur frequently in reading such publications. Some writers admit that they cannot remember certain dates or details, while others claim a full recollection, and still more consult outside sources to validate their memories. Many memoirs are politically motivated or propagandistic. Republican works are heavily influenced by politics and local pride. They sometimes present a misleading picture of total IRA victory, deflect any criticism of that body, and condemn pro-government forces in their entirety.[30] Government officials' writings often display bitterness over their "surrender" at the end of the war, and occasionally assert inherent Irish perfidy, cowardice, and savagery to interpret their adversaries' actions.[31] Some memoirs were written anonymously or leave out participants' names, as a record of their actions might damage their reputations or government pensions. As late as the 1940s, the Kerryman press published contributions to the *Fighting Story* series, collections of republican memories focusing on specific counties, under pseudonyms. None of these difficulties invalidate these works as sources. Apart from establishing a generally reliable narrative from various points of view, the words of participants are invaluable

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[29] For Breen's narrative, see Dan Breen, *My Fight for Irish Freedom* (Dublin: Anvil Books, 1989), 33, 39. For criticism of his assertion that this was the first action, see Patrick J. Twohig, *Green Tears for Hecuba: Ireland's Fight for Freedom* (Ballincollig, Ireland: Tower Books, 1994), 32.

[30] For examples of local pride, uncritical views of IRA action (or inaction), and condemnations of police and military forces in a republican narrative, see James J. Comerford, *My Kilkenny I.R.A. Days, 1916-22* (Kilkenny, Ireland: Dinan Publishing, 1980), 285, 312, 483, 523, 528.

[31] The most blatant example comes from an Auxiliary Cadet and intelligence officer: Hervey de Montmorency, *Sword and Stirrup: Memories of an Adventurous Life* (London: G. Bell and Sons, 1936), 240-241, 337-338, 348, 356, 363.

both to establish how and why events unfolded, and to investigate how they wished themselves, their actions, and their opponents to be remembered.

This thesis will use these sources to illuminate the inspirations and influences of republican military strategy. Previous works have downplayed or ignored GHQ's role in guiding the conflict, investigating neither the influences at work in IRA guerrilla strategy, nor how Dublin-based leaders interacted with units in the field. These unresolved issues form the basis of investigation for this study. Joost Augusteijn presents GHQ's failures to provide arms for many IRA units. Peter Hart and Richard English portray country units as gangs of independent gunmen with little respect for authority or political sensibility.[32] Charles Townshend's "The Irish Republican Army and the Development of Guerrilla Warfare" (1979) mentions some glimmers of guerrilla ideas prior to 1919, but does not elaborate on how these thoughts influenced IRA strategy, and does not investigate the origins of violence in 1917 and 1918.[33]

While indicting previous methods, neither the political party Sinn Féin nor the Irish Republican Army (IRA) emerged from the Easter Rising with its ideas fully formed. The IRA drew upon many influences—conventional and unconventional—in evolving its strategy for fighting what it viewed as an occupying British garrison. This thesis argues that, while many tactical ideas and innovations were born in the field, republican General Headquarters (GHQ) set a policy of guerrilla war and began to guide the organization by this idea as early as 1918. The slow development of this policy, including restraining

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[32] Augusteijn, *From Public Defiance to Guerrilla Warfare*, 145-147; Hart, *The I.R.A. and Its Enemies*, 111; English, *Armed Struggle*, 24.
[33] Charles Townshend, "The Irish Republican Army and the Development of Guerrilla Warfare, 1916-1921," *The English Historical Review* 94:371 (1979): 318-345.

some of the more belligerent spirits among the rank-and-file, was one of the keys to prolonging the struggle and forcing the British to negotiate a truce.

The first chapter examines the resurrection of Sinn Féin and the Irish Volunteers, and their development between 1917 and 1918. I argue that, while most authors focus only on the political developments in these years, the IRA also reorganized and began to engage in aggressive actions that set the pattern for the guerrilla war. GHQ provided a command structure and encouraged these efforts in the pages of *An t'Óglác*.

The second chapter analyzes the establishment of a clandestine republican government, its relationship to the Republican Army, and the slow spread of violence throughout the country in 1919. The year began with sporadic actions that had characterized the previous two years. The establishment of Dáil Éireann, the republican parliament, enabled IRA propagandists to present the force's actions as defending an elected government. The Dáil established the *Irish Bulletin* to convey what it portrayed as British aggression to the international press. GHQ increasingly asserted its control over the militant movement, establishing a unit under its direct control in Dublin and sanctioning larger and more widespread attacks. At the same time, IRA leaders forbade operations that would result in drastic casualties, forcing country units to conform to a pace set from Dublin. By the end of 1919, the IRA was set to begin a widespread assault on the rural police force, the Royal Irish Constabulary (RIC).

The third chapter scrutinizes increasing republican aggression during the first nine months of 1920. It deals with a widespread series of assaults on RIC barracks, a sabotage campaign directed by GHQ, and the origin of "flying columns" to conduct the guerrilla conflict. The government attempted to counter by bolstering the RIC, but new recruits

proved difficult to control. The destruction they wrought in reprisal for IRA attacks fed republican propaganda, which Dublin Castle attempted to counter by establishing the *Weekly Summary*.

The final chapter analyzes the last three months of 1920 to July 1921. October 1920 marked the beginning of the fiercest and bloodiest period of the war. Lord Mayor Terence MacSwiney of Cork died on hunger strike, and Kevin Barry was the first IRA member executed during the struggle. GHQ ordered a series of attacks across the country in the wake of his execution. The Dublin leaders also sanctioned the killing of a number of military intelligence officers living around the city in November, an event known as "Bloody Sunday." This was followed a week later by the Kilmichael ambush, in which an entire patrol of Auxiliary RIC Cadets was wiped out. GHQ continued to encourage more widespread attacks in 1921, leading to a number of IRA deaths as inexperienced members of the force threw themselves into an increasingly desperate guerrilla war. Despite British army adaptation to rebel tactics, IRA attacks continued to spread and government casualties reached their highest levels in May. The Truce of July 1921 came as a shock to both sides, abruptly ending a war that they both thought they were on the verge of winning.

The thesis concludes by analyzing the effects of GHQ's initiatives throughout the conflict. While they were successful in molding the IRA into an effective guerrilla force and compelling the United Kingdom government to negotiate a treaty, the body that resulted was unwieldy and its command structure convoluted. A profusion of officers resulted in personality conflicts, and an upsurge in peacetime recruiting led to

indiscipline in the ranks. These factors contributed to the IRA split following the signing of the Anglo-Irish Treaty, and the civil war that followed.

CHAPTER TWO:

FROM THE IRISH VOLUNTEERS TO THE IRA, 1917-1918

By the end of 1916, radical nationalist organizations including the Irish Volunteers and Sinn Féin were hard-hit by government suppression and arrests. The years 1917 and 1918 were largely characterized by rebuilding these organizations, but also witnessed a resurgence of political violence in Ireland. This chapter will argue that, while most historians mark the beginning of the War of Independence in 1919, the two preceding years witnessed violent incidents that set patterns for the conflict. Despite their disparate, unconnected nature, each of these events was intended to increase the military capacity of the burgeoning Irish Republican Army or advance republican political goals, and this period should be understood as the true beginning of the war.

Politics and the Gun

Volunteer reorganization began almost immediately after the Easter Rising's failure. Seán Ó Muirthile and Diarmuid O'Hegarty began touring the country during the summer of 1916, establishing contact between the few leaders who had not been arrested. These two were not only members of the Volunteers, but the secret, oath-bound Irish Republican Brotherhood. The IRB had already infiltrated most nationalist organizations founded in the twentieth century and planned the 1916 Rising.[1] Its members regarded their organization as the rightful government of the Irish Republic, and even sent Patrick

[1] Diarmuid Lynch, *The I.R.B. and the 1916 Insurrection*, ed. Florence O'Donoghue (Cork, Ireland: Mercier Press, 1952), 21-32.

McCartan to New York as "Envoy of the Provisional Government of Ireland."[2] Ó Muirthile's and O'Hegarty's contacts within this secret society helped them to re-forge the shattered links of the Volunteer organization. Under cover of the Gaelic League Ard Fheis (national conference) on August 7, the two gathered enough Volunteer delegates in Dublin to form a provisional committee.[3]

Reorganization continued in earnest with Cathal Brugha's release from the Dublin Castle hospital in November 1916. Born Charles Burgess, his name change signified his commitment to the Gaelic revival. During the Easter Rising, he had served as Vice-Commandant of the Fourth Battalion, Dublin Brigade. Wounded many times, the authorities assumed Brugha would die, and he was therefore not tried or executed as were 16 other republican officers.[4] Brugha had been an active member of the IRB, but after his release, he met with Ó Murthuille and O'Hegarty and informed them of his opinion that the society had outlived its usefulness.[5] Despite their differences in this regard, the three convened another convention that month, and Brugha was elected the head of the provisional committee governing the Irish Volunteers.[6] The committee was dominated, as the early Executive of the Volunteers had been, by members of the IRB.[7]

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[2] For McCartan's IRB mission to the U.S., see *The Irish Race Convention: Souvenir Program* (Philadelphia: 1919); Patrick McCartan, "Extracts from the Papers of the Late Dr. Patrick McCartan: Part Two," ed. F.X. Martin, *Clogher Record* 5:2 (1964): 209-210. For the belief that the IRB constituted the government of the Irish Republic, see Seán MacEoin, "Longford Brigade, Ballinalee," *Capuchin Annual* (Dublin: 1970), 554.
[3] Richard Mulcahy, "The Irish Volunteer Convention 27 October, 1917," *Capuchin Annual* (Dublin: 1967), 402. For the dates of the Ard Fheis, see *The Times*, August 10, 1916.
[4] John Joseph O'Kelly (pseud. Sceilg), *A Trinity of Martyrs: Terence MacSwiney, Cathal Brugha, Austin Stack* (Dublin: Irish Book Bureau, 1947), 39.
[5] Lynch, *The I.R.B. and the 1916 Insurrection*, 22, 32.
[6] Mulcahy, "The Irish Volunteer Convention 27 October, 1917," 402.
[7] Tomás Ó Maoileóin, *Survivors: The Story of Ireland's Struggle as Told Through Some of Her Outstanding Living People*, ed. Uinseann Mac Eoin (Dublin: Argenta Publications, 1980), 83.

Volunteer reorganization gained speed after most of the Rising prisoners were released from Frongoch internment camp in Wales on December 23, 1916.[8] The only Irish political prisoners still in jail were the so-called "convict prisoners," who had been sentenced by courts martial, in Lewes Gaol. The rebellion participants never forsook the name Irish Volunteers, but they were increasingly known by a new title: the Irish Republican Army. In fact, at the outset of the Rising on April 24, 1916, leaders Patrick Pearse and James Connolly had gathered the insurgents and informed them that they were now members of this new force.[9] Maeve Cavanagh's book of verse, *A Voice of Insurgency*, published just months after the revolt, refers to the executed Pearse as "Commandant-General, I.R.A." The title page includes a picture of two crossed flags, one a traditional nationalist banner bearing a gold harp, the other a republican tricolor with "I.R.A." in its white center.[10] W.J. Brennan-Whitmore referred to himself as a "commissioned officer of the Irish Republican Army" in his 1917 chronicle of imprisonment: *With the Irish in Frongoch*.[11]

The prisoners' return to Ireland marked a resurgence of political violence. A celebration to welcome the released inmates to Cork turned into a riot, as their supporters attacked British soldiers in the streets.[12] One of the earliest shooting incidents presaged what would become standard IRA operating procedure: a unit created a reason for the RIC to leave their barracks and ambushed them as they went to investigate. On the night of February 17, 1917, local RIC received a report that shots had been fired into a farmer's

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[8] Charles Dalton, *With the Dublin Brigade (1917-1921)* (London: Peter Davies, 1929), 44-46; Ernie O'Malley, *On Another Man's Wound, A Personal History of Ireland's War for Independence* (Boulder, CO: Roberts Rhinehart, 1999), 48-49.
[9] Countess Markievicz (Constance Gore-Booth), *Prison Letters of Countess Markievicz*, ed. Esther Roper (New York: Kraus, 1934), 37.
[10] Maeve Cavanagh, *A Voice of Insurgency* (Dublin: Printed for the Author, 1916), title page, 16.
[11] W.J. Brennan-Whitmore, *With the Irish in Frongoch* (Dublin: Talbot Press, 1917), 3.
[12] *The Times* (London), Jan. 1, 1917.

house outside Portumna, Co. Galway. A patrol left the barracks, and five people opened fire on them as they neared the house, wounding one constable.[13] The shooting at the farmer's house might have been connected to land issues, an endemic problem from the nineteenth century, but the ambush of the RIC as they arrived was an innovation, and a harbinger of the new conflict.

The IRB reorganized at the same time, electing a new Supreme Council in February 1917. The officers were Seán McGarry, Michael Collins, and Diarmuid Lynch. Other important figures included Con Collins and Tomás Ashe—who was still in prison. All had taken part in the Easter Rising and spent time in British jails.[14] Participation in the rebellion served as a form of political capital in republican circles. It is not surprising that this phenomenon should exist within the closed circles of radical nationalism, but this political capital was to be tested publicly.

Shortly after the releases, a Parliamentary seat opened in the Roscommon North constituency. The Irish Parliamentary Party (IPP)—the moderate nationalists who supported Home Rule—ran Thomas Devine. A consortium of radical nationalists decided to run George Noble Plunkett. The sixty-five-year-old was a Papal count, and had been inducted into the IRB in April 1916.[15] All three of his sons had participated in the Easter Rising, and Joseph Plunkett, who had played a key role in planning and the uprising, was executed. There was no party label attached to Plunkett's name, but he was associated with the vague radical nationalism of "Sinn Féin."[16]

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[13] *The Times* (London), Feb. 20, 1917.
[14] Lynch, *The I.R.B. and the 1916 Insurrection*, 32-33, 107.
[15] Geraldine Plunkett Dillon, "The North Roscommon Election," *Capuchin Annual* (Dublin: 1967), 339.
[16] Florence O'Donoghue, "Re-Organisation of the Irish Volunteers 1916-1917," *Capuchin Annual* (Dublin: 1967), 382.

The Sinn Féin organization founded by Arthur Griffith in 1905 advocated abstention from the Westminster Parliament as a means of achieving political independence.[17] During World War I, "Sinn Féin" became a label attached to any radical nationalist movement. In this vein, the press called Easter 1916 the "Sinn Féin Rebellion."[18] In February 1917, Sinn Féin meant a rejection of using constitutional methods to achieve Irish freedom. On this and no more precise platform, George Noble Plunkett won the Roscommon North seat in a landslide, by more than 1,300 votes over the IPP candidate.[19] In his victory speech, the new MP announced that he would not take his seat in Westminster. *The Times* quipped, "A Sinn Fein victory apparently means disfranchisement."[20]

This success encouraged the radical nationalists to take an even bolder step. A seat opened in South Longford in May. This time, the Sinn Féin nomination was definitely made by a group of IRB members. A series of covert negotiations between Michael Collins in Dublin and Tomás Ashe in Lewes Gaol resulted in a nomination.[21] Instead of running an equivalent to the venerable Papal count only laterally involved with the Easter Rising, the Sinn Féiners nominated Joseph McGuinness—a man still languishing in a British prison for participating in the failed rebellion. *The Times* announced him as the "Rebel Candidate."[22] The election slogan became "put him in to

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[17] Máire de Bhuitléir, "When the Sinn Fein Policy was Launched. Musings and Memories over the Relic of an Historic Meeting," in *The Voice of Ireland: A Survey of the Race and Nation from All Angles, By the Foremost Leaders at Home and Abroad*, ed. William G. Fitzgerald (Dublin: Virtue, 1924), 106-108.
[18] *Sinn Fein Rebellion Handbook, Irish Times* (Dublin: 1917).
[19] Plunkett Dillon, "The North Roscommon Election," 340; *The Times* (London), Feb. 6, 1917. The results were: Plunkett – 3,022; Devine (IPP) – 1,708; Tully (Ind. Nationalist) – 687.
[20] *The Times* (London), Feb. 8, 1917; Frank Gallagher (pseud. David Hogan), *The Four Glorious Years* (Dublin: Irish Press, 1954), 9.
[21] Mulcahy, "The Irish Volunteer Convention 27 October, 1917," 403.
[22] *The Times* (London), April 10, 1917.

get him out." That was just enough; McGuinness won the seat by only thirty-seven votes.[23]

Barely a month later, the first fatality among government forces since the Rising occurred in Dublin. On June 10, Cathal Brugha and George Noble Plunkett led a group of several thousand Sinn Féin supporters into Beresford Place, where Brugha began to address them. Dublin Metropolitan Police Inspector John Mills and a detail of officers approached and declared the meeting illegal. As Brugha and Plunkett continued speaking, the inspector arrested them. Mills was escorting the prisoners to Store Street Police Station when a man leapt from the crowd and fractured his head with a single hurley swing.[24] This act might be considered a spontaneous outburst, except that Joe Good of the Dublin Brigade wrote that the attacker was a Volunteer, and the city companies had already decided to defend their leaders against the police.[25] This killing shows that as early as mid-1917, the IRA was organized and aggressive, though its weapons were crude and purpose ill-defined. A month later, an unidentified woman traveling in a Sinn Féin candidate's car near Tullamore called for "three cheers for the hurley that killed Inspector Mills." County Inspector H.W. Crane felt that this accurately indicated "the temper of the Sinn Feiners."[26]

The day after Inspector Mills' killing, the London press announced the death of Irish Parliamentary Party MP Major William Redmond in France. Already reeling from two by-election defeats, the loss was a terrible blow to moderate nationalism. William

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[23] *The Times* (London), May 11, 1917; Piaras Béaslaí, *Michael Collins and the Making of a New Ireland* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1926), 1:153-154.
[24] *The Times* (London), June 13, 1917.
[25] Joe Good, *Enchanted by Dreams, The Journal of a Revolutionary*, ed. Maurice Good (Dingle, Ireland: Brandon Book Publishers Ltd., 1996), 111-112.
[26] County Inspector H.W. Crane, "Co. of King's, Tullamore, 31 July 1917," CO 904/198/105 in *Sinn Féin and Other Republican Suspects 1899-1921: Dublin Castle Special Branch Files CO 904 (193-216), The United Kingdom, Colonial Office Record Series Vol. 1* (Dublin: Eneclann, 2006).

was the brother of party leader John Redmond, and his service in the British Army symbolized Irish moderate support for the war effort. British Prime Minister David Lloyd George wrote that William Redmond died promoting "a real partnership between Ireland and Britain through the unifying influence of a common struggle for liberty."[27] The death also meant another election contest.

Sinn Féin nominated another prisoner for the vacant East Clare seat. Their candidate was Eamon de Valera, who commanded Dublin's Third Battalion during the Rising. At Boland's Mills in southeast Dublin, troops under his command wreaked havoc among British reinforcements entering the city, and his reputation immediately soared on this military prowess.[28] He was often touted as the last surviving commandant of the Rising, though Tomás Ashe held the same rank. In Lewes Gaol, de Valera insisted the prisoners salute Eoin MacNeill, the Volunteers' former chief of staff who had attempted to prevent the Rising, thereby helping to heal a potential fracture within radical nationalism.[29] Seeking to assuage all shades of Irish opinion, the British government pressed forward with arrangements for a convention of nationalists and Unionists. The Irish Convention, designed by Lloyd George to represent all shades of opinion on the island, was to provide the government with a Home Rule plan that would be acceptable to all parties.[30] In this spirit of reconciliation, British Cabinet Minister Andrew Bonar Law announced the immediate release of the convict prisoners on June 15.[31]

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[27] *The Times* (London), June 11, 1917.
[28] Robert Brennan, *Ireland Standing Firm: My Wartime Mission in Washington and Eamon de Valera: A Memoir* (Dublin: Dublin University Press, 2002), 98.
[29] Brennan, *Eamon de Valera*, 100.
[30] *Report of the Proceedings of the Irish Convention* (Dublin: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1918); Michael Laffan, *The Resurrection of Ireland: The Sinn Féin Party, 1916-1923* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 251-252.
[31] Andrew Bonar Law, "General Amnesty," House of Commons Debates (HC Deb) 15 June 1917 vol 94 cc1384-92.

The releases did not have the ameliorative effect hoped for by the government. The Sinn Féiners not in prison had already declared their unwillingness to join in such a convention. On May 24, they released a statement that they would only join such talks on what *The Times* called "fantastic and impossible terms," including, "the Convention should be free to declare an Irish Republic," and that the British would swear to uphold any decisions of the conference, subject to verification by the United States and European powers.[32] Clearly the Sinn Féin leaders felt secure in their popular domestic and international appeal, and were unwilling to work with the established parties or within the political order. This defiance became more acute after the prisoner releases.

Several of the discharged convicts returned to Cork on June 23, and the following day their supporters stoned the local Constabulary barracks. *The Times* reported that the police confronted the Sinn Féin crowd, and were fired on with revolvers from surrounding houses, wounding three constables. The Constabulary called on military assistance, and the combined forces charged the crowd with fixed bayonets. In the course of the melee, civilian Abraham Allen was bayoneted to death and thirty others were injured. Republican sources claim that a policeman killed Allen while retiring to barracks, when the Crown forces were under no threat. They also state that a coroner's jury brought a murder verdict against Constable Prendergast, but the decision "was ignored by the English Government."[33] *The Times* did not publish the finding, and though Members of Parliament discussed the event, they never mentioned the dead man's name.[34]

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[32] *The Times* (London), May 25, 1917.
[33] *Irish Bulletin* (Dublin), Oct. 18, 1920.
[34] *The Times* (London), June 26, 1917; Henry Duke, "Disturbances in Dublin and Cork," HC Deb 28 June 1917 vol 95 cc506-7.

The London paper noted a more violent tone in the East Clare election speeches than in previous Sinn Féin campaigns. De Valera and speakers on his behalf continued to use internationalist rhetoric, insisting that Ireland should be recognized at a peace conference at the close of the European war. They tinged these optimistic pronouncements with aggressive oratory, claiming that they were in favor of the violent overthrow of British government if a suitable opportunity presented itself.[35] Sinn Féiners also capitalized on long-standing tension between landlords and tenants. J.J. Walsh, who was imprisoned after the Easter Rising, said during the campaign that on the day the Irish Republic was established, "the landlords would be put against the wall and there would be an end of landlordism."[36]

The assertion that Sinn Féin would gain independence via an international peace conference was an attempt to capitalize on a deep reservoir of goodwill toward the Allied Powers, now joined by the United States. U.S. President Woodrow Wilson's Fourteen Points, which endorsed democracy and national self-determination, resonated powerfully in nationalist Ireland. Maire Comerford, a member of the republican women's organization Cumann na mBan, told an interviewer years later, "Everything that Wilson said—government by consent of the governed, war for small nations, open agreements openly arrived at…go right down Wilson and it was a litany of things which stirred up the Irish people right through."[37]

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[35] *The Times* (London), July 4, 1917.
[36] *The Times* (London), July 7, 1917. Despite Sinn Féin rhetoric, successive governments had made more widespread land ownership a priority since the "Land War" of the 1880s. See Augustine Birrell, *Things Past Redress* (London: Faber and Faber, 1937), 207. The situation for small landowners gradually improved, but residual issues were not resolved until the "Economic War" with the United Kingdom in the 1930s. See Foster, *Modern Ireland*, 541, 551-554.
[37] Maire Comerford, *Ireland's Unfinished Revolution: An Oral History*, ed. Kenneth Griffith and Timothy O'Grady (Boulder, CO: Roberts Rhinehart, 1999), 46.

Republican speakers used this rhetoric, but made it clear that they were willing to use force if the peace conference failed them. De Valera told a crowd at Cresslough, Co. Donegal, that "Winning freedom internationally was infinitely preferable to any attempt to win it from England." In the same speech, he said that Sinn Féin would use "every means that common-sense and morality would admit of" to achieve its goals. He was more explicit when he told a crowd at Letterkenny that "Instead of begging for freedom they would take as much as they could get," and "if they were prepared and organised they could be in such a position, if a suitable opportunity presented itself to secure their demand by force of arms."[38]

De Valera's meetings sometimes included militaristic displays. He was often introduced as a "Commandant of the Irish Republican Army."[39] A meeting at Tullamore on April 8, 1918, was attended by "nearly 2000 Volunteers…all armed either with hurleys or blugeons [sic] or sticks & a great many in uniform."[40] A Constabulary memorandum advocated de Valera's arrest, providing it was clear to the public that he was detained "not because of speeches advocating any abstract political ideas, but because of his direct incitement to offences against the law."[41] Concern for de Valera's arrest and its effect on public opinion is evident in that Brian Mahon, general officer

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[38] "Summary of speeches made by Mr. de Valera and other Sinn Fein Leaders, during his tour in the North," CO 904/198/105 in *Sinn Féin and Other Republican Suspects*.
[39] Sgt. Henry Cronin, "'Aeridheacht' at Tullamore," CO 904/198/105 in *Sinn Féin and Other Republican Suspects*.
[40] County Inspector H.W. Crane, "Tullamore, 8 April 1918," CO 904/198/105 in *Sinn Féin and Other Republican Suspects*.
[41] "Wire U.S. to C.S." [Wired in cipher], August 15, 1917, CO 904/198/105 in *Sinn Féin and Other Republican Suspects*.

commanding the British forces in Ireland, gave the Constabulary permission to issue a communiqué to the press on the instance of his arrest.[42]

The mix of peaceful and violent rhetoric resulted in an overwhelming victory for de Valera. He defeated the Parliamentary Party candidate Patrick Lynch by nearly 3,000 votes. British observers were stunned and alarmed by the result. *The Times* wrote that the Sinn Féin policy of "open war on British authority" had paid off, resulting in "a victory for an Irish Republic."[43]

Violent outbursts greeted the triumph in certain parts of the country. Constabulary bullets killed Ballybunion youth Daniel Scanlon outside of the barracks in that Co. Kerry town on July 11, 1917. Partisan descriptions of this incident show how polarized political opinion had become. Nationalist sources in Annie Ryan's *Comrades* assert that Sinn Féin supporters were marching past the barracks, celebrating de Valera's victory, when "some RIC men there became so annoyed that they opened fire."[44] *The Times* says that the Sinn Féiners assaulted the barracks and fired shots through the windows, and that constables shot over their heads until "the attack became so resolute they were forced to fire in earnest." A coroner's jury returned a verdict of willful murder against Constable Lyons and Sergeant Mulcahy.[45]

Encounters between the Constabulary and hostile civilians were not always fatal, but they indicate rising tension and violence in the country. Enthusiastic Sinn Féiners hung a republican flag bearing the letters "I.R." from a tall tree in Killyon, King's County (now Co. Offaly) on July 13, 1917. Constabulary Sergeant Lacy climbed the tree and

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[42] B. Mahon, Headquarters, Irish Command, Dublin, August 18, 1917, CO 904/198/105 in *Sinn Féin and Other Republican Suspects*.
[43] *The Times* (London), July 12, 1917. The results were de Valera (Sinn Fein): 5,010; Lynch (IPP): 2,035.
[44] Annie Ryan, ed., *Comrades: Inside the War of Independence* (Dublin: Liberties Press, 2007), 35.
[45] *The Times* (London), July 14, 1917.

began sawing off the branch bearing the seditious emblem when a shotgun blast rang out from a nearby hedge, wounding him in the arms and legs.[46]

Nationalists and the Royal Irish Constabulary

These early conflicts with the police seemed to validate Sinn Féin's most incendiary rhetoric, which was reserved for the Royal Irish Constabulary itself. Many speakers called them the "eyes and ears" of the British government in Ireland, while Peter Clancy of Ennis went so far as to call them "murderers," referencing Ballybunion as an example.[47] Volunteer Gearóid O'Sullivan called the police "their principle [sic, principal] enemies," and advised no one to so much as speak to them.[48] Martin Walton noted the prevalence of the RIC throughout the country, and their capacity for information-gathering. He later told an interviewer, "the country was studded at the time with small police barracks every few miles…they were the eyes and ears. You couldn't travel from Dublin to Swords—that's a distance of about seven miles—without going into three RIC outposts, and everybody passing up and down the road was noted carefully."[49] Constables regularly attended Sinn Féin meetings and made notes of possibly seditious speeches, but their reports reveal overt hostility from republican crowds. District Inspector O'Brien of Ennistymon believed that if police attempted to send a note-taker to an upcoming meeting, it would take twenty armed constables to

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[46] *The Times* (London), July 16, 1917.
[47] C.S. Murphy, "Sinn Fein Meeting at Johnstown," April 13, 1919, CO 904/194/34; J.R. Murphy, "Sinn Fein Meeting at Ennistymon," Oct. 2, 1917, CO 904/198/105 in *Sinn Féin and Other Republican Suspects*.
[48] Const. Joseph McCarthy, "Sinn Fein Meeting at Skibbereen," March 31, 1918, CO 904/196/65 in *Sinn Féin and Other Republican Suspects*.
[49] Martin Walton, *Ireland's Unfinished Revolution*, 132.

protect him.[50] Instead, members of the force attended meetings in disguise, or got second-hand accounts from informants.[51]

Nationalists had long held an ambivalent attitude toward the RIC. The force had earned the title "Royal" after helping to suppress the Fenian Rising of 1867.[52] Nationalists frequently objected to the "military" character of the force, and its substantial arsenal. Planners of the 1916 Rising suggested rebels make Constabulary barracks their first targets, primarily to seize weapons.[53] The force—armed with modern Lee-Enfield carbines—helped to combat the rebellion, but suffered a humiliating defeat at Ashbourne at the hands of an IRA force commanded by Tomás Ashe and Richard Mulcahy.[54]

Long-serving members of the force objected to republican accusations of spying. Thomas Fennell, who retired as a District Inspector in 1905 and lived through the War of Independence, stated in his memoirs that the Constabulary gathered information in the course of regular policing. He wrote, "the police were able to supply the Government with any information required without engaging in espionage."[55] The Royal Irish Constabulary Manual stated that the prime object of the force was the "prevention and detection of crime." The most effective method was to accomplish this was to "obtain a

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[50] T. O'Brien, "De Valera's Visit to Clare," Sept. 29, 1917, CO 904/198/105 in *Sinn Féin and Other Republican Suspects*.
[51] Sgt. J. Edwards, "Sinn Fein Meeting at Belfast," Sept. 14, 1917, CO 904/199; Head Constable P.J. Killacky, "Suspect Michl. Thornton," Nov. 7, 1917, CO 904/216/425 in *Sinn Féin and Other Republican Suspects*.
[52] Peter Cottrell, *The Anglo-Irish War: The Troubles of 1913-1922* (Oxford: Osprey Publishing, 2006), 17.
[53] Kathleen Clarke, *Revolutionary Woman, 1878-1972: An Autobiography*, ed. Helen Litton (Dublin: O'Brien Press, 1991), 64.
[54] For RIC armament, see "Royal Irish Constabulary," HC Deb 01 June 1916 vol 82 cc2871-2. For a participant's account of Ashbourne, see J.V. Lawless, "The Fight at Ashbourne: A Stirring Episode of the 1916 Rising," in *Our Struggle for Independence: Eye-witness accounts from the pages of An Cosantóir*, ed. Terence O'Reilly (Cork, Ireland: Mercier Press, 2009), 121-138.
[55] Thomas Fennell, *The Royal Irish Constabulary: A History and Personal Memoir* (Dublin: University College Dublin Press, 2003), 155.

good 'local knowledge.'" The manual encourages constables to learn the habits, relationships, employment, and connections of the people in their districts by "entering into friendly conversations with them, endeavouring to gain their confidence (which I should never abuse), and impressing on them that the police are their friends and protectors."[56] This upholds Fennell's assertion that spying was unnecessary for a normal policeman.

However, the lengths noted above to which members of the force would go to infiltrate and observe "seditious" organizations indicate that espionage was a possible occupation within the Constabulary. While using blanket terms to describe the force, republicans often made distinctions between policemen who actively worked against them and those that did not. Even during periods of violence, republicans claimed that they only took extreme actions against the most "offensive" members of the force, though this distinction often broke down in practice.

Organizing Disorder

In October 1917, Sinn Féin and the Irish Volunteers held conventions to formalize their organizations and elect leadership. On October 26, Sinn Féin elected Eamon de Valera its president. The party had to compromise between Arthur Griffith's original, more moderate policy calling for an Irish parliament with the British monarch as head-of-state, and the out-and-out republicans led by Cathal Brugha. The resultant Sinn Féin

[56] *The Royal Irish Constabulary Manual; or Guide to the Discharge of Police Duties* (Dublin: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1909), 29-30.

constitution called for the recognition of Irish independence, following which the people would decide on their own form of government.[57]

The following day, the Volunteers held their convention in secret. One day after Sinn Féin chose him to lead that organization, the Volunteers voted Eamon de Valera president. They also elected a twenty-member national executive—five members from each province. Of these twenty, Cathal Brugha headed a Dublin-based resident executive consisting of four Directors: Michael Collins for Organisation, Richard Mulcahy for Training, Rory O'Connor for Engineering, and Michael Staines for Supplies.[58] This arrangement lasted until March 1918, when the national executive appointed a General Headquarters Staff. This staff was comprised of Chief of Staff Richard Mulcahy, Adjutant-General and Director of Organisation Michael Collins, Quartermaster General Sean McMahon, Director of Engineering Rory O'Connor, Director of Training Dick McKee, and Deputy Chief of Staff Austin Stack. Chaired by Cathal Brugha, the executive remained in charge of Volunteer policy.[59]

Throughout this period, republicans debated whether the organized use of force was possible, or the best means of achieving Irish independence. Sinn Féin activist P.S. O'Hegarty was of the opinion that, "After 1916, there should not have been a shot fired in Ireland."[60] He was equally cynical regarding his country's efforts at international recognition, writing, "So far as the Peace Conference was concerned, it was all waste labour, and might just as well have been recognised as such at the beginning. We never

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[57] Robert Brennan, *Allegiance* (Dublin: Browne and Nolan, 1950), 155.
[58] Mulcahy, "The Irish Volunteer Convention 27 October, 1917," 407-409.
[59] Richard Mulcahy, "Conscription and the General Headquarters' Staff," in *Capuchin Annual* (Dublin: 1968), 386-387.
[60] P.S. O'Hegarty, *The Victory of Sinn Féin: How It Won and How It Used It* (Dublin: University College Dublin Press, 1998), 120.

had a chance of getting into the Peace Conference."[61] Fr. Pat Gaynor, an early Sinn Féin convert, claimed that the only benefit of violent action was the international exposure it gave the republican cause. He wrote, "The one solid argument in favour of our war was that the shootings were 'news' and received world-wide publicity."[62] The split in opinion on physical force becomes more apparent considering that brothers of both writers commanded brigades in the IRA; Seán O'Hegarty of the First Cork (North), and Seán Gaynor of the First Tipperary (North).[63]

Contemporary condemnations of violence came from the press and from within the Sinn Féin organization itself. An RIC sergeant recorded that, while sharing the platform with de Valera on New Year's Day 1918, Rev. J.W. O'Meehan said, "It was not he said by lying in wait for a victim behind a ditch, or attacking a man's house at night that they would obtain their independence. Such outrages were he said the work of cowards; were un-Irish and foreign to the methods of the men of Easter Week."[64] Such a denunciation is indicative of the unease with which even the most active Sinn Féin supporters viewed physical force, but the fact that these types of statements did not stop the violence shows the determination of those who committed it. It is possible that denunciations of physical force tamped down aggressive attacks, but by and large members of the burgeoning IRA engaged in whatever activities they felt would strengthen their organization in local areas.

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[61] O'Hegarty, *The Victory of Sinn Féin*, 23.
[62] Pat Gaynor, *Memoirs of a Tipperary Family*, *The Gaynors of Tyone: 1887-2000*, ed. Eamonn Gaynor (Dublin: Geography Publications, 2003), 103.
[63] O'Hegarty, *The Victory of Sinn Féin*, 120; Seán Gaynor, *Memoirs of a Tipperary Family*, 237.
[64] Sgt. J. Clark, "Public Sinn Fein Meeting Held in Galway on 1:1:18," CO 904/201/134 in *Sinn Fein and Other Republican Suspects*.

In late 1917, republican arms raids became commonplace. Joe Good wrote that from the time his company was reorganized in 1917 their Commandant Dick McKee ordered them to raid for arms, but to refrain from shooting police.[65] The most profitable was a September 2 raid on Cork Grammar School, where the Volunteers seized twenty rifles belonging to the British Officer Training Corps.[66] On the night of November 25, 1917, four masked men armed with revolvers entered the home of a British soldier near the town of Cashel, Co. Tipperary. The intruders declared that they were members of the Irish Republican Army, and demanded the soldier's rifle. A young man in the house chided the raiders, and "reminded them of the injury that they were doing to his brother, who was a soldier and as good an Irishman as any of the intruders." The masked men replied that the brother "was an English soldier, but that they were soldiers of the Irish republic." The masked men seized the rifle and left.[67]

Despite the mounting disorder, British officials were reluctant to deal with the Irish situation while the European war continued. In the House of Lords on November 15, 1917, Viscount Chaplin "rose to call attention to the gravity of the situation in Ireland," but began, "I am well aware that some people think it undesirable that there should be any discussion of this kind during the war."[68] This admission indicates that British lawmakers were divided on the question of publicly recognizing what was happening in Ireland. Nevertheless, Chaplin went on to say that the situation in Ireland was "becoming worse and worse every day," and that the republican movement was

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[65] Good, *Enchanted by Dreams*, 102.
[66] *The Times* (London), Sept. 4, 1917; Donal O'Kelly, "Ordeal By Fire: How Cork City Faced the Terror," in *With the I.R.A. in the Fight for Freedom: 1919 to the Truce* (Tralee, Ireland: Kerryman, n.d.), 31.
[67] *The Times* (London), Nov. 28, 1917
[68] Viscount Chaplin, "The Situation in Ireland," House of Lords Debates (HL Deb) 15 November 1917 vol 26 cc1019-68.

"undoubtedly progressing throughout the greater part of Ireland."[69] Chaplin was delivering a warning about the danger of republican rhetoric, but members of the movement's rank-and-file continued to join this with action.

In early 1918, police posts became targets of republican raids. On St. Patrick's Day, Volunteers in Eyries, Co. Cork raided the local RIC barracks while most of the garrison monitored a parade arranged as a distraction.[70] Two Volunteers were killed during a failed barracks raid at Gortatlea, Co. Kerry, on April 13, 1918.[71] The deaths made Constables Boyle and Fallon, known to have been the shooters, marked men. Unidentified attackers shot at them in broad daylight on a Tralee street on June 14, wounding Fallon in the shoulder.[72]

In conjunction with the Irish conscription crisis and the German offensive on the Western Front, Dublin Castle took action in mid-May 1918. Detectives working in the Dublin Metropolitan Police learned that their employers were planning a general arrest of Sinn Féin leaders. Some of these detectives, including Eamon Broy, Joseph Kavanagh, and Eugene Smith, were sympathetic to the republican movement. All three sent the information through back channels to republican contacts, and it eventually reached Michael Collins.[73] The fact that three Dublin detectives were willing to risk their jobs to aid the radical nationalist movement highlights a recurring problem for the British

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[69] Viscount Chaplin, "The Situation in Ireland," HL Deb 15 November 1917 vol 26 cc1019-68.
[70] Liam Deasy, *Towards Ireland Free, The West Cork Brigade in the War of Independence: 1917-1921*, ed. John E. Chisholm (Cork, Ireland: Mercier Press, 1977), 29-31. One of the raiders attempted to shoot the remaining constable, but the attacker's revolver failed to fire.
[71] *The Times* (London), April 15, 1918; Volunteer, "Gortatlea First Barrack Attack and Casualties," in *Kerry's Fighting Story: 1916-21, Told By the Men Who Made It*, ed. Brian Ó Conchubhair and J.J. Lee (Cork, Ireland: Mercier Press, 2009), 201-202.
[72] Volunteer, "Gortatlea First Barrack Attack and Casualties," 202-203; *The Times* (London), June 15, 1918.
[73] Eugene Smith, *Comrades*, 54; Mulcahy, "The Irish Volunteer Convention 27 October 1917," 405; Béaslaí, *Michael Collins and the Making of a New Ireland*, 1:188-189.

administration in Ireland. As the authorities relied on a largely Irish civil service, it was relatively easy for republicans to find sympathetic government employees. The passage of this information to Collins marks the beginning of the republican intelligence system, one which utilized numerous government insiders throughout the conflict.

Collins delivered the information to the Sinn Féin Executive and, on the night of May 17, these republican leaders met and decided to acquiesce in the arrests. Darrell Figgis later wrote that the only alternatives were to go "on the run," or to force the Volunteers into premature active resistance.[74] While most of the political leaders resigned themselves to arrest, Brugha, Collins, Richard Mulcahy, and other military leaders decided to go on the run. The same night, the British made a clean sweep of the political leaders. The prisoners included de Valera, Arthur Griffith, Joseph McGuinness, and many other Sinn Féiners all over Ireland. They were arrested on the pretence that they had been scheming with Germany to foment another insurrection. In publicizing the arrests, the British government assured the press that evidence would be forthcoming.[75]

Moderate Sinn Féiner Darrell Figgis argues in his memoir that the "German plot" arrests had the unintended consequence of allowing militarists to take over the republican movement. In particular, the IRB faction and its leader Michael Collins rose to prominence in this period. Interestingly, the RIC had already tagged Collins as an up-and-comer within the movement. In September 1917, the District Inspector for Bandon, near Collins' Co. Cork home, noted he was a paid secretary for Sinn Féin and "likely to become a prominent and important member of that body."[76] In March 1918, District

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[74] Darrell Figgis, *Recollections of the Irish War* (New York: Doubleday, Doran, 1927), 210-213.
[75] *The Times* (London), May 21, 1918; Béaslaí, *Michael Collins and the Making of a New Ireland*, 189-193..
[76] "Suspect Michl. Collins," Sept. 23, 1917, CO 904/196/65 in *Sinn Féin and Other Republican Suspects*.

Inspector Charles Collins of Granard called him "a very dangerous criminal," who "boasts about the part he took in capturing the G.P.O." during the Rising. The officer warned, "his activities, if not speedily restrained, will lead to serious mischief."[77] The German Plot arrests did not immediately produce an upsurge in violence, but during this period, the trio of Brugha, Collins, and Mulcahy coalesced into the decision-makers of an increasingly militant republican movement.[78]

Months after Viscount Chaplin's plea, the British government in Ireland proclaimed fourteen of Ireland's thirty-two counties under the Criminal Law and Procedure Act on June 14, 1918. This act allowed special juries to be drafted into areas where prosecutors could not obtain convictions, or for the trials to be moved to another location. *The Times* explained the necessity of these measures: "Many magistrates in the rural districts are in open sympathy with Sinn Fein and a number of moderate men have been deposed by Sinn Feiners in the recent elections of chairmen of local bodies."[79] On July 3, 1918, the government went a step further in declaring Sinn Féin clubs, the Irish Volunteers, and the Gaelic League "dangerous organizations." The proclamation explained that these groups "encourage and aid persons to commit crimes and promote and incite to acts of violence and intimidation and interfere with the administration of the law…[they] are a grave menace, and are designed to terrorize peaceful and law-abiding subjects of his Majesty."[80]

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[77] DI Charles Collins, March 5, 1918, CO 904/196/65 in *Sinn Féin and Other Republican Suspects*.
[78] Figgis, *Recollections of the Irish War*, 212, 216-220.
[79] The fourteen proclaimed counties were Clare, Cork, Galway, Kerry, King's (now Offaly), Limerick, Longford, Mayo, Queen's (now Laois), Roscommon, Sligo, Tipperary, Tyrone, and Westmeath: *The Times* (London), June 15, 1918.
[80] *The Times* (London), July 4, 1918; *New York Times*, July 5, 1918.

Despite these legal strictures, one of the most daring attacks on the Constabulary took place five days after the proclamation. At Béal a' Ghleanna, Co. Cork, seven Volunteers ambushed two constables en route to Ballyvourney in broad daylight, assaulted the officers and captured their rifles. The attackers had standing orders not to open fire, but a nervous Volunteer shot one policeman in the neck.[81]

Encouraging Violence

To this point, Volunteers undertook actions based on their own initiative or that of local leaders. However, General Headquarters Staff in Dublin began directly encouraging arms raids and defensive violence from the first issue of *An tÓglác, The Official Organ of the Irish Volunteers* on August 15, 1918. This bi-monthly journal published General Headquarters orders, gave tips on technical aspects of weapons and equipment, and constantly encouraged Volunteer units to engage in operations. The inaugural issue declared, "The Volunteer does not talk, but acts…Whenever and however an opportunity occurs of offering effective resistance to an attack of the enemy, that resistance must be offered. Volunteers with weapons in their hands *must never surrender without a fight*."[82] Like Sinn Féin speakers around the country, *An t'Óglác* also took on the issue of the peace conference. Predicting that the European war would soon end, the journal stated on October 29, "The freedom of Ireland depends in the long run not upon the play of politics, nor international dealings, but upon the will of the Irish people to be

[81] Micheal O'Suilleabhain, *Where Mountainy Men Have Sown: War and Peace in Rebel Cork in the Turbulent Years 1916-21* (Tralee, Ireland: Anvil, 1965), 39-44; Patrick J. Twohig, *Green Tears for Hecuba, Ireland's Fight for Freedom* (Ballincollig, Ireland: Tower Books, 1994), 27-31; 396. The fact that this incident resulted in no fatalities is a sign of poor IRA armament. The republican leader tested his shotgun after the ambush, and both of his homemade shells failed to fire.
[82] *An t'Óglác* (Dublin), August 15, 1918.

free and maintain their freedom." The same article exhorted Volunteers to "leave no stone unturned in the effort to arm and equip themselves thoroughly."[83]

Though GHQ staff were united in their call for decisive action, different views existed as to what form the conflict would take. In an early edition of *An t'Óglác*, Michael Collins' column "Organisation Notes" asserts the importance of the Company as the basic Volunteer unit, but writes, "Forget the Company of the regular army. We are not establishing or attempting to establish a regular force on the lines of the standing armies of even the small independent countries of Europe." Instead, Collins describes the Volunteers as a body of "riflemen scouts," capable of acting individually or in units. On the very next page, however, the section "Equipment Notes" lists the mess requirements for a full company of eighty-one soldiers, including plates, mugs, knives, forks, and spoons for every fighter.[84] This hardly represents the vision of a small, mobile guerrilla unit.

W.J. Brennan-Whitmore, a former British soldier who joined the Volunteers on their inception in 1912, later wrote that tension always existed between leaders who envisioned a regular force and those with different ideas. He told a Volunteer military council meeting early in 1914, "We could not possibly withstand the British army, in the event of a clash, if organised and trained on their lines." Brennan-Whitmore found a sympathetic ear in J.J. "Ginger" O'Connell, a member of GHQ staff at the time, but otherwise his "views were received so unsympathetically as to almost amount to indifference."[85] Other officers eventually warmed to irregular ideas. Shortly before the

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[83] *An t'Óglác* (Dublin), Oct. 29, 1918.
[84] *An t'Óglác* (Dublin), Sept. 14, 1918.
[85] W.J. Brennan-Whitmore, *Dublin Burning: The Easter Rising from Behind the Barricades* (Dublin: Gill & MacMillan, 1996), xviii.

Rising, Eamonn Ceannt, Cathal Brugha's commanding officer, asked Brennan-Whitmore to write a Volunteer textbook based on his theories.[86] In March and April 1916 the *Irish Volunteer*, the organization's original journal, published a series of articles quoting Hungarian General Arthur Görgei's chronicle of his own guerrilla campaign.[87] The final issue before the Rising carried an article entitled "Guerilla Warfare in France," noting a little-known 1914 incident in which 400 French cavalry were cut off in the Ardennes and launched hit-and-run attacks on the advancing Germans. The article called it "an excellent example of the system of tactics best suited to the Volunteers."[88]

The military failure of 1916 highlighted the need for new thinking. Particularly poignant is Major John MacBride's exhortation to the Jacob's Factory garrison, likely based on his experience fighting the British during the Boer War: "never allow yourselves to be cooped up inside the walls of a building again."[89] MacBride was executed after the surrender, but many of the Volunteers who heard his words went on to actively work for a new kind of rebellion. The origins of republican tactics are difficult to determine. Many observers claim that the type of guerrilla campaign initiated by the IRA was without precedent, while some officers insist that their methods were unique, homegrown, and wholly adaptive to the Irish situation.[90] Republican field commanders necessarily adapted to their local situations, but a close reading of IRA publications reveals a number of historical precedents and theoretical influences at work.

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[86] Brennan-Whitmore, *Dublin Burning*, xix-xx.
[87] *Irish Volunteer* (Dublin), April 22, 1916; Arthur Görgei, *My Life and Acts in Hungary in the Years 1848 and 1849* (New York: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1852).
[88] *Irish Volunteer* (Dublin), April 22, 1916.
[89] John MacBride, *Boer War to Easter Rising: The Writings of John MacBride*, ed. Anthony J. Jordan (Westport, Ireland: Westport Books, 2006), 157.
[90] For the presumed uniqueness of the republican campaign, see Tim Pat Coogan's "Foreword" in *The Path to Freedom* (Boulder, CO: Roberts Rhinehart, 1996), viii. For an IRA officer's insistence on homegrown tactics, see Michael Brennan, *The War in Clare, 1911-1921: Personal Memoirs of the Irish War of Independence* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 1980), 70.

A note in an early edition of *An t'Óglác* promised "to give some account of battle fought by irregular troops against regular armies in the past … particularly those combats whose story contains military lessons for Volunteers."[91] This trend toward guerrilla warfare did not invalidate ideas from traditional military thinkers. Perhaps the most important is nineteenth-century Prussian General Carl von Clausewitz. M.J. Costello, a Volunteer in the First Tipperary Brigade and later a tactician in the Irish Defence Forces, called him, "The most notable of all writers on war."[92] Among Clausewitz's lessons pertinent to the Irish situation between 1917 and 1921 were his insistence on the subordination of military strategy to political authority and objectives, as well as the advantages (and disadvantages) of surprise in combat. Other "regular" theorists cited by *An t'Óglác* include German General Friedrich von Bernhardi and French Marshal Ferdinand Foch.[93]

Of course, guerrilla warfare was not without precedent by 1918. The final phase of the Second Boer War of 1899-1902 had been a guerrilla struggle waged by Boer commandos against vastly superior British forces. The potential for such a war in Ireland had been considered decades earlier. For example, James Fintan Lalor, a Young Ireland activist, wrote a letter published in the Irish Felon outlining the circumstances under which he believed Irish fighters could defeat the British Army. After warning his readers that they possessed no military organization or arms, Fintan Lalor advised, "The force of England is *entrenched* and *fortified*. You must draw it out of position; break up its mass;

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[91] *An t'Óglác* (Dublin), Sept. 30, 1918.
[92] M.J. Costello, "The Principles of War, Part III—The Surprise," in *Our Struggle for Independence*, 236.
[93] *An t'Óglác* quotes von Bernhardi on June 1, 1920, and Foch on September 15, 1920.

break its trained line of march and manoeuvre, its equal step and serried array."[94] By emphasizing small-unit tactics, the IRA did exactly this by forcing Crown forces to divide their strength, spreading them thinly over the whole country in a system of patrols.

The republican campaign benefited in both military and political senses from another piece of advice from Fintan Lalor:

> You cannot organize, or train, or discipline your own force to any point of efficiency. You must therefore disorganize, and untrain, and undiscipline that of the enemy, and not alone must you unsoldier, you must unofficer it also; nullify its tactique and strategy, as well as its discipline; decompose the science and system of war, and resolve them into their first elements. You must make the hostile army a mob, as your own will be.[95]

The IRA achieved a measure of discipline and organization unthought-of by Fintan Lalor, but it still attempted to nullify the British Army's tactics by initiating a campaign antithetical to the great power struggle of World War I. Unofficial reprisals and random shootings by Crown forces exemplify the extent to which the Republicans "undisciplined" their enemy and gained propaganda victories from the brutal consequences.

The British empire of the late nineteenth- and early twentieth-centuries had already witnessed a series of irregular wars. Colonel C.E. Callwell collected a number of lessons from these campaigns in *Small Wars* (1899). This title encompassed rebellions, guerrilla warfare, and any campaign "where organized armies are struggling against opponents who will not meet them in the open field."[96] Like Clausewitz, Callwell stresses the necessity of having a clear political goal guiding military operations and

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[94] James Fintan Lalor, *James Fintan Lalor, Patriot & Political Essayist (1807-1849)*, ed. L. Fogarty (Dublin: Talbot Press, 1919), 73.
[95] Fintan Lalor, *James Fintan Lalor*, 73.
[96] C.E. Callwell, *Small Wars: Their Principles and Practice* (London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1903), 1.

states, "it is the difficulty of bringing the foe to action which forms, as a rule, the most unpleasant characteristic of these wars." Having drawn out an enemy, a superior force will almost always prevail in combat, but it is the prelude which frustrates the "regular" commander.[97] With this principle in mind, Callwell calls guerrilla warfare "a form of operations above all things to be avoided." While the regular commander seeks "decisive methods," an adept guerrilla leader will avoid confrontation. According to Callwell, "no amount of energy and strategic skill will at times draw the enemy into risking engagements, or induce him to depart from the form of warfare in which most irregular warriors excel and in which regular troops are seen at their worst."[98] Throughout the Irish conflict, the British military and press predicted and prepared for a switch from guerrilla to regular operations in which rebel forces could be drawn into open combat.[99]

Republican forces were routinely criticized for shooting from behind hedges or fences. John Fails, a Constabulary recruit from Rathkeale, Co. Limerick, said later, "most of the shooting at that time was done by the IRA from behind stone walls, a ditch or something, and you were on the road going along on your duty. There was nothing to stop them shooting you and you would never know it."[100] Callwell specifically advocated this type of "hedge fighting" in *The Tactics of Home Defence* (1908). A product of the recurrent "invasion scares" in the prewar United Kingdom, Callwell's work suggests that Britain's and Ireland's human-made landscape—especially hedgerows and fences—could be used to military advantage. In this type of "enclosed country," Callwell says that artillery and mounted troops would have limited effect and the onus of

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[97] Callwell, *Small Wars*, 14, 17.
[98] Callwell, *Small Wars*, 104.
[99] *An t'Óglác* quotes Callwell's *Small Wars* in its August 12, 1921 issue.
[100] John Fails, *The Royal Irish Constabulary: An Oral History*, ed. John D. Brewer (Belfast: Institute of Irish Studies, Queen's University, 1990), 100, 104.

action would be on infantry.[101] Though he imagines a conflict between major powers deploying large conventional armies, the author notes that the nature of the terrain would break these into small units, and that battalions, companies, and sections would require training and efficient officers to act independently.[102] This type of warfare would be decided by a series of minor unconnected actions, sometimes without larger forces having knowledge of them.[103] These small units should use cover to maximum effect. Callwell writes, "The kind of ground that one naturally associates with rural England lends itself to an extraordinary extent to the concealment of strength and of movements," adding, "The utilisation of hedgerows for concealing the movements of infantry is an art in itself."[104] The IRA put Callwell's theories to the test; particularly in utilizing cover, and small, independent units engaging in disconnected actions.[105]

The writers of *An t'Óglác* also drew guerrilla inspiration from the Spanish resistance to Napoleon's invasion, the Cuban insurgency against Spain, as well as Boer General Christiaan de Wet's and German General Paul-Emil von Lettow-Vorbeck's campaigns against the British.[106] Despite variances in time and place, all of these examples stress the importance of mobility, choosing the terrain for combat, avoiding unsustainable casualties, and winning the active support of the local population

Another arena of the conflict was the "intelligence war," fought mostly in Dublin but in a smaller way throughout the country. The tactics of this shadowy war also had precedents, emphasizing subtlety and the importance of personal knowledge of the

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[101] C.E. Callwell, *The Tactics of Home Defence* (Edinburgh: William Blackwood and Sons, 1908), 100.
[102] Callwell, *The Tactics of Home Defence*, 111-112.
[103] Callwell, *The Tactics of Home Defence*, 84-85.
[104] Callwell, *The Tactics of Home Defence*, 101, 102.
[105] *An t'Óglác* began a series entitled "Hedge-Fighting for Small Units" in its February 1919 issue. It does not specifically invoke Callwell's *Tactics of Home Defence*, but employs many of the same principles.
[106] *An t'Óglác* cites these examples in the following issues: the Cuban insurrection, March 1, 1920; von Lettow-Vorbeck, May 1, 1920; Napoleon's Spanish campaign, March 1, 1921.

enemy. Séamus Ó Maoileóin, whom Collins recruited to work as a spy, said that he and other intelligence officers studied W.J. Fitzpatrick's *Secret Service Under Pitt* (1892), and "many other books of that nature."[107] Fitzpatrick describes the methods of British agents in cultivating informers among the United Irishmen. He includes a warning for contemporary plotters in his preface: "The organisers of illegal secret societies will see that, in spite of the apparent secrecy and ingenuity of their system, informers sit with them at the same council-board and dinner-table, ready at any moment to sell their blood; and that the wider the ramifications of conspiracy, the greater becomes the certainty of detection."[108] Republican officers took the warning, but instead of being discouraged, used Fitzpatrick's work to avoid the doom he pronounced on them.

As the intellectual climate at GHQ trended toward guerrilla war, its publication began to encourage definite action. When Volunteer Donncadh MacNeilus wounded two RIC officers while resisting arrest in Cork on November 4, 1918, *An t'Óglác* lavished him with praise. The next issue read, "his gallant defence against enemy aggression will evoke the admiration of every decent Irishman…The fate of MacNellis [sic] will be watched with careful sympathy by the Volunteer Organisation."[109] Taking the cue, Seán O'Hegarty and members of the First Cork Brigade organized a rescue one week after the arrest.[110] *An t'Óglác*'s writers crowed over the victory, saying "This daring exploit, by a half-dozen Volunteers, was skillfully planned and carried out with a courage and efficiency which we would hold up to all Volunteers for imitation … Every incident in

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[107] James Malone, *Blood On the Flag: A Translation from the Irish of B'fhiu an Braon Fola by Séamus Ó Maoileoin* trans. Patrick J. Twohig (Ballincollig, Ireland: Tower Books, 1996), 23.
[108] W.J. Fitzpatrick, *Secret Service Under Pitt* (London: Longman, Greens, 1892), v-vi.
[109] *An t'Óglác* (Dublin), Nov. 15, 1918.
[110] Florence O'Donoghue, "Rescue of MacNeilus from Cork Gaol," in *Rebel Cork's Fighting Story: 1916-21, Told by the Men Who Made It*, ed. Brian Ó Conchubhair and Peter Hart (Cork, Ireland: Mercier Press, 2009), 37-45.

connection with the MacNellis [sic] affair gives cause for pride and an example for imitation to all Volunteers."[111] It is important to note the repeated exhortation to other Volunteers to emulate both MacNeilus's resistance and his rescue, as this indicates a definite active policy.

The MacNeilus rescue took place the same day the European war ended and just weeks before the United Kingdom held a general election. For months, British politicians and the press had been downplaying Sinn Féin's prospects. *The Times* mocked the abstentionist policy, calling it "expensive propaganda."[112] The paper could not deny that the party was predicted to win between fifty-two and fifty-six seats, while the IPP expected just twenty-five. However, *The Times* insisted that with fewer representatives at Westminster Irish prosperity would wane, and "Sedition will become unpopular from the moment it interferes with money-making."[113] General John French, the Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, assured a Londonderry audience that moderates would regain power "when the country is free once more from the tyranny of organized sedition."[114]

During the election campaign, republicans continued to make dual statements regarding international recognition and a resort to violence. By presenting themselves as a party that would work through international institutions such as the forthcoming peace conference, Sinn Féiners could counter the suggestion that a vote for them would be wasted on an unrealistic abstentionist policy. More generally, Sinn Féin was able to offer Irish electors both peace and the sword. While not committed to the peace conference as

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[111] *An t'Óglác* (Dublin), Nov. 30, 1918.
[112] *The Times* (London), August 21, 1918.
[113] *The Times* (London), Sept. 23, 1918.
[114] *The Times* (London), August 23, 1918.

the sole arbiter of independence, Irish republicans benefited from this rhetoric in two further ways. First, Sinn Féin politicians mollified moderates in their party and won over reluctant members of the public. Second, they constrained the British scope for action in Ireland. While Sinn Féiners appeared to be open to a peaceful solution of the conflict through international cooperation, repressive exercises on the part of the British would only increase sympathy for Ireland at the peace conference and elsewhere.

British pundits must have been astounded by the election results. The poll was held on December 14. Sinn Féin won seventy-three of Ireland's 105 seats. Unionists scored twenty-six victories, and the Irish Parliamentary Party retained just six seats.[115] As soon as the full results were announced two weeks after the poll, the republicans declared that they would set up their own assembly in Dublin.[116] *The Times* continued to argue that the republicans' momentary victory would lead to their demise. Its Dublin correspondent wrote, "Parliament will not be sitting for a month before the question of Sinn Fein's policy of abstention becomes a subject of acute controversy in Nationalist Ireland."[117] The Cork Volunteers ended the year with one more act of defiance. While politicians bickered over Cabinet seats, the "Sinn Feiners" blew up a monument to Irish soldiers who fought in the British army in the Second Boer War.[118]

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[115] Brian Feeney, *Sinn Féin: A Hundred Turbulent Years* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2003), 109-110. The author gives the party vote totals as follows: Sinn Féin – 474,859; Unionist – 289,025; IPP – 220,226.
[116] *The Times* (London), Dec. 30, 1918.
[117] *The Times* (London), Dec. 31, 1918.
[118] *New York Times*, Dec. 30, 1918; *New York Times*, Dec. 31, 1918.

Conclusion

Historians typically describe 1917 and 1918 as years in which the republican movement engaged in peaceful reorganization and political campaigning. However, violent rhetoric and action went hand-in-hand with these activities throughout the period. Organized violence took place, which cost lives on both sides, and set the pattern for future years of conflict. The fact that republican actions took few lives in this period was a result of their poor armament, rather than a lack of aggression. British attempts to contain republican violence through the machinery of regular law failed. The IRA took advantage of this cautious approach to prepare its forces. Florence O'Donoghue, intelligence officer for the First Cork Brigade, emphasized the operational and psychological significance of this period when he recalled that, "The slow build up of activity from 1917 to 1919 … allowed the Volunteers and the people to become acclimated gradually to the atmosphere of war."[119] From 1919, IRA operations became more sophisticated, deadlier, and prompted increasingly drastic British responses.

[119] Florence O'Donoghue, "Guerilla Warfare in Ireland, 1919-1921," *An Cosantóir* 23:5 (May 1963): 301.

CHAPTER THREE:

A SYSTEM OF GUERRILLA WAR, 1919

A sergeant and constable of the Royal Irish Constabulary were patrolling the Dublin Mountains on January 19, 1919. Arriving at Three Rocky Mountains, they stumbled into a group of men conducting illegal military drill. Typical procedure over the past two years had been for the police to arrest the leader of such parties, and to disperse the rest. On this occasion, the drillers attacked the policemen, seized their revolvers and truncheons, tied up the sergeant, restrained the constable with his own handcuffs, and left them lying on the mountainside.[1]

The episode was embarrassing for the Constabulary, but not lethal. The same could not be said for other policemen just two days later in Co. Tipperary. Seán Treacy and Dan Breen, Vice-Commandant and Quartermaster of the Third (South) Tipperary Brigade, were planning to seize a cartload of gelignite being moved to Soloheadbeg quarry. Breen later asserted that the two felt the IRA was at a dangerous point in its development. He wrote, "The Volunteers were in danger of becoming merely a political adjunct to the Sinn Féin organisation." According to Treacy, they and their comrades "had had enough of being pushed around and getting our men imprisoned while we remained inactive." Breen argued that the republicans needed the explosives, but said of the expected six RIC guards, "if they put up an armed resistance, we had resolved not merely to capture the gelignite but also to shoot down the escort."[2]

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[1] *The Times* (London), Jan. 20, 1919; *An t'Óglác* (Dublin), Jan. 31, 1919.
[2] Dan Breen, *My Fight for Irish Freedom* (Dublin: Anvil, 1989), 30-31.

Breen, Treacy, and seven other Volunteers took up positions in ditches and hedges on the Tipperary-Soloheadbeg road on January 16. The explosives did not pass. On the fifth day of the party's vigil, a cart bearing two Constabulary members and a driver appeared on the roadway. As the vehicle entered the ambush, the masked Volunteers stood in the roadway and, brandishing revolvers, shouted, "Hands up." Constables James McDonnell and Patrick O'Connell reached for their rifles, and the attackers shot them dead.[3] Breen wrote, "Our only regret was that the escort had consisted of only two Peelers instead of six. If there had to be dead Peelers at all, six would have created a better impression than a mere two."[4]

This theft and shooting, committed the same day as the opening of Sinn Féin's republican parliament Dáil Éireann, is often interpreted as the first shots in the War of Independence. As the previous chapter shows, conflict between the republicans and the police had been going on for some time before 1919, both in the ad hoc fashion of resisting arrest and preplanned ambushes such as at Béal á Ghleanna. The killings at Soloheadbeg represent a process of escalation that took place throughout the year. This chapter will analyze that process, arguing that though local units continued to act on their own, IRA General Headquarters controlled the direction and pace of the conflict and provided the link to a political organization necessary to unify an otherwise disparate organization.

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[3] Breen, *My Fight for Irish Feedom*, 32-34; Abott, *Police Casualties in Ireland*, 31-33.
[4] Breen, *My Fight for Irish Freedom*, 32.

Legitimizing Violence: A Republican Government

Indeed, the Soloheadbeg ambush made very little impression on the immediate political situation. Both *The Times* and the *New York Times* reported the event as a double-murder. The idea that the perpetrators were Irish Volunteers or that the crime might have had a political intent was not mentioned.[5] Both newspapers covered the opening session of Dáil Éireann more thoroughly, though with little enthusiasm. The Dáil opened, coincidentally, the same day as the Soloheadbeg ambush. *The Times* said of the preparations for Sinn Féin's parliament, "The whole thing is, of course, childishly illegal."[6] The *New York Times* correspondent was bored by the proceedings, calling them "deadening," with little "concession to popular interest."[7] The American publication also called Irish—the tongue in which the Dáil conducted business before translation—a "dead language," prompting an angry response from Sinn Féiner and Gaelic Leaguer Padraic Colum; then residing in New York.[8]

During its opening session, the Dáil called roll, listing thirty-five members as "fé ghlas ag Gallaibh" or "imprisoned by the foreigners."[9] Cathal Brugha, chairman of the Volunteers' resident executive, was elected Ceann Comhairle, or Speaker of the House. This honor likely would have gone to de Valera, but he was still imprisoned in Britain on the "German plot" charges. The "Declaration of Independence" moved and accepted at the sitting asserted that "the Irish Republic was proclaimed in Dublin on Easter Monday, 1916, by the Irish Republican Army acting on behalf of the Irish people," and demanded

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[5] *The Times* (London), Jan. 22, 1919; *New York Times*, Jan. 23, 1919.
[6] *The Times* (London), Jan. 21, 1919.
[7] *New York Times*, Jan. 22, 1919.
[8] Padraic Colum, "The Gaelic Language," *New York Times*, Jan. 24, 1919.
[9] "An Rolla," Dáil Éireann – Volume 1 – 21 January, 1919.

the evacuation of the British garrison from the country.[10] The "Message to the Free Nations of the World" referred to "the existing state of war between Ireland and England."[11] The British government did not see the Dáil as a serious enough threat to take active steps against it, but in republican minds a significant change took place on its establishment. Fighting for a government—though ridiculed and unrecognized—legitimized the acts of aggression against Crown forces already taking place.[12]

Though Soloheadbeg did not singlehandedly change the course of the Irish struggle, the government's response and GHQ's reaction to the Dáil opening did alter the situation. Tipperary was proclaimed a "disturbed district," and subject to martial law. The day after the Dáil's opening, four republicans escaped from Usk prison in Wales. They climbed the prison wall, made their way to a waiting ship, and survived a search at the Dublin docks—all without being discovered. One of the four was Joseph McGrath, elected representative for the St. James division of Dublin, who could now take his seat in the Dáil.[13] Before the month was out, arms raids took place in at least three different Co. Cork towns, and grenades were thrown at a Londonderry prison.[14]

On January 31, the Volunteer organ *An t'Óglác* echoed the Dáil's assertion that a "state of war" existed "between Ireland and England." It added that IRA members were justified "in treating the armed forces of the enemy—whether soldiers or policemen—exactly as a National Army would treat the members of an invading army." They were to "use all legitimate methods of warfare against the soldiers and policemen of the English

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[10] "Declaration of Independence," Dáil Éireann – Volume 1 – 21 January, 1919.
[11] "Message to the Free Nations of the World," Dáil Éireann – Volume 1 – 21 January, 1919.
[12] Richard Mulcahy, "Chief of Staff 1919," in *Capuchin Annual* (Dublin: 1969), 340-341.
[13] *The Times* (London), Jan. 25, 1919; *Irish Bulletin* (Dublin), Sept. 27, 1921.
[14] *The Times* (London), Jan. 28, 1919.

usurper."[15] Piaras Béaslaí, who wrote the editorials, asserted that they were approved by Brugha and the GHQ staff, and therefore reflected Volunteer policy.[16]

While the Dáil was meeting, another jailbreak was in the works. Eamon de Valera worked for the Lincoln Gaol prison chaplain. Following Mass one morning, he found a key lying unattended near the sacristy. He made a wax impression of the key from one of the warm church candles, and enlisted fellow-prisoner Seán Milroy to sketch the resultant impression.[17] Around Christmas 1918, Mrs. Seán McGarry received a card from her imprisoned husband featuring a cartoon figure trying to unlock a house door, using an incredibly detailed key. The prisoners also sent an explanation of what the card meant, in Irish, to the officer commanding the Manchester IRA. GHQ pieced the information together, and Michael Collins took charge of the escape attempt. Two attempts to smuggle keys into the prison hidden in cakes failed; the keys got through, but were too small. Next the republicans sent in blank keys and files, and prisoner Paddy de Loughrey deconstructed a jail lock to make master keys for the escapees. On the night of February 3, de Valera, Milroy, and Seán McGarry used three duplicate keys to open and re-lock their cell doors and prison gates. Collins and Harry Boland were waiting outside to spirit them to safe houses in Manchester, with the help of republicans from Liverpool and London.[18]

The escape of the Sinn Féin president and two associates garnered great publicity. Articles in the British and international press speculated on how the escape was managed,

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[15] *An t'Óglác*, Jan. 31, 1919.
[16] Béaslaí, *Michael Collins and the Making of a New Ireland*, 276.
[17] Robert Brennan, *Ireland Standing Firm: My Wartime Mission in Washington and Eamon de Valera: A Memoir* (Dublin: University College Dublin Press, 2002), 118.
[18] Bill Kelly, "Escape of de Valera, McGarry and Milroy ('German Plot' Prisoners) from Lincoln Jail," in *Sworn to be Free: The Complete Book of IRA Jailbreaks, 1918-1921*, ed. Florence O'Donoghue (Dublin: Anvil, 1971), 39-44.

and *The Times* derided the government's "indecision" on how to deal with Irish prisoners.[19] The operation also showed the value of the British IRA organization. Built in small units from Irish emigrant communities around the country, these clandestine groups were already involved in arms smuggling, but incidents like the Lincoln escape displayed their capacity for direct operations.[20]

Rising enthusiasm required GHQ to head off several attempts to escalate the conflict, or even redirect it from the emerging system of guerrilla war. The first emanated from the Tipperary Volunteers, soon after the Soloheadbeg action. On February 23, officers of the Third Tipperary Brigade took a page from the government's book and drafted a "proclamation" against the Constabulary in their county. It stated that by the end of the month, any members of the Force remaining in the county "will be deemed to have forfeited his life. The more notorious police being dealt with as far as possible first." The document extended the threat to anyone paid by the British government, or "who helps England to rule this country." Civilians giving information to the Constabulary and doctors who assisted them were also threatened with execution.[21] The brigade officers sent the draft to Dublin, where the Dáil and GHQ forbade its publication. Richard Mulcahy later wrote that such an initiative would "disrupt the minds and lives of a whole people," undercutting the IRA's support.[22] Breen said that he and his Tipperary colleagues "could not understand their reluctance, seeing that ours was the only logical position."[23]

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[19] *The Times* (London), Feb. 5, 1919; *New York Times*, Feb. 5, 1919; *New York Times*, March 2, 1919.
[20] John A. Pinkman, *In the Legion of the Vanguard*, ed. Francis E. Maguire (Cork, Ireland: Mercier Press, 1998), 108.
[21] *The Times* (London), July 8, 1919.
[22] Richard Mulcahy, "Chief of Staff 1919," 347.
[23] Breen, *My Fight for Irish Freedom*, 41.

Other Dáil members were still languishing in prison, among them Robert Barton, representative for West Wicklow. Chief of Staff Richard Mulcahy visited him in Mountjoy Gaol in Dublin posing as a solicitor's assistant. While the guard was watching the visitor gave Barton news of his pending court martial, and when he looked away Mulcahy slid the prisoner a file. Over the next three days, Barton sawed through the bars on his window. On the night of March 16, he rigged a dummy in his bed and escaped by a rope ladder thrown to him from outside the prison. Barton left a note in his cell to the governor stating he had left "owing to the discomfort of the place," and asking him to hold his baggage until it was called for. On St. Patrick's Day, the IRA gave Dublin a present: another republican legislator on the loose.[24]

Barton was the first prisoner ever to escape Mountjoy, but twelve days later, twenty Volunteers repeated the exploit. During exercise on March 29, a rope ladder was thrown against the outside wall. Seven prisoners "covered" the nearby guards with "revolvers"—which were actually kitchen spoons held under their clothes, and the republicans scrambled over the wall and vanished amid the Dublin streets. The escapees included J.J. Walsh, Dáil member for Cork City, and Piaras Béaslaí, member for East Kerry and editor of *An t'Óglác*.[25] None of the individuals taken out of prison could change the course of the conflict, but the republican goal of delegitimizing British rule and making the country ungovernable appeared to be advancing dramatically during the string of high-profile getaways. *The Times* commented two days after the Mountjoy mass breakout, "Escapes of Sinn Fein prisoners have become so common of late that they

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[24] *Irish Bulletin* (Dublin), Sept. 27, 1919; Ernie O'Malley, "In British Jails," in *Dublin's Fighting Story: 1913-1921, Told by the Men Who Made It*, ed. Diarmaid Ferriter and Brian Ó Conchubhair (Cork, Ireland: Mercier Press, 2009), 368.
[25] Piaras Béaslaí, "Twenty Got Away in Big Daylight Escape from Mountjoy Jail," in *Sworn to be Free*, 51-53.

excite little wonder, though much disgust, in the minds of the public."[26] The derision that had marked commentary on the Dáil's opening was disappearing as its members made a mockery of the British prisons and the IRA continued its campaign of "outrage" in the countryside.

On March 20, Volunteers raided the military arsenal at Collinstown Aerodrome, four miles north of Dublin. Five of the twelve republicans involved were working as contractors at the facility before the operation, and their knowledge of the facility and inside preparations enabled it to take place. GHQ approved the raid and supplied khaki clothing and masks to disguise the Volunteers. The raid netted the IRA an enormous haul, consisting of seventy-five rifles with bayonets and 5,000 rounds of ammunition. Patrick Houlihan, who planned the raid, noted with regret that the military suspected some of the contractors had been involved, and they all lost their jobs shortly after.[27]

An attempt to rescue Robert Byrne from Limerick Workhouse Hospital signaled the spread of this campaign to that county. Byrne, adjutant of the Limerick City Brigade's Second Battalion, had been moved from prison due to his weakness after undertaking a hunger-strike for political prisoner status. On April 6, twenty Volunteers, two armed with revolvers, entered the Workhouse during visiting hour. At a whistle blast, the republicans rushed the five constables and one warden guarding Byrne. The prisoner tried to rise, but Constable Martin O'Brien threw himself on top of his bed. After a short melee, Constable Spillane was shot in the spine, O'Brien killed, and Byrne carried out on a Volunteer's shoulders. Once outside in the getaway car, however, the

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[26] *The Times* (London), March 31, 1919.
[27] Patrick Houlihan, "Collinstown Aerodrome Raid," in *Dublin's Fighting Story*, 241-245; *The Times* (London), March 21, 1919.

rescuers realized Byrne had been shot. He died that evening.[28] *An t'Óglác* described Byrne's death as "deliberate murder," and the *Irish Bulletin* used his case as evidence of a "shoot-to-kill" policy to prevent prisoners escaping alive.[29] The government designated Co. Limerick a "special military area" on April 7 and a "disturbed district" three days later.[30]

At the end of March, John Charles Milling, a resident magistrate and former RIC Inspector with a penchant for locking up Volunteers, was shot dead in his home in Westport, Co. Mayo.[31] On April 6, an armed group concealed behind roadside hedges opened fire on a patrol of four policemen in Eyries, Co. Cork. Three of the constables were wounded, but none killed.[32] On April 20, Liam Lynch and six Volunteers of the Second Cork Brigade raided Araglen Constabulary barracks while three of the four-constable garrison was at Mass. They overpowered the one constable left on duty and seized six Lee-Enfield carbines, 400 rounds of ammunition, and a revolver.[33] Three days later two soldiers were assaulted in Arklow, Co. Wicklow, and deprived of their arms and ammunition.[34]

While aggressive actions spread, the republican movement faced a crisis regarding the relationship between its political and military components. On March 24, a notice appeared in the press purporting to have been issued by Sinn Féin's general secretaries. It stated that de Valera would be welcomed into Dublin by the Lord Mayor,

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[28] Patrick Maloney, "With the Mid-Limerick Brigade 2nd Battalion," in *Limerick's Fighting Story*, 315-319; Abbott, 33-35.
[29] *An t'Óglác*, May 15, 1919; *Irish Bulletin* (Dublin), Jan. 27, 1920.
[30] *The Times* (London), April 8, 1919; *Royal Irish Constabulary List and Directory* (1920), 153.
[31] *The Times* (London), April 1, 1919; Abbott, *Police Casualties in Ireland*, 43.
[32] *The Times* (London), April 10, 1919.
[33] P.J. Power, "Mick Fitzgerald, Gallant Soldier of Fermoy," in *Rebel Cork's Fighting Story*, 117-118; O'Donoghue, *No Other Law*, 45-46.
[34] *The Times* (London), April 24, 1919.

with bands playing and demonstrations by Sinn Féin and the Irish Volunteers. The notice was signed by two Sinn Féin secretaries, Harry Boland and Tom Kelly. *The Times* noted that "The last time when the corporation publicly welcomed a distinguished visitor to the city was when Queen Victoria visited after the Boer War." The paper had an explanation ready-made, asserting that "The arrangements for his [de Valera's] reception seem to be designed with the object of impressing the Peace Conference and American opinion with the supremacy of the Republican movement in Ireland."[35]

When the Sinn Féin Executive gathered that day, none of them recalled sanctioning such a reception. Darrell Figgis asked Kelly why he had signed the notice. Michael Collins rose, and declared that the reception plans had not been issued by Sinn Féin, but by "the proper body, the Irish Volunteers." He indicated that the public demonstration was meant as a provocation, declaring "Ireland was likely to get more out of a state of disorder than from a continuance of the situation as it then stood." Returning to the issue of the authority for the statement, Collins added, "The proper people to take decisions of that kind were ready to face the British military, and were resolved to force the issue. And they were not to be deterred by weaklings and cowards."[36]

Collins was essentially telling the assembled political leaders that military commanders would decide the course of the republican movement. The Dáil's Declaration of Independence had recognized the IRA's role in asserting the republic during the Easter Rising, and now one of its GHQ staff was attempting to flex his muscle over the political body. Collins's bombastic style did not cow Arthur Griffith, who was attending his first Executive meeting since his arrest in May 1918. He stood and told

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[35] *The Times* (London), March 24, 1919.
[36] Figgis, *Recollections of the Irish War*, 243.

Collins that no body had authority to decide whether to go ahead with the reception than the Executive.[37] The Sinn Féin leaders debated for two hours. P.S. O'Hegarty, who was never a Volunteer and opposed military action after 1916, argued the reception should proceed. He made an analogy with Daniel O'Connell's abandonment of a mass meeting at Tara after it was proclaimed by the British.[38] The debate carried over to the next day, when Griffith reported that de Valera also objected to the reception, and the Executive cancelled it.[39] The press of March 26 carried news of the decision.

Collins continued to view "politicians" with disgust. He wrote to Austin Stack on May 17, "The policy now seems to be to squeeze out anyone who is tainted with strong fighting ideas." He added the next day, "It seems to me that official Sinn Féin is inclined to be ever less militant and ever more political, theoretical."[40] Ironically, Collins himself held military and political positions as the Volunteers' Adjutant General and Director of Intelligence, as well as the Dáil's representative for South Cork and Minister for Finance. Richard Mulcahy considered his, Cathal Brugha's, and Collins' dual military and governmental roles a strength.[41] The relationship between the two arms of the movement remained ambiguous, but strengthened as the conflict deepened and each became dependent on the other.

GHQ and the Detectives

Collins's main military initiative in this period consisted of an all-out offensive against the few indispensable British officers in Ireland: the detectives of G-Division of

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[37] Figgis, *Recollections of the Irish War*, 244.
[38] Richard Mulcahy, *My Father the General*, 62.
[39] Figgis, *Recollections of the Irish War*, 244.
[40] Michael Collins, *Michael Collins: In His Own Words*, 16-17.
[41] Richard Mulcahy, *My Father the General*, 38-39.

the Dublin Metropolitan Police. The detectives, known as "G-men," were responsible for tracking and gathering information on political dissidents. At the end of the 1916 Rising Collins had watched as they picked out republican leaders for court martial and execution.[42] He became director of intelligence in January 1919, taking over the office from Eamonn Duggan. There were already three G-men feeding republicans intelligence: Eamon Broy, James Kavanagh, and Eugene Smith, but their efforts were unorganized. The new director undertook a policy of meeting face-to-face with these double-agents, and getting as many of them as possible.[43]

Immediately upon taking the position, Collins began building up a staff. He promoted the Dublin Brigade's intelligence officer Liam Tobin to be his chief intelligence officer. The IRA's Assistant Quartermaster General Tom Cullen was co-opted into the department and came next in seniority, followed by Frank Thornton.[44] Collins is often described as singlehandedly directing every minute detail of the intelligence department, but part of his success in managing as many projects as he did was his ability to delegate.[45] His own interviews refer to "the trustworthiness of my chief aids."[46] Tony Woods, a veteran of the Dublin Brigade, went so far as to say, "Tobin, of course, was the real Intelligence man in Dublin in the Tan struggle, not Collins."[47] This critique likely goes too far in attempting to shift credit for the intelligence war away from the director, but it is important in that it emphasizes the roles of his subordinates.

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[42] Béaslaí, *Michael Collins and the Making of a New Ireland*, 1:106-107.
[43] Eamon Broy and Eugene Smith, *Comrades*, 52-54.
[44] Béaslaí, "How it was Done – IRA Intelligence," 379.
[45] Tim Pat Coogan, *Michael Collins: The Man Who Made Ireland* (Boulder, CO: Roberts Rhinehart, 1996), 94-95; Dwyer, *The Squad*, 7.
[46] Michael Collins, *Michael Collins' Own Story*, 80-81.
[47] Tony Woods, *Survivors*, 322.

Other contemporary and recent writers have painted the republican intelligence department as an authority unto itself, striking when and at whom its members pleased.[48] Liam O'Doherty, an officer in Dublin's Fifth Battalion, insisted, "no spy was shot without the authority of G.H.Q. The latter body, presided over by Cathal Brugha, Minister for Defence, went carefully into all the circumstances of each case before giving their final decision."[49] Mulcahy later wrote, "We each knew what the other was at and particularly in his [Collins'] domain of intelligence."[50]

Collins was encouraged by the successful prison escapes and gained greater access to information as the Dáil and its subsidiary office came into operation.[51] By April 1919, he had decided the G-men needed to go. Collins later wrote, "England could always reinforce her army. She could replace every soldier that she lost…To paralyse the British machine it was necessary to strike at individuals. Without her spies England was helpless." New recruits might enlist in G-Division to replace the numbers of each one lost, but executing an individual detective erased his knowledge and therefore his threat to the republican movement forever. As Collins put it, "even when the new spy stepped into the shoes of the old one, he could not step into the old one's knowledge."[52]

The intelligence director began his assault by doing some detective work of his own. On the night of April 7, Detective Eamonn Broy let him and Volunteer Sean Nunan into G-Division headquarters in Brunswick Street Police Station. The republican intelligence director made notes on each detective in the political section. He read the information they had collected on known republicans and learned their names and where

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[48] Frank O'Connor, *The Big Fellow* (New York: Picador, 1998), 72.
[49] Liam O'Doherty, "Dublin Brigade Area—1920," in *Capuchin Annual* (Dublin: 1970), 529.
[50] Richard Mulcahy, *My Father the General*, 83.
[51] Richard Mulcahy, "Chief of Staff 1919," 347-348.
[52] Michael Collins, *The Path to Freedom* (Boulder, CO: Roberts Rhinehart, 1996), 69.

they lived.[53] Collins also found a book of telephone messages from Irish citizens giving information to G-Division.[54] Two days later, Volunteers tried to intimidate the detectives into resigning. They raided Detective Sergeant Nicholas Halley's home, and bound and gagged Detective Constable Denis O'Brien, leaving him in the middle of a city street.[55]

Before the IRA's offensive in the intelligence war could progress, politics intervened. The Dáil's second session opened on April 1. Sean T. O'Kelly had taken the chair as Ceann Comhairle from Cathal Brugha at the January 22 meeting, and de Valera—fresh from Lincoln Gaol—was now elected Príomh-Aire, or President of the Dáil.[56] Brugha had ceremonially tendered his resignation as Príomh-Aire, and the next day was named Minister for Defence.[57]

During the second session's third meeting on April 10, de Valera rose and called for the police forces to be socially ostracized. In doing so, he called up a tactic that had played a large role in the "Land War" in rural Ireland during the 1870s and 1880s.[58] De Valera stated, "The people of Ireland ought not to fraternise, as they often do, with the forces that are the main instruments in keeping them in subjugation." Given the composition of these forces, boycott meant accentuating divisions among Irish people, including family members and community residents. De Valera said that he was reluctant to move against the RIC and DMP because they were Irish as well, but that he spoke out on behalf of imprisoned republicans—who were in their predicament as a result of police activities. In the course of the speech, he called the Constabulary

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[53] Sean Nunan, *Comrades*, 53; Abbott, *Police Casualties in Ireland*, 40.
[54] Dwyer, *The Squad*, 39.
[55] Piaras Béaslaí, "How it was Done – IRA Intelligence," 378-379; Dwyer, 40.
[56] "Election of Speaker and Deputy Speaker," Dáil Éireann – Volume 1 – 22 January 1919; "Election of President of Dáil," Dáil Éireann – Volume 1 – 01 April, 1919.
[57] "Resignation of Ministry," Dáil Éireann – Volume 1 – 01 April, 1919; "Nomination of Ministery. – Secretary for Defence," Dáil Éireann – Volume 1 – 02 April, 1919.
[58] Townshend, *Political Violence in Ireland*, 116-117.

"England's janissaries," and "no ordinary civil force, as police are in other countries. The R.I.C., unlike any other police force in the world, is a military body." De Valera reached his full thunder in declaring:

> They are given full licence by their superiors to work their will upon an unarmed populace. The more brutal the commands given them by their superiors the more they seem to revel in carrying them out—against their own flesh and blood, be it remembered!

The republican Príomh-Aire said that a full boycott "will give them vividly to understand how utterly the people of Ireland loathe both themselves and their calling."[59] At no time did de Valera forbid violent action against the police, but his call for social ostracization and the warnings issued by the intelligence department required time to take effect.[60]

In June, de Valera left for the United States, hoping to raise funds and to gain recognition for the Irish Republic either at the peace conference or in the Senate.[61] By July, no appreciable difference had been made in the Dublin situation. In fact, on July 1 police discovered an arms dump in Lower Stephen Street.[62] David Neligan, who joined G-Division at Collins' request and fed the intelligence department information, said that the principal detectives; Barton, Bruton, Hoey, and Smyth, were all fighting for promotions by arresting republicans.[63] Robert Brennan remembered Smyth as "particularly active against Sinn Féin."[64] At the end of the month, a group of Volunteers was specially attached to the intelligence department. The officer in charge was Michael McDonnell, or "Mick Mac," and his second was Patrick Daly. This was the beginning of a special unit within the Dublin Brigade known as "The Squad." They were attached to

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[59] Eamon de Valera, "Geimhligh Cogaidh agus Fuadach Leanbh.," Dáil Éireann – Volume 1 – 10 April, 1919.
[60] Richard Mulcahy, "Chief of Staff 1919," 348.
[61] Patrick McCartan, *With de Valera in America*, 138, 141.
[62] *The Times* (London), July 2, 1919.
[63] Neligan, *The Spy in the Castle*, 50-51.
[64] Barton, *Allegiance*, 262.

the intelligence department and called upon to assassinate detectives.[65] Their first target was Detective Sergeant Patrick Smyth.

Smyth was walking toward his home in Drumcondra on the evening of July 30, when four Volunteers approached him near his home at Millmount Avenue. They opened fire and wounded him, but Smyth ran all the way to his front door, where he collapsed wounded. He lingered in hospital for several weeks before dying of his wounds. The Volunteers who committed the shooting were alarmed that Smyth had been able to run so far and clung to life so long after being hit. They switched from .38 to .45 revolvers in future actions.[66] *The Times* stated a week after the incident that Smyth had been "literally riddled with bullets."[67]

Widespread Violence

Attacks around the country continued. On June 23, Volunteers assassinated District Inspector Hunt in Thurles, Co. Tipperary.[68] The next day, two Constables were disarmed at Camp, Co. Kerry. The most activity took place in Co. Clare. In July the IRA ambushed a Constabulary patrol at Kilfenora and attacked Inch barracks.[69] In August, Volunteers attacked Broadford, Moyona, and Tubben barracks; killed two Constables in an ambush near Illaunbaun, seized all the arms in Newmarket-on-Fergus barracks, and attacked a patrol at Moyfadden.[70] On August 4, the incidents spread to Co. Louth, where

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[65] Béaslaí, "How it was Done – IRA Intelligence," 380.
[66] Dwyer, *The Squad*, 46-48; Abbott, *Police Casualties in Ireland*, 40-41.
[67] *The Times* (London), August 6, 1919.
[68] Paddy Kinane, "My Part in the War of Independence, Part I," *Tipperary Historical Journal* (1995): 90.
[69] *The Times* (London), July 8, 1919; *The Times* (London), August 15, 1919; Abbott, *Police Casualties in Ireland*, 182.
[70] *The Times* (London), August 15, 1919; *The Times* (London), August 16, 1919; *The Times* (London), August 18, 1919; Abbott, *Police Casualties in Ireland*, 43-44.

nineteen rifles en route to the Royal Artillery were stolen from a railroad depot at Greenore.[71]

Despite the widespread violence, government responses remained localized. Tipperary and Clare had already been declared "disturbed districts" on April 10, with Counties Cork and Limerick. This empowered the Constabulary to move in reinforcements from other counties, but the incidents were so widespread few police could be spared from any area. Moreover, the force was understaffed due to a policy of non-enrolment during the World War meant to encourage potential police to join the British Army. Eamon Broy later said that the Constabulary heads did not realize they were facing an unprecedented situation and "could not adopt the old manoeuvre of transferring members temporarily from a quiet area to a disturbed district."[72]

The piecemeal government response continued. On July 3 Dublin Castle declared Sinn Féin, the Irish Volunteers, Cumann na mBan, and the Gaelic League "dangerous organizations" and banned them throughout Co. Tipperary. On August 14, the same measure was applied to Co. Clare.[73] Another facet of the government response was to withdraw Constabulary garrisons from isolated barracks in Clare, Limerick, Galway, enabling them to concentrate their forces in larger population centers, but essentially abandoning large portions of the country. At the same time, a system of fortifying the remaining barracks with steel shutters and sandbags began.[74] As the Constabulary retreated and the republican boycott began to take effect, the force's means of intelligence-gathering dried up. Around this time, Constable John Regan sat down in a

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[71] Thomas Moles, "Attacks by Armed Men (County Clare)," HC Deb 07 August 1919 vol 119 cc526-7; *The Times* (London), August 5, 1919.
[72] Eamon Broy, *Comrades*, 51-52.
[73] *The Times* (London), July 8, 1919; *The Times* (London), August 15, 1919.
[74] Townshend, *The British Campaign in Ireland*, 27; *Irish Bulletin* (Dublin), August 2, 1919.

pub in Bantry, Co. Cork, with one of his usual informants. Regan asked "if he had heard anything fresh." "I'm finished," the man replied. Regan tried to coax him, but the informant said, "I tell you I'm finished. These fellows are serious, and if you take my tip you'll go a bit easy too."[75]

Republicans were taking steps to establish a daily newspaper. There were many weeklies dedicated to the Sinn Féin cause. *The Times* described them as carrying out "a sort of guerilla warfare on the Irish government" months before using that title to describe the republican military campaign.[76] Nevertheless, rumors that Sinn Féin intended to take on professional journalism began as early as January. Poking fun at republicans' supposed foreign funding, youth, and intellectualism, *The Times* commented that money would be no problem, but the party's "ability to find managing and editorial staffs for a peculiarly difficult venture in journalism is another question…its young writers and orators lack the training and experience which are necessary to success in daily journalism."[77] At the April 2 Dáil sitting, Terence MacSwiney of mid-Cork made a motion to start a daily paper, but the matter was referred to the propaganda department.[78]

On July 12, a newsletter entitled "Acts of Aggression committed in Ireland by the Military and Police of the Usurping English Government" found its way to the mailboxes of select foreign correspondents and British legislators. The paper was a simple repetition of raids, arrests, and alleged assaults by Crown forces gleaned from the pages of the daily press.[79] This forerunner of the Dáil's *Irish Bulletin* initially attracted little

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[75] Regan, *Memoirs of John M. Regan*, 114.
[76] The quotation describing guerrilla war in the press appears in *The Times* (London), Sept. 22, 1919. This was applied to the republican military campaign in *The Times* (London), March 5, 1920.
[77] *The Times* (London), Jan. 8, 1919.
[78] Terence MacSwiney, "Notices of Motion. – Daily Paper," Dáil Éireann – Volume 1 – 02 April, 1919.
[79] *Irish Bulletin* (Dublin), July 12, 1919.

notice, but as the propaganda department stepped up its efforts the British administration took action against the outspoken republican press.

In August, the Minister for Defence took measures to bind the IRA to the Dáil. Initially, the Irish Volunteers were answerable to no authority except their own executive. On August 20, Cathal Brugha moved that every Dáil representative and Volunteer should swear an oath of allegiance to "support and defend the Irish Republic and the Government of the Irish Republic, which is Dáil Éireann, against all enemies, foreign and domestic."[80] The motion sparked some debate. Tom Kelly called it "a species of coercion" against the Volunteers. Arthur Griffith, acting president in de Valera's absence, spoke strongly in favor of the oath. Brugha said that "he regarded the Irish Volunteers as a standing Army, and that as such they should be subject to the Government."[81] The motion passed thirty votes to five.

The controversy over the oath to the Dáil speaks to the lingering distrust between various sections of the republican movement. Military theorist Carl von Clausewitz, with whose work Volunteer leaders were familiar, insisted that military authority should be subject to civil authority and that wars cannot be conducted without the political ends in view.[82] In a war such as that being fought in Ireland, in which the sides were so unequal and many anticipated a negotiated settlement, this necessity was even more apparent. Nevertheless, the Volunteers were created as an independent organization, and the Dáil's recognition that the IRA founded the Republic during the Easter Rising gave them a certain legitimacy for many of the rank-and-file. For these reasons the oath created some

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[80] Cathal Brugha, "Oath of Allegiance," Dáil Éireann – Volume 1 – 20 August, 1919.
[81] Tom Kelly, Arthur Griffith, Cathal Brugha, "Oath of Allegiance," Dáil Éireann – Volume 1 – 20 August, 1919.
[82] Clausewitz, *On War*, 156-157 [Bk. I, Ch. III], 406-407 [Bk. V, Ch. VI].

dissension. Todd Andrews of the Dublin Brigade later wrote, "I was sorry we took the oath to Dáil Éireann. I thought, or rather felt, that no outside organization should have any say in the activities of the Volunteers."[83] In practice, the oath was unevenly administered to various republican units at the discretion of their officers, but theoretically it bound the IRA to the Dáil.

On September 7, 1919, fifteen soldiers of the King's Shropshire Light Infantry marched through the town of Fermoy, in Co. Cork, in the south of Ireland. As they neared their destination – the town's Methodist church – three motor-cars of club-wielding men surrounded them, while others appeared in the streets brandishing revolvers. Though the soldiers carried no ammunition, the officer in charge ordered them to resist with rifle butts and bayonets. A melee ensued, during which the attackers shot Private William Jones dead, wounded two of his comrades, and subdued the rest with their bludgeons. They seized the soldiers' rifles and fled the scene in the waiting cars. The military gathered reinforcements and gave chase, but found the escape route blocked by felled trees.[84]

The attack had been carried out by the IRA's Second Cork Brigade under Commandant Liam Lynch. Other members of the British military made a swift, unofficial response. About fifty to sixty soldiers swept into Fermoy the next night, breaking windows and looting shops for about two hours, until convinced by the arrival of other members of the military to return to barracks.[85] The official response was far more wide-ranging and prolonged. On September 12, Dáil Éireann, the republican parliament set up in Dublin by members of the political party Sinn Féin, was declared a

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[83] C.S. Andrews, *Dublin Made Me* (Dublin: Lilliput Press, 2008), 120.
[84] *The Times* (London), Sept. 8, 1919; *New York Times*, Sept. 8, 1919; O'Donoghue, *No Other Law*, 49-50.
[85] *The Times* (London), Sept. 10, 1919.

"dangerous organization" and suppressed. The RIC arrested suspected republicans all over Ireland, and a wave of newspaper suppressions threatened to silence the voice of radical nationalism in public discourse.

After September 1919, the British government in Ireland tolerated little expression of republican sentiment. On September 17 police raided the *Cork Examiner* offices and seized parts of its printing press. Three days later the same treatment was meted out to seven Dublin-based weekly papers, all supportive of Sinn Féin.[86] By September 24, publications in Dundalk, Birr, and three each in Kerry and Limerick met the same fate.[87] Even the venerable *Freeman's Journal*, the organ of the moderate Irish Parliamentary Party, was forced to cease publication for six weeks beginning in mid-December.[88] It was the first systematic, island-wide response to a republican attack.

One publication that escaped the purge was the Dáil's secretly published "Acts of Aggression" newsletter. While early issues simply repeated actions of police and military against republican suspects, the issue of September 13, following the events in Fermoy, carried its first editorial comment. It declared, "During the foregoing six days English Military terrorism in Ireland reached its high water mark." It called the arrests "a wholesale onslaught on the Republican movement" and asserted that "Not a county in Ireland escaped from this molestation." It made no mention of the IRA attack that had spurred the entire "onslaught."[89]

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[86] The seven Dublin papers were: *Nationality*, *The Voice of Labour*, *New Ireland*, *The Republic*, *The Irish World*, *Fianne an Lae*, and *The Leader*; *The Times* (London), Sept. 22, 1919; *The Times* (London), Sept. 23, 1919.
[87] The newspapers were; in Birr: *Midland Tribune*; in Dundalk: *Dundalk Examiner*; in Kerry: *Kerry News*, *Kerry Weekly Reporter*, *Killarney Echo*; in Limerick: *Limerick Echo*, *Limerick Leader*, *Munster News*; *Irish Bulletin* (Dublin), Sept. 27, 1919; *The Times* (London), Sept. 24, 1919; *The Times* (London), Sept. 25, 1919.
[88] *Irish Bulletin* (Dublin), Dec. 16, 1919; *The Times* (London), Jan. 29, 1920.
[89] *Irish Bulletin* (Dublin), Sept. 13, 1919.

While republican propagandists launched rhetorical attacks on the British government, IRA members took the Dáil's suppression as a mandate for further violence. Writing from New York, Patrick McCartan said, "England has now openly declared war on Ireland."[90] Taking previous republicans statements at face value, it would have been more consistent to say that the British administration now recognized the "state of war" the Dáil claimed existed before January 1919. Chief of Staff Richard Mulcahy wrote that after the suppression, "a positive element of violence was introduced as a policy" within the IRA. While most previous attacks attempted to seize arms and intimidate police, the new strategy was to eliminate the British presence from as many parts of Ireland as possible. As Mulcahy put it, the IRA would "provide clearance areas in the country where the writ for the Dáil could begin to run, and the smaller bodies of Volunteers, who were engaged in active hostilities, could have security and a certain freedom of movement."[91]

The all-out offensive Mulcahy describes did not begin immediately upon the Dáil's suppression, but the attacks continued despite the British crackdown. The day of the suppression, Detective Constable Daniel Hoey was walking behind the Brunswick Street Police Station in Dublin when three Volunteers of the intelligence Squad walked up behind him and shot him dead.[92] The British IRA participated in another operation, helping to rescue six Volunteers from Strangeways Gaol in Manchester on October 25.[93] The conflict spread to Meath the next week. On October 31, an IRA unit raided Ballivor barracks and killed Constable William Agar. They locked up the rest of the garrison and

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[90] *New York Times*, Sept. 14, 1919.
[91] Richard Mulcahy, *My Father the General*, 47.
[92] *The Times* (London), Sept. 13, 1919; Dwyer, *The Squad*, 51-52.
[93] *Irish Bulletin* (Dublin), Sept. 27, 1921; Piaras Béaslaí, "Escape from Strangeways Gaol, Manchester," in *Sworn to be Free*, 106.

seized all arms and ammunition in the day room. The same night, another Meath IRA party opened fire on Dillon's Bridge barracks, wounding Sergeant Matthews but failing to capture the building.[94]

GHQ Policies: Controlling the Pace

In September, Michael Brennan, the officer commanding the East Clare Brigade, planned what he called "a general onslaught" against Constabulary barracks throughout his area. The goal was to secure as many rifles as possible. Brennan felt, "As nothing like this was anticipated it would almost certainly have been successful, but there probably would have been heavy casualties."[95] Mulcahy learned of the scheduled assault just two days before it was to take place, and called Brennan to Dublin. The Chief of Staff told him "that the people had to be educated and led gently into open war and what I proposed doing might scare them off."[96] The East Clare Brigadier was disappointed, feeling that by the time GHQ allowed him to act, the RIC arms would be out of reach. Mulcahy's countermand undoubtedly saved lives on both sides and maintained the Headquarters goal of a slow buildup to the war, but Brennan's brigade suffered from a lack of arms throughout the conflict.[97]

The First (East) Cork Brigade planned a similar action for December. Brigade Commandant Tomás MacCurtain pitched the project to fellow Corkman Collins, who refused to sanction the project and referred him up the chain of command. Vice-

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[94] Seán Boylan, "Meath—1920," in *Capuchin Annual* (Dublin: 1970), 540; *The Times* (London), Nov. 3, 1919; Abbott, *Police Casualties in Ireland*, 46.
[95] Michael Brennan, *The War in Clare, 1911-1921: Personal Memoirs of the Irish War of Independence* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 1980), 38.
[96] Brennan, *The War in Clare*, 38.
[97] Richard Mulcahy, "Chief of Staff 1919," 350-351; Brennan, *The War in Clare*, 103.

Brigadier Terence MacSwiney met with Mulcahy early in November seeking approval to attack ten different Constabulary barracks in one night. Michael Leahy, commander of the Brigade's Fourth Battalion, later wrote that due to casual security measures in the rural outposts, "the capture of most of the R.I.C. barracks in the brigade area would involve little more than walking in and capturing all arms, supplies, and records."[98] MacSwiney proposed the barrack assaults as a prelude to a general uprising of Volunteers in Cork City. Mulcahy later quoted him as saying, "They could hope to last about a fortnight anyway before they would be wiped out, but the flag would have been raised and in six months time the same could be done in Galway."[99]

The idea of Volunteer "risings" in urban areas was a step backward from Headquarters strategy. It was very similar to the tactics followed during the 1916 Easter Rising, and many who experienced that failure were unwilling to repeat it. If the IRA concentrated its scant weapons in a single area at a given time, they could expect a greater impact. However, MacSwiney was certain the effort would still fail, and the most favorable result that could be hoped for was a negotiated settlement after the British tired of bloodily suppressing urban uprisings every six months. Both the Clare and Cork plans indicate a willingness to incur heavy casualties. Moreover, executing the idea of urban uprisings would ruin several of Ireland's largest cities and towns. Such human and material sacrifices were inimical to Headquarters' plans. Florence O'Donoghue, intelligence officer in the First Cork Brigade and later a military historian, wrote that two essential keys to Headquarters' plans were: "The governing policy of not committing the whole force to the conflict at the start," and "though severe damage was done to the

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[98] Michael Leahy, "East Cork Activities—1920," in *Capuchin Annual* (Dublin: 1970), 361.
[99] Richard Mulcahy, "Chief of Staff 1919," 351.

economic life of the country…no part of the country was completely devastated."[100] The Chief of Staff offered a compromise by allowing the Cork Brigade officers to select and attack three barracks in one night.[101] Leahy states that a further condition was to await the outcome of a particularly sensational attack in the works for Dublin, and it was January 1920 before the attacks could proceed.[102]

During their November 1919 meeting, MacSwiney accused Mulcahy and GHQ officers of not understanding the mindset in the rest of the country. Long years of drilling and arrests, as well as a feeling of having "missed out" during 1916 were frustrating country Volunteers.[103] Demoralization was a serious threat to the IRA. Periods of inaction, mass arrests, a lack of arms, and constant accusations of cowardice and murder in the press took a toll on rank-and-file morale. Moreover, these incidents show that tension existed between Headquarters and the most active republican units from the beginning of the war's escalation.

That GHQ provided little support and fewer arms were familiar complaints throughout the conflict. From 1919, Headquarters attempted to enforce a monopoly on arms acquisition. Local units were discouraged from buying weapons except through GHQ. Among the first to attempt to subvert this policy was the energetic Michael Brennan of Clare. After seizing £1,500 in British pension funds during a raid on the Limerick post office, he proceeded to Dublin to buy arms. He acquired a number of

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[100] Florence O'Donoghue, "Guerilla Warfare in Ireland, 1919-1921," *An Cosantóir* 23:5 (1963): 301.
[101] O'Donoghue, "Guerilla Warfare in Ireland," 351-352.
[102] Leahy, "East Cork Activities—1920," 361.
[103] Richard Mulcahy, "Chief of Staff 1919," 351.

revolvers before being informed that Dublin Brigade officers were unhappy he was "spoiling the market." GHQ ordered him to cease his activities.[104]

Thomas Kettrick, quartermaster of the West Mayo Brigade, took his quest for arms to England. Having arranged to transport weapons and explosives back to Mayo, he found that Michael Collins "was enraged at our going independently to England without permission from Headquarters," and also heard that his activities would "upset the market."[105] Matthew J. Kavanagh of Wicklow's Arklow Company also tried to buy weapons in Liverpool, and faced the same opposition. Collins confronted him and "started off with a terrible harangue and abused me at a frightful rate for daring to interfere by tapping a Headquarters source of supply for arms." Collins softened and let Kavanagh buy a few revolvers out of GHQ's stock, but the Wicklow Volunteer left Dublin disappointed.[106]

In addition to stifling independent attempts to acquire weapons, Headquarters only sparingly distributed arms from its stockpile to country units. GHQ had a habit of only supplying weapons to units that were already active. An October 1920 issue of *An t'Óglác* admonished its readers, "Those who complain of insufficiency of munitions and equipment, should take steps to secure more from the enemy. Those who get 'stuff' [arms] should make good use of it."[107] Collins wrote to a brigade commander in May 1919, "When you ask me for ammunition for guns which have never fired a shot in this

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[104] Brennan, *The War in Clare*, 41.
[105] Thomas Kettrick, *Comrades*, 122.
[106] Matthew J. Kavanagh, *Comrades*, 219.
[107] *An t'Óglác* (Dublin), October 15, 1920.

fight, my answer is a simple one. Fire shots at some useful target or get to hell out of it."[108] The irrepressible Michael Brennan saw this as favoritism. He later wrote:

> I made many trips to Dublin, mostly endeavouring to persuade GHQ to let me have some arms. The only result was a few revolvers occasionally. Neither then nor later did I ever succeed in extracting one rifle from GHQ. This was much resented as we knew that a certain number of rifles were going to Cork. We had the feeling that Collins was using his influence in favour of his own county.[109]

Billy Mullins, quartermaster of the First Kerry Brigade, found dealing with Headquarters relatively easy. He made regular trips to Dublin, handed over the proceeds from many Volunteer fundraisers to Collins, and GHQ shipped the weapons to Kerry under the address of a local merchant.[110] Mullins's experience shows that the GHQ system of arms purchase could work, but might also enforce a cyclical situation of inaction. Volunteer officers complained that they could not act without weapons, but Headquarters officials refused to supply weapons to brigades that lacked the capacity to act.

Thus, by late 1919, most republican actions still aimed at acquiring arms. These included a raid on a British sloop in Bantry, Co. Cork on November 17. Local Volunteers held up the crew with revolvers and came away with ten Canadian Ross rifles.[111] Reporting the incident, *The Times* exclaimed that Sinn Féin had "dared to declare open war on the British Navy."[112] On November 29, members of the Squad tracked Detective Sergeant Johnny Barton down College Street, where they shot him. As he lay dying, the G-man cried out, "Oh god, what did I do to deserve this?" A rumor gained circulation in Dublin that he had joined the political section just fifteen minutes

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[108] Michael Collins, *In His Own Words*, 18.
[109] Brennan, *The War in Clare*, 38-39.
[110] Billy Mullins, *Memoirs of Billy Mullins*, 127.
[111] Flor Crowley, "Arms and Ammunition Taken from Naval Sloop Lying in Bantry Bay," in *With the IRA in the Fight for Freedom*, 41-42.
[112] *The Times* (London), Nov. 18, 1919.

before being shot. Though police officials insisted Barton was on "ordinary criminal work" when he was shot, this was untrue.[113] Neligan later wrote that Barton had accepted work in the political division well in advance of his killing in hopes of a promotion, while *The Times* noted that he arrested an ex-soldier on suspicion of wounding Detective Wharton weeks earlier.[114] Nevertheless, the belief in instantaneous republican vengeance attests to the presumed power of intelligence department.[115]

The conflict spread to Co. Donegal on December 14, when a Constabulary patrol was ambushed at Dungloe.[116] The attackers' arms consisted of one rifle, one shotgun, and two revolvers, but they wounded all four policemen. Though they captured no weapons in affray, the republican commander of the operation Joseph A. Sweeney asserted that "the incident raised the morale of the Volunteers locally." He added that he regretted Sergeant McKenna—who he says was "not officious"—lost a leg due to his wounds.[117] By contrast, Constable Bolger was assassinated the same day in Kilbrittain, Co. Cork, and Tom Barry later claimed that he was "a most aggressive policeman."[118]

The year's final issue of *An t'Óglác* appeared on the same day as the Dungloe ambush. The Volunteer journal had been silent since October, as its editor Piaras Béaslaí was once again imprisoned. Freed during the Strangeways Gaol escape, he wrote:

> A year ago we compared the Irish Volunteers to any army in the trenches whose activities were confined to occasional trench raids and sniping. Since then the raids and sniping have greatly increased in frequency; in

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[113] *The Times* (London), Dec. 2, 1919.
[114] Neligan, *The Spy in the Castle*, 49-50; *The Times* (London), March 1, 1920.
[115] Dwyer, *The Squad*, 68-69.
[116] *The Times* (London), Dec. 15, 1919.
[117] Joseph A. Sweeney, "Donegal and the War of Independence," in *Capuchin Annual* (Dublin: 1970), 431-432.
[118] Tom Barry, *Guerilla Days in Ireland: A Personal Account of the Anglo-Irish War* (Boulder, CO: Roberts Rhinehart, 1995), 13.

> fact a situation has been created which more resembles guerrilla warfare.[119]

The statement shows that even the directors of the struggle, some of whom still harbored images of parade-ground armies and set-piece battle tactics, were only now coming to grips with its unconventional nature. Throughout the year, GHQ staved off attempts to quicken the pace of the conflict, while encouraging its slow spread throughout the country. The same editorial hinted that a "big push" by the Volunteers might not be far off.

The most sensational attack of 1919 occurred four days after the Dungloe ambush. It was the operation that caused GHQ to insist the Second Cork Brigade postpone their barrack attacks until January 1920. It is likely that Headquarters communicated the same warning to other brigades, as no barrack assaults followed the Meath attacks at the end of October.

On December 19, as the three cars of Lord Lieutenant John French's entourage returning to the Viceregal Lodge in Phoenix Park neared Ashtown crossroads, gunfire suddenly erupted from the roadside. The Lord Lieutenant's bodyguard Detective Sergeant Halley told the driver, "We are in it. Go like the devil." As the car began to speed away, Halley was shot in the hand. The first car sped out of the crossroads while the attackers loosed their full fury on the second car—in which they knew French usually travelled. A grenade exploded inside the vehicle, and gunfire peppered it furiously. As this attack opened, the third car entered the crossroads. The six soldiers in this vehicle opened fire, and several more grenades exploded near the roadway. Sergeant Rumbold took aim with his rifle and shot one of the attackers through the throat. The military

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[119] *An t'Óglác* (Dublin), Dec. 15, 1919; Béaslaí, *Michael Collins and the Making of a New Ireland*, 375.

emptied their weapons and also sped off into Phoenix Park. When the shooting stopped, the bullet-riddled second car was smoking in the crossroad, its driver Corporal Appleton and DMP Constable O'Loughlin were wounded, and Volunteer Martin Savage lay dead in the crossroad.[120]

Piaras Béaslaí later wrote that the attack on French, "the head of the British machinery of violence against us," was "especially justified." He added that GHQ approved the attack and Michael Collins planned it.[121] Dan Breen—who took part in several attempts to kill the Lord Lieutenant while in Dublin—said there were no less than twelve attempts on his life during 1919.[122] On this occasion, they left Ashtown convinced that they had got him at last. No one could have escaped the devastation dealt upon the second car. Reading the newspapers that evening, the Volunteers learned that French had not traveled in the second car but the first, which had sped out of range carrying one wounded detective and a few bullet holes.[123]

Breen, who was wounded in the attack, later attempted to claim victory. He wrote, "We had routed an entire contingent of British soldiers with their rifles, their machine-guns, and their armour-plated car."[124] But it was a Pyrrhic victory. In the type of campaign developing in Ireland—in which fighters and materiel had to be used with great economy—the Ashtown ambush was an abject failure. *The Times* immediately interpreted the attack as an attempt to repeat the Fenian assassinations of 1882, which

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[120] *The Times* (London), Dec. 22, 1919; *New York Times*, Dec. 23, 1919; Breen, *My Fight for Irish Freedom*, 88-90.
[121] Béaslaí, *Michael Collins and the Making of a New Ireland*, 385.
[122] Dan Breen, "Lord French was Not Destined to Die by an Irish Bullet," in *With the IRA in the Fight for Freedom*, 43-46.
[123] Desmond Ryan, "Attack on Lord French," in *Dublin's Fighting Story*, 251-252.
[124] Breen, *My Fight for Irish Freedom*, 90.

claimed the lives of the Chief Secretary and Under-Secretary for Ireland as they walked in Phoenix Park.[125]

The attack garnered great publicity, but *The Times* claimed its affects might work against the republicans. The paper's correspondent reported, "Ireland's grief and shame at the attack on the Lord Lieutenant are greater than its surprise," adding, "there is good hope that the outrage may do something to break the present reign of terror in Ireland. Hitherto the country has watched the campaign of crime in a spirit of sullen apathy…the attempt on Lord French's life may induce the Bishops, and perhaps even the leaders of the Sinn Fein Party, to denounce outrage." Archbishop William Walsh of Dublin and Cardinal Logue, head Catholic prelate in Ireland, obliged in denouncing the assassination attempt, but *The Times* waited in vain for a similar announcement from Sinn Féin leaders.[126]

The Ashtown ambush pushed another story from the headlines. The attempted assassination came just three days before Prime Minister Lloyd George announced his Irish policy. Throughout 1919, the British government had been engrossed with the Versailles negotiations, but as that conference closed officials turned their attention to the worsening situation across the Irish Sea.[127] Lloyd George first established that his government would not allow a "hostile republic" in Ireland, and speaking as much to Irish sympathizers in the United States as to his own audience, asserted "any attempt at secession will be fought with the same determination, with the same resources, with the same resolve as the Northern States of America put into the fight against the Southern

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[125] *The Times* (London), Dec. 20, 1919.
[126] *The Times* (London), Dec. 22, 1919.
[127] David Lloyd George, "Government of Ireland Act (Amendment) Bill," HC Deb 15 December 1919 vol 123 cc34-6.

States." The Prime Minister proceeded to propose two Home Rule parliaments for Ireland: one for the largely Catholic and nationalist southern twenty-six counties and another for the mostly Protestant and Unionist six northeastern counties. Lloyd George recognized that two of the six counties (he did not mention them by name, but they were Fermanagh and Tyrone) were majority Catholic and nationalist as well, but used this as his basis anyway. The two parliaments would be linked via a Council of Ireland to which they would each appoint members.[128]

Instead of the denunciation of violence for which *The Times* hoped, Sinn Féin leaders promptly criticized the Home Rule plan. Speaking from Buffalo, New York, de Valera anticipated the two-parliaments approach and rejected it before hearing details of the plan. He said the Irish people had voted for a republic, "free from the domination of any imperial authority."[129] The *New York Times* correspondent in Dublin quoted Arthur Griffith as saying Lloyd George's proposals were not meant to operate in actuality, but to "affect and mislead public opinion in America." He rejected the American Civil War analogy and framed the conflict in colonial terms, saying, "The relations of Ireland and England are not the relations of Illinois or California with Washington. They are fundamentally the former relations of Finland and Poland with Russia, or Bohemia with Austria, or Cuba with Spain."[130]

The New York paper denounced the violent campaign in no uncertain terms. An editorial entitled "Sinn Fein Madness" declared:

> The first effect of the campaign of assassination, aside from alienating well-wishers of the Irish republicans, must be the pouring of reinforcements into the country, already strongly garrisoned, to put an

[128] David Lloyd George, "Prime Minister's Statement," HC Deb 22 December 1919 vol 123 cc1168-223.
[129] *New York Times*, Dec. 23, 1919.
[130] *New York Times*, Dec. 24, 1919.

> armed guard at every crossroads and make an end of terrorism. There could be nothing more hopeless for separatists, already confronted by obdurate and populous Ulster, than to challenge the might of Great Britain.[131]

It might have been hopeless, but republicans were determined to make the challenge nonetheless. On December 26, armed and disguised men entered a police hut at Lissycasey, Co. Clare. *The Times* claimed the building was not in use, while the *New York Times* said all of the constables were on duty. The raiders removed the caretaker, a constable's wife, from the building. The fact that neither publication reported that the raiders captured arms seems to indicate that the hut was not in use, but the presence of a caretaker—and a constable's wife at that—shows that if it was not currently in use, the RIC intended to reoccupy it. With the building clear, the raiders burned it to the ground.[132] GHQ's policy of clearing the RIC and allowing the Dáil's writ to run was under way.

Conclusion

Though conflict had been occurring for some time before 1919, the year was a significant period of organization within republicanism, and escalation of the conflict in which it was engaged. Throughout the year the IRA engaged in non-lethal arms seizures such as that at Three Rocky Mountains and Collinstown Aerodrome, but these were now combined with deadly ambushes such as that at Soloheadbeg and Illaunbaun. Police casualties during the year amounted to seventeen killed and thirty-nine wounded. One British soldier was killed while four were wounded.[133] Throughout 1919 Republican

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[131] *New York Times*, Dec. 29, 1919.
[132] *New York Times*, Dec. 31, 1919; *The Times*, Jan. 1, 1920.
[133] Street, *Administration of Ireland 1920*, 369.

GHQ extended its control over the IRA, while not micromanaging unit actions. Headquarters continued to exhort units to action through *An t'Óglác*, legitimized their deeds through the alliance to the Dáil, and managed both the pace of the escalation and the flow of arms into Ireland. The intelligence department established a unit in Dublin under GHQ's direct authority, and commenced a policy of targeted assassination that helped to safeguard the entire movement. Republicans were routinely excoriated in the British and international press, but the Dáil's establishment of the *Irish Bulletin* intensified the propaganda battle that had been waged since 1916. By the end of 1919, GHQ's determination to spread and gradually escalate the war was evident in every arena: the offensive against the RIC, intelligence, and propaganda. The next phase began from the outset of 1920.

CHAPTER FOUR:

DISTURBING EVERY AREA, JANUARY-SEPTEMBER 1920

On the night of January 2, 1920, Volunteers of the Irish Republican Army's First Cork Brigade opened fire on Inchigeelagh, Kilmurry, and Carrigtwohill RIC barracks. In each area, a large number of unarmed Volunteers took up axes and sledgehammers to destroy telephone and telegraph wires, fell trees and build barricades across roads for miles around to delay reinforcements from other posts. The attacks on Inchigeelagh and Kilmurry barracks broke off after an amount of ammunition was expended. During the Carrigtwohill attack, Michael Leahy ordered several Volunteers to advance under cover from their comrades' fire and break holes in the barrack wall. The attackers inserted sticks of gelignite in the openings and blew the building open. The RIC garrison of five constables and a sergeant surrendered, and the Volunteers seized all their arms and ammunition.[1]

These attacks marked the widening of the campaign against the RIC. Already strained by ambushes and assassinations, the police were now subject to attacks against their posts. The IRA soon joined this aggressive policy with one of extensive sabotage. This chapter will argue that, while not directing every action, republican GHQ oversaw the intensification of these campaigns and took measures to ensure action across Ireland. Seeking full-time guerrilla units, GHQ seized on the idea of "flying columns" developing in a country unit, and took steps to establish them in other areas. In the same period, the IRA intelligence department continued to eliminate spies, particularly in Dublin. The British government, no longer distracted by the Versailles negotiations, turned its

[1] *The Times* (London), Jan. 5, 1920; Seamus Fitzgerald, "East Cork Activities—1920," 361-363.

attentions to Ireland. Taking steps to reinforce the police, the government's missteps opened it to republican propaganda attacks, lending credence to the Dáil's *Irish Bulletin*. Republican propaganda became so potent that Dublin Castle responded with the *Weekly Summary*, a publication that became notorious for justifying the increasing violence in Ireland.

The RIC Under Attack

Following the Cork attacks, IRA units attacked barracks in counties Galway, Kerry, Limerick, Longford, Tipperary, Waterford, and Wicklow in the same month.[2] Though none of these attacks on occupied posts were successful, they showed that republican forces were well-armed enough to expend precious ammunition attacking a fortified barracks. Moreover, an initial failure could be followed by success. The barracks at Castlehackett, Co. Galway survived a night of assault on January 9, only to be evacuated the next day. IRA members returned and burned the deserted building to the ground.[3] In addition to these attacks, raiders destroyed another unoccupied barracks in Clare.[4]

In February, the attacks spread to Co. Kilkenny, with a failed assault on Gowran barracks.[5] The Cork Volunteers successfully raided Castlemartyr barracks on February 9.[6] The Westmeath Brigade was to open its campaign by attacking Ballymore barracks on February 20. Officer Seamus O'Meara arranged for the Athlone area Volunteers to

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[2] *New York Times*, Jan. 11, 1920; *The Times* (London), Jan. 21, 1920; *The Times* (London), Jan. 26, 1920; *The Times* (London), Jan. 27, 1920; *The Times* (London), Jan. 30, 1920; Ernie O'Malley, *Rising Out: Seán Connolly of Longford (1890-1921)*, ed. Cormac K.H. O'Malley (Dublin: Dublin University Press, 2007), 57.
[3] Martin Dolan, "Galway 1920-1921," in *Capuchin Annual* (Dublin: 1970), 386-387.
[4] *The Times* (London), Jan. 21, 1920.
[5] Comerford, *My Kilkenny I.R.A. Days*, 122.
[6] Seamus Fitzgerald, "East Cork Activities—1920," 364.

concentrate their arms for the attack, but on the night designated the rifles failed to arrive. Several brigade members were court-martialed and either reduced in rank or dismissed from the Volunteers for their failures. O'Meara explained, "While some men were willing to fight, they did not like the fight to be near their own houses. Not everyone was prepared to risk his people's home, especially at that time."[7] Two days later Westmeath Volunteers successfully raided Ballynacargy barracks, seizing all the arms in the building.[8]

The northern part of the country had seen little action, and GHQ sent staff captain Ernie O'Malley to Monaghan. He immediately decided to attack the isolated Shantonagh barracks near Ballytrain. Eoin O'Duffy, commander of the Monaghan Battalions (the county was not yet organized along brigade lines), led the assault. P.J. O'Daly, O'Duffy's second-in-command, later wrote that about 120 Volunteers mobilized for the attack on the night of February 13; perhaps half of them were armed with rifles, revolvers, or shotguns. The unarmed men took the same precautions against reinforcements as those in Cork. At about 1 a.m., four Volunteers stole up to the barracks and began to mine the gable wall with gelignite. At the same time, a dozen riflemen opened fire on the barrack. After about two hours exchanging gunfire, the Volunteers set off the mine, destroying the wall. The garrison surrendered, and the attackers seized six Lee-Enfield carbines, revolvers, and grenades. O'Daly wrote that Sergeant Lawton, in command of the garrison of one other sergeant and four constables, was actively anti-republican at his previous post and assumed he would be executed. He asked the Volunteers not to kill them, saying, "We are all Catholics, like you." One of the

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[7] Seamus O'Meara, "Some Activities in Westmeath—1920," in *Capuchin Annual* (Dublin: 1970), 548.
[8] *The Times* (London), Feb. 24, 1920.

attacking party responded, "How do you know what we are?" He added that after the capture, RIC posts in the surrounding area were abandoned and the garrisons concentrated in larger towns.[9]

The *New York Times* noted that the Ballytrain operation was the first barracks captured in Ulster.[10] *The Times* correspondent was more disturbed by a failed attack more than a week later. In the early hours of February 23, constables in Ballynahinch barracks in Co. Down were awakened by a faint explosion. They found that holes had been drilled into their post, and a stick of gelignite was protruding from the wall. Telephone and telegraph wires leading to the barracks had been cut, and roads were blocked for miles around. The writer noted that it was "the first time that an outrage of this character has been attempted in North-East Ulster," referring to the six-county area designated by Lloyd George for exclusion from the Dublin parliament.[11]

The sporadic nature of these assaults and ambushes on patrols placed a mental strain on the police. Constable Peter Gallagher later told an interviewer, "you could go out and you wouldn't know when you'd be fired on…If you thought about being targets, sure you wouldn't be able to live. You tried to put that to the back of your mind. Sure there'd be nobody in the police if they thought of it that way."[12] Proposals to reinforce the Irish police were several months old. At the end of October 1919, Lord Lieutenant French appointed a committee to report on the possible reorganization of both the RIC and the DMP.[13] Nothing seems to have come of the initiative. On December 15 the

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[9] P.J. O'Daly, "Monaghan Men's Baptism of Fire at Capture of Ballytrain R.I.C. Post," in *With the I.R.A. in the Fight For Freedom*, 46-50; O'Malley, *On Another Man's Wound*, 125-126; A. Monaghan, "Monaghan – 1920," in *Capuchin Annual* (Dublin: 1970), 445-446.
[10] *New York Times*, Feb. 16, 1920.
[11] *The Times* (London), Feb. 24, 1920.
[12] Peter Gallagher, *The Royal Irish Constabulary: An Oral History*, 81.
[13] *The Times* (London), Nov. 1, 1919.

DMP Chief Commissioner announced that willing citizens could be enrolled as "special constables" to patrol the capital and prevent crime, but this also did not result in positive action.[14] On December 29, *The Times* refuted a rumor that members of the London police would be brought to Dublin to suppress "general crime."[15]

The last rumor was the closest to the truth. It was not London police who were to be brought in, however, but unemployed ex-soldiers from across the United Kingdom. RIC recruitment opened in Britain on New Year's Day, 1920.[16] The new enlistees became known as "Black and Tans," because their hurried mobilization did not allow time to issue full dark-green RIC uniforms for them. They substituted military khaki for the missing items. Most observers, and some participants, assert that the first Black and Tans arrived to reinforce the "old RIC" on March 25.[17] However, it is clear from newspaper reports that British recruits in their strange attire began permeating the force more than a month prior to this date. An account of a February 12 shootout in Rathdrum, Co. Wicklow said of the Constables involved: "Some of them, apparently military recruits who had recently joined the force, wore khaki with the Constabulary caps and overcoats."[18] Two days later, Volunteers held up a Constable guarding mail in Cork city. *The Times* referred to the victim as "a newly-joined English recruit."[19]

The introduction of these non-Irish members of the Royal Irish Constabulary is highly significant for the new arenas of propaganda they opened to both sides. For the British administration, taking demobilized soldiers off the streets and providing them

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[14] *The Times* (London), Dec. 16, 1919.
[15] *The Times* (London), Dec. 29, 1919.
[16] Street, *Administration of Ireland 1920*, 277.
[17] Abbott, *Police Casualties in Ireland*, 56; Breen, *My Fight for Irish Freedom*, 104; Twohig, *Green Tears for Hecuba*, 402.
[18] *The Times* (London), Feb. 14, 1920.
[19] *The Times* (London), Feb. 17, 1920.

government jobs allowed officials to capitalize on their fight against unemployment and their promises to provide for the heroes of the Great War. At the same time, they were taking steps to stamp out lawlessness in Ireland.

For republican propagandists, the introduction of British former soldiers into the RIC simplified their goal of vilifying the force immensely. They had taken pains from 1917 to 1919 to portray the force as composed of spies who were morally to the national movement. In their papers and memoirs, republicans make excuses for shooting members of the "old RIC." They allege that only deserving policemen were dealt with that way. Members of the IRA's intelligence department sought specific reasons for shooting DMP members. Tom Barry described Constable William Agar, killed in December, as "arrogant." Sergeant Lawton of Ballytrain thought he would be executed for anti-republican activities. By contrast, Joseph Sweeney felt a need to apologize for wounding the un-officious Sergeant McKenna at Dungloe.

Despite long-term efforts at vilification, the republicans failed to convince all Irish people that the police were their enemies. Todd Andrews wrote that in 1919 several members of his Volunteer company left the movement on being told they would have to shoot police.[20] Republicans claimed that the RIC was an adjunct of foreign colonialism; now the British government infused it with actual foreigners, set apart from regular Constables by their strange dress and British accents.

C.J.C. Street, an information officer in Dublin Castle, wrote that the mixture of military and police uniform gave an undeservedly negative connotation to the new recruits from the beginning. He asserted, "It gave the impression that the men were not members of the R.I.C., in the sense of being regular constables as heretofore. It was

[20] Andrews, *Dublin Made Me*, 120.

thought by some that they were a quasi-military force, half soldiers half policemen, and that they were under the control of the Military Authorities." Street added that the impression persisted even after the new constables had been issued full police uniforms.[21] These negative perceptions of a militarized police force were not improved by British officials' statements. Chief Secretary Hamar Greenwood began a speech to a group of recruits in October by quoting the RIC manual: "Your first duty will be to prevent crime, and your second to detect the criminal." However, he reminded them of their wartime roles by saying, "I would urge each of you to live up to the traditions of the different units in which you have so honourably served during the late great war."[22] The Chief Secretary was urging them to make their former units proud, but the ethics of which he spoke were those of imperial military service, not ordinary police duty.

In addition to opening RIC recruitment in Britain, Dublin Castle officials ushered in the new year by replacing the head of the force. Rumors had been swirling that Inspector-General Joseph Byrne was on his way out since he had been granted a month's leave on December 10. The hammer fell on January 6. Byrne was replaced by his deputy T.J. Smith. Byrne had been a popular and successful police chief, and *The Times* correspondent wrote that the effects of his dismissal would be "deplorable" and place a "strain on the discipline and temper" of the rank and file.[23] J. Anthony Gaughan asserts that Byrne opposed the closure of small RIC stations that began in August 1919. He realized that the abandonment would give the insurgents a free field of operations, and the police would be unable to protect government sympathizers.[24]

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[21] C.J.C. Street, *Administration of Ireland 1920* (New York: E.P. Dutton, 1921), 279.
[22] Street, *Administration of Ireland 1920*, 280.
[23] *The Times* (London), Jan. 8, 1920.
[24] Gaughan, *Memoirs of Constable Jeremiah Mee*, 77.

The Intelligence War

In Dublin, the intelligence war continued. Police authorities sent veteran RIC Detective W.C. Forbes Redmond from Belfast at the beginning of the year, and appointed him Deputy Assistant Commissioner of the DMP in charge of G-Division. He brought a squad of plain-clothes detectives with him from Belfast, and Neligan said his objective was to "smash up Collins's activities." However, the problem with bringing in outside policemen was that they did not know Dublin. Redmond appointed James MacNamara as his secretary and guide. This compounded his problems, as MacNamara was passing information to Collins. When the intelligence director learned that Redmond was living in the Standard Hotel in Harcourt Street, he got Tom Cullen a room there to study his movements. On the morning of January 21, members of the Squad tracked the G-Division chief as he walked to Dublin Castle and shot him dead.[25] *The Times* wrote days later that "The murder…is accepted as final proof of the existence in Ireland of a criminal organization of the most desperate kind. The crime must have been planned with much care and skill."[26] While the republicans were now consciously pursuing guerrilla war tactics, members of the British press were still loath to admit the scale of unrest in Ireland or its political nature.

Despite the murder of the G-Division chief, Dublin Castle had succeeded in placing two secret agents close to republican intelligence. The first was known as Jameson, who ingratiated himself with Collins by posing as a representative of a British soldiers and sailors union while the Intelligence Director was trying to foment disorder in Crown forces by encouraging strikes. He arrived in Dublin with a letter of introduction

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[25] Neligan, *Ireland's Unfinished Revolution*, 164-165.
[26] *The Times* (London), Jan. 23, 1920.

from Art O'Brien, head of the IRB in London. Shortly before his death, Redmond boasted to several detectives that they, who knew Dublin so well, could not get close to Michael Collins, while "a man who had only recently arrived from England had managed to meet him more than once." The only suspect was Jameson, and Collins ordered the intelligence staff to stay away from him.[27]

The other agent was Timothy Quinlisk, a former member of Roger Casement's Irish Brigade, formed from Irish prisoners of war in Germany. This affiliation gave him immediate nationalist credentials on his return to Dublin after the war, and the Irish National Aid Association paid his bills for several months. During this time, Quinlisk became familiar with Collins and other republican intelligence staff. In February 1920, he decided to turn Collins over to the government and made a statement to G-Division offering his services to the DMP in return for a reward. Eamon Broy copied the message and passed it to Collins. Collins passed information to Quinlisk that he was in Cork, and wanted to meet him there. On February 18, Cork Volunteers picked Quinlisk up from his hotel to take him to the meeting. His body was found in a field north of the city the next night with multiple bullet wounds.[28] Two days later, three Dublin detectives resigned from the force.[29] The republican intelligence goal of destroying the opposing organization—one way or another—was bearing fruit.

Late in February, Jameson cornered Collins's aide Joe O'Reilly in Dublin. He said he desperately needed to meet the intelligence director. Collins had members of the Squad pick him up on March 2 and take him to Glasnevin, in north County Dublin, where

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[27] Neligan, *The Spy in the Castle*, 64; Neligan, *Ireland's Unfinished Revolution*, 165.
[28] *The Times* (London), Feb. 24, 1920; Béaslaí, *Michael Collins and the Making of a New Ireland*, 1:392-402.
[29] *The Times* (London), Feb. 21, 1920.

they killed him. His wife came to Dublin and identified the body. His real name was John Charles Byrne, and his wife understood he was in Dublin on holiday.[30] *The Times* recognized that the killings followed the same pattern, and added the "mysterious assassinations" of Quinlisk and Byrne to their list of outrages against Crown forces.[31]

Neligan later wrote that Byrne "was the last agent to try the personal approach. His employers must have found it difficult to get people for such a mission."[32] The detective was, however, mistaken. One more secret service agent tried to get close to Collins and the intelligence staff, but he reported to British Army officers, and apparently had no interaction with the DMP. This speaks to the growing distrust between the police and military forces in Ireland at the time. Lily Mernin, a typist in Ship Street military barracks and cousin of Piaras Béaslaí, warned Collins that Fergus Bryan Molloy was a British spy. Mernin witnessed Molloy ask a contact to write down the names and addresses of prominent Sinn Féiners on Dáil notepaper that had been seized in a raid on the party's Harcourt Street headquarters on November 11, 1919.[33] At the time, republicans were receiving death threats on that same notepaper.[34] On March 24, members of the Squad shot Molloy at the corner of South William and Wicklow streets. For the first time, Dublin civilians attempted to stop the killers from escaping.[35] Squad members concluded that the civilians thought they were soldiers in civilian clothes, executing a man on the street.[36]

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[30] *The Times* (London), March 8, 1920.
[31] *The Times* (London), March 13, 1920.
[32] Neligan, *The Spy in the Castle*, 66.
[33] Dwyer, *The Squad*, 96-97.
[34] Gallagher, *The Four Glorious Years*, 93.
[35] *The Times* (London), March 25, 1920.
[36] Dwyer, *The Squad*, 98.

On March 3, members of the IRA's Dublin Brigade held up a mail van in Dominick Street. They seized the official Dublin Castle mail, including the correspondence of the Lord Lieutenant and the Chief Secretary.[37] Two days later, *The Times* admitted the nature of Irish unrest with the headline "Sinn Fein's Guerilla War." Ironically, it was not the barrack attacks or assassinations that forced Britain's leading journal to this conclusion, but the mail seizure. *The Times* Dublin correspondent called the operation "highly injurious to the executive's prestige," adding that "the capture of the official mailbags, which may have contained matter of vital importance to the conspirators, ought to have been impossible." The writer acknowledged the importance of intelligence in the conflict, quoting "a great soldier" saying "the business of generalship is to find out what the other fellow is thinking." He urged the government to take "the ordinary precautions of guerilla warfare."[38] The mail found its way to Dublin Castle by March 8. The republicans had marked each envelope "Passed by Censor."[39]

The direct approach was not the only one Dublin Castle used in attempting to undermine the republicans. On March 8, Resident Magistrate Alan Bell began a well-publicized inquiry into sources of funds to Sinn Féin and the Dáil.[40] The *Irish Bulletin* asserted that Bell had been brought to Dublin Castle "to assist in the concoction of conspiracy charges against the Republican Leaders."[41] The sixty-two-year-old Bell was sitting on the tram on his way to Dublin Castle on the morning of March 26, when Mick McDonnell and Liam Tobin of IRA Intelligence boarded and sat down next to him. "Are you Mr. Bell?," McDonnell asked. After Bell answered in the affirmative, the two men

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[37] *The Times* (London), March 4, 1920; Dalton, *With the Dublin Brigade*, 63-65.
[38] *The Times* (London), March 5, 1920.
[39] *The Times* (London), March 8, 1920.
[40] *The Times* (London), March 9, 1920; *The Times* (London), March 12, 1920.
[41] *Irish Bulletin* (Dublin), March 9, 1920.

grabbed him and hauled him off the trolley. Other Squad members, who had taken up positions on the tram, exited at the same time. McDonnell and Tobin shot Bell dead in the middle of the Simmonscourt-Donnybrook crossroad.[42]

Condemnation of the murder was universal and widespread. *The Times* claimed in an editorial that Bell was killed because he "became obnoxious to that secret force of assassins who have sought to establish a reign of terror in Dublin and throughout the South and West of Ireland."[43] The *New York Times* correspondent wrote that "This latest outrage has carried public indignation to the boiling point and in many quarters it is being urged that the Government must take the severest steps to suppress the campaign of murder by extremists who are terrorizing the whole community."[44] British MP William Davison used the killing to argue for sterner measures in Ireland, stating in the House of Commons:

> The coercion in Ireland to-day is entirely on the other side; it is not from the British Government. When a man like Mr. Bell, in the middle of the morning, is dragged from a crowded tramcar into the street and murdered, and not a member of the public is prepared, owing to fear of the coercion of Sinn Fein, to stand up and protect his life, I say that this country ought at once to put down coercion of that kind.[45]

Despite this torrent of indignation, Dublin Castle did not make another attempt to investigate republican funds, and in that sense, the attack achieved its object.

Republican Murders and the Propaganda Battle

Retaliatory attacks now created a new dynamic in the escalating violence. At about 11 p.m. on March 19, Constable Joseph Murtagh was shot dead near Pope's Quay,

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[42] Dwyer, *The Squad*, 99-100.
[43] *The Times* (London), March 27, 1920.
[44] *New York Times*, March 27, 1920.
[45] William Davison, "Government of Ireland Bill," HC Deb 30 March 1920 vol 127 cc1107-218.

in Cork City.[46] Two hours later, there was a knock at the door of the Lord Mayor's house. One of the prominent Sinn Féiners who had received a death threat was the Lord Mayor of Cork and Commandant of the First Cork Brigade of the IRA, Tomás MacCurtain. James Walsh, MacCurtain's brother-in-law, was awakened when his sister Eilish called, "The police are below." Walsh opened the door, later telling the press, "I thought it was the usual raid." Two men with blackened faces, armed with revolvers, brushed past Walsh and Eilish up the stairs. When MacCurtain appeared in the doorway, the intruders shot and killed him.[47]

Another man who received a threatening letter was Michael McCarthy, a Sinn Féin urban councilor in Thurles, Co. Tipperary. On March 27, armed men knocked on his door and asked for "McCarthy." The councilor's brother James answered, and the unidentified men shot him dead.[48] The next night, Thomas O'Dwyer of Bouladuff, in the same county, was killed in similar fashion.[49]

The most sensational of these attacks was the killing of the Lord Mayor of Cork. On March 22, South Down MP Jeremiah MacVeagh called it "a police murder" in the House of Commons.[50] Two days later, *The Times* correspondent reported that this strange rumor was actually gaining credence:

> Public feeling is so inflamed that it has become quite irrational. Men believe what they want to believe, and the most outrageous charges against the Irish Government are accepted as Gospel truth by the majority of Nationalists. As I write the coroner's inquiry into the Lord Mayor of Cork's death has not been concluded, but only a few persons make any pretence of suspending their judgment. Sinn Fein asks the country to

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[46] *The Times* (London), March 22, 1920; Abbott, *Police Casualties in Ireland*, 64.
[47] *The Times* (London), March 22, 1920.
[48] *The Times* (London), March 29, 1920; Fr. Colmcille, "Tipperary's Fight in 1920," in *Capuchin Annual* (Dublin: 1970), 266-267.
[49] *The Times* (London), March 30, 1920.
[50] Jeremiah MacVeagh, "Murder (Lord Mayor of Cork)," HC Deb 22 March 1920 vol 127 cc23-5.

> accept, and apparently it does accept, the monstrous theory that Mr. MacCurtain was killed by actual agents of the Government, or at least by its friends.[51]

This quotation is worth noting for its complete incredulity toward the idea that the British government might murder one of its citizens. The same day, the *Irish Bulletin* printed evidence from the MacCurtain inquest, including statements by Cork civilians that armed men—some wearing uniforms with civilian overcoats and caps—left the area of the Lord Mayor's house after the killing and entered King Street RIC barracks.[52]

On March 30, *The Times* reported that it had new information on MacCurtain's killing. The night before his murder, the Lord Mayor attended a meeting of the Irish Republican Brotherhood, where several members were expelled for "infidelity to the cause." One of those expelled was allegedly shot soon afterward.[53] The next day, the London paper reiterated that "the Government have information that the Lord Mayor of Cork was the victim of Republican vengeance." The correspondent noted indignantly that "a deliberate attempt is being made to fasten this and other murders on the police." The writer added that information to be brought out at the inquest would provide a complete answer to these charges.[54] On April 1, Professor Stockley, the man allegedly shot following an IRB meeting on March 17, denied all knowledge of the society.[55] Arthur Griffith denied press allegations that MacCurtain was murdered by a "Sinn Fein Black Hand," accusing publications printing such an "infamous falsehood" of breaking "journalistic law." The *Irish Bulletin* insisted that "the murderers of Ald. MacCurtain are

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[51] *The Times* (London), March 24, 1920.
[52] *Irish Bulletin* (Dublin), March 24, 1920.
[53] *The Times* (London), March 30, 1920.
[54] *The Times* (London), March 31, 1920.
[55] *The Times* (London), April 1, 1920.

policemen."[56] On the other hand, Lord French gave an interview to the *Daily Mail* in which he stated emphatically that MacCurtain was murdered by "the Sinn Feiners themselves."[57]

The far less-publicized inquest verdict on James MacCarthy was given on April 13. The jury found that he had been murdered by "persons unknown, wearing long black overcoats and caps similar to those worn by policemen."[58] The inquest result for Thomas Dwyer stated that his killers were members of the Royal Irish Constabulary.[59] This verdict does not seem to have made the pages of *The Times*. The MacCurtain verdict, finally promulgated on April 19, surpassed both of these. The jury found that "the murder was organised and carried out by the R.I.C. officially directed by the British government." The verdict personally indicted District Inspector Oswald Swanzy, Divisional Commissioner Clayton, the RIC's Acting Inspector General T.J. Smith, former Chief Secretary Ian MacPherson, Lord Lieutenant French, and Prime Minister Lloyd George.[60]

The Times correspondent took notice of the verdict's wide-ranging nature, stating "It had been assumed that the coroner's jury at Cork would find a verdict of wilful murder against the police, but the flourish which involves the Prime Minister, the Lord Lieutenant, and the late Chief Secretary was not expected." The writer warned his readers, "It is not to be taken seriously, for the southern mind is prone to melodramatic gestures of this character."[61] Expected, melodramatic, ineffective; the verdict might have

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[56] *Irish Bulletin* (Dublin), April 1, 1920.
[57] *The Times* (London), April 8, 1920; *Irish Bulletin* (Dublin), April 9, 1920.
[58] *The Times* (London), April 14, 1920.
[59] *Irish Bulletin* (Dublin), April 16, 1920.
[60] *Irish Bulletin* (Dublin), April 19, 1920.
[61] *The Times* (London), April 19, 1920.

been all of these things, but it was still an embarrassment for the British government. In the House of Commons, Liberal MP Joseph Kenworthy asked if the government had information that MacCurtain was murdered by "a secret society," why it was not brought forward during the inquest. The question went unanswered.[62] The *New York Times* quoted the MacCurtain family attorney as saying, "The eyes of the civilized world were upon the trial and its result." Though an inquest verdict was not equivalent to criminal charges, the paper added that the police mentioned might expect to be arrested.[63] No arrests took place. Historians agree that members of the RIC likely killed MacCurtain, but analysis focuses on the propagandistic nature of the verdict and its use to discredit the police and government.[64]

The Easter Burnings

In the midst of the furor over the Dublin, Cork, and Tipperary assassinations, the guerrilla war continued. Despite *The Times* awakening to the guerrilla war situation, as Easter approached, officials worried about a mass uprising in imitation of 1916. In the House of Commons on March 22, Clement Edwards asked the Prime Minister if the government had information of a "rising" scheduled for April 5—Easter Monday. Clearly the British IRA had made an impression, as Edwards suggested that action would take place not only in Ireland but Glasgow, Liverpool, and Manchester, supported by a German arms landing. Lloyd George refused to answer the question.[65]

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[62] Joseph Kenworthy, "Murder of Alderman MacCurtain," HC Deb 22 April 1920 vol 128 cc534-5.
[63] *New York Times*, April 18, 1920.
[64] John Borgonovo, *Spies, Informers and the 'Anti-Sinn Féin Society': The Intelligence War in Cork City, 1919-1921* (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 2007), 106; Hart, *The I.R.A. and Its Enemies*, 321; Hopkinson, *The Irish War of Independence*, 109.
[65] Clement Edwards, "Local Risings (Alleged)," HC Deb 22 March 1920 vol 127 cc21-2.

On April 3, strong military pickets placed barricades across the roads leading into Dublin and searched every vehicle and individual entering the city. The *New York Times* correspondent reported that for the past week the military had been moving ammunition into the city, guarded by armored cars. Similar precautions were taken in other towns, including Londonderry, Limerick, Newry, and Tipperary, and soldiers manning a barricade told the correspondent they were likely to continue for several days.[66] While a "well-informed citizen" assured the *New York Times* writer that nothing untoward would happen in Dublin, *The Times*' correspondent cautioned, "it is possible that the week will not pass without some disturbance in the South or West."[67] Even as that statement was being committed to paper, the "disturbance" was likely already beginning.

At 9 p.m., four Dublin tax offices were simultaneously set on fire. *The Times* correspondent conveyed reports of similar incidents in Kilkenny, Dundalk, and Cork. The Newry custom house was partially burned, and at least twenty unoccupied barracks around the country were destroyed. Another reporter stated that all of the tax offices in Belfast had been attacked, and the city's venerable custom house had been damaged by fire.[68] Even these initial reports do not convey the full extent of the damage. The number of empty police barracks destroyed grew daily as press reports came in from around the country.

Confusion abounded as to why the attacks took place, and how many rebels had been involved. *The Times* editorialized that they had been "stage-managed" to press for wider powers in the Home Rule Bill. The view from London could not frame the conflict outside of parliamentary politics or recognize that there was a military purpose in

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[66] *New York Times*, April 4, 1920.
[67] *The Times*, April 5, 1920.
[68] *The Times*, April 5, 1920.

destroying the abandoned posts. Observers on the ground in Dublin were far more impressed by the synchronized actions. By April 5, the London paper's correspondent was aware of 140 barracks destroyed, and repeated the *Irish Times* assertion that the country was in a "state of war."[69] The final count for that night was 218 barracks destroyed and 17 tax offices raided throughout Ireland, but most observers exaggerated the numbers upward.[70]

IRA Headquarters had issued orders for the simultaneous and systematic attacks, due to rumors that the empty barracks might be reoccupied by the military.[71] The next issue of *An t'Óglác*—which claimed 250 "enemy strongholds" were destroyed—said that the success meant that even bigger operations could be carried out.[72] The Attorney-General for Ireland Denis Henry contemplated that if 250 barracks had been destroyed, and at least 100 men were involved in each, the rebels might have had 25,000 men under arms that night. This did not fit with the government's insistence that the crimes in Ireland were being committed by small, unsupported murder gangs. T.P. O'Connor mused "one might almost call it war."[73] Robert Cecil insisted the situation was not war; the rebels did not deserve to be treated as though they were at war with the British Empire. The word he chose was "anarchy." Nevertheless, he was forced to admit that "we are drifting through anarchy and humiliation towards an Irish republic."[74]

The destruction of so many barracks across the country cleared the RIC from large areas of rural Ireland. As everyday structures of government, particularly police

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[69] *The Times* (London), April 6, 1920.
[70] *The Times* (London), April 7, 1920.
[71] *An t'Óglác* (Dublin), May 15, 1920; Dalton, *With the Dublin Brigade*, 68-71.
[72] *An t'Óglác* (Dublin), April 15, 1920.
[73] Denis Henry, T.P. O'Connor, "Irish Administration," HC Deb 13 April 1920 vol 127 cc1538-91.
[74] Robert Cecil, "Crime in Ireland," HC Deb 26 April 1920 vol 128 cc957-95.

and court services, retreated into the larger towns, republican organizations stepped in to fill the void. The IRA established unarmed "police" units in many areas. Though these particularly served areas from which the RIC had been expelled, in some places both the Constabulary and their republican rivals existed side by side. Policing activity proved so popular with Volunteers that in August *An t'Óglác* had to remind its readers that a war was on, and "the primary duty and *raison d'être* of the Volunteers is to fight the enemy."[75] Another initiative was the establishment of the Dáil or "Sinn Féin" courts. Set up to prosecute criminals and arbitrate land disputes, some tenants, landless laborers, and small farmers hoped these republican courts would invariably work to break up large estates and redistribute land.[76] While significant redistribution took place, the brand of justice Dáil judges sought to implement was far less revolutionary, and they prided themselves on dealing evenhandedly with landlords, tenants, and small farmers.[77]

During the uproar over the Easter burnings, a new commander in chief of British forces arrived in Ireland. Nevil Macready was chosen to replace Frederick Shaw due to his dual police and military experience, and the resulting belief that this would enable him to coordinate the varied forces in Ireland.[78] Macready later wrote that he did not want the job, because he realized his work "would be affected by every variation of the political weathercock." Before leaving London, he attempted to learn all he could about Sinn Féin, including reading Arthur Griffith's *The Resurrection of Hungary*. Macready

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[75] *An t'Óglác* (Dublin), August 15, 1920.
[76] Kevin O'Shiel, "The last land war? Kevin O'Shiel's Memoir of the Irish Revolution (1916-21)," ed. Fergus Campbell, *Archivium Hibernicum* 57 (2003): 188, 199-200.
[77] Conor A. Maguire, "The Republican Courts," in *Capuchin Annual* (Dublin: 1969), 379-380; *An t'Óglác* denounced what it described as "land-greed" among the landless and small farmers in its May 1, 1920 issue.
[78] Andrew Bonar Law, "Crime in Ireland," HC Deb 26 April 1920 vol 128 cc957-95; Macready, *Annals of an Active Life*, 2:425.

proclaimed it a precise blueprint for Sinn Féin activities, but that this inherently peaceful political movement had been hijacked by armed extremists.[79]

Upon arriving in Ireland on April 13 he found the destruction of the DMP's G-Division "accomplished" and the RIC in a state of "disintegration."[80] He admitted that the ex-soldiers "diluting" the RIC did little to fight the insurrection.[81] These observations led to the conclusion that the Irish police were of little use as fighting forces, and Macready's opinions contributed to the growing alienation between them and the military. The general also recognized the need for positive relations with the press. He wrote, "A factor which increased the exasperation of the troops was the total absence of counter propaganda on the part of the Government in reply to the very efficient circulation of systematic falsehood spread broadcast by Sinn Fein and their friends in England and America."[82] Sixteen days after arriving in Dublin, Macready called a press conference. He informed the assembled journalists that when incidents took place involving British troops, his command staff would provide them with prompt information. Macready also assured them these regular reports would not be used to influence the press or provide propaganda.[83]

Following the coordinated assaults of Easter 1920, the conflict settled into a pattern of localized action. Arson became one of the main weapons in the insurgent arsenal. Flammable materials were easier to obtain than firearms, and burning a building provided an opportunity to involve a large number of Volunteers in a local action. These operations were not without risks. One republican was wounded and four captured while

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[79] Macready, *Annals of an Active Life*, 2:430-431.
[80] Macready, *Annals of an Active Life*, 2:435, 439.
[81] Macready, *Annals of an Active Life*, 2:455.
[82] Macready, *Annals of an Active Life*, 2:454.
[83] *The Times* (London), April 30, 1920.

burning Belmullet coastguard station in Co. Mayo in August.[84] The following month, the RIC evacuated Ballinlough barracks in Co. Roscommon. Hours after the police left, a number of republicans set fire to the barracks. As they were watching the building burn, a military patrol approached and shot three of them dead.[85]

Attacks on occupied posts resumed as well. The Limerick Volunteers pioneered a new technique during an attack on Ballylanders barrack on April 27. Instead of blowing in a wall, the Volunteers entered an adjoining building, broke a hole in the roof, and dropped in a grenade, followed by paraffin and a lighted torch. As flames spread over the top floor of the barracks, the five-man garrison surrendered.[86] The brigade used the same technique in attacking Kilmallock barracks one month later. However, with the main structure engulfed in flames, the garrison retreated to an outbuilding and refused to surrender. As ammunition and bombs began to explode in the barracks, the Volunteers' leader Tomás Ó Maoileóin, operating under the name Sean Forde, decided to break off the attack. The barracks was almost completely destroyed and had to be evacuated the next day. Volunteer Liam Scully was killed during the operation.[87]

Though a strategic victory for the republicans, the police heads attempted to use the tenacious defense at Kilmallock as propaganda material. Constable John M. Regan said the police were slow to recognize the value of good publicity. He invoked a maxim from Aeschylus in writing, "We did not appreciate the fact that the first casualty in war is truth and that propaganda was regarded as a legitimate weapon of the most powerful

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[84] *Irish Bulletin* (Dublin), Oct. 14, 1920.
[85] *Irish Bulletin* (Dublin), Sept. 20, 1920.
[86] *The Times* (London), April 29, 1920; J.M. MacCarthy, "Roof Fire Technique was Exploited in Capture of Ballylanders Barrack," in *With the I.R.A. in the Fight for Freedom*, 51-55.
[87] Michael Quirke, "Raid on Kilmallock RIC Barracks," in *Our Struggled for Independence*, 85-91.

kind."[88] The RIC's reputation had been damaged by implication in multiple murders of republicans, and Kilmallock offered a chance to rebuild it.

Constable Jeremiah Mee said the official version of the engagement ran as follows: "the report of the attack on Kilmallock barracks indicated that the R.I.C. defenders offered to surrender on conditions that their lives be spared and that this request was denied by the attackers."[89] This account differs from republican remembrances in one key respect. Tomás Ó Maoileóin and Michael Quirke state that the Volunteer commander called on the garrison to surrender several times, and they refused.[90] Contemporary press reports confirm the republican version of events. The *New York Times* quoted local sources asserting, "The garrison was called upon to surrender and upon refusing the barracks were attacked from the front and back with rifle fire and bombs."[91] Nonetheless, Mee says that the official version "was emphasized again and again by the police authorities and had the desired effect – that of furthering the alienation of the vast majority of the R.I.C. from Sinn Féin." In addition to increasing hostility between the republicans and the police, Mee says that the incident was used to boost morale. He wrote, "The defence of Kilmallock was also held up to the R.I.C. as an example of bravery and dedication to duty which they were encouraged to follow."[92]

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[88] John M. Regan, *The Memoirs of John M. Regan, A Catholic Officer in the RIC and RUC, 1909-1948*, ed. Joost Augusteijn (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2007), 168.
[89] Mee, *Memoirs of Constable Jeremiah Mee*, 86.
[90] Quirke, "Raid on Kilmallock RIC Barracks," 89-90; Ó Maoileóin, *Survivors*, 87.
[91] *New York Times*, May 29, 1920.
[92] Mee, *Memoirs of Constable Jeremiah Mee*, 86.

Flying Columns

Another development in the aftermath of Kilmallock had enormous implications for the IRA's intensification of the conflict. In this operation, as well as those that preceded it, Volunteers assembled at a point of attack or ambush, received weapons from the battalion or brigade arms dump, and carried out a plan conceived by their officers. The Volunteers would then go back to their homes, or men "on the run" would find a safe house. There was a growing feeling among IRA members that they needed a standing force to carry out a sustained series of attacks. The May 15 issue of *An t'Óglác* urged Volunteers to "Speed Up the Work," calling for "intensive, persistent, and widespread guerilla warfare."[93]

Following Kilmallock, Donal O'Hannigan and P. Clancy of the East Limerick Brigade traveled from Liam Scully's funeral in Tournafulla to Sixmilebridge, Co. Clare, where an attack was planned. When the operation was canceled, they returned to East Limerick. O'Hannigan later wrote, "Fully armed we had traveled over 30 miles cross-country in daylight without any great difficulty." Deprived of Clancy, who was arrested, O'Hannigan gathered a unit of twelve Volunteers from the East Limerick Brigade as the IRA's first standing "active service unit." O'Hannigan said of the force, "What we had in mind was an efficient, disciplined, compact and swift-moving body of men which would strike at the enemy where and when a suitable opportunity arose."[94] The unit carried out its first operation on July 9, disarming four constables at Ballinahinch. Its

[93] *An t'Óglác* (Dublin), May 15, 1920.
[94] Donal O'Hannigan, "Origin of the Flying Column," *An Cosantóir* 6:12 (1946): 622.

first active engagement occurred four days later, when the Volunteers ambushed a military patrol at Emly.[95]

The idea for flying columns has been attributed to several individuals. The discrepancy is important relative to how GHQ interacted with units around the country. Dan Breen credited his Tipperary comrade Sean Treacy with the idea. He writes, "We wanted full-time soldiers who were prepared to fight by night or by day, ready for any adventure. They would constitute a mobile force capable of striking at a given moment in one district and on the next day springing a surprise thirty miles away."[96] The similarity between this and O'Hannigan's statement reveal analogous strains of thought occurring at roughly the same time in different parts of Ireland. Various contemporaries, including Dublin Volunteer Joe Good and General Macready, assert that Michael Collins invented the units.[97] This reflects a tendency to attribute every republican initiative to the energetic Collins. Piaras Béaslaí made two statements regarding Dick McKee's involvement with the flying columns. Initially, Béaslaí writes that the units were formed "largely due to his initiative."[98] Later, he refers to "McKee's plan of 'flying columns' in each brigade area."[99]

The second statement is likely closer to actual developments. McKee spent his time in Dublin, and like Breen, Collins, and Treacy, could not have been responsible for the formation of units elsewhere in the country. They each might have had theories about full-time mobile republican units, but O'Hannigan's evidence and the chronology of the

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[95] Donal O'Hannigan, "The Flying Column Originated in East Limerick," in *Limerick's Fighting Story*, 165-169; Mannix Joyce, "Limerick 1920," in *Capuchin Annual* (Dublin: 1970), 296.
[96] Breen, *My Fight for Irish Freedom*, 127.
[97] Good, *Enchanted by Dreams*, 160; Macready, *Annals of an Active Life*, 2:507.
[98] Béaslaí, *Michael Collins and the Making of a New Ireland*, 1:200-201.
[99] Béaslaí, *Michael Collins and the Making of a New Ireland*, 2:74.

conflict establish that the first functioning column began operating in East Limerick. All of the Dublin officers listed likely encouraged GHQ staff to adopt flying columns as a policy. The tactical innovation took place in the field, but Headquarters adopted the idea and sought to facilitate its spread to other areas.

In addition to providing a standing body of troops, the columns helped to alleviate the arms situation. Brigades and later battalions forming a column pooled their weapons on the understanding that they would be more effective in the hands of a compact striking force than scattered in dumps across the countryside. Even so, the East Limerick column began with five Lee-Enfield service rifles, one old Winchester, seventy rifle rounds, three shotguns, three revolvers, and a few cartridges for each. This was hardly a formidable arsenal.[100] It is no surprise that their first action was to seize arms from a police patrol. Local Volunteers were often called up to provide support for an ambush or attack in a given area. They would normally make use of shotguns or revolvers, while the column men used rifles. In August IRA Headquarters "recommended" that all brigades form flying columns, and in September issued orders to each unit to do so.[101] GHQ organized camps all over the country to facilitate the growth of the new units.[102]

It is not surprising that several IRA officers conceived ideas of flying columns at approximately the same time. Republican journals show an obsession with highly mobile British forces as early as 1919. On August 2 of that year, one of the earliest issues of the *Irish Bulletin* reported that "flying columns of English forces" were scouring the Limerick countryside for republican suspects.[103] Following the April 1920 burnings, *The*

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[100] O'Hannigan, "The Flying Column Originated in East Limerick," in *Limerick's Fighting Story*, 169.
[101] O'Hannigan, "Origins of the Flying Column," 624; Barry, *Guerilla Days in Ireland*, 19.
[102] O'Hannigan, "Origins of the Flying Column," 624.
[103] *Irish Bulletin* (Dublin), August 2, 1919.

Times asserted that General Macready was establishing "a system of garrison posts and flying columns" as part of reforming the deployment of British forces in Ireland.[104] The June 1 issue of *An t'Óglác* highlighted the dangers of this formation to republican units, as they might give the military the capacity to counterattack during barrack sieges.[105] There is no evidence that military and police deviated from their usual system of patrols until 1921, but fear of this type of mobile unit likely prompted republican officers to press for similar measures in their own organization.[106]

While these preparations for larger-scale actions were in progress, members of the Second Cork Brigade pulled off the IRA's greatest publicity stunt yet. On June 26, 1920, Brigadier-General C.H.T. Lucas and two aides were on a fishing trip near Fermoy. A squad of the IRA's Second Cork Brigade seized the trio as they returned from the River Blackwater to their cabin. Colonel Danford was shot during a subsequent escape attempt, and Colonel Tyrell was left behind with his dying comrade.[107] The *Irish Bulletin* did not admit that the IRA had the general in custody, but published news of his capture. The issue also reported another attack on Fermoy, where British soldiers again wrecked shops in the town upon learning of Lucas's misfortune. Other disturbances took place in Lismore, and bombs were thrown at the houses of prominent republicans in Limerick and Newcastlewest.[108] *The Times* carried the story under the headline "A Sinn Fein Coup," and by June 30 was citing the *Irish Bulletin* as its source for updates on his condition. It

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[104] *The Times* (London), May 19, 1920.
[105] *An t'Óglác* (Dublin), June 1, 1920.
[106] T.A. Lowe, "Some Reflections of a Junior Commander Upon 'the Campaign' in Ireland 1920 and 1921," *Army Quarterly* (1922): 56.
[107] George Power, "The Capture of General Lucas," in *Rebel Cork's Fighting Story: 1916-1921, Told by the Men Who Made It*, ed. Peter Hart and Brian Ó Conchubhair (Cork, Ireland: Mercier Press, 2009), 82-87.
[108] *Irish Bulletin* (Dublin), June 29, 1920; *Irish Bulletin* (Dublin), Oct. 1, 1920.

is worth noting that the London paper made no mention of the reprisals carried out in the wake of the abduction.[109]

The kidnapping turned into little more than a publicity stunt because, having succeeded in capturing the general, the republicans were not sure what to do with him. There was a vague idea of holding him as ransom for the release of Volunteer Michael Fitzgerald, who was on hunger-strike in Mountjoy, but nothing came of it.[110] The Second Cork Volunteers had disregarded one of Clausewitz's central tenets: military action without a clear political objective is useless.[111] The republicans transferred General Lucas from North Cork to West Limerick, where the Volunteers also found him a nuisance. Guarding the high-profile prisoner occupied fighters who could be engaged in other work, and the necessity of feeding him imposed on local families already providing for the Volunteers on the run.

The West Limerick officers shifted Lucas to East Clare. Commandant Michael Brennan complained, "His presence completely immobilised us as we daren't do anything which would involve raiding by the British." GHQ was embarrassed by the unprofitable hostage, and a visitor from Dublin asked Brennan, "Why the hell doesn't he escape?" Two nights in a row the Clare Volunteers neglected to place a guard outside Lucas's window, and on July 29 the general finally made his getaway. A military patrol picked Lucas up from the roadside. Ironically, the convoy ran into an ambush at Oola, Co. Tipperary, while taking the general to safety.[112] The patrol arrived safely, and the press interpreted the unrelated ambush as an attempt to re-capture Lucas. The headlines

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[109] *The Times* (London), June 28, 1920; *The Times* (London), June 30, 1920.
[110] Power, "The Capture of General Lucas," in *Rebel Cork's Fighting Story*, 82-83.
[111] von Clausewitz, *On War*, 405-406 [Bk V, Ch. VI].
[112] Brennan, *The War in Clare*, 54-56.

in *The Times* rang out the next day, "General Lucas Escapes, Roadside Fight and Rescue."[113]

The Auxiliaries, the *Weekly Summary*, and Reprisals

Between June and July, the situation was so bad from the British point of view that at least one high-ranking military figure saw a danger of British forces being forced off the island altogether. Henry Wilson, a Co. Longford native and chief of the imperial general staff, was an upper-level officer with deep connections to the prewar opposition to Home Rule. In 1914, as an officer at Imperial Headquarters in London, he had encouraged the "Curragh mutiny" during which British officers in Ireland decided to resign rather than move against the Ulster Volunteer Force (UVF).[114] Wilson's support for drastic measures against republicans may have been prompted by an acceptance of the precarious position of the British presence in Ireland. As a Unionist from outside the six-county area in which they formed a majority, Wilson understood that Irish Unionists were vastly outnumbered and no military campaign could hope to win overwhelming popular support. While most observers believed that republican victory against the British was impossible, Wilson's writings reveal a genuine fear that Crown forces could be expelled from Ireland.

Wilson's letters show that his major concern was not casualties in large actions, but rather the cumulative effect on morale of soldiers engaging in policing operations. He wrote to Secretary of State for War Winston Churchill, "I have absolutely no faith in the present regime as a semi-military semi-police operation, and I think that before long

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[113] *The Times* (London), July 31, 1920.
[114] Wilson, *Field Marshal Sir Henry Wilson: His Life and Diaries*, 1:140-141.

we will find that the troops do not like the work." Mentioning the disarming of seven soldiers in Ennis and rebel sniping in Londonderry, he wrote to Churchill the next day: "These are very deplorable incidents and are very bad for the troops. They will continue until the Government realize that they are at war with Sinn Fein and say so and *act* on the fact." Churchill responded that it was not as simple as "declaring war," and asked the general to draw up a series of specific regulations he wished to see in place. Wilson did not do so.[115]

Wilson wrote in his diary on June 28 that he "really believed we shall be kicked out" of Ireland.[116] Meeting with Churchill on July 11, the general said, "the present policy was suicidal, and it would lead to our being put out of Ireland, that we must take strong measures or retire." He saw the Irish conflict as the possible beginning of a cascade of reverses for Britain and acknowledged the importance of winning greater support among the British public. Wilson told Churchill "that if we retired we lost our Empire, that before we take strong measures we must convince England that they are necessary."[117] While politicians including Lloyd George and Hamar Greenwood insisted that supporters of the insurrection constituted a minority among nationalists, Wilson had already given up on winning Irish hearts and minds. He only wanted British support for strong measures against them.

Instead of handing the situation over to the military, the British government continued to reinforce the RIC with former soldiers. On July 10, 1920, the order to form the Auxiliary Division Royal Irish Constabulary was issued. This force originated in a Cabinet suggestion in May to form a special "gendarmerie" to supplement the RIC. The

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[115] Wilson, *The Military Correspondence of Field Marshal Sir Henry Wilson*, 180-182.
[116] Wilson, *Field Marshal Sir Henry Wilson: His Life and Diaries*, 2:246.
[117] Wilson, *Field Marshal Sir Henry Wilson: His Life and Diaries*, 2:252.

result was what government touted as a corps d'élite. By July 23, General Tudor told the Cabinet he had 500 recruits, all of them former Army officers. Though designated "temporary cadets," they had the rank of sergeant within the RIC, and were paid £1 per day. Unlike the Black and Tans, the "Auxies" as they were quickly nicknamed, did not integrate into the regular RIC but formed their own 100-man companies.[118] They also had distinctive khaki and black uniforms topped with a tam-o-shanter bonnet. The new force was heavily armed, as each cadet carried a Lee-Enfield carbine, bayonet, grenades, and a revolver worn low on the hip in what Lord French dubbed "the American style." Each company included a machine-gun section.[119]

C.J.C. Street described the Auxiliaries as "a striking force," only to be deployed in "disturbed areas."[120] Like other constables they took the police oath, but as with all the other forces in Ireland their duties incorporated military features. Addressing a newly raised company in October, Lord French immediately reminded them of their military service, told them their task was "putting down rebellion," and added, "to strengthen such a magnificent force as the Royal Irish Constabulary is a task worthy of soldiers who have proved their prowess and mettle on many a blood-stained field of battle."[121] The force almost immediately became confused with the Black and Tans in the press, among republicans, and with politicians.[122] The Auxiliaries were placed under the command of Frank Percy Crozier, another officer with ties to the Ulster Volunteer Force.[123] By October 1920 nine companies of the Auxiliary Division were dispersed in what the

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[118] Street, *Administration of Ireland 1920*, 281-282; Townshend, *The British Campaign in Ireland*, 110-111.
[119] French, *Administration of Ireland 1920*, 283.
[120] Street, *Administration of Ireland 1920*, 283.
[121] French, *Administration of Ireland 1920*, 284.
[122] *The Times* (London), Oct. 9, 1920.
[123] F.P. Crozier, *Impressions and Recollections*, 143.

commander called "the hot spots": Clare, Cork, Dublin, Galway, Kerry, Kilkenny, Limerick, Mayo, and Meath.[124]

On the propaganda front, the British government launched its response to the *Irish Bulletin*. Dublin Castle's *Weekly Summary*, a four-sheet newsletter, debuted on August 13, 1920. In form and substance it greatly resembled the *Irish Bulletin*. It quoted excerpts from daily publications, captured republican documents, and British leaders' speeches, as well as published its own editorials. Hamar Greenwood described the circumstances that gave rise to the *Weekly Summary* in the House of Commons, saying, "When I undertook the office of Secretary for Ireland, the police, especially those living in remote parts, were almost marooned in their barracks, and this we thought was the proper way of connecting them with the central organisation in Dublin and keeping them in touch with events in Ireland."[125] As far as the editing and production of the paper were concerned, Greenwood said, "This publication is produced by the heads of the police for the benefit of the members of that force who, if no such periodical existed, would have no means of knowing the truth regarding current events in Ireland."[126]

The *Weekly Summary* attacked the IRA as a "murder gang"—echoing statements by British politicians—and derided the Dáil's propaganda efforts as part of the "screen of terrorism" put up around the republican movement. While gunmen terrorized ordinary, law-abiding Irish people into accepting their illusory "republic," republican propaganda

[124] F.P. Crozier, *Ireland For Ever*, 95.
[125] Hamar Greenwood, "Weekly Summary," HC Deb 22 November 1920 vol 135 cc32-4.
[126] Hamar Greenwood, "Weekly Summary," HC Deb 22 November 1920 vol 135 cc32-4.

subverted the truth about the violence.[127] Columns in the *Weekly Summary* always insisted that the rebels were on the verge of defeat.[128]

Unlike the *Irish Bulletin* in its early days, the Dublin Castle publication did not ignore the uglier actions of its adherents. In a period when British generals and the public were debating the necessity or morality of uniformed police or soldiers destroying citizens' property, it stated flatly that Crown forces were responsible for reprisals carried out after republican attacks. Yet, it was so vigorous in its insistence that murders of policemen or soldiers caused a reaction against people and property where IRA attacks occurred that it appeared such retaliation was natural rather than deliberate.[129] British leaders were united in both their condemnation of reprisals and their inability or unwillingness to do anything about them. Hamar Greenwood assured the press that reprisals were not government policy and that steps had been taken to prevent them.[130] Macready was much more tolerant of such breaches of discipline, saying in an interview, "the machinery of the law having been broken down they [the police] feel there is no certain means of redress or punishment, and it is only human that they should act on their own initiative."[131]

The *Weekly Summary* regularly reported statements of the "Anti-Sinn Fein Society," supposedly a civilian group undertaking vigilante actions against violent republicans in the south of Ireland. Historian John Borgonovo persuasively argues that this title was a façade behind which off-duty police carried out reprisals against

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[127] *Weekly Summary* (Dublin), Oct. 8, 1920.
[128] *Weekly Summary* (Dublin), Feb. 25, 1921.
[129] *Weekly Summary* (Dublin), Feb. 11, 1921.
[130] *The Times* (London), Sept. 29, 1920.
[131] *The Times* (London), Sept. 27, 1920.

republican suspects.[132] In the House of Commons, British MP Joseph Kenworthy quoted a resolution supposedly emanating from the Lismore branch of this society to the effect that "if any attempt was made to kill any servants of the Crown a Sinn Feiner would be killed, or else if one was not available two sympathisers would be killed." Kenworthy was not taken in, saying, "I do not know what that society is. I am informed that it is a spectre, and that there is no such society or branch at all." He went on to point out the danger of publicizing such a declaration: "That resolution published in the 'Weekly Summary' was sent to every barracks in Ireland, and these young recruits would read it—these young men living in this super-heated atmosphere. Hon. Members may laugh, but I call that incitement to murder."[133]

According to Henry Wilson, Prime Minister David Lloyd George was aware and approved of the murders of republicans. At the same time, he disavowed any official involvement:

> He [Lloyd George] reverted to his amazing theory that someone was murdering 2 Sinn Feiners to every loyalist the Sinn Feiners murdered. I told him that, of course, this was absolutely not so, but he seemed to be satisfied that a counter-murder association was the best answer to Sinn Fein murders. A crude idea of statesmanship, and he will have a rude awakening.[134]

For his part, Wilson preferred flooding Ireland with regular troops and strangling the rebellion. The situation was too complicated to be dealt with either by official repression or unacknowledged reprisals, and it was left to the *Weekly Summary* to describe what no other part of the state would yet admit.

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[132] Borgonovo, *Spies, Informers and the 'Anti-Sinn Féin Society'*, 16.
[133] Joseph Kenworthy, "Murders and Reprisals," HC Deb 24 November 1920 vol 135 cc487-601.
[134] Wilson, *Field Marshal Sir Henry Wilson: His Life and Diaries*, 251.

The debate on reprisals soon took a turn. On September 20, Head Constable Peter Burke, an instructor at Gormanstown police depot, met his brother and RIC Sergeant Michael in a pub in Balbriggan, Co. Dublin. The two were shot by a republican police patrol, Peter fatally. The *Irish Bulletin* asserted that the RIC officers had refused to pay their bill and drawn revolvers on the republican police when they appeared. These accusations were repeated in the House of Commons.[135] Two hours later, a party of Auxiliaries arrived from Gormanstown depot. For five hours, they ran riot in the town. One of their first acts was to burn down the hosiery factory, the principal employer in the area. Houses were cleared of inhabitants and burned to the ground. The invaders took John Gibbon out of his house into the street, where they shot and bayoneted him. They also seized James Lawless and took him to the local police barracks, where he was killed.[136]

The Times reported every detail of the incident, as well as reports of reprisals in Carrick-on-Shannon, Frenchpark, Macroom, Tralee, and Tuam.[137] A September 23 editorial stated, "We made allowances for exaggeration on the part of those who are seeking to blacken the reputation of British rule; but we found a residuum of truth which seemed to support the charge that the forces of the Crown are no longer acting in accordance with the standards of civilized government."[138] For the paper that had so vigorously defended the RIC from accusations of involvement in the MacCurtain murder six months previously, this was a significant admission. It went on to say that its writers

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[135] *Irish Bulletin* (Dublin), Sept. 25, 1920; Arthur Henderson, "Vote of Censure Proposed," HC Deb 20 October 1920 vol 133 cc925-1039.
[136] *Irish Bulletin* (Dublin), Sept. 25, 1920; *The Times* (London), Sept. 22, 1920; Abbott, *Police Casualties in Ireland*, 122-123.
[137] *The Times* (London), Sept. 22, 1920.
[138] *The Times* (London), Sept. 23, 1920.

did not believe that British leaders had sanctioned "a war of indiscriminate retaliation upon the Irish people for the offences of Irish extremists," but that "the new Irish police have, with some encouragement, arrogated themselves a free hand in inflicting indiscriminate and illegal punishments."[139]

Hamar Greenwood stated in the House of Commons that the Balbriggan episode was regrettable, but proposed no punishments for those involved. He believed instead that "the best and the surest way to stop reprisals is to stop the murder of policemen," a sentiment expressed almost word-for-word twelve days earlier in the *Weekly Summary*.[140] Dublin Castle official Mark Sturgis wrote in his diary that if the Auxiliaries had simply "confined themselves to the dignified shooting of the two prominent Sinns, notorious bad men, the reprisals would have been not so bad," adding, "worse things can happen than the firing up of a sink like Balbriggan."[141] At the same time that individuals at various levels of the British administration were permitting both reprisals and the killings of alleged Sinn Féiners, the press was beginning to admit these things were taking place and to criticize the government for allowing them. While the *Irish Bulletin*—which had alleged these acts throughout the conflict—gained greater credibility among the mainstream press, the *Weekly Summary*'s defense of reprisals made it increasingly infamous.

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[139] *The Times* (London), Sept. 23, 1920.
[140] Hamar Greenwood, "Vote of Censure Proposed," HC Deb 20 October 1920 vol 133 cc925-1039; *Weekly Summary* (Dublin), Oct. 8, 1920.
[141] Mark Sturgis, *Last Days of Dublin Castle: The Mark Sturgis Diaries*, ed. Michael Hopkinson (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 1999), 43.

Conclusion

The opening months of 1920 saw the IRA launch an all-out assault on the RIC. Barrack assaults and a widespread arson campaign coordinated by GHQ eliminated the force from much of Ireland, enabling republican government over much of the cleared area. The *Irish Bulletin* established itself as a credible news source by vigorously arguing that the RIC were murdering republicans, as well as reporting incidents such as the kidnapping of General Lucas. Many IRA units established flying columns to intensify the guerrilla struggle, and GHQ constantly encouraged more widespread action. Witnessing this radical diminution of its authority, Dublin Castle and the British government took steps to reinforce the RIC with British recruits. They also established the *Weekly Summary* to counter republican propaganda. Both of these initiatives backfired as the Black and Tans and Auxiliaries proved unsuited to police work and began to deliver heavy-handed reprisals in the wake of republican attacks, while the *Weekly Summary* began to function merely to excuse their excesses. By September, brutal patterns were emerging in the variegated and chaotic conflict: assassination and counter-assassination, sabotage and counter-sabotage, ambush and reprisal. With these dynamics set, the war was to enter its fiercest phase.

CHAPTER FIVE:

NEW HEIGHTS OF VIOLENCE, OCTOBER 1920-JULY 1921

This chapter will show that republican GHQ initiatives sparked a dramatic rise of violence in the final three months of 1920. The IRA's leadership mandated widespread action in the wake of high-profile republican deaths, and many country units responded with vigor. The intelligence war culminated in a large, coordinated operation in November, planned by the IRA's intelligence department and approved by GHQ staff. Having mandated that all units establish flying columns, these units increased the number and scale of attacks. Though scoring many successes, some of these units operated almost autonomously of any higher authority, causing potential disruptions in the brigade hierarchy. Operations involving large numbers of Volunteers threw inexperienced fighters into an increasing intense guerrilla war, causing a string of republican casualties early in 1921. Nevertheless GHQ continued to encourage more attacks, particularly outside the southwest region, where units had responded most vigorously to the call to form flying columns.

IRA leaders also instituted a new organizational scheme in 1921, designed to increase communication between GHQ and units around the country. Some brigade leaders resented what they saw as a growing bureaucracy within the IRA. Throughout this period, the press increasingly singled out republican leaders. The names of GHQ staff appeared in the press for the first time, indicating that British military intelligence was making inroads into the organization and angering republicans who felt individuals were using the movement for self-aggrandizement. The sudden cessation of hostilities

during the truce of July 1921 caught the rank-and-file of both sides by surprise. The IRA and British forces both felt they were making headway against their opponents and excoriated the politicians who had deprived them of victory. On the republican side, this added to tensions caused by the IRA's convoluted hierarchy and individual hostilities. This chapter will argue that while GHQ succeeded in maintaining a guerrilla force in the field despite enormous government pressure, structural issues within the IRA organization added to the tensions that burst forth in the political debates over the Anglo-Irish Treaty that ended the war in December 1921.

Republican Vengeance: MacSwiney, Kevin Barry, Bloody Sunday

October ended badly for the British government in Ireland. In the north, Belfast and Londonderry were consumed by rioting, while republicans attacked a barracks in Fermanagh. Republican flying columns were becoming active around the country. In the west, the IRA launched multiple attacks in Galway, Roscommon, and Sligo.[1] Republicans carried out ambushes and barrack attacks in Clare.[2] Insurgents attacked military and police in Kilkenny, King's County, and Westmeath. Columns from the Cork Brigades carried out multiple attacks, including a successful ambush of the Essex Regiment at Toureen.[3] The First Tipperary Brigade column ambushed a military patrol at Thomastown on October 28.[4] Police or military reprisals followed most of these attacks.

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[1] *The Times* (London), Oct. 26, 1920; *New York Times*, Oct. 18, 1920; Abbott, *Police Casualties in Ireland*, 133-134, 138-139.
[2] *New York Times*, Oct. 19, 1920; Abbott, *Police Casualties in Ireland*, 130, 135.
[3] *New York Times*, Oct. 23, 1920; *New York Times*, Oct. 24, 1920; Abbott, *Police Casualties in Ireland*, 134.
[4] Tadhg Crowe, "Life with a Flying Column, 1919-1921," *Tipperary Historical Journal* 17 (2004): 255.

None of this violent activity was as damaging for the British government as the solitary death of Terence MacSwiney. Elected Lord Mayor of Cork after the late Tomás MacCurtain, MacSwiney was arrested during an RIC raid on City Hall on August 12. He immediately went on hunger strike, refused to recognize the court that tried him for possession of IRA documents, and imprisoned in Brixton jail. The press carried regular reports of MacSwiney's condition during the seventy-four-day ordeal, particularly in the last weeks before he died.[5] Terence MacSwiney's funeral turned into an enormous public demonstration. The British government was already embarrassed by the fatal hunger strike. Hundreds of prewar suffragettes had adopted the same tactic, but this was the first to result in death. Now a guard of "Irish Republican Volunteers," some in uniform, marched through the streets of London at the head of MacSwiney's funeral procession. They were followed by hundreds of mourners and surrounded by a silent, bareheaded crowd of London-Irish and sympathetic Britons. A few cheers even greeted what *The Times* called "the Sinn Fein flag."[6] The coffin was inscribed "Murdered by the Foreigner in Brixton Prison."[7]

Things did not improve as the days rolled into November. A military court had passed the death sentence on eighteen-year-old Volunteer Kevin Barry, captured taking part in an ambush in Dublin on September 20. The agitation for a reprieve was intense. Barry signed a statement alleging he was beaten in prison to give evidence against other republicans.[8] Arthur Griffith sent a "Message to the Civilised Nations" through the press, emphasizing Barry's youth and the fact that British forces captured by the IRA had not

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[5] *New York Times*, Oct. 19, 1920; *The Times* (London), Oct. 26, 1920; C. Harrington, "Arrest and Martyrdom of Terence MacSwiney," in *Rebel Cork's Fighting Story*, 62-63.
[6] *The Times* (London), Oct. 29, 1920.
[7] *New York Times*, Oct. 28, 1920.
[8] *Irish Bulletin* (Dublin), Oct. 28, 1920; *The Times* (London), Oct. 30, 1920.

been subject to execution.[9] The affair had military implications as well. *An t'Óglác* stated the hope that his execution would provide "a fresh inspiration and a fresh incentive to relentless warfare against the enemy murderers," and GHQ issued orders to all units to launch attacks in the wake of Barry's execution.[10]

The hanging took place on November 1, by which time a wave of attacks had already begun. Between October 30 and November 1, police or military were assaulted in counties Donegal, Kerry, Kilkenny, King's, Longford, Roscommon, Sligo, Tipperary, and Tyrone.[11] The most activity took place in Co. Kerry. Two RIC officers were kidnapped in Tralee—the county seat—on November 1. The next day a notice appeared warning of "reprisals of a nature yet not heard of" if they were not returned.[12] Police returned to the town each day for the next week, keeping all the shops closed, killing Thomas Wall, and wounding Simon O'Connor, both former British soldiers. The military patrolled the streets by day, but each night the police returned and burned businesses in the town. Market days were forbidden and food became scarce.[13] In the House of Commons, T.P. O'Connor read an article from the *Daily Mail* describing it as "like a town with the plague," while *The Times* headline read "Terror in Tralee."[14]

At approximately the same time, reprisals were taking place in Granard, Co. Longford. The IRA assassinated District Inspector Philip Kelleher there on October 31, and on the night of November 3 uniformed men entered the town and burned down a number of buildings. The same night, a convoy of military and police was ambushed in

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[9] *Irish Bulletin* (Dublin), Oct. 28, 1920.
[10] *An t'Óglác* (Dublin), Oct. 15, 1920; Con Casey, *Survivors*, 372.
[11] *New York Times*, Oct. 31, 1920; *New York Times*, Nov. 2, 1920; *The Times* (London), Nov. 2, 1920.
[12] *The Times* (London), Nov. 3, 1920.
[13] *The Times* (London), Nov.4, 1920; *The Times* (London), Nov. 9, 1920.
[14] T.P. O'Connor, "Tralee," HC Deb 10 November 1920 vol 134 cc1188-9; *The Times* (London), Nov. 5, 1920.

the nearby town of Ballinalee and forced to retreat.[15] *The Times* correspondent visited both towns the following day, and described Granard as a scene "that can scarcely be imagined in a town which is not in the throes of actual war." Most of the businesses and the market hall were "smoking ruin." Despite official denials, the writer concluded that "No reasonable man…could come to any other conclusion than that this terrible punishment had been inflicted on the town by the R.I.C." Visiting Ballinalee, local people told the correspondent that both soldiers and Black and Tans had tried to enter the town the previous night, but "Forces of the Republic" had carried out a successful defense.[16]

Despite the wave of attacks, the Prime Minister assured a Guildhall audience in the City of London that British forces were winning the conflict. According to Lloyd George, "We have murder by the throat" in Ireland. He described the rebel campaign as "a spectacle of organized assassination, of the most cowardly character." He then asked his audience to disregard distorted accounts of "what they call reprisals," and insisted "There will be no peace in Ireland, there will be no conciliation, until this murder conspiracy is scattered." After the reorganization of the police, "we struck the terror, and the terrorists are now complaining of terror."[17] An editorial in *The Times* argued that the Prime Minister had "committed himself to war upon large sections of the Irish people" and added that his government was "engaged in an effort to scourge Ireland into obedience."[18]

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[15] *New York Times*, Nov. 5, 1920; *The Times* (London), Nov. 5, 1920; Abbott, *Police Casualties in Ireland*, 140.
[16] *The Times* (London), Nov. 6, 1920.
[17] *New York Times*, Nov. 10, 1920; *The Times* (London), Nov. 10, 1920.
[18] *The Times* (London), Nov. 12, 1920.

Two violent episodes at the end of the month undercut Lloyd George's assertion of imminent victory. On the morning of November 21, members of the Squad and the Dublin Brigade entered houses, boarding houses, and hotels all over the city. The republicans dragged men from their beds and shot them immediately, sometimes in the presence of female companions. Where more than one was present in a certain building, Volunteers collected them in hallways and executed them in groups.[19] *The Times* initially reported nine deaths and fifty wounded, but stated reports were "panic-stricken and contradictory."[20] Fourteen people died in the shootings: nine former soldiers, one ex-soldier and RIC sergeant, two Auxiliary Cadets who happened upon a group of republicans during the shootings, and two civilians.[21] The IRA's intelligence department had targeted the British counter-espionage organization in Dublin, attempting to wipe out the government's secret service agents in one fell swoop. In the wake of the attacks, the British army and officials were loath to admit that those killed had been on secret service duty. Describing them as "British officers," they attempted to portray the violence as random acts of aggression against vulnerable and inoffensive government employees. Accounts from witnesses tell a different story.

Auxiliary Commander F.P. Crozier learned of the shootings when he arrived at Dublin Castle that morning. An officer received a phone call, and after hanging up turned and said, "Collins has done in most of the secret service people."[22] British Intelligence Director Ormonde Winter later claimed the attacks were a further measure of revenge for Kevin Barry's execution, or perhaps Lord Mayor MacCurtain's murder. He

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[19] Dalton, *With the Dublin Brigade*, 106.
[20] *The Times* (London), Nov. 22, 1920.
[21] The Times (London), Nov. 23, 1920; Abbott, *Police Casualties in Ireland*, 152-154.
[22] Crozier, *Ireland For Ever*, 102.

never refers to the dead as intelligence officers, but admits that some of them were "attached to military headquarters."[23] Auxiliary officer J.L. Hardy later fictionalized his experiences in Ireland, changing characters' names but describing historical events with brutal accuracy. In the novel *Never in Vain*, he states that "a sort of semi-official semi-secret force was being recruited to combat the Dublin terrorists," comprised of former army officers.[24] Castle official Mark Sturgis wrote that those attacked were "employed in Courts Martial or Secret Service men."[25]

For months prior to the attacks, republican intelligence staff gathered information from its friendly detectives within G-Division, from mail raids, and from employees or residents of the hotels and boarding houses where the agents resided.[26] The operation was originally planned to be much larger. Frank Thornton was in charge of compiling a case against each target. He later said, "I had to prove that each and every man on my list was an accredited Secret Service man of the British government. This, as everybody can realise, was not an easy task."[27] Frank Gallagher claims that Defence Minister Cathal Brugha struck fifteen names from the list, as "the evidence against them was not beyond doubt."[28] Dublin Brigade member Todd Andrews wrote that before the operation republican officers reminded those taking part of the notorious spies who had infiltrated previous Irish nationalist movements. He understood it was a means of "screwing up my

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[23] Winter, *Winter's Tale*, 321-322. The idea that the shootings were a measure of vengeance for the MacCurtain killing is especially interesting. Winter claims throughout his book that republican extremists killed MacCurtain, but if this was true, why would they lash out at British army officers in Dublin in revenge?
[24] J.L. Hardy, *Never in Vain: A Novel* (London: Collins, 1936), 88.
[25] Sturgis, *Last Days of Dublin Castle*, 76.
[26] Andrews, *Dublin Made Me*, 163; Dalton, *With the Dublin Brigade*, 102-103; Neligan, *The Spy in the Castle*, 122.
[27] Thornton, *Comrades*, 254.
[28] Gallagher, *The Four Glorious Years*, 242.

courage to the sticking point."[29] Andrews added that many more killings were attempted, but "the majority of the raids made by the IRA were abortive because, as in our case, the man sought was not at home or, in several cases, the Companies concerned bungled the job."[30]

In the afternoon after the shootings, a mixed party of regular RIC and Auxiliaries went to Croke Park, Dublin's athletics stadium, where a Gaelic football championship was being played between teams from the capital and Tipperary. The police opened fire on the crowd, killing twelve spectators. *The Times* carried the official explanation: Crown forces entered the park with the intention of searching the crowd, but IRA pickets around the stadium opened fire as they approached. The correspondent notes that Gaelic Athletic Association officials claimed the idea that republicans were guarding the park was "ridiculous," and eyewitnesses claimed that no shooting took place until the police were inside the stadium.[31] The *Irish Bulletin* published an account by one eyewitness who stated that no firing took place except from the police. The same issue insisted that the British officers slain that morning were engaged in secret service work.[32]

On the night of November 21, Auxiliary guards in Dublin Castle killed three prisoners captured the evening before. The dead included Dublin Brigade Commandant Dick McKee and Vice-Commandant Peadar Clancy, who had helped to organize the killings—though the Auxiliaries could not have known this for certain. The final dead man was Conor Clune, who was not a Volunteer, but was captured alongside McKee and Clancy. His uncle, Archbishop Clune of Perth, was appealing to Lloyd George for

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[29] Andrews, *Dublin Made Me*, 160.
[30] Andrews, *Dublin Made Me*, 165.
[31] *The Times* (London), Nov. 23, 1920.
[32] *Irish Bulletin* (Dublin), Nov. 27, 1920.

peace.[33] British officials insisted they were killed during an escape attempt and showed journalists a guardroom in disarray as proof. Republicans universally disbelieved the story, and the *Irish Bulletin* reported their deaths as a reprisal.[34]

The Times had no doubt that the officers shot on what became known as "Bloody Sunday" were targeted because "the military Intelligence Service got hot on the trail of the chief conspirators." The paper's correspondent wrote that "Dublin is profoundly horrified by yesterday's murders," and there was a belief that this was "the last desperate demonstration of the murder movement, which is being sorely pressed by the forces of the Crown."[35]

Despite this optimistic rhetoric, the shootings left a mental scar on the British Army in Ireland comparable to the affect of the early attacks on the RIC. Private J.P. Swindlehurst wrote, "time is now reckoned as since or before 'Bloody Sunday.'"[36] Following November 21, all of the officers and their families living incognito in Dublin were brought inside the Castle or surrounding premises. This crippled whatever capacity they had left for intelligence-gathering.[37] Captain R.D. Jeune, one of the intelligence officers who escaped death that day, was forced into a guarded hotel, "where it was impracticable to do any useful work."[38] The killings shook the British administration at its highest levels. After Bloody Sunday, Chief Secretary Hamar Greenwood told the Cabinet that he had taken precautions against his own assassination. He said, "All my

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[33] *The Times* (London), Feb. 15, 1921; Sean Kavanagh, *Ireland's Unfinished Revolution*, 175.
[34] *Irish Bulletin* (Dublin), Nov. 27, 1920; Béaslaí, *Michael Collins and the Making of a New Ireland*, 2:87-88.
[35] *The Times* (London), Nov. 23, 1920.
[36] J.P. Swindlehurst, *British Voices From the Irish War of Independence 1918-1921: The Words of British Servicemen Who Were There*, ed. William Sheehan (Doughcloyne, Ireland: Collins Press, 2005), 21.
[37] Gallagher, *The Four Glorious Years*, 243; Sturgis, *Last Days of Dublin Castle*, 77.
[38] Jeune, *British Voices*, 90.

household are armed. My valet, my butler and my cook. So if you have any complaints about the soup you may know what to expect."[39]

On November 27, the British IRA set fire to a number of warehouses and timber yards in Liverpool. The *New York Times* correspondent said that the port's warehouse district extended for seven miles, and fires "spread over almost the whole of the area."[40] This operation was also smaller than originally planned. Two weeks earlier, British authorities seized plans to blow up the Liverpool docks. Even the warehouse burnings were to coincide with similar operations in London and Glasgow, but the units there could not complete their arrangements.[41] While escaping the scene of the burnings, a republican shot and killed a civilian in Parliament Street.[42]

Exactly one week after Bloody Sunday, seventeen Auxiliaries and a District Inspector stationed in Macroom, Co. Cork, ran into an ambush not far from their base. It was normal in these situations for the attackers to inflict a small number of casualties before the police surrendered. At Kilmichael, the West Cork Brigade flying column killed sixteen of the Auxiliaries and the Inspector. One policeman escaped only to be captured by a republican patrol and executed, while the eighteenth man suffered severe brain damage and was initially taken for dead.[43] *The Times* stated that the patrol was "wiped out," calling it "the most disastrous of a long series of ambushes." It also printed Hamar Greenwood's statement in Parliament that some of the Auxiliaries were disarmed and executed.[44] After visiting the Macroom area, the paper's correspondent abandoned

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[39] Stephen Roskill, *Hankey: Man of Secrets* (London: Collins, 1972), 2:197.
[40] *New York Times*, Nov. 29, 1920.
[41] Pinkman, *In the Legion of the Vanguard*, 34-38.
[42] *New York Times*, Nov. 29, 1920.
[43] Abbott, *Police Casualties in Ireland*, 156-160.
[44] *The Times* (London), Nov. 30, 1920; Hamar Greenwood, "Ulster Volunteers," HC Deb 29 November 1920 vol 135 cc1070-84.

the idea of executions, writing that the Auxiliaries fought until they were all killed.[45] The paper also quoted a Dublin Castle statement that the cadets' bodies were mutilated with shotgun blasts and hatchets.[46] The *Irish Bulletin* claimed that the extensive injuries were caused by grenades, which killed several of the Auxiliaries at the outset of the action.[47]

Tom Barry, the republican commander at Kilmichael, later wrote that one factor leading to the high death toll was the less-than-ideal ambush position, which did not offer the Volunteers an escape route if the fight went against them. Before the operation he paraded the Volunteers and informed them "that the positions they were about to occupy allowed of no retreat; the fight could only end in the smashing of the Auxiliaries or the destruction of the Flying Column."[48] Barry also supported Stephen O'Neill, a section leader in the column, in writing that some of the Auxiliaries offered to surrender, only to pull revolvers and shoot three Volunteers who exposed themselves. The remaining column members did not cease firing until all the policemen were dead.[49]

The cumulative effect of the week's actions was to show that if Lloyd George's government had "murder by the throat," it kept a very loose grip. The operations in Dublin, Britain, and Cork were the largest of their kind to-date. British Brigadier-General H.R. Cumming, stationed in Kerry, told the press in December that his troops were "not making any appreciable headway against the guerrillas" and that they were not trained for this type of warfare.[50] Ironically, these events were followed by rumors of a truce. The Galway Urban Council—which had sworn allegiance to the Dáil—and Sinn

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[45] *The Times* (London), Dec. 1, 1920.
[46] *The Times* (London), Dec. 1, 1920; *The Times* (London), Dec. 2, 1920.
[47] *Irish Bulletin* (Dublin), Dec. 23, 1920.
[48] Barry, *Guerilla Days in Ireland*, 40.
[49] Barry, *Guerilla Days in Ireland*, 44-45; Stephen O'Neill, "Ambush at Kilmichael," *The Kerryman*, Dec. 12, 1937; O'Neill, "Auxiliaries Ambushed at Kilmichael," in *Rebel Cork's Fighting Story*, 140-143.
[50] *New York Times*, Dec. 10, 1920.

Féin Vice-President Fr. O'Flanagan both sent messages urging negotiations early in December.[51] *The Times* stated that a Sinn Féin envoy had been secretly visiting London for five weeks discussing terms.[52] Also, Archbishop Clune of Perth was said to be in contact with Michael Collins, the alleged "'Commander-in-Chief' of the Sinn Fein army" about a proposed settlement.[53] British officials, who took this as a sign that "the 'murder gang' are beginning to realize the game is up," came under pressure not to bow to republican demands.[54] *The Times* later printed a statement from the unnamed envoy that these informal discussions collapsed on the demand that the IRA give up its arms.[55]

As the scale of republican attacks escalated, its propaganda arm became increasingly comfortable acknowledging these actions. During the final three months of 1920, the *Irish Bulletin* increasingly acknowledged IRA attacks on Crown forces.[56] By April 1921, the publication carried a "Weekly Review of the War in Ireland," which attributed the attacks to "Irish troops" and to the IRA by name.[57] The growth and escalation of the republican campaign produced a significantly higher casualty rate during 1920. Over the course of the year, 165 police lost their lives while 225 were wounded. The military were increasingly targets of IRA attacks, resulting in 53 soldiers killed and 188 wounded.[58]

At the same time, the press increasingly printed names of republicans said to be responsible for the "outrages" and "murders" in Ireland. Figures such as de Valera and Arthur Griffith were well-known due to their political activities, but the guiding hands of

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[51] *The Times* (London), Dec. 6, 1920.
[52] *The Times* (London), Dec. 7, 1920.
[53] *The Times* (London), Dec. 9, 1920.
[54] *The Times* (London), Dec. 8, 1920.
[55] *The Times* (London), Feb. 15, 1921.
[56] *Irish Bulletin* (Dublin), Oct. 6, 1920.
[57] *Irish Bulletin* (Dublin), April 8, 1921.
[58] Street, *Administration of Ireland 1920*, 212, 220.

the IRA remained tantalizingly anonymous. However, in August 1920, Michael Collins gave an interview to American journalist Carl Ackerman. The resulting article stated that British officials believed "Dail Eireann was not the real power in Ireland…Michael Collins was." Ackerman added that "the British military authorities considered him the field marshal of the Irish Army and that they feared him."[59] In September, the *New York Times* published an article describing him as the "Republican War Minister" and chief of the Sinn Féin "irreconcilables."[60] Three months later the paper dubbed him "Commander-in-Chief of the Irish Republican Army."[61] Béaslaí asserts that de Valera and Brugha were angered by the press attention.[62]

Richard Mulcahy's name appeared in the press in November as a leader of "Sinn Féin extremists" alongside Collins.[63] *The Times* published a statement from Hamar Greenwood that Mulcahy was the IRA chief of staff and confirmed Collins as commander-in-chief.[64] In March 1921, the British published their names alongside that of "Charles Burgess" (Cathal Brugha) as organizers of attacks on British forces.[65] The appearance of these names in the press indicates that British intelligence was learning more about its enemies, and these three most important Headquarters staffers were becoming targets. The position "commander-in-chief" never existed in the IRA, but a 1921 British military intelligence summary explains that its authors believed this title went hand-in-hand with "President of the Republic." With de Valera in America and

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[59] *Irish Bulletin* (Dublin), Oct. 21, 1920.
[60] *New York Times*, Sept. 17, 1920.
[61] *New York Times*, Dec. 8, 1921.
[62] Béaslaí, *Michael Collins and the Making of a New Ireland*, 2:19-20.
[63] *New York Times*, Nov. 30, 1920.
[64] *The Times* (London), Nov. 23, 1920.
[65] *The Times* (London), March 19, 1921.

Griffith imprisoned after Bloody Sunday, Collins became "Acting President," and, British intelligence believed, "Commander-in-Chief."[66]

Advances and Reversals: The Course of the War in 1921

The *Weekly Summary* proved prophetic in its insistence that reprisals would inevitably follow republican attacks. At the beginning of 1921, the British government sanctioned the destruction of property of known Sinn Féiners, or in areas where attacks had taken place.[67] With this dictum, the pattern for the remaining six months of the conflict was set. IRA units carried out their opportunistic attacks, which were routinely followed by "official reprisals." Republican organizers constantly encouraged more widespread activity, while British forces increasingly imitated their opponents' tactics.

The year 1921 began with a series of reversals for IRA units. British Major T.A. Lowe wrote that the activities of the flying columns "gave back the initiative to the Crown Forces."[68] While these formations provided the full-time active units for which republican planners longed, they also supplied a target for British raids. Moreover, despite GHQ's orders, flying columns were most actively pursued in the already "active" counties in the south, particularly Clare, Cork, Kerry, Limerick, and Tipperary. Smaller actions continued throughout the country, but the concentration of major actions in the south allowed the British to flood the region with Auxiliaries and military

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[66] *British Intelligence in Ireland, 1920-21: The Final Reports* ed. Peter Hart (Cork, Ireland: Cork University Press, 2002), 33.
[67] *New York Times*, Jan. 8, 1921.
[68] Lowe, "Some Reflections of a Junior Officer," 53.

reinforcements. The pages of *An t'Óglác* constantly implore units from around the country to conduct even minor operations to relieve the pressure on the south.[69]

GHQ's constant insistence that more units join the struggle threw largely untrained Volunteers against an increasingly efficient British garrison. Even in areas in which many actions had already taken place, officers constantly rotated Volunteers in and out of flying columns, so that no individual experienced active service for too long a period.[70] A by-product of this was that even the most veteran unit could include untested Volunteers.

On January 28, an ambush was surprised near Dripsey, Co. Cork. One Volunteer was killed and ten arrested.[71] Between February 15 and 16, seven Cork Volunteers were killed in two incidents: three during a bungled train ambush at Upton and four attempting to trench a road near Crois an Leanbh.[72] Twelve Cork Volunteers were killed and eight captured at Clonmult on February 20. Republican sources state that three were killed during the fight, while the Auxiliaries executed seven who surrendered before soldiers of the Hampshire Regiment arrived.[73] Eight days later, six Volunteers were executed in Cork Gaol; three were from Cork, one from Mayo, one from Tipperary, and one from Wicklow.[74]

On March 8, Limerick's Sinn Féin Mayor George Clancy and former Mayor Michael O'Callaghan were killed in their homes. Michael's wife Kate O'Callaghan later

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[69] *An t'Óglác* (Dublin), April 1, 1921.
[70] Cornelius Flynn, "My Part in Irish Independence: The Statement of Cornelius Flynn," ed. Philip McCarthy, *Bandon Historical Journal* 4 (1998): 65.
[71] *New York Times*, Jan. 30, 1921.
[72] Barry, *Guerilla Days in Ireland*, 93; Liam Deasy, "The Gallant Volunteers of Kilbrittain," *Bandon Historical Journal* 22 (2006): 54.
[73] Patrick J. Higgins, *Comrades*, 86-87; P. O'C., "The Heroic Fight at Clonmult," in *Rebel Cork's Fighting Story*, 235-240.
[74] *The Times* (London), March 1, 1920.

made a statement accusing the police.[75] The next day, three Volunteers were killed during a roundup near Nadd, Co. Cork.[76] The RIC killed Seán Connolly, commander of the Longford flying column, and five other Volunteers on March 11 at Selton Hill, Co. Leitrim.[77] Two Volunteers were killed in a shootout with police near Gortdrum, Co. Tipperary, on May 2. The press reported the dead men were "Sinn Fein Chiefs," but they were regular Volunteers on the run.[78]

British propaganda attempted to capitalize on military victories by driving a wedge between "moderates" and "extremists" within the republican movement. The effort to identify individuals with whom they could negotiate a settlement played on existing republican fears that some of their leaders might compromise with the British.[79] The *Weekly Summary* re-published a statement from the *Cork Constitution* that "The Government require that any who undertake to speak for Ireland shall leave all thoughts of an independent Irish Republic outside the Council Board." Another statement, originally from the *Freeman's Journal*, asserted that "men of moderate views" were making peace overtures.[80] A May 1921 editorial in the *Weekly Summary* said of republican leaders, "They are all for peace now. They are all for negotiation now."[81]

Despite the rising casualty rate, republicans in active brigades achieved a number of spectacular attacks, while large-scale actions spread to areas where activity had been

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[75] *The Times* (London), March 8, 1921; K. O'Callaghan, "A Curfew Night in Limerick," in *The Voice of Ireland*, 147-150.
[76] *New York Times*, March 11, 1921; Seán Moylan, *Seán Moylan: In His Own Words, His Memoir of the Irish War of Independence* (Millstreet, Ireland: Aubane Historical Society, 2004), 111.
[77] *The Times* (London), March 14, 1921; Ernie O'Malley, *Raids and Rallies* (Dublin: Anvil Books, 1982), 100-101.
[78] *New York Times*, May 6, 1921; Crowe, "Life With a Flying Column," 258.
[79] For British willingness to negotiate with "moderates" but not "extremists" see Sturgis, *Last Days of Dublin Castle*, 84-85. For republican fears of "compromise," see MacBride, *That Day's Struggle*, 36-37.
[80] *Weekly Summary* (Dublin), April 8, 1921.
[81] *Weekly Summary* (Dublin), May 6, 1921.

scant. On January 28, members of the North Cork and East Kerry brigades killed Major-General Holmes in an ambush at Tureengarriffe.[82] The same units cooperated in an ambush at Clonbanin, Co. Cork on March 5. They killed Brigadier-General H.R. Cumming and three other soldiers in the action.[83]

Tom Barry was hunting big game with the West Cork flying column, now grown to 104 officers and Volunteers. After attempting to intercept 300 military reinforcements near Shippool, the unit took up positions near Crossbarry on March 19. The new military flying columns in the area, assisted by Auxiliaries, began a round-up. Instead of leaving the area, the Volunteers engaged, ambushed three lorries of troops, and broke out of the encirclement involving several hundred Essex Regiment soldiers under Major Arthur Percival. Four Volunteers were killed, while ten members of the Crown forces lost their lives.[84]

On April 11, the Dublin Brigade launched a gunfire and grenade attack on the London and Northwestern Railway Hotel. Located on North Wall Quay, it was occupied by the Auxiliaries who were using it as a base for searching ships in the dock areas. C.J.C. Street wrote that the assault produced no result, but "showed that the Republican forces were prepared to take the offensive even in Dublin, the seat of the British power."[85]

On May 15, an IRA unit ambushed a party of police and military officers at Ballyturin, Co. Galway. The officers were returning from a tennis match with their

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[82] *New York Times*, Jan. 30, 1921; Moylan, *Seán Moylan: In His Own Words*, 90-91.
[83] *The Times* (London), March 7, 1921; Moylan, *Seán Moylan: In His Own Words*, 106-107.
[84] *New York Times*, March 21, 1921; Barry, *Guerilla Days in Ireland*, 122-130; Tom Kelleher, "Rout of the British at Crossbarry," in *Rebel Cork's Fighting Story*, 153-162; Lowe, "Some Reflections of a Junior Commander," 53-54; A.E. Percival, *British Voices*, 127.
[85] *The Times* (London), April 12, 1921; C.J.C. Street, *Ireland in 1921* (London: Philip Allan, 1922), 21-22.

wives. Volunteer Martin Dolan later wrote that District Inspector Cecil Blake was killed in the opening salvo, but his wife picked up his revolver and fired at the ambushers. The Volunteers shot her dead during the fight, as well as three other military officers and a constable.[86]

The Mayo brigades launched a sustained campaign in May, but suffered casualties along the way. The South Mayo flying column carried out a successful ambush at Tourmakeady on May 3, but lost a Volunteer.[87] British forces killed three West Mayo column members when they surprised an ambush at Kilmeena on May 19.[88] The republican unit was surprised again at Skirdagh on May 23, but managed to escape and inflict one casualty on the RIC.[89] On June 2, the West Mayo column killed a District Inspector and seven constables at Carrowkennedy, as well as capturing two Lewis machine-guns.[90] The experiences of these flying columns in mid-1921 are in many ways typical of the course of the war at that time. Not especially active before this period, the Mayo brigades stepped up their efforts in response to GHQ urgings.[91] The units found capable column leaders in Michael Kilroy in West Mayo and Tom Maguire in South Mayo, but the units' inexperience inevitably led to casualties. Nevertheless, the columns scored key victories, proved they could remain in the field for an apparently indefinite time, and captured more and better weapons. Kilroy's and Maguire's reputations soared as a result, leading to their elections to the Dáil.[92]

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[86] *New York Times*, May 17, 1921; Martin Dolan, "Galway 1920-1921," in *Capuchin Annual* (Dublin: 1970), 394-395.
[87] Tom Maguire, *Survivors*, 284-286; Donal Buckley, "War of Independence: Diary of Mayo Events," *Cathair na Mart: Journal of the Westport Historical Society* 19 (1999): 6.
[88] O'Malley, *Raids and Rallies*, 161-168; Buckley, "Diary of Mayo Events," 7.
[89] *The Times* (London), May 25, 1921; O'Malley, *Raids and Rallies*, 171-175.
[90] O'Malley, *Raids and Rallies*, 188-201; Buckley, "Diary of Mayo Events," 7.
[91] Maguire, *Survivors*, 281.
[92] Maguire, *Survivors*, 289-290.

The most notable region in Ireland to experience a general rise in action was the new Northern Ireland. Comprising six northeastern counties, this statelet had a core of four counties dominated by Unionists. In accordance with Lloyd George's two-parliament idea, the area was officially partitioned from the rest of the country with the passage of the Government of Ireland Act in 1920.[93] The region had mostly experienced mob violence and barrack attacks, but on April 5 *The Times* reported that republican flying columns were operating in the area.[94] Republican activity in Londonderry and Belfast, which had been rocked by sectarian riots throughout the conflict, took on an organized nature. Police and military posts were simultaneously attacked in Londonderry on April 1.[95] Attacks on police in Belfast became routine, and on June 14 the IRA set up barricades around several nationalist neighborhoods and used them to snipe at patrols.[96] More barrack attacks took place, and ambushes such as those seen in the south now occurred in five of the six counties: Armagh, Down, Fermanagh, Londonderry, and Tyrone.[97]

Action in Northern Ireland was alarming, but attacks in Britain itself threatened all-out panic. The November 1920 burnings in Liverpool were just the first of a series of republican sabotage missions. Cathal Brugha pushed GHQ staff to emphasize operations in Britain, and by March 1921 this evolved into a sustained campaign.[98] Liverpool IRA officer Edward M. Brady said the arson and sabotage efforts were in retaliation for the

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[93] Walsh, *Ireland's Independence*, 68.
[94] *The Times* (London), April 5, 1921.
[95] Street, *Ireland in 1921*, 56; Abbott, *Police Casualties in Ireland*, 218.
[96] *New York Times*, April 11, 1921; *New York Times*, May 18, 1921; *New York Times*, June 15, 1921; Street, *Ireland in 1921*, 71.
[97] *New York Times*, April 7, 1921; *New York Times*, May 18, 1921; *New York Times*, June 1, 1921; *New York Times*, June 6, 1921; *New York Times*, June 10, 1921; Street, *Ireland in 1921*, 57; Abbott, *Police Casualties in Ireland*, 245-247, 253-254.
[98] Edward M. Brady, *Ireland's Secret Service in England* (Dublin: Talbot Press, 1928), 24-25.

destruction wrought by police in Ireland.[99] On March 9, a series of fires began to break out at farms in Cheshire, Lancashire, and Liverpool.[100] Three days later, *The Times* reported that republicans had specifically targeted property near Liverpool owned by an Auxiliary Section Leader serving in Ireland.[101] On April 2, fires broke out in various hotels in Manchester. Police went to an Irish club in the city to arrest suspects, and were fired on. Four officers were wounded.[102] In May, a London timber-yard went up in flames, and republicans raided and burned the homes of Auxiliaries and Black and Tans in the capital, St. Alban's, and Liverpool.[103] On May 21, farms and boat-builders' premises in Stockton and Newcastle-upon-Tyne were targeted.[104]

During the night of June 16, armed and masked men raided railway stations all around London. They assaulted railway employees, burned signal huts, cut telegraph and signal wires, and fired on police when they tried to interfere.[105] These types of raids were repeated at Manchester on June 18.[106] Eleven days later, masked men stopped two trains and stole the mail they carried. Such events were typical in Ireland—but had never occurred in Staffordshire.[107] The campaign had the desired effect of altering the normal course of life in Britain. Between July 1 and 3, London police searched carts, examined drivers' licenses, and noted vehicles moving in and out of the city. The *New York Times* correspondent wrote that there was "practically a complete cordon" around the capital.[108]

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[99] Brady, *Ireland's Secret Service in England*, 26-27.
[100] *The Times* (London), March 10, 1921.
[101] *The Times* (London), March 12, 1921.
[102] *The Times* (London), April 4, 1921.
[103] *The Times* (London), May 11, 1921; *The Times* (London), May 16, 1921.
[104] *The Times* (London), May 23, 1921.
[105] *The Times* (London), June 18, 1921.
[106] *The Times* (London), June 20, 1921.
[107] *New York Times*, June 30, 1921.
[108] *New York Times*, July 4, 1921.

Problems of Command: The Expanding IRA Officer Corps

In April, GHQ made another major effort at reorganization. Hoping to increase coordination between brigades, IRA leaders decided to group them into divisions based on geography. On April 26, Ernie O'Malley presided over a meeting at Kippagh, Co. Cork, to form the First Southern Division. The officers present—representing the brigades from Cork, Kerry, West Limerick, and Waterford—agreed on the need for greater cooperation, but some of them viewed the division scheme as administration run amok. O'Malley began the meeting by reading a memorandum from GHQ, which raised the already simmering ire of the Cork officers, who were hard-pressed and felt they were getting little support. Seán Moylan recalled the document as follows: "those who wrote such communications at G.H.Q. seemed to have as bedside book a Bible and a copy of General Lettow Vorbeck's story of the war in East Africa. From this and *Infantry Training, 1914*, I assume came the inexplicable military periods and inapplicable military proposals which this communication contained."[109]

Commandant Seán O'Hegarty of the First Cork Brigade told O'Malley that GHQ should focus on organizing the west or the midlands, to take the pressure off the south, and suggested that "Dicky Mulcahy or Micky Collins" should visit the region to see the situation for themselves.[110] Moylan told Tom Barry in private, "We started this war with hurleys, but, by Heavens, it seems to me we will finish it off with fountain pens."[111] Barry himself noted that the divisional structure "did not and could not add a man, a rifle, a bomb, a round of ammunition, or a shilling to the strength of any Brigade, nor did it

[109] Moylan, *Seán Moylan: In His Own Words*, 119.
[110] O'Malley, *On Another Man's Wound*, 339.
[111] Barry, *Guerilla Days in Ireland*, 159.

organise any action or issue a single operation order to any Unit."[112] Despite the objections, GHQ persisted in the organizational scheme. By July, only the southern brigades and several in the north had been organized along divisional lines.[113]

The Cork officers had a right to be concerned over the profusion of new officers and ranks within the IRA. While trying to respond in a systematic way to problems that surfaced throughout the conflict, republican GHQ set up a complex and variegated command structure involving local battalions, brigades, divisions, and semi-independent flying columns. All of these units had to relate to one another and with the national leadership in Dublin. On paper, the hierarchy was well-defined and need only be respected in order for the organization to function smoothly. In practice, issues of personal pride, ambition, jealousy, and safety concerns complicated the individual relationships between officers.

The flying columns in particular set up a strange dynamic within brigades. GHQ mandated that brigades form flying columns, but did not produce uniform guidelines or place their officers within the command structure. *An t'Óglác* articles on membership of brigade councils and duties of brigade officers do not reference flying column commanders.[114] Local units were left to work these issues out on their own. Theoretically, the column commander was in charge of all the Volunteers under his control during the planning and execution of operations. Brigade commandants could serve in the unit, but they were expected to obey the column commander. Outside the column, officers in that unit returned to their normal ranks, and the brigade staff were in

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[112] Barry, *Guerilla Days in Ireland*, 161.
[113] Hopkinson, *Irish War of Independence*, 75-76.
[114] *An t'Óglác* (Dublin), Oct. 7, 1921; *An t'Óglác* (Dublin), Oct. 14, 1921.

charge.[115] For instance, West Cork Commandant Charlie Hurley at times served under Tom Barry with the Brigade's flying column.[116] There does not seem to have been any animosity or strain in this relationship, and Barry later praised Hurley—who was killed on the morning of Crossbarry—in several publications.[117]

An opposite example comes from the North Tipperary Brigade, where Commandant Seán Gaynor served at times with the column. In discussing a failed action at Latteragh in November 1920, he says, "I was with the column in this engagement but did not interfere with the O/C's arrangements."[118] The statement indicates that Gaynor could have interfered had he so chosen, which would have gone against the command relationship at work in other brigades. Column commander Ned O'Leary says that attempting to work with any officers outside his own unit was a struggle. He states, "From the beginning I received very little co-operation from the brigade staff," adding that he often could not get supplies. Relations with several of the battalions within the brigade were no better. O'Leary says the reason was "senior officers of these units did not want any trouble in their area."[119] Following a moderately successful ambush at Kilcommon in December 1920, the local battalion commander Paddy Doherty pulled O'Leary aside and "abused me strongly…over having attacked the police patrol in his area."[120]

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[115] Ned O'Leary, "An Account from the Bureau of Military History: Ned O'Leary's Account of the War of Independence in North Tipperary," *Tipperary Historical Journal* 23 (2010): 116.
[116] Flynn, "My Part in Irish Independence," 63.
[117] Tom Barry, "Charlie Hurley's Work and Death for Ireland," in *Rebel Cork's Fighting Story*, 163-168; Barry, *Guerilla Days in Ireland*, 16.
[118] Seán Gaynor, "With Tipperary No. 1 Brigade in North Tipperary 1917-1921, Part II" *Tipperary Historical Journal* 7 (1994): 31.
[119] O'Leary, "Account of the War of Independence in North Tipperary," 116.
[120] O'Leary, "Account of the War of Independence in North Tipperary," 111-113, 116.

Successful column commanders often gained widespread reputations and fame, while brigade officers fell into the background. Thomas Ryan, commander of the South Tipperary flying column, later wrote that this damaged the relationships between active service Volunteers and the Brigade Commandant Seamus Robinson. He states, "From the time the Columns began operations, Robinson remained in and about the Brigade Headquarters at Rosegreen, taking no active part in the work of the Columns, and so was not regarded by the men of the Columns as having any effective control over them." He added that this dynamic was not unique to his unit and Robinson, asserting, "the Column Commanders at this time seemed to be supreme in their respective commands, the Brigade Headquarters merely acting as a centre for intelligence reports and other communications."[121] This view of the brigade commandant as a figurehead could only damage discipline and respect for hierarchy within the organization.

The IRA's geographic basis also hampered coordination between units. Seán Moylan, commander of the North Cork flying column, complained in his memoirs that his unit had not been notified in advance of the Kilmichael ambush, which took place in their area. Following the disaster at Clonmult, where the East Cork IRA flying column was surrounded and annihilated, rumors were rife in republican circles that another column was close by and heard the shooting, but made no attempt to aid their comrades.[122] A Cork Volunteer later claimed that another unit was in the area, but did not arrive until the fighting was over.[123] Whatever the truth of the matter, the fact that such a story could be given credence indicates a level of disorganization and ambivalence

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[121] Thomas Ryan, "One Man's Flying Column,Part 3," *Tipperary Historical Journal* 6 (1993): 51.
[122] Moylan, *In His Own Words*, 118.
[123] P. O'C., "The East Cork Brigade in Action," in *Rebel Cork's Fighting Story*, 239.

to events outside one's local area. Throughout the conflict, GHQ attempted to provide Volunteers with a larger context for viewing their actions.

The divisional scheme was meant to provide greater coordination between units, but also introduced another layer of authority into the IRA structure. This profusion of officers is also evident in the expansion of Headquarters Staff. When first created in 1918, the staff consisted of six members. Throughout the war, successful local commanders or longtime republicans were rewarded with GHQ positions, so that by July 1921, the staff had more than doubled to thirteen.[124] This included directors of both purchases and munitions, causing Volunteer gunrunner Seán MacBride to quip, "I never knew what the distinction between Purchases and Munitions was."[125] Joe Good says that nepotism played a role in the appointment of several of these extraneous officers. He states, "A number of men were approved solely because of their popularity and social position." Good notes the case of an unnamed officer, who was "appointed mainly because his brother had supposedly fought in the GPO" during the Easter Rising, which the writer knew he had not.[126]

Chief of Staff Richard Mulcahy recognized that the IRA's convoluted hierarchy was causing discipline problems, and made an attempt to rectify it. During a meeting with divisional commandants and Headquarters staff in August 1921, he outlined a ranking system between these officers, but did not mention either brigade commandants or flying column commanders.[127] It is possible that he assumed the column commanders

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[124] Risteárd Mulcahy, *My Father the General*, 34.
[125] MacBride, *That Day's Struggle*, 47.
[126] Good, *Enchanted by Dreams*, 186.
[127] Ernie O'Malley, *The Singing Flame* (Dublin: Anvil Books, 1978), 24.

would report to their brigade superiors, who would in turn report to divisional staff, but this did not always work in practice.

Anticlimax

The IRA's most daring, and reckless attack of the entire conflict in Ireland took place on May 25. Dozens of members of the Dublin Brigade rushed the sprawling Custom House on the Liffey quay, while others stood guard outside. They evacuated the staff and set fire to the building. The target of the raid was not unusual; dozens of smaller custom houses all over the country had been burned during the arson campaign. An attack on the Dublin building was even considered during the Easter 1920 burnings, but it was held by a strong military guard at the time.[128] The idea resurfaced after Eamon de Valera returned from America at the end of 1920.[129] Chief of Staff Mulcahy later said that de Valera and Brugha "dragged" GHQ into the operation.[130] The action cost the Dublin Brigade dearly. Five Volunteers were killed and about eighty captured. Despite the losses, the building was completely destroyed, and republicans claimed a victory.[131]

A desire for peace had been a frequent feature of newspaper letters and editorials throughout the first six months of 1921. On June 21, cabinet member F.E. Smith, a former Ulster Volunteer, admitted in Parliament that the situation in Ireland amounted to a "small war."[132] He was one of just a few leading British parliamentarians to acknowledge the state of hostilities that the republicans had claimed since 1918. The

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[128] Béaslaí, *Michael Collins and the Making of a New Ireland*, 435.
[129] Patrick Daly, *Comrades*, 256.
[130] Mulcahy, *My Father the General*, 56.
[131] Oscar Traynor, "The Burning of the Custom House," in *Dublin's Fighting Story*, 313-321.
[132] F.E. Smith, "The Government of Ireland," HL Deb 21 June 1921 vol 45 cc659-704; *The Times* (London), June 22, 1921.

next day, King George V opened the Northern Ireland Parliament in Belfast with a speech calling for "an end of strife amongst her [Ireland's] people, whatever their race or creed." He added an "appeal to all Irishmen to pause, to stretch out the hand of forbearance and conciliation, to forgive and to forget, and to join in making for the land they love a new era of peace, contentment, and good will."[133] Prime Minister Lloyd George and his government took their cue from the king's widely praised speech. As the message stressed several times that Ireland should stay within the British Empire, they could reiterate this as the official policy guiding any settlement proposals. The sovereign's call for a cessation of violence undercut conservative arguments at Westminster that the rebellion should be stamped out before imposing a political solution.[134] Two days after the speech *The Times* declared that now was "The Moment for a Truce."[135]

Lloyd George moved quickly to capitalize on the opening. On June 24, he sent a letter to de Valera at the Mansion House in Dublin asking for a meeting between themselves and Northern Ireland Prime Minister James Craig to "explore to the utmost the possibility of a settlement."[136] De Valera initially insisted that no settlement was possible until Lloyd George recognized Ireland's "essential unity," and right of "national self-determination."[137] Over the next two weeks, a series of letters circulated between Dublin, Belfast, and London. De Valera met with Craig and other unionists to discuss the possibilities of cooperation between unionist and republican Ireland. He also met South

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[133] *The Times* (London), June 23, 1921.
[134] John Swan, "Business of the House," HC Deb 24 June 1921 vol 143 cc1747-53.
[135] *The Times* (London), June 24, 1921.
[136] National Archives of Ireland (NAI), "Documents on Irish Foreign Policy," Volume 1, Doc. No. 135, 24 June 1921 - From David Lloyd George To Eamon de Valera; *The Times* (London), June 27, 1921.
[137] NAI, "Documents on Irish Foreign Policy," Volume 1, Doc. No. 136, 28 June 1921 - From Eamon de Valera To David Lloyd George; *The Times* (London), June 29, 1921.

African Prime Minister Jan Smuts, who assured the republican leader that the government earnestly desired a settlement.[138] The correspondence and news of the meeting found their way into the press, where speculation on what form the settlement would take reached a fever pitch.[139] By July 8, de Valera had dropped his conditions and agreed to meet one-on-one with Lloyd George.[140] The next day's *Irish Bulletin* carried an order from Richard Mulcahy that "active operations by our troops will be suspended as from Noon Monday, July Eleventh."[141] Attacks continued right up to the moment the Truce came into effect; Volunteers killed two policemen on July 11.[142] January to July 1921 was by far the bloodiest period of the conflict. Casualties among the various police forces amounted to 223 killed, 428 wounded. The military suffered 94 killed and 210 wounded.[143]

The Truce was not a surprise as the negotiations which led to it were well-publicized, but republicans differed on whether it was necessary.[144] Kerry Volunteer Con Casey later insisted, "We were going full pelt. The I.R.A. never felt stronger."[145] GHQ organizer Seán MacBride said he was annoyed by the cessation of hostilities, adding, "We were on the way to really 'make things hotter.'"[146] An anonymous Dublin Volunteer later claimed that before the Truce they were preparing for "our biggest

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[138] Jan Smuts, *Selections from the Smuts Papers*, ed. Jean van der Poel, 7 vols. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1973), 5:94-95.
[139] *The Times* (London), June 27, 1921.
[140] NAI, "Documents on Irish Foreign Policy," Volume 1, Doc. No. 138, 08 July 1921 - From Eamon de Valera To David Lloyd George.
[141] *Irish Bulletin* (Dublin), July 9, 1921.
[142] Abbott, *Police Casualties in Ireland*, 266.
[143] Street, *Ireland in 1921*, 7.
[144] *The Times* (London), June 27, 1921; *Irish Bulletin* (Dublin), July 9, 1921; *New York Times*, July 10, 1921.
[145] Con Casey, *Survivors*, 373.
[146] MacBride, *That Day's Struggle*, 39.

operation" in the city, which was to be "much bigger than Bloody Sunday."[147] On the day of the Truce, the North Cork and West Limerick flying columns were forced to abandon a joint ambush prepared near Templeglantine. The operation involved eight road mines and four lorries of British soldiers—double the contingent wiped out at Kilmichael.[148] Ernie O'Malley later wrote that prior to the Truce that there were rumors that all British troops would be withdrawn to the coasts.[149] Some thought the IRA could force the British army to evacuate Ireland altogether, including Dáil cabinet members Cathal Brugha and Austin Stack.[150] On the opposite side British Major A.E. Percival, later a lieutenant general, expressed the view of many soldiers when he asserted, "in another few weeks the back of the Rebellion would have been broken."[151] Captain Douglas Wimberley, later a major general, was more circumspect. He insisted that if the British army was left to its own devices to enact an "official policy of ruthlessness" it would stamp out the rebellion, but under the circumstances a negotiated settlement was "the only sensible course left."[152]

Many republicans viewed the Truce itself as a validation that their military and political campaigns were legitimate. Dáil member Liam de Roiste called it "a recognition of our national status as coequal with England." For the IRA, the Truce meant that "what the English termed a gang of murderers was now an army."[153] General Macready insisted that the republicans were on the verge of defeat when the Truce was declared,

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[147] Volunteer 'M', Section Commander, Dublin Brigade, Pre-Truce I.R.A., *Survivors*, 427.
[148] Mossie Harnett, *Victory and Woe: The West Limerick Brigade in the War of Independence*, ed. James H. Joy (Dublin: University College Dublin Press, 2002), 111-115; Volunteer, "The IRA Campaign in West Limerick," in *Limerick's Fighting Story*, 287-288.
[149] O'Malley, *On Another Man's Wound*, 377.
[150] Michael Collins, *Michael Collins' Own Story*, ed. Hayden Talbot (London: Hutchinson, 1923), 78.
[151] Percival, *British Voices*, 130.
[152] Douglas Wimberley, *British Voices*, 192.
[153] Liam de Roiste, "Debate on Treaty," Dáil Éireann – Volume 3 – 22 December, 1921.

and Conservative and Unionist polemicists dubbed the cessation a surrender to gunmen.[154] When de Valera was on his way to London for the first round of peace negotiations, Lloyd George told Henry Wilson he would have a chance to converse with the republican leader. Wilson replied, "I do not speak to murderers."[155] Despite such lingering contempt, the shooting was largely over between the IRA and its government opponents. The future relationship between Britain and Ireland would be determined by negotiations between individuals who had only weeks before been plotting ways to eliminate one another.

Conclusion

The IRA faced its greatest pressure from government forces in late-1920 and the first six months of 1921. In this same period, it achieved its greatest military and propaganda victories. These successes were the combined results of GHQ policy and local initiative. IRA leaders played a role in planning attacks in Dublin, while the institution of flying columns provided the weapon that inflicted the greatest wounds on the police and British army in the countryside. The *Irish Bulletin* provided an increasingly effective republican mouthpiece, no longer shying away from the violent side of the movement. Despite these successes, other GHQ policies sowed dissension among the IRA. The leadership provided no guidance for integrating the flying columns into the brigade hierarchy, which remained the most effective structure for operating country units. The divisional organization was designed to increase cooperation between units, but added another layer into an increasingly complicated hierarchy. By the Truce,

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[154] Macready, *Annals of an Active Life*, 2:596; Charlotte Menzies (pseud. A Woman of No Importance), *As Others See Us* (London: Herbert Jenkins, 1924), 207.
[155] Wilson, *Field Marshal Sir Henry Wilson: His Life and Diaries*, 2:298.

the GHQ staff was unwieldy, confusing to the rank-and-file, and faced accusations of nepotism.

While the conflict was ongoing, these tensions were subsumed beneath the overall need for cohesion against police and military forces. In forcing the government to the negotiating table, the IRA won a concession that many had considered unimaginable. As late as December 1919, the *New York Times* warned republicans that "nothing could be more hopeless" than taking on the British army.[156] The IRA did this with a considerable measure of success, but as soon as the conflict was over, its organization began to unravel.

[156] *New York Times*, Dec. 29, 1919.

CHAPTER SIX:

CONCLUSION

The truce marked a condensed but intense period of development for the IRA. The months between July and December 1921 saw its ranks swell, its arms increase, and its defiance of authority grow. This chapter will analyze the pressures brought on by the peace. It will argue that the hierarchical issues present from the beginning of 1921 resulted in indiscipline once the war had ended. In conclusion, this chapter will assess the role of GHQ over the course of the struggle, and how its initiatives contributed to the IRA's military successes.

IRA Development during the Truce

To many members of the IRA, the truce did not mean an end to the war. Ernie O'Malley, who had been promoted from GHQ staff captain to commandant of the Second Southern Division, later wrote that he and his officers expected the truce to last for two or three weeks.[1] Dáil member and *Irish Bulletin* editor Desmond Fitzgerald later wrote that some militants, led by Defence Minister Cathal Brugha, never intended the truce as anything but a "breathing space," a chance to reorganize, relieve pressure on hard-pressed units, and import arms.[2] This idea took hold with many units, and GHQ began organizing training camps to prepare them for further fighting.[3] *An t'Óglác* constantly warned its readers to maintain discipline and be ready to return to active service if

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[1] O'Malley, *The Singing Flame*, 15.
[2] Desmond Fitzgerald, "Mr. Pakenham on the Anglo-Irish Treaty," *Studies: An Irish Quarterly Review* 24:95 (1935): 406.
[3] Deasy, *Towards Ireland Free*, 314.

necessary. As early as July 22, 1921, the journal warned, "A truce is not a peace" and "The guns are silent—but they remain in the hands of the Irish Volunteers."[4] The *Irish Bulletin* also downplayed hopes of a settlement, printing a column entitled "The War That May Be Resumed" on July 14.[5] Tension between the previously warring sides was palpable on the ground. Republicans formerly "on the run" now returned to their homes, where they were lauded as heroes, while police and British soldiers could move freely outside their barracks, where they had been largely confined except when on patrol.[6]

Adding to this tension was an influx of new recruits. For months *An t'Óglác* had emphasized the need for introducing new blood into the organization, but with the truce many young men were suddenly eager to join the IRA—now that peace had been declared.[7] Dubbed "Trucers" or "Trucileers" by the veterans, they were brimming with patriotic enthusiasm; too much of it in fact. Ernie O'Malley stressed that they could not be trusted as well as the Volunteers who had been tested under fire.[8] Piaras Béaslaí asserted that not only were the new recruits difficult to handle, but the discipline of IRA veterans broke down under their new status as heroes of the republic. He wrote, "They learned to swagger about in trench-coats and leggings, with a revolver in their pocket…The man with a gun learned to be a law to himself." Many IRA members had prided themselves on abstention from alcohol, but Béaslaí says during the truce "Men who had been models of sobriety, took to hard drinking ."[9]

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[4] *An t'Óglác* (Dublin), July 22, 1921.
[5] *Irish Bulletin* (Dublin), July 14, 1921.
[6] Harnett, *Victory and Woe*, 119; Frederick Clarke, *British Voices*, 38, 40.
[7] *An t'Óglác* emphasized the importance of recruiting in issues of the following dates in 1920: July 1, July 15, and Sept. 1.
[8] O'Malley, *The Singing Flame*, 36-37.
[9] Béaslaí, *Michael Collins and the Making of a New Ireland*, 2:270-271.

In spite of the truce, clashes between police and military and IRA members soon began. In August a Cork Volunteer was tried for attempting to commandeer an RIC car at gunpoint.[10] The next month a constable was shot and wounded in Limerick, and a shootout in Tipperary resulted in the wounding of a constable and soldier, as well as the death of a civilian.[11] In October a court clerk died while in the hands of republican police. The inquest jury returned a verdict of heart failure.[12] In December, unknown assassins killed an RIC member in Ballybunion and another in Kilmallock.[13]

Other republicans directed their aggressive tendencies toward aiding jailbreaks. By the truce, about 4,000 suspected republicans were interred in jails or prison camps in Ireland and Britain.[14] Combined with convicted IRA members, *The Times* placed the number of Irish political prisoners at about 6,000. Dáil members were released to take part in debates on the peace negotiations. Though the press debated whether a full amnesty should be granted, this was not forthcoming.[15] Between July 11 and the year's end, approximately 165 republican prisoners escaped.[16] The most dramatic jailbreak occurred on September 9, when forty-nine IRA members tunneled out of the Curragh military camp in Co. Kildare.[17]

Of greater import for the IRA organization than the escapes were two successful arms landings. Arms and ammunition shortages were a constant problem throughout the conflict, lowering the number of Volunteers under arms and at times preventing actions

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[10] *The Times* (London), August 26, 1921.
[11] *The Times* (London), Sept. 26, 1921; *The Times* (London), Sept. 30, 1921.
[12] *The Times* (London), Oct. 21, 1921.
[13] Abbott, *Police Casualties in Ireland*, 271-280.
[14] Hopkinson, *The Irish War of Independence*, 200.
[15] *Irish Bulletin* (Dublin), August 10, 1921; *The Times* (London), August 13, 1921.
[16] This figure is compiled from reports in the *Irish Bulletin*. Jailbreaks are reported in issues of the following dates in 1921: Sept. 27, Oct. 7, Oct. 20, Oct. 27, Nov. 10, Nov. 17, Nov. 24, and Dec. 1.
[17] *The Times* (London), Sept. 10, 1921; Bill Kelly, "Mass Escape of Internees from the Curragh Camp," in *Sworn to be Free*, 160-166.

by entire units. In September 1921, the IRA possessed a total of 3,295 rifles, 5,911 pistols, thirty-eight Thompson submachine-guns, and eighteen captured British machine-guns.[18] On November 11, Londonderry IRA member Charlie McGuinness landed the *Frieda* at Helvick, Co. Waterford. The ship's cargo consisted of 1,500 Mauser rifles, 2,000 Luger parabellum pistols, and 1,700,000 rounds of ammunition. The weapons were unloaded by local IRA units and hidden in the nearby Comeragh Mountains.[19] On April 2, 1922 the republican gunrunning ship *Hannah* landed 200 rifles, 500 pistols, several machine-guns, and ammunition at Ballynagaul, Co. Waterford. Most of these weapons went to the northern IRA, which was attempting an offensive against the government of Northern Ireland.[20] All of the arms had been purchased by republican agents in Germany. The effect of the two successful arms importations was to boost the IRA's arsenal by more than 50 per cent.

Despite discipline concerns, the cumulative effect of increased recruitment, training, and arms importation was to dramatically augment the IRA's fighting ability. Even prior to the *Hannah*'s landing, Cathal Brugha reported to the Dáil on December 17, 1921 that compared with the beginning of the truce, "We are in an indefinitely better position from the military point of view."[21] The British army commander in Ireland agreed with the assessment. Nevil Macready later wrote that in July he requested the British army garrison in Ireland be increased to 80,000 troops in order to stamp out the rebellion. By December he estimated the task would take 150,000.[22]

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[18] Comerford, *My Kilkenny I.R.A. Days*, 839.
[19] Charles John McGuinness, *Sailor of Fortune: Adventures of an Irish Sailor, Soldier, Pirate, Pearl-Fisher, Gun-Runner, Rebel and Antarctic Explorer* (Philadelphia: Macrae Smith, 1935), 197-204.
[20] Robert Briscoe, *For the Life of Me*, with Alden Hatch (Boston: Little, Brown, 1958), 112-117; Pax Ó Faoláin, *Survivors*, 141-142.
[21] Cathal Brugha, Dáil Éireann – Volume 4 – 17 December, 1921.
[22] Macready, *Annals of an Active Life*, 2:561-562.

The Treaty Split

While the IRA strengthened its organization, the peace negotiations ground on in London. One-on-one talks between de Valera and Lloyd George had amounted to nothing except an agreement that both would appoint negotiating teams for a full peace conference. The republican team, consisting of five negotiators led by Arthur Griffith and Michael Collins, arrived in London on October 8. Griffith was regarded as a moderate and pragmatist. He insisted that a republic would be an impossible expectation for the negotiations.[23] Collins was sent to capitalize on his fearsome reputation, which he called "the Michael Collins legend."[24] The negotiations progressed for the next two months, carefully followed in the press. On December 6, all five members of the Irish delegation signed the Anglo-Irish Treaty, ending the War of Independence. The treaty did not grant a republic, but set up the Irish Free State in the twenty-six counties not included in Northern Ireland. The agreement promised a boundary commission would review the status of the northeastern six counties. The Free State would remain in the British Empire, and members of its parliament would swear an oath of allegiance to the monarch as head-of-state.[25] The agreement required ratification by the Dáil, and its signers returned to Ireland to convince their colleagues to vote in its favor.

The treaty immediately polarized republicans, particularly within the IRA. Ernie O'Malley wrote that his immediate feeling on hearing of the agreement was that its signers had "betrayed us."[26] Tom Maguire later said that some officers wanted to arrest

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[23] Arthur Griffith, "Behind the Scenes at the Peace-Pact. Being the Personal Impressions of the Five Irish Plenipotentiaries and Others," in *The Voice of Ireland*, 32-33.
[24] Michael Collins, *Michael Collins' Own Story*, ed. Hayden Talbot (London: Hutchinson, 1923), 145.
[25] The *Irish Bulletin* published the "Articles of Agreement" in full on Dec. 7, 1921. Also see "Articles of Agreement as Signed on December 6th, 1921," in Macardle, *The Irish Republic*, 953-958.
[26] O'Malley, *The Singing Flame*, 41-42.

the negotiators on their return to Dublin.[27] During an IRA officers' meeting in Dublin to discuss the treaty, GHQ's Director of Chemicals Jim O'Donovan called Collins a traitor, and said he should be court-martialed for treason.[28] The GHQ staff was divided on the agreement: nine were in favor and four opposed.[29] De Valera repudiated the treaty publicly on December 8. *An t'Ólgác* continued to preach discipline and unity, emphasizing loyalty to the Dáil whatever its decision on the treaty.[30] One of the treaty signers, Robert Barton, said he had only signed at the last minute after Lloyd George threatened "immediate war" if the treaty was rejected.[31] Secretary of State for War Winston Churchill had already threatened "real war, not mere bushranging," if the peace conference failed.[32] To many republicans, such statements raised the question of whether the IRA could offer effective resistance if the treaty was rejected. Following the signing, Collins told former Chief Secretary for Ireland Hamar Greenwood that without the truce the IRA could not have lasted two weeks.[33] Brugha asserted that the IRA was now in a much stronger position. Pro-treaty Dáil members insisted that against the British army the IRA's relative strength was insignificant, and used these arguments in favor of ratification.[34]

Added to this mix of opinions was the covert influence of the Irish Republican Brotherhood. Many Volunteers were members of this secret society, or joined it during the war. In fact, after the Easter Rising the IRB admitted no one who was not also a

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[27] Maguire, *Survivors*, 290.
[28] O'Malley, *The Singing Flame*, 53.
[29] O'Donoghue, *No Other Law*, 208.
[30] *An t'Óglác* (Dublin), Jan. 7, 1922.
[31] Robert Barton, "Debate on Treaty," Dáil Éireann – Volume 3 – 19 December, 1921.
[32] *Irish Bulletin* (Dublin), Oct. 10, 1921.
[33] L.S. Amery, *My Political Life*, 2 vols. (London: Hutchinson, 1953), 230.
[34] Kevin O'Higgins, Dáil Éireann – Volume 3 – 17 December, 1921; Kevin O'Shiel, "Behind the Scenes at the Peace-Pact," in *The Voice of Ireland*, 31.

Volunteer.[35] Members of both organizations insist that the IRB never attempted to usurp the IRA or exert military influence during the conflict.[36] Despite their nearly identical aims and mutual membership, the IRA and IRB did not always operate in harmony. IRA leaders including Cathal Brugha had established their anti-IRB stance as early as 1917. In May 1921, IRB President Michael Collins and Secretary Sean Ó Muirthile visited Seámus Ó Maoileóin, an IRA intelligence officer who had left the IRB, to try to convince him to rejoin the organization. On Ó Maoileóin's refusal, Ó Muirthile warned him, "Brugha and yourself should be shot, and maybe some day ye will." Collins separated the two and ejected Ó Muirthile from the meeting. He even convinced Ó Maoileóin to deliver messages to other IRA officers that they were welcome to join the IRB, but the story makes it clear that the IRB were still recruiting, and some within the organization believed it should be the vanguard of the republican movement rather than the IRA, the Dáil, or Sinn Féin.[37]

After the treaty signing, the IRB's Supreme Council dictated that the agreement should be ratified. Many rank-and-file IRB members opposed the treaty on principle, as did many of the IRA. However, the IRB ruling body's decision in favor of the agreement forced its members to decide whether to support it in a complex web of principles and loyalties.[38] Both organizations were accused of attempting to influence the treaty vote. Cathal Brugha faced allegations in the Dáil that IRA units were trying to intimidate members into voting against the agreement.[39] Brugha in turn accused the IRB of using its

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[35] O'Donoghue, *Florence and Josephine O'Donoghue's War of Independence*, 32.
[36] O'Donoghue, *No Other Law*, 188-189.
[37] Seámus Ó Maoileóin, *Blood on the Flag*, 155; Tomás Ó Maoileóin, *Survivors*, 98.
[38] O'Donoghue, *No Other Law*, 190-191.
[39] Brugha, Dáil Éireann – Volume 4 – 16 December, 1921.

influence to pass the treaty.[40] Tom Maguire, whose successes leading the South Mayo flying column led to his election to the Dáil, later told an interviewer that an IRB member tried to convince him to vote for the treaty. He described the messenger as, "my senior in the I.R.B. (I would not admit that he was my senior in anything else, particularly, in the fight)."[41] The implication is that Maguire did not feel compelled to listen to someone who had not contributed to the war as much as he had. Despite the IRB dictum, Maguire voted against the treaty. Republicans were choosing loyalties along a number of different trajectories: political principles, a choice between the IRA and IRB, and loyalty to individuals deemed to have been actively involved in fighting the guerrilla war, whatever their status within the republican movement.

The Dáil's debates on the treaty lasted from December 14, 1921 to January 7, 1922. During these heated discussions, the treaty's merits as well as the personalities of its signers offered major points of discussion. Much of the debate centered on the military reputation of Michael Collins. Griffith called him, "the man who won the war."[42] On the final day of the debates, Cathal Brugha stated that many Dáil members and other Irish people were in favor of the treaty because Michael Collins, who had "fought many fights for the Republic," had signed it. Brugha then launched an attack on Collins as "a subordinate in the Department of Defence…specially selected by the Press and the people to put him into a position which he never held; he was made a romantic figure, a mystical character such as this person certainly is not."[43] The treaty was ratified

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[40] Brugha, "Statement by Army Officers. – Declaration of Election," Dáil Éireann – Volume 2 – 19 May, 1922.
[41] Maguire, *Survivors*, 290.
[42] Arthur Griffith, "Debate on Treaty," Dáil Éireann – Volume 3 – 19 December, 1921.
[43] Cathal Brugha, "Debate on Treaty," Dáil Éireann – Volume 3 – 07 January, 1922.

by a majority of seven, 64-57. The last words spoken in the Dáil that day were by Brugha, promising to keep discipline in the IRA.[44]

The former minister of defence and others were able to hold the IRA together for another three months, but that was all. The anti-treaty IRA broke ranks in April 1922, refusing to acknowledge the Dáil's ratification of the agreement. The emerging Free State regime turned its rhetorical weapons against its former comrades. *An t'Óglác,* which by April 1922 functioned more as a propaganda tool than a military manual, announced the division with the headline, "Mutineers Cause Army Split." In a detailed unit analysis, pro-treaty battalions and officers are described as "loyal to GHQ," while those against the agreement are dubbed "disloyal." The unit breakdown attempts to show that GHQ still commanded the loyalty of the majority of the IRA, but the complex figures show no clear pattern according to unit or geographic orientation. While some writers argue that the rank-and-file generally followed their local officers, the *An t'Óglác* breakdown shows that individuals made their own choices.[45] Brigade, battalion, and company staffs were fractured. Some units are marked "fifty per cent. loyal," and where specific figures are given they read in terms such as "133 out of 224 stand with G.H.Q."[46]

The IRA was fragmenting along many fault lines. The final break was on the treaty, but other factors were the result of issues that arose during the War of Independence. These contributing features included complicated hierarchies at GHQ and local levels, a willingness to follow leaders on the basis of their reputation during the

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[44] Cathal Brugha, "Debate on Treaty," Dáil Éireann – Volume 3 – 07 January, 1922.
[45] For the argument that IRA members followed their officers in their treaty opinions, see Risteárd Mulcahy, *My Father the General*, 142. Macardle argues that pro-treaty forces including the IRB were reorganizing the army from January 1922 to ensure unit loyalty, but this claim likely stems from her anti-treaty bias. If the allegation was true, the GHQ unit breakdown in *An t'Óglác* would be unambiguous. Macardle, *The Irish Republic*, 654, 673.
[46] *An t'Óglác* (Dublin), April 25, 1922.

war, and mounting indiscipline during the truce. The treaty split marks the end of the IRA as it had existed since 1916. During the civil war which followed, the anti-treaty side became known as the IRA, while the pro-treaty faction was reconstituted as the Irish National Army. The National Army decisively defeated the IRA in the Irish Civil War (1922-1923) by a mix of superior conventional tactics, ruthless repression, and a widespread policy of executing captives. The pro-treaty forces also received small-arms, artillery, and armored cars from the British, increasing hostility between them and their anti-treaty opponents. Both Cathal Brugha and Michael Collins were killed early in the conflict. Griffith also died, partly from exhaustion. De Valera, still recognized as "President of the Irish Republic" by the anti-treaty faction, went into a temporary political exile.[47]

That the IRA has had a marked influence on Irish society is undeniable. Despite the Civil War, republican credentials remained a valuable commodity in Irish politics. Between 1922 and 1966, three of the four heads of government were former IRA members active in either the Easter Rising or the War of Independence. The Free State evolved into the Republic of Ireland by 1948, but it did so through constitutional evolution, not violent resistance.[48] In Northern Ireland, various reincarnations of the IRA attempt to link themselves to the body that fought the War of Independence. The longest-lasting of these, the Provisional IRA, claims legitimacy based on the endorsement of Tom Maguire, the former South Mayo flying column leader and the last living member of the Second Dáil, until his death in 1993.[49] Despite a Provisional IRA ceasefire in 1998, the willingness of dissident republicans and their loyalist opponents in Northern Ireland to

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[47] Walsh, *Ireland's Independence*, 97-102.
[48] Walsh, *Ireland's Independence*, 102-103.
[49] English, *Armed Struggle*, 113-114.

use violence to achieve their goals continues to mar the political landscape there as well as in the Republic of Ireland.[50]

GHQ and the Irish War of Independence

The military achievements of the Irish Republican Army during 1917 to 1921 are difficult to asses, but whatever its accomplishments, it is irrefutable that the leaders at General Headquarters played an important role throughout the conflict. Historical accounts often downplay or ignore GHQ, emphasizing local initiative. Peter Hart and Richard English ignore the fact of top-down direction for IRA units and their political aspirations, discussing them as independent gangs of gunmen.[51] Hart also ignores the leadership's role in forming the flying columns, posing them as a spontaneous local development. This is especially detrimental in his critical discussion of the West Cork column led by Tom Barry, which was formed as a direct result of GHQ encouragement and training.[52] Joost Augusteijn recognizes GHQ's focus on training, but he often discusses only the leadership's shortcomings, not its importance in tactical innovation and encouraging widespread action.[53]

Though much of the onus of tactical innovation and action lay with local units, GHQ provided an overall strategy and hierarchical command structure, dissemination of effective tactics to various units, and alliance to a political party. The reorganization of the Irish Volunteers—which rapidly become known as the Irish Republican Army—in 1917 depended on individuals who would form the nucleus of militant leadership over

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[50] English, *Armed Struggle*, 302-303, 315.
[51] Hart, *The I.R.A. and Its Enemies*, 17-18; English, *Armed Struggle*, 17-18.
[52] Hart, *The I.R.A. and Its Enemies*, 85-86; Barry, *Guerilla Days in Ireland*, 19-20.
[53] Augusteijn, *From Public Defiance to Guerrilla Warfare*, 98-102.

the next four years. This year saw a reemergence of violent action in the form of arms raids and political protection. With the establishment of *An t'Óglác* in 1918, GHQ began encouraging active resistance to arrest, leading to further clashes with government forces. The publication also began to disseminate small-unit tactical ideas that formed the basis of guerrilla war; a decisive break with past republican strategy. This year saw the first raids on police barracks and the emergence of the ambush as a key republican tactic.

With Sinn Féin's success in the December 1918 elections, the republican movement could claim a popular endorsement of its aims. The establishment of the Dáil and GHQ's alliance to this elected body, however nominal, provided it with democratic credentials and an overt political context for its actions. Dáil statements that the IRA had played a leading role in establishing the Irish Republic in 1916 boosted the prestige of the militant body in republican eyes. GHQ continued to encourage action, while at the same time taking steps to moderate the IRA's more aggressive tendencies and set the organization on a definite course of guerrilla war.

The widespread barrack attacks that commenced in 1920 were largely the result of GHQ's strategy to provide clearance areas in which the Dáil's writ could run. The largest action of the war in terms of numbers of Volunteers involved were the Easter 1920 burnings, which saw the destruction of 218 evacuated barracks that might have been reoccupied by reinforced police or military garrisons. This operation was mandated by GHQ, but planned at the local level. Though it cost few lives, its effect was to dramatically impress British officials as to the danger the IRA posed to their continued governance of Ireland. Another tactical development was the establishment of full-time flying columns to conduct sustained operations against government forces. While not

originating from GHQ, the leadership disseminated the idea around the country, eventually mandating that all units implement the formation in their areas and establishing training camps to facilitate them.

With October 1920, the War of Independence entered its most intense period. GHQ's ability to order widespread attacks in the wake of a republican execution such as that of Kevin Barry shows its engagement with and influence with local units. It also shows that these units were awake to the political situation throughout the country. GHQ planned and executed the Bloody Sunday attacks on British secret service agents, which devastated the government's counterespionage efforts in the capital. Once the flying columns were established in local areas, they operated independently, but remained in contact with GHQ and with its organizers. Successful ambushes such as those at Kilmichael, Tureengarriffe, Clonbanin, and Tourmakeady were local initiatives, but could not have taken place without the encouragement and training provided by the leadership. Throughout 1921, GHQ encouraged greater participation both in terms of units and numbers of Volunteers. This policy led to higher casualties, but accomplished the goals of spreading the war to various parts of Ireland. GHQ also encouraged action in Britain, which terrorized the populace and hastened the cessation of hostilities. Total casualties among the police forces from 1919 to July 1921 amounted to 405 killed, 692 wounded. Over the same period, the British military suffered 148 personnel deaths while 402 were wounded.[54] Republican casualties are difficult to determine, but historians agree that a total of 752 civilians and IRA members were killed during the conflict.[55]

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[54] Street, *Administration of Ireland, 1920*, 212, 220, 396; Street, *Ireland in 1921*, 7.
[55] Hopkinson, The Irish War of Independence, 201-202; Tim Pat Coogan, *The I.R.A.* (Douglas, UK: Fontana, 1980), 44.

Despite GHQ's significant successes, by the truce the redundancies and shortcomings of its policies were evident. The divisional scheme introduced what many considered an unnecessary and bureaucratic level of authority in the IRA. Flying column leaders had become increasingly independent, building their reputations and gaining political clout to the detriment of their nominal superiors within local brigades. Prominent republicans gained GHQ staff positions regardless of their necessity or qualifications. While the truce introduced greater numbers of recruits and arms than the IRA had ever seen, these structural issues led to indiscipline within the ranks. Chief of Staff Richard Mulcahy recognized these commands issues and attempted to address them, but his efforts were too little, too late. The treaty controversy blew these smoldering embers into full flame. Republicans chose their loyalties based not on the hierarchical structure GHQ had struggled to implement, but according to political principles and personal loyalties. Far from being insignificant, the IRA leadership's role in the conflict was decisive both in its successes and in its failure to maintain discipline and cohesion. The same initiatives that made the IRA an effective fighting force when facing conventional government forces caused structural issues that rent the organization at the conflict's end, leading to the Irish Civil War.

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